



**И**НСТИТУТ  
ЗА ПЕДАГОГИЈА



# INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy -  
Educational Challenges and Future Prospects

Ohrid | May 16<sup>th</sup>—18<sup>th</sup> | 2022



# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

November, 2022

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Edited by:  
Natasha Angeloska Galevska  
Elizabeta Tomevska-Ilievska  
Maja Janevska  
Branka Bugariska







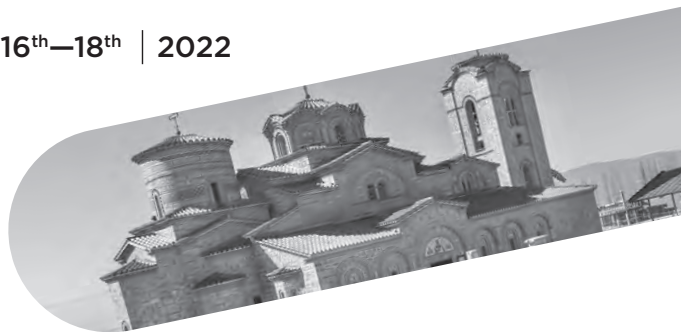
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## **EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

International Scientific Conference “75th Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Future Prospects”, Ohrid, 16-18 May 2022

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## Foreword

The International Scientific Conference entitled “75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Future Prospects” was organized by the Institute of Pedagogy, one of the oldest institutes at the Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, for the occasion of the significant jubilee of its foundation.

The Conference was organized under the patronage of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia Prof. Dr. Stevo Pendarovski. It took place in Hotel Inex Olgica in Ohrid, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

The aim of the Conference was to attract attention to the activities of our institute, and to bring together academics, educational experts, researchers, educators, practitioners and students from various countries. After the period of isolation due to the pandemic, the Conference was a great opportunity to make retrospective of recent developments in educational theory, legislative and practice, to discuss actual issues in all areas of education, to promote new concepts and ideas, and to disseminate results of innovative research and knowledge accomplishments. We are grateful for the interest of almost 200 authors from 21 countries to participate in our conference and to contribute to its success.

The book with conference proceedings contains 84 peer reviewed academic papers from 148 authors that are organized alphabetically according to the last name of the first author. The welcome speeches of our honored guests who speak at the opening ceremony are also included at the beginning of the book.

We would like to thank all institutions and companies for their support and sponsorship in organization of the conference. Only with joint efforts and cooperation and with exchanging of our professional experience and expertise, we can provide quality education as our children and next generations deserve.

Many thanks to the members of the editorial board who helped us in preparation and publishing of the book.

With respect,

President of the Organizing Committee  
Prof. Dr. Elizabeta Tomevska–Ilievska

President of the Programme Committee  
Prof. Dr. Natasha Angeloska–Galevska

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# Welcoming Speeches

**Prof. Dr. Elizabeta  
TOMEVSKA-ILIEVSKA**  
*Head of the Institute of pedagogy  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje  
Faculty of Philosophy  
Republic of Macedonia*



## Greetings

Respected Minister of Education and Science, Jeton Shaqiri; Respected Rector of the University “St. Cyril and Methodius”, prof. Dr. Nikola Jankulovski; Respected Vice-Rectors of the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” from Skopje and the University “St. Kliment Ohridski” from Ohrid; Respected Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje prof. Dr. Ratko Duev, Honorable President of the University Senate “St. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje, prof. Dr. Aneta Barakoska; Respected Mayor of the Municipality of Ohrid, Mr. Kiril Pecakov, Respected: Deans, Vice Deans, Senators; directors, principals, professors, pedagogues, teachers, students, honored guests, dear friends of pedagogy and pedagogical work, good afternoon.

On my own behalf, on behalf of the professors of the Institute of Pedagogy and the Faculty of Philosophy, I welcome you to this great and solemn event, together to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy, on which occasion we organize the International Scientific Conference “75 years of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Perspectives”.

I have the honor, but also a great responsibility for the indicated trust to address this honorable auditorium.

## Introduction

The bright trace of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius is a cultural and enlightening, educational value of the Slavic civilization. It has a centuries-old contribution to the history of European civilization and their cultural and educational future.

How important and essential is the mission of the Holy Brothers is shown by the fact that today they are patrons of Europe, a recognition given by the Vatican in order to emphasize their importance for the unity of the European people, whose cultural motto is – **unique in diversity**. In such cosmopolitanism is the essence of the efforts of Saints Cyril and Methodius, whose existence is forever rooted in the cultural history of Europe.

The core of the enlightenment mission of the brothers Cyril and Methodius lies in the solid foundation they have developed for the expansion of the enlightenment activity, ie preparation of students – successors, who will adequately respond the historical task.

Today, we, the teachers and pedagogues, are facing with such a task, and continuing the Cyril and Methodius educational mission, on this day, we are gathered right here, in the holy city of Ohrid. The city where the Ohrid Literary School was founded, back in 886 by their most prominent student St. Clement, creator of the second Slavic alphabet – Cyrillic, with which he literates 3500 students. In Ohrid he built the monastery of St. Panteleimon, in which the first Slavic University, known as Clement University was housed.

We are honored to inform you that the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University “St. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje marks 75 years since its founding. This Institute is the first and oldest higher education institution for education of pedagogues, teachers and educators in our country. Prominent pedagogues, ministers of education, deans of faculties, directors of educational institutions, masters and doctors of pedagogical sciences came from this Institute.

## **Historical Review of the Institute**

The Institute of Pedagogy is one of the oldest institutes at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje and focuses its activity on teaching and research work in the field of pedagogical sciences. From the very beginning of the work of the Faculty of Philosophy, from the distant 1920, the following subjects are listed in the enrollment of students: literature, linguistics, history, philosophy and pedagogy. These disciplines, in fact, reflect the structure of the faculty itself. Later, the three oldest departments of the Faculty of Philosophy will emerge from them: philosophy, history and pedagogy.

The national and social policy implemented on the Macedonian people, for various aspects and reasons, left consequences on its national, social, cultural, and above all educational development. A country like Macedonia, with a great tradition and history of Slavic literacy, immediately after the liberation found itself with 75% illiterate population. For this reason, in the initial phase of the construction, development of Macedonia, it needed educators the most. This fact is connected with the opening of the study group in pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje in 1946, which in the first three years exists together with the study group for philosophy, and in the academic year 1949/50, the studies in pedagogy stand out as a separate Department for pedagogy, which to this day exists as a separate unit of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje.

In 1978/79 the Department of Pedagogy grew into a Teaching-Scientific Study Group in Pedagogy, and ten years later, as the Institute of Pedagogy.

Especially important contribution in building the tradition and the realization of the activity of the Institute of Pedagogy, gave the teachers from the first generation, as follows:

- **Dr. Kiril Kamilov** (one of the founders of the Department of Pedagogy);
- **Dr. Risto Kantardziev** (Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Branko Veljkovikj**;
- **Dr. Vladimir Spasikj**;
- **Nikola Popovski** and assistant **Klime Dzambazovski**;
- **Dr. Branko Petrovski** (Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Dr. Borivoj Samolovchev**;
- **Dr. Gjorgji Delchev** (Author of the Primer who has 36 editions);
- **Prof. Dr. Anatolij Damjanovski** (Minister of Education, Vice Rector of UKIM and Vice Dean of Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Prof. Dr. Ljupco Koprovski** (Minister of Education and Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy).

Great importance for the development of the Institute of Pedagogy is attributed to the teachers who, unfortunately, are no longer among us:

- **Prof. Dr. Blagorodna Lakinska** (1946-2006, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Director of the State Education Inspectorate);
- **Prof. Dr. Marija Kostova** (1946-2015);
- **Prof. Dr. Natka Mickovikj** (1943-2022).



Great importance for the development of the Institute of Pedagogy is attributed to retired teachers:

- **Prof. Dr. Nikola Petrov** (born in 1937, Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy “St. Kliment Ohridski”);
- **Prof. Dr. Kiro Kamberski** (born 1941, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Prof. Dr. Trajan Gocevski** (born 1950, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy 1992-2009, first civilian Minister of Defense in Independent Macedonia);
- **Prof. Dr. Snezana Adamceska** (born 1950, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Acting Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Prof. Dr. Marija Tofovikj- Kjamilova** (born 1953).

In addition to the undergraduate studies, the Institute of Pedagogy from the academic year **1980/81** started organizing postgraduate studies at the master’s level. The enrollment of these students was done every second academic year.

Also, since the academic year **1992/93**, postgraduate **specialist studies** have been introduced at the Institute of Pedagogy, lasting one year.

The Institute of Pedagogy is actively involved in the processes of implementation of the principles of the **Bologna Declaration**. Since the academic year **2004/2005**, the study and subject programs have been revised, modernized and based on the European Credit Transfer System.

In the same academic year, postgraduate studies were introduced in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System. Changes in the curriculum and program for postgraduate studies at the master’s level followed. In addition to the Department of **Pedagogical Sciences**, postgraduate studies in **Management in Education** were introduced.

In addition to master’s and specialist studies, there are doctoral studies also at the Institute.

The Institute of Pedagogy from 2018/19 introduces the new Study Program for Andragogy and is expected in this academic year to graduate the first andragog.

The Institute of Pedagogy also has a program for **pedagogical-psychological and methodological retraining**, for teachers from primary and secondary schools, who graduated from non-teaching faculties in all fields. A large number of personnel have obtained such a diploma, today they are successful teachers in primary and secondary education in the Republic of Macedonia.

Today, the Institute of Pedagogy employs 11 teachers, in the following composition:

- **Prof. Dr. Zoran Velkovski** (born in 1959, Vice Rector of UKIM and Director of the Bureau for Development of Education);
- **Prof. Dr. Jasmina Delceva-Dizdarevic** (born in 1963, General Director of the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia);
- **Prof. Dr. Aneta Barakoska** (born in 1964, current President of the University Senate of UKIM);
- **Prof. Dr. Vera Stojanovska** (born 1965);
- **Prof. Dr. Suzana Miovska-Spaseva** (born 1965);
- **Prof. Dr. Natasha Angeloska-Galevska** (born in 1966, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Prof. Dr. Lena Damovska** (born 1967, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy);
- **Prof. Dr. Borche Kostov** (born in 1973);
- **Prof. Dr. Elizabeta Tomevska-Ilievska** (born in 1974);
- **Prof. Dr. Alma Tasevska** (born 1982);
- **Prof. Dr. Elena Rizova** (born 1982);
- **Tatjana Dichoska** (senior associate for library work and coordinator for ECTS).

### **At the Institute of Pedagogy so far:**

- **3336 students graduated;**
- **388 students received master degrees and**
- **107 candidates received their doctorates.**

Thanks to the high quality provided by the Institute, the professors participate in the creation of national education policies, by creating important strategic documents in the field of upbringing and education. In terms of **project activities**, many intensive contacts and cooperation were established with a number of donors and institutions in the country and abroad. This cooperation is expected to intensify in the coming period. The Institute of Pedagogy permanently focuses its activities on contemporary pedagogical problems, which are the basis and guarantee for new research projects and a contribution to contemporary pedagogical theory and practice.

In addition to these teachers and associates, the realization of the activity of the Institute of Pedagogy **includes teachers and associates from the institutes** of psychology, philosophy, sociology, special education and rehabilitation, etc. In addition, teachers and associates participate in the implementation of teaching at other institutes of the Faculty of Philosophy, as well as at most other faculties of the University “St. Cyril and Methodius ”in Skopje.

**Scientific research activity** of the members of the Institute, is also a significant part of the scope of work of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. In the past period, the teachers and collaborators of the Institute of Pedagogy have published an impressive number of **scientific and professional papers, books, monographs, studies and textbooks in the field of pedagogy**, and have published their papers in several renowned professional and scientific journals and publications in the country and abroad.

The Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, independently or in cooperation with other institutions, has organized a number of **scientific and professional gatherings** (conferences, symposiums, consultations, debates) dedicated to topics of importance for the development of pedagogical theory and practice in our country.

Significant activity and engagement of the teachers and associates of the Institute of Pedagogy is manifested in the social and public life, in the work of the cultural-educational institutions, **professional and scientific societies and in several editorial councils and boards.**

Many of the activities of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje consist of cooperation with **domestic and international academic, governmental and non-governmental organizations.**

### **From the Present to the Future**

The Institute of Pedagogy is an inseparable link in the social life of Macedonia, which makes a huge contribution, primarily in educational development, but also in historical and cultural development.

The concept of the structure of the Study Program in Pedagogy arises from the needs for modernization of studies and their adaptation to the modern world tendencies in the field of pedagogy, as well as the reform efforts that are taking place in our country in the field of upbringing and education.

The focus of these changes is the student and the need he to be educated in a modern way. Our vision is to create a study program and education that will be student-oriented, education that will integrate the basic pedagogical disciplines, the original upbringing and education, educational standards and ethical principles.

The proposed Study Program should lead to the final result – building defined sets of competencies that graduate educators should possess, in order to be able successfully to apply in the labor market and competencies that will enable them to successfully continue their education.

Additional effort has been made for modern pedagogy to respond to the need for transparency and recognition at the national and international level, which is in fact one of the basic recommendations of the Bologna Process.

Continuing education, ie training of the pedagogue, teacher, educator and andragog has a special meaning. The need of our time, expressed in the attitude to constantly learn, ie to learn throughout life is of particular importance, precisely for the pedagogical activity.

**We are contemporaries of numerous reform efforts** in all subsystems of the educational system in Macedonia, inpreschool, primary, secondary, higher education, adult education, which of course should be followed by the vigilant critical pedagogical reason and eye.

The pedagogues with the professional contribution and the great enthusiasm deal with numerous changes, social and educational reforms, write the history of the pedagogical activity in our country and leave an important “professional stamp” in the educational development and growth.

**The purpose of the conference** is the affirmation and promotion of our activity to the wider academic public, as well as creating an opportunity for in-depth cooperation with university professors, educational experts, researchers, educators, practitioners and students from different countries. After the period of isolation due to the pandemic, we expect the conference to make a retrospective of the latest developments in educational policy, theory and practice. To discuss current issues in all areas of upbringing and education, while respecting the multidisciplinary approach, to promote new pedagogical concepts and ideas and to share the results of the latest research and innovation.

Through the **123 abstracts** submitted by **202 authors** from a total of **21 countries**, I believe that **this scientific conference will contribute** to a kind of overview of current educational developments in Macedonia, and new issues and topics in the field of pedagogy and education will be updated. Of course, they will also result in recommendations, which will be of great importance through their integration into the education policies in the country to fulfill the vision for improved education system.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Your esteemed participation in this scientific conference is invaluable for the development of scientific thought and the most modern processes and trends in the field of education and pedagogy.

Dear guests, let me finally thank to the university professors from the program board of the conference. I would like to express my special and great gratitude to the members of the organizing committee who worked tirelessly, devotedly and with great enthusiasm for seven months in organizing the conference. But I also like to thank the administrative staff of the Faculty of Philosophy, who are a valuable support to us. We also thank the media that expressed great cooperation in monitoring and transmitting information related to this jubilee event. In this process, we also gained many friends who, in the conditions of a pandemic, economic and energy crisis, had a great sense of pedagogy and education and supported this conference. I would like to thank the company “Kožuvchanka”, the local self-government of Ohrid headed by Mr. Kiril Petsakov, “Ars Lamina”, “Nansen Dialogue Center”, the local government of Kumanovo headed by Mr. Maxim Dimitrievski, “Inbox”, “Vitaminska”, winery “Goce Delchev-Tikvesh”, “Alkaloid”, “Student service”.

Dear guests, dear and respected friends of pedagogy, I wish you a pleasant work and stay in beautiful Ohrid!

Thank you.

**Prof. Dr. Ratko DUEV**

*Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje  
Republic of N. Macedonia.*



Dear Dr. Jeton Shakiri, Minister of Education and Science, Dr. Nikola Jankulovski, Chancellor of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Mr. Kiril Pecakov, mayor of our host city of Ohrid, dear Chair of the Institute of Pedagogy, Dr. Elizabeta Tomevska Ilievska, dear Vice-Chancellors of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Vice-Deans, directors, professors, students, media representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

1. The literary text by Chernorizets Hrabar “On the Letters” (behind the pseudonym of which stood Saint Naum, according to research carried out by the late academician Petar Ilievski) commences in the following way:

“Being still pagans, the Slavs **did not have their own letters**, but read and communicated by means of tallies and sketches, like the other pagans. After their baptism they were forced to use Roman and Greek letters in the transcription of their Slavic words, **with no particular rules in place**. But how can Greek letters be used to write: бгъ ог жизньъ, сѣло ог цркѣвь ог члкъ ог широта ог шедрѣты ог юность ог жзыкъ ог яадъ, and others like them? **This went on for many years.**

At last, God, in His love for humankind, who created people and did not leave them without sense, but rather, brought them **sense and salvation**, sent them Saint Constantine the Philosopher, called Cyril, a learned and upright man, who composed for them thirty-eight letters...” His work was to be carried on by his students, the saints Clement and Naum, who in the IX century turned Ohrid into a center of education in Europe, which would see thousands of students from the Slavic world.

One millennium later, in the distant 1920, the Faculty of Philosophy was founded in Skopje. One century of higher education also marks one century of science, as without science there can be no education. With the creation of the Macedonian state, in 1946 the newly restored Faculty of Philosophy commenced working, with classes held in Macedonian for the first time ever. The main role of the Faculty after the War was to help in the development of education and in the establishing of institutions which represent the foundations of the state. Undoubtedly, education is one of the most important segments. Following the War, at a time when 95% of the population was illiterate, the top priority was shaping teachers in order to equip the schools and Faculties. A significant role here was played by the study program in pedagogy, which later evolved into a Department of pedagogy. The responsibility the professors carried was great: Risto Kantardziev, prof. Anatolij Damjanovski, prof. Ljupco Koprovski, Branko Petrovski, Gjorgji Delcev, and others. The growth of the Faculty resulted in its social activity: the appearance of kindergartens, schools, high schools, special schools, strategies in education, reforms, curriculum development, shaping future teachers... the list goes on. Today, the Institute of Pedagogy has the same role that it did in the past: creating modern study programs, advancing the study of pedagogy, shaping professionals who will be involved in the various educational processes.

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.” The 75th anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy represents a window to a great many students both in the past and now, in the present, an open window to the world, a window through which the educator leads you from your earliest age throughout life. This 75th anniversary marks an investment in the foundations of society, an investment in science and in the shaping of society.

2. The theme of the Conference is “the 75th Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Future Prospects”.

Science is an ongoing process, influenced by a number of events. We are living at a time of crisis, which presents a great challenge to all of us. The pandemic, the armed conflict, as well as the related migration of people all demand that we swiftly adapt to the new conditions and provide an uninterrupted flow in the educational and teaching process, as well as in scientific research. The changes brought about by the health crisis, which has inexorably resulted in an economic crisis as well, have affected each and every society, and education in the process. The challenges caused are significant, and they determine the future prospects.

According to Aristotle, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” The changes that have taken place in the last three decades in our country, as well as worldwide, have resulted in erasing the teaching out of the term of education, which in the Slavic languages encompasses both concepts. Education has started being treated as a business “**and that has gone on for a number of years**”. Constant financial analyses are being carried out so as to optimize it “**without following any particular structure**”. The swift technological advancements and globalization are affecting each and every stage in education. On the other hand, education is not able to adapt to these processes at the same rate due to the various stages of development the different countries in the world find themselves in, as well the prospects they offer, the different conditions of living they offer their citizens, and their various economic conditions. These trends are contrary to the UN philosophy that everyone has the right to education.

If we see education and knowledge as expensive, then let us try to see how far we get without education and with ignorance. Our country, like most of the countries in the region, is faced with the problem of the mass immigration of its population to more developed countries, and one of the reasons for this is the better educational opportunities for them and their children. The number of high school graduates has decreased by 40% in the last ten years. The most popular study programs are the technological ones, so as to get a well-paid job in the more developed countries abroad, which, on the other hand, are faced with a drop in their birth rates and a scarcity in human resources to cover the increased growth rate of their economies. According to some scientifically-backed predictions, EU countries will have a deficit of nine million workers in the next ten years. In order to protect their own pension and health systems, investments are no longer directed toward the lesser developed countries. As such, all future strategies and reforms in the sphere of education ought to start with strategies to eliminate the mass immigration of one’s own population, as, otherwise, both education and the local economies will stagnate.

As a result of all this, 75 years later we find ourselves at the beginning, facing the same problems that our professors faced. Schools need math and physics teachers, but there are none, since there was no interest in these study programs, and soon there will be a shortage of a number of teachers in other subjects as well.

The challenges are serious, indeed, and I sincerely hope that reason will prevail. This is why we, as a Faculty, have organized and carried out a number of scientific conferences in the last several years, as well as forums, debates, summer schools, public lectures, international weeks, hoping that the exchange of scientific knowledge and international mobility will help us find an answer to the many problems the sphere of education is dealing with in our country.

3. Dear guests, in the name of the Dean’s office of the Faculty of Philosophy within the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, it is a great honor to welcome you to today’s international conference in Ohrid, best known by Saint Clement and Saint Naum, who were expelled by tsar Simeon in the IX century because they resisted adapting the Glagolitic script, the Slavic alphabet of their teachers Cyril and Methodius, to the Greek alphabet. Exiled to the most distant and remote parts of the Empire, Devol and Kutmicheva, they succeeded in turning Ohrid, from an **obscure city** into a center of Slavic literacy, visited by the whole Slavic world, a literary center where they would go to be educated and to pay their respects to their teachers.

To conclude, in the name of the Faculty of Philosophy, I would like to wish all of you fruitful discussions, and, according to the conference program, which offers a number of interesting topics, I believe that we will raise awareness among the public concerning the importance of education, while the papers presented in the next three days will be of great importance for the educational strategies and reforms leading to higher quality education in our country and abroad. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the financial assistance offered by the Ministry of Education, the Chancellor of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, and the city of Ohrid, as well as to everyone else that has supported this Conference.

Thank you!

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**Mr. Kiril PECAKOV**  
*Mayor of the Municipality of Ohrid*  
*Republic of Macedonia*



Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored and really glad to be part of the grand opening of this important International Scientific Conference and to have the opportunity to greet you on behalf of beautiful Ohrid, which is your cordial host.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy on its 75th anniversary and to express my great appreciation for the overall contribution, as the oldest higher education institution for education of pedagogues, teachers and educators in our country.

Holding this academic gathering in Ohrid has great symbolism, because this is the center of Slavic literacy and culture. This is the spiritual sanctuary of St. Clement and St. Naum, home of the laurel wreath Grigor Prlichev and a place that throughout its long history has grown many personalities who played an important role in the affirmation of the Enlightenment and left a mark on their time.

Honored guests,

Pedagogy is the noblest science because it is the foundation and the nursery of all other sciences and all other professions. In the life of every great doctor, lawyer, engineer, scientist, artist or political leader, there is at least one teacher who left a significant mark, who was the motive and guide to the realization of dreams. We should all pay special respect to our teachers, because they have the greatest credit for what we are today, they have taught us to walk towards success and to be the best version of ourselves.

The teacher is our first authority after our parents and has great merit for our upbringing, behavior and our knowledge. The teacher is a set of wisdom, discipline and empathy. The teacher is an intellectual and spiritual guide who gives motivation and inspiration for young minds to grow and reach their potential.

I hope that this conference will exchange significant experiences from the educational policy and that it will contribute to the development of new and modern pedagogical measures.

I wish you continue with even greater enthusiasm, to create successful educators, who will educate successful generations and have the capacity to make the world a better place to live.

Dear guests,

Ohrid is a precious pearl not only for our country but for the whole world, so its natural and cultural heritage is under the auspices of UNESCO. Ohrid is a living postcard and it is a real

privilege to have the opportunity to experience all its beauties. So make the most of your stay here and visit the impressive cultural sights and enjoy all the natural beauties of our city.

Thank you and I wish you fruitful and successful work!

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**Prof. Dr. Nikola JANKULOVSKI**  
*Rector of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius  
University in Skopje  
Republic of North Macedonia*



Dear Professor Stevo Pendarovski, Ph.D., President of the North Macedonia,  
Dear Mr. Jeton Shaqiri, Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia,  
Dear Professor Ratko Duev, Ph.D., dean of the Faculty of Philosophy,  
Dear rectors, vice rectors, mayors, deans, professors and students,  
Dear guests and friends,  
Good afternoon!

It is a special honor and pleasure for me on behalf of the “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje to congratulate the great 75-year Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy, as one of the oldest institutes of our University. I am honored to attend the opening of the International Scientific Conference “75 years of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Perspectives”, organized by the Institute of Pedagogy, sponsored by the President of the State, prof. Dr. Stevo Pendarovski.

I am very pleased that an impressive number of university professors attends this event from the country and abroad, pedagogues and teachers, who have been dedicating their working lives to the continuation and affirmation of the teaching profession and the prestigious pedagogical activity.

Pedagogues with their professional contribution and great enthusiasm deal with numerous changes, social and educational reforms, write the history of the pedagogical activity in our country and leave a significant mark in the educational development and rise.

Education is the primary moving force of any society. The creation of a “knowledge-based society” and producing high-powered work qualifications is a crucial task of every university.

In this direction, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University also strives for the improvement of the quality in the education of future educators, teachers and pedagogues, by improving the standards and capacities of the educational system in our country. Teachers, educators and pedagogues are the bearers of change, development and progress in one country. Hence, it is especially important to make sure that our students, future professionals are adequately prepared for the tasks and challenges facing modern education. Expectations for the pedagogical and teaching profession are always high. In that context, a large number of personal and professional qualities are required from the modern pedagogue and teacher.

Modern educational trends are reflected in the need for accelerated transformation of the overall setting of higher education and the establishment of quality appropriate to the needs of the country, which is at the same time competitive in international frameworks. Therefore, overcoming the relapses of the past and the implementation of internationally recognized norms and standards in higher education will remain imperative in the operation of the University. Only in this way, the higher education will fully fulfill its mission at the national and international level.

At the same time, it is evident that the introduction and implementation of numerous changes, European programs and initiatives are directed towards modernizing the Macedonian educational system in terms of following the contemporary development trends in education in Europe, as well as strengthening the institutional capacities in the field of educational policies.

In that sense, the goal of this international scientific conference which will be realized in the next three days, i.e., the affirmation and promotion of the educational activity in front of the wider academic public at the national and international level, is justified and especially necessary. I believe that through the working sessions of the conference, a space and opportunity for in-depth cooperation between domestic and foreign university professors, educational experts, researchers, educators and practitioners will be created and they will have the opportunity to discuss and exchange experiences on issues related to educational and educational challenges and perspectives. It is always necessary to discuss current issues from all areas of upbringing and education, to promote new pedagogical concepts and ideas, and to share the results of the latest research and innovations.

In that sense, the University's commitments are moving in the direction of providing and promoting quality education for the young generations, because they are the foundation of our future.

The program is very plentiful, and allows the professional and general public to be informed about the work of pedagogues, the conditions and perspectives for the development of the pedagogic activity, as well as about the challenges that the pedagogue encounters. I am especially glad that the program is designed with a multidisciplinary approach and that among us there are professors from several scientific fields who are in close connection with the common moving force, which is pedagogy.

In the expansion of numerous reform efforts in all subsystems of the educational system in Macedonia, in preschool, primary, secondary, higher education, adult education, it is necessary they are to be managed and monitored by the expert academic staff.

Today, the pedagogical profile is dealing with numerous changes, social and educational reforms with great enthusiasm, and there is a need to stamp a significant "professional seal" in the national educational system.

I am convinced that the benefits of this scientific conference will provide a kind of overview of current educational developments in our country, as well as the experiences of foreign universities and their practice, but at the same time, they will actualize and stimulate new issues in the field of pedagogy and education, and as expected results are the knowledge and the recommendations, which will be of great importance for their implementation in the creation of educational policies in the country and improvement of the quality of the educational system in the country.

To all participants of the Conference I wish a successful work.

Thank you!

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**Mr. Jeton SHAQIRI**

*Minister of education and science of the  
Republic of North Macedonia*



Dear President of the Republic of North Macedonia, prof. dr Stevo Pendarovski,  
Dear Rector of the "St. Cyril and Methodius University", prof. dr. Nikola Jankulovski,  
Dear Vice-Rectors,



Dear Mayors,

Dear Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, prof. dr. Ratko Duev,

Dear Head of the Institute of Pedagogy, prof. dr. Elizabeta Tomevska-Ilievska,

Dear, present deans, vice-deans, senators, professors, pedagogues, teachers, students, guests.

Seven and a half decades The Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, with its teaching and scientific-research work enriches the social and public life of our country. The international scientific conference being 75 years Institute of Pedagogy – Educational challenges and perspectives”, seems to be a logical completion of all previous activities of the Institute and tracing new directions in one of the most important activities, which covers the entire corpus of education and training of generations that will be the future of our country and the future of the world. Because, now, more than ever, the question arises as to how we should change the education in order to be more prepared to intercept the time that lies ahead.

Numerous are the challenges that condition the answer to this question. The Government and the Ministry of Education and Science have set out that the strategic goal is to provide quality education that will be accessible to every child, by providing an educational system that will create a staff capable of logical and critical thinking, based on analysis and facts. The school should prepare the children to use the knowledge to solve the problems that they will face in the future, and also to be creative and active.

Through the educational process to be formed individuals who respect and cultivate civil rights, tolerance and diversity, that will be able to respond to the needs of the labor market in accordance with the accelerated technological development.

In the fundamental educational changes based on these goals, we started from the nine-year primary education, based on the new Concept and for the first time are being established national standards for the achievements of students at the end of primary education. In the educational process, we put in the first place the student and his needs, opportunities and affinities, while the teacher was given autonomy and the opportunity to decide how is he going to create the lesson. We have also promoted the level of digitalization of the entire educational process, in order to follow the development of the advanced practices of the countries with better quality educational systems.

Dear present guests,

The new Concept, digital learning materials and changes in general, have caused controversy among the general and professional public. Personally, I think that societies that want to move forward with big steps should not be afraid of public debates, which are a good guide for policy makers. In this way, I am convinced that the scientific opinions that will be presented by the large number of authors-participants in the conference and the multidisciplinary access, will show new approaches to education, study and solving pedagogical problems. Because the only thing that is unchangeable is our commitment to improve the quality of education, as a basis for the overall development and prosperity of the country, for social transformation and democratization.

In the end, I would like to congratulate the 75th Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy, and wish you to continue to enrich your pedagogical thought, to create high practitioners and to continue to be integrated into the overall development of the national educational system. The profile of the educator is very important in the educational system in our country and I think that the pedagogical critical experience should be respected in order to achieve more qualitative education. I believe and hope that in the future, the professors from the Institute of Pedagogy will continue to be our partners and whose valuable experience will be built-in for future national educational policies. To all that are present, beside the successful scientific dialogue, I recommend you to take your time to see the beauties of the Macedonian pearl the city of Ohrid.

Thank you.

**Prof. Dr. Stevo PENDAROVSKI**  
*President of the Republic of North Macedonia*



Dear organizers,  
Dear participants,  
Dear friends,

Allow me first to congratulate you on a great jubilee – 75 years since the founding of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University “St. Cyril and Methodius – Skopje. Our oldest institution for the education of pedagogists, teachers and educators, is celebrating this important jubilee in a worthy manner, in addition to other activities, with the International Scientific Conference entitled “75 years of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Perspectives”.

I wish to underline what a special honor it is for me to be the patron of the Conference. Unfortunately, due to urgent work commitments I cannot be with you today, but I do thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts in this way.

Bearing in mind that the conference is attended by around 200 participants – rectors, mayors, university professors, deans, professors, pedagogists, teachers, educators and students, including numerous participants from fifteen countries, I can rightly state that it is a special event and a unique opportunity to share information, experiences, to network and jointly develop future projects. I have no doubt whatsoever that in the next three days it will be possible to hear interesting presentations and fruitful discussions and debates. After all, that is the way to achieving better results and reaching the highest standards.

Educational processes should not be considered static and unchangeable – on the contrary, they should be adapted to the needs of those for whom they are intended, as well as to the demands and expectations of societies, in correlation with development trends. In this context, the contribution of those who, as practitioners, are involved in the educational process itself and who are in charge of its proper implementation, is immeasurable.

Dear participants,

The Republic of North Macedonia is not part of the highly developed industrial countries and does not have resources that can ensure rapid economic development. Hence, our greatest wealth is human capital – it must be invested in and given the necessary attention.

Of course, the process starts from an early age. Education is the foundation for building healthy individuals who will acquire knowledge and skills necessary for the development of our country. Namely, that is why it is necessary to constantly invest in education and science and give space for talent and creativity to come to the surface.

We live in a time and a world where things are changing rapidly. The Covid 19 pandemic has set us back, because despite all efforts and the use of the latest technologies, the educational process still lost a portion of its dynamism and quality. That is precisely why we must have a readiness and a strategy to face the accumulated problems, but also challenges that are yet to come. New concepts and methods should be adopted and ideas, information, doctrines exchanged. Education and science must finally become the backbone of any planning of our future development.

Dear attendees,

Let me conclude by wishing you a pleasant stay in beautiful Ohrid and a successful conference. Thank you.

## PLENARY SPEAKERS

**Prof. Dr. Natasha ANGELOSKA  
GALEVSKA**

*Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje  
Faculty of Philosophy  
Republic of Macedonia*



### **Methodology of Pedagogy – Pillar of Pedagogical Science**

**Abstract:** The methodology is a necessary pre-requisite for the development of each science because its progress relies on the scientific knowledge, research, and findings that methodology enables. Therefore, in light of the significant anniversary in which we celebrate 75 years since the foundation of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, we dedicate this paper to the methodology as a pillar of pedagogical science. The paper reveals the milestones in the process of the development of methodology of pedagogy in Macedonia, pointing out the crucial persons for the establishment and progress of methodology as a scientific discipline and as a course for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students at the Institute of pedagogy and other university study programs. We also draw attention to the global research tendencies and their reflection in the research work in Macedonia.

The paper covers a few more essential aspects of the topic such as the need and importance of this discipline for the development of research competencies among students, pedagogues, teachers, and educators as one of the primary tasks of university education. Through the courses in the field of methodology, students adopt the principles of scientific work and acquire their first own experiences with empirical research in the field of education.

At the end of the paper, we highlight the barriers and main challenges as well as the prospects for further improvement of methodology as an imperative condition for the development of pedagogical science.

**Keywords:** Methodology of pedagogy, Research tendencies, Research competencies

### **Introduction**

In light of the significant anniversary in which we celebrate 75 years from the foundation of the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, we dedicated this paper to the methodology of pedagogy as a condition and incentive for the development of our institute and the pedagogical science in general. Each science can be developed only if its methodology is developed because the progress of science relies on the scientific knowledge, research, and findings that methodology enables.

For these reasons, on this anniversary, we made a review of the development of the methodology at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Institute of Pedagogy, through the stages that this science went through, and the key periods and key persons significant for its current status.

The text covers a few more essential aspects as well: research tendencies in the world and their reflection on the development of the methodology of pedagogy in our country and the impact of this discipline on the development of research competencies among students, pedagogues, teachers, and educators as one of the primary tasks of university education.

## Development of the Methodology of Pedagogy in the Republic of Macedonia

The Institute of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje is the first higher education institution for the training of pedagogues, but also for the formation of teaching staff who possess research knowledge and skills necessary for the development of pedagogical science. (Miovska-Spaseva, 2016) Therefore, the Institute of Pedagogy has played a leading role in the development of scientific research and pedagogical research in Macedonia during the past 75 years. Since the very foundation of the studies in pedagogy in 1946 (Филозофски факултет во Скопје, 2006), contents that were aimed to train students for research work were included in the framework of the obligatory courses of General Pedagogy and Didactics. Methodological and epistemological aspects were also included in the course of Logic, which had the status of a compulsory subject and was implemented by professor Bogdan Sheshikj from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, author of the widely used textbook on General Methodology.

*Figure 1*

A student record from the academic year 1952/53

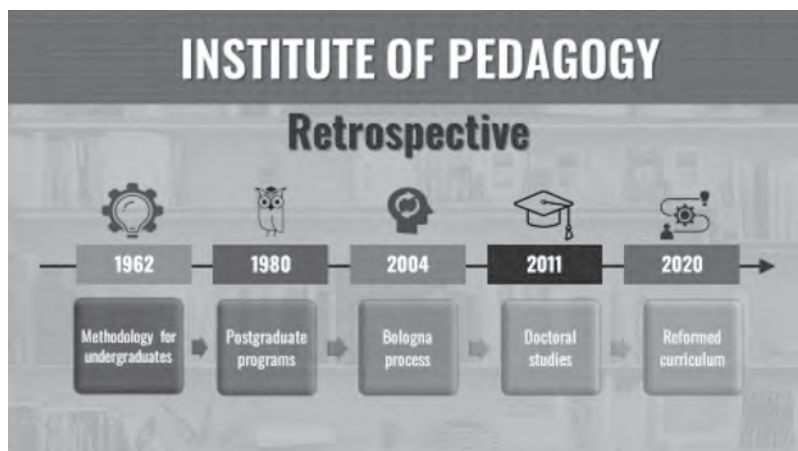
Име на студент	ПРЕДМЕТ	Број на часови	Оцена
Стефан Стефанов	Педагогика	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Психологија	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Историја	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Својата	4	2
Стефан Стефанов	Трговина	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Математика	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Филозофија	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Математика	2	2
Стефан Стефанов	Математика	2	2

In the academic year 1962/63, exactly six decades ago, the Methodology of Pedagogy was introduced as a distinct course in the study program of pedagogy, therefore an even more significant phase in the development of methodology began. For establishing the Methodology of Pedagogy as one of the fundamental scientific disciplines of our studies, professors Anatoli Damjanoski and Natka Mickovic are credited as the first implementers of this course, later implemented by professors Natasha Angeloska Galevska and Elizabeta Tomevska Ilievska. The contents of methodology were also included within the higher education programs for teachers and educators of the former Pedagogical academies. With the transformation of their two-year programs for teachers and educators into four-year programs, the course of Methodology got the status of a mandatory or optional subject at all Pedagogical Faculties in the country. While at some faculties it is represented with only a basic course with a smaller number of teaching hours (Универзитет “Св. Климент Охридски” – Битола, 2016) at other faculties, a larger number of teaching hours per week are dedicated to methodology

and even additional subjects such as Action Research in Education are offered as optional courses. (Универзитет “Св. Кирил и Методиј” – Скопје, Педагошки факултет, 2022)

**Figure 2**

Key stages in the development of methodology at the Institute of Pedagogy



The opening of postgraduate studies in pedagogy in the academic year 1980/81 is significant for the enrichment and enhancement of research work. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Institute of Pedagogy took active participation in the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process thus all the courses and study curricula were revised, updated, and aligned with the European Credit Transfer System. (Institute of Pedagogy, 2022). Moreover, the start of the third cycle of doctoral studies in 2011/2012 provides continuous methodological training for candidates throughout their entire studies, starting from the undergraduate courses. Methodological training is not only part of formal education but it is also included in informal and non-formal education, acquired through the lifelong learning concept.

Research activities of the Institute are also exposed in the cooperation with the relevant state institutions and with non-governmental organizations and associations, then, through the implementation of scientific research projects, organization of the congresses, seminars and informal forms of training, production of literature (textbooks, manuals, didactic materials), as well as participation in international associations.

**Figure 3**

Founders of methodology as a compulsory course at the Institute of pedagogy: Anatoli Damjanovski and Natka Mickovic



In addition to professors Anatolij Damjanovski and Natka Mickovic, other methodologists from related institutes of the Faculty of Philosophy also contributed to the development of the

methodology, and in the mutual cooperation in the development of modern study programs, especially those with an interdisciplinary character. In that context, we should mention the names of the professors-methodologists from the Institute of Philosophy: Mitko Ilievski, Violeta Panzova, and Ana Dimishkovska, then Petre Georgievski and Vesna Dimitrievska from the Institute of Sociology, Violeta Petroska Beshka and Nikolina Kenig from the Institute of Psychology and all others who contribute to the affirmation of this science through research projects and by successfully mentoring of students, on undergraduate, graduate and doctoral level.

Through the courses in the field of methodology, students, future pedagogues, educators, and teachers adopt the principles of scientific work and acquire their first own experiences with empirical research in the field of education. Within these courses, the first attempts to plan and design scientific research are made, as each student is required to create a research design that foresees the application of quantitative and qualitative techniques with appropriate research instruments. In addition to the instructions that students receive from the professors during their studies, future teachers develop their knowledge and skills for research work through practical teaching in schools where they observe classes and do mini-research, through the preparation of seminar theses and graduation work, as well as through reading texts in professional journals and books that the professors indicate as mandatory and optional literature.

## **Research Tendencies in the World and Our Country**

From the very beginning, the Institute of Pedagogy strives to follow the contemporary research trends and the innovations of world science to be implemented as quickly as possible in the contents of the methodological courses. (Angeloska-Galevska, 2013; De Landsheere, 1986). For example, at the end of the last century together with the popularization of the qualitative research paradigm in the world, a doctoral dissertation was defended on the topic of the Contemporary approach to qualitative research in education – Participant observation in a classroom (Angeloska-Galevska, 1997). The thesis was worked on under the mentorship of prof. Natka Mickovic, based on the theoretical and empirical research work at the Research and Graduate School at the University of Manchester and at the University of Warwick in England at the eminent Center for Development and Pedagogical Research – CEDAR directed by professor Robert Burgess, a well-known name in the field of qualitative methodology.

The first published textbook on Qualitative Methodology in Macedonian language dates back to 1997 and it is a roadmap and guide for students in planning and conducting research with qualitative research methods such as participant observation, open interviews, focus groups, contextual content analysis, video analysis, conversation analysis, life-history method, etc. (Angeloska-Galevska, 1997a). The involvement of practitioners, teachers, and educators in action and evaluation research in upbringing and education is particularly significant. As action research became widespread in the world, a doctoral dissertation on this topic was undertaken for investigation at the Institute of Pedagogy. The thesis was titled Action research for the improvement of upbringing and education and it was defended in 2005 under the mentorship of Natasha Angeloska Galevska. Within the theoretical and empirical research, the author Dean Iliev elaborates on how teachers can think in a scientific way using their ongoing reflection on their classroom practices and finding the best solutions in their pedagogical work. (Iliev, 2005; Iliev, 2006)

The meta-analysis of the conducted research and the used methodology shows that the decades-old enthusiasm for using the survey as a research technique with standard statistical procedures is still present, but with endeavours for methodological triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to obtain more objective and valid results.

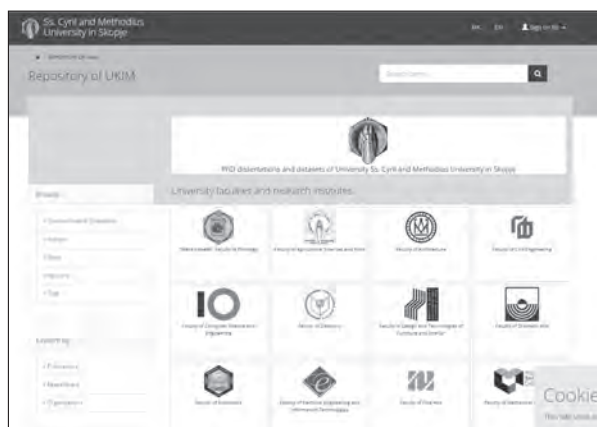
Through research, the teacher improves the practice, thinks about it, and acquires more responsibility for his work. Research competencies are especially important for teachers in inclusive

classrooms where a differentiated approach is needed in the assessment and evaluation of the achievements of students with special educational needs. (Angeloska Galevska & Ilić Pešić, 2018)

Pedagogues and teachers should be trained for research work both during initial education and through various forms of professional development. This will enable them not only to improve their pedagogical work but also to gain a more critical attitude toward the introduction of innovation in education. Many years ago, Maria Montessori carried out experimental verification of educational methods before starting their application in practice. Unfortunately, it still happens today that wide educational reforms are applied without previous verification of their effects in practice.

The time of the pandemic, despite all the negative aspects, has perhaps provided certain positive opportunities, such as intensifying the processes of creation of digital resources and establishing open science. Valuable open educational resources have been created in a short time, open access to scientific data and professional literature has been provided every day, open reviews and evaluations of papers have become new practice and entire education becomes open, meaning that it has become accessible to anyone, at any time and by any device.

*Figure 4*  
Repository of UKIM



In relation to this, the repository of the Faculty of Philosophy and the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University offers a precious collection in which scientific works created over decades have become permanently preserved and accessible to everyone. (Repository of UKIM, 2022)

Contemporary science sets new demands and traces new directions. Some authors call it a revolution of accessibility or *access revolution* (Suber, 2012). Open access brings new opportunities, enables and facilitates the communication of scientists from various countries, increases the visibility of authors and the transparency of their work, spreads their research results, and reduces the possibility of plagiarism or unwanted duplication of research activities.

Very soon, the openness of the research process will become a required component in the evaluation of research and research papers. Researchers will be obliged to store their data and the entire research material including the statistical procedures and instruments in a space (a cloud) within the repositories and to make them available to the public.

## Conclusion

Research competencies are a significant part of the academic programs including the studies at the Institute of pedagogy. Methodological training of future researchers begins in the first cycle of studies through the mandatory or optional methodological courses in all the pedagogical

faculties in Macedonia. Studying the basics of methodology and practical training for research work during the undergraduate studies is vital for the growth of research curiosity and it is the basis for quality and in-depth scientific research in master's and doctoral studies. It is especially beneficial to encourage students at the undergraduate level for applied and comparative research. In addition, the University, faculties, and institutes should work on the continuous creation of electronic data banks for research in various scientific fields, as well as databases for master's and doctoral theses. The Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje has successfully begun this practice in the last few years through the electronic repository.

In the last decade, universities and faculties are ranked based on several criteria, where one of the main criterion is the conducted research and the published reports of the research results in renowned professional and scientific journals. Therefore, it is important to train the young university staff in planning and implementing scientific research, as well as writing articles and reports according to academic standards. The main problem of the university is that the academic staff is quite old on average, and there are fewer and fewer young assistants and researchers who will be able to contribute to the future development of research, and consequently to the better ranking of our universities.

The scientific research work would be much more intensive if it were not for the heavy workload of the university staff with teaching and administrative work. The relatively small number of teachers and collaborators compared to the large number of students and subjects does not leave enough space for scientific work. The continuous assessment and numerous administrative obligations imposed by the Bologna way of studying irreversibly consume the time that could be devoted to scientific work.

## Future perspectives

Scientific work in the last decade remained marginalized due to insufficient support and overloaded teaching and administrative duties. The shortage of funds allocated by the state for science and research is supplemented by European programs and other funds.

University programs require an increase of methodological subjects from the first cycle of study with the continuous upgrading of research knowledge and skills until the third cycle of studies.

The scientific approach should be used by every pedagogue, teacher, and educator, while critically following the innovations in pedagogical theory and practice. The acquired research competencies through the methodological courses enable analysing and researching practices, monitoring students, observing and examining the relationships in the classroom and finally deciding which practice gives the best results for both the pedagogues and the students.

In the future, it is necessary to increase the awareness of the need for open science as well as the skills and resources for its practicing, while reducing the resistance to greater visibility through sharing data and texts. In this way, we will ensure the development of pedagogical science and quality education that future generations deserve and expect.

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## Slow Pedagogy and Contemporary Teaching Strategies

**Abstract:** In this paper, contemporary teaching strategies are discussed in the theoretical and practical context of slow pedagogy and contemporary curricular planning of the teaching process. Emphasis is placed on the importance of raising awareness of the need to slow down in the teaching process so that students can fully develop in the experiential learning process, i.e. that each student can acquire knowledge and construct meanings, think in critical, creative, and reflective way, form and express attitudes, and develop psychomotor abilities and skills at her/his own pace through practical activities based on her/his interests. Based on the curricular approach to teaching in the context of slow pedagogy, this paper argues the need for careful planning and choosing learning and teaching strategies to achieve the goal using appropriate teaching content, in appropriate social forms and working conditions, and with appropriate ways of (self)evaluation. As a synthesis of knowledge about slow pedagogy, contemporary curriculum and learning and teaching strategies in the teaching process, the paper argues the importance of teachers' professional development and their role of action researchers who continuously evaluate and improve the quality of the educational process for the benefit of all of its stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Action research, Curricular approach, Experiential learning, “*Knowledge-in-action*”, Learner autonomy

## Introduction

Slow pedagogy refers to a concept that emerged in the 1980s when journalist Petrini criticized the opening of McDonald's fast food restaurant in Rome because of its commercialised, industrialized and standardized approach to food. The beginning was in the idea of 'slow food', that referred to values opposite to 'fast food' and everything that fast food represents (Petrini, 2001) but eventually Petrini's idea spread as a Slow movement that entered all aspects of one's life. Parkins and Craig (2006, as cited in Bozalek, 2017) consider Slow movement to be:

*"a process whereby everyday life – in all its pace and complexity, frisson and routine – is approached with care and attention ... an attempt to live in the present in a meaningful, sustainable, thoughtful and pleasurable way"* (p. 45).

This paper proposes possibilities of incorporating elements of 'slow pedagogy' in higher education, emphasizing contemporary teaching and learning strategies and the need to consider them in relation to the student and the course aim and content. The main Slow movement postulate is to slow down in all aspects of our lives, so slow pedagogy proposes strategies focused on students' learning process and enabling enough time for students to learn at their own pace (Shaw et al., 2013), with deeper understanding, enjoyment in learning and quality interaction between teacher and learner (Holt, 2012).

Slow pedagogy developed as a kind of a response to the standardization and homogenization of education (Holt, 2002), so the question is how to incorporate ideas of slow pedagogy in the contemporary European educational system. The Republic of Croatia has also implemented a competency-based curricular approach to teaching according to which all qualifications in Europe should be unified (Ćatić, 2012; Lončar-Vicković & Dolaček-Alduk, 2009). According to the competency-based curricular approach, we strive to help students develop their competencies so that they can actively and dynamically apply their knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes in different contexts, and we try to verify the development of those competencies through the students' achievement of learning outcomes (Lončar-Vicković & Dolaček-Alduk, 2009). So, as teachers, we organize the teaching process by setting the course's goal, determining the expected learning outcomes, choosing relevant content, appropriate teaching and learning strategies and a classroom environment that will help us achieve that goal. Finally, we determine the kind of evaluation that will allow us to check on the achievement of set goals, learning outcomes and students' competencies.

An analysis of the competency-based curricular approach reveals both its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the constructive alignment of the curriculum (Loughlin et al., 2021), learning and teaching process transparency, as well as setting aims towards the quality of education and effectiveness of students' accomplishment (Kerka, 1998). Doghonadze (2016) concludes:

*"This is generally positive; as equitable education has to be based on standard requirements."*, but also *"(...) this system of education is sort of faceless. It puts not only students, but also teachers into rather rigid frames, making them run like in a squirrel cage to catch up with requirements, which are getting harder and harder"* (p. 65).

Economization and competitiveness of education, setting aims towards outputs, standards and external evaluation of education, uniformity and behaviorist approach to teaching and learning can be singled out among disadvantages of competency-based education (Kerka, 1998). In addition, it is important to notice the fact that in the teaching process we cannot measure everything important for one's holistic development; especially we cannot measure certain aspects of upbringing. Thus, very important outcomes, difficult to operationalize, often do not find their place in closed and rigid curriculum (Jukić, 2010). Bracey (2001, as cited in Holt, 2002, p. 6) also points out the fact that *"creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, humor, reliability, enthusiasm,*

*civic-mindedness, self-awareness, self-discipline, empathy, leadership, and compassion*”, qualities important for one’s moral development, cannot be assessed through standardized tests. Sadly, practice shows that most of the learning outcomes in curriculums refer to student’s cognitive development, while his/her conative and psychomotor developments are often neglected. From the point of slow pedagogy, disadvantage of a standards-based approach to education is its focus on the pressured and hurried realization of achievement instead of one’s self-realization, as Holt (2002) noticed:

*“The pressure to proceed from one targeted standard to another as fast as possible, to absorb and demonstrate specified knowledge with conveyor-belt precision, is an irresistible fact of school life. Parents are encouraged to focus on achievement, not self-realization”* (p. 264).

Is it possible to combine a *‘slow approach’* in education with a competency-based curricular approach that represents our mainstream educational policy? It is. But we should take into account both positive and negative aspects of these two approaches and very carefully plan the teaching process, always having in mind not just its purpose, but also its unpredictability. And, yes, we should *slow down*. As Petrini said (as cited in Shaw et al., 2013), being slow refers to our right to determine our own tempos:

*“Being Slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life. You decide how fast you have to go in any given context. If today I want to go fast, I go fast; if tomorrow I want to go slow, I go slow. What we are fighting for is the right to determine our own tempos”* (p. 319).

We must be aware of the fact that students are individuals with their different potentials, different needs, different interests and different tempos. Therefore, there is a need for us to reconsider the educational process in higher education from the perspective of slow pedagogy (Simmonds, 2020; Van der Sluis, 2020), because slow pedagogy advocates students’ self-realization, their learning process at an individual pace, in a way that leads to in-depth understanding (Holt, 2002, 2012).

## **Slow Pedagogy and Competency-based Curricular Approach: Which Teaching and Learning Strategies to Use and Why?**

### **Aim and Learning Outcomes**

In the competency-based curricular approach to teaching, the starting point is always the *aim*. All other questions, as well as the question of teaching and learning strategies, are determined by the teaching aim. If the aim is based on the idea of individual’s self-realization, as it is in slow pedagogy, then the *learning outcomes* should be set in a way they relate to higher qualitative levels of student’s development and include his/her whole personality: its cognitive, conative and psychomotor aspects. Outcomes should require creative and critical thinking, argumentation and critical assessment of students’ attitudes and expression of students’ practical skills that are relevant to their self-actualization. According to that, teachers can agree with students on which teaching and learning strategies are going to be used in order to achieve needed competencies.

### **Content and Teaching and Learning Strategies**

In the competency-based curricular approach, the chosen content determines the choice of teaching and learning strategies, and both, content and strategies, should enable the achievement of the set goal and learning outcomes. In slow pedagogy, a deeper understanding of the content is proposed (Holt, 2012). Therefore, the emphasis is on strategies such as project learning, problem-based and collaborative learning, service-learning, *just-in-time* teaching, flipped classroom (Shaw et al., 2013), and other interactive strategies and approaches that focus on students’

learning process and enable active acquisition of knowledge, construction of meaning and deeper understanding:

*“Slow pedagogy replaces the direct transmission of knowledge with collaborative and individual procedures promoting critical thinking, reflection, and introspection”* (Shaw et al., 2013, p. 327).

Pana and Escarlos (2017) cited several studies that showed a positive effect of using some of the above mentioned contemporary strategies on the following: students’ academic achievements (Akinoğlu & Tandoğan, 2006; Fatade, Mogari, & Arigbabu, 2013; Odoh, 2013; Zare & Othman, 2013), conceptual development (Akinoğlu & Tandoğan, 2006), reading comprehension (Ghabanchi & Behrooznia, 2014), critical thinking skills (Ghabanchi & Behrooznia, 2014; Zare & Othman, 2013), speaking abilities (Zare & Othman, 2013), and their attitudes towards the course (Akinoğlu & Tandoğan, 2006). All those strategies put students in active role that enables them to reflect and contemplate on important topics and tasks through experiential learning. As Holt (2012) noticed:

*“Instead of breaking the curriculum down into measurable, bite-sized chunks, we should encourage students to consider a situation or a problem, look at it from various angles, and ask questions that need answering. Students might work in groups, and teachers might work in teams: instead of classroom boxes, we need flexible spaces, and ways of linking subjects that enrich learning.”*

Similar to the competency-based curricular approach, slow pedagogy also accepts usage of information-communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. In that context, Tanti and Kennedy Clark (2010) and Shaw et al. (2013) point to the importance of using ICT in slower settings of virtual environments by giving students enough time to collaborate and discuss the virtual learning experience, instead of understanding ICT as a mean to get fast information and ‘fast knowledge’. Teachers can organize individualized and individual work, work in pairs and in groups, but the focus in slow pedagogy is on cooperative learning, as slow pedagogy proposes a classroom environment that nurtures cooperation and learner’s autonomy. As Holt stated (2002, 2012), we need to give students enough time to gain an understanding of what is being learned, without rushing students in that process.

## **Evaluation**

In slow pedagogy, according to Shaw et al. (2013, p. 328), assessment criteria should be discussed at the beginning of the teaching process and continuously revised. Moreover, *“procedures and tools for students to document all of these interactions and reflect on learning outcomes from both the content and the form of their experiences, covering cognitive, performative, and affective domains”* should be used, so the authors put emphasis on formative assessment that includes portfolios, peer-evaluation, and self-assessment. In the competency-based curricular approach, summative and formative evaluation are both needed, and they should be used complementary to assess students’ competencies.

## **Slow Pedagogy and Contemporary Teaching and Learning Strategies: Possibilities in Higher Education**

How to realize ‘slow approach’ in the existing competency-based curricular approach in higher education? Is it justified to combine them? Again, it is, since those ideas can contribute to the quality of higher education. Every approach has its positive and negative aspects, its supporters and critics. If we embrace a certain approach, we should be focused on maximizing its positive and minimizing its negative aspects. Moreover, we should always re-question and re-confront our understanding of the educational process to other opinions and other approaches, and be flexible

in our planned actions. Here, Aoki (2004) well noticed that teachers balance between *curriculum-as-planned* and *curriculum-as-lived*. In that balance between our curricular plans and the real situations in classroom, teacher's *pedagogical tact*, in a way Muth (2020) sees it, is of high importance:

*"Tact is not subsumed to the planning intention of the teacher. Therefore tactful action cannot be realized in a pre-planned educational operation, but always only in the unforeseeable situation in which the educator is engaged"* (p. 5).

Slow pedagogy and competency-based curricular approach both emphasize the importance of *time* and give us the freedom to choose *how* to achieve our goals. Shaw et al. (2013) noticed that:

*"calibration of the difficulty of learning tasks and materials, on the one hand, and of the time available for completion and mastery, on the other, is tricky"* (p. 325).

These two issues should be well balanced, as the whole curriculum should be well balanced and carefully planned, but, with its openness for flexibility. The need for flexibility can be supported by Malaguzzi's arguments (1994), as there is the same need in a higher education context:

*"Of course, many things that happen in school can be seen ahead and planned beforehand. But many things that happen cannot be known ahead of time. Something will start to grow inside the child and suddenly what is happening in the school will move in that direction. Sometimes what happens starts inside the adults. School can never be always predictable. We need to be open to what takes place and able to change our plans and go with what might grow at that very moment both inside the child and inside ourselves."*

When connecting slow pedagogy and contemporary teaching and learning strategies in the context of the competency-based curricular approach, we can think of '*curriculum as conversation*' that allows interaction (teacher-student, student-student, student-media, etc.) and building 'knowledge-in-action', instead of acquiring 'knowledge-out-of-context' (Applebee, 1996; as cited in Shaw et al., 2013). We can also think of '*curriculum as lived*' (Aoki, 1993, 2004). That kind of curriculum considers teachers' and students' personal characteristics and their experiences, and enables us to "*experience and apply what really matters, such that it might become sustainable*" (Simmonds, 2020, p. 34). In those views of the curriculum, emphasis is more on the process of teaching and learning and creating meaningful experiences than on the results and implementing knowledge transmission, and that is essential in higher education.

Giving students enough time to learn at their own tempo and to reflect on the learning process is a key element in slow pedagogy. To achieve such a teaching and learning process, the university course curriculum should not be understood as a linear, unified and predictable process. Instead of that, it could and should be understood as a creative, divergent, diverse and open process, full of choices and possibilities for teachers' creative teaching and students' autonomous learning. Thus, students are co-creators of the course, so they can, together with teachers and according to the set course's goal, agree on relevant content and appropriate learning and teaching strategies, and appropriate evaluation. Therefore, they can create a learning process in line with their interests, needs and possibilities, but also in line with the course aim and learning outcomes.

Where to start? How to do it? Here are some possibilities. Teacher can present the course aim and learning outcomes to students, discuss with students the importance of these concepts for students' present and future, their values and culture, their knowledge, attitudes and experiences. Furthermore, teacher can identify the course's main concepts with students so that they can, with the teacher's mentorship and guidance, individually, in pairs or in small groups, search for literature and find relevant authors, select relevant content using different sources (scientific articles, books, videos, documentaries and movies, etc.). They can investigate those concepts in different contexts. As van der Sluis (2020) noticed, 'slow Higher Education' can enable students to develop their self-efficacy and self-confidence, courage, mindfulness and cooperation, it can enable

them to be civically engaged, and to “*understand the relevance of their profession and vocation within its ecological, social and cultural context*” (p. 8).

In thus organized teaching process, students can decide when and how much time they will devote to a certain topic and its analysis. In that context, Huang (2014) emphasizes the importance of pursuing “*an appropriate education, namely democratic education where students are provided freedom, responsibility and respect without coercion, authority or unnecessary strictness*” (p. 33).

Students can investigate the topic at home, at their own pace, with their own preferred learning strategy, and then, in the classroom, through discussions, they can compare their understanding with other students’ understandings by working in pairs or small groups. In that way, the model of ‘flipped classroom’ is used (Millis, 2010, as cited in Shaw et al., 2013). But, here we should be careful so that our students do not engage in meaningless activities and, in that manner, acquire superficial knowledge, something that McGuire and Gubbins (2010) point out as ‘*info-tainment*’. Also, as Shaw et al. stated (2013), we should guide students in that process, prepare and encourage them for ‘*slow learning experiences*’ (p. 331) because they can feel insecure in new learning conditions.

Through problem-based, research-oriented, project and collaborative learning, with their teacher’s mentorship and guidance, students can deepen their understanding of certain concepts by critically re-examining what they have learned and understood. They can take control of their learning process and also the process of (self)evaluation. Each individual, pair or group of students can make personalized projects and share their new knowledge, new (or enriched) attitudes, and new abilities and skills with other students and with their teacher.

Although the activity of learning is emphasised in slow pedagogy, “*the quality of the engagement between teacher and learner is supreme, and it lies at the heart of the slow school*” (Holt, 2012). In the context of the relationship between learning and teaching, we must be aware of Biesta’s questioning the culture of the ‘*learnification*’ of the educational process (2010a, as cited in Biesta, 2012, 2013). The author states (2013):

“(...) ‘*learning*’ generally denotes a process or an activity. This means, however, that the word ‘*learning*’ is in itself neutral or empty with regard to content, direction and purpose. To suggest that learning is good or desirable – and thus to suggest that it is something which should go on throughout one’s life or which should be promoted in schools – does therefore not really mean anything until it is specified what the content of the learning is and, more importantly, until it is specified what the purpose of the learning is” (p. 6).

In addition to the *content* and *purpose*, Biesta (2012, 2013) indicates the importance of teachers and the process of teaching, emphasizing teachers’ *relationship* with students in the teaching process. According to Žarnić (1999), teaching and learning strategies should be discussed focusing on the aim, the content and the student, since teaching and learning strategies depend on them and should be chosen to be appropriate and relevant to the aim of teaching, the content that is being learned and the characteristics of the student.

In this kind of teaching process, the teacher, together with the students, can agree on the method of evaluation which will check the achievement of the goal, learning outcomes and student’s competencies. Although learning outcomes are standardized for all students in the course, the type of evaluation does not have to be uniformed for everyone. According to the competency-based curriculum approach, it is important that the outcomes are accomplished and verified, but if we think ‘out of the box’, the way to achieve the mentioned does not have to be the same for everyone. For example, an outcome related to critical evaluation of a certain concept does not have to be evaluated with a classic written or oral test. Instead, it can be evaluated through an essay or group discussion. Some students can create review papers on the topic, others can show their understandings creatively, through role playing, or by asking relevant questions on the topic, instead of giving expected answers.

This approach to the teaching process in higher education requires openness of teachers to think critically and creatively and to go beyond the framework of traditional and classic teaching. It requires readiness for permanent professional development and taking on the role of action researchers who will, together with their students and according to the curriculum and students' interests and needs, carefully investigate and *plan* new approaches in their teaching, *act* according to that plan, *observe* the teaching process by using different instruments and, finally, *reflect* on it in the context of their values. In that way, teachers can scientifically examine and establish effective new approaches to teaching in a certain context, develop new educational theories and implement them in teaching (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Naturally, in accordance with the all above mentioned, in action research, 'slow approach' should also be implemented:

*"All forms of research should be undertaken with care and thoroughness. However, self-study action research, Living Theory research and all forms of values-based research need even more time because they draw on the identity and emergent values of the researcher in a slow and reflexive manner"* (Glenn, 2021, p. 4).

## Conclusions

This paper emphasizes the importance of raising awareness of the need to slow down in the teaching process. The main argument refers to the notion that slowing down could enable students to fully develop in the experiential learning process, i.e. that slowing down could enable each student to acquire relevant knowledge and construct personal meanings, think critically and creatively, and to think in a reflective way. By slowing down in the teaching process, we could enable each student to form and express his/her attitudes and develop psychomotor abilities and skills at her/his own pace through practical activities based on her/his interests. We could, if: we carefully plan the teaching and learning process, we carefully set our educational goals that strive for student's self-realization, we carefully set learning outcomes for students and choose relevant content for achieving that goal, we decide on teaching and learning strategies that are appropriate to those contents, that goal, and those students, and we plan educational process and its evaluation with our students as co-constructors of our courses. If. But, the equally important *if* is the next one: if we as teachers take responsibility for our teaching process in a way that we always question it, if we become action researchers who always question educational theories and investigate ways to improve pedagogic theory and practice. If we do all that, we can organize a purposeful educational process that meets individual and societal needs, i. e., we can continuously evaluate and improve the quality of the educational process for the benefit of all of its stakeholders.

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## **Educational Policy and Reforms**

**Abstract:** Education reform lives its difficult times. Current implementations and models prioritized in education by reforms have characteristics to create results as centralization, monotyping, over inspection seen as problem in former periods. It is possible to see implementations as standardization, accreditation that we hear frequently today as implementations to create old problems again. In same context, increasing sources appointed for education and studies to be performed to spread education are not also more functional steps for nowadays. So, it is needed not to decide what problems we face in education currently by considering old way of thinking related to education. Favorite implementations and models in today's education are met with doubt. Otherwise, even education model and implementations demanded to be left in previous periods can be reborn by effect of today's new trend implementation and models accepted. This can create a meaningless discrepancy and left more shocking effect for intellectual basis of education. From this point of view, education must be considered not as an implementation area dealt with technical perceptions but an area having theoretic side. In this context, each implementation performed in education must be dealt with context of bindings founded between today and moments in which education thoughts and institutions appeared firstly. For this, education must be signified and guided and implemented by societies having its own terminology, culture on plane of conflicts between paradigms. Besides that reform attempts as increasing in number of school, teacher, student, intensifying technology, increasing education budget must be taken more carefully.

**Keywords:** Education reform, Changes of education

## **Educational Policy and Reforms**

Dear Minister of Education, Distinguished Directors of the Pedagogical Institute, Distinguished Guests!

I congratulate the 75th Anniversary of the Pedagogical Institute and sincerely thank you for inviting me to this congress. The first point I would like to mention about the reform in education is that we need to protect our basic knowledge, concepts, institutions and theories about education. It is a good thing that you have left behind the 75th year of the Pedagogical Institute you have in Mekadonya. In my country, Turkey, there was an institute called Pedagogy Institute, which was opened at Istanbul University about 90 years ago. Unfortunately, we closed this institute later; Or rather, we changed the name. On this occasion, I would like to say that there should be things that we should not change, that is, we should protect, as much as what we try to change in education.

In this panel, I will talk about reform in education. I will present my views on reform in education.

There have been many educational reforms so far. Transition to compulsory education, co-education, vocational education, student-centered education are some of these reforms. Depending on these reforms, education has changed and developed. In fact, thanks to these reforms, the

political, cultural and economic needs of the countries were also met. In particular, the need for labor, the need for certain skills, was met in this way.

However, there is a blockage in education reforms in many countries in the world today. We have arrived to dead ends in educational reforms. Indeed, it is difficult to say that reform initiatives of the last decades have been beneficial for education. Indeed, especially in the last quarter century, the educational reforms did not contribute to culture, economy and politics in a concrete way.

Therefore, the expression “reform in education” could not go beyond being a discourse that had no effect as expected.

Because there has been a vicious circle in recent education reform efforts. This vicious circle can be explained as follows: Until about half a century ago, certain problems related to education were mentioned.

*What were these problems?* Centralization. authoritarianism. Hierarchy. Tight control. Tight control. One-of-a-kind education. Monopoly. Dependence.

*So, what were the ideals on the agenda regarding education?* Liberation. Originality. Variation. Differentiation. Dynamization. Localization.

*So, what has been done about education especially in the last quarter century?* Standardization has increased. Accreditation became widespread. The quality movement became widespread. Digitalization has increased. Technologicalization became widespread.

*So, what has been observed in the last quarter century after all these works?* Centralization in education has increased even more. Monopoly in education has also become more widespread. Uniformity in education became widespread. In this process, both the teacher and the student lost their freedom. Likewise, originality in education has decreased. Education was more molded. In other words, freedom in education has decreased.

Recent education reform efforts/initiatives have briefly followed this cycle.

*What else happened during this process? Let's talk about them now...* In the past, education was a field in which philosophers, educators and pedagogues were involved and initiated. The people who provided education and founded schools were theoreticians. In other words, those who were involved in educational practice were also theorists. Pedagogues such as Froebel, Pestelozzi, Dewey, Tolstoy, Cecil Redie were both theorists and practitioners. Because all of them had their thoughts on education and in their schools, which they implemented their ideas into action.

Recently, however, entrepreneurs and companies have begun to change education, not philosophers or educators. The school began to be founded by non-philosophers and educators. Education began to be changed not because it was needed, but because large companies and companies demanded and forced it. For this reason, developing and underdeveloped countries labeled as delayed and they were strongly advised to implement educational reforms to develop. In the face of these suggestions, societies and countries tried to change their education.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that today education has become a field that wealthy entrepreneurs have taken up. In other words, education has become a profitable field for entrepreneurs. Today, there are “reforms” made not because they are needed, but with a different motivation.

The game looks like this. The system is constantly seen as inadequate and weak in certain dimensions. It is then forced to be reformed or even replaced with a totally new one. For example, first teachers' incompetence is underlined; then teacher training is recommended. The inadequacy of curricula and textbooks is marked; then they are requested to be changed.

As a matter of fact, this situation was clearly expressed in an article written in Turkey in 1919. In the article, it is said: “The Ministers of Education have a characteristic in common: whoever takes the lead does three things: The first is to change the curriculum. The second is to change the textbooks. The third is to train teachers.” Nothing much seems to have changed today. Today's ministers of education often try to do these three things in a similar order.

There are other problems with the reform in education besides the issues I have mentioned above. First of all, whenever a reform is discussed, a future scenario is definitely proposed. Imagining the future in education is very often repeated. However, it is not realistic to talk about a future fiction that will be constantly prepared. Therefore, it is worth stating that “there is no future to be prepared for”. In other words, talking about the future in education should be dropped from the agenda.

The demand for innovation has also become a legend. This situation leads to alienation from the past, namely accumulation. This makes us forget the eminent authorities and classical tradition and roots.

The frequent attempts of change in education has weakened the culture of education. Frequent changes in education hold back us to establish long-lasting institutions. However, education exists with institutionalization. As such, it should be a value not to change education for tomorrow but to change it for today. In other words, we should pay special attention to stability in education. For this, instead of determining what will change as always, it should be essential to determine what will not change and to ensure this.

Another reform proposal that does not fall off the agenda is about resources, namely money. In other words, it is always on the agenda to increase resources by addressing the scarcity of resources allocated for the improvement of education. This is an old way of thinking. There were times when it was true, of course. However, the scarcity of resources is voiced not because it is true today, but for companies and companies that want to make money to earn more. For this reason, when any reform proposal comes to the fore in education, and first of all, it should be questioned whether the reform in question is very much related to money, and then, if it is, the reform should be approached with suspicion.

Projects voiced for education should also be considered in this way. Because today, there is a situation resembling a project dump. Education is being developed through so-called projects. The problem here is that projects are produced not to solve a problem, that is, to meet a need, but to share large public resources. However, the project has to meet a need. Now, the project developers are preparing projects because they are tracing the resources allocated for education.

Another point is that the package of suggestions about the teacher and teaching should be known that improving teaching and teaching aside, molds it, makes it shallow and artificial. The steps taken to improve the teacher quality somehow result in the restriction of the teacher’s freedom. For this reason, attention should be paid to the suggestions about the teacher and teaching. It should not be forgotten that every step taken for this reason may dehumanize and objectifies teaching.

In addition, it should be known that the emphasis on teaching, that is, the method, weakens the real basis of education and training. By overemphasizing the method, we may have taken the risk of neglecting the real foundation, namely language, science, and mathematics.

Patrik Frange says; The history of education consists of the struggle between those who want to take a step for others and those who want to take a step for themselves. That is, on the one hand, someone is working to save others; On the other hand, individuals are working to save themselves. It should be known that trying to save others is both unrealistic and unethical.

It should also be noted that the steps taken in the name of reform can enslave education, that is, enslave it. The education we are trying to develop may be a molded education. However, what needs to be liberated and liberating education. This classification, which belongs to Freire, should always be kept in mind when it comes to reform in education. The question today is: Does education liberate? Does it enslave? I think education today enslaves more than it liberates.

For educational reforms, the knowledge and perspective of educational science should be utilized more. Today, the science of education has turned into a divided and multi-part structure. Thus, the long-standing integrity of educational science has been disrupted.

While educational science was comprehensive and powerful, it could offer an objection to educational reforms. However, educational science cannot offer a perspective on educational reforms as it has been divided, fragmented and weakened for a long time. In this way, in the absence of a theoretical and strong educational science, education becomes a field that everyone dares to change and intervene.

It should be known that education became a productive field first for philosophy and then for psychology. In particular, psychology was also revived by approaching education. The same is true for Philosophy. However, it is observed that the educators themselves move away from education. These people who are trying to distance from education should be released. These people should be allowed to divorce from education. Apart from those who stay away from education, educational science should be strengthened by classical knowledge. For this, educational science should meet with historical references.

Educational reforms should be based on education, learning and schooling. In other words, reform in education should in any case start with school, learning and teaching and end with learning.

And finally, attention should be paid to the redemption and development implications seen in education reforms. It should not be forgotten that the reform steps that started with the liberation are not realistic. No one can save anyone. Therefore, especially teachers and students should be convinced that they can save themselves before others. As William Reich says "Listen, little man! I tell you: Only you yourself can be your liberator!"

Finally, I would like to point out that there is the debate of education vs course. When education is mentioned, a more abstract, more theoretical, more open-ended process is understood. More general purposes come to mind. When the course is mentioned, concrete operation, process, purpose and system come to mind.

Likewise, today's schools resemble organizations. Hierarchy, workflow, job description, etc. are intertwined with industrial qualities. However, schools should be like institutes, that is, academies.

During the pandemic, we observed closely that education left the school behind just like the genie came out of the bottle. Just as it is not possible to put the genie out of the bottle back in, education should not be brought back to school just because the pandemic is over. Education should continue outside the school where it could liberate itself since then.

Schools had to be closed due to the pandemic. When conditions improved, it was tried to be opened. The closure of schools has created a substantial educational gap. Education should not be stuck with schools staying open or closed. Schools should always be open for education. It should be open for living and producing, not just for lessons. Society should be open for all, not only for students. It should be open all the time, not only in certain periods, but also in summer and winter, day and night, on weekdays and weekends.

Education is a humble, simple field. For this reason, Education should not be shown too much, that is, it should not be explained. Because the more it is manifested explicitly, the more it becomes fictitious. It should be known that education becomes artificial and fabricated as it is intended to be exhibited.

In this sense, there should be no display (exhibition room) and arrangement works (decor) for education. It is possible to demonstrate the quality of road, water or electricity services materially, but the quality of education cannot be displayed in material terms.

The last point I want to mention is this: We should know that education can not be changed, it changes. Society changes, culture changes, life changes, and then education changes. However, let's not forget that trying to change education can be an unnecessary compulsion.

Thank you very much for listening to me. I respect you all.

# PAPERS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

## PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES



Macedonia



Egypt



Hungary



Serbia



Croatia



Czech Republic



Turkey



Slovakia



Israel



United Kingdom



Ukraine



Italy



Slovenia



Albania



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Finland



Kazakhstan



Montenegro



Kosovo



Bulgaria



Switzerland

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## **MATH'S GAMES AS A MECHANISM FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY CLASSES**

**Abstract:** Experts of education and others with active participation in education believe that traditional ways of teaching are no longer beneficial to students. Researchers emphasize that certain students are not attracted to math's due to attractive teachers' instructions, but because math's is seen as a task rather than a problem to be solved. Researchers also agree on the statement that implementation of new teaching and learning trends is becoming a necessity. An increasing number of studies show that ninety-five percent of the teaching and learning that occurs through games is effective and quality-based learning. Games were and will always be considered favorite for children and when employed in the learning process, their effect is even greater. In North Macedonia, game-based learning in the subject of math's is merely researched. Therefore, this study aims at providing useful practices of game-based learning in math's classes. A mixed research design was used to investigate this problem. A group of 370 teachers (specifically 250 elementary school teachers and 120 elementary school mathematics teachers who teach mathematics in grade six or at least taught mathematics in grade six) across elementary schools in the whole territory of Republic of North Macedonia. Interview sessions were conducted with several state experts (Counsellors from the Bureau for Development of Education) involved in education problems in our country. It is the researchers hope that the results of this study will serve as a point of reflection, for both in-service and novice teachers to focus on qualitative education.

**Keywords:** Math's education, Game-based learning, Elementary classes

### **Introduction**

When it comes to education in our state, specifically referring to education in elementary school, the first thing which comes across to our mind is the vast number of reforms which were implemented and are still being implemented with the aim to improve the educational process. Those very same reforms which refer to the teaching process itself, they do also refer to active methods of work where the focus of learning is transferred from the teacher to the student, learning with the student in the center.

Referring to math's classes in elementary schools, every elementary school teacher would agree with the following claim that the biggest enemy in math's classes are the feelings of fear and insecurity while solving a certain mathematical problem. Yet, the matter remains how to find an efficient way, to generate a mechanism which will yield feelings of relaxation and enjoyment during classes.

A such unique combined joint of building skills, motivation, socialization among students, and above all learning, is the game itself. Games aim to enhance learning in classes by fulfilling the gaps which an individual student can possess, yet prepare him for life by teaching him how to accomplish those basic state standards which are determined with the new program in our state.

### **Review of Literature**

Although games have a distant past which overlaps with history of mankind as a constituting part of culture of all nations, but also as one of the most ancient forms of socio-humanitarian interaction, the history of games is completely newer in relation to those older evidences of life on the Earth. It is being practiced regardless the age, in all parts of the world. It does not only possess numerous mutual characteristics, but it also has a number of cultural elements which are stamped on their duration, originality, uniqueness and ubiquity. (Catalano, 2021)

Piaget and Vygotsky regarded the child as an active creator of knowledge and understanding. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky depicted the significance of direct instructions in relation to those who know more than the process of learning itself. Vygotsky claimed that learning is a result of social relations between the child and the other members of the society, in which, essentially, the child gains everything he needs in order to think and learn. According to Vygotsky, teaching is the essence of learning. (Grijak, 2019)

Lena Damovska, author of the book "The Game and Learning", states that: "The game is a spontaneous, free activity which is conveyed without an external need. The necessity for playing games among children arises from the internal needs for activity. It has its own logic which differs from the external reality (as it is comprehended by the adults). In the process of playing games, the reality is processed in coordination with the children's experiences. While playing, the child accomplished everything which is impossible in the real world. Within the game, the child is "the master of the situation". The child creates his own imaginary world within the game, by acting in it, in the similar way as the adults act in the reality. The child's activity in the game is specific, and by many means it is creative as well. It is not only a mechanical copy of the environment, but it is also a reality seen with the eyes of the child and it is a specific type of transformation of the child's experience." (Damovska, 2021)

Games have a clear goal. The players know when and what under specific circumstances the game is over. Therefore, the whole time the motivation to reach the end is enormous and it maintains the concentration of the players in the game. Games are a combination of knowledge and luck. They can be focused in processes and problems. Players respect the appointed rules within them, but the end is always unpredictable. Each of the players can be a winner. The unpredictability of the result is motivating. The game always yields numerous emotions. The presence of emotions in the process of learning makes learning more durable. In fact, emotions which appear during the course of the game are positive and they make learning entertaining and fun. (Jankulovska, & Mickovska, 1997)

Contemporary math's teaching actualizes student's activity as a significant factor in his growth. Namely, a precondition for a successful teaching mathematics practice is the determination of activities which will enable a positive stimulation in the development of every child. Therefore, while teaching mathematics, practical things, independent and conscious activities ought to be employed. All of this actualizes student's role in the process of learning and successful accomplishment of teaching math's goals. The effectivity of the learning process is enormously conditioned by the willingness of the students for acquiring new knowledges, crafts and skills. In that point of view, it is especially necessary to pay attention to the creation of stimulative environment for learning math's. The teacher is required to make a blend of activities which will meet individual interests and needs for students' development. Arising from the contemporary approaches towards teaching, we shall recommend herein the employment of research activities and of course the game, as a teaching method. These activities in the contemporary teaching of mathematics provide an increased attention at students, because through games in spontaneous way they put effort and acquire knowledges, crafts and skills which are determined in the teaching goals. (Cajkowska and a group of authors, 2016)

Games are activities which are widely employed in the educational process among the students of elementary school, foremost as a way of learning. With its characteristics and features the game has a particular use in the process of teaching mathematics, while learning and practicing. In order to be successfully accomplished, games should be well planned, organized, managed and conveyed by the teacher alone.

Important elements which lead to a successful accomplishment of games during math's classes in elementary school are: the selection of the game based on the content, the rules of the game, the instructions on how to play the game, its course and duration, teacher's role, the selection of groups, the place where it will take place and many others.

## Methods

In order to study this problem and prove the statement that the employment of games contributes to the process of teaching mathematics in elementary schools, a mixed research design was used. The sample is consisted of a group of 370 teachers, out of which 120 are mathematics teachers who teach or taught math's to students of grade six, and the remaining 250 teachers are elementary school teachers which teach from first up to fifth grade in elementary schools in the whole territory of Republic of North Macedonia. The research was conducted from May to June in 2022.

These 370 teachers who work in various environments, with different work experiences answered the following claim: The mathematics teacher considers that the employment of games contributes to the class of learning mathematics in elementary school classes.

The teachers chose from among five answered which were offered to them, according to the scale of Linkert. 1 – I fully disagree, 2 – I don't agree, 3. I partially agree, 4. I agree, 5. I fully agree.

In order to determine the importance of differences among the groups-teachers based on their work experience, a one-way analysis of variant was used (ANOVA). The differences in the arithmetic means of respondents from different places of work (city-rural) were calculated using a t-test of independent samples.

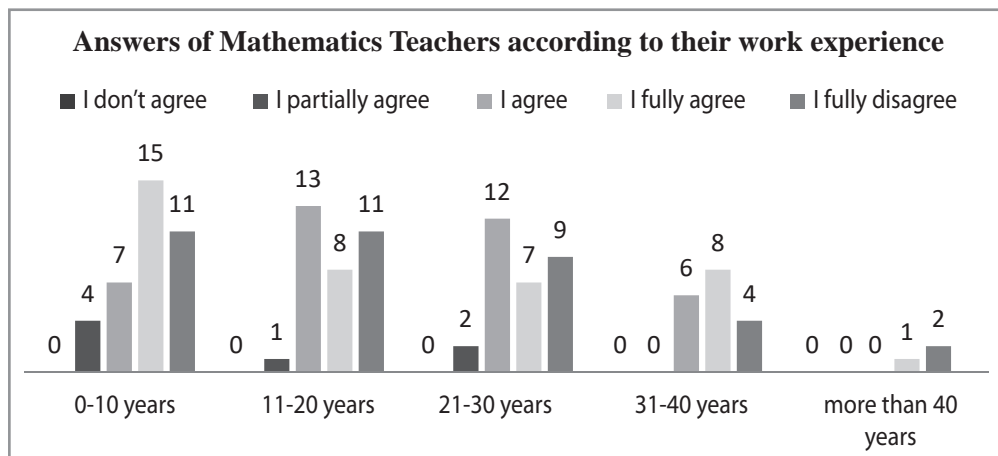
In addition to this research, interviews were conducted with experts of this particular field (5 counsellors from the Bureau for Development of Education), and 3 other counsellors of elementary school teaching and two counsellors for teaching mathematics.

## Results and Discussion

### Results of Mathematics Teachers

#### *Histogram 1*

The mathematics teachers regard that the employment of games contributes the process of teaching mathematics in elementary school.



The majority of teachers, 37 of them (30.8%) have work experience of up to 10 years, 33 of them (27.5%) have work experience of 11 to 20 years, 30 (25%) have work experience of 21 to 30 years, 18 of them (15%) have work experience of 31-40 years and only 2 of them (1,7%) have work experience of more than 40 years. Their answers are presented on the histogram 1.



**Table 1**  
Analysis of variant

ANOVA Summary					
Source	Degrees of Freedom DF	Sum of Squares SS	Mean Square MS	F-Stat	P-Value
Between Groups	4	152.56	38.14	1.7873	0.171
Within Groups	20	426.7958	21.3398		
Total:	24	579.3558			

From the conducted analysis of the variant, we can conclude that there is no statistically important difference between the teachers with different work experience in the viewpoint of the claim. The mathematics teachers consider that the use of games contributes to the teaching of mathematics in elementary school.

The value of the ratio  $f$  is 1,7873, P-value is 0,171. The result is not significant when  $p < .05$ .

From the total number of mathematics teachers, 43% of them work in villages, while 57% of them work in the cities.

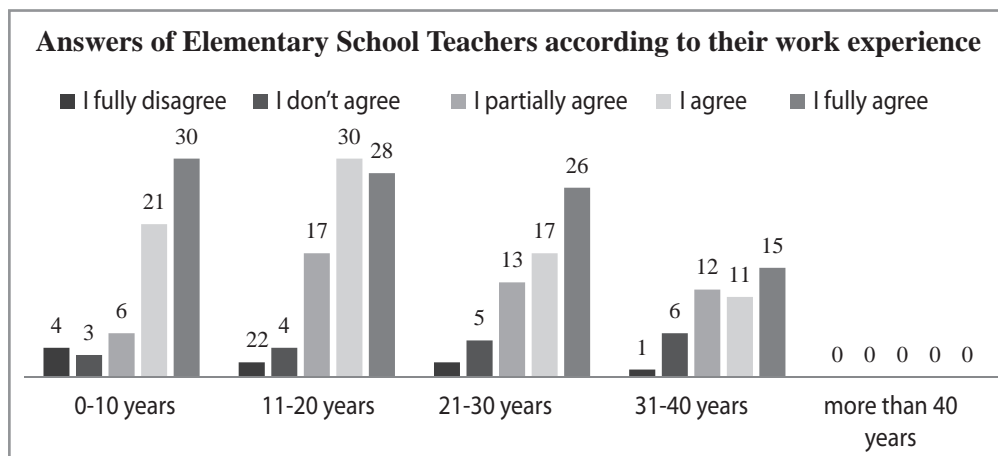
The  $t$ -value is 0.5904, the  $p$ -value is .285609. The result is *not* significant at  $p < .05$ .

The differences between arithmetical environments of the respondents from a different place of work in terms of the claim: The mathematical teacher considers that the employment of games contributes to the process of learning mathematics in elementary school classes. The  $t$ -test shows that there is not a statistically significant difference ( $t=-0.59$ ,  $p=0.286$ ).

### Results from Elementary School Teachers

#### Histogram 2

The elementary school mathematical teachers think that the use of the game contributes to the process of teaching mathematics in elementary school classes.



The majority of elementary school teachers, specifically 81 of them (32.4%) have a work experience of 11-20 years, 64 (25.6) have a work experience of 0-11 years, 60 (24%) have a work experience of 21 to 30 years, 45 (18%) have a work experience of 31-40 years. The answers of teachers are shown on table 2.

**Table 2**  
Analysis of variance

ANOVA Summary					
Source	Degrees of Freedom DF	Sum of Squares SS	Mean Square MS	F-Stat	P-Value
Between Groups	4	769.84	192.46	2.1935	0.1066
Within Groups	20	1754.8022	87.7401		
Total:	24	2524.6422			

From the conducted analysis of variant, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant difference among the teachers with different work experience in the viewpoint of the claim that the employment of games is a good opportunity to improve learning mathematics in the elementary school classes.

The value of the ratio  $f$  is 2,193. P-value is 0,106. The result is not significant at  $p < .05$

From the total number of elementary school teachers 39% of them work in villages, while 61% of them work in cities.

The  $t$ -value is 0.76882. The  $p$ -value is .232045. The result is not significant at  $p < .05$ .

The differences between the arithmetical environments among the respondents of various places of work in the viewpoint of the claim: The employment of games is a good opportunity in learning mathematics in elementary school classes, t-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference ( $t=-0.768$ ,  $p=0.232$ ).

From the data obtained from the counsellors from the Bureau for Development of Education, we can conclude that on the claim: The employment of games contributes to learning mathematics in elementary school classes, we have these results: three of them totally agree with this claim, one counsellor agrees, and the other partially agrees.

## Conclusion

- From the obtained results from the mathematics teachers from the conducted analysis of variant, we can conclude that there is not a statistically significant difference between the teachers with different work experience regarding the claim. The value of the ratio  $f$  is 1,7873, P-value is 0,171. In addition to this the differences between the arithmetical environments at the respondents from different places of work in terms of the claim, the t-test showed that there is not a statistically significant difference. The  $t$ -value is 0.5904. The  $p$ -value is .285609.

The mathematics teachers consider that the employment of games contributes to the process of learning mathematics in elementary school classes.

- From the obtained results of elementary school teachers from the conducted analysis of variant, it can be concluded that there is not a statistically significant difference between the teachers with different work experience in the viewpoint of the claim. The value of the ratio  $f$  is 2,193, the P-value is 0,106. In addition to this, at the elementary school teachers as well, the differences between the arithmetical environments at the respondents from different places of work, in terms of the claim, according to the t-test it was shown that there is not a statistically significant difference ( $t=-0,768$ ,  $p=0.232$ ).

The elementary school teachers consider that the employment of games contributes to the process of learning mathematics in elementary school classes.

- Likewise, three counsellors stated that they fully agreed on the claim, one counsellor agrees and the other one partially agrees,

From this we conclude that games contribute to the process of learning mathematics and that they should have a central place in teaching mathematics, because with games students are more active, socialized and interested, above all they learn through games.

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## DISTANCE LEARNING

**Abstract:** Challenges in education are present in everyday practice and they depend on several factors that directly affect its course. For more than two years, humanity has been facing a global pandemic that has accelerated the process of online learning, as well as the process of creating digital learning content. This paper is focused on the problems that have arisen and still arise from distance teaching, in primary and secondary education, but also the advantages that this type of teaching has. In the paper examples from the teachers will be illustrated and their observations on the teaching process during the lessons in which the Macedonian language is taught will be stated. Namely, the paper will show the way of connecting the most important elements

of the educational process, the student and the teacher, which takes place through the connection provided by the internet and all its forms, social networks, platforms. The paper briefly presents the guidelines given by the institutions as well as the realization of the program through the used sources and visibility as well as through the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning. The problems presented in the paper, which are the product of distance education, gave us a direction for conclusions and some proposed solutions that should be considered.

**Keywords:** Distance learning, Organization, Strategies and approaches, Interactivity

## Introduction

In February 2020, life turned into a global crisis caused by COVID-19. The word crisis in this context is with multiple meanings, it includes a series of meanings for crisis situations, a crisis primarily in solving the health problems caused by the pandemic: drugs, vaccine, treatment and accommodation capacities, up to crises caused by the stagnation in industry, production, trade, tourism, traffic and of course not last, but one of the most affected branches of social life – education. Education has been completely changed, namely, in the first months after the declaration of the pandemic, teaching had going on at a distance, constantly, mediated by the Internet, platforms and tools created for mutual communication. The listed possibilities for conducting distance education existed before, but now they have acquired a completely new dimension. During the second year, some of the countries used combined models, but they also largely included distance learning. The challenges that required the will and perseverance, as well as the knowledge and commitment to solve them in the education sector, were big and unknown to most of the education systems. The term distance learning was not always associated with direct video conference connections, but now it all began to have more and more such a meaning, or only that meaning. A large number of articles were published where the distance learning was discussed by teachers, educators, educators and university professors and they have shown their satisfaction with the possibilities of networking and platforms as forms of mutual communication and learning. Whether the Macedonian teachers also practice this and whether they practiced it during the past school year spent in distance teaching, we will give our opinion and conclusion in accordance with the answers from the conducted survey with teachers who teach in primary and secondary education. At the same time, the paper will make a relation between the given directions and the implemented practices for distance education.

## Distance Education

The interpretations of the term distance education are not unique, but what connects them is the fact that learning includes physical distance of students and teachers during the teaching process, that it represents learning with the help of electronic media, IT devices and the Internet. Several authors give different explanations for the term, and in the professional literature we find a number of terms that are often used as synonyms, for example: distance learning, distance education, digital teaching, electronic learning (e-learning) and electronic education (e-education). Electronic education is any curriculum that uses information and communication technology for the purposes of teaching, while distance learning is a narrower term because it is mainly limited to colleges and primary and secondary schools. According to Glušac (2012), “e-learning is instructional content or learning experiences delivered or enabled by electronic technology” (p.4).

She is giving a large citation on e-learning and m-learning from Brown, T. H. (2004)<sup>1</sup> and says: “Electronic learning has been present and functioning in practice for more than a decade

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<sup>1</sup> (The Role of m-Learning in the Future of e-Learning in Africa? In Distance Education and Technology: Issues and Practice. Hong Kong)

as learning facilitated and enhanced by the use of information and communication technology. Such devices at this technological moment include the computer with additional devices, digital television, portable and pocket computers and mobile phones. Communication enables the use of the Internet, e-mail, discussion groups, and collaborative learning systems. E-learning includes learning at a distance, through an intranet network, and can be considered a component of flexible learning. When learning takes place exclusively over the network, then it is called on-line learning. When learning is distributed by mobile devices such as mobile phones, laptops and pocket computers, then learning is called m-learning. Mobile learning (m-learning) and online learning (on-line learning) are two subsets of electronic learning. All three of these sets belong to distance learning.” (Glušac, 2012:6).

Distance education can be realized in accordance with the conditions and its qualities depend on the established infrastructure, according to the law and legal documents and technical infrastructure. During the pandemic due to the absence of legal regulation of distance education/distance learning, it was organized according to documents that were prepared by the Government of RSM and dealing only with the technical aspect in the implementation of distance education. There are various examples of different approaches and organization of distance education, which, in some neighboring countries at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, was organized through special or already existing channels of national TV services. Such an approach allowed equality in availability considering that in some countries and regions the television as a source and medium is more accessible than Internet access/network. But despite the TV lessons, there was still a need for a permanent, for each grade and class, a specially prepared lesson that would contain the basic features: appropriate length and good structure of the lesson, which would be well illustrated, that is, followed by graphic displays, video projections, photos and animations that will be in its function. Of course, interactivity appears most and above all. Online teaching cannot be imagined as a clone of classroom teaching, but it can therefore be designed conceptually differently, even multidisciplinary, if we want to set other views on teaching and other expectations from it – activating the research spirit among students that will develop and independence in work and responsibility. In the 2020/2021 academic year, distance learning took a more appropriate form, which was implemented in several educational systems through selected platforms and accurate schedules.

## **Distance Education in the Republic of North Macedonia**

Distance education in the Republic of North Macedonia was especially specific to organize, given that there was neither a reality that practiced this kind of education, nor final documents that planned and defined it. The Strategy for Education and Action Plan for the period 2018-2025 says: “Most of the schools are inadequately equipped with teaching aids, but also with additional ICT equipment (e.g. LCD projectors, smart boards etc.). Modern teaching methods and techniques are not sufficiently applied in practice. There is no e-learning platform yet. (Section 5.2.2 Challenges, point 10, p.37). Students and teachers acquire the necessary digital skills. (Section Priorities and expected outcomes, Priorities and outcomes, p. 68).

The pandemic organization of distance learning had two periods: a) teaching that was organized in the second half of the academic year 2019/2020, from February to June 2020, and b) teaching that was organized for the academic year 2020/2021. The teaching that was organized in the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020 depended on the organization of the school and its readiness to accept the new reality and to conduct teaching both synchronously and asynchronously through platforms (which were also used by the work organizations within the “work from home” principle”), as well as using social media for explanation, consultation and exchange of materials. The organized part, the support that was provided institutionally, through

the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Education Development, had two projects: the TV-classroom project and the EDUINO e-platform. Both projects involved teachers with their own attempts to creatively prepare teaching units in forms, more or less, suitable for live broadcasts on the TV channels of the national radio and television service. This period was really confusing for the students because of the sudden transformation as well as because of the unpreparedness for systematic arrangement of teaching. Sharing presentations, written materials, or useful links on a specific topic through a medium or program that involves mutual communication is not considered distance teaching or distance learning due to the fact that it omits interactivity in the educational process. However, despite the isolated good practices of some of the teachers and in some schools, the general impression of teaching in the first months of the pandemic is: no established sequence, no order that allowed the consistency of the process with appropriate approaches.

The classes in the 2020/2021 started one month later, on October 1 and were held on Teams, one of Microsoft's tools. For this, the teachers received a short training, and they worked, mainly on their own devices. For the needs of this type of teaching, the document Guidelines for the methodology of distance teaching in primary and secondary education was prepared by the Bureau for Education Development, as well as the document Didactic guidelines for conducting distance teaching. The first-mentioned document has guidelines for lesson planning (planning is not expected, according to the document, to change, but to be adapted to the conditions), where it is emphasized that the lesson provides basic information, mentoring and guidance in the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies among students (Guidelines, 2020:4). It is particularly important that the document states that the teacher should take time to familiarize himself with the relevant functionalities of the tools of the platform being used and have prepared alternatives if a tool does not work, as well as that the way of sharing the material to the students will affect the desire for learning and student involvement within the distance learning process. This suggests the conclusion that teachers are expected to prepare guidelines for students and provide appropriate learning materials, create them or provide appropriate resources that will point them as appropriate sources for learning. Teachers are recommended to share the material ahead of time in order to have time in class for discussion, examples and application, that is, for explanation and conclusions. The material for the class should be illustrative, with pictures applicatively appropriate for the content, and at the same time, the content should have good examples of case studies, setting up problem discussions, video projections, animations and gamifications. This, on the other hand, leads to the conclusion that teaching, in addition to its synchronicity, which means direct involvement, will also be realized asynchronously, which will mean sending educational games, checked videos, questions for thinking and research – with indicated links for searching, material for a certain topic/content. Asynchronous activities stimulate students' work and cause interest and engagement in the class itself. Also, homework is indicated to be creative and stimulating, to develop higher competencies, and not just to reproduce facts or examples by analogy. The three dimensions of the ideal learning environment that include greater student engagement, social interaction and appropriate use of technology should be presented: – instruction with interactivity, engagement and collaboration; social interaction for the development of the social context, – the socio-cultural and sociocognitive environment and – technology that encourages opportunities for upgrading and expanding knowledge (Guidelines, 2020 :16). The guidelines for the implementation of distance learning also include recommendations for methods and techniques, some of which are already known to teachers, such as the Barometer of Attitudes, the Spider's Web, debate, gamification, (incorporating games into the learning process), digitized classic games, as a crossword puzzle with emphasis on level learning as well as a problem solving method.

## Conditions and Reactions

Teachers and the public, above all parents as a stakeholder in the teaching process, have on many occasions and using different media, shown their views regarding distance learning. Most of them related to the following questions:

- technical (pre)conditions for organizing distance teaching (technical readiness of schools and teachers and technical readiness of students with devices on which teaching can take place as well as internet powerful enough to support daily teaching);
- digital skills of teachers and students;
- program readiness for the implementation of teaching (e-programs)
- organized and permanent system support of the teaching process from the relevant and competent institutions.

## Methodology

In order to obtain concrete data, attitudes and thoughts from teachers about the past school years during the time of COVID-19, a Survey was made regarding: the application of the tools from the platform, visibility and application of the use of alternative learning sources, interactive teaching, students' evaluation, self-evaluation of the past process by teachers. The survey was conducted on 45 teachers who teach Macedonian language in primary and secondary schools in RSM. The data was obtained during April 2022.

## Results from the Survey for Primary Education Teachers

### Preparing for Classes and Using the Tools from the Learning Platform

From the data provided in the survey, it is evident that the teachers used the tools of the platform they worked on, but that there is a good part that used them partially. The survey showed that 60.7% of the teachers declared that they used the tools from the platform, 35.7% declared that they partially used the tools, and 3.6% used only verbal interactivity. In secondary education 76.92% of teachers used the tools from the platform and 23.07% partially used the tools.

### Attendance at Classes by Students

On the second question, we asked for an answer about the attendance of the students in the classes as well as their engagement. For the most part, it was answered that they were regularly present and that they fulfilled their duties, but the number of answers that the students are present and active in teaching in most of the lessons is also not small. The attendance of the students in the classes is directly dependent on the ways of interaction and the ways of presenting the material. In primary schools, 60.7% of students attended classes regularly, 35.7% mostly attended classes and did homework. 3.6% were occasionally involved in teaching. In secondary education, the results are: 76.9% of students attended classes almost every and sent their homework, 7.7% attended classes every day, 7.7% were on the classes very often, but didn't sent the homework, 7.7% also attended classes occasionally and they did what was necessary for a positive evaluation.

### Visual, Audio and Other Aids to Classes

The teachers shared that they mostly created their learning materials independently, 78.55% although they also used materials from the Internet. A small part of the teachers, 17.85%, declared that they made materials independently, and only 3.6% that they used traditional forms of teaching, meaning they realized the distance lessons without the types of materials that are recommended to be used. As other visualizations used by the teachers, they added: electronic puzzles, reading materials, directions with the order of activities in the lesson, online quiz, online

questionnaire, video lesson from EDUINO, video calls from experts related to the teaching unit. In secondary education, teachers used presentations in 100%, less they were using video materials, meaning 76.9%, but they used the school textbooks in 53.84% and only 7.7% used animations.

### **Learning Online Resources and Other Resources**

The teachers also stated that 78.5% of them mostly used the materials they created themselves, but that they also downloaded materials from the Internet, 17.5% of the teachers independently created learning materials as the main sources, while 3.6% stated that they had given classical lectures. In secondary schools 76.9% were using materials which they created by themselves but 23% made their sources.

### **Evaluation of Students**

The teachers declared that they evaluated the students in all the listed ways: tests, short assignments, oral presentations, presentations, homework essays, projects. Or, 75% used all of that, 14.26% used oral answers and evaluated the class activity. 7.14% declared that they used presentations and homework as assessment instruments, and only 3.6% used only tests for assessment. In secondary education teacher declared that they were using everything: tests, short assignments, oral presentations, presentations, homework essays, projects in 92.30%.

### **Advantages of Distance Learning**

As advantages teachers named:

- the possibility to use modern interactive tools through digital technology, which is not possible in classrooms every day;
- the possibility to use the resources from the Internet pages without additionally needing a projector (which is a handicap in everyday teaching because there are not enough in schools);
- the possibility of using more visibility in classes because the Internet is an excellent opportunity to implement teaching with digital tools;
- bigger motivation among students due to the visualization of the contents;
- with the help of interactive presentations, students learn the material much more easily, and learning from home among students with less self-confidence has proven to be more successful, as well as regularity in bringing (handing in) homework and interest in being involved in projects;
- distance teaching can be held and scheduled in additional time in order not to lose classes during absences of students or teachers because of various reasons;
- direct access to the homework and working materials performed by the students and the possibility of having a permanent online portfolio open so the student and the teacher, can see the achievements and progress;
- quick automatic checking of the results of e-tests and quizzes.

### **Disadvantages of Distance Learning**

- lack of internet connection and devices for monitoring teaching by both, students and teachers;
- not all students have Internet and their own properly updated computer, some of the students rely on only one smartphone that they have in the family;
- teachers do not have enough technical support, they manage with electronic platforms and tools according to their own material possibilities and abilities;
- students have lost the usual course of learning, and the teacher does not have sufficient control over what has been understood and learned;



- lack of meetings with being in the classroom that cannot be replaced even by the best presentation, animation or electronic aid, that is, nothing can replace live contact and energy exchange with the teacher;
- too much help from parents when tests were online and preparing presentations;
- bad handwriting, use of slangs in the language and internationalisms that become domesticated too quickly;
- a longer period of time for the preparation of the teacher with daily production of teaching contents.

### **How to Get to a Successful Realization of the Teaching**

In accordance with the advantages and disadvantages, in the questionnaire, it was requested to indicate the three most important things, secondary opinion and experience, which are needed as a basis for the successful implementation of distance learning, and the following was indicated:

- good internet connection, appropriate computer equipment and training for the use of appropriate tools for both teachers and students;
- appropriate educational platform;
- motivation to learn something new in the profession.

The questions that were answered lead to the conclusion that the need for trainings in which teachers will have the opportunity to learn the tools in a wider range, as well as the need to solve the problem with the Internet, show a connection with the answers to the first questions, as well as the issue of the implementation of visualization in teaching as a key and important factor in distance learning. Adequate technological equipment of the teacher and the student (a good electronic device and good Internet connection), appropriate skills and competences of the teacher for the realization of distance teaching, a selection of already existing created digital contents in the subject of Macedonian language and literature, according to the teachers, is a basis for good teaching. At the same time, in these answers, it is requested to legally regulate the concept of distance education as well as the ways and forms in which it can be realized.

The list of at least three forms of distance learning activities, which can be used in combination with the usual form of carrying out the educational process, was given by the teachers in the following way: quiz, virtual class (video material temporarily created by the teacher or student), interactive presentation, preparation of presentations, sharing of various links with content useful for the topic, exercises and materials for repetition and determination of acquired knowledge, tests, etc. with application web tools, crosswords, virtual visits to certain institutions, memorial rooms, museums, institutes, etc. in the context of teaching, research activities, additional and additional teaching, extracurricular activities, projects.

### **Distance Learning in Non-Pandemic Conditions, Yes or No?**

Regarding the question whether teaching should not be practiced in non-pandemic conditions and that it should not be constantly present as a combined form of teaching with classis in school, the teachers had divided answers, namely some of them believe that this type of teaching – distance teaching should not be practiced in general when we are in non-pandemic conditions. 42.87% go for each of these opinions, and even 14.26% of the teachers did not answer this question at all. In secondary school answered the same, half of the teacher were for distance learning, but the other half was against.

### **Possibility of Combined Teaching**

The teachers who think that the teaching is good to be carried out in a combined manner stated reasons why they would like to practice distance teaching continuously, namely:

- maintenance of additional teaching and free student activities that would be scheduled in free terms when it suits all students
- students are more careful and the cooperation with their teachers is better;
- at any time and from any place, students can go back to the elaboration of the teaching content that was covered in the lessons.

### **Self-evaluation of Teachers**

The teachers evaluated their work on the scale from 1 to 10.

57.18% of the teacher evaluated with a score of 8, 14.26% were evaluated with grade 7 and grade 9; 10.7% were rated with 10; and 3.6% rated themselves with 5. In secondary schools 23.07% evaluated themselves with 9, but 46.15% rated themselves with 8, 15.38% evaluated with 7, but with 5 were rated 7.7%. Only 7.7% evaluated themselves with 3.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusion is imposed as a synthesis of the analyzed results and we present it as possible solutions for some unstable points of distance teaching and as possible proposal for its qualitative upgrading: - development of curriculum sub-programs for distance learning, in accordance with the existing curricula and the available digital capacities, which will contain a designed and measured amount of content and lessons, as well as appropriate forms of teaching activities for the lessons and for homework;

- inclusion of theoretical and practical content for distance learning in the Methodology subject programs of all faculties in the country where the future teaching staff for the Macedonian language/Macedonian language and literature subject has to be created;
- organizing regular and various forms of lifelong learning for teachers, aimed at acquiring higher, but also basic knowledge and skills for the implementation of distance learning;
- permanent and inviolable informational education and re-education of future and existing teachers, emphasizing the importance and advantages of the Internet as the most widespread and easily accessible resource;
- permanent and inviolable information support for teachers and students in schools, primarily in the form of technical equipment, but also through various forms of counseling and training, as well as specific instructions and directions online or by phone;
- involvement of parents in the planning and realization of online teaching, as well as the use of their professional and professional opportunities in the direction of bringing this type of teaching closer to the students and to the parents themselves;
- subtle, unobtrusive, thoughtful and functional implementation of distance learning in regular, non-pandemic teaching, through various forms that facilitate teaching in the classroom in schools, which should not be understood only as communication via the Internet, but also through other means of communication – letters and other physical shipments by mail, telephone, radio, television, etc.;
- creation of data banks for distance education, in which the contents will be subject to constant quality control, and the authors will be recruited according to verified benefits in the respective scientific and professional fields;
- involving students in designing and facilitating distance learning, through various forms of technical and intellectual assistance, but also through ideas and proposals for specific teaching activities, etc. These and many other assumed and existing forms for improving and enriching the complete “infrastructure” of distance education do not at all represent distant and inaccessible possibilities in our educational theory and practice. On the contrary, they are present in our educational everyday life in all the forms we mentioned above. We just need

to slightly improve the way of connecting them into a functional whole and create conditions for their permanence – first in the consciousness of each individual, and then in the collective conviction.

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## EFFECTS OF INNOVATIVE TANDEM HOURS ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION ON MOTOR CAPACITY OF CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

**Abstract:** The main goal of the research is to determine the effects of traditional and innovative (tandem) classes on physical education of the body composition and motor skills in young school-aged children. The research was conducted in five primary schools in the city of Skopje. Ten classes were chosen at random, two from each school, with five classes in the experimental group and five in the control group. The experimental group consisted of 115 subjects, while the control group consisted of 110 subjects. The following motor tests were used to realize the goals of the research: leaning in a sitting position, dynamometer in the palm of the hand, long jump, lying-sitting for 30 seconds, running 4 x 10 m and running 20 meters with progressive increase of speed. The components of the body composition are determined by the method of bioelectrical impedance with the help of which the body weight, the percentage of fat tissue, the percentage of muscle mass and BMI are measured. The effects of the applied treatment in the experimental and control group were determined on the basis of multivariate and univariate analysis of covariance. Based on the results, it can be concluded that at the end of the experimental treatment, the subjects from the experimental group achieved better results in motor tests: dynamometer

on the palm, long jump, lying-sitting for 30 seconds and odd running 4 x 10 m. The key element that led to improvements in the experimental group is probably the proper planning, organization and implementation of classes, ie the correct and optimal choice of type, duration, intensity and frequency of physical exercises and physical activities in each class after physical education.

**Keywords:** Tandem teaching, Physical education, Motor skills, Body composition

## Introduction

Throughout the world, the class of physical education is characterized by diversity in relation to the elements of preparation and their realization in practice. However, besides its diversity, the class of physical education in different educational systems is characterized by a single common cause. This cause can be identified in the commitment of the process of physical education “form cradle to grave”, which contributes to the development of the individual by the definition of the term “physically educated man” (Hardman, 2009). The endorsement of this idea has led to broadening of the role of physical education, and as such, it carries a specific type of responsibility. Its role can be defined by the content of the class, which encompasses highly contemporary issues in the frames of the educational process, with characteristics that cannot be offered by any other class or educational material (Hardman, 2009).

This responsibility is fully summarized in the Decision on the Role of Sports in Education, adopted by the European Parliament in November 2007 (Hardman, 2009). The preamble of the decision states that physical education is “the only class in which children prepare for a healthy life, that it is focused on their overall physical and mental development, that it conveys important social values such as honesty, self-discipline, solidarity, tolerance, team spirit and fair play, and together with sports, it is considered to be “one of the most important tools for social integration” (Hardman, 2009).

Based on the results obtained from the previous research, as well as the analysis of the domestic and foreign literature, some recommendations will be given for the promotion of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle in children and youth. Namely, primary school is compulsory, and the physical education class is of the same rank as the other classes, thus with a fund of three classes per week, physical education is right next to Macedonian language and mathematics. At first glance, according to this statement, one can assume that the physical education has no significant problems, however the problems start to emerge in the execution of the educational process and the practical implementation of the legal provisions. The period between the age of 6 to 11 years is when the most intense changes occur in the lifestyle of a person. Children, prior to their 6-th year of age, have no obligations and spend most of their time in play, and then suddenly get school obligations. Long hours of sitting, heavy and often inappropriate school bags, immense curriculums at school, and at home, are ideal conditions for occurrence of mild and more severe forms of postural disorders, weight gain and poorly developed motor skills, as supported by results of multiple researches. Experience tells us that physical exercise, as a proven means for prevention, prophylaxis and therapy, can provide help for these problems. If we take into consideration the mentioned problems, the results provided by the researches in our, as well as other countries, it is inevitable to conclude that the physical activity, especially physical and health education, is of immense importance in this period of life. All this poses the question of the quality of the class of physical and health education.

What should the class of physical and health education look like? The class, especially for the younger generations, should encompass contents that mostly address the capabilities that are most prone to development at that age. It is highly important to address the physical and physiological development without too much stress. It should be noted that kids are easily motivated into physical activity if the content gets their attention. Thus, it is highly important that the programs are

realized through play. With an exclusion of the exceptions, the classes taking place in most of our schools are not on a satisfactory level. Because of the mere complexity of the issues that may arise at this age, only the best experts should have the responsibility to aid in the execution of certain movement exercises. At this age the possibility of abstraction is small, so the proper demonstration of certain exercises is especially important. Poor demonstration also entails incorrect learning and automation of the movement, which makes further work difficult. Despite this, it is rare for schools to pay attention to these problems, although teaching is scheduled to take place three times a week, in practice it is usually different. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, and for this occasion only the most common will be mentioned. One of the biggest problems in teaching in early school age is not maintaining the fund of classes provided by the curriculum. Namely, it is known that in this age the teaching is performed by the class teachers, and it is not uncommon for the lost lectures from other subjects to be compensated with physical education classes, as indicated by the children themselves in the conversations conducted during this research. This procedure does double damage: children are harmed by missing out on the positive effects of physical activity, and physical and health education is presented to them as an unimportant subject that is not mandatory and can be easily compensated. Experts in the field of kinesiology are well aware of how important it is to influence certain motor skills in a timely manner. If we look at the plans and programs, it can be seen that they are copied from year to year without taking into account the changes that have occurred in the meantime, tackles and equipment, improved teaching with new scientific knowledge, change in the population itself, etc. The affinities and abilities are not taken into account at all, and thus neither the needs of the students.

Although not all problems are listed, it can be concluded that physical and health education is largely devalued as a school subject. Knowing how important physical activity is for the healthy development of young people, the previous qualification of physical and health education sounds almost unbelievable.

The first component of the intervention should be structural changes in the subject of physical and health education. Children and young people have the need and right to physical and health education as an integral part of quality education, which enables permanent, individual and professional development, gaining knowledge about life, building ethnic values, communication, cooperation, teamwork, respect for others, fair play, acceptance of victory and defeat, living together in peace and harmony. Physical and health education is the only school subject that focuses on physical activity, physical development and health, so it needs its greater affirmation as a basic subject, pedagogical process (training, learning) that ensures the integral development of body and mind.

The main goal of the research is to determine the effects of traditional and innovative (tandem) physical education classes on body composition and motor skills (physical fitness related to health) in children of young school age.

## **Methods of the Research**

The research is quasi-experimental of the longitudinal type and was conducted in a school environment on a sample of students from 1st to 5th grade within the regular physical education classes. A pre-test research project with randomized groups was used – experimental group (E) and control group (K). The purpose of such a scheme is to determine whether changes in the experimental group are significant in relation to the control group (Bala, 2007). The experimental treatment was represented by innovative (tandem) physical education classes, i.e. classes that were realized in collaboration with the class teacher and professors of physical education – experts. Both the experimental and the control group worked on existing curricula approved by the Bureau for the Development of Education. The experimental program lasted for a whole school year, with three hours per week.

## **Sample of Respondents**

The sample had the characteristics of a convenient and random cluster. The research was conducted in five primary schools in the city of Skopje: the primary school “Johan Hajnrilj Pestaloci”, the primary school “Krume Kepeski”, the primary school “Bratstvo”, the primary school “Gjorce Petrov” and the primary school “Tefejuz”. 10 classes were selected randomly, two from each school, of which 5 classes entered the experimental group and 5 classes entered the control group. The experimental group consisted of 115 respondents, while the control group consisted of 110 respondents.

## **Sample of Variables for Assessing Body Composition and Motor Skills**

All respondents were measured by a modified battery of EUROFIT tests recommended by the Council of Europe, and some of them have been modified and adapted into the international scientific projects “Feeding and Assessment of Nutritional Status of Spanish Adolescents (AVENA study)” and “The Healthy Lifestyle in Europe by Nutrition in Adolescence” – (HELENA study) (Ruiz et al., 2006), “Identification and prevention of Dietary – and lifestyle-induced health Effects In Children and Infants” (IDEFICS study) (Miguel-Etayo et al., 2014). The following fitness (motor) tests were used in the research: seated forward bend, palm dynamometry, long jump, sit-ups for 30 seconds, shuttle run 4 x 10 m and running for 20 m with progressive increase of speed.

The components of the body composition are determined by the method of bioelectrical impedance (measurement of electrical conductivity – Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis – BIA). The measurement was performed using the Body Composition Monitor, model “OMRON – BF511”, which measured body weight, body fat percentage, muscle mass percentage and body mass index (BMI). Before starting the measurement, the gender, age and body height of the respondent are entered in the Body Composition Monitor.

In order for the obtained results from the measurement, i.e. the assessment of the body composition to be as accurate and precise as possible, the preconditions that are recommended by ACSM (2005) and Heyward (2006) were met before each measurement.

## **Statistical Analysis**

The basic descriptive statistical parameters are calculated for each applied variable. The normality of the distribution of all variables has been tested with the method of Kolmogorov and Smirnov.

The effects of the applied treatment in the experimental and control groups were determined on the basis of the multivariate analysis of the covariance (MANCOVA). Specifically, this analysis determined the magnitude of the effect achieved by the experimental program of the final measurement in the applied variables for assessing nutritional status and motor skills (physical fitness related to health). The condition for applying the multivariate analysis of covariance was to neutralize (equalize) the differences between the groups in terms of gender and age and the differences between the groups in the initial measurement. After the neutralization of the results, the real effects of the experimental group were determined. The differences at the univariate level, with the neutralization of the initial measurement, gender and age, were determined with the help of a univariate analysis of the covariance (ANCOVA), by correcting the arithmetic lines (Adj. Means). Testing of differences was performed using the *f* – test, and the significance level was shown as sig.

## **Results**

In order to determine whether the groups are homogeneous, analysis of variance in the initial measurement was applied. The analysis of the variance in the initial measurement in the measures for assessment of the body composition and the motor abilities in the experimental and control group are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

In the initial measurement, in the body composition assessment measures, the respondents from the experimental and the contrast group did not statistically differ at the multivariate level. At the univariate level, a statistically significant difference was found only in the measure of body mass index. In motor tests, respondents from the experimental and contrast groups did not statistically differ at the multivariate and univariate levels.

This condition indicates that the two groups of respondents are relatively homogenized, which allows the experimental program to begin from the same starting point for both groups, however with the purpose of neutralizing the differences in age and gender, and the body mass index, as well as for preventing these differences to cause a “system error”, the groups will be further homogenized by an appropriate statistical procedure, i.e. to determine the differences in the final measurement between the experimental and the control group, multivariate and univariate analysis of covariance will be applied.

**Table 1**

Significance of differences in body mass assessment measures between the experimental and control groups in the initial measurement

Variables	EXPERIMENTAL		CONTROL		F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Body mass index	18,05	0,32	16,98	0,36	4,91	,028	,027
Percentage of body fat	22,36	0,80	20,08	0,88	3,61	,059	,020
Percentage of muscle mass	28,93	0,30	28,33	0,34	1,71	,193	,009
<b>Wilks' lambda =.962</b>		<b>F =2.32</b>		<b>Q =.077</b>			

**Table 2**

Significance of differences in body mass assessment measures between the experimental and control groups in the initial measurement

Variables	EXPERIMENTAL		CONTROLE		F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Seated forward bend	17,91	0,49	19,02	0,57	2,20	,140	,012
Palm dynamometry	11,60	0,27	10,95	0,31	2,49	,116	,014
Long jump	102,92	1,94	104,17	2,24	0,18	,674	,001
Sit-ups for 30 seconds	10,92	0,51	10,33	0,59	0,57	,452	,003
Shuttle run 4 x 10 m	16,82	0,24	16,45	0,27	1,06	,305	,006
<b>Wilks' lambda =.963</b>		<b>F = 1.36</b>		<b>Q = .239</b>			

Multivariate and univariate analysis of covariance was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in body composition assessment measures and motor skills in the final measurement in the experimental and control groups. The results of the multivariate and univariate analysis of the covariance are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

An overview of Table 3 shows that there are no statistically significant and univariate differences in body composition between the experimental and control groups in the final measurement.

**Table 3**

Significance of differences in body mass assessment measures between the experimental and control groups in the final measurement

Variables	EXPERIMENTAL		CONTROLE		F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
	Mean*	SD	Mean	SD			
Body mass index	18,27	3,86	18,37	3,14	0,62	,433	,004
Body fat percentage	21,84	8,21	22,42	7,83	1,42	,236	,009
Muscle mass percentage	30,37	0,12	30,32	3,16	0,07	,792	,000
<b>Wilks' lambda =.987</b>		<b>F=0.71</b>		<b>Q =.549</b>			

\* Corrected arithmetic mean

**Table 4**

Significance of differences in body mass assessment measures between the experimental and control groups in the final measurement

Variables	EXPERIMENTAL		CONTROLE		F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
	Mean*	SD	Mean	SD			
Seated forward bend	18,36	6,14	17,31	6,15	1,52	,219	,008
Palm dynamometry	13,99	4,43	12,57	5,21	11,20	,001	,055
Long jump	119,91	4,08	113,43	3,44	7,77	,006	,039
Sit-ups for 30 seconds	15,08	17,46	12,48	21,29	18,97	,000	,090
Shuttle run 4 x 10 m	14,73	1,69	15,32	1,90	8,15	,005	,041
Running with progressive increase of speed	560,61	25,09	558,04	6,15	0,02	,884	,000
<b>Wilks' lambda = .880</b>		<b>F=4.24</b>		<b>Q = .000</b>			

\* Corrected arithmetic mean

By applying the multivariate analysis of the covariance (MANKOVA), i.e. by testing the significance of the differences of the arithmetic mean in the measures for assessing the motor skills in the final measurement in the two groups of respondents, a statistically significant difference was determined, because Wilks' Lambda, 880 and  $df = 187$ , give statistical significance at level  $Q = .00$ . The magnitude of the partial  $\eta^2$  effect shows an average of 0.12.

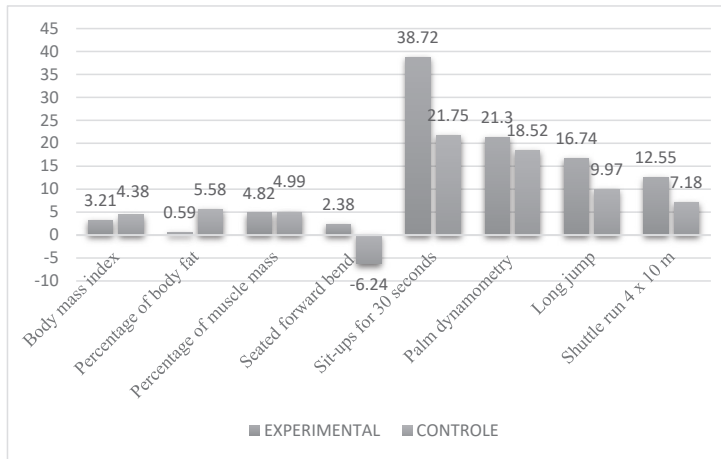
In order to determine in which measures for assessment of motor skills there are statistically significant differences, univariate analysis of the covariance for each motor test was calculated. From the overview of Table 7, it can be seen that there are statistically significant differences in 4 out of 6 variables. Intergroup differences are found in the variables: palm dynamometry ( $F= 11,20$ ;  $Sig = 0,01$ ), long jump ( $F= 7,77$ ;  $Sig= 0,06$ ), sit-ups for 30 sec ( $F= 18,97$ ;  $Sig= 0,00$ ) and shuttle run 4 x 10 m ( $F= 8,15$ ;  $Sig = 0,00$ ).

Partial -  $\eta^2$  is ranged between .04 and .09 and shows little to moderate effect. The greatest effect in determining the differences shows the variable: sit-ups for 30 seconds (partial -  $\eta^2 = .09$ ).



### Graph 1

Percentage differences in body composition and motor skills between the experimental and control group in the final measurement



Explanation of the terms under bars from left to the right: body mass index, body fat percentage, muscle mass percentage, seated forward bend, sit-ups for 30 sec, palm dynamometry, long jump, shuttle run 4 x 10 m, Experimental, Control

From the values of the arithmetic mean and the level of statistical significance, it can be seen that at the end of the experiment, the test subjects of the experimental group achieved better results in motor tests: palm dynamometry, long-jump, sit-ups for 30 sec and shuttle run 4 x 10 m. No statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the final measurement were found in the test for seated forward bend and running for 20 m with progressive increase of speed.

### Discussion

The study evaluated the effect of two different approaches in physical education for physical fitness related to health (body composition and motor skills) in early-school age children after 9 months of experimental treatment (108 classes of physical education).

Based on the obtained results, it is evident that the innovative (tandem) classes have contributed more to the development of musculoskeletal fitness, which is statistically proven. In the final measurement, compared to the initial measurement, the students from the experimental group on average made 4 body lifts more (39%) compared to 2 body lifts in the control group (22%), jumped 18 centimeters in the long jump (17%) compared to 10 centimeters in the control group (10%) and improved test strength: palm dynamometry by 3 kg (21%) versus 2 kg in the control group (18%). The stated progress of the experimental group in musculoskeletal fitness is in accordance with the research of (Faigenbaum et al., 2013; Faigenbaum et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2011). It is obvious that in our schools the physical education classes are inefficiently working towards improving the musculoskeletal fitness in early school age children. Classes organized by the class teacher do not contribute as much as they should to the development of the arm, chest, spine muscles and the explosive power of the lower extremities. Progress in musculoskeletal fitness requires special planning of activities and exercises taking place at least 2 to 3 times per week (Behringer, vom Heede, Yue & Mester, 2010; Faigenbaum et al. 2009).

The results of the research indicate that the innovative classes (realized by the class teacher and professor of physical education) are much better planned, organized, realized and dosed, compared to the traditional classes realized only by the class teacher.

No statistically significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups in the final measurement in the flexibility assessment test – deep seated forward bend. In the final measurement compared to the initial measurement, in absolute values, the students from the experimental group improved the flexibility on average by 0.42 centimeters (2.38%). In the control group between the initial and the final measurement, the flexibility decreased by 1.18 centimeters (6.24%). As a possible reason for the small changes in flexibility is considered to be the originally established flexibility that was at a relatively high level among students of this age. The achieved threshold is a limiting factor in the development of this ability. Another possible reason may be insufficient activity. The recommendations are that despite the application of stretching exercises in the preparatory (warm-up) and the final part (cool-down) of the class, independent activities that contribute to the development of flexibility should be organized 3 times per week. In this research, as well as in the research of Yaranja and collaborators, such activities are not separately organized. The limiting factor in our research was the three classes of physical education in the weekly cycle. In the future, we may need to consider increasing the number of physical education classes, as well as organizing additional physical activities with children in this age group.

Innovative classes have contributed much more to the development of motor fitness (coordination, agility and speed), which is even statistically proven. In the final measurement compared to the initial measurement, the students from the experimental group improved the shuttle running test 4 x 10 m for an average of 2 seconds (12.55%), as opposed to 1 second in the control group (7.18%). This can be expected if we consider the fact that the curriculum for these age categories is dominated by activities of locomotor, manipulated and non-locomotor type, which positively affect the improvement of motor fitness. The development of coordination and agility is related to the development of the nervous system which by the 6<sup>th</sup> year is 60%, and by the 12<sup>th</sup> year is up to 90% of the total development, so the sensitive period for the development of muscle fitness is from 6 to 12 years, and the critical period is 6 to 8 years of age. The process of developing coordination is more a matter of improving movement rather than motor skills. It should be noted that the exercise programs in various sport activities have a general foundation based on coordination, or acquisition of motor experience (Bompa, T., 2000, cited by: Kukolj, M., 2006).

The body composition between the two measurements did not change significantly in the two groups of respondents. But the absolute values are less favorable in the control group. In the experimental group, body mass index increased by 3.21%, the body fat percentage to 0.59%, and the muscle mass percentage increased by 4.82%. In the control group the body mass index increased by 4.38%, the body fat percentage by 5.58% and the muscle mass percentage increased by 4.99%. The results obtained are consistent with previous research by Voltera and colleagues (Walther et al., 2009). The results are also in accordance with the results of a meta-analysis in which it was concluded that intervention in a school environment has little effect on body mass index (Guerraet al., 2013; Harris, Kuramoto, Schulzer & Retallack, 2009), as well as other body composition assessment measures (Harris, Kuramoto, Schulzer & Retallack, 2009). Harris and colleagues (2009) point out the insufficient level (duration, intensity and frequency) of physical activity that is necessary to make changes as a possible reason. Another possible reason is that physical activity itself has less of an effect on body composition compared to the joint influence of physical activity and dietary factors. Contrary to these results, interventions performed in the school environment (Carrel et al., 2005; Kain, Uauy, Vio, Cerda, & Leyton, 2004; Kriemler et al., 2010) lead to a positive effect on body composition. Individual interventions include additional classes in physical education (Kriemler et al., 2010).

It is evident that innovative classes (tandem) contributed to the improvement of several variables that were applied in this research. The key element that led to the improvement in the experimental group was probably the proper planning, organization and implementation of the classes, i.e. the correct and optimal choice of the type, duration, intensity and frequency of physical

exercises and physical activities in each class of physical education. Regular physical activity and / or programmed physical exercise are the most important factors that maintain and improve physical fitness related to health. Schools can provide conditions for young people to engage in physical activity, improve physical fitness related to health, and can play a very important role in motivating young people to stay physically active (Burgeson et al., 2001). They constitute suitable places to promote positive health habits. Taking into account current trends such as the dramatic increase in the prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents who spend more time watching TV or playing on the computer, reducing physically active movement, shows that schools should take the lead in getting young people to involve in appropriate forms of everyday physical activity in order to improve physical fitness related to health and gain sports literacy (Pate et al., 2006).

Based on the conclusions of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, physical education classes should prepare children and adolescents for physically active and healthy living (PBNASPE, 2011), encourage them to engage in activities and develop habits for regular lifelong exercise (The Cooper Institut, 2010). The creation or selection of the best curricula for physical education and their implementation by some of the best professional teaching staff is a critical step in effective development of physically educated individuals who will choose to participate in physical activities throughout their lives (CDC, 2006).

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## NEW TEACHING PRACTICE FOR THE NEW ERA

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to present a new teaching practice that was enforced mainly because of the pandemic and the new circumstances for organizing the teaching process using distance learning and mostly blended teaching.

The pandemic has accelerated an existing trend towards online and hybrid learning. This shift has uncovered new and innovative ways for students and educators to organize their teaching and learning activities and to interact in a more personal and flexible manner online. We are aware that the teaching profession is a key mediating agency for society as it endeavors to cope with change and upheaval. The teaching profession must adapt a great deal so that it can act in a constructive manner within a fast-changing society if it is to retain the confidence of society.

The presented teaching practice in one Macedonian classroom with usage of different learning applications and learning platforms (Nearpod, Google Classroom, GoLab, Wordwall, Kahoot, Google Forms, Microsoft Teams, etc.) opens the discussion about the core competences teachers need as they are inadequately prepared to facilitate young people's understanding of and engagement with technologies in general.

In addition, the experience throughout one-school year with distance learning challenges the role that teacher has in the new era of teaching. His/her role changes towards equipping and motivating students' acquisition of skills and knowledge like self-directed learning, self-regulation, innovation, communication and cooperation.

The paper will present several recommendations for improvement of teaching with the usage of technology so to provide authentic experiences for both teachers and students.

**Keywords:** Teaching, Technology, Competences

### Introduction – The Teaching Profession

The teaching profession in the modern course of life is confronted with numerous sources of information and ways of learning, and is in a situation where it has to "prove" its value and necessity. Even in the past it was concluded that this is not a simple profession, but a complex set of

knowledge, skills and behaviors that are expected of teachers. The review by Gustafsson (2003) suggests that there are important relations between different indicators of teacher competence and student achievement, including teacher education, experience, measured knowledge and skills, and in-service training.

Actually, the Teacher Competency Initiative originated in the United States in the 1960s as part of a larger movement to introduce competencies in education. Later in the 1980s and 1990s, competency-based education appeared in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Asia and Latin America, mainly in vocational education. In the early discussions, teacher competencies were understood as “the ability to take action to achieve a certain standard”. Teacher competencies have been interpreted as a set of discrete practical skills, free from theory. There has been a lot of criticism of the competency model for the teaching profession, primarily due to the fact that it was claimed to have served as an instrument to control the teacher.

Many attempts have been made to improve the model based on teachers’ competencies. Knowledge from numerous scientific studies has been used for brain development, human development and the way people learn in order to overcome shortcomings. A holistic (integrated/connected) approach has emerged where competence is taken as a complex combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values seen in the context of task performance. Competence is not understood as learned, practiced behavior, with thoughtful ability and developmental process. The holistic approach to competencies is influenced by the constructivist perspective, i.e. the idea that people construct their reality in interaction with others. Cultural context and social practices are embedded in competing behavior, reflecting how personal attributes are used to achieve results in work within organizational and social relationships. Teaching conditions are taken into account (class size, shared value beliefs in the wider community about the role of the teacher) and they are essential when it comes to developing teacher competencies, and the description of teacher competence should take into account the context and personal characteristics of the teacher when emphasizing how competence and performance are related. Unfortunately, it turns out that the “human trait” with his/her personal characteristic is what is missing in many competency descriptions. Teachers also need socio-emotional competencies to be able to effectively manage students’ emotional development. According to some researchers, socio-emotional competence is considered the basis for living today, where the ability to collaborate, communicate, create, understand cultural, religious, ethnic, sexual differences in class and environment are no longer something that is “good for a teacher to possess”, but is “something that a teacher MUST” have as a basis for related issues in terms of world peace, social justice and environmental survival.

A competency-based model was later developed, which is an advanced version of the teacher training model, although it was supposed to go beyond the behavioral orientation of teacher education. The basic idea of the model is that if the goal is for teachers to successfully cope with the rapid changes in education and society as a whole, then they must be staffed with skills, abilities, knowledge and attitudes that will make them autonomous professionals. Under the auspices of competence, the concept of teacher education introduces pedagogical disciplines (teaching sciences) and supervised practical training, and on the other hand develops research orientations that aim to increase the ability of the teacher to participate in solving professional problems. (Buchberger, et al., 2000; 61)

Criticism of the concept of teacher training led first to the concept based on competencies and then to the concept of teacher education. In this last concept, the teaching profession is not reduced to a skill, on the contrary, this concept insists on the scientific basis of teaching and education of teachers. In this concept, teaching is understood as a complex activity that requires theoretical knowledge, without which the teacher cannot realize complex goals of the educational work. At the same time, the role of the teacher as a researcher is strongly embedded in the concept.

On the other hand, by the end of last century in their meta-analyses, Greenwald *et al.* (1996) and Hedges and Greenwald (1996) found that variables such as teacher education, teacher

experience and teacher ability show strong relations with student achievement. As Coolahan (2002) has argued, when society is undergoing profound and accelerating change, particular pressures emerge to improve the alignment between the education system and these changing societal needs. The teaching profession is a key mediating agency for society as it endeavors to cope with change and upheaval. As the society develops, the teaching profession needs to develop and adjust to the change requirements and circumstances in which teaching is taking place and the way learners learn.

## The New Era in Teaching

The technological development globally in all areas of the societies implied changes in the education as well. Education must respond to the demands of the modern society because the functioning of the society is based on technology and digitalization. The digitalization of everyday life requires the digitalization of all segments of life and education cannot be neglected. But when it comes to the educational process, things here become more complicated because it is not enough for the teacher to just know how to use digital tools, it is necessary for his knowledge to be at a higher level so that she/he can transfer her/his knowledge to students.

The pandemic of Covid 19 in 2020 and 2021 and the realization of distance learning brought to the surface the shortcomings in terms of digital competencies of teachers who through no fault of their own have not acquired the level necessary to be realized at a distance. With the urge to close the educational facilities, countries started practicing different methods of providing learning spaces. These methods included variety of approaches: from preparing instructional packages for the students, to broadcasting educational programs through radio and national televisions, to setting up online resources and creating online studying platforms (Schleicher, 2020).

OECD stated that over 60% of teachers got an opportunity for professional development in the field of Information and communication technologies and 18% of professors stated that they have a need for more development in the area. These number showed how (un)prepared the teachers were for the sudden digitalization of the educational process. The fact that the students got access to education from their homes and could learn remotely, in different environment, offering different learning opportunities, also meant that the role of the teachers is being changed in accordance with the new digitalized systems (Schleicher, 2020). It is important to note that besides this new opportunity, some of the students, especially the younger ones (such as pre-school children and students in the lower classes), lacked age-appropriate learning opportunity and were in a more disadvantaged position than their older peers (World Economic Forum, 2022).

These findings and shared concern about the quality of teaching and learning brought to attention the importance of the *European Framework for Digital Competences for Educators* (DigCompEdu) which teachers should attend in order to properly prepare students for the needs of the market of the 21st century. According to this framework three main categories can be noted:

- professional competencies for teachers,
- digital pedagogical competencies for teachers and
- digital competencies for students.

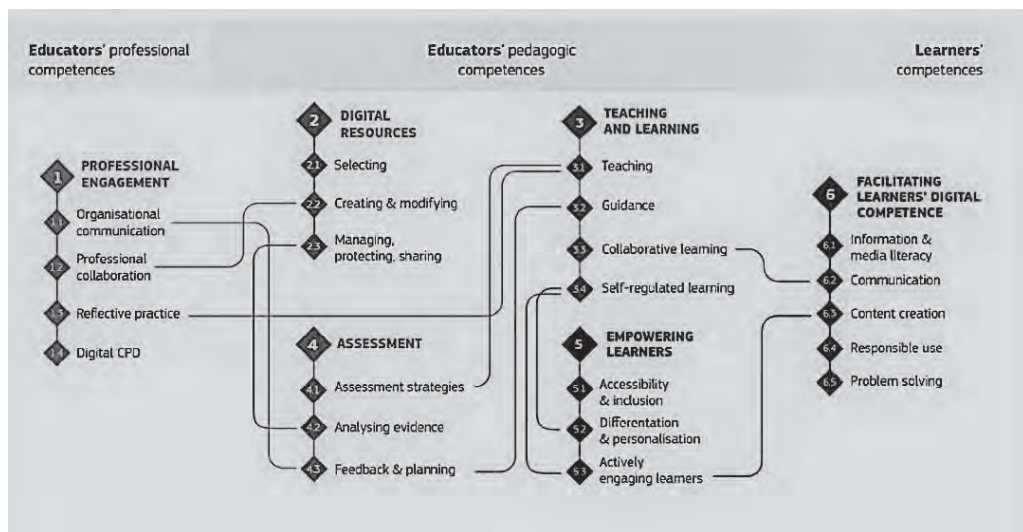
The DigCompEdu Framework aims to capture and describe these educator-specific digital competences by proposing 22 elementary competences organized in 6 areas: Area 1 is directed at the broader professional environment, i.e. educators' use of digital technologies in professional interactions with colleagues, learners, parents and other interested parties, for their own individual professional development and for the collective good of the organization. Area 2 looks at the competences needed to effectively and responsibly use, create and share digital resources for learning. Area 3 is dedicated to managing and orchestrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning. Area 4 addresses the use of digital strategies to enhance assessment. Area 5 focuses on

the potential of digital technologies for learner-centered teaching and learning strategies. Areas 6 details the specific pedagogic competences required to facilitate students' digital competence.

All areas of this framework are not new to educators and policy makers, but required fast adaptation and urgent interventions in time-frames not sufficient to make good preparations and efficient guidelines to teachers who had to find their own ways to transform the teaching process and focus on variety of student learning opportunities and needs in times of restricted face-to-face interactions and physical presence in the classroom.

The virtual classroom and hybrid models of teaching forced teachers to become more self-directed learners of the variety of digital tools available to them. This paper is focusing on some of these tools and activities a teacher in Macedonian primary school implemented in a course of one school year with her students.

Figure 1.



## Description and Discussion on the Effective Use of Digital Tools in Online Teaching

At the beginning of the pandemic and shifting to remote learning we tried to meet our students in the virtual space using ZOOM platform. It was a big challenge for all teachers especially for those with lack of digital competence. Faced with a new setting and motivated to be with our students and continue educational work, we started exploring and learning tools that can be beneficial for us to teach, and for students to be able to learn. Nowadays, only two years after the pandemic, it is very convenient to use different platforms for synchronous communication.

This is a short basic description of tools and platforms a teacher in science subjects used in everyday teaching during distance and blended teaching.



**ZOOM** is easy to use platform for delivering face to face lectures, but the free version allows only 40 minutes session and there is no option for sharing contents from other participants, only the host has that privilege. It is easy to record, save and share the session with students and colleagues.



**NEARPOD** as an app offers to teachers interactive teaching during the remote learning. The best feature of this app is that teachers can follow the student's activity and achievements in real time while also getting written reports about their progress during the remote classes.

Preparing the teaching material is by uploading the material from the computer or simply with drag and drop action. The tools for preparing teaching materials are divided in two categories. Tools for creating contents where you can find various aids such as (slides, video, Nearpod 3D, Sway and etc. see Figure 1) and tools for creating activities (Quiz, Flipgrid, Poll, draw it and etc. (see Figure 2)

**Figure 1**

Nearpod reports print screen



**Figure 2**

Nearpod activity print screen



**Figure 3**

Nearpod content print screen





The teaching material is easy to share through simply sharing the code of the activity. Students can access the lesson by logging with their Microsoft or Google accounts. According to the results obtained in a study (Naumoska, A, et al., 2022), they find “that Nearpod-based activities positively influenced students’ motivation in learning chemistry”.



**GOOGLE CLASSROOM** is an app that allows teachers good organization of teaching materials and assessments. Google classroom is a powerful and easy-to-use app with students friendly interface. Students very easily learn how to navigate and use the platform, it is easy to join with a google account and it is free. From the teacher’s point of view, every teacher with a google account can use google classroom. They can organize their students in classes by simply adding their google accounts. Teaching material is set by uploading from the computer, also the same material can be added to several classes at the same time, that is really a time-saving activity. Assignments can be delivered to the whole class or only to specific students. Teachers can access very easily the students’ work and check their assignments by giving feedback or grading their work (Figure 4). The learning progress of students is organized and is very clearly presented. (Figure 5)

**Figure 4**  
Review print screen

	Stream	Classwork	People	Grades		
	Jul 10, 2021 StoryJum per...	Jul 4, 2021 Тест Исправку...	May 27, 2021 Домашна работа	May 15, 2021 Што е потребн...	May 2, 2021 Анализир ај го...	
Sort by last name	Overall grade	Тест out of 24	Домашна работа 8	Доказано out of 3	Доказано out of 5	
Class average	71.94%	N/A	21.82	7.86	2.9	4.78
Ana Ivanovska	100%	Missing	Missing	8	3	5
АнаMarija Spasova	76.19%	Missing	18	5	3	5 (late)
Daniela Stanooska Dzidro...	100%	Missing	24	8	2	5
David on Fire	100%	Missing	24	8	3	5

**Figure 5**  
Learning progress print screen

	To review	Reviewed	
All classes			
No due date			1
Work in progress			12
Escape room Земца 9 - Due Jun 18, 2021	1 Turned in	50 Assigned	0 Returned
Story Jumper Project Природна наука 5a - Due Jun 10, 2021	3 Turned in	21 Assigned	0 Returned
Story Jumper Project Природна наука 5a - Due Jun 10, 2021	9 Turned in	25 Assigned	0 Returned

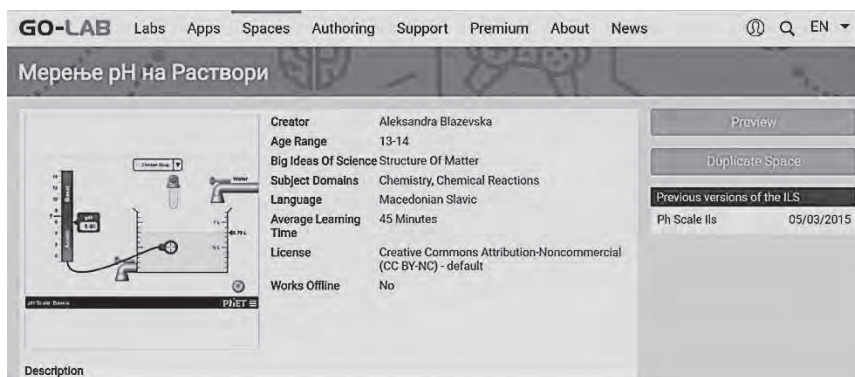


**GO-LAB** (<https://www.golabz.eu/>) is sharing and authority ecosystem with 1000 online labs and 54 interactive apps combined into 1635 Inquiry Learning Spaces where students can virtually experience doing science. Inquiry Learning Spaces (ILS) can be created by teachers from scratch or can be adapted from other teachers’ ILSs. They

are structured to follow the steps of the scientific method and they are an excellent opportunity for students to conduct scientific experiments in the virtual environment. Teachers guide students through the investigation process and follow their progress thanks to the interactive apps that give this opportunity.

**Figure 6**

<https://bit.ly/3s9DetM>



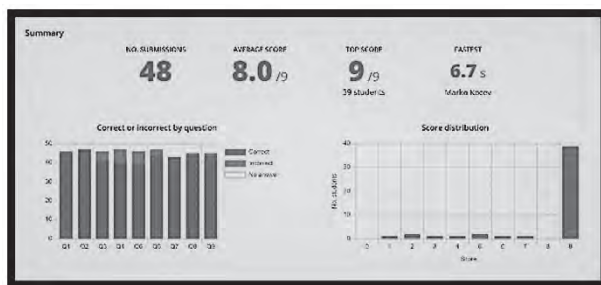
**WORDWALL** is an app that allows teachers to create digital resources mainly for synthesis and evaluating students` knowledge. It is very easy to make an account by using some of the existing accounts on google, yahoo, or others. Making the digital resources can start from scratch or by adopting some of the digital resources made by other teachers which can be found in the Community tab. There are various templates (match up, random well, group sort and etc. see Figure 7) for creating different activities. The good thing is that one activity can be switched to another template, thereby providing an entirely different perspective at the activity. Another positive thing is that resources can be shared with students via a link as an assignment in which students will compete between themselves in order to get better results. Furthermore, the wordwall gives a written report (Figure 8) analysis with details for each student about their participation and progress in the activity.

**Figure 7**

Wordwall template – print screen



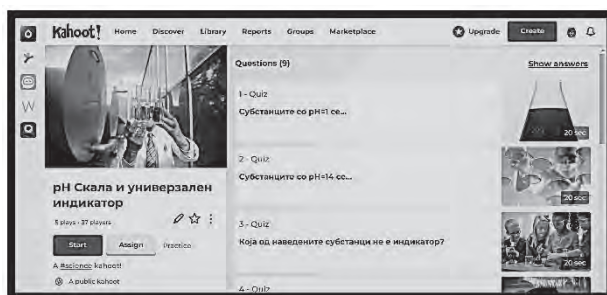
**Figure 8**  
Wordwall result list – print screen



Same as Wordwall, **Kahoot** is an app that can be used for synthesis and evaluating students' knowledge. Mainly it is an app for creating quizzes (Figure 9) where students working in teams or individually compete with each other in order to get better results. They use their smartphones as a tool for submitting the correct answers.

It is an excellent resource for the evaluation of students' knowledge and raising the motivation and competitive spirit among students. Kahoots are very easy to be created either from scratch or from other teachers' resources. A variety of Kahoot quizzes made by other teachers can be found in the Discovery tab. Students enter the Kahoot by entering a six-digit number shared by teachers. Same as many others apps Kahoot also gives written reports with students' results which can be found in the Reports tab.

**Figure 9**  
Kahoot quiz



**Figure 10**  
Kahoot report – print screen

Name	Date	Status	Number of players
Questions of the (CO2) (Kahoot!)	July 6, 2022 at 10:48 AM	Assigned Kahoot!	11
Questions on environmental study	June 6, 2022 at 8:04 AM	1/10	11
Muller, Smith, Church & Stone	June 6, 2022 at 8:43 AM	1/10	11
Questions on environmental study	May 6, 2022 at 11:02 AM	1/10	11
Questions of previous questions in Biol.	May 10, 2022 at 10:17 AM	1/10	11
get Cards a personalized kahoot!	May 10, 2022 at 11:47 AM	1/10	11
Questions of previous questions in Biol.	May 10, 2022 at 11:58 AM	1/10	11
get Cards a personalized kahoot!	May 10, 2022 at 11:58 AM	1/10	11



**Google forms** mainly is an app for online forms and surveys. As an app, it gives an opportunity for creating different types of questions (multiple choice, true-false, matching and grouping and etc.) setting feedback, correct answers, and points. All these possibilities make google forms a very used app as a tool for evaluating students' knowledge among teachers. Creating assignments by organizing questions in different sections is easy and fast. Also getting the results and feedback can be set differently. Results can be sent to the student's emails automatically or after a manual review by the teacher. Additionally, an excel report with a detailed record with chosen answers for all questions by each student is generated after every assignment.



**Microsoft Teams** is an app from the Microsoft 365 package that was the most used app for synchronous communication during the pandemic 2020-2021 school year. MC Teams is not only an app for delivering online lessons, it is an app in which interface can be easily added to different tools such as MOODLE, OneNote, Poly, and many more that makes online communication with students more engageable. The various options for setting give the app personalized features such as controlling when students enter and leave the online class, option for dividing students into groups, options for on-off microphones, options for changing the background, recording the online sessions and many more.

## Conclusion

The pandemic has accelerated an existing trend towards online and hybrid learning. This shift has uncovered new and innovative ways for students and educators to organize their teaching and learning activities and to interact in a more personal and flexible manner online. We became more aware that the teaching profession is a key mediating agency for society as it endeavors to cope with change and upheaval. But this also emphasized the need that teachers must adapt a great deal so that it can act in a constructive manner within a fast-changing society if it is to retain the confidence of society.

The experience throughout one-school year with distance learning challenged the role that teacher has in the new era of teaching. His/her role changed towards equipping and motivating students' acquisition of skills and knowledge like self-directed learning, self-regulation, innovation, communication and cooperation.

Unfortunately, the last year and a half proved that teachers lack core competences to facilitate young people's understanding of and engagement with technologies in general. This is why there is a need for urgent and effective changes in the curricula of the faculties that educate teachers in order to prepare the future teaching staff with adequate digital competences. Policy makers also need to develop systematic support measures for an on-going professional training of the already employed teachers, for upgrading their digital competences and supporting the network of teacher-to-teacher learning and sharing of good practices in this field.

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Abstract:** The answer to the question on how to prepare young people to take the role of active citizens, develop their abilities, skills and values that will help them to integrate into a sustainable society and face all challenges, uncertainties and problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century lies, among other things, in the continuity of education and training of young people, which is reflected in the continuous progress and professional development that we can see in the concept of sustainability, with special emphasis on the discourse of competence. In that sense, in the paper, through the analytical-theoretical approach, we emphasize the need to change the paradigm in the professional development of teachers as an important factor in the transformation of education for the sustainable future. The model of sustainable professional development of teachers, which is the subject of our study, does not only deal with the development of professional competencies but also explores the areas of personal and social behavior of teachers, as development guidelines in raising awareness, gaining knowledge and conceiving actions for sustainable development. The implications of studying this problem point to the need for a holistic, integrative, and transformative approach in the professional development of teachers and in the construction of a support system for teachers in accordance with the new educational discourse – education for sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Professional development, Teachers, Education for sustainable development, Competencies

### Introduction

The concept of sustainable development, which represents a paradigm of modern development and progress in technology, economy, ecology and society, has its foothold in science and education, and is one of the proper solutions for the challenges faced by modern society, but also the initiator of further changes. In a society where globalization and intercultural conversation become the backbone of new relationships, the creation of new life skills and lifelong education become the primary objectives of modern society. In this context, “at the gates of postmodernism, contemporary pedagogy turns to everyday life as a time for lifelong education and learning: non-formal and informal ways of acquiring knowledge, professional competences and a culture

of living. Therefore, it is about the form and content of the permanent development of human potential and the creation of new competencies for the future, which pedagogy must anticipate and integrate into the lifelong education system as its primary task and permanent category” (Previšić, 2007, XIX). In this process, the leading concepts of change become “knowledge society”, “lifelong learning” and “competence development”. Rapid development and changes require the need for competent individuals who will not only adapt to changes, but will become active and accountable in managing and solving problems, those who will recognize their role and individual and collective responsibility as active members of the global community. How can we prepare people to face rapid changes and challenges?

Education for sustainable development is an approach that tries to answer these questions. In this sense, a tool that should build a competent, active individual equipped to live in an uncertain world of change and diversity is education (Anđelković, S., & Vračar, M., 2020). Knowledge becomes a strategic resource, a marketable goods and a competitive factor in achieving and preserving sustainable development (Anđelković, 2018). One of the goals of education for sustainable development is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable people to face problems that require transformation and self-transformation.

In order to develop students’ competencies for sustainable development through the ethos of school, and especially through the teaching process, we need a competent teacher who is able to recognize, understand, act holistically, be responsible and ready for further professional growth and development. In this sense, the competences of teachers in school and the implementation of the concept of education for sustainable development become important and topical from the aspect of educational policy, initial education and lifelong professional development.

## **Lifelong Learning and Professional Development of Teachers – a Need and a Challenge**

Changes in the understanding of new discourses, perspectives and the potential of professional development of teachers pose more and more complex demands to experts specialized in education and educational policy. Problems related to different segments of the professional development of teachers (from initial education to lifelong learning) today represent key issues in the reform processes of those countries which strive to improve their own educational systems and adapt them to the needs of modern society (Đurić, 2017, p. 23). That is why, according to Bandur, Maksimović (2013), “teacher education as part of professional development is understood as an open and dynamic system that is related to different fields of social life and that includes different participants, it is a continuous process that begins with initial education, introduction to work, professional improvement and is connected with educational innovations and pedagogical research” (Bandjur, Maksimović, 2013, p. 22-32). Teacher is perceived by the educational policy and the entire society as an individual who should take the lead in monitoring developments in the field of this profession, as well as in the field of pedagogical sciences, in order to successfully fulfill his professional role (European Commission, 2000, as cited in Marušić, Pejatović, 2013). Considering the professional development of teachers as undoubtedly one of the most important factors in improving the quality of education, the *Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020* proposes a strategic orientation that implies changes in the approach to basic education and professional training of teachers (Čaprić, 2016) and their professional development.

When using the term “professional development of teachers” some authors imply increasing the teacher’s awareness of what he does, how he does it and how he can improve his work (Bjekić, 1999), as well as the professionalization of the teaching profession (Beara, & Okanović, 2006). The authors Krstić and Osmanović (2015) claim that professional development is a complex

process that includes continuous development of teacher competencies in order to do their work better and improve the development of children, and which involves increasing the teacher's awareness of what he is doing and how he can improve his awareness (Krstić, Osmanović, 2015). According to Day (Day, 1999), professional development is "a process that includes spontaneous learning experiences, as well as consciously planned activities through which an individual, a group of teachers and a school improve the quality of education in the classroom" (Day, 1999, as cited in Đerić, Maksić, 2018, p. 82).

Based on these definitions of professional development, we can conclude that they are similar in that they highlight the improvement of the quality of teachers' work as the main determinant, and that they only differ in their content when defining professional development as a complex process that includes both the spontaneous learning experience and the continuous development of teacher competencies. In the professional literature, the term professional development of teachers is very often insufficiently delineated from terms such as: professional development, seminars and courses. The term professional development appears as a synonym for professional training and vice versa, which is incorrect, because these two terms differ in scope, quality and duration. In this regard, we will provide an overview of the comparison between professional training and professional development.

**Table 6**

Differences between professional training and continuous professional development

	<i>Professional training</i>	<i>Continuous professional development</i>
<b>activities</b>	seminar, course, workshop	seminar, course, master's studies, literature usage, distance learning, research, informal learning, coaching, mentoring, supervision, networks of teachers and schools, social media (Facebook, blogs, forums), collaborative learning, participation in school projects, partnership with scientific community, participation in creating educational policies
<b>frequency</b>	One-time, occasionally, as needed	regularly, continuously
<b>formality</b>	formal learning, accredited activities	formal and informal learning

We can conclude from the table that the main differences between professional training and professional development are related to activities, frequency and formalization. Professional training includes seminars, courses, one-time activities, which means that these are programs that are carried out within a short period of time (lasting a few days at the most), and that long-term learning effects are expected, although there are no follow-up or support procedures for the implementation of what teachers learn (Lieberman, 1996, Pešikan, 2002, as cited in Džinić, 2014). Professional development of an individual cannot, therefore, be reduced to occasional seminars and professional summits. It is a long-term process during which, through learning, practical work and research activity, the knowledge, skills and abilities of an individual are developed and improved (Popović, 2010). Teacher becomes a practitioner who reflects and sets the goals of his professional development in accordance with his needs, the needs of the profession and education.

Craft (Craft, 2000) lists ten principles of successful professional development of teachers, which he links to the improvement of the school as a whole:

- it is difficult for individuals to progress in a static school;
- schools cannot be changed without changing what teachers do;
- if teachers progress professionally only individually, then they probably will not be able to change their school;
- sometimes, when schools change, teachers do not change with them;
- a learning organization consists of individuals who, along with performing their basic duties, have the opportunity to learn;
- professional development of teachers is a continuous process that begins with the first and ends with the last day of their professional practice. It is lifelong learning;
- acquiring new information and successfully dealing with new situations is of crucial importance for lifelong learning;
- changes are a process, not an event;
- every individual is the bearer of change;
- theories of change and theories of education need each other.

The quality of a teacher's work is directly related to his professional training and professional development. It follows that the professional development of teachers directly affects the quality of the education process, that is, better success and more effective development of students, and their inclusion in life and work (Grandić, Stipić, 2011). The professional development of teachers begins with initial education – the acquisition of higher education knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to the future vocation and continues during the teaching process by improving competencies in practice, and is improved based on reflective practice during teacher's personal experience.

Bearing in mind the modern understanding of the teaching profession and professional development of teachers who are seen as reflective practitioners, it is necessary to view the teacher as a professional who is not only active in building student knowledge, but is active, self-directed and effective in building his own competencies and self-development (Beara, Okanović, 2010). The key determinants of professional development are: a continuous process, a systematically planned and lifelong process that is based in the school itself and through cooperation with other partners aimed at improving the quality of work (especially student achievement) in the school and the position of the teaching profession within society. It is obvious that the concept of professional development implies a lot of change in the existing concept of the teacher's vocation related to different fields of teacher professional development (their own work, teaching and learning, student achievements and the support that teachers provide to students) and the alignment between these changes and the needs of a sustainable society. Teachers are one of the key factors in the quality of teaching and learning in a school institution and the quality of the school system as a whole (Spasenović, 2013, p. 156). The bearers of this responsible profession have significant impact on education, i.e. the connection between the goals of sustainable development and teacher education is strong and diverse (Veinović, 2018, p. 48).

The concept of professional development of teachers has changed quite a bit over time, starting from the concept of "training", practice, i.e., one-time, isolated training for acquiring a specific set of knowledge and skills, towards a systemic approach to continuous professional development of teachers (Ivić, Pešikan, Antić, 2003; Lyttle, 1993). For this reason, back in the 1980s, legislation demanded mandatory training of class teachers and subject teachers in Serbia (*Law on Basic Education and Education*, 1985/1986, according to: Marušić, 2010). Compulsory professional development is still defined by the *The Rule Book on Continuous Professional Development and Career Promotion of School Teachers, Preschool Teachers and Expert Associates* and is part of



the process of teacher professional development. In the aforementioned rulebook, professional development is defined as “a complex process that implies constant development of the competences of teachers, preschool teachers and professional associates in order to perform their work better and to improve the development of children, students and trainees, i.e., the level of their achievements” (*The Rule Book on Continuous Professional Development and Career Promotion of School Teachers, Preschool Teachers and Expert Associates*, “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 81/2017 and 48/2018, which is in force since June 30, 2018).

## **Professional Development of Teachers in the Context of the Sustainable Development Concept**

Teacher competences have a central place within the modern theories of professional development and empirical research. One of the main questions that arises when conceptualizing new education programs, as well as teacher training, is the question of the balance between general, subject-specific training and pedagogical, methodological-didactic and methodological training and preparation for participation in the planning of school development, educational programs, cooperation with parents, use of information and communication technology in the classroom, working with children with special needs, use of local resources and cooperation with the local community. The creation of teacher competencies for lifelong learning depends on positive selection at the faculty, the quality structure of teacher education programs, and the existence of a systematic process of professional training and self-education of teachers. Through professional development, teachers should improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes, build their ethics, become open to new learning by adapting to the demands of rapid changes in the society. Affirmation of the idea of lifelong learning based on the needs and interests of the “knowledge society” brings changes in teacher education and their professional advancement. Although teacher education programs in different countries differ, there are some common features. These are (Ben Peretz, as cited in Pastuović, 1999): studies of teaching content (academic disciplines); basic education studies; teaching profession studies (pedagogy studies); organized teaching practice. These characteristics should be viewed holistically, in mutual interaction. There are many problems related to each of the abovementioned characteristics: from finding the balance between academic theoretical knowledge, and pedagogical, didactic-methodological knowledge and abilities; from different points of view on what the content of the undergraduate education studies should be, from different content and scope of the pedagogy program/curriculum, as well as the way it is taught at the faculties; as well as the organization and execution of methodological-didactic practice and building a reflective teacher who will question the existing practice and improve it.

Curricular approach aimed towards the development of future competences of teachers wishes to develop the need for permanent investment in professional development, which is a prerequisite for guiding their students in the process of lifelong learning. In order to develop students’ competencies for sustainable development with the school curriculum, we need a competent teacher who is able to recognize, understand, act holistically, be responsible and ready for further professional growth and development (Anđelković, 2018). Teachers should be able to prepare students for the knowledge society, where they are expected to be self-initiative, capable and motivated to learn throughout their life (Đurić, 2017). The importance and quality of initial education and professional teacher education, which precedes practice, has direct consequences for educational practice and the development of teacher competencies for education for sustainable development.

Professional development of teachers as an important segment of professional advancement, which is closely connected with socio-economic, scientific and global changes, as well as teacher training and their education should be viewed in the context of these changes. The key meaning of professional development and professional advancement of teachers is reflected in the

need to increase the quality and efficiency of teaching (Thomson, 2003). This is made possible by the constant acquisition of new knowledge (professional, pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological knowledge), deepening and expanding the existing knowledge, mastering new usable skills and raising the general level of competence for the successful performance of the teacher's calling. Also, the professional development of teachers has the character of lifelong improvement (Simeunović, 2010). During their initial education, teachers do not have the opportunity to learn how to manage their professional development, so they have to develop these skills in practice (Pešikan, Antić, Marinković, 2010, as cited in Đerić, Maksić, 2018, p. 94), which is why it is necessary to encourage them to choose a certain form of professional training. The concept of teacher professional development does not only imply the necessity of teacher learning even after initial education, but emphasizes the continuity of different phases of education and the ongoing nature of professional development (Radulović, 2016, p. 123).

The Republic of Serbia is a signatory to the *Agenda 21* document on the implementation of sustainable development, and thereby undertook to ensure its implementation in the education system. However, in Serbia, education for sustainable development is not carried out in a systematic way, but depends on the ability of teachers to integrate it into current curricula. In aligning their professional development with the needs of a sustainable society, the teacher himself plays a significant role, his openness to innovation, enthusiasm, professional curiosity and desire to change and improve his own practice. It is necessary for teachers to be critical of their work. The success of this integrative role of teachers depends on several factors, primarily on the teacher's professional preparation, motivation and willingness to improve further (Anđelković, 2018). In addition to the knowledge of the subject he teaches, the teacher must also have knowledge in the field of pedagogical and psychological disciplines, as well as methodological knowledge and skills (Đurić, 2017, p. 28). In order for professional training to have the desired outcomes, it must be adequately planned, whereby it is necessary to take into account both the individual perspective of the teacher, as well as the position and possibilities of the school (Đerić, Maksić, 2018, p. 95).

According to the authors Krstić and Osmanović (2015), teachers become more ready to accept changes and use modern ways of teaching, which is a good starting point to develop skills and abilities and strengthen competences to conduct education for sustainable development and to provide help to other teachers and support them when choosing a certain type of professional development program. Teachers must be supported by the system, but also by the schools where they work (Pešikan, 2010). This clearly indicates the need to plan and implement various programs and activities that will help teachers acquire new knowledge, develop skills and abilities, and strengthen the competences required for the education for sustainable development, which will improve their further work. Professional development of teachers aimed at developing the competences of teachers required for the education for sustainable development should be planned and carried out through different forms of training, which differ in terms of the level and quality of the outcome of the implementation.

### **Lifelong Learning Aimed at Strengthening the Competence of Teachers for Sustainable Development**

Life in modern society requires lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is not only one form of education and training, but tends to become a leading principle in the entire context of learning. "Lifelong learning is a continuous, voluntary and self-motivated search for knowledge for personal or professional reasons" (Mijanović, 2017, p. 69-86). According to the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning of the European Commission (2000), the term lifelong learning refers to all forms of learning during adulthood with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within personal, civic, social or professional activities.

Lifelong learning implies the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education, but also experiential learning, e-learning, distance learning, all with the aim of ensuring individual knowledge and skills for the purposes of improving the quality of life (Miljković, Sitarica, 2016). In this paper, we were interested in lifelong learning as a tool for strengthening the competencies of teachers for sustainable development. The need for lifelong education of teachers through formal and informal forms of learning is indicated in the UNESCO report *Towards a Knowledge Society* from 2007. Priorities in the knowledge society are as follows: individual readiness to learn and improve throughout life, selection and adoption of the right information, application of acquired knowledge in new situations, development of curiosity, critical awareness, creativity, communication, independence, social competence, management of one's own learning process (Miljković, Sitarica, 2016).

The concept of lifelong learning does not imply only a quantitative expansion by connecting initial education with adult education. When education in childhood and youth is coupled with permanent, continuous lifelong education, this also causes qualitative changes in the structure of education, especially by including various possibilities of the knowledge society: in addition to formal, also informal and non-formal education is affirmed (Radeka, Petani, Rogić, 2008, p. 303).

Lifelong learning and education outgrow the framework of an idea and become a necessary goal of a society that learns and builds foundation on knowledge (Horvat, Lapat, 2012). The concept of lifelong learning has gained crucial importance with the emergence of new technologies that change how we receive and gather information, collaborate with others and communicate. "New teacher education programs at the initial and professional level must be aimed at shaping such teachers who will be sustainable citizens, educated, trained and who will have proper competencies for lifelong development and learning focused on the implementation of education and education for sustainable development when facing future challenges" (Andjić, 2015, p. 369).

## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that although a lot has been done, including the education policy, legal documents, as well as practice, there are still many problems related to the professional development of teachers. Teachers are faced with the process of improving and developing the competencies that already exist, but also with acquiring new ones that arise from the growing educational needs of the economy, ecology, society and the individuals. It is important for teachers to create various models of professional development that will range from lesson planning to evaluation process, and to start from practical needs when determining the thematic content and forms of work. In order to meet the needs of teachers and to help them respond to the challenges of modern education, further investment in the professional development of teachers and the formation of an effective system of support for teachers is necessary, starting from educational policy, initial teacher education, and professional development of teachers, lifelong professional development for education for sustainable development. The answer to the question – how can one keep up with the times, how can one respond to the needs of modern society, how can one know what are the abilities, skills and values that lead to successful integration in a knowledge-based society, must be sought in the continuity of education and training of people, which is reflected in constant advancement and professional development, which is reflected in the concept of lifelong learning, in the unity of formal, non-formal and informal education. The pedagogical implications of the study of this topic indicate the need for a transformative, reflective approach to the professional development of teachers and in accordance with education for sustainable development.

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## INTERCULTURALISM AND THE ETHNIC CHALLENGES IN THE PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NORTH MACEDONIA

**Abstract:** In May/November 2019 the Government of North Macedonia prepared and enacted the “Strategy for Development of the ‘One Society for All’ Concept and Interculturalism”. This paper will analyze the process of creation of the strategy, as well as the idea why this document was produced and what was behind. Further, the paper will shed more light about the priorities in the section of Education (there are seven sections in the strategy), and what should be done to soften the ethnic integration problems within the society. The team that created this part of the strategy aimed that elements of intercultural education should be implemented in the way to enhance the communication between the young people with different ethnic background in the society.

**Keywords:** Divided society, Primary education, Interculturalism, Concept of “one society”

### Introduction

The Macedonian society has been a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society for a long time. Despite peaceful coexistence in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (when the Macedonian republic was part of the Yugoslav federation), and after the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991, the socio-demographic characteristics of the society were reflected primarily through the ethnic lenses. Macedonian society in a decade turned into a typically divided society. The economic uncertainty and the subjective perceptions of the insecure future in the Balkans had a significant influence on people. The groups (Albanians primarily) were more and more withdrawing within their “societies”, each seeking protection and support in its own group. Instead of strengthening the liberal values and creating prerequisites for social pluralism and modern society based on the fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as enabling equal conditions for all members of the society, with no exception due to their ethnic, language, or religious background, exactly the opposite happened.

As the processes of transition from socialism to capitalism had penetrated all spheres of the state, and as the “western” values in politics and economy were implemented, as primary arenas towards prosperity, the class category in the Macedonian society was in great part replaced by the ethnicity. Group identification exclusively on ethnic bases was intensified, and the Macedonian society from an integrated status stepped into a status of disintegration. The ethnic and language differences became a factor of confrontations, and the process of ethnopolitical mobilization became a factor of deep division. (Atanasov, 2003: 177) The prediction was that the management of ethnic differences in the Macedonian case must reconcile two nationalisms, the civic Macedonian and the ethnic Albanian. Otherwise, opposite to this, the “battle” for resources and

the symbols of the state between Macedonians and Albanians will reinforce the affection toward its own national (ethnic) identity. On one side, if the resolution between the two nationalism(s) would have been successful, the multicultural democracy will enable the existence of “one society”. On the other side, if the ethnic identification would deepen, that would mean the creation of “two societies”, which will breed higher pressure upon the state regarding its political model. The nurturing of ethnic differences would mean a weakening of the civic cohesion of the society. (Atanasov, 2017: 28) After all, Europe is still a nation-state “business”, as well are the Balkans.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), signed after six months of clashes between regular security forces and the Albanian paramilitary in 2001, was just a legal road sign. With the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement began the process of continual internal division, enhancing ethnic belonging as the main identity that never eased, just strengthening over time (Simoska, 2010). After two decades of implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, it showed that one of the consequences is that changes enhanced, instead of weakened the importance of ethnic identification. If you are a member of a sizeable and politically active ethnic minority, you will have higher chances to acquire a proper job, get more resources for development, and be permanently part of the government coalitions that will allow some of the party cadres big privileges (the Democratic Union for Integration – former paramilitary, since 2002 was constantly in the government). So, the specific characteristic of our new “coexistence” became ethnic concessions trade. Ethnicity, as an instrumental tool, by definition uses exclusive demands and policies. Accordingly, we are facing here the limits regarding the possibilities concerning scarce resources. The main characteristic is that the Macedonian society today is still deeply ethnically divided, mainly because of the language, the ethnic differences work against the interests of the majority of the citizens, and their unequal position in the society. It seems that this differentiation is a consequence of the “investment in the diversity”, for which purpose the international organizations invested so much and spend millions of Euros, and the result, opposite of the higher integration, is still a divided society with sizeable cultural and ghettoized spaces. (Atanasov, 2021: 87) Is there a solution for an integrated cohesive society?

## **The Inter/Multi/Cultural Resolution**

Multiculturalism as a hard policy, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stood opposite of the national state because is against the idea which propagates that only one culture should be dominant and serve the citizens (the one that is the biggest national/cultural group). In the meantime, the multicultural societal models even in their everyday practice showed that contain a lot of weak points. Contrary to its claims, the main propagators are usually small segments of politics, namely the political-ethnic elites. In that process as often happens the matrix of culturalism is used to put the cultural group above the individual, to constantly pressure the members of the group to blindly follow “their” ethnic canons. Multiculturalism is an approach that promotes and defends, and yet it freezes, the ethnic differences and succeeds neither in fully integrating nor eradicating the structural group’s inequality. Seldom has multiculturalism produced more than a handful of satisfied ethnic leaders and a lot of complaints and protests on behalf of different ethnic marginalized groups. It seems that the philosophy of “multi-culti” is something that moves and pushes the processes, but it proved that breeds disorder and segregation. (Atanasov, 2021) The multicultural policies suffered serious critics, first of all, in the realization of insufficient or improper results.

The Macedonian society today is even more ethnically divided, mainly because of the language (there are areas where citizens have no contact with the language of the majority – the Macedonian language), and the ethnic differences work against the societal integration of the majority of the citizens. The dominant part of the “multicultural” concessions, according to the Agreement, enjoys only one ethnic group – the Albanians. Now, we have “multicultural quarrels”

used by the Macedonian and Albanian leaders, which is only the façade for their communities' "ethnic dreams". Other communities that are not in majority and are part of the society are absent from this "ethnic game". Ethnic mobilization broadens its scope in politics, including the municipal local power, annual "ethnic" budget negotiations, strengthening the ethnic identity, and sometimes opening the questions in the manner of "to whom this state belongs". All these processes were about the cultural differentiation and division between ethnic segments and new relations on the political base. The echoes of the political atmosphere after the announcement of the census "results" in April 2022 resemble all of the previous analyses, and the census was more like another historical "re-counting".

The 'National Strategy for the Development of the "One Society for All" Concept and Interculturalism' (from here on the National strategy for one society) is a document of such prominence that for the first time was designed in the Republic of North Macedonia, and it is of special importance having in mind the ethnic divisions in the society and other levels. At the beginning of the document, it is stated that this national strategy was the subject of extensive consultations and discussions in the period May-June 2019 with representatives of state institutions, the civil society, the academic community, and other stakeholders. The document has incorporated much of the submitted comments, suggestions, and follow-ups of public debates held across the country. The result of this process is a document that reflects, to the best extent possible, the steps needed to achieve its vision for 'One Society for All'.<sup>2</sup> *The designers of this document wanted to initiate activities to strengthen the processes of communication and cooperation between the communities in direction of creating a society in which everyone will feel like a member of "one society". (Zemon, 2021) This was the official viewpoint of the man<sup>3</sup> who initiate the whole process for the creation of the strategy. What was in the mind of some of us (the author of this paper is the prime author of the whole idea and concept<sup>4</sup>)* involved in the process, was that in our case the development should be in the direction of collaboration of different cultures. As something that comes in-between, or involves two or more cultures. As the exchange between cultural groups inside the society on an equal footing. It is close to the concept of interculturalism which is a try for upgrade or exit strategy for multicultural traps. Interculturalism involves action above the passive acceptance of the multicultural facts of various cultures that exist in the society and instead promotes interchanges between cultures. Interculturalism is the eventual answer to the critics of existent policies of multiculturalism, as well as the criticism that the multicultural policies did not succeed to create inclusion of different cultures in the society, but further divided the society through legitimizing the segregated communities, that often isolated each other and constantly emphasized its specificities. Interculturalism is in its essence the recognition of different cultures, but even more, it is active cooperation based on common values among cultures. (Atanasov, 2021)

In the autumn of 2019, the Government enacted a new strategic document named 'The National Strategy for the Development of "One Society for All" Concept and Interculturalism 2020-2022'. This national strategy was a sign that the Government has a will to continue supporting the process for a higher level of societal integration. The state needed a model of civic nationalism, which will be the pattern for building an integrated society by investing in the political unity of the state. The feelings of the ethnicity should be losing their importance, through building a fair society and impartial state. The National Strategy had 7 chapters of intervention: legal, educational, cultural, youth, media, local government, and social cohesion.

<sup>2</sup> The National Strategy for the Development of the 'One Society for All' Concept and Interculturalism <https://vlada.mk/nacionalni-strategii> [visited on 12.05.2022]

<sup>3</sup> Professor Rubin Zemon, was an adviser for multicultural questions in the Cabinet of Prime minister Zoran Zaev during the time when the whole process started.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Petar Atanasov, was deputy minister of education in the Government of Prime minister Zoran Zaev at the time when the whole process started.

## Primary Education Ethnic Challenges

This paper will elaborate on the process of creation of the National strategy, as well as the idea of why this document was produced and what was the idea behind it. The paper will shed more light on the priorities in primary education and what should be done in long term to solve the ethnic integration problems within the society. The analysis of the educational sector during the time of the writing of the main body of the National strategy<sup>5</sup> showed that despite several important documents that were enacted and some of them implemented (Concept for nine-year primary education<sup>6</sup> – 2007, The Concept for Intercultural Education – 2015, the Education Strategy 2018-2025<sup>7</sup> – 2017, and the Law on Primary Education – 2015/2019) questions are asked were they effective and workable. Let us just quote two of them. The vision of the Concept for intercultural education consists of “developing ambiance for education and upbringing that will nourish intercultural relations and integrative processes that promote cultural differences and their transposition in a wider societal and multi-ethnic and multicultural context.”<sup>8</sup> Looking at the Law on Primary Education, among the number of listed education objectives are also the following: i) education on mutual tolerance, cooperation, respect for diversity, basic human freedoms, and rights, as well as, ii) developing awareness among students about belonging to the Republic of Macedonia and fostering their own national and cultural identity.<sup>9</sup> However, the dilemma is whether the process of education enables the acquisition of this knowledge, values, and skills, or the overall objectives in these documents.

On one hand, as the National strategy elaborates, in the past ten years there has been a lot of research that identifies various issues about the primary education system itself as to the extent to which education enables students who are different on any basis to meet, make friends and work together. As early as 2009 a UNICEF Study on multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relations in education (Petroska-Beska, 2009) identified a downward trend in the number of students taught in different languages who are attending multilingual schools, and consequently, the number of monolingual schools was rising. The same can be confirmed in the 2012 ‘Baseline study about inter-ethnic integration in education,<sup>10</sup> done as part of the USAID ‘Project on inter-ethnic integration in education’ (IIEP). Namely, the research suggests that most students study in monolingual schools, and, as a result, do not have opportunities for mutual interaction. Even students from different languages of instruction in multilingual schools do not necessarily have a guaranteed contact opportunity since they study in different buildings (central as opposed to satellite schools), in different parts of the same building, or on different shifts. On the other hand, both teachers and parents and even students themselves have an ambivalent attitude towards chances of direct contact with students with different languages of instruction. According to data obtained from the electronic research as part of the USAID Project on inter-ethnic integration in education,<sup>11</sup> only 21% of the students with the Macedonian language of instruction study in bilin-

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<sup>5</sup> The part of the education in the strategy was written by a team led by Professor Petar Atanasov, Safet Balazhi, an independent consultant and expert, and Andriana Tomovska, teacher and external adviser.

<sup>6</sup> The Concept of nine-year primary education – Bureau for the Development of Education, Ministry of Education and Science, 2007

<sup>7</sup> The Education Strategy 2018-2025 with an Action Plan, Ministry of Education and Science, 2017

<sup>8</sup> The concept of inter-cultural education, Ministry of Education and Science, 2015  
<http://www.mon.gov.mk/images/Koncepcija-mk.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 103/2008, 33/2010, 116/2010, 156/2010, 18/2011, 42/2011, 51/2011, 6/2012, 100/2012, 24/2013, 41/2014, 116/2014, 135/2014, 10/2015, 98/2015 and 145/2015

<sup>10</sup> Baseline study about inter-ethnic integration in education, [http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY\\_MAC.pdf](http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY_MAC.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Report from electronic study on the implementation of the IIEP,  
<http://pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Electronic-survey-report-MAK.pdf>



gual or trilingual schools, and only 47.6% of students with the Albanian language of instruction attend multilingual schools. Data shown are clear indicators that help us conclude that students mainly grow in parallel worlds, isolated from each other, without ample opportunities for mutual contact. Considering also that in multilingual schools the space-time organization of instruction is organized in a way that it largely prevents contact between students of different languages of instruction, turns out that the percentage of students learning in different languages who meet, make friends, and work together while at school is truly neglectable. The study titled *How to Achieve Integrated Education in the Republic of Macedonia* (Bakiu, 2016), points out that the existing segregation in the education system is a result of the efforts for avoiding conflicts between students with different languages of instruction, which, in turn, only enhanced the stereotypes and prejudice towards the ethnically “others”.

The main indicator is that although the North Macedonian Government adopted some strategic documents for integrated education, still the division upon ethnic lines remains visible even in multilingual schools. The textbooks are an additional weak point, with not complying with the criteria for multiculturalism which does not contribute to strengthening the social cohesion.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, most research indicates the need for intervention in this area to enable students to get to know those different from them and to build a stance of acceptance and respect for all differences, not only through direct contact but also indirectly through what is offered in textbooks and through the curricula and programs themselves. A more recent study titled *From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism through Primary Education* (Petroska-Beska, 2018), reveals that textbooks in primary education in Macedonian and Albanian languages of instruction contribute to the development of ethnic nationalism, in terms of both their content and approach.

A series of scientific research speaks about the importance of the content of curricula and its effect on inter-group relations. The *broader contacts* (when members of different communities have no contact but learn about each other through different teaching units) have shown a positive effect when researchers were reading students’ stories about different kinds of interaction among members of different groups (Rutland, 2006), and during the discussion following book readings which had cross-group contacts (Vezzali, 2012). We need to pay special attention in our education system to the use of different languages of instruction too. Presently five different languages are used (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, and, as of recently, Bosnian). Nevertheless, in conditions where students can only speak their native language and not the other languages, the very contact between members of different communities becomes difficult since there is no common language. Stemming from this problem, the document titled *Steps toward integrated education in the education system of the Republic of Macedonia*<sup>13</sup> recommends a more serious approach to the language issue, so that students with different languages of instruction to Macedonian would start learning it as early as first-grade primary school, and students with the Macedonian language of instruction would start learning the languages of communities as early as possible. With the existing curriculum, the Macedonian language for students with different languages of instruction is introduced in the fourth grade, while students studying in Macedonian can choose (as an elective subject) to learn the Albanian language, but not the languages of other communities, starting from the sixth grade. Languages are one of the crucial elements of the intercultural curricula.

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<sup>12</sup> The National Strategy for the Development of the ‘One Society for All’ Concept and Interculturalism <https://vlada.mk/nacionalni-strategii> [visited on 12.05.2022]

<sup>13</sup> *Steps toward integrated education in the education system of the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje: Ministry of Education and Science, 2010

## The Concept of “One Society” in Education

In the last decade, as stated in the National strategy for one society, three different strategies in the educational sector have been adopted. ‘Steps toward integrated education in the education system of the Republic of Macedonia is a strategy prepared by a team comprised of representatives of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Ministry of Education and Science of RM (The strategy was adopted by the Government in 2010 as an attempt to overcome the divisions in the education system through various measures); The Concept for Intercultural Education was prepared by an expert team from the Nansen Dialogue Center in Skopje and was adopted by the MES in early 2016 (The concept identifies multiple areas in which measures need to be taken to address the existing divides upon language and ethnic lines); The Education Strategy 2018-2025 and its Action Plan are the latest strategic documents in education (adopted by the Government in January 2018 (The thing of particular importance in this Strategy is that the role of education is clearly emphasized for improving inter-ethnic integration and social cohesion). Among other things, the strategy aims at “adapting and consistently implementing the concept of inclusive and multicultural education, in other words, this strategy truly aims at developing one society for all.”

According to the Education Strategy 2018-2025, teachers themselves do not promote sufficient respect for diversity and equality (in terms of gender or ethnicity, social status, intellectual and physical abilities), as well as multiculturalism. Also, according to the National strategy, the measures to overcome divisions upon ethnic lines in schools are insufficient and segregation in schools affects social cohesion and interethnic integration. There are a lot of participants and stakeholders connected to this problem. First, the children that are living in 21 century through their digital devices and smartphones, then their parents that might be still stuck in socialist time or struggling for decent salaries, also the teachers who are not motivated or simple not able to cope with the higher level of instilling the values of diversity for the future, last but not the least, the municipalities that are hardly involved in the processes of education despite many obligations and opportunities according to the laws, and additionally, the negative societal atmosphere that “stimulates” various crime and corruption acts than diverse cultural values or needed life skills for the children. About the quality of education in general, we can pose a question is it in line with the desired output? I will start with the old saying that education is what is left in kids’ heads after formal education is over. Namely, based on this thesis, it will mean that the educational strategy for the building “one society for all” would aim for children to have in their portfolios sustained contact with the children of other ethnic groups, to acquire some (or full) knowledge of another societal language (besides 2 foreign languages), and to learn about “other” cultures, namely, to get familiarized with cultural values and history of their neighbors (even though some municipalities or spaces are ethnically homogeneous).

Many donor projects were engaged and implemented in our educational sector, but so far no one has reached comprehensive or sustained results generally, and concerning the multicultural elements and integration efforts, particularly. Why the interventions and models that were tested and implemented could not become reality? Why the schools could not manage to use new multicultural practices? Let us try to shed more light on these questions. There are many factors, but for our purpose, there are two lines of analysis possible that prove the failure of the projects: wrong investments in diversity, when unity was needed, and lacking political will and courage to build something cross-ethnic for benefit of social integration.

About the first line of explaining the problem, I have written many times. The challenge is how to build an integrated society, in which it is of no importance from which ethnic community you are coming. Is it possible for society to be fair and equitable for the majority of citizens? The lesson that ordinary citizens have learned in these years, or at least felt on their skin, is that to be equal in society, you need to be the same as others. To become the same as others, you need at

some point “to get” different from the state to be equal to others. Instead of equating themselves with others, by nurturing and “investing” in diversity, citizens and their families become even more diverse and slowly isolate themselves from mainstream society and move into their own “ethnic society.” Thus, isolated and excluded, especially the citizens from the smaller communities, are no longer equal participants in political and economic life. (Atanasov, 2017) It seems that this result is a direct consequence of “investments in diversity”, for which many have so much advocated and spent millions of euros, and the result, instead of integration, is often segregation in the form of culturally parallel or ethnically ghettoized spaces.

The second line of elaboration seems more complex. There is a need for political will and courage to invest in social integration. What has been proposed and what should be done? As seen from the national strategy sectors, in education, the strategy is simple and direct. It stands on three pillars: sustained communication, learning other languages, and enriching the educational contents in regular and formal education. Let me once again go through the proposed elements. In the educational sector are identified “three priorities and adequate goals and activities: securing interaction among students from different ethnic communities and different languages of educational instruction in primary (and secondary schools); improving the learning of the language of “others”; as well as strengthening of intercultural elements in curricula. Each of these priority goals has its own ‘arsenal’ of activities in which the essence is on the communication among children in the educational system, bigger language acquaintance, and the learning different cultures that surround us” (Atanasov, 2021). The strategy, explaining the first priority, try to secure bigger interaction of the school children from different ethnicities/languages that should be done through formal curricula and extra-curricular activities. In the formal education process, the teaching classes should be held together in at least two different subjects. The extra curricula activities should be held together in different projects and activities. Three more activities should be implemented: increasing cooperation among different municipal/state schools, increasing the cooperation among teachers of different language instruction, and increasing the cooperation between schools, parents, and children. Concerning the second priority, improving learning the languages of “others”, there are two goals, improving the learning of the Macedonian language for non-Macedonian speaking children, and enabling the Macedonian children to basic communication with the language of other ethnic communities. This will be regulated in dependence on different regions and municipalities. The third priority is, namely, the enhancement of the elements of different cultures and changes in the textbooks in the way of better acquaintances with “other” cultures, and respect for diversities. Also, new project activities should be implemented in meeting the cultures and traditions of all communities. These priorities should be realized through simultaneous and sustained efforts if we want to achieve bigger results in a couple of years. If the region is stable and without processes that can damage the whole strategy.

The Action plan<sup>14</sup> of the National strategy for the development of the one society for all concepts and interculturalism was a document that accompanied the strategy and means that the two of them are inseparable and complement. In the Action plan, the creators of the strategy projected their processual timing, the institutions that were responsible for the implementation of the strategy, the resources needed, the type of interventions, the risks and the level of risk, and identified stakeholders, interested sides and the number of the activities. Being part of the process, I can confirm that it was done within the institutions (all the previous strategies of this format were done from outside of the institutions, i.e. Ministry of education), by people that were already in the state institutions, the main group, and supportive groups worked intensively in six months, the process and the people in the process respected the legal procedures that were in power. We

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<sup>14</sup> Action plan and National Strategy for Development of the ‘One Society for All’ Concept and Interculturalism <https://vlada.mk/nacionalni-strategii> [visited on 12.05.2022]

had full Government support, a lot of interested stakeholders were part of the process, there were many public events where the teams and leaders of the process spoke about the strategy and the whole idea, and there were no obstructions of the political matters. The risks in implementation were identified only in the establishment of Children's centers for integrative, intercultural, and inclusive education because they were new and a project that will require longer time and resources, and additionally, changes in the textbooks for a bigger acquaintance of the cultures of "others" and respecting of diversities. The latter is something that always provokes resistance, mainly political and, also, teachers' uneasiness. The learning of languages of the "others" was not labeled as a risk. The lowest risk we took was to project the fourth grade as a starting point for everybody to learn the language of the majority – Macedonian language (from fourth to ninth grade), and for Macedonians to start learning one of the "others" languages in the multilingual schools, as an elective subject, and as a wish of the children and their families. The main goals were to break the barrier of non-Macedonians practicing the lingua franca, and for Macedonians to learn basic communication in the "other" language. There are different theories about when the children should start another language than the mother tongue, but our children were already burdened with two foreign languages, which I claim is too much. The biggest change compared to reality is that the Macedonian children should start learning "other" languages not from the sixth but the fourth grade. All of this depends on other factors as well but the idea was to adopt the strategy every third year.

Three preconditions were most important for the process to be successful. The approval of the Government and the political parties that were in the Government, the speed of the implementation that should engage a lot of people and resources, as well as establishing new sectors in some institutions (for instance in the Ministry of education and science), and the overall regional atmosphere of building positive context in the region considering that the integrational process for European Union and NATO membership of some of the neighbors should add more energy and will to change the negative heritage of the wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, in a short period after the enactment of the National strategy, one of the main coalitions in the Government, the Democratic Union of Integration (DUI), as well as some other political parties expressed "political" doubts about this strategy and concept.

## **Conclusion**

If this government's national strategy does not become reality, especially in education, it will mean that no political force is willing to get into it and make it real. It will mean that our communities (mainly Macedonian and Albanian) do not share the same vision of the society, nor would desire or like a higher level of integration. It will mean that the political concept of "one society for all" is abundant and interculturalism did not become an integrational solution. In the national strategy, it was stated that: "To us, One Society for All means: recognition of all diversities, safeguarding and ensuring equality, social justice, just and equitable treatment, equal opportunities, involvement and participation of citizens in decision-making and attaining social cohesion. This comprehensive aim was projected by reaching integration through diversities, equality, justice, involvement, participation, and attaining social cohesion.

There are seven areas, but for the author, the most influential for the concept of "one society for all" are education, culture, and media. These three sectors are spaces where the values are made and transmitted as connecting categories that should be used in social communication and integration. These are the values that will support bigger communication among different segments of the societies. (Atanasov, 2021) The team that created the Strategy aimed that elements of intercultural education should be implemented in a way to stimulate the communication between the youth in the primary school context. It is a long-term task but the only way of achieving the concept of "one society for all".

All of these presuppose having a stable social context that was so far nurtured by strong nationalism and ethnic political mobilization. If society emanates positive vibes to the school system, then on some levels we can achieve correlation and mutual enhancement. The schools should support the new waves of communication, language learning, and the exchange of cultural values. The search for common ground is worth investing in the future, instead of investment in diversity. Anyhow, the gain will be twofold: reaching a certain level of social cohesion and mutual trust of communities in creating “one society for all”, and enriching the students with the cultural heritage from the region, as a benefit in their life and career. Then, individual gains can be transformed into a social value that can bring more to a society that matures and practice democracy and respect diversity.

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## GENDER SENSITIVE EDUCATION AS A PREREQUISITE FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

**Abstract:** The purpose of this text is to examine relationships between concepts of Gender Sensitive Education, Feminist Pedagogy and Comprehensive Sexuality Education. The main hypothesis of this conceptual analysis is that a prerequisite for successful implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education is a successful implementation of principles of Feminist Pedagogy and Gender Sensitive Education. Main argument for the hypothesis is that Comprehensive Sexuality Education is content-oriented education, while Feminist Pedagogy and Gender Sensitive Education focus on teaching, the pedagogical process, and the development of teacher and student competencies. Only within Gender Sensitive Education environment, successful implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education is possible.

**Keywords:** Gender sensitive education, Comprehensive sexuality education, Feminist pedagogy, Competencies

## Introduction

The term “Comprehensive Sexuality Education” (CSE) has been widely used since the *International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), at the end of the first decade of this century, published their first guides to the design of “Comprehensive Sex Education” curricula (International Planned Parenthood Federation [IPPF], 2010; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2009; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe and BZgA [WHO], 2010).

It is a well-designed system that includes all participants in the education system. CSE is based on scientifically proven information about sexuality, it promotes gender equality and human rights. In addition to formal education, the concept of CSE envisages non-formal peer education, supported by responsible educational and medical institutions. The “comprehensiveness” of this type of education is because it addresses multiple topics; In addition to sexual and reproductive health, i.e. prevention of sexually transmitted infections, protection against unwanted pregnancy and information on HIV prevention, are included topics on gender equality, prevention of violence, especially cyber violence and school harassment, romantic relations and relationships, civil aspects, etc. Contents on diversity, protection from homophobia, discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity are also provided. According to the WHO, CSE refers to cognitive, emotional, social and interactive aspects of sexuality. Sex education begins in early childhood and continues through adolescence and adulthood. It strives to support and protect sexual development. Gradually it enables and empowers children and young people by providing information, skills and positive values to understand their own sexuality, to have safe and fulfilling relationships, but also to be responsible for their own health and the health and well-being of others. The concept of CSE covers contents and approaches of sex education programs that should meet different quality criteria, and the most important criterion is that information provided is scientifically accurate, complete and tailored to the level of understanding of students of different ages and developmental stages.

A widely accepted definition of CSE was developed for the second edition of the International Technical Guide to Sex Education, published in 2018 by UNESCO and five other United Nations organizations. The definition is as follows:

“Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and, to understand and ensure protection of their rights throughout their lives” (UNESCO et al., 2018, p. 16)

Despite the initial problems in defining “comprehensiveness” in sex education and expanding the areas of learning and activities (Miedema, 2020), CSE faces a number of other issues and problems related to its implementation. Despite the inclusion of the criterion of cultural sensitivity for the realization and implementation of CSE, different cultural and social milieus, religious beliefs, and different degrees of democratic processes of the states, create specific problems in the attempts for its implementation. In addition to the “external” issues and problems faced by CSE implementation, there are also “internal” open issues, which relate to the immediate educational space and environment in which CSE should be implemented (Yankah, & Aggleton, 2017).

Pedagogical aspects, as part of “internal problems” of the CSE, include methods and means of implementing teaching, but also the issues about the approach and the character of training of the teaching staff. The recommended method of interactive teaching, the approach to teaching where students are at the center of teaching, only partially solves the problem, obscuring the situation with the educational ambience and environment created by educational policies. It is almost unthinkable for CSE to achieve declared goals and effects in conditions of enclosure with curriculum content from other subject programs filled with stereotypical contents and prejudices, ie, contents that disqualify the contents in CSE programs. Inconsistency and incoherence with the curriculum, plans and programs can lead to confusion among students, but also to complete discrediting of CSE as a whole. Although “Gender Sensitive Education” is explicitly mentioned in the *International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)* document in the revised edition of the UNESCO guide, the treatment of Gender Sensitive Education is only in the context of general principle of sensitivity to different needs of girls and boys concerning the information related to the CSE program. It seems that CSE is possible to be successfully implemented only as part of an education reform policy in which Gender Sensitive Education will be in the central place, and CSE will be only one part of such a reform. This is because Gender Sensitive Education has a wider range and scope of reforms that do not only address the topics and content of the curriculum, but also the overall educational process. Gender equality policies, protection and prevention of discrimination, protection against sexual harassment as part of the Gender Sensitive Education, provide a quality environment and preconditions for the implementation of CSE. Such a reform goes beyond the limits of sex pedagogy and includes gender sensitive pedagogy (Curvino, & Fischer, 2014).

Hereinafter, an overview of the CSE will be given in terms of topics and content in the proposed programs, and the proposed principles of implementation in the technical guidelines of international agencies. The concept of “Gender Sensitive Education” and current practices for development and implementation of such education will then be presented. The internal tensions of “Gender Sensitive Education” will be accessed when it is implemented through the gender mainstreaming tool. Finally, we will present the concept of Feminist Pedagogy as a solution to the internal problems of “Gender Sensitive Education”, and as the broader context of sex and gender sensitive pedagogy.

## **CSE: Content and Implementation**

According to the UNESCO guidelines (UNESCO et al., 2018), the CSE, whether formal or informal, contains certain characteristics that are general and necessary. CSE must be based on scientifically accurate information related to sexual and reproductive health, sexuality and sexual behavior. It is a continuous educational process that begins at an early age, in which new information is based on what has been previously learned. The educational content in CSE is appropriate to the age of children and young people and meets their needs related to the topics; the content of the topics is adapted to their emotional and cognitive development.

CSE, in its pedagogical form, is created as a curriculum with a clear plan according to which teaching is performed. The curriculum includes key learning objectives and tasks, presentation of key concepts, and structured information with clear messages. It is interesting to notice that for UNESCO, such a curriculum for CSE can be conducted in formal and non-formal education. However, according to all efforts and analyzes, it seems that the CSE program is best implemented within the formal education.

“Comprehensiveness” in CSE means several things, but one dimension of that meaning is that CSE has access to sexuality in all its aspects (F Hague, E A J Miedema, & Le Mat, 2018). CSE is not just about information and content about sexual and reproductive health and information

about reproductive biology and physiology, it also promotes a positive active attitude towards sexuality. Sexuality is an active part of human personality and behavior, so contraceptive topics are presented not only as a topic to prevent pregnancy, but also as a form of protection of an active sex life and the challenges of sexually transmitted infections, HIV.

CSE also covers social issues that shape sexuality and our perceptions and problems with it. CSE supports the empowerment of students by improving their analytical, communication and other life skills, concerning their health and well-being through relevant information on sexuality, human rights, family life and interpersonal relationships, personal and shared values, cultural and social norms, gender equality, non-discrimination, sexual behavior, violence and gender-based violence, respect for bodily integrity, sexual abuse, underage marriage and child trafficking for sexual exploitation. “Comprehensive” refers to the breadth and depth of the topics and the content that is continuously delivered to students through education, instead of CSE being presented as a one-time lesson or intervention (Roodsaz, 2018).

CSE is based on a human rights approach, through the promotion of human rights and the rights of children and young people. The right to health, education, information, equality and non-discrimination are the core values of CSE. Therefore, human rights are not only the background of CSE, they are also actively promoted through the teaching process. Children and young people must be empowered with information and knowledge about their rights, recognize and respect the rights of others and stand by those whose rights are endangered or not respected. At the heart of the human rights approach, the CSE advocates for young people to exercise the right to responsible, informed choice in the area of sexuality.

CSE also includes the aspect of gender equality, especially how gender norms can affect inequality and how those inequalities can affect the overall health and well-being of children and young people, having an impact on the prevention of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, wounds and unintentional pregnancies and gender-based violence. CSE contributes to gender equality by building awareness about the centrality and diversity of gender and gender identity in people’s lives; accessing of gender norms shaped by cultural, social and biological differences and similarities; and by encouraging the creation of respectful and equitable relationships based on empathy and understanding. Gender mainstreaming in the CSE curricula is an integral part of the effectiveness of CSE curricula (Allen, & Rasmussen, 2017).

Transformability is also an important concept for CSE. The idea is for CSE to contribute to the formation of an equal and compassionate society by empowering individuals and communities, promoting critical thinking skills and promoting the active participation of young people in society. It provides students with opportunities to explore and nurture positive values and attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health and the development of self-respect and respect for human rights and gender equality. Through CSE, young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions and behaviors and the ways in which they can influence others. CSE strengthens the skills and attitudes that enable young people to treat others with respect, acceptance, tolerance and empathy, regardless of their ethnicity, race, social, economic or immigration status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

In the context of CSE, the traditional pedagogy, in which the teacher has a central role and the students are only a passive recipient of the content, is abandoned. The UNESCO handbook recommends pedagogical approaches according to which learning is a process that always builds on the knowledge that the student already possesses, but also that students construct their own knowledge based on interaction with the environment and the given inputs. Based on this perspective, learning is not only a process of passively receiving and processing information conveyed by teachers. Students learn best when they are allowed to critically construct their own understanding of information and content. Although there is little evidence of the impact of student-centered or shared approaches within the CSE, according to UNESCO experts, these teaching strategies



have proven to be the most successful for health education in general. Another important factor in the successful implementation of CSE is that the positive effects in teaching are largely due to the motivation, attitudes and skills of teachers and the ability to apply participatory teaching techniques. Student-centered approaches and shared learning strategies within CSE programs enable students to actively participate in the teaching process and to create new learning styles. Since learning can be seen as a form of personal growth, students should be encouraged to use reflective practices for critical thinking oriented to their own life.

## **Gender Sensitive Education as a Context**

Gender Sensitive Education is implemented as part of the basic policy measures for achieving the principle of equal opportunities for women and men and gender equality (Aksornkool). Equal opportunities education is an integral part of education system and vocational training at all levels of education, which ensures readiness of women and men for active and equal participation in all areas of social life. In preparation, adoption and implementation of education or vocational training programs, preparation of textbooks and school aids and introduction of organizational innovations and modification of pedagogical and andragological methods, mechanisms are provided to remove prejudices and stereotypes regarding the establishment of equal opportunities. In our country, for example, the bodies of the state administration responsible for performing activities in the field of education and labor and the institutions that perform education and professional training, are obliged to perform regular analysis of the contents of the curricula, programs and textbooks, in improving equal opportunities for women and men (Lampsey, Alice, et al, 2015).

At the level of formal primary education, the need for gender sensitive pedagogy is imposed as a means of overcoming the teaching in which gender bias prevails, where girls and boys do not have equal opportunities to participate and gender stereotypes are encouraged (Mukoro, 2021). Gender-sensitive pedagogy is based on innovative approaches to teaching and learning by emphasizing interactive processes in which students are involved with introduction of critical thinking and the development of new skills, new attitudes or new ways of thinking. Within such approaches, the educational needs of each student should be met, based on his/her personal abilities, and a willingness should be expressed to encourage and inspire all students – girls and boys alike. The main characteristics of gender-sensitive student-centered pedagogy are aimed at transforming schools to create a positive learning environment in which both female and male students are equally valued. All students actively participate in teaching, without discrimination. Teaching and learning are adapted to the specific learning needs of girls and boys and through experiential learning and dialogue students are enabled to think critically about the world around them, in order to become active citizens who can contribute to the community. Students are respected according to their abilities, interests, ideas, needs and developed social identities. Gender sensitive pedagogy has an inclusive gender approach in the processes of planning and implementation of teaching, and in classroom organization.

Gender sensitization in education does not mean exclusively education on gender equality as a separate content that is added to the original teaching content. Gender sensitization in education would be aimed more to creating an environment of absence of discrimination and affirmative representation and visibility of gender relations, and proactive affirmative representation of women as a subject in teaching content that for historical and social reasons have been repressed, stereotyped in representation, or degraded in their social and historical role.

Gender Sensitive Education in both compulsory formal education and higher education could be implemented through the integration of a gender perspective into curricula and study programs.

Policies for prevention and protection against discrimination in the context of gender equality in education are founded on several basic concepts:

1. A gender perspective is a view concerning gender differences in any given political area/activity. It is about a general acceptance of a gender perspective in the process of assessing the implications of any planned action on women and men, including legislation, policies or programs in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for the issues and experiences of women and men in striving to become an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and social spheres, so that women and men will have equal benefits and equal opportunities. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

2. “Inclusion of gender equality in the mainstreams, policies and practices” (gender mainstreaming) is the integration of a gender perspective at every stage in the process of building, policy-making, adoption, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies – with a view to promoting and developing equality between women and men. That is, assessing how policies affect lives and position of women and men and taking responsibility in accessing them by creating space for everyone, from the family community level to the wider community level; to contribute to that process of building a common and understood vision for achieving sustainable development, while turning those policies into reality. To achieve this, a high level of political will, commitment and understanding is required in all structures and spheres of society.

3. Gender impact assessment. Gender impact assessment means the assessment of policy proposals of different impacts on men and women, with the aim of identifying whether discriminatory effects have been neutralized and whether gender equality has been implemented.

4. Gender sensitivity. Gender sensitivity implies the ability to understand and point out the existence of gender differences, problems and inequalities and to include them in strategies and actions to overcome them.

All these steps are inevitable and necessary in the implementation of Gender Sensitive Education. However, institutional support is needed from education authorities, but also from gender equality management bodies.

## **Feminist Pedagogy as a Framework**

The dangers associated with Gender Sensitive Education are in the bureaucratization of implementation of this type of educational policies. The central principle of Gender Sensitive Education – to take into account differences in educational needs of girls and boys, and other persons with different gender identities, can become a principle of measures to “add” and “complement” the underrepresented sex or gender, thus satisfying the principle of balanced participation. Bureaucratization of measures for Gender Sensitive Education can also be transferred to the field of creating curricula and programs, creating content that will “stereotype” gender equality without a critical perspective on the production and dissemination of knowledge. Feminist pedagogy, as part of critical pedagogy, criticizes this implementation of gender-sensitive education (Crabtree, 2009). Gender sensitivity in education must be transformative and critical. Measures and activities for gender equality in education will not be achieved by themselves if the access and approach to teaching is not changed. Teaching should not be focused solely on the content of the curriculum, it should also increase students’ critical competencies. But to achieve this type of teaching, it is necessary to transform critical potential of institutional bodies and authorities involved in education. Gender perspective does not mean only a statistical calculation of the inclusion of gender groups, it also means a constantly critical position towards the conditions of production and reception of knowledge.

In the context of higher education, for e.g., the main idea of policy making and decision-making processes in an organizational structure in education from a gender perspective, is to provide prevention and protection against discrimination, and, at the same time, affirmatively and proactively promote gender equality. In our case, the process of development of study programs, viewed from a gender perspective, must provide mechanisms that will determine the needs of students,

and at the same time, to evaluate the consequences and the impact that the recommendations will have on them. This process can and should be part of the whole structure of the governance and management bodies of the faculty, which should also be guided by the same principles.

Recommendations for the implementation of gender sensitization can be prescriptive-descriptive in terms of clear guidelines for creating the curriculum, with a ban on teaching content and teaching aids, and the content of mandatory and additional literature in which the grounds for discrimination are present (Hennig, 2018).

The second type of implementation of gender perspective in the subject programs, ie the study program, is with clear recommendations to achieve proactive affirmation of gender equality, ie, clearly increased visibility of gender relations, status and position of women, use of positive representations and portraits of women and girls, etc. The third type of implementation is through the evaluation tool, ie checklist through which the creator and evaluator of the subject or study programs can check their discriminatory potential. At the same time, their affirmative status for the development of gender equality can be assessed with the same tool.

Gender sensitization means critical transmission of discriminatory content, which is necessary for realization of the curriculum, placing it in the historical context in which the content is created, and by pointing out the theoretical, methodological and epistemological assumptions of such content. In other words, a critical distance is needed towards any teaching topic and content that is contrary to the currently accepted positive provisions on gender, gender relations and sexual orientation.

Gender sensitization does not mean following some kind of gender ideology of following dogmas hidden behind international conventions and legislation in this area. Within higher education, academic freedom allows creation of attitudes and views that do not coincide with current positive attitudes about gender and sexuality. However, the presentation of such views must rigorously and uncompromisingly have a sound theoretical and methodological framework, a valid argumentation framework, and a respectable reference literature. This not only provides greater objectivity in the creation and presentation of scientific views, it also reveals arbitrary views on issues in this area that are covered by academic freedom and academic authority.

## **Conclusion: CSE as Part of Gender Sensitive Education**

Accessing the relationships between the concepts of Feminist Pedagogy, Gender Sensitive Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education has supported the main hypothesis of this conceptual analysis, that a prerequisite for successful implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education is successful implementation of the principles of Feminist Pedagogy and Gender Sensitive Education. The main argument for the hypothesis is that Comprehensive Sexuality Education is a content-oriented education, while Feminist Pedagogy and Gender Sensitive Education are aimed at creating a non-discriminatory and transformative teaching environment, pedagogical process and development of teacher and student competencies.

Although CSE comprehensively incorporates pedagogical and external aspects in order to successfully achieve its goals, they still remain outside its domain, and belong to the pedagogy of Gender Sensitive Education and Feminist Pedagogy. The presumed support in education policies for Gender Sensitive Education as an educational environment for CSE is neither so simple nor so easy. Gender Sensitive Education requires broad educational reforms that have their own challenges and problems. But from this conceptual analysis one thing is certain: only within the Gender Sensitive Education environment is a successful implementation of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education possible.

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## **SECURITY CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION PROCESS ON FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES IN SARAJEVO DURING PANDEMIC OF COVID-19**

**Abstract:** First case of COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been registered in March of 2020. After this the authorities proclaim COVID-19 as security challenge, condition of natural disaster and lockdown in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since that education process in all institutions has been stopped and next step was request for transformation from normal to “new normal” that involves technology for on-line teaching and learning. Faculty of Political Sciences, as part of University of Sarajevo, start with getting hardware and software for teaching and learning but also equipment for individual and collective security of students and employees. Research in this paper is about analysis, statistics and comparison of measures, activities and results for minimizing security challenges for students and employees at Faculty of Political Sciences caused by a pandemic of COVID-19. Significant part of this research paper is on consequences on teaching and learning process after on-line stop and education process at Faculty of Political Sciences back to normal.

**Keywords:** Security challenges, Education, COVID-19

## Security-meaning and Characteristics

Security is a term of very broad meaning. In general, it implies the degree of protection of people from various forms of endangerment, protection of material and cultural goods in personal and social property, protection of society and its values, overall protection of the state from all forms of endangerment and finally the degree of protection on the planet (Beridan and others, 2001:348).

The concept of modern security is undergoing a kind of transformation in which the traditional understanding of national security is intertwined with the concept of human (human) security still in development. The state and its endangerment by other states was a central issue traditional understanding of national security. It was dominated by force and the impact of force on states, societies and individuals. In the modern understanding of national security and human security play an equally important role. Human security is more focused on endangering individuals and social groups and society as a whole from a variety of threats, dangers and challenges which are called the sources of risk. They can produce a wide range of social, economic, environmental and other negative impact on individuals, social groups and society as a whole. (Lisica and Bajramović, 2021:64).

Vellani reduces security assessment to three elements: vulnerability assessment, threat assessment and risk assessment, stating that they can all be qualitative, quantitative or combined, depending on the scenario that is analyzed (2007:9). Threats are one of the sources of security risks and this assessment can be extended by assessing hazards and challenges as sources of security risks. Hazards, threats and challenges as sources of risk and potential the consequences of their manifestation constitute security risks.

Hazards, threats and challenges are sources of security risks. It is a danger an event and situation that may produce damage under certain circumstances. Threat is a combination of the intention and ability of the opponent to produce damage in the near or distant future. Damage means injuring or killing people, damage to property or the environment, economic and other losses or deterioration security. There is no clear distinction between the terms danger and threat. Their definitions and classifications are similar, and are sometimes used as synonyms. By definition, danger is a somewhat broader term than threat. That what distinguishes threats from danger is the existence of evil intent. Malicious the action of an opponent characteristic of threats does not necessarily exist in the code dangers. Dangers are mainly the result of unintentional human actions or they can be caused by natural disasters beyond human control. One they do not involve the direct intention of the opponent towards a particular goal. Challenges are usually called uncertain threats and dangers, or those for which they are not can predict the probability, location, or intensity of events. Characterizes their uncertain forecast of the level of exposure of people, property, the environment and others goods and the likelihood of damage to them. No matter what threats like this and the dangers pose a challenge to analysts, they also need to be careful investigate how safety measures and preventive procedures would be taken characters aimed at preventing or mitigating their consequences. Challenges can also be related to management and organizational structure – wrong decisions, wrong security measures and priorities, misplaced organization in the security sector and others that they have potential for damage production. Management and organizational challenges are mainly considered through vulnerability assessment (Lisica and Bajramović, 2021:55).

Health security is one of the contents of the concept of human security, as a relatively new concept has not received a generally accepted definition. Instead, there are a multitude of working definitions developed by actors that deal with public health issues, and the scientific contribution in such cases is most often contained in the common features of the term (Dautović, 2021:92). One such example is the article by Ya-Wen Chiu (2009) in which a comparative analysis of the definitions of the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Organization (APEC) and the European Union (EU) was conducted. According to this, the term health security encompasses emerging diseases. Emerging diseases are

difficult to understand, difficult to treat and very often fatal. Several such examples are the emergence of diseases such as SARS, avian influenza and influenza A (H1N1), which have become a serious threat to global health security. Other diseases of a similar nature include Ebola virus, Nipah virus and Marburg hemorrhagic fever (Dautović, 2021:92-93).

## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

On December 31, 2019, the office of the World Health Organization (WHO) in China has been informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology (unknown cause) discovered in the city of Wuhan, Chinese province of Hubei. On January 1, 2020, WHO requested more detailed information from national authorities in order to assess the risk. On January 3, 2020, the national authorities in China reported a total of forty – four patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology ([www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unknown-cause-china/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unknown-cause-china/en/) accessed on 05.11.2020.).

Coronavirus disease “is an infectious caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The virus can spread from an infected person’s mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell.” ([www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1) accessed on 14.04.2022.).

At the press conference on March 11, 2020, led by the director of the World Health Organization, a pandemic was declared in the world. The reason for declaring a pandemic is that in two weeks the number of cases outside China increased by 13 times, and the number of countries affected by the virus tripled. He said the WHO was deeply concerned about the alarming level of proliferation and the seriousness of the situation, and called on all countries to take action to combat the virus. At the time of declaring a pandemic globally, 132,758 cases of SARS-COV-2 had been confirmed, of which 4,955 were fatal ([www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020](http://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020) accessed on 14.04.2022.).

The first cases of COVID-19 in Europe were recorded on January 24, 2020, when France officially notified the Regional Office of the World Health Organization for Europe of 3 confirmed cases. The WHO Office for Europe, in line with global guidelines, recommends that all countries increase preparedness levels and strengthen alert and response systems to identify, manage and manage new COVID-19 cases and communicate risks. Countries should prepare to respond to different public health scenarios, recognizing that there is no single approach to managing COVID-19 cases and epidemics. Each country should assess its risk, measures in place and their social acceptability and swiftly implement the necessary interventions to the appropriate extent to halt or slow down the transmission of COVID-19 while minimizing economic, public and social impacts. Since March 13, 2020, when the number of new cases became higher than those in China, the World Health Organization has begun to consider Europe an active center of the pandemic. Cases across countries across Europe have doubled over a period of usually 3 to 4 days. At the very beginning of the spread of the virus, the most severely affected by the virus was the European country, Italy, where certain areas were in complete isolation for almost three months. Those numbers rose sharply in a matter of days, putting Europe’s national health system in serious trouble and collapsing health in some countries. One of the reasons for this is the delays and indecision in taking action by some European decision-makers. The European Union has rejected the idea of suspending the Schengen free travel zone and introducing border controls with Italy. The decision met with some opposition from some politicians, and some countries announced the complete closure of their national borders. A few days later, the EU closed its external borders ([www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/03/17/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/03/17/) accessed on 14.04.2022.).

World data show that by April 19, 2022, there were 505,410,728 patients on the planet, 6,225,554 dead and 457,298,745 recovered ([www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/](http://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/) accessed on 19.04.2022.).

## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The COVID-19 pandemic in Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of a global coronavirus pandemic that is still progressing and has been reported in more than 210 countries and territories around the world. It was confirmed that the virus arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina on March 5, 2020, when a patient in Banja Luka, who was traveling to Italy, tested positive. Later that day, another case was reported, and it was a family cluster of the son of the first infected case. The first case of COVID-19 in the entity of the Federation of BiH was recorded on March 9, 2020. On March 21, the first death of COVID-19 in the country was announced at a hospital in Bihac. The patient was an elderly woman who had been hospitalized two days earlier ([www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/peti-slucaj-koronavirusa-u-bih-potvrden-kod-pacijentice-iz-zenice/200308096](http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/peti-slucaj-koronavirusa-u-bih-potvrden-kod-pacijentice-iz-zenice/200308096) accessed on 14.04.2022.). Without precise instructions at the BiH level, the entities reacted and made separate decisions with the emergence of the coronavirus in BiH. The recommendations and orders of the authorities in the Republic of Srpska, where the first cases of infection were recorded, have not been called into question at lower levels of government. However, this was not the case in the Federation of BiH due to 10 cantonal units.

Pursuant to Article 13, item (h) of the Framework Law on Protection and Rescue of People and Material Goods from Natural or Other Disasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Official Gazette of BiH”, No. 50/08), Decision of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Accidents caused by coronavirus, Decision of the Government of Republic of Srpska on declaring a state of emergency and Decision of the Mayor of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina on declaring a state of natural disaster due to COVID-19, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the 5th extraordinary session on March 17, 2020. (“Official Gazette of BiH”, No. 18/20) passed a decision: On declaring the occurrence of a natural or other disaster in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was late in procuring vaccines against COVID-19, so the vaccination process was the last in the region of Southeast Europe. Following the situation on the ground during the state of the accident with the improvement of conditions, it revoked certain orders and relaxed certain measures in order to make it easier for the citizens and thus not violate the security situation. Orders suspending the work of shopping malls, providing services within catering facilities of all categories and hotels have been repealed, and orders that did not have a deadline have been repealed. The ban on the movement of people over the age of 65 and those under the age of 18 was also lifted, public transport was established, and many measures were relaxed. Data on COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 19, 2022:

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Cases: 363.555, Tested: 1.641.177, Recovered: 191.286, Died: 14.419

Federation of BiH – Cases: 239.595, Tested: 1.164.071, Recovered: 126.105, Died: 7.852

Republic of Srpska – Cases: 109.638 Tested: 408.326, Recovered: 55.033, Died: 6.042

Brčko District – Cases: 13.857, Tested: 65.840, Recovered: 10.126, Died: 511 ([www.klix.ba/koronavirus-u-bih](http://www.klix.ba/koronavirus-u-bih) accessed on 19.04.2022.).

## **Faculty of Political Sciences – History and Structure**

The modern history of the University of Sarajevo began with the opening of the first higher education institutions on the eve of World War II. Thus, in 1940, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry was opened, and after that in 1944, the Faculty of Medicine. After the end of the Second World War, the work of the Faculty of Medicine was renewed in 1946, and the Faculty of

Law and the Higher Pedagogical School and the Institute of Biology were opened. The work of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry was renewed in 1948, and in 1949 the Technical Faculty was opened. In 1949, the Assembly of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed the Law on the University establishing the University of Sarajevo, so that with the election of the first rector, dr. Vaso Butozan on December 2, 1949, the University of Sarajevo officially began to operate. Until 1975, the University of Sarajevo was the only university in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main institution of higher education and science in Bosnia and Herzegovina, significantly contributing to the founding of the University of Banja Luka in 1975, the University of Tuzla in 1976 and the University of Mostar in 1977. ([unsa.ba/o-univerzitetu/organizacija/historija](http://unsa.ba/o-univerzitetu/organizacija/historija) accessed on 14.04.2022.).

The Faculty of Political Sciences is one of the 26 faculties of the University of Sarajevo. It was officially formed in 1961, continuing the tradition of the former College of Political Science in Sarajevo. Through the tradition of academic education for more than 60 years, it is one of the oldest public scientific research institutions in the field of social sciences in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Filandra and others (ed) 2012:5). The Faculty of Political Sciences is successfully implementing the reform of the teaching-scientific process on the basis of the standards contained in the Bologna Declaration. The Faculty of Political Science has five departments: the Department of Politology, the Department of Sociology, the Department of Communicology, the Department of Social Work and the Department of Security and Peace Studies ([fpn.unsa.ba/b/historijat-fakulteta/](http://fpn.unsa.ba/b/historijat-fakulteta/) accessed on 14.04.2022.).

## **Faculty of Political Sciences During Pandemic of COVID-19**

The notice on the change in the organization of teaching in the conditions of the occurrence of COVID-19 was published on the website on March 11, 2020. The Senate of the University of Sarajevo has adopted conclusions on changing the organization of teaching, according to which lectures and exercises will be realized through the E-teaching platform. The change of organization will begin on Thursday, March 12, 2020, and will last until the competent Crisis Staff makes a different decision. Teachers and associates are required to post teaching materials and exercises for the next two weeks on the E-learning platform. Consultations and communications will take place via e-mail. More detailed instructions and updated information related to the change in the organization of teaching, the temporary transition from teaching "in the classroom" to E-teaching will be delivered by e-mail and posted on the website and other platforms of the Faculty of Political Science ([fpn.unsa.ba/b/obavijest-o-izmjeni-organizacije-nastave-u-uvjetima-pojave-covid-19/](http://fpn.unsa.ba/b/obavijest-o-izmjeni-organizacije-nastave-u-uvjetima-pojave-covid-19/)).

In accordance with the new situation, liquid for disinfection of hands and shoes were introduced at the entrance to the Faculty of Political Sciences with the obligation to wear a face mask. In accordance with the conclusions of the Senate of the University of Sarajevo, instructions for the implementation of online teaching were issued:

- Teachers and associates are required to post teaching materials and exercises – for period from 12 to 27 March. 2020 – on the moodle e-learning platform UNSA Faculty of Political Science and, if necessary, communicate with students through discussion forum, which is activated on the profiles of all subjects on the platform of education, with mandatory and more frequent consultations via the official e-mail address.

- Realized and completed online classes need to be recorded in the records teaching forms – with an indication that it is online teaching, which you are already talking about informed in the LETTER about the beginning of classes in the summer semester from February 3, 2020. years – as you record the classes and exercises that are realized in the classroom or classes for part-time study, provided that it is not necessary to collect signatures for online teaching students. You can fill in the registration forms on the realized online classes handed over subsequently to the faculty



porter. Provisions of the Law on Higher Education Canton Sarajevo prescribes that every form of teaching must be recorded (such as teaching in classrooms, distance learning classes, online classes, part-time classes, consultative teaching, etc.), which teachers and associates should keep in mind and in accordance with follow these instructions in order to be protected and safe – as an institution and individuals involved in the teaching process – from possible inspection supervision.

- In conclusion no. 6. – Senate of the University of Sarajevo from March 11, 2020 – it is ordered that the teaching and non-teaching staff of the University of Sarajevo – except those from risk categories and those with manifest symptoms of respiratory infections – should to intensify work in the workplace, and teaching staff should intensify and work from home – due to the organization of the work process and teaching in the changed circumstances, as well as the need for the implementation of online teaching and more frequent electronic consultation – while non-teaching staff should coordinate their work in the workplace with proposed hygienic measures and instructions of the Crisis Staff of the University of Sarajevo.

- Therefore, the teaching and non-teaching staff is proposed to work harder and more intensively conditions of work process organization in changed circumstances, and that means that all employees of the Faculty of Political Science of UNSA are obliged to work in harmony with the adopted Conclusions of the UNSA Senate, which do not state – not even in one of the adopted conclusions – that the next two weeks are non-working, but yes during this period it works in changed circumstances, with obligatory realization online teaching.

- Defense of master's theses (3 + 2) and doctoral dissertations scheduled for on March 11, 2020, it will be held without the presence of the audience.

- Conclusions on the changed model of teaching – according to which lectures and exercises realized through the e-learning platform – remain in force until the Crisis the headquarters of the University of Sarajevo did not make a different decision.

The Senate of the University of Sarajevo, at its session of March 25, 2020, passed a Decision (01-5-113/20) which continues the application of the conclusions and recommendations of March 11, 2020.

On May 22, 2020, the Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences passed a Decision (01-3-532-1/20), in order to protect the health and prevent COVID-19 infection of all employees at the Faculty of Political Sciences, with the following content:

- Full-time work is being established for teaching staff at the Faculty of Political Science.
- Consultations of academic staff with students will be conducted by phone, e-mail or exceptionally in the classroom, with prior notice and compliance with all epidemiological measures.
- The sessions of the Faculty of Political Sciences will be uninterrupted, in a way that will be held electronically.
- The decision is applied from June 1, 2020, and the Decision from March 26, 2020 ceases to be valid.

On October 16, 2020, the Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences adopted the COVID-19 Crisis Preparedness and Response Plan. The plan contains: Objective, General instructions on the organization of work in the circumstances of infection caused by COVID-19, Teaching and other forms of work with students, Work of the Council and other bodies of faculties and sub-organizational units and COVID-19 employee case protocol. This plan is still in force today. In the period from March 2020 to April 2022, the University of Sarajevo adopted 37 different documents (Guidelines, Conclusions, Decisions, Information ...) related to the work during the COVID-19 pandemic ([www.unsa.ba/covid-19](http://www.unsa.ba/covid-19) accessed on 19.04.2022.). The method of teaching and other forms of work online at Faculty of Political Sciences was discontinued at the end of September 2021 and from the winter semester of the academic year 2021./2022. classes are held in the

classroom. For the period from March 2020 to April 2022, part of the teaching and non-teaching staff was infected with the COVID-19 virus, but without a fatal outcome. At the session of the Council of the Faculty of Political Sciences on March 15, 2022, the Report on the passing of students in the winter semester of 2021/2022 was adopted. The report shows that the passing of the exams in the winter semester of 2021/2022. is significantly lower than when the exams were online.

## **Conclusion**

Accepting the fact that there is no absolute security, it is realistic to accept that there are different levels of security, from individual to collective, national and supranational. Various dangers, challenges and threats endanger the life and health of people, their property, endanger the survival of society and the state, and even regional and international security. The traditional understanding of security that focuses on the state has been replaced by new ones that focus on human. The Human Security concept fully demonstrates the importance of working to reduce risk, take action and mitigate the consequences of various hazard, threats and challenges. Security challenges, whether they are part of an assessment or poorly organized activities and decisions in the organization, represent the connection between the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of security. Health security, as part of Human security concept, and Health care is not only essential but essential. It is important to work on the prevention of threats and hazards because there are several reasons to make the space in which we live, work or stay safe.

COVID-19 is one of emerging diseases. It appeared suddenly, spread quickly, had cross-border effects and it was not known how to prevent or treat it properly. A large number of people in the world were infected and about 10 % of those infected died. The effort invested by the WHO and other organizations was great but not on time. In parallel with the measures to suppress the spread of COVID-19 infection, the vaccine was developed. It turned out that regardless of development and standard, all countries are affected by the infection. In Europe, EU members and non-EU countries were equally affected. Italy, as a member of the EU, was in the most difficult position due to the infection. Bosnia and Herzegovina had the first case of COVID-19 infection in March 2020. Given the complex political and administrative arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the response to the COVID-19 infection was slow. The decision to declare a state of emergency and a state of natural disaster from the spread of the COVID-19 infection was first declared at the level of the entities and the Brčko District, and only then at the level of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the entities and the district independently made decisions on measures, travel bans, operation and the establishment of public transport. Due to problems in the internal organization, the procurement of vaccines was delayed, so some citizens were vaccinated in the neighboring countries of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro.

Already in March 2020, the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo faced the problems of spreading the COVID-19 infection and influencing the teaching process. In the initial phase, the Guidelines were followed and the decisions of the University of Sarajevo were implemented. The work of employees was harmonized with the measures adopted by the Crisis Staff of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Work from home was introduced, work in shifts (day of work at the faculty, day of work from home) the necessary equipment for conducting online classes was procured. Introducing disinfection, keeping distance and reducing the number of contacts were mandatory. A major shift in response to the spread of the infection, in organizational terms, was in October 2020 when the COVID-19 Crisis Preparedness and Response Plan was adopted. In September 2021, the University of Sarajevo left it to the faculties to decide whether to continue with online teaching or return to classrooms and the Faculty of Political Science has returned to classroom learning. The biggest problem in online mode was the organization of exams. Since

there was no possibility to achieve quality supervision over students, literature and other sources were used to a large extent. The scores achieved in online mode were far above average. The consequences of returning from the regime of online teaching in the classroom are reduced student concentration, ignorance of established behavior in higher education institutions and a far worse grade point average.

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## THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MILITARY EDUCATION OF ARMED FORCES OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**Abstract:** Aim of training and military education in Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of Training and Military Education Policy and Training Doctrine. Main task of military personnel, according to this documents, is to develop well trained and ready individuals and units for successful task execution. Individuals and units have to accomplish high standards and norms of North Atlantic Treaty Organization interoperability. Basic for this interoperability is foreign languages courses in Department of Foreign Languages of Center for Professional Development of Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The whole process involves methodology, facilities, instructors, attendees, internal and external evaluation and testing. Research in this paper is about role of Department of Foreign Languages in achievement of language skills of individuals

and units of Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other members of Security Agencies including analysis, statistics, comparison and recommendations.

**Keywords:** Foreign languages, Military education, Armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Education and Learning

Education as kind of training for determination, subject development in medium of objectification as part of previous human culture have its moral, cognitive, ethical and practical dimension (Gudjons, 1994:162). Osmić and Tomić (2008:4) by education mean adoption of a certain knowledge system, formation of practical skills and habits, as foundation and assumption for development of cognitive strength and abilities, shaping a scientific worldview and connecting knowledge with the practical, professional and any other activity.

Cikotić (2017:114) emphasizes importance of government investment in education because it is significant for its positioning. Education can't take the right place within state decision mechanism and bureaucracy as long as it is recognized as budget spending item at different levels, item for spending social and state capital and not as construction mechanism for most important state and social resource-competent and qualified professionals for the future. Education is, essentially, investment in ability of the state and social community to develop and raise capacity to respond on growing demands of future complex processes and changes.

Education is important for every individual because in addition to giving us knowledge in various fields, it also gives us the opportunity to gain experience in those areas that interest us. Education enables us to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to perform various tasks and thus make a significant contribution to the well-being of both our immediate environment and society as a whole. Educated people are useful members of society and with their knowledge contribute to the initiation of all social activities in their field of activity. Education is also guaranteed by laws, the constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international documents. Education is a process that takes place not only in educational institutions but also outside them because the individual must enrich their knowledge acquired in educational institutions throughout life, adapting it to a changing world as existing knowledge quickly becomes obsolete due to rapid development which includes: socio-economic development, scientific and technological progress in all segments, by applying new, modern, highly sophisticated and state-of-the-art technologies, especially digital and information technologies (Podžić, 2022:16-17)

Despotović and Kulić state that "adult education is an old idea and a significant historical and civilizational phenomenon. At the same time, this means that adult education is a natural and essential characteristic of human societies through the birth and growth of our civilization. It is deeply woven into the emergence and development of the oldest civilizations and cultures – Greek, Roman, Jewish and Islamic, which gave it great importance and role. In these ancient civilizations, it was considered very important to take care of adult education and learning. Such an attitude was supported by the religion – Jewish and early Christian. For Jews, learning was a way of survival. We find a similar understanding of adult education in the earliest Islamic philosophical and historical thought and culture, so that the Muslim world was among the first to preach the idea of lifelong learning, requiring all men, women and children to be educated so that they could educate others (Despotović and Kulić, 2005:11).

Contemporary authors (Samolovčev, Kidd, Titmus, Savićević) "agree that adult education was more widespread at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, because in that period industrial development included more and more European countries, which accompanied the intensification and expansion of adult education activities." (Kulić, Despotović, 2005:11-12)

According to Savićević, "educated workers contribute to the multiplication of capital, which was in the interest of employers." The machines were becoming more and more complicated, so

a higher level of knowledge was needed to operate them. That was one of the driving motives of adult vocational education” (Savićević, 2000: 108).

Adult education will soon become one of the most important instruments of social emancipation, ie a factor that should enable the change of inhuman living conditions and lack of status and respect. In the second half of the 19th century, generations of workers began attending lectures either because they wanted to improve their living conditions and security, or because they wanted to “quench their thirst for knowledge and understanding, or because they had to raise funds to fight. Since then, adult education has been constantly expanding and deepening its content to special needs. Although the expansion of adult education began in the late 18th century, the development of adult education as a separate sector of education is an essential product of the 19th and 20th centuries and Europe, especially northwestern Europe and North America. It is especially important that all developing countries have realized that without adult education and learning there is no knowledge, no expertise, no entrepreneurial spirit, which is so necessary nowadays” (Despotović and Kulić, 2005:12).

## **Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Structure and Language Education**

The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are a “professional, single military force organized and controlled by Bosnia and Herzegovina. The armed forces have an active and a reserve component. The Armed Forces, as an institution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, consists of members from all three constituent peoples and others, in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” (Law on Defense of BiH, Article 2, paragraph 1)

The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina consist of branches organized according to the system of three infantry regiments responsible for the heritage and identity of the units and peoples from which they originate, without administrative and operational powers. (Law on Defense of BiH, Article 2, paragraph 2).

The defense structure of BiH consists of: Presidency of BiH, Ministry of Defense of BiH, Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of BiH (JS AF BiH), Operational Command of the Armed Forces of BiH (OC AF BiH), Command for Support of the Armed Forces of BiH (CS AF BiH), three infantry brigades (4. Inf. Br., 5. Inf. Br. and 6. Inf. Br.), Air Force and Air Defense Brigade (AF and AD Br.), Tactical Support Brigade (TS Br.), Personnel Management Command (PMC), Logistics Command (LC), Training and Doctrine Command (TaDC) and subordinates commands and units (Bajramović, 2016:215-217).

The Command for Training and Doctrine was formed in 2007 as part of the Command for Support of the Armed Forces of BiH, and at that time it had the Center for Basic Training, the Center for Professional Development, the Center for Combat Simulations and the Center for Combat Training. Later, the TaDC included the Peace Support Operations Training Center and the Center for Mine Action and Destruction of Unexploded Ordnance (Podžić, 2022:69).

Center for Professional Development- The Center for Professional Development was established on September 3, 2007 as part of the Training and Doctrine Command. The Center for Professional Development realizes career, functional, specialist and general education of non-commissioned officers and officers of the BiH Armed Forces, language education of members of the MoD, BiH Armed Forces and other BiH institutions, and testing and basic training of candidates for military service for non-commissioned officers. We can call this center the lifeblood of the professional development of the officers of the Armed Forces of BiH. The training in the Center is realized in two departments: the Department of Military Courses and the Department of Foreign Languages. The Department of Military Courses is responsible for the implementation of all military courses of professional development from the basic level of non-commissioned officer

and officer courses to training for staff duties through the Command and Staff Course and other career, functional and specialist education. Up to 300 members of the BiH Armed Forces receive training on military courses annually. The Department of Foreign Languages plans and conducts language training through basic and advanced levels of courses for English, German, French, Turkish and Greek. At the annual level, between 450 and 500 members of the Armed Forces of BiH attend various levels of language education. The center is located in the barracks “Travnik” in Travnik. The Center for Professional Development includes the following organizational units:

- Command,
- Headquarters,
- Department of Military Courses,
- Department of Foreign Languages. (Podžić,2022:69-73).

The Department of Foreign Languages consists of:

- Head of the Department of Foreign Languages,
- Department of English (DoE),
- Department of German Language (DoGL),
- French language course (FLC),
- Turkish language course (TLC),
- Greek language course (GLC). (Podžić,2022:73).

The Department of Foreign Languages, as part of the implementation of individual and institutional training in the Armed Forces of BiH, provides education in foreign languages to members of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of BiH and other institutions to develop and improve their language skills.

List of basic tasks of the mission of the Department of Foreign Languages:

1. Realization of foreign language courses (English, French, German, Turkish and Greek),
2. Development and improvement of the teaching process,
3. Management of information related to training in foreign language courses.”  
(SOP of the Department of Foreign Languages, November 2019).

## **Teaching on Department of Foreign Languages**

The work of instructors with students is basically communication between instructor – student, instructor – group, and monitoring of student – student communication. The instructor is there to explain new content, to initiate and lead communication within the group. In doing so, he encourages “live” conversation as much as possible, and he must be careful not to stray too far from the content of the topic. The atmosphere of the conversation should be relaxed, and the ambience should contribute to making each participant feel comfortable. The goal is to expand the “dictionary” as much as possible, and the instructor is constantly making grammatical corrections and correcting mistakes little by little (Podžić, 2022:77-78).

Foreign language courses in the Department of Foreign Languages are based on a combined method, and on several basic principles:

- a) language is not a natural science that is studied, but part of an active process of conscious and subconscious thinking, expression and communication,
- b) learning should be as monolingual as possible (use of the mother tongue in the instructor-student communication and vice versa, as well as in the student-student communication to a minimum),
- c) every smallest part of language knowledge is not active knowledge, until it is used in communication many times and in many situations,
- d) it is necessary to achieve such a level of knowledge that the student begins, ie. can speak words, word combinations, sentences, phrases and sentence sets without being aware that he is speaking at that moment.” (SOP of the Department of Foreign Languages, November 2019)

In order for a student to successfully complete the course and receive a certificate of completion of the course, he must be present in the classes at least 95% of the total fund of hours, pass periodic tests and the final test. For each level of the course, standards are prescribed for the skills that the student must meet in order to successfully complete the course. Each foreign language course has certain specifics in testing, depending on how the testing is done in partner countries, ie, testing foreign language skills in the Department of Foreign Languages is done in the same or mostly the same way as in partner countries that support the work of the Department. The participants are informed about the dates and types of tests on the first day of the course, and those dates are available to them at any time. The results achieved in the test are recorded in the registry book, personal card for monitoring the results and grading of students, and the same through the report on the test are submitted to the Head of the Department of Foreign Languages for review, as well as in the report on completion of the course (Podžić, 2022:78).

Learning foreign languages is intended for training of Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of BiH staff in communication and education in English, French, German, Turkish and Greek language, especially with focus on English language. Main goal is to achieve request of interoperability of Armed Forces of BiH for common actions together with NATO forces in international approved peace support operations, collective security operations, crisis management operations, training and practice. Learning of foreign languages is placed in Center for Professional Development of Training and Doctrine Command. In accordance with Foreign Languages Learning Policy (2007:2-3) in Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of BiH, foreign languages courses are organized by priority: I priority – English language, II priority – French and German language, III priority – Turkish and Greek language and IV priority – Italian language (if necessary only). Courses are on locations: Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Čapljina and Tuzla (Podžić, 2022:75).

Considering that the needs for education of Armed Forces of BiH staff abroad were constantly growing and knowledge of foreign languages was basic tool for knowledge expand and participation in peace support missions, military diplomacy or as representatives of BiH in international security institutions (Podžić, 2022:75).

Teaching on language courses is on instructors of Armed Forces of BiH. These instructors are educated in BiH and other partner countries. Beside them there is lecturers from partner countries. Lecturers from partner countries are mostly for conversation practice and language courses are more effective. United States of America, Great Britain, France, German, Austria, Turkey and Greece support all program materially for better quality in realisation of language education. Number of participants, in one group, is 12 maksimum. Fund hours per week is 32 (school lesson, 45 minutes) from that 27 with instructor, 4 as individual work and 1 for after-action analysis, every friday. For more effectivity in classroom it is necessary for participants to spend an hour per day, individual work, to prepare completely for classes. This part is one of very significant because every participant have to evaluate themselves to continue foreign language learning. Standard operative procedures of Department of Foreign Languages and courses elaborates is prescribed the mode of operations and functioning in learning process and general guidelines for teaching methods, modules, means, grading and achievement of certain level in foreign language (Podžić, 2022:75-76).

In order for the teaching to be realized as well as possible adequate classrooms capacities are needed as well as teaching equipment. Department of Foreign Languages has at its disposal: classrooms, multimedia language laboratory, language audio laboratory, software (Tell Me More, Rosetta Stone, Computer Based Training, Interactive Multimedia Instruction, Listen Language Activities), varios books (textbook, exercisebook, dictionary...), smart tables, computers, TV, multimedia equipment, DVD's and CD's with language practice. Instructors are choosing the right classroom and equipment for the classes (Podžić, 2022:76).

## Department of Foreign Languages Results

Since Department of Foreign Languages in Center for Professional Development of Armed Forces of BiH has been established in 2008. to 2021. over 7820 members of Ministry of Defense, Armed Forces of BiH and other institutions have completed foreign languages courses. In table 1. are results of all foreign languages courses for period from 2017. – 2021.

**Table 1**

Department of Foreign Languages results 2017-2021

Department/ Course	Number	OF	NCO	S	C	Members of other institutions	M	F
DoE	1679	564	272	749	22	72	1577	102
DoGL	92	56	15	21	0	0	80	12
FLC	60	18	7	35	0	0	54	6
TLC	134	49	22	59	4	0	121	12
GLC	143	110	24	9	0	0	138	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2108</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>138</b>
OF-officers NCO-non-commissioned officers S-soldiers C-civilian M-male F-female								

Podžić, 2022:127

The results in table 1. show that foreign languages courses from 2017. to 2021. have been completed by 2108 members of Ministry of Defense, Armed Forces of BiH and other institutions. In percentage it is 37,8 % officers, 16,1 % non-commissioner officers, 41,4 % soldiers, 1 % civilians and 3,4 % members of other institutions. In percentage of gender are 93,45 % male and 6,55 % female.

Knowledge of a foreign language brings various benefits to members of Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of BiH, and it's one of basic condition for participation in peace support operations, collective security operations, crisis management operations, military diplomacy, also in training, workshop, practice and all other activities in multinational environment (Podžić, 2022:128).

Peace support operations are an important step for countries candidates for membership in NATO. It is a great opportunity to show how much they care about collective security and able to work with other nations and armed forces to provide common interest- collective security. Participation in NATO, UN i EU missions is also benefit for members of Armed Forces BiH and BiH because more and more of participants are able to work in multinacional environment and it helps country in process of bosoming NATO and EU member. Furthermore, participation in this type of missions is a strong message that members of Armed Forces BiH are credible partner that show how much they can contribute to success and results of NATO, UN i EU missions. As of 2021. a total of 1808 members of Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces BiH was engaged in missions abroad: UN Monitoring Mission in Democratic Republic of Kongo – MONUSCO, UN Monitoring Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea – UNMEE, UN Multidimensional integrated stabilization mission in Republic of Mali – MINUSMA, EU training mission in Central African Republic (EU TM RCA), engaging the unit of Armed Forces BiH for destruction of unexploded ordnance



in operation „Iraqi Freedom“, engaging staff officers in operation „ISAF“ and engaging the unit of Armed Forces BiH to secure locations in operation „ISAF“ (Hadžović and other,2018:15-16).

Department of Foreign Languages is contributing in education of police officers in english and french language. Police officers applying for pre-mission training have to pass english language test held by Department of Foreign Languages. Ministry of Security BiH recognized significant role of Department of Foreign Languages and Minister of Security BiH presented a thank you note in 2015. for creating conditions in police agencies for participation in peace operations ([www.msb.gov.ba/vijesti/saopstenja/default.aspx?id=12466&langTag=bs-BA](http://www.msb.gov.ba/vijesti/saopstenja/default.aspx?id=12466&langTag=bs-BA) access 05.04.2022.).

The above facts tell us the importance of knowing at least one of foreign languages and how much it is important to Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of BiH. Foreign languages learning doesn't stop with completion of instutionalized language education. To keep the foreign language knowledge it is necessary to continue individual work to improve it and it is lifelong learning process. In accordance to this foreign languages learning is very important part of military education of Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of BiH staff.

## Conclusion

Military education provides an opportunity for military personnel to prepare for the new roles that await them in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main task of military education is to enable military personnel to constantly improve their work and life, and thus ensure continuous self-development, development of the military organization, as well as society as a whole. The need for military education is constantly growing due to the increasingly complex and advanced techniques used in new forms of operations, both war and non-war. At the beginning of his military career, the basic things necessary for the realization of regular tasks are studied, however, new challenges are gradually imposed, with which one simply has to constantly keep up.

Lifelong learning and education occupies an extremely important place in the development of the Armed Forces of BiH as an important and relevant factor for the defense and prosperity of the state. The need for lifelong learning applies to all categories of military personnel and is a permanent process because the survival of the military organization is based on continuous training and development. The professional development of officers and non-commissioned officers is intensive and they are involved in the continuous process of individual and collective education, which includes military training through various types of education and courses, participation in seminars and workshops in the country and abroad, and general training in various fields such as learning. foreign languages, training in the field of informatics and a number of other activities that play an important role in the context of lifelong learning. As the system of education within the capacity of the Armed Forces of BiH does not currently meet all needs, military education is conducted abroad through bilateral agreements with partner countries, primarily the United States, Britain, Turkey, Germany, Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Northern Macedonia, Greece, Canada, Italy, Pakistan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France and many other countries.

In addition to the mentioned activities regarding military education abroad, knowledge of foreign languages, primarily English, is a basic condition for other activities in a multinational environment such as: preparation and training of members of the Armed Forces and the BiH Ministry of Defense for military and military diplomatic representation. diplomatic and consular missions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO command structures, multinational, international and foreign military commands, and NATO, UN, EU and other multinational, international and foreign organizations and institutions, achieving NATO interoperability and training of members of the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defense and unit of the Armed Forces of BiH for joint action with NATO forces in NATO and other internationally approved peace support operations, collective security operations, crisis management operations, as well as NATO exercises in the country

and abroad. Learning foreign languages is an important segment of the future development of the modern Armed Forces of BiH and represents a constant cycle that is necessary for the continuation of cooperation and coordination with modern and contemporary states.

Data on the products and results of the Department of Foreign Languages, which clearly show the numerical indicators on the number of members of the Ministry of Defense of BiH, the Armed Forces of BiH and other security structures of BiH, who successfully completed English language learning because it is the number one priority in learning foreign languages in BiH's towards Euro-Atlantic integration and fulfillment of assumed international obligations. A large percentage of members of the security structures who completed English language courses were nominated and performed duties arising from Bosnia and Herzegovina's international obligations. The Armed Forces of BiH would not be able to achieve interoperability with NATO without learning English, because all tasks on the way to fulfilling this goal are realized in English. The best proof of the fulfillment of the mission of the Department of Foreign Languages in this segment are the field exercises that have been carried out for the last three years at the military range "Manjača", where the battalion group of light infantry was evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by experts from NATO and Partner countries. All previous evaluations of field exercises have been conducted with the full use of English, and the evaluations given by experts are the highest possible. Learning other foreign languages in the Department of Foreign Languages contributes qualitatively to achieving interoperability of the Armed Forces of BiH with NATO, because members of the Armed Forces of BiH who acquire knowledge and skills needed to achieve this goal are sent to specialist courses in countries speaking these languages. For that reason, we believe that the Department of Foreign Languages is one of the most important organizational units in the Armed Forces of BiH, which by fulfilling its mission fully and in a very high quality way contributes to fulfilling Bosnia and Herzegovina's international obligations related to NATO accession. It is important to reiterate that one of the main tasks that must be fulfilled along the way is to achieve the interoperability of the BiH Armed Forces with NATO, which cannot be done without knowledge of the English language. Appreciating the above elements of this research, we can fully confirm that learning foreign languages in the Department of Foreign Languages significantly contributes to the preparation of security structures in fulfilling its international obligations, and with the elements and parameters professional development of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its capacities can offer even better cooperation and opportunities for training of members of all security structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to better meet international obligations.

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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 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2**

Gender structure of teachers

Female	138	98.6%
Male	2	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3**

Ethnicity of teachers per school year

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

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

B&H, concerning the guaranteed right to education on the principles of non-discrimination, in accordance with the Convention on Child Rights. It is considered how and in what way the education of migrant children is planned, how preschool medical checkups are made, and how successfully migrant children are integrated into the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research results indicated a number of challenges that these children face in the education process, from difficulties in enrolling in schools due to the lack of identity and previous education evidence, insufficient knowledge of the local language, and inability to complete education because of their constant move.

**Keywords:** Migration, Migrant children, Education, Integration

## Introduction

Since the beginning of 2018, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as part of the Western Balkan migrant route, has become very attractive for mixed migration movements to the European Union (EU) countries. According to the data of the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH a total 85.206 migrants were registered in BiH in the period 2018-2022, most of them coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and other countries, while 80.437 migrants expressed their intention to seek international protection in BiH. During 2021 BiH had made a significant step forward in the migration management process, especially in the area of more efficient control of movement and stay of migrants within the territory of BiH, closing "informal camps" where migrants stayed, and strengthening cooperation with local communities in which the Migrant Reception Centers (MOCs) where migrants were located, where BiH Ministry of Security and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH played a special role. A total of five temporary reception centers for accommodation of migrants are currently open in BiH: three in the Una-Sana Canton and two in the Sarajevo Canton, where, in the past 5-6 months, resided between 1.800 and 2.200 migrants, which represents the smallest number of migrants residing in the territory of BiH since 2018.

Mixed migrations bring many challenges, and one of them is lack of or unhindered access to the education system for migrant children. The constant movement of migrants to their desired destination in the EU countries prevents families with children or unaccompanied minors from staying longer, and endangers the basic rights of children who are unable to join the age appropriate education or often have to interrupt formal education. It could be said that every country has its own method for including migrant children in the education system and integration into society that depends on the political, economic, but also developmental factors of that country, as well as the attitude towards mixed migration. Migrant children come from different cultural and even religious backgrounds, and language barriers, traumas and losses should be taken into account. Therefore, it is crucial to create an environment in which migrant children feel safe and accepted to be able to have a successful integration into the society of the host country. The European Commission has been supporting EU member states to integrate migrants into their education systems – from pre-school education to higher education since 2016. The Action Plan of the Commission for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (European Commission, 2016, 7-8) identifies three priorities for education:

- the fastest possible integration of newly arrived migrants into standard educational structures,
- preventing the achievement of poorer results among migrants,
- preventing social exclusion and encouraging intercultural dialogue.

## Methodology

The goal of this research is to deepen the understanding of the challenges and benefits of including migrant children in the education system in BiH. Although there is a significant amount



of research on the topic of mixed migration in the Western Balkans, few are dedicated to the importance of the aspect of education within mixed migration. The integration of migrant children into the social flows of the host country is recognized in the system of international relations and the law, while in BiH this topic is at the infancy stage. The paper will point out the challenges and opportunities for the integration of migrant children from culturally diverse backgrounds into the educational process, but also highlight good practices that can lead to greater integration of migrant children into the education system, which is their guaranteed right regardless of their ethical, cultural and other background. The main and auxiliary hypotheses were determined in line with the paper's goal.

The main hypothesis is: Migrant children have the right to education in BiH.

Auxiliary hypotheses are:

H1a: An obstacle to the inclusion of migrant children in the education system in BiH is the constant movement to the desired destination.

H1b: An obstacle to the inclusion of migrant children in the education system in BiH is the lack of documents on previous levels of education and identity.

H2: The education system in BiH has been successfully adapted for the inclusion of migrant children.

H3: Children and parents, both national and migrant, accept cultural differences positively and as an advantage.

The following methods were used in this paper: content analysis, comparative and descriptive method, as well as interview. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the topic, the results of the research will be useful to the academic community, representatives of the media, non-governmental and educational sector.

## **Discussion and Results**

We could say that the 20th century is the century in which the need to respect children as individuals and create an environment in which all children will feel accepted despite the differences between them was mostly promoted. It is a century focused on emphasizing the importance of protecting human and child rights. Today, it is considered that a child is a being who has its rights both in terms of its position in society and in terms of meeting children's needs. From birth to adulthood, a child has the right to a childhood within which the child will meet all its needs, and the role of adults is to provide conditions, opportunities and assistance in finding and realizing all their potentials (Maleš and Stričević, 2003). Bašić (2011) talks about a doctor and pedagogue named Janusz Korczak, better known as the "father of children's rights", and his main contribution is that he is actually the creator and originator of the idea of promoting children's rights and full equality of children. His concept of upbringing is focused primarily on the child who has its rights, just like an adult. Among the more important elements, he emphasizes the rejection of any kind of violence, and in the whole system he assumes that the child has the right to privacy, respect, ignorance, failure, opinion and property. According to him, the comprehensive educational process is focused on the individuality of each child, which means that great importance is attached to the child's wishes, needs and feelings.

In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration, which highlighted the rights of the child in five points. For many years, work was done on further expansion and editing of the document, and in 1959, that editing reached a goal. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Expanded Geneva Declaration as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, but it was not binding for signatory states. The most suitable form was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, and contains the fundamental rights and freedoms of the child that the child acquires at

birth. These are universal standards that the states that have signed and ratified it must guarantee to every child, and the document was written by “adults for adults”. That is, the Convention primarily talks about the obligations of adults towards the child, the obligations of many societies that are obliged to provide protection to the child, and then about the rights of the child that has the right to enjoy them, independently or through parents, guardians, institutions. The rights of the youngest are generally divided into survival rights, development rights, protection rights and participation rights known as “4P”, all of which are directly or indirectly described and established by a series of international documents that benefit children. According to Maleš and Stričević (2003), the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopts the concept of “best interests of the child” through 54 articles, of which the first 41 define the concept of the child and obligations that the state is obliged to undertake and implement by ratifying the document. Articles 42-45 relate to the monitoring of the application of the Convention, and Articles 46-54 contain formal provisions related to the entry into force of the Convention. Hrabar (2007, according to Šeparović, 2014) says that the Convention contains a system of children’s rights that can be systematized as personal, social, educational, health, social, economic, cultural and judicial rights. The same author (Hrabar, 2007, according to Šeparović, 2014) states that there are other divisions of children’s rights, depending on the area in which they are applied, so for example the psychological approach to children’s rights distinguishes three groups of rights or “3S” are security, care and participation (Kuna, 2019, p. 15).

Every child in the world, regardless of economic and social conditions, religious and national affiliation, skin color, has the right to a happy upbringing and a quality childhood. The education system should offer diverse and comprehensive educational programs that enable children with complete development. Families, educators, educational institutions, the state and society participate in the upbringing, development and education of the child, and their role is to recognize the needs of children and respond in accordance with their interests and abilities, thus respecting children’s rights and teaching them to seek that their rights are respected. Early and preschool education institutions must be focused on meeting all children’s needs. Kuna (2019) states in her paper that the needs that must be met include the areas of physical and psychomotor development, socio-emotional development and personality development, cognitive development, speech, communication, expression and creativity. A. H. Maslow (1982) points out: “Fundamental human needs are physiological needs, the need for security, belonging, love, self-esteem and respect by others, and the need for self-actualization.” He says that it is necessary to satisfy all needs because the absence of satisfying one need results in the absence of satisfying other needs (Maleš et al., 2003, p. 107).

Not only children born in a country deserve this treatment, but also those with the status of a migrant, refugee or asylum seeker. The integration of children and young people into the school system is a central component of any migration and integration policy, thus improving the prospects for successful absorption into the society of the host country for present and future generations. (Sinai et al., 2012, p. 57). However, obstacles often hamper successful integration of migrant children into a country’s education system due to the complexity of adapting the education system related to migration management at the state level and the lack of a clear policy for integrating migrants into society. In these cases, practices from neighboring countries or the adoption of European practices are most often resorted to, which is again challenging because there is no unified migration management policy in the European Union. Every country that has faced mixed migration has faced the need to address the aspect of education because education provides continuity and encourages personal development of children migrants/refugees/asylum seekers and thus facilitates their position in the local community and enables faster and better interaction and integration (Đurović Radoš, 2015, p. 26). Numerous practices show that linguistic and cultural differences can be an obstacle, but also an advantage of integrating migrant children into a country’s education system – an obstacle due to insufficient understanding of others and different, and

an advantage due to the fact that differences can enrich both local and migrant children. An approach to integration that highlights the importance of tolerance and acceptance, while not without its flaws and challenges, leads to mutual respect, openness, and broadening horizons among different groups (Sinai et al., 2012, p. 57).

Recognition of the specific vulnerability of children asylum seekers and refugees depends to a large extent on the political will and compliance with the obligations set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which must be respected and implemented by all signatory states. Consequently, in defining laws and policies relating to children, including asylum-seeking and refugee children, signatories must follow the four basic principles of the Convention on which children's rights are based:

- The principle of non-discrimination according to which children must not be discriminated against “regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, developmental difficulties, birth or other status of the child, his parents or legal guardians”,
- Children have the right to life and development in all aspects of life, including physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, social and cultural development,
- In making all decisions or carrying out actions that affect the child or the children as a group, the welfare of the child must be paramount. This applies to decisions made by government, administrative or legislative bodies, as well as to decisions made by the family,
- Children must be enabled to take an active part in resolving all issues that affect their lives and be allowed freedom of expression. They have the right to express their views that must be taken seriously (Ćuća, 2021, pp. 2-3).

## **Integration of Migrant Children into the Education System of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Cantonal Ministries of Education, has adapted a handbook for the inclusion of children refugees, migrants and asylum seekers from the Republic of Serbia in the Bosnian context. This handbook has been finalized and is available to all Ministries for use in creating plans for the inclusion of refugee children, migrants and asylum seekers in educational processes. UNICEF and Save the Children organized a seminar in 2019 attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Una-Sana Canton and seven schools from Una-Sana Canton and Sarajevo Canton that integrated children refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in regular educational process in order to identify the main challenges in the inclusion of these children in the educational process, as well as to provide recommendations and answers to existing challenges. The language barrier and cultural differences are listed as some of the biggest obstacles proposed to overcome by intensive language courses for children, development of textbooks for language learning, workshops and socializing with other children, as well as organizing additional classes. Teachers emphasized that they also face challenges such as the lack of information about children and their parents, and that they need additional support and education in working with migrant children. An individual approach to each child, regular parent-teacher meetings and descriptive assessment are some of the proposed solutions (UNICEF, 2019).

Timely inclusion of children on the move in the education system is one of the great challenges due to the constant movement, but also the lack of documents that testify to the age of children and the previously acquired level of education. Additional reasons that affect this are certainly the inability to adequately socialize and learn the local language, as well as overcoming the trauma that the child has acquired either in the country of origin or during the trip. Refugees and asylum seekers in all situations emphasize language as a key dimension for integration (Ajduković, 2019,

p. 79). According to the Manual for the Inclusion of Children Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in the Education Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to keep in mind that children have been on the move for a long time, changing countries and thus different education systems. Some were not even in the process of education, and some had interruptions for several years. Adolescent groups are one of the most sensitive challenges for the environment in which they find themselves. For these young people, education becomes an opportunity for a new and better life (UNICEF, 2020, 12).

According to a World Bank report from August 2019, learning outcomes in BiH are weaker than those achieved in the EU and the region, and there is a gap between the skills provided by the education system and those required by the labor market. There is also great public dissatisfaction with the quality of primary and secondary education. Several key problem areas in the education system in BiH were highlighted, which should be improved for the benefit of the local population, and in this context it is certainly important for the integration of migrant children into the education system in BiH. Schools involving refugees/asylum seekers and migrants are becoming places where different cultures meet and coexist, and it is often emphasized that it is children who become the bearers of their parents' integration into society. Every school that accepts refugees and migrants should choose a proactive approach and it is necessary to make a plan that includes a number of activities:

- Professional development of teachers and professional associates for working with refugee children,
- Preparation of students (in homeroom classes) and parents (at parent meetings, Parents' Council) for the arrival of refugees (lectures for parents of domicile children, meetings of parents of refugee children with domicile parents, development of intercultural dimension of the school through workshops, workshops against discrimination and prejudice, development of joint projects of children and parents),
- Organizing educational work (additional language classes; shortened curricula; individual classes, organizing additional classes and extracurricular activities),
- Realization of cooperation with external associates (international organizations and non-governmental sector, social services, health institutions),
- Monitoring and evaluation of the process (regular meetings of school coordinators with school management, pedagogical advisors and external associates).

The school plan for the inclusion of children refugees/asylum seekers and migrants in the educational process should be simple and clear and include: activities, expected results, performers, responsible persons, performance times (UNICEF, 2020, p. 22). The process of including migrant children in the education system is also difficult due to the lack of textbooks that would be adapted to the needs of migrant children to learn the local language as a foreign language. However, in BiH, despite the complexity of society, there are positive examples of the social inclusion of migrant children currently residing in this country:

- Preparatory activities for arrival of new pupils in the Primary School "Harmani II" in Bihac School preparations began with the departure of the pupils of the journalism section to the reception center Sedra with teacher N.D. to make the first contact and meet refugee/asylum seekers/migrant pupils who will attend the same school. The Parents' Council unanimously adopted the Plan for the Inclusion refugees/asylum seekers/migrants at a meeting organized by the school principal and thus became part of the process. During the preparatory activities, materials for parents were prepared, and workshops were also held for domicile pupils on the arrival of new peers in the classes of the Harmani II school. (UNICEF, 2020, p. 20)
- School plan activities in PU Primary School "9.maj" Pazarić, Sarajevo

The mission of the PS “9. maj“ “Pazarić“ is for school to be the place of joy for all the children, an environment where everyone feels safe and that the school community is an example of good school practice. Main activities within the Children Inclusion School Plan are:

- assessment of children’s needs and determination of educational status/level of school knowledge and skills;
  - learning Bosnian language as a foreign language;
  - psycho-social support program;
  - inclusion of children in regular classes and afterschool activities;
- Cooperation with parents/guardians (UNICEF, 2020, p. 23).
- Extracurricular activities in PS “Harmani II“, Bihać, Una-Sana Canton

In addition to regular classes, refugee, asylum seekers and migrant children are also involved in extracurricular activities with their peers, which helps in socialization and faster psychological recovery. By the end of the second semester in the 2018/19 school year, a total of 53 students went through the educational process. (UNICEF, 2020, p. 24).

- Activities for inclusion of refugee/asylum seeker children in the educational process in PS “Harmani II“

1. The adaptation period – includes the period spent in the HEART classroom (from two weeks up to one month). During this period, it is necessary to determine the level of knowledge of Bosnian language and general knowledge, and on the basis of that plan the following:

- intensive learning of the language of the community
  - adapted and additional classes
2. Inclusion in regular classes with individualization (IPP)
  3. Involvement in other educational activities
  4. Family/guardian involvement
  5. Cooperation with representatives of Save the Children (cultural mediators) and escort
  6. Monitoring pupil progress (UNICEF, 2020, p. 30).

Cultural mediators also play an important role in the successful integration of migrant children into the education system, enabling them to overcome language barriers, clarify crucial material for children in their mother tongue, but also mediate in bringing cultures closer and better understanding others. In October 2021, about 60 children were enrolled in schools in BiH. Senadija Hadrović, a pedagogue at the Prva Osnovna Škola in Ilidža, who is also the coordinator of the Children on the Move project, expects better results than in 2019, when they were pioneers in the education of migrant children in BiH: *“We tried to accept children with our hearts and show them that they are welcome and to truly integrate them into the educational process. To be honest, we have better experiences with children than with their parents. They always had that sense of temporary residence and did not motivate children to attend and learn the language. And now the focus is on parents learning with their children ... Migrant children learn our language and culture, and our children and teachers learn their languages and cultures”* (Radio Free Evropa, 4 October, 2021).

The first two months focused on psychosocial integration, educational art and sports workshops and the initial study of the Bosnian language, as well as involving children in the regular process with local children. A spokeswoman for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Nineta Popović, emphasized that education is one of the basic human rights and that this UN organization is trying to ensure that right for migrant children as well: *“This is not easy because the participation of numerous actors is required, from the authorities through schools to all those who provide support to the refugee and migrant families. Since the beginning of the migrant crisis, about 1,600 children have enrolled in schools. Some also missed four years of education. A*

*curriculum has been developed for each child and additional classes have been provided in the camps in which they live, where numerous informal activities have been organized, including language learning. They also receive psychosocial support there. They were also provided with an escort and translators, all in order to fit in with the lessons as easily as possible.”* Children were provided with school supplies and medical examination, transportation, and their current knowledge level was assessed (Radio Free Evropa, 4 October, 2021).

The Danish Refugee Council, with the support of UNICEF, takes care of the health of children, both temporary reception centers and those staying in informal locations. Systematic medical examinations for regular inclusion in the teaching process, as well as immunization of children according to the calendar prescribed by the relevant public health institutes, are part of health care. Thus, in the period from 1 January to 11 December, 2021, 212 school-age children were vaccinated, who are staying in temporary reception centers in BiH accompanied by their parents or children without parental care. Out of 161 children who passed the regular systematic examinations for enrollment in school, 123 children successfully passed the necessary tests for unhindered integration into the BiH education system.

## **Results of the Research**

The primary research question concerned the possibilities and ways of educating migrant children in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The paper used a combined method – the quantitative method determined the existence of integration of migrant children into the education system, while the qualitative method gained broader insights into the ways of education. The sample of research in this paper is semi-structured interviews, and the answers to research questions that indicate how classes are implemented in practice for migrant children residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the unit of analysis. We obtained additional information through interviews with UNICEF representatives in order to clarify certain questions that cannot be answered by the interviewed school representatives.

Following the influx of more refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, UNICEF conducted a rapid assessment of the educational needs of the children who arrived. Then, a discussion was initiated among the relevant government institutions on the main findings and recommendations, and an initial plan for including these children in the education system in BiH was created. Children were included in the first semester of 2019 in Sarajevo Canton (SC) and Una-Sana Canton (USC). During that year, a total of 522 children were included in the formal education system and attended classes with their peers. In 2020, a total of 727 children were enrolled in primary schools in the USC area, while children did not start school in SC due to the fact that families did not stay in this canton for long. In 2021, the enrollment of children in schools in the USC continued, and work was underway to reintegrate children into primary schools in the SC. In October 2021, about 60 migrant children were enrolled in schools in BiH, which is a result of the reduced number of people on the move in BiH. On its official Facebook page, UNICEF had on April 12, 2022 announced that they, in cooperation with the World Vision in BiH, are supporting the Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Education in providing access to a secondary vocational training program for migrant and refugee children. The first group of 25 children started courses for hairdressers and cooks on April 11. The training programs are implemented by the Secondary School Center Hadžići, and UNICEF provides support by providing cultural mediators who will support teachers and children during classes. In addition, UNICEF assists in the procurement of school supplies and provides additional support in learning through daily non-formal education at the Ušivak Reception Center. IOM BiH will support the transportation of children to school. The training will take place every day, and a total of 80 hours per child is planned. UNICEF had during 2021 provided access to formal and non-formal education for 1.314 children on the move.

UNICEF also supported education authorities in Sarajevo Canton and Una-Sana Canton in providing access to inclusive formal education for 312 migrant children.

The public institution “Prva osnovna škola” Ilidža in Sarajevo was the first school on the territory of this canton to integrate migrant children into the teaching process, which was preceded by discussions with representatives of the local community and parents of local children. This school employs teachers who speak several languages: English, Arabic and Turkish, and before they started working with migrant children, they underwent training with the NGO “Save the Children” and one of the used methods is the HEART method of working with children. In addition, they exchanged experiences with colleagues in Bihać (USC), but also with colleagues in Belgrade who have extensive experience in including migrant children into the education system. They emphasize that local children and parents showed an exceptional level of understanding and empathy towards migrant children and warmly accepted them. Migrant children feel a sense of belonging in this multicultural school, which they have further enriched with their arrival.

*“We currently have a new concept of teaching children on the move, every day for two school hours. Classes are held by seven teachers, and the number of students varies from day to day due to the movement of families to their final destination. The biggest challenges we face are the language barrier and overcoming the trauma that children had experienced during the trip. With the Charter of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child, and guided by the fact that every child has the right to education and that we are obliged to provide protection and care at all times of life, we tried to make our school the first to open doors and give children the opportunity to socialize with other children and to gain new experiences. Given that the laws at the level of BiH are not harmonized with the cantonal ones, this additionally creates difficulties in the inclusion of children who are on the move, and the biggest problems are created by the administration that does not recognize this type of inclusion in the regular teaching process,”* stressed Arif Čelović, school principal.

The school says that the role of non-governmental organizations that provide technical support is important in order to provide migrant children with medical examinations, school supplies, hygiene products, as well as transportation from the reception center to the school. Some of the good examples emphasized is the fact that children on the move master Bosnian language in a very short time and that they can apply what they learn in BiH in another country once they join the education system. It is therefore important that they have an adequate document that they can take to other countries as proof of their level of education and inclusion in teaching.

Cultural mediators who help children to fully integrate into the education system and enable the translation of school materials into their mother tongue emphasize that the biggest obstacles, but also challenges for including children in the education system in BiH, are short stays in reception centers and bad experience children had in some of the countries during the trip, when included in the classes. However, despite the short time spent in BiH, cultural mediators recommend the greatest possible integration of migrant children into the education system, as they testify to the fact that this means a lot to children and brings positive changes in their daily lives. The children are looking forward to going to school, they are excited, and for many it is their first contact with an educational institution. Cultural differences are considered neither an obstacle nor an advantage because children adapt to change, accept change and anything that is different if they feel it is good for them. Cultural mediators believe that the education system in BiH is enriched by the inclusion of migrant children because local children help migrant children, accept them, just as children on the move accept local children and motivate them to learn foreign languages, learn about other cultures and show understanding to those who are different, which sometimes includes difficult life stories.

## **Conclusion**

Although Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a member of the European Union, it strives to respect the rights of migrant children to education, and the existing system enables the psycho-physical

development of children, learning and a supportive school environment. The need was expressed to strengthen the capacity of teaching staff and adapt educational materials to the needs of migrant children. The UNICEF Handbook on the Inclusion of Refugee, Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Children, adapted to the BiH context of mixed migration, is available to all Ministries for use in creating plans for the inclusion of refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking children in educational processes. The biggest challenge, and at the same time an obstacle for migrant children to be included in the education system in BiH, is the lack of documentation, both on their identity and on the previously acquired level of education. It is equally important to emphasize the constant travel to the desired destination, which prevents a longer stay of the child in BiH and integration into society. Insufficient knowledge of the Bosnian language makes it difficult to include these children in the education system, but it is encouraging that children are quick to master the language and have the support of cultural mediators to master the necessary teaching materials. Great support for migrant children is also provided by local children, and good results are achieved in getting to know other cultures, languages, but also in developing respect and understanding through peer education. It is necessary to work on the harmonization of legislation at the state level in order to make the integration of migrant children into the education system easier.

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## **INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR MOTIVATING AND CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY FOR BETTER EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

**Abstract:** Current social developments as a result of the global health pandemic have imposed very serious consequences on the educational system and the quality of early childhood development. With the closure of schools and kindergartens, educators took upon the responsibility to organize and implement the program requirements in a different way. Furthermore, parents met with a new parenting dimension – creating a stimulating environment at home and taking on some of the tasks in working with their children. This process of mobilization of educators, teachers and students imposed the need of implementation of ICT in education as a very important opportunity for distance learning.

This paper will present several innovative models aiming motivation and connection of the community involving educational work in the area of early childhood development, in process of development of resources for strengthening the capacities and competencies of educators, as well as models of co-creation and practical application of available materials through the collective portal “EDUINO”.

Through this portal we will conduct a research with the users (educators, parents and children from aged 3 to 10 years old) in order to determine the practical application of the open library of digital educational materials, video lessons, resources, games and educational activities to support the educational process and the effects on the socio-emotional development of children.

**Keywords:** Innovation, Co-creation, Early childhood development, Digital educational materials

### **Factors Affecting Early Childhood Development**

Every child is born with certain genetic predispositions, which are the starting point for its development. It is known that in early childhood personality development is most dynamic, and therefore, it is the subject of numerous researches. How well the child’s genetic potential will develop depends on several factors that are part of the community of the environment in which the child develops. One of the most important factors is the family, as the most responsible for the proper growth and development of children. Parents/guardians play a significant role in building the personality through their own models of behavior and action, as well as in the developing of basic habits and skills for introduction into practical life. The extended family (relatives and their communication), as well as the social environment in which the child grows up

(friends, environment, peers, media, etc.) also have a significant impact on the child development. Of course, educational institutions providing significant support in early childhood development have a huge influence and role. Through system and program setup, educational workers have a direct influence on the educational activity of the children who are included in the system, but also indirectly on the general public, through their professional activity in counselling centers, media, papers, etc.

All these factors directly or indirectly affecting the child's development represent a community, in the midst of which is the most significant triadic relationship: child-parent-teacher, which should act in sync in the interest of better early childhood development.

## **Changes and Challenges the Participants in Early Childhood Development Face with**

Living in a time of dynamic social and technological changes and development, all participants in the educational activities encounter numerous challenges in their activities. Some parents, faced with professional and life responsibilities, often lack the time or experience to devote themselves to their children, so they leave the overall responsibility to the institutions, thus neglecting the development of the basic life habits that are established within the family, as well as the emotional experiences. On the other hand, others burden themselves with various information about the children's development and show an extremely protective attitude towards children and unwittingly prevent them from social relationships. Educators and teachers are in a constant dynamic of changes with regards to the program objectives, training for such program objectives, project tasks, following new educational models, developing digital skills and, of course, implementing them in the practical work with children. In these processes, it is of particular importance to establish good communication between all participants in early childhood development, so that they can harmonize and coordinate for better quality.

## **Challenge of the New Age – Needs and Changes in Educational Systems**

In the last two decades, education in our country has gone through certain reforms that follow European Union models, world globalization and the need for implementation of information and communication technology in all systems.

These reforms had a positive effect on the educational workers, allowing them to independently create the educational practice and continue their career advancement, which are imperative for high quality education, focused on the learning process itself. All of this redefines learning from a traditional, one-way and passive transmission of knowledge to a process of finding information, constructing and reconstructing knowledge and applying it.

The focal point in all transformations of the educational systems is the explosive development of information and communication technology, which tends to preserve the tradition of acquiring knowledge in the educational process, but also highlights the need for developing skills for continuous expansion, upgrading and application thereof. Hence, the need to change teaching and learning approaches that should follow the constant development of technology, which should be an integral part of the entire educational process, is emphasized.

## **Communication and Cooperation in Time of Pandemic**

The global educational system faced with a huge challenge deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. the educational process was "conditioned" to adapt to distance learning. The pandemic imposed the need to use information technology, strengthen the digital skills of educational workers and apply creative solutions in order to realize the educational process. In all of the

world's developed countries, distance learning has been present for years in all subsystems, but in our country it caused uncertainty regarding its implementation in relation to the educational platforms used up to that moment and the digital competence of educators and parents, as well as the technical equipment in institutions and homes. The parents faced with certain difficulties, they assumed the role of parents and teachers in conditions of a pandemic. Guided by the experience of other countries, the entire situation with the educational systems, the challenge faced by educators, parents and children, with the support of competent institutions, the non-governmental sector and the involvement of educational experts and practitioners, educational platforms were provided and created in support of the whole educational system in order to improve the communication between all affected parties.

### **EDUINO – a Model Encouraging Mutual Cooperation and Support**

EDUINO is a collective portal for digital educational content, professional development and collaboration of educators, creating space, resources and tools for quality education through joint creation, innovation and creation of the EDUINO community. It is owned by the Education Development Bureau (EDB), and the project is financed by the Government of the United Kingdom through the British Embassy in Skopje, with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and UNICEF, and is implemented by SmartApp – Laboratory for Social Innovations Skopje. The portal consists of two platforms:

EDUINO Teaching that enables online teaching with digital open content and resources intended for educators and students, i.e.:

- E-entertainment, preschool education
- E-school, primary and secondary education
- Video tutorials, webinars and resources intended for educators, students and parents
- Resources for personal growth and development, intended for students
- Professional development for educators

EDUINO Early childhood development to encourage social emotional development and learning through play in children from 3 to 10 years of age

- Educational activities and games
- Educational resources
- Professional development for educators
- Add an educational activity

EDUINO Early Childhood Development is an educational platform for educators, class teachers and parents. The platform contains quality and tested educational materials, games and activities for children of preschool age and grade school, i.e. from 3 to 10 years of age, with the aim to encourage game-based learning. “Through play, the child tries out its capabilities for certain functions, develops, combines and perfects his abilities. Developing specific skills and behaviors, the child gains experiences, discovers, learns and creates through play.” (Damovska, 2021) This platform provides free educational resources, created by educators, teachers and professionals, verified by experts in the field, intended for learning through play and fun in preschools and schools, but also for home settings, to encourage quality education.

Additional literature, manuals, educational texts, reports, researches, brochures, etc., intended for educators, class teachers and parents, are available in the resources section. The opportunity for professional development of educators is also supported through collaborative work and continuous webinars.

The entire concept of the platform enabled the creation of an EDUINO community, which counts more than 25,000 educators and 33 EDUINO Ambassadors, who contributed to the creation of more than 4723 video lessons, 71 tutorials and over 1200 educational play activities. In doing so, this community contributes to the creation of a national digital library of inestimable value to students and future generations.

## **An Innovative Way to Motivate the Community**

The EDUINO Playathon is an innovative way to motivate the community to apply in practice the educational activities from the EDUINO Early Childhood Development platform.

The playathon is a creative challenge to learn and play through selected activities and games placed in the open library with educational activities intended for children from 3 to 10 years of age and the focus is put on the process of learning through play in children. The library features activities designed for learning and play, created by a number of dedicated educators across the country. These games and activities are from the practical experience of educators and have the possibility of qualitative applicability. They provide an opportunity for fun time spent at home, creating a different class at school or enriching play activities in kindergartens. The first EDUINO Playathon was held in November 2020, intended for parents/guardians and children from 3 to 10 years of age in home conditions, in which over 160 families actively participated. The great interest in the playathon encouraged its expansion, i.e. including children from 3 to 10 years of age in kindergartens and schools. The second playathon (November 2021) was attended by over 1200 participants, and in the third one (February 2022) was attended by 1000 participants from all three categories (home conditions, kindergartens and schools) with implemented educational activities.

## **Capacity Building through Participation in Eduino Activities**

According to the analysis from the quantitative and qualitative research with the participants, it was established that the implementation of the EDUINO Playathons gives very positive results, i.e.:

Strengthening of social emotional competences, self-awareness and self-confidence was noted in children from 3 to 10 years of age, as well as the feeling of belonging to a group and cooperation between members. The parents/guardians stated that the playathons enabled them to mobilize the family for preparations and games, while spending quality time with the children and learning new approaches with lots of smiles and positive emotions at home. Educators and teachers believe that with the application of educational activities and participation in playathons, they had the opportunity to use new creative approaches in practice, which encourage the development of children in all aspects, establishing good communication, excellent cooperation and positive emotional experiences in the educational group/department.

## **Conclusion**

The EDUINO platform gives meaning to all participants in early childhood development by valuing the processes of their actions, provides support for continuous development and upgrading of the existing potentials, and thus the platform itself grows and develops as a living curriculum open to new challenges. Eduino is a positive example of an innovative model that strives for better early childhood development, motivating and connecting the entire community.

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## **THE IMPORTANCE AND SCOPE OF FINANCIAL EDUCATION IN A PROJECT PERSPECTIVE AND IN THE SHADOW OF THE PANDEMIC, BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A PRIMARY RESEARCH**

**Abstract:** As one of the biggest milestones of the century and of the modern era, 2008 has taught us a lot for us. We have realized the importance of making informed decisions in all areas of life, including finance. The importance of financial literacy has been brought into focus as a result of these events, which have highlighted the gaps and knowledge disadvantages that could have prevented the events and disadvantages that much of society has suffered as a result of the crisis. However, in many countries, financial awareness is still conceptual, much discussed, researched and studied, but in many cases no real change is visible or tangible. In many cases, awareness programmes and initiatives are still in an experimental phase and are not yet integrated into the day-to-day management of problems. There are interdependent processes in the development of knowledge and a real financial culture. The family model is important as the primary field for financial socialization, but the education system is also important, which is complemented by various programmes and initiatives. In our paper we seek to answer the question of who and what extent is responsible for financial awareness and education in the eyes of the everyday people, from whom do they expect solutions and what are the levels and fields where meaningful solutions can be born in terms of financial culture building.

**Keywords:** Financial culture, Financial education, Financial socialization, Primary research

### **Introduction**

Life is a serial of changes and decisions, which may define fundamentally our life in the future. These decisions and choices are formed by the circumstances and factors, for example values, cultural attitude or our perspectives. The mentioned human factors are usually called the individual's cultural factor, what can never be related to one single person but to a smaller or larger group of people, because culture never belongs to one person. The cultural characteristics of a person are formed by learning and socializing and this process influence our financial activity as well. What is more nowadays we can find such a strong relationship, which has led to unite the two notions. Financial culture is not a new conception, it was used already in the years 1900 (Kovács et al, 2012). We are speaking about a financial expression, which has never had any exact definition accepted. The recently published articles have given us different ideas and theories about the meaning of this expression, what is more they are still discussing if financial culture is an expression or a concept!? Béres and his colleagues say that financial culture is more than a definition, so it can be a special concept. According to this conceptual point of view, financial culture means financial literacy (financial knowledge) and experience, but also financial skills and financial consciousness; and all of these are present at the same time. (Béres – Huzdik, 2012). Several experts agree that financial culture can be connected to financial knowledge in most cases. Beyond that, conscious behavior is generated by not just having but also using financial knowledge. Using our financial knowledge may generate conscious and responsible decisions, which can reduce the amount of future risk, the financial insecurity of households and can make personal finances more calculable. The financial culture mainly affected the financial behavior and practice as well (Bárcezi – Zéman, 2015). Nagy and Tóth

(2012) emphasize, that conscious behavior of people would be essential. In the lights of financial consciousness people can learn the advantages and risks of financial services and can keep their investments at an optimal level.

Financial culture is also that kind of definition which integrates the cultural values of a community and can find interdependence between its characteristics and the quality of the community's financial decisions. According to Süge, financial culture includes everything that helps people to find their ways in financial questions and can create comfort. (Süge, 2010). The article about this topic, published by the Hungarian National Bank (MNB) unambiguously suggests the definition of financial culture. The supreme organization of monetary politics of Hungary states, that financial culture is the level of financial skills and literacy, where individuals are able and ready to make sense of basic financial information and make conscious decisions. They are also able to estimate the future risks of their decisions, can interpret and examine them in financial terms. (MNB, 2008). The term "financial culture" is not really current in articles written in English, this factor is mostly defined by "financial literacy". The most important component of financial skills is financial literacy. By this approach financial literacy is a basic characteristic of financial skills, which skills must be learned by the individuals. (Atkinson – Messy, 2012). Financial skills are not inborn skills, so it becomes a more and more important question how to gain these skills. Xu and Zia in their article from 2012 explain the idea of financial literacy. By their interpretation this notion includes financial consciousness and knowledge, including the awareness of financial products, institutions and concepts. According to Xu and Zia (2012) financial literacy can not be advanced where people do not understand and can not calculate compound interest and individuals are without the skills of finding their way in finances and financial planning.

Lusardi and Mitchell's article from 2014 states that well-informed and rationally thinking individuals spend much less when they have more income, they save money in order to secure their future if their income may decrease. (Lusardi – Mitchell, 2014). With this statement Lusardi and his partner create the synergy of consciousness, responsibility and financial decisions, since individuals always have to be prepared to a financial setback or any unexpected expenses. Financial culture or financial literacy can express the individual's expectations about future, since the demand on financial culture is stronger for people who want to calculate with more calculable, plannable and predictive financial processes, so they try to learn them better and analyze financial environment more deeply. In this form financial culture requires knowledge and also associates with responsibility and rationality, since individuals should be interested in achieving better and better accomplishment and should try to avoid disadvantageous financial events (e.g.: losses, high risks or precarious financial actions).

The economical crisis was an excellent example of precarious financial actions and pointed out the importance of financial culture. (Kovács et al, 2012). Not only businesses, but also individuals and households suffered from the negative effects of the crisis. Huston mentions in his article from 2010 that the confirmation of financial literacy should be a central goal, since it could be a very important tool to increase social comfort. Huston emphasizes that the recent critical period of mortgages, the indebtedness of consumers or the breakdown of households are all proving the importance of financial crisis. The author emphasizes also that although many publications have defined the meaning of financial literacy, less researchers have dealt with its measurement. (Huston, 2010). The development of measuring methods would be important to become able to improve individuals' financial skills. Most of the financial skills are not inborn, so they need to be improved and extended. So it matters, when, in what period of their lives, individuals try to learn these skills, and it is not by coincidence that the responsibility of socialization, family and the education system come into prominence. However it was not only the economical crisis to point out the importance of financial literacy (culture). According to Botos and his colleagues the demand of financial culture has become more precious, because some financial products have

turned up in the last 30 years, and their risks could not be estimated even by experts because of their complexity. (Botos et al, 2012).

The complexity of our economical environment and the increasing complexity of financial markets oblige the participants of economy to have analyzing skills which let them make financial information digested and explainable by them. According to The Financial Literacy Annual Report published in 2014 consumers have to become able to analyze expenses, costs, risks and results, especially those which can be directly connected to their lives, like financial products, services and decisions. Individuals must be able to make effective decisions, get out of poverty and have to know who to turn to ask for financial help. Steps and action must be made to improve present and future comfort and form financial expectations. (Financial Literacy Annual Report, 2014). By developing financial culture, the individuals' knowledge about financial products and expressions can widen, people can learn how to deal with risks or to make decisions, which affect less unfavorably their future economy. The question with responsibility is often connected to the idea of financial culture, as we have to be able to choose among financial services according to their risks and dangers. (European Commission, 2007). Financial culture and financial literacy is very often related to the question of reducing risk. As business culture is mostly defined by our skills, the level of financial culture can be defined by the quality of our financial skills. In this sense, financial culture is the complex of the financial skills shared by the personages of the economy and their level of quality. Of this sort, financial skills can be explained with the complexity of three components. (Table 1.) To start with we can mention financial knowledge, competence and the ability of analyzing, all these facilitate the understanding of financial processes. But it is not enough to be in possession of knowledge and competency. Individuals must have the desire for learning, making perfect and using these skills while making financial decisions. And –as a third factor- appears awareness, to embody the desire for computability, security and planning.

This nexus is confirmed by Hung and his colleagues in their article of 2009, with the title: Defining and measuring financial literacy (A pénzügyi műveltség definiálása és mérése). In this article the authors highlight that financial literacy means skills, how individuals can manage their finances through their knowledge and skills. With the help of all these they can become able to form their comfort and prosperity. (Hung et al, 2009). Financial culture leads to the realization of individual goals and interests through the perfect utilization of skills. Among others, this connection was confirmed in Mandell and Klein's article (2009) where they state that articles about financial culture usually agree that most of the consumers do not have a satisfactory level of financial literacy despite the fact that they would be very important when making financial decisions, in their own interest. According to this interpretation, with their lower financial skills individuals put back the realization of their own interest, so the status of financial culture is important not only because of the financial stability of the economy, but also from the perspective of the realization of the individuals' short- and long term aims.

In their common article OECD and World Bank reinforce this above statement, according to which financial literacy means the series of skills which can be important to both the consumers at the markets of the well developed countries and for poor people as well. (OECD – World Bank, 2012). Financial culture can be interpreted not only at the level of individuals and communities. According to Rumyantseva financial culture is strongly related to business culture. Pursuant this approach forming business culture helps individuals to get into understanding financial processes. While we are forming business culture we have to create financial processes and their communicative channels. In order to learn the financial environment, market research must be done then involve employees to let them learn financial processes and basic financial expressions. Precise and fast financial reports must be done which help to understand the up-to-date status and can be useful during the process of learning. Well-defined and well-known financial aims must be stated which are known by every involved person. All these factors help to make the company

more transparent and successful in financial terms, but also the involved people can feel more responsibility, can learn consciousness and can use all these in their households. (Rumyantseva, 2013). In consequence, financial culture is not a definition what belongs to one person but to a community, to a business or to the whole society. Several similarities can be found in different explanations. The development state of financial culture is beneficial to financial decisions and indirectly has positive influence on economical processes and on the evolution of welfare. All experts agree that adequate financial culture help us to become more experienced in financial processes, to make financial decisions more reasonable and inspire us to more responsible financial management, with future end in view. Almost everybody agrees that financial culture is a complex notion and it may cause the fact that it does not have an accepted definition yet. After all, the definitions agree that professional competence and the needed knowledge is essential so they must be continuously improved.

Financial culture is not else but the complex of skills and abilities which help us to give more effective answers to changes which directly influences our financial affairs. The learning process does not only mean how individuals can gain their financial knowledge but people can get in relation with businesses, with their financial decisions and all these can develop people's mentality about finances. Beside individuals' financial culture we have to define the given organizations' and institutions' financial culture as well, because they can influence people's financial mentality. All these assign the level of financial culture of the society, the economy and the different branches of industry, what can be considered as a very important source of competitiveness when we speak about national economy. It is a very important question, not only from the perspective of the development of different countries but also for the sake of the individuals' and businesses' goals. High quality financial culture shows that economy's characters have financial skills (financial literacy) which involve better awareness of responsibility, endeavor to safety, foresight and professionalism. All these does not mean that countries which have high quality financial culture keep themselves clear of risks or would not invest. On the contrary, they do but with more rationalism, expecting the factors which may disadvantageously influence their future. According to this approach, financial culture is not just the complex of financial skills, but also the economy's characters' behavior and attitude to planning, prediction and simplicity in their financial affairs.

## **Method**

The primary results presented in the study are the results of a quantitative study conducted in Hungary between May and October 2020, immediately after the closures due to the coronavirus pandemic. At the beginning of the data collection, the closures were still in place and the restrictions were only gradually lifted, which led to very vivid recollections of the respondents' answers to our questions. We conducted an online survey, where subjects were recruited through a snowball sampling method, using our own active students as the first base, by sharing the online research tool directly to their email address. This resulted in 6803 evaluable questionnaires. The research tool contained only closed questions, at nominal measurement level (in the form of single-choice and multiple-choice questions), and metric scales (Likert scale and semantic differential scale). The research questionnaire examined the impact of the pandemic in a complex approach. The questionnaire measured changes in financial awareness, changes in consumer habits, but also the effect of digitalization. SPSS 22.0 software was used to process the quantitative results. In the present study, we use frequency counting and cross tabulation analysis to examine the main fears of respondents about the pandemic during the main period of constraints caused by the coronavirus crisis by age and education level. The distribution of the sample is shown in the table below:



**Figure 1**

Distribution of the sample along the factors analyzed



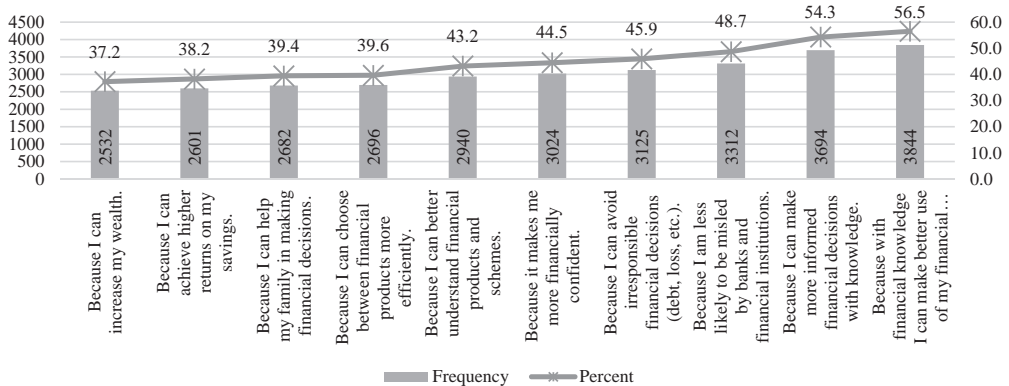
Source: own research, 2020, N = 6084

## Results and Discussion

In this study, we seek to answer the reasons and motivations that drive people towards financial education. Among the possible answers listed, we find both individual and social benefits. The greatest benefit of financial education was seen by respondents as the ability to make better use of their financial opportunities by having financial knowledge. Equally high value is placed on being more informed when making financial decisions. In addition, respondents also saw benefits, albeit to a lesser extent, in being less likely to be misled by banks, and also felt that it was important to be better able to avoid making rash financial decisions when financially literate. The least perceived benefit of financial education was that it would increase their wealth. They also saw little benefit in being able to earn a higher return on their savings. This is generally a characteristic of risk-averse behavior, which is very much a feature of the Hungarian population. Furthermore, respondents did not rate highly the ability to have a sound financial knowledge to help them make family decisions and to be able to choose between different financial products more easily.

**Figure 2**

The mentions of the benefits of financial education in the research



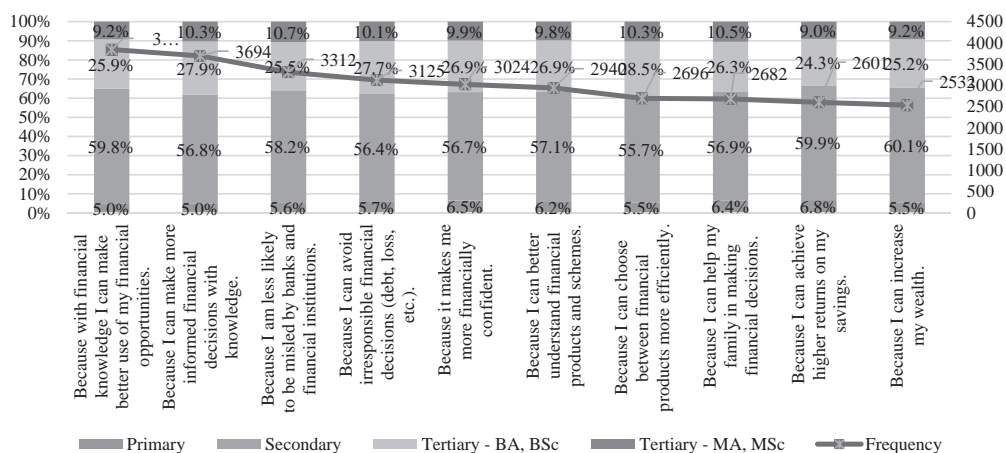
Source: own research, 2020, N = 6084

If we look at the answers to the statements and the proportion of people with each level of education within them, we see the following picture (row percentage, total answers = 100%). Respondents with a primary education have the highest proportion of respondents in their category for the following statements: having financial knowledge allows them to achieve higher returns

on their savings, and thus greater financial security, and also a high proportion of respondents in the overall 100% for the statement that having financial knowledge allows them to help their own family make financial decisions. For respondents with a secondary education, the highest proportion of respondents with a higher education level indicated wealth accumulation as a benefit. This was followed by higher returns on savings and better use of financial opportunities. For respondents who have a bachelor's degree (BA, BSc), there is a better choice between financial products, being better informed to make financial decisions and avoiding rash financial decisions. The main advantages for respondents with a Master's degree are that having financial knowledge makes them less likely to be misled by banks and financial institutions, and better choices between financial products and helping their family. For the latter two groups, the last ranking is higher returns on savings. For those with secondary education, being better informed is the last ranking, and for those with primary education, increasing wealth is the last ranking. This shows that respondents with different levels of education attribute very different benefits to financial education. There is also a clear difference in income between them in the order in which they respond.

**Figure 3**

Distribution of mentions of a given statement for respondents with each level of education (row percentage, mention of a given statement = 100%)



Source: own research, 2020, N = 6084

Finally, it is also worth looking at the frequency with which respondents with a given level of education mention which advantage. In this case, we look at the column percentages, i.e. the percentage of respondents within a given category who identified the item as a benefit (the group by educational attainment is considered to be 100%). The highest mention rate for respondents with primary education was 41.3%. This rate was used to describe greater financial literacy as an advantage. Better use of financial opportunities was also described by respondents with a rate of almost 40%. Third in terms of frequency of mention is the fact that having financial knowledge makes it less likely that banks will be able to deceive respondents. The lowest mention rate was for wealth accumulation among respondents with a primary education.

Respondents with secondary education had a much higher percentage of mention of each benefit. 58.9% described the statement that better use of financial opportunities. Better information when making financial decisions was also mentioned with a frequency of over 50%. The advantage of being less likely to be misled by banks and financial institutions in the presence of sound

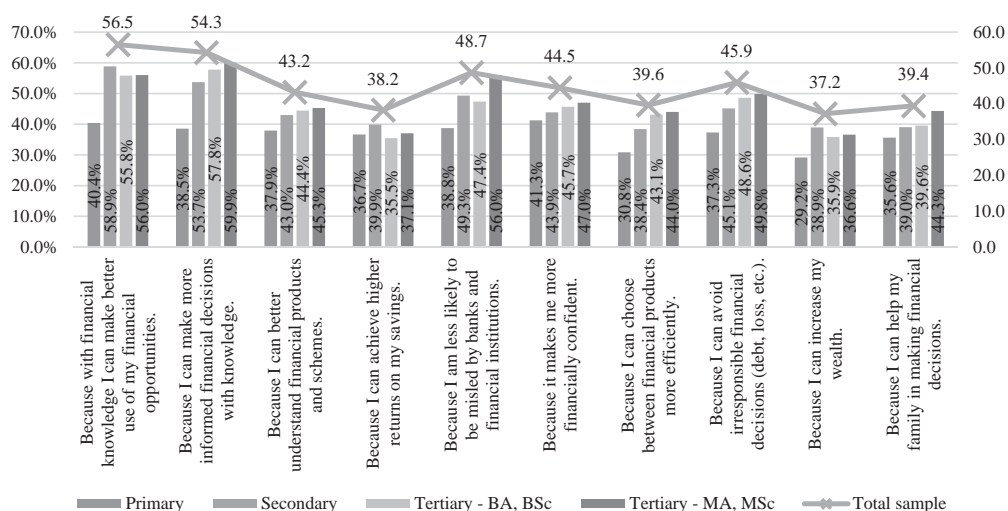
financial knowledge was mentioned with a slightly lower rate of 49.3%. Better choice between financial products was the least mentioned, with 38.4%, and wealth accumulation was the least mentioned, with a slightly higher value.

Respondents with a bachelor's degree also show very high mention percentages. The highest rate, 57.8%, was for being better informed. 55.8% of respondents said that having financial knowledge would enable them to make better use of financial opportunities, and just under 50% (48.6%) said that it would help them avoid bad financial decisions. Achieving higher returns was mentioned by 35.5% overall, with a slightly higher proportion (35.9%) putting wealth accumulation last.

The same percentage and proportion of those with a Master's degree also mentioned being better informed when making financial decisions. Better financial decision making was ranked at a similar rate to the previous group, at 56%. Overall, these two statements have the same mention percentage as for respondents with a bachelor's degree. In third place, also at 56%, is the claim that, with financial knowledge, they are less likely to be misled by banks and financial institutions. The lowest percentage of respondents in this group mentioned the accumulation of wealth and the possibility of achieving higher returns.

**Figure 4**

Frequency of mention by respondents in each segment (column percentage, group = 100%)



Source: own research, 2020, N = 6084

## Conclusion

No one disputes the importance of financial education after the 2008 crisis. This process has been compounded by the 2020 crisis. Financial education is important because every moment of our lives is determined by money and its culture. We make financial decisions when we shop, when we borrow, when we build up savings, but also when we make any other decision that affects the individual and their immediate and wider environment. In this study, we measured individual perceptions of financial education among respondents with different levels of education. It is clear that respondents with different levels of education attribute completely different beneficial attributes to financial education. As a result of the responses received and the above analysis, it can be said that respondents with a more stable and higher income tend to focus on wealth

accumulation and rationalizing their financial decisions, while for respondents with a lower level of education, the focus is more on awareness and information. Overall, the beneficial attributes listed above are definitely present in one or the other group in terms of financial education and are seen as beneficial attributes. This is why financial education should be given high priority from primary school onwards, so that young people are familiarized as soon as possible with the principles and concepts that will be relevant to their everyday lives.

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## **HORIZONTAL LEARNING – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS**

**Abstract:** This paper will focus on horizontal learning, which generally means that employees, voluntarily and over a long period of time, collaborate and learn from each other, define a shared vision, build values, and critically review their actions to improve teaching practice. It also enables personal and professional development.

This research will be aimed at finding a way/s for proper functioning to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching staff. Also, this paper will explore the best practices for its proper implementation in the educational process. The subject of this research will be focused on the analysis of the current practice for horizontal teaching of teachers in our country and a comparative analysis from several European countries, such as Portugal, France, Poland, Estonia, and the Netherlands.

The aim is to determine the experiences related to horizontal learning that they have, and what is the need for mutual exchange of knowledge and skills, experiences, and information between teachers. We will also explore the personal motivation of teachers for horizontal learning, what are the factors and how they affect their motivation for this learning process.

We believe that with this paper we will make a small contribution to the realization of the activities of the teaching staff as part of the professional bodies, the assets in the schools, in order to find the appropriate model for upgrading the cooperation, easily and quickly overcoming obstacles of short-term new information and the surge in the rapid growth and development of scientific and technological knowledge.

**Keywords:** Horizontal learning, Professional development, Professional assets, Teachers

### **Introduction**

“Global education is for implementation of a vision, necessary for transferring into a model of partnership between peoples, cultures and religions at the micro and macro level. Transformative learning through global education involves a deep, structural change in the basic premises of thought, feeling, and action. It is an education for the mind, as well as the heart. It implies a radical shift towards interconnection and creates opportunities for achieving greater equality, social justice, understanding and cooperation between nations.” (Cabezudo, Christidis, Carvalho da Silva, Saltet, Halbartschlager, Mihai, et al., 2008:17)

“This European report on the quality of school education is based on the 16 indicators which were selected by the working group in cooperation with the Commission. These indicators cover four broad areas: attainment levels; educational success and transition; monitoring of school education; and educational resources and structures.” (European Commission 2001)

“Teachers’ work is multifaceted and dynamic. They frequently encounter students with different needs, such as different ability levels and learning styles, and frequently need to give students feedback or interpersonal support. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed new challenges, as teachers have had to communicate with their students, facilitate learning processes and monitor students’ learning without being physically present. While teachers’ interactions with their students lie at the heart of the teaching and learning process, their relationships and interactions with

their colleagues constitute a key professional dimension that has also been seriously affected by the pandemic. Collaboration with colleagues allows teachers to learn from each other's expertise, share knowledge within their professional community and, ultimately, improve the instruction and support they can give to their students." (OECD 2020: 2)

"Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programs involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organizations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically." (TALIS 2009: 49)

"Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher." (TALIS 2009: 49)

"The development of teachers beyond their initial training can serve a number of objectives (OECD, 1998), including:

- to update individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area; • to update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research.
- to enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
- to enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice.
- to exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g., academics, industrialists; and
- to help weaker teachers become more effective." (TALIS 2009: 49)

"The concept of learning communities based on the methodology Teacher Leadership (Teacher Leadership) says that key aspects of this methodology are the following:

- professional development based on the context and needs of the teacher (the teacher himself determines what is key in improving his teaching practice);
- involvement in a research process and documenting the activity in a portfolio of professional development;
- respect the values for mutual trust, cooperation and personal engagement of everyone involved in the improvement of the educational process as key factors in creating a culture of learning at school and strengthening the profession – teacher;
- expanding the influence in the school, the community and the entire educational system." (Step by Step 2017: 5)

## **Problem**

In the literature we encounter multiple definitions of what professional development is. Glathorn (Јованова Митковска 2015: 4) makes the following determination "Teacher's development is his/her professional growth, his/her upgrade that occurs as a result of enriching his/her work experience and constant research that he/she conducts in teaching and outside it." According to Ganser, Filding and Schalock, (Јовановска-Митковска 2015: 8) "professional development is based on the concept according to which it is perceived and understood as a process of inspiration and a set of goals set by administrators aimed at changing the professional development activities applied by the teacher, in different environments and conditions and that lead to constant reviews and changes." (Јованова-Митковска 2015: 2)

"PRN implies continuous professional and personal growth of a teacher in a long-term, continuous process that starts from the beginning of the preparation for this profession and lasts until the end of life, a process that is realized in different ways, which means the training of the teacher

with new knowledge, skills, abilities, strategies in the appropriate areas and ability to apply appropriate technology.” (Јованова-Миктковска 2015: 2)

Investment in the professional development of teachers contributes to higher levels of excellence in schools (McKinsey Report 2007). Professional empowerment is part and parcel of the teaching career in its many stages, from pre-service training, followed by induction during the first years of teaching and the ongoing process of skill development throughout the teaching career, until retirement (Livingston 2014; Schleicher 2011). Empowered teachers experience feelings of competence, motivation and commitment; they are capable of properly dealing with decision-making and professional problems within the world of the classroom and the school and they succeed in implementing skills acquired during their extended process of development and growth (Avdor, Reingold, and Kfir 2010; Klein 2016:2)

Starting from the fact that the best results are provided by professional development that takes place at the school level and is based on personal needs, where the Professional Asset is the core of learning from each other. It is also desirable to have collaborative learning teams, cooperation with other schools. But the existence of supervised (supported) professional development (for those who are not skilled or self-motivated) is essential.

Attention is paid constantly, and continuous corrections are made in setting up a proper framework for the quality professional development of the teaching staff, which will allow a constant addition of new knowledge and information that will provide a solid ground for the teacher to create teaching adjusted to each child instead of each child adjusts to teaching.

The rapid growth and development of science, on one hand, against the short-term nature of new knowledge, imposes the need for different approaches in adapting to the extremely fast way of surviving in everyday life. This pace of constant flow of new information whose quantity and speed of its spread on a global level is made possible by the rapid growth and development of information technology poses new challenges not only in our educational policies but also globally. If we put into operation the power of the human mind from many segments to create a new functional unity, then the challenge for the most part is in the good organization of new information which will then be selected into useful, necessary and non-useful but necessary parts to create another unity. The biggest challenge in such a hectic and rapidly changing everyday life in the segment of the basic resource for functioning, information, the teaching profession faces the need for continuous adaptation. The systematicity in the selection of the necessary information as knowledge that will be applied in the spirit of good proven practices, as opposed to the student and his direct contact with an open window to everything new is inevitable and necessary. Being economical is a necessity, because we can't stand up to the chaos of the things we do or don't need at a particular moment in this way. This raises the question of how much, how, when and in what manner the work of the teaching staff should be shaped so that, on the one hand, they are in constant contact with the necessary information that they will translate into good practices in part of their teaching, and on the other hand the necessity of mutual cooperation with his colleagues and all stakeholders in the educational process that would benefit him in its practicality, economy and functionality in the work of the teacher. The need for continuous upgrading is indisputable, but the need for cooperation is also inevitable. Only on such a basis can a solidly organized course of self-reflection, reflection and quality selection of strategies, techniques and work approaches be created. From here, the development of the teaching staff is a necessity, not just called professional development, but the development of a complete, adaptable character that will aim to improve itself.

Reason why: Research shows that quality teacher preparation is related to the quality of interaction and communication that teachers have with children in order to provide support and encouragement for learning (NICHD 1997, Blair 2002, Kontos and Wilcox-Herzog 2002, Siraj-Blatchford et al. et al. 2002). The quality of interaction has a positive effect on children's

cognitive development (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva 2002). According to Rinaldi (2006), teachers must understand that there is “a constant reciprocity between the one who educates and the one who is educated, the one who teaches and the one who learns”. (International Step by step 2017: 3)

Beazley, Boenisch, and Harden (2003) delineate the differences between horizontal and vertical organizational learning. The horizontal aspect refers to the collaborative development of insights among staff members working simultaneously in different positions. Knowledge continuity management (KCM), which refers to the vertical dimension of knowledge transfer from employees leaving their posts to their replacements, complements the horizontal dimension of knowledge sharing among colleagues working together (Beazley, Boenisch, and Harden 2003; Kalkan 2006; Klein 2016: 3)

Accountability includes thinking about the consequences of teaching: the personal impact on children’s self-image, the academic impact on children’s development and the impact of policy on children’s lives (Pollard and Tann 1993). Zeichner and Liston (1996) pointed out that even under ideal conditions; teaching can lead to unexpected and unintended outcomes. Sorel and Vitorski (2005) emphasize that in order to be a professional one should not only use the knowledge that is served, but one should participate in the creation of knowledge. Reflection allows teachers to find new theories, beliefs and research as evidence for their successful work. The acquired knowledge of teachers must become visible and valued. Zeichner and Liston (1996) point out that the knowledge and experience of teachers is insufficiently considered and valued in educational research. Leet and Cochrane-Smith (1990) point out that the voice of teachers, the issues and problems that teachers emphasize, the methods they use to improve their work, the ways in which they define and understand their work are often invisible in the pedagogical literature. Milikan (2003) points out that professional development is much richer when it takes place through discussions with colleagues, parents and experts. Through conversation and collaboration, both mentor and teacher broaden their perspectives to gain insight into their own teaching. (International Step by step 2017: 4) Through professional development, teachers learn what it takes to engage in democratic professionalism or professionalism as a social practice, which several authors talk about (Oberhuemer 2005, Moss 2007, Peters 2008). According to Moss (2007). (International Step by step 2017: 5)

## **Methodology**

Horizontal learning and its complexity implies the need for continuous retrospective through observation, made in a smaller and larger scale. The short course of knowledge generates a series of opportunities for many teachers. On one hand, institutions and state requirements for continuous professional development, on the other hand, personal interests and needs put teachers in an unfocused direction. Because of this confusion, non-formal and informal education is not channeled properly and is often unproductive. Starting here, an effort was made to give some direction to the teachers, institutions, state officials in the educational process to pay attention in a concrete direction in relation to the wide range of horizontal learning. By itself, the goal arose, which posed a clear challenge to highlight what kind of experience our teachers and teachers globally have in relation to horizontal learning. The parallel made against the prepared comparative analysis of the obtained data will already upgrade the goal. That is, a clear picture will be obtained in which domain of horizontal learning the teacher needs when he needs upgrading, so that he will be supported in his professional development, as well as following the trends of rapid technological development, which on the one hand It facilitates the teaching profession, but on the other hand, it presents additional challenges. The quantitative methodology in this research did not answer the question of what the teacher’s experience is related to horizontal learning, and what is the motivation of the teaching staff to be involved in it. Things related to



the teacher's motivation, directly or indirectly, are a great sign of a future challenge and its concrete direction. Simply, a motivated teacher is a productive teacher. In relation to the theory, the materials that have already been made concrete research in our country, and our neighbors, but also more widely, are reviewed. We are also guided by the legal legislation that refers to the professional development of the teaching staff, its changes and additions. With particular intensity in the last two years, when the trend and focus is on the professional, the career advancement of the teacher when in his profession represents a serious step forward. Each of the questions addressed to the teaching staff was a product of the perceived needs derived from the teaching staff and should be in the domain of different supports, ways of exchanging experiences, information and good practices. From here, the focus on the exchange inside the school, outside of it, but as part of the national exchange as part of the mandatory accredited programs, will start. The teachers should be asked for the international exchange of information, experiences and good practices through the implementation of project activities. The need to release how much the school institutions create the necessary environment in which horizontal learning is nurtured came self-imposed. In the theory of our educational policy, a large part of the subjects are defined as part of horizontal learning, but on the other hand, we are aware of the human factor of influence for the quality implementation of the same imposed need to be the key factor and his serious approach in motivating and implementing the defined theoretical indicators for quality horizontal education. The analysis was conducted online via Google Forms tools. Except questions with single and multiple choices, the possibility was left for an independent statement of one's own position, the teacher's opinion in relation to certain questions, with the aim of obtaining more relevant evidence.

## Results

Building sustainable educational policies comes down to mutual exchange of good proven practices. Experiences are built on the foundations that each country has laid in the past against cultural beliefs and indirect or direct influences on the economic development of each country. However, it is a reality that the economic development of each country is a driver for appropriate quality comparison in the educational context.

Global flows, in contrast to the rapid development of technology, especially IT technology, immense quickly through the unlimited pool of information. The ease with which we realize the exchange of intellectual goods and we can obtain specific knowledge that will build an educational policy of proven experiences is another indicator of the need for awareness, selection and duplication of what is needed, which as a whole, afterwards will create the potential new educational streams recreated from the past.

One of the prerequisites for our quality continuous upgrading as individuals, especially as professionals, is the rapid flow of everyday life, especially the teaching staff is exposed to continuous modifications in their professional mapping. How to create an ideal map along which each of our stakeholders in the educational process will move and at the same time easily, quickly, and economically get the necessary information that is necessary for a professional, quality action is a big dilemma. A dilemma that often not only the individual but also the collectives strive for. Perhaps cooperation is a basic prerequisite for economical and high-quality self-supply.

Starting from the postulate that there is a gap between the formal education of the teacher versus practice and the challenges that are part of everyday life is in the hands of the non-formal and informal upgrading of the professional in order to build a bridge between theory and practice, but also in practice versus proven practice as part of a quality mapping in the context of so-called horizontal learning. As part of creation of a sustained framework that is also in the teacher's hand, is a certain believe.

**To what extent is the representation of the following forms of professional development in your institution: Accredited programs and trainings from the state.**

Accredited programs and trainings from the state are one of the prerequisites to offer the teaching staff quality information from theory, but also from practice. If we start from the conviction that the filters of the state for the selection of accredited programs will be a prerequisite for guaranteed quality, then the map of the teaching staff needs the representation of this type of horizontal approach to professional upgrading. To the given question: To what extent is the representation of state-accredited programs and training in their institution, school, 60% of the teaching staff from RSM declared that this type of training is partially represented in their institution, and 30% of them that are most often represented, in contrast to EU teachers who 31.6% declared that they are partially represented, and 54.6% declared that this type of professional development of the teaching staff is most often represented. No educational policy will be able to give its true maximum if there is no teaching staff who do not themselves follow the information and upgrade their knowledge with proven facts from science on the one hand and good practices on the other hand and that from every science area, at a different level.

If we ask how objective the state can and should be in the selection of accredited institutions that will conduct such trainings for the teaching staff, it is a completely different segment that goes into two segments: How often should the state provide all these to the teaching staff? How much training is optimal to offer teaching staff? How will we get to the right providers who will implement this kind of training, so that they can confirm quality delivery against the needs of the right stakeholders?

**Congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposia, round table.**

45% are not represented at all, 45% are partially represented, 42.1% are partially represented, 31.6% are mostly represented

Exchange as a prerequisite for quality is always necessary. Any way of exchanging information is welcome. If 45% of our teachers answered that this form of professional development is not represented at all in their institution and 45% that it is only partially represented, in contrast to the EU teachers who are compared are one line further in their experience and that 42.1% answered that partially are represented, and 31.6% mostly represent such forms of exchange, then many dilemmas arise. Among the many questions, there is a doubt as who should encourage and implement the various ways of professional cooperation and exchange? How ready are school managers to initiate such a way of exchange? Is there any cooperation between higher education and primary/secondary education?

**Study visit/professional visit to other institutions and project mobility.**

60% are not represented at all  
51.6% are mostly represented

Study visits or professional visits to other institutions and project mobility, as the numbers themselves speak for, are little or not at all represented as part of horizontal learning in our educational institutions, as an opportunity that would be offered to teaching staff as part of their professional development. In contrast to the EU, the countries that perceive the presence of this opportunity in accordance with their institution, with 51.6% of the total number of teaching staff who expressed their opinion on this issue.

**Participation in international projects, programs and networks.**

20% are partially represented and 45% are fully represented  
63.2% are partially represented and 31.6% are fully represented

The National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility in its activities is one of the biggest stakeholder for the present time where international projects are included in the educational system, that is, educational institutions. The presence of international projects, programs and networks in our educational institutions, schools, 45% of teachers fully perceive their representation,

and 20% partially perceive the presence, representation of international projects, programs and networks. Among teachers from the EU, 63.2% partially perceive the representation in participation in international projects, programs and networks, and 31.6% fully perceive the presence of international projects, programs and networks in conjunction with their own educational institutions as a prerequisite for quality mapping of all branches in horizontal learning of teaching staff.

**Cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education department of the local community/municipality.**

40% are not represented at all

52.6% are partially represented

Regarding the request to perceive the existence of cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education sector at the local community/municipality, huge deviations are noticeable in the answers of teachers from our educational institutions, who say that 40% of them do not have this type of cooperation at all. In contrast to EU teachers who 52.6% say that there is a partial representation of cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education sector at the local community/municipality. From here the question arises: Although primary schools are under the umbrella of the municipalities and in every municipality the education sector should exist and work in a quality way, then why does the teaching staff not see their professional activity in the education system? Where and how in the map of horizontal learning as an inevitable part of the professional development of the teaching staff to intervene in order to change the invisible role of cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education sector of the local community/municipality.

**If you have taken/not taken part in the mentioned forms of professional exchange, cooperation, circle:**

**Accredited programs and trainings from the state.**

70% did not participate at all

73.7% participated

If the teaching staff of our schools perceive the state-accredited programs and trainings and with their answers, 60% of the teaching staff say that their representation is partial, and 30% of the teachers say that their representation is complete, the percentage of them who are stated that they have not taken part in accredited programs and trainings from the state at all. In contrast to teachers in our schools, 73.7% of teachers from EU schools declared that they took part in accredited programs and trainings conducted by the state.

**Congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposia, round table**

55% did not participate at all

73.7% participated

If 45% of the teachers in N.M partially perceive the presence of congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposiums and round tables in an assembly in their educational institution, 55%, i.e. 10% more declared that they did not take part in this form of professional upgrading at all. Against the teachers of our schools a high 73.7% of EU teachers declared that they took part in congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposiums or round tables.

**Study visit/professional visit to other institutions and project mobility.**

70% did not participate at all

73.7% participated

In parallel with the answers that 60% of the teaching staff declared that the opportunities for study visits/professional visits to other institutions and project mobility were not represented at all, 70% declared that they did not participate at all, that is, they did not have the opportunity to participate in this type of horizontal upgrading of own professional competences. On the contrary, EU teachers declared that even 73.7% of them took part in a study visit/professional visit to other institutions and project mobility.

### **Participation in international projects, programs and networks.**

55% did not participate at all

73.7% took part

Regarding how the teachers declared about the representation of international projects, programs and networks, 20% are partially represented and 45% are fully represented, as opposed to EU teachers who say that 63.2% are partially represented and 31.6% are fully represented international projects, programs and networks, 55% of RNM teachers did not take part in international projects, programs or networks at all, while 73.7% of EU teachers declared that they took part in this type of horizontal learning. The question that arises in this context is what is the reason for such a big difference? Why did the teaching staff from our school not find a way to find themselves in an international project, program or network and with their own initiative? How much of an obstacle can the language barrier be, which undeniably exists?

### **Cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education department of the local community/municipality.**

65% did not participate at all

76.8% took part

If we know that 65% of the teaching staff in our educational system declared that they did not take part in cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education department of the local community/municipality, even though the municipalities are one of the filters of the educational chain of institutions where the professional approach of cooperation. The questions arise: What kind of professionals work in the education departments there? What is their basic program of professional work in upgrading the competencies of the teaching staff? Regarding our system of professional development, EU teachers declared that there is a high 76.8% cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education sector of the local community/municipality.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Leading the thought from several sides, and on the one hand, the rapid growth and development of science and technology offer the teacher a quantity of information that is extremely short-lived, since there is a continuous flow of new information. On the other hand, the need for the teaching staff to create an environment that will be in harmony with the modern life of the student in order that in the educational process neither the student nor the teacher should be at the center, but their relationship, since education is primarily a course of social interaction supported from human interaction. In order for a third party to take into account the time frame and the economy of time, each individual will take care of his own professional development on the one hand, but on the other hand he will not be lost in the ocean of information, offers, opportunities in a smaller, larger or any quality, so as not to be detrimental to the education of generations.

From the obtained data on the map for the professional development of the teaching staff in our educational system, the first marker pin in the creation of a path on which it is desirable for the teacher to move will be placed on **Cooperation through discussions and analyzes with the education department of the local community/municipality**. Each municipality in its network of operations should have a serious approach to education policy through the education sector. In its own work programs, it should dedicate a significant part to the professional development of the teaching staff that gravitates to its territory. An important segment is the need for mutual cooperation at the local level in a kind of mutual networking of schools for multiple segments in the educational process, and especially for informal and informational upgrading of the teaching staff.

**State-accredited programs and training** will receive the second pin on our teacher professional development map. However, any training offered and imported to teaching staff by the state should give its maximum in terms of quantity and quality, since it is assumed that it passes

through a serious and sustained filter of demand and selection according to strictly defined criteria. In such a way, against the demands as a need from the teaching staff to enhance their own professional competences, the state should deliver appropriate high quality trainings. Perhaps the most appropriate approach in this segment of upgrading professional competences would be institutional cooperation, and not only accredited associations that cannot guarantee continuity in their own work, precisely in that area.

### **Congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposia, round table.**

A large percentage of our teaching staff stated that they did not have the opportunity to implement activities of this type. The exchange of good practices and experience only within the schools if it honestly exists, and as the teaching staff declares and exists, then by itself the need for cooperation at a higher, more sophisticated and professional level in a different way is imposed. That is, through the organization of congresses, tribunes, conferences, symposiums, round tables.

### **Study visit/professional visit to other institutions and project mobility.**

A large part of the research that is being carried out is aimed at creating the necessary intertwining between the theory and its correct way of creating appropriate practice, that is, quality teaching. The third pin from this research goes to the map with the expressed need of teaching staff during study visits/professional visits to other institutions and project mobility.

The last but not the least important pin on the map of necessary activities in order to improve the quality of the professional development of the teaching staff is **participation in international projects, programs and networks**. International exchange as one of the important influencing factors of the development of the professional competences of the teaching staff is evident as a segment to which attention is paid, but still not to the extent that the teachers need for it. Every international exchange in its scope of activity has a greater impact on the professional part than the image of the teaching staff, because it has a direct impact from more segments. And that's professional upgrading, language usage, cultural positivity. So we would say not only internationalization but also interculturalism, gender equality, human rights, child rights, democracy, that is, with one term globalization of the thought of the educational worker. A large part of the economic aid countries compete at the European and global level in the ranking from the aspect of donating, sharing, creating funds that are at the disposal of the teaching staff, just to meet these needs. Exchanges are facilitated through the creation of collaboration networks of different types, with different requirements and obligations for the teaching staff.

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## EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENTS

**Abstract:** This paper will address the issues of assessment and evaluation of students achievements in order to motivate and support their development in learning and in the education process in general. Often the learning assessment and the evaluation process is equated with the final summative, usually numerical result.

In our country, many times, in the last two decades, a series of trainings were held about the criteria which is necessary to be used in the assessment as well as training about the type of instruments and methods that are enable it in both segments: in teaching and in the examination of what has been learned (abilities, competencies, skills and knowledge). The paper intends to confirm its importance and to pay attention to several important points of the evaluation process, summative and formative evaluation (oral feedback as basic form of encouragement and motivation for students to continue the learning process within and out of the class, as well as written feedback, ranked questions, class discussion, and performance activities, tests, essays...) Also, the paper will address the national standards for student achievement and the possible relation for complementarity and interaction, again in the direction of proper evaluation and assessment to achieve standards after completing primary education.

**Keywords:** Learning assessment, Evaluation, Teaching, Standards

### Introduction

This paper is dedicated to the issues of valuing and evaluating students in the direction of motivation and support of their development during learning and in general in education process. The reason why we decided to write on this topic is the still present problem with the assessment and evaluation of students and their achievements within the educational system. The trainings about formative and summative assessment have been continuously going on for almost two decades in collaboration with established and relevant experts on the subject. Also there are currently still going on online through the EDUINO platform. The trainings seem to make a contribution, but the effects are showing very slowly. On the other hand, Nacional standards were established in 2021 as outcomes results from the nine-year primary education. Whether and how much they will be a real motive and challenge to achieve them, its early to say. The most important is: **if** teachers will use appropriate strategies to implement them in the teaching and learning process as well as strategies for their achievement and **how** they (teachers) will organize that. Any change is successful only if it makes a real change in the classroom where the real place to apply all the innovations is.

### Definition of Assessment, Assessment Tasks

Assessment is a part of all curriculum areas and covers various aspects of learning. This means that it refers to all the contents studied by the student and does the checking if they have been learned. Or, assessment is the process of collecting data and making judgments about student achievement

in relation to certain performance criteria. On the other hand, evaluating process allows teacher to plan and creatively come up with next steps. Assessment, can be a motive or a punishment for the student, although its essential value consists in making a combination of teaching and learning, whereby the *final product*, will be acceptable for all, or it will be seen as feedback on the teacher's achievements in teaching and the achievement of the adopted knowledge by the student.

Formative and summative assessment are two points about how assessment is defined, i.e. assessment for or during learning and assessment as a final, summarizing the results for certain contents at a certain time. A good summative grade, but we do not mean good as a qualification that will make just the student satisfied, but good in the sense that the grade is justified or a set of subsequent follow-ups, indications and directions for the student.

### **How Can We Define These Two Types of Assessment?**

Formative assessment should be seen and implemented as a relation or rather like a process of cooperation between the teacher and the student. Such a relation with the student, promotes learning, promotes achieving higher results. On the other hand, proper formative assessment creates an active student who evaluates his own progress. We underline, achievements are measured, not just results or outcomes. Learning assessment is a traditional way of testing of the student's knowledge. The student is subject to assessment in order to verify his knowledge. Summative assessment is often numerical. The compares student achievement to expected standards for that age and with the submitted material. Most of the time, only this feedback goes to the parent as information about what the child has achieved.

This perspective, formative evaluation serves to improve, control and check the progress in the learning of students or the activities of students and the teacher in relation to the achievement of a specific goal. In fact, the goal of monitoring is to improve learning efficiency. This means that the teacher has the task of recognizing and analyzing the obstacles and thus helping the student to overcome the obstacles regardless of their nature. For this purpose, observations, discussions and learning controls are made. Those forms of work with the student contribute to him setting and defining learning goals. When we work with formative forms of assessment, transfer automatically follows in the following direction: – goal-oriented learning, rather than purely content-oriented learning – individualized teaching, instead of teaching in which all students solve the same tasks. The evaluation is for what has been learned and it is the definition and verification of the student's knowledge, to what extent they have achieved knowledge on a specific topic or topics. The question of objectivity and reliability of summative assessment as well as the question of motivation and support during formative assessment are crucial in both types of assessment. What are the elements of assessment that challenge objective assessment? Most often this is due to integrating elements that have no relation to the current situation: past achievements, good or not, wrong assessment of abilities, the individual versus the achievements in the class and even the aspect of discipline.

Now the question is about the instruments and methods used for assessment as well as the ones set the teacher's evaluation criteria. Are the students familiar with them, what is the way of their interpretation? These are just some of the aspects that should be defined by the teacher. The aspect of the individual versus the whole, we mean the student versus the class, you also have to be careful. The teacher must not always have *reserved places* for *good and bad* students. Their changing position is his biggest challenge. Otherwise, the motivation will disappear regardless of the interesting strategies and techniques that will be applied in the class. Although we underline that evaluation is something that is connected with instruments for its realization and forms that should be correlated with the teaching content and concepts that should be adopted, but also with the goals, that is, the learning results. It is important for all actors of the teaching process that the assessment is aimed at better results for the student, provides complete information about the

achievements, is implemented with several methods, thus ensuring reliability. Evaluation should be conducted continuously, fairly and transparently.

## **Application of Assessment**

Achieving results for the student, especially for students where motivation is not on a high level or is based on other elements of the student's personality, sometimes that turn prevent rapid progress or progress that is desired, especially depends on good feedback. When the student is informed of what he has achieved, and what he needs to do to achieve more than the goals which are set in part of the programs in individual departments as something that needs to be achieved, i.e. the learning results that he is expected to achieve. Which specific feedback that the student would receive would be good? In short, that feedback that, in addition to adequate descriptions of what has been achieved, will contain support and steps for further achievements. In all instructions given for assessment by means of oral or written feedback, the principles of respecting what has been achieved versus what has not been achieved is a priority. This means that the student should first know what he needs to know, how he should learn it (by making mistakes, asking for help, he will be aware of how much he has learned and plan what he needs to learn). On the other hand, the teacher should go through the path of diagnostics, connecting prior knowledge with new contents, consciously setting the criteria for success. Therefore, it is important that the teacher sets appropriately structured activities, that is, appropriate activities for what is being learned. For the realization of the activities, it is necessary to give constructive comments related to the goals and criteria. In that process, students develop self-awareness, and that's how, they build their metacognition. When giving positive feedback, students are praised for their engagement, and at a younger age even more so (so that they are not limited to abilities that will essentially continue to be built continuously), because students should not perceive mistakes as something irreparable and they should learn to compare themselves with themselves and not with others. In terms of formative assessment, there are special strategies and techniques that are cataloged as assessment methods: questions for reflection, special time for reflection, *traffic light*, assessment of papers by other students, self-assessment, independent creation, creation of assessment criteria by students themselves, mind maps, plus-minus-interesting, idea circle, right angle, six hats, learning journal, one sentence summary, one word summary, I have the question who has the answer, quizzes, portfolios, checklists, think-exchanges – shared, anecdotal notes. During summative assessment, it is important to apply such ways that will provide more information, in different ways, about what has been learned from a certain topic and for a certain period. A good assessment tool is an essay question. An essay by its very definition includes presenting an opinion based on acquired knowledge, collected facts and arguments. It is also recommended as an assessment method when the higher objectives of the curricula are to be assessed. The essay, despite its apparent breadth, requires the teacher to ask a concrete question that will be understood by the students, that the question is related to the teaching objectives, and the teacher will define what outcome/result is expected from him. When asking the question, it is necessary to set and share evaluation criteria because this type of evaluation may be an issue for discussion for certain bias and arbitrariness. Another important way of summative assessment is knowledge tests. During their preparation, the teacher inspects the curriculum, finds out the level of prior knowledge and thereby determines the time needed to learn the following lessons. At the same time, through the tests, the teacher validates his efficiency in teaching. In the teaching process, the teacher needs to connect or stratify the global goals or learning results from the curricula and shape them into special activities, Petroska-Beška (2007) points out. When specifying the goals, it is possible to measure them with the help of knowledge tests. Concretization implies the measurement of a specific activity. At the same time, the statements that are formulated and addressed to the student require the setting of an active verb that indicates the behavior that the student should manifest



in relation to the given teaching content (Petroska-Beška, 2007, p.6). The tests contain questions that check the learning objectives that are subject to cognitive processes and are related to the six categories of Bloom's taxonomy: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The tests applied in teaching are tests that belong to the so-called informal tests, which means that their preparation and implementation is done by the teacher. Also, he sets the criteria, and the tests themselves should not have metric characteristics – Petroska-Beška (2007) points out. It does not mean that the test is going to be really informal, but it should be made concrete and gradually prepared (global goals, specific goals, clear indicators and criteria, determination of the type of questions, compilation of questions, order of questions and instructions for solving them). But when asking the questions independently, and in general when operationalizing the teaching goals/results, how real are the active verbs in such statements and questions? According to Dimovski, Malceski, Malcheska, (2019), “The answer to this question lies in the fact that teachers are mainly try to fulfill their obligations, but their formulations of the teaching goals remain insufficiently specified, so as such they are uncertain way isolated from the process of checking students' knowledge. In practice, teachers formulate the goals mostly formally, due to the obligation to do so.” (Dimovski, Malceski, Malcheska, 2019, 110). The authors Dimovski, Malceski, Malcheska, (2019) also believe that the curricula have their own shortcomings, such as content overload versus the lack of specific examples of specific learning results and standardization of achievements. This leads us to the next point of our paper, which is the standardization of the students' output achievements, as a national framework, but also the setting of standards within the programs themselves by topics and by areas for the sake of greater “operationalization”.

## **National Standards**

One of the points that the competent institutions, Bureau for the Development of Education, determined as a problem was the lack of good, empirically based descriptions of different levels of achievement in the teaching subjects, to which it would be possible to easily “tie” grades. The guidelines given for diagnostic, formative, microsummative and summative assessment in primary education programs since 2007 have moved things forward, however the definition of objectives and their operationalization to arrive at appropriate activities and assessment instruments were not entirely clear. The assessment standards that were additionally developed as an annex to the existing curricula last decade did not come to life completely. But the reform of teaching in vocational secondary schools, experimentally in 2018 and regularly in 2019, was the beginning of entering student-oriented learning results and achievement standards from which the teacher will take the evaluation criteria, i.e. in the column dedicated to the standards easily the levels built on suggested active verbs from Bloom's taxonomy are visible, and as such easily connected to any numerical grade. The results of such changes will have to be defined with output national standards for secondary education, which will complete that process and then the concerns about proper implementation will remain. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish continuous monitoring and possible revision if it is concluded about some points of applicability. The newest programs, which are at the beginning of their implementation in primary education, are developed on the basis of the adopted National Standards for the achievements of students at the end of primary education. The document established in 2021 is based on the key competences for Lifelong learning from the European Reference Framework in correlation with the needs of our educational system, and contains 8 areas with competences by subject areas and transversal competences. In accordance with the standards, and related to the new programs, formative assessment takes precedence over summative, which means that the students' progress will be monitored and recorded daily. It is also represented in the lesson scenarios. In relation to the national standards, the divided areas: Language literacy, Use of other languages, Mathematics and natural sciences, Digital literacy, Personal and social development, Society and democratic culture,

Technique, technology and entrepreneurship, Artistic expression and culture, contain standards related to knowledge and skills and attitudes and values. On the question of their applicability, we can say that the standards in themselves as a general form represent a typical model according to which it is expected to plan and implement teaching. The existence of standards in some way generalizes what should be the output result for the student and his knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes, values. At the same time, it is a direction, a direction in which the teachers will prepare their lectures and teaching. So, the standards need layering, but it is necessary for the teachers to do the same in their planning for the realization of the teaching in accordance with the program contents and combining the cognitive, affective and skills field as a whole. The processing, adaptation, ie leveling of the standards should also be in accordance with the age of the students and their real possibilities. The national standards that should be implemented in teaching are also differentiated in each grade according to the needs of the specific curriculum. Their elaboration should help in their easier acceptance and implementation. The programs that have been reformed contain standards for evaluating achievements for each content, while examples of activities are given for each standard. The expectations of this program setting are aimed at the correct use of these documents.

## **Conclusions**

How to find the connection between what needs to be achieved and what needs to be measured? Why is the problem of empirical evidence for assessment so big? How to provide evidence and how to value correctly? Is the key only good techniques and learning strategies for teaching, or is it part of everything that should be connected to how we measure students' knowledge? Let's remember one fact: in addition to giving correct guidelines and examples for assessment, there are manuals with good practices and in each of them there is a note that students always achieve more when they have clearly set assessment criteria, that is, the teacher should indicate which assessment standard of the achievements should be realized at the moment so that at the end of the school year they have achieved the results of learning for each topic/area. That's why we return to what was previously stated, the need to connect teaching goals with specific activities, that is, the standards and their connection with specific activities through which those standards will be achieved. At the same time, the formative assessment still has the goals that have been defined a long time ago, but on this occasion we highlight the most important feature of the formative assessment that applies to the student – the assurance that everyone can improve. A key role is played by quality feedback that provides: information about achievement, appreciation of what has been achieved and directions for improvement. Feedback should be specific, that is, individualized to be effective. The teacher should always be directed to the standards and they should be the guide in the realization of quality teaching, because the standards are descriptions (general descriptions) of the levels of quality and quantity of knowledge that is expected students to reach at the end of a certain period of education. Curricula determine what students should know and be able to, as a result of adopting the contents that the program foresees, a achievement standards represent concretization and differentiation of achievements by levels. Exactly this kind of concretization and differentiation enables an objective and valid view of the students' achievements and facilitates their measurement and valuation (Dimovski, Malceski, Malcheska, 2019, 110).

## **The Specific Points from This Paper**

- Evaluation is a process through which the connection between the standards on the one hand, and the teaching content on the other is established.
- Evaluation and assessment should not be connected only with a numerical result, but should be connected with the standards as a line along which the student will move if it is guided correctly through the formative assessment.

- Evaluation must be constant, that is, monitoring should be constant, the instruments should be empirical, measurable and provide accurate visibility of what has been achieved.
- The measurability of the tasks depends on the success in the “translation” of the goals/results from global to concrete, that is, to activities. Activities are a way of achieving a standard that is shown through an active verb that in turn guarantees measurability.

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## TERMINAL VALUES FOR STUDENTS WITH PEDAGOGICAL PROFILE OF EDUCATION

**Abstract:** The report presents the results of the research on terminal values for Bulgarian students of pedagogical profile of education. It was held in the 2021 among students from the first and second year of education. For this report, we chose one of the fragments of this broad and complex reality – the goals, outlining student activities and gives meaning to their own lives. As a methodological instrument was use “Morphological test for life values” /MTJC/ by V. Sopov and L. Karpushina (2002). The subject of research with this test are the terminal values and the various spheres of life of their realization – professional, educational, personal and family life, social and physical activities, hobbies and interests. Mathematics and statistic data processing is done by using SPSS software, version 22. The terminal values are divided into two groups – moral and business, and personality-prestigious. The conducted t-test for dependent samples in order to have a significant difference in the average values of the two variables shows that the studied students generally reveal significantly higher values in the first group of values – moral and business than in the second group – personal the prestigious. The obtained and analyzed results in general confirm hypothesis formulated by us for updating and bringing to the forefront of values related to spiritual development, striving for new achievements and self-improvement, and to a lesser extent – active social contacts in new ones, groups and communities.

**Keywords:** Values, Spheres of life, Students

## Introduction

The value system of the individual of different age groups is of interest to researchers from various scientific fields – philosophy, axiology, culturology, sociology, psychology and pedagogy. With this fact we could explain, on the one hand (site, part), its indisputable theoretical and

practical importance, and, on the other hand, the pluralism of opinions, the colorful terminological polyphony and most of all – the lack of uniform content definition and classification. The classification proposed by Rokich, based on the relationship between “goals and means”, as a result of which the values are divided into two very common types – terminal and instrumental is the classic (Rokich, 1973).

Subsequently, many other classifications have emerged, the review of which is not part of the tasks of this short report. We will limit ourselves to a classification based on the different types of activities performed by the subject. Then the values are associated with certain areas of life – with play, communication, learning, work and leisure. As citizens of Europe, let us turn for a brief reference to the “New Constellation of European Values”, the result of the latest (fifth) international survey published in 2019 in Bulgarian. In it, the compiler of the collection of Bulgarian authors, Acad. G. Fotev, reminds us of the main European values. Among them are peace and humanism, freedom and solidarity, cultural diversity and political equality, modern science and others.

## Methods and Design of Empirical Research

**The aim** of our research is to establish the place and importance of the main terminal values and the leading spheres of life in first- and second-year students with a pedagogical profile of education. Theoretical analysis allowed us to formulate our following assumptions and **hypotheses**.

*First*, the specifics of the university pedagogical profile of education, as well as the dynamic age changes in all areas of their development will update and highlight values related primarily to spiritual development, needs and aspirations for new achievements and improvements, but also for interaction and communication in a new university environment, in new groups and communities.

*Secondly*, the ongoing socio-political and socio-economic changes in our country, the sensitivity to which is particularly high in adolescence, inevitably provoke the need for greater social and socio-political activity. At the same time, we expect the preservation of the imperatives of material, pragmatic and hedonistic values.

*Third*, the transition from first to second year of study in this important humanitarian profile of education will generate its own dynamics in the constellation of terminal values and spheres of life, mainly in the direction of confirming or revising the professional choice made.

*Fourth*, among the life spheres of activity of first- and second-year students, we expect priority to be given to training in their chosen specialty and the beginning of inclusion in the professional life of their new university environment.

The verification of our hypotheses requires the solution of the following **tasks**: 1/ assessment of the level of updating the main terminal values related to the spiritual development of students; 2/ establishing the dynamics and the status of the leading for the students life spheres of activity; 3/ search for connections and dependencies between the established terminal values and the spheres of life with which they are connected and 4 / fixing dynamic processes in the constellation of values and spheres of life.

The population studied by us included first and second year students majoring in Pedagogy from the Faculty of Pedagogy and Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy from the Faculty of Science, Education and Arts at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, their number was 154 students, of which 144 were female and 10 were male. The average age of which is 19.87 years.

For the purposes and tasks of the empirical research we used as a **methodological instrument** the well-established and demonstrated its diagnostic capabilities “Morphological test for life values” /MTJC/ by V. Sopov and L. Karpushina (2002).

**The subject** of research with this test are the terminal values and the various spheres of life of their realization – professional, educational, personal and family life, social activity, physical activity, hobbies.

The test consists of 112 statements, each of which the respondent should rate on a 5-point scale. The results of the approbation and psychometric examination reveal a high degree of reliability and validity of the test. They were also confirmed in our previous study with students (Dimitrov, Petkova, 2017).

The authors of the test distinguish two main groups in the activity orientation of the personality: 1/ development of oneself, self-improvement; spiritual development, creativity and active social contacts, essentially referring to the moral and business orientation of the student's personality, and 2/ orientation to one's own prestige, achievements, material benefits and preservation of one's own individuality, reflecting the selfish-prestigious orientation of the personality.

At high values of the life values from the first group the orientation of the student's personality is accepted as humane, and at high values of values from the second group – as pragmatic.

The low values in these two areas reveal uncertainty, lack of initiative goal setting and vague preferences, and the high values present the personality of the respondents as contradictory and internally conflicting. The authors of the questionnaire have also included a *reliability scale* in it – the higher the result on this scale, the closer the behavior is and corresponds to the socially accepted patterns.

## Results and Discussion of Empirical Research Data

The data obtained in the empirical study are processed with the SPSS program, and the results are presented in Table 1. It shows that the terminal values are divided into two groups – moral and business /  $\bar{X} = 42,85$ ;  $SD = 5,809$ / and personality-prestigious /  $\bar{X} = 41,5$ ;  $SD = 5,559$ /.

The conducted t-test for dependent samples in order to have a significant difference in the average values of the two variables shows that the studied students generally reveal significantly higher values in the first group of values – moral and business than in the second group – personal the prestigious /  $t_{(153)} = 4,02$ ,  $p < 0,001$ /.

**Table 1**

Descriptive statistics of terminal values

Terminal values	Average values $\bar{X}$	Standard deviation (SD)
Moral and business values	42,85	5,809
Prestigious personal values	41,5	5,559
<b>Moral and business values</b>		
Self-improvement	44,64	6,978
Spiritual satisfaction	45,79	6,903
Creativity	40,16	7,550
Active social contacts	40,82	6,225
<b>Prestigious personal values</b>		
Personal prestige	37,89	7,385
Achievements	43,77	6,693
Financial situation	41,33	7,593
Preserving the individuality	42,99	6,710

Among the *moral and business values*, the highest average values are established on the scale of *spiritual satisfaction* /  $\bar{X} = 45,79$ ;  $SD = 6,90$ /, followed by the *self-improvement* scale /  $\bar{X} =$

44,64; SD = 6,97 /. And the other two scales from this first group – *creativity* /  $\bar{X}$  = 40,16; SD = 7,55/ and *active social contacts* /  $\bar{X}$  = 40,82; SD = 6,22 / have significantly lower average values.

Among the second group – *personal-prestigious values*, the highest values are revealed on the scale of *achievements* /  $\bar{X}$  = 43,77; SD = 6,69/, followed by the scale of *preserving the individuality* /  $\bar{X}$  = 42,99; SD = 6,71/ and *financial position* /  $\bar{X}$  = 41,33; SD = 7,59/. And with even lower values than the first two scales are the *personal prestige scale* /  $\bar{X}$  = 37,89; SD = 7,38/.

The obtained and analyzed results in general confirm the first hypothesis formulated by us for updating and bringing to the forefront of values related to spiritual development, striving for new achievements and self-improvement, and to a lesser extent – active social contacts in new ones. groups and communities. They are followed by values from the second group – the personal and prestigious, namely – achievements. As for the low values on the scale of active *social contacts* – this fact is indirectly confirmed and consistent with data obtained from the “Fifth Wave of Research on European Values” (2019), where young people aged 18 to 30 reveal low social political /especially/ and social /in particular/ activity.

However, our data do not confirm our second hypothesis that the recent socio-political and socio-economic changes and calls for reform will make young people more active in both the political and the wider social field. It`s true that they were the main part of the protesters in Bulgaria in the summer of 2021 against the government and the Prosecutor General. Many are the reasons for the data obtained, among which the impact of the restrictions caused by the pandemic should not be overlooked.

The main reasons, however, are elsewhere, namely – in the disappointment not only of the young, but also of the older generations of the state and political leadership of the country – the parliament, government, court and prosecutor`s office, political parties. The data from our empirical study in the *spheres of life*, contained in Table 2, show that the highest average values are the scales *training and education* /  $\bar{X}$  = 63.55; SD = 9, 12/, followed by the *professional life scale* /  $\bar{X}$  = 61.85; SD = 8.53/. Relatively lower are the average values on the scales of *hobbies* /  $\bar{X}$  = 56.52; SD = 9.55 / and *family life* /  $\bar{X}$  = 54.73; SD = 8.14 /, and significantly lower are those on the scales of *social life* /  $\bar{X}$  = 51.62; SD = 10.10 / and *physical activity* /  $\bar{X}$  = 48.25; SD = 11.22 /.

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics of life spheres

Life spheres	Average values X	Standard deviation (SD)
Professional life	61,85	8,539
Training and education	63,55	9,129
Family life	54,73	8,147
Social life	51,62	10,107
Hobbies	56,52	9,558
Physical life	48,25	11,225

We find it natural to study in the chosen specialty is a priority area of effort and performance of students, which is consistent with their pursuit of self-improvement and spiritual development. Our expectations and assumptions were in this direction.

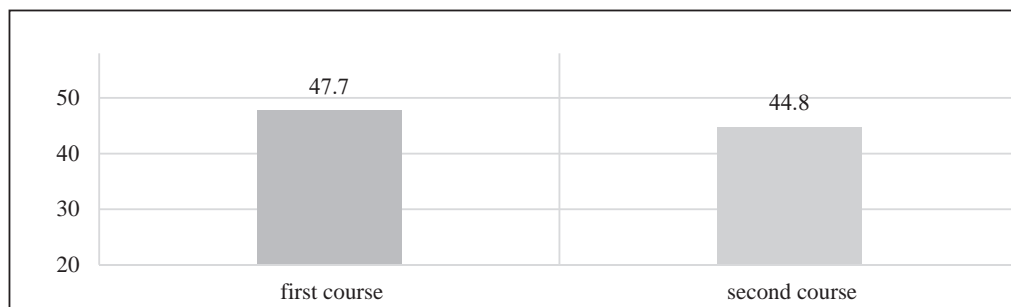
As for hobbies, they remain in the background in the above priority. Located in a university environment different from the school one, and committed to goals and tasks already related to the professionalization of education and training, their students have less and less time for social life and physical activity.

This can presumably be explained by the fact that the students themselves / apart from student councils / do not have their own, led by the public organizations themselves, to initiate, offer and organize their social life in this new environment. And physical education in it has long been a forgotten field by universities that do not specialize in it. Of course, there are exceptions, which group primarily students with the same, similar inclinations and interests – for example, to artistic and theatrical / dance and choir ensembles /, as well as sports competitions. The series of t-tests for tracking the influence of demographic factors on the studied constructs – terminal values and life spheres, did not establish statistically significant effects of the specialty studied by the students.

However, the year of training on *spiritual satisfaction* ( $t_{(131,21)} = 2.76, p = 0.007$ ) has a differentiating statistical effect as part of the moral and business group of values. It turns out that first-year students attach more importance to their spiritual development as a value /  $\bar{X} = 47,7$ ;  $SD = 5,37$  / than second-year students do /  $\bar{X} = 44,8$ ;  $SD = 7,39$  // Cf. Figure 1 /.

**Figure 1**

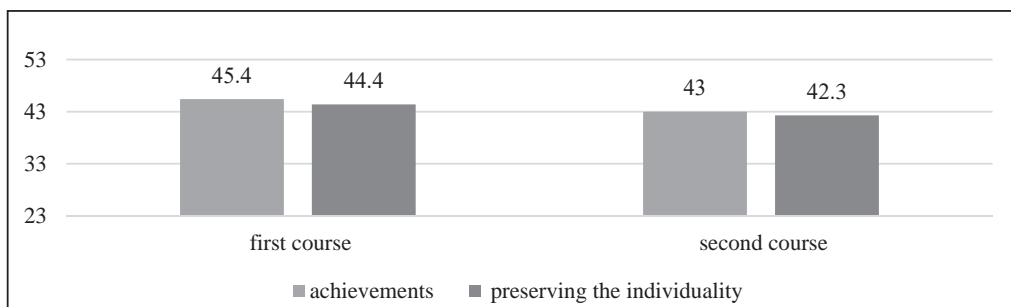
Significant differences in the average values of spiritual satisfaction in first and second year students



The year of study of the students in the specialty has significant effects on two of the personal and prestigious group of values – *achievements* /  $t = 2.49, p = 0.014$  / and *preserving the individuality* /  $t_{(131,79)} = 2,06, p = 0,042$  /. First-year students have higher average values on the achievement scales /  $\bar{X} = 45.4$ ;  $SD = 4.92$  / and preserving the individuality /  $\bar{X} = 44.4$ ;  $SD = 5.15$  / compared to those from the second year /  $\bar{X} = 43$ ;  $SD = 7.3$  and /  $\bar{X} = 42.3$ ;  $SD = 7.29$  /, respectively in terms of achievements and preserving the individuality. The data are illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

Significant differences in the average values of achievement and preservation of individuality in first and second year students



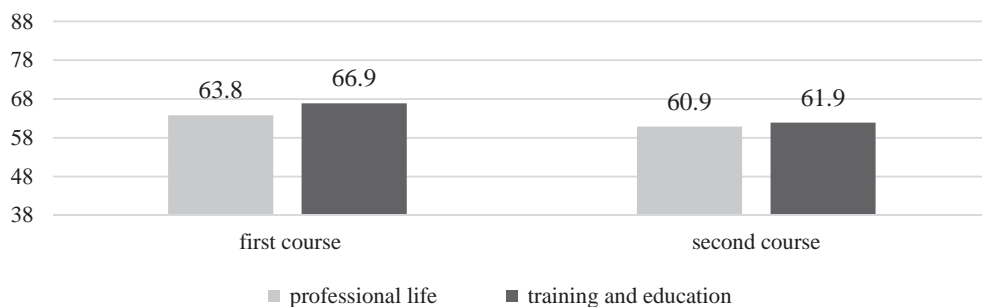
How can we explain the data analyzed above? We assume that they depend on whether the specialty in which they are studying was desired or whether it was in the form of a kind of insurance

with the intention of moving later. If this was the desired specialty and enrolled in it, students will make greater efforts in the direction of achievement and self-improvement. However, the same can be expected given that the specialty in which they enrolled was not a priority status for them, and then the training efforts could have a different, pragmatic motivation, that is (to say) higher success is required for transfer to another specialty or faculty of the university. In the second-year students the motivation for high achievements decreases and especially in the cases when the dissatisfaction with the quality of their education in the first year was a fact.

To what extent does the duration of training (one or two years) affect *professional life* ( $t_{(133,82)} = 2,28, p = 0,024$ ) and *training and education* ( $t_{(142,22)} = 3,84, p = 0,001$ ) / is illustrated in Figure 3. It shows that first-year students have higher average values in both areas of life – professional life /  $\bar{X} = 63,8$ ;  $SD = 6,54$  /, training /  $\bar{X} = 66,9$ ;  $SD = 6,3$  / from the second year /  $\bar{X} = 60,9$ ;  $SD = 9,25$  / and education /  $\bar{X} = 61,9$ ;  $SD = 9,85$  /.

**Figure 3**

Significant differences in the average values of professional life and training and education of first and second year students



Finally, let us see the data shown in Figure 4, which illustrate the influence of the “gender” factor, verified by t-test on the spheres of life. This factor significantly distinguishes only physical activity ( $t_{(152)} = 2.03, p = 0.044$ ) as a vital sphere. It was found that men attach more importance to physical activity /  $\bar{X} = 54.2$ ;  $SD = 10.88$  / than women do /  $\bar{X} = 47.7$ ;  $SD = 11.3$  /.

**Figure 4**

Gender differences in the average values of physical activity





We assume that the unequal studied population by gender /144 of females and 10 of males / has influenced the fact that no other significant differences are found between the surveyed students of both sexes. The limited range of our respondents on the indicator “age” / 96% are aged between 19 and 22 years, and 90% – between 19 and 20 years / is one of the reasons why the correlation analysis of the studied scales does not reveal links between the age of the students and the studied constructs.

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## JEROME BRUNER ON LITERATURE: CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVES FOR EDUCATION

**Abstract:** In this paper, we are going to discuss the status that the cognitive psychologist and pedagogue Jerome Bruner gives to narratives (stories) and literature, especially the part that he thinks that they should play in the process of education. In the first part of the paper, we are going to discuss Bruner’s important distinction between the *paradigmatic* (or *logico-scientific*) and the *narrative* modes of thinking and knowing. In the second part, we are going to clarify this distinction furthermore, and we will discuss the specifics of the narrative mode of knowing, especially the important part that stories play in the subject’s construction of the worldview and his idea of the self. We will also discuss the importance of literature in the context of the narrative mode of knowing and thinking. In the third part, we will delve deeper at the importance that Bruner gives to literature, talk about what, according to him, are its benefits, and how literature can be better implemented in the process of education. In writing this paper we will consult Bruner’s extensive literature, but we will mainly focus on the following books: *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (1979), *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1985), *Culture of Education* (1996) and *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (2002).

**Keywords:** Narrative, Story, Literature, Education, Learning

**Introduction: A Child’s Need for Stories...**

At the end of *The Book of Memories* (the second part of his essayistic memoir *The Invention of Solitude*) Paul Auster gives the following remark concerning the relationship between children and stories:

It is said that a man would go mad if he could not dream at night. In the same way, if a child is not allowed to enter the imaginary, he will never come to grips with the real. A child’s need for stories is as fundamental as his need for food, and it manifests itself in the same way a hunger does. (Auster 2012: 165)

Auster, in this short extract, using the specific intuition that can be found in (good) works of literature, crystallizes the problem which we are going to elaborate on in this paper with great economy and precision. We know by intuition that stories are necessary, as fundamental for the child “as his need for food”; from the earliest age to the highest levels of education, children are “hungry” for stories. We also know that stories are useful in some way, and that they have been a part of a child’s education from the downs of civilization; and that the imaginary is a necessary precondition for the construction of the real – not only a “supplement” or a “decoration”, but a *sine qua non*. Why?

We are not going to find the answer to this question by intuition, without an in-depth analysis of the complex relationship between people, stories, and education, and for that we need to turn our attention to scientific discourse (intuition is helpful, but only in the beginning, while we need to formulate the problem concisely<sup>15</sup>). What is going to help us is the work of the American pedagogue and cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, because his work in the late seventies (*On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand*, 1979), eighties and nineties (*Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, 1985; *Acts of Meaning*, 1990; *Culture of Education*, 1996), and up until the early years of the new millennium (*Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, 2003) provides in-depth and interdisciplinary analysis (the only way possible, according to Bruner<sup>16</sup>) of the problems that concern us.

It is, as we’ve forgotten, says Bruner, that the narrative mode of the construction of reality is fundamental for our functioning in the world and in society. Our deepest and most precious values and convictions are reflected in our stories, and with their help, we structure our time and conceive history, we articulate our own and the lives of others, and we imagine other people’s minds. We use stories so we can cope with the unexpected in life, with failed plans and expectations gone wrong. They give us conventionalized wisdom about what we can expect, they orient our worldviews and give meaning to our actions. Simply stated, stories makes us *beings-in-the-world*; without them, we would be lost and disoriented. (Bruner 2002:31)

Then why, asks Bruner – in *The Uses of Story* – “do we fob Pythagoras of on eight-graders but never breathe a word to them about Aristotle on narrative?” (Bruner 2002: 5) Meaning why, conventionally, and generally, the approach to the narrative mode in most of our school – the approach to poems, drama, *belles-lettres*, theater etc. – is ground on the premise that they are some kind of sophisticated decoration, a supplement, as we already said, but not a necessity, as Auster concisely remarks? That narratives are something that beautifies free time and makes life more interesting, but not something as fundamental as mathematics or science?<sup>17</sup>

There are a lot of answers to Bruner’s quasi-rhetorical question, answered and elaborated in many books, all from different sciences and scientific disciplines. But what concerns us in this

<sup>15</sup> In *Essays form the Left Hand* Bruner gives the following definition of intuition: “Intuition implies the act of grasping the meaning or significance or structure of a problem without explicit reliance on the analytic apparatus of one’s craft. It is the intuitive mode that yields hypotheses quickly and produces interesting combinations of ideas before their worth is known. It precedes proof; indeed, it is what the techniques of analysis and proof are designed to test and check”. (Bruner 1997: 102)

<sup>16</sup> In the *Acknowledgments* to *Acts of Meaning*, Bruner states the following in relation to the *Center for Cognitive Studies* and interdisciplinarity: “I mention it here only to express a debt to yet another community that helped convince me (by this time hardly against my will) that the boundaries that separated such fields as psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy were matters of administrative convenience rather than of intellectual substance.” (Bruner 1990: XVI)

<sup>17</sup> In the chapter *So Why Narrative*, a part of his last book *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Bruner decidedly writes that without narratives, we would be literally lost and disoriented. If we couldn’t tell stories about ourselves, and stories in general, our idea of selfhood could not exist. From a medical and physiological point of view, he mentions a clinical manifestation called *dysnarrativia*, which presents itself as the inability to tell or understand stories, or in general, a manifestation that describes how the brain organizes the narrative experience. It is commonly associated with Alzheimer’s disease and with Korsakoff’s syndrome and other focal brain injuries. Another important type of *dysnarrativia* manifests as the inability to understand other people’s minds, which means a loss of the sense of oneself, but also the sense of others. (Bruner 2002: 86)

paper – and what concerns Bruner in his books – is why that must change (why should we teach Aristotle’s theory of *peripetia*, as we teach Pythagoras to eight-graders). Why narratives and the theory of narratives must have a bigger part in education, as they are a huge part of folk-psychology and our everyday lives. What are the benefits of stories – of hearing, telling, and learning about them – of knowing a lot of stories (having a big “repertoire”), and knowing about stories, about their structure and rules? To answer all these questions, first, we must consider the narrative impulse, which is an invariant in human nature. So, in the first part of this paper, we are going to analyze how we – as subjects – use narratives to construct reality, according to Bruner, but also the scientific side of talking about stories. In the second part, we are going to elaborate on Bruner’s conception of this mode (the narrative mode) and its place in education. We are going to finish this paper with a conclusion that sums up our findings.

## The Two Modes of Knowing

“There appears to be two broad ways in which human beings organize and manage their knowledge of the world, indeed structure even their immediate experience”, writes Bruner in his essay *Culture, Mind and Education*, establishing the foundations of his theory of the narratives:

One seems more specialized for treating of physical “things”, the other for treating of people and their plights. These are conventionally known as *logical-scientific* thinking and *narrative* thinking. Their universality suggests that they have their roots in the human genome or that they are... givens in the nature of language. They have varied modes of expression in different cultures, which also cultivate them differently. No culture is without both of them, though different cultures privilege them differently. (Bruner 1999: 39-40)

Although most clearly articulated in the book *Culture of Education*, the issue of this division of human existence and cognition has been of interest to Bruner since the collection of essays entitled *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand and Actual Mind, Possible Worlds*. In the second work, he makes a distinction between these two modes of knowledge and existence using concrete examples. The first mode – the *logico-scientific* or *paradigmatic* – strives for the ideal and purely formal mathematical system of description and explication. It operates by categorizing and conceptualizing the elements in a coherent, homogenous system, and bases itself on logical and scientific procedures such as conjugation and disjunction, hyperonymy and hyponymy, strict implication, etc. It is a language that rests on the premises of consistency and non-contradiction, and creates good theory, analysis, logical proof, solid argument, and empirical research guided by stable hypotheses. The second mode – the one which interests us in this paper – i.e., the narrative mode of representation and construction of reality, aims at good stories, gripping drama, and believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts. Also, the human, or human-like intentions and actions and the complications and consequences that emerge from them are central to this mode. When he speaks about the narrative mode, Bruner refers to the famous literary theorist and philosopher Paul Ricoeur who says that narrative is built upon concern for the human condition. (Bruner 1986: 12-14) In the essay *Possible Castles* (part of the book *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*) Bruner notes that both modes – or the “two cultures”, as they were called in the past – have the same starting point: building a frame of references in which the world will have sense and meaning, and which will bring new knowledge. They differ in that their methods are different – the sciences strive for universality, outside of any context; while the humanities and the arts are always context-oriented, they talk about the world as a place in which people have lived, are living, and are going to live. (Bruner 1986: 50)

In all his essays and papers, Bruner constantly repeats that narratives are a specific form of knowledge. The etymology of the word signals its connectedness to knowing, because the verb

“to narrate” derives from both “telling” (*narrare*) and “knowing in some particular way” (*gnarus*) – the two of them intertwined from the beginning to the end (Bruner 2002: 27). Narrating presupposes knowing and knowing narrating. With the help of narratives, we establish the structural background of reality. “We seem to construct stories of the real world, so called, much as we construct fictional ones: the same forming rules, the same narrative structures”, writes Bruner.

We simply do not know, nor will we ever, whether we learn about narrative from life or life from narrative: probably both. But nobody questions that learning the subtitles of narratives is one of the primer routes to thinking about life – much as a grasp of the associative, commutative, and distributive rules helps us grasp what algebraic thinking is. (Bruner 1999: 94)

Furthermore, it must be emphasized that while narrative modes of knowledge are clearly different from the *logico-scientific* modes of thinking, that doesn't mean that they are an arbitrary and chaotic phenomenon. Stories are subject to rules and laws, just like mathematics, logic, physics, and other “hard sciences”. In the essay *The Narrative Construal of Reality* (in the book *Culture of Education*) Bruner demonstrates nine such “universals of narrative realities”: 1. Every story establishes a *structure of committed time*; it doesn't organize its time by seconds or hours (as societies do), or by a metronome, it does so by “the unfolding of crucial events”, i.e., beginning, middle and end, determined by the meanings assigned to the events or the perceptions of the agents in the narrative. 2. *Generic particularity*: every narrative falls under a genre or type, because each story is reminiscent of another – It can be comic, tragic, farcical, satirical, sentimental, ironic, etc. 3. In stories, unlike the “real world” (the material world as it is), *actions have reasons* – in contrast to the naked meaninglessness, the narrative reality is always meaningful. It gets its motivation from the convictions, beliefs, and values or other “intentional states” (phenomenologically speaking) of the author or the genre. 4. Narratives by rule have a *hermeneutic composition*, meaning that the significance of the “text” comes from the complex interdependence of the part and the whole (i.e., the “hermeneutical circle”). 5. All stories are constructed on the state of *implicit canonicity*, to which they are referring positively or negatively, either being subservient to it, or being opposed to it. 6. The significance of the narratives is always open to interpretation because of its *ambiguity of reference*. 7. *The centrality of trouble*: stories are always about broken rules or planes gone awry, they are oriented around unusual things and adventures. 8. The relationship between the reader and the story is based on *inherent negotiability*, concerning the places where fiction starts and reality ends, or *vice versa*. 9. *The historical extensibility of narrative*: every story has a nearly limitless possibility for the widening and integration of events, characters, or themes. (Bruner 1999: 133-147) What is obvious and doesn't need to be emphasized is that all these aspects are valid not only for the world of fiction, but also for the world of real people and real events. We structure our life-stories in this way, always obeying these nine universal rules.

Bruner, in many of his books, notes that children enter narratives quite quickly, from a very early age. Before the start of their formal education, they know a lot about stories, even before they can fully comprehend them, or before they can tell and retell them themselves. “We seem, then, to have some predispositions, some core knowledge about narrative from the start”, writes Bruner in *The Uses of Story*. (Bruner 2002: 33) The origin of this predisposition comes mainly from the fact that people are inherently social and cultural beings. The socio-cultural context (“folk psychology”, in Bruner's terms) feeds us with stories from our earliest years, stories that come from the cultural tradition/s, and which immediately become our primary templates for experience. They structure both our private and our public experience of life, being crystalized by culture in a shared set of symbols. Society and social life as we know it wouldn't be possible

without stories. In other words, children will listen and learn to tell stories even without spending a single day at school, because they are an integral part of the culture and the structures of society. The myths and histories of the nation they were born in, as well as the folk tales of tradition passed down from their ancestors are the most obvious example of this. Through them, they get their sense of selfhood, tradition, culture, nationality, i.e., everything that they are, but also everything that they can become. (Bruner 1990: 80; Bruner 2002: 34)

When we outline the basic aspects of the narrative mode, the connection between stories and education becomes apparent. Children have no choice but to participate in the world of narratives. With their entry into language and culture, they immediately start swimming in the endless ocean of stories – an ocean which is nothing other than culture itself, the structure of society. From this point of view, the choice is obvious: either we let children learn to orient themselves in this world of narratives without the knowledge or skills which can help them get a sense of orientation or critical distance; or we ensure we teach and equip them, systematically, from an early age, to have a critical and enlightened attitude *a propos* the stories they hear, the culture they have, and the society they live in.<sup>18</sup>

### **Narrative and/in Education**

“It has always been tacitly assumed that narrative skill comes *naturally*, that it does not have to be taught. But a closer look shows this not to be true at all”, decisively observes Bruner, emphasizing that although we are naturally predisposed to function in the narrative mode, the skill, the ability to use that mode, does not develop spontaneously and beyond (or out of) the broader context of our lives. Bruner observes decisively, emphasizing that although we are naturally predisposed to function in the narrative mode, the skill, the ability to use that mode does not develop spontaneously and beyond the broader contexts of our lives. We know, he writes, that narrative dexterity goes through many different stages (that it can be developed and upgraded): that it can be seriously damaged or impaired as a consequence of brain damage of a certain kind; that it doesn’t work well under stress, and that it ends up in literalism in one social community (that goes against the inherent ambiguity of the meaning in narratives), while becoming fanciful in another one with a different tradition (it splits up from material reality and any kind of social relevancy completely, and ends up as pure fancy). Also, it is obvious that some individuals show greater talent or prowess at constructing good stories: writers obviously, but also law students or lawyers, psychologists, teachers, even doctors – all of them have learned how to make a story believable and worth thinking about. While nobody can’t tell for sure what we should do to increase “narrative sensibility” in a person, however, two very obvious premises can be observed: Firstly, that the child or the young person can know himself (or herself), his identity and culture, if he gets to know and feel the myths, history, folk tales, and all other narratives of his culture (or cultures). Secondly, it has been known for some time that the imagination is nurtured with the help of fictional stories: finding yourself in the world, in society, in a particular culture – while it is a consequence of family or societal institutions – it is mainly an act of the imagination. Belles-lettres, drama, poetry lead to the possible – not only as a helping tool for the child

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<sup>18</sup> In the conclusion of the third chapter (*Entry into Meaning*) of the book *Aspects of Meaning*, Bruner writes that: “... our capacity to render experience in terms of narrative is not just child’s play, but an instrument for making meaning that dominates much of life in culture – from soliloquies at bedtime to the weighting off testimony in our legal system... Our sense of the normative is nourished in narrative, but so is our sense of breach and of exception. Stories make ‘reality’ a mitigated reality. Children, I think, are predisposed naturally and by circumstance to start their narrative careers in that spirit. And we equip them with models and procedural tool kits for perfecting those skills. Without those skills we could never endure the conflicts and contradictions that social life generates. We would be unfit for the life of culture.” (Bruner 1990: 97)

in finding himself (or herself) in the world as it is in the present but also as a way of creating a place for itself in the world as it can be in the future. (1999: 40-43)

One of the first tasks of a “narrative education” would be to get the students acquainted with as many narratives as possible. Every student should learn as many stories as he can, so that he can have a broader view of the possible. The variety of stories and the variety of ways they can be told would broaden the students’ understanding of reality. They would learn more about the world, about society, and about themselves. On the other hand, they would also get to learn new ways of being in the world (alternative “life forms”) – because literature, in the general sense, is the factory of the possible – but also ways to change the world. This, simply said, is the first quantitative task of education in relation to narratives.

“We live in a sea of stories”, writes Bruner in *The Culture of Education*,

And like the fish who (according to the proverb) will be the last to discover water, we have our own difficulties grasping what it is like to swim in stories. It is not that we lack competence in creating our narrative accounts of reality – far from it. We are, if anything, too expert. Our problem, rather, is achieving consciousness of what we so easily do automatically, the ancient problem of *prise de conscience*. (Bruner (1999: 147)

With this statement, we delve deeper into the connections that exist between education and narrative. The “narrative education” cannot stop at the “ordinary” acquaintance, and quantitative multiplication of empirical samples (listening to more folk tales, adopting more historical examples, following examples from the domains of poetry, prose, and drama). The quantitative aspect is not enough. The more profound goal of education is to bring to the forefront of our minds, to wake up in a way, what we do automatically – because the narrative mode is so natural and integrated with our everyday experience, that most of the time we don’t take notice of it. In other words, to have us reflect on the possibilities and the presuppositions of the narrative creation *per se*: from its *praxis*, to its *theoria*. That’s the true meaning of Bruner’s rhetorical question – why we teach Pythagoras to eight-graders, but not Aristotle.

Bruner lists several ways in which this can be achieved. The first one is by *contrast*: the classical example of this method is listening or reading the same story told by two speakers or two opposite points of view. This will make students think about how two observers or participants in the same event might see it in a completely opposite way, or at least differently. That is a good starting point for a more profound, but nevertheless very concrete discussion concerning the nature of reality itself, the distinction between subject and object, story, and plot etc. The second way is by *confrontation*, which is, in essence, by thwarting the listener’s or the reader’s expectations. By having their expectations betrayed, students get a better grip of the dynamic of what Freud calls the *pleasure* and the *reality principles*. In other words, their expectations about the narrative were betrayed: they were expecting something to happen in a particular way, but something completely different happened, something that they weren’t expecting at all. The third way is the most complex, but also the most profound, and it is called *metacognition*. Metacognition is in fact an in-depth reflection, a turning backwards and inwards towards thought itself and thinking itself, and specifically – in the case of narratives – towards the codes and the procedures we use when telling or listening to stories. It is, simply, thinking about thinking, and thinking about stories in general, which is a first and very important step towards compromising and thinking together with other people. By employing metacognition, for example, students can start to ask questions about contrasting stories in a deeper way – why are the two subjects looking at or experiencing the same event in two different ways? Or asking more acute questions about confrontation – why expectations were set in that particular way or why did I feel betrayed when the plot or the *denouement* happened in this and not that way etc. (Bruner 1999: 147-149)

Teaching narrative literacy, then, comes down to two activities. The first is based on equipping children/students with the necessary symbolic systems, which is basically the primary acquisition of as large and as diverse a number of narratives as possible, regardless of the form or the genre: myths, folk tales, poetry, prose, drama, etc. This is the quantitative aspect of narrative education. The second, more complex, qualitative part, is becoming conscious of the universal rules of the narrative: the transformation of the student's point of view from empirical to critical (in the Kantian sense of the term). It may sound abstract, when it is said in abstract language, but Bruner's examples (*contrast, confrontation, metacognition*) show us that it is something very practical and applicable.

Bruner mentions one more aspect that is relevant for teaching narrative competences. Every society, every culture, can have a "breakdown", a crisis which is in many ways a disagreement about stories, or when the narrative impulse is numbed. The reasons for this can be various, but Bruner lists three that seem central to him in his book *Aspects of Meaning*: 1. When there is a serious disagreement about what is ordinary and canonical in a particular culture, in fact, when there are disagreements about the fundamental mythical and historical stories on which the cultural and political reality of a group of people is based. 2. The second problem comes from what Bruner calls, "the rhetorical overspecialization of the narrative", when stories (private or public) become overly ideological, banal, and self-serving, so that people stop taking them seriously: they see them as obvious lies or counterfeits. This happens, for example, in totalitarian regimes, as described in Milan Kundera's or Danilo Kis's novels. 3. When there is a "sheer impoverishment of narrative resources" – in the lowest classes of society (ghettos, sub-proletariat etc.), when the worst-scenario stories are so dominant that the sense of the possible is almost extinguished or swallowed by the actual material and economic circumstances. (Bruner 1990: 96-97) At times like that, we can notice, as Bruner emphasized on several occasions, that not all stories are of the same quality. One of the main tasks of education would be to teach its students to be critical of bad narratives, especially when breakdowns happen. Also, to show them that there are necessary material and societal preconditions for a story to actually come to be, and a sense of the possible which is not extinguished by the sense of a complete ending.

From this point of view, teaching narrative sensibilities is not only knowing a large number of stories; nor is it only knowing narratology and literary theory; it is also a capability of sensing and recognizing those specific moments when your culture is in crises, when there is a breakdown in the narrative impulse, when stories are being falsified and bad stories are the rule and not the exception, and where the necessary material conditions for imagining the possible are prone to be extinguished. That is why Bruner's conclusion concerning the relations between narratives and education is intentionally general – we should pay more attention, at least as much attention as we pay when we teach the natural sciences and logico-scientific thinking, to teaching narrative thinking, stories, and their theory. Or as he puts it himself in the important essay *The Narrative Construal of Reality*:

We devote an enormous amount of pedagogical effort to teaching the methods of science and rational thought: what is involved in verification, what constates contradiction, how to convert mere utterances into testable propositions, and on down the list. For these are the "methods" for creating a "reality according to science". Yet we live most of our lives in a world constructed according to the rules and devices of narrative. Surely education could provide richer opportunities than it does for creating the metacognitive sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims. It is so bizarre, given what we know about human thought, to propose that not history be taught without historiography, no literature without literary theory, no poetry without poetic? (Bruner 1999: 149)

## Conclusion

We started this paper with a remark from the contemporary American novelist and essayist Paul Auster on the nature of the relationship between stories and children. Auster writes that stories are as necessary for children as food. Building on this intuitive grasp of the problem, we delved deeper into it with the help of the theories of education theorist (pedagogue) and cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, who wrote in depth about the universal narrative impulse in humans and its necessary place in education.

In the first part of the paper, we presented his distinction between the two modes of knowledge: the logico-scientific and the narrative modes – both universal to every culture and in every education. We elaborated further on this distinction but delved deeper into the narrative mode of knowledge. We referred to his analysis of the etymology of the verb to narrate, and concluded that narration is as much about knowing, as it is about telling – in other words, that narrative is a form of knowledge, equally respectable, but with different aims and characteristics than science. Then, we referred to Bruner's nine universal aspects of narratives, and talked about the function and the place of narratives in culture and society. We concluded the first part with the note that stories must be systematically taught in school because they play a necessary part in every person's life, in the working of society and the organism of culture. Also, because they are a form of knowledge with universal aspects that can be taught in a systematic and organized way.

In the second part of the paper, we concentrated on Bruner's writings concerning the place of the narrative in education. We noted that although Bruner thinks that narrative is universal to all cultures and societies and intrinsic to every human being and its genetics, it also can be prone to errors, distortions, sickness, malfunction, and manipulation. It must be nourished if we want to develop it in a right and healthy way. Following on these remarks, we talked about two ways in which narrative can be taught: 1. Quantitatively, by teaching as many narratives and as many forms of narratives as possible; 2. Qualitatively, by teaching about narrative itself, theoretically and critically, with the help of different methods such as *contrast*, *confrontation*, and *metacognition*. In the end, we talked about Bruner's remarks about the breakdowns in culture and society because of narrative malfunctions and distortions of consensual, political, material, and economic nature. We concluded this paper with a remark from Bruner's key essay, *The Narrative Construction of Reality*, according to which narrative and narrative thinking has to be taught with the same systematic, organized, and serious approach we take when teaching scientific thinking and science, because stories play a key role in our personal and public lives.

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## **CREATIVITY IN TEACHING MATHEMATICS**

**Abstract:** Thinking about the future of education at all levels, we need to ask ourselves what qualities students need to be encouraged and how to prepare them for the challenges that tomorrow brings. Creativity has certainly been highlighted as one of the most important factors to be encouraged during the teaching process. Creative teaching methods motivate students to think, create freely and actively participate, and consequently create a pleasant teaching climate. This is also a feature of today's understanding of modern teaching and active learning. The results of some researchers point out that creativity in teaching is still not given as much importance as it should be, especially in the context of teaching mathematics, which is the basis of other scientific fields. Teaching media represent a significant contribution to raising the quality of teaching, and textual media, as the oldest among them, are still indispensable in classroom textbooks. In this context, the tasks that appear in them are especially important, and the focus of this paper are open-ended tasks that appear in textbooks in mathematics. Previous research on this issue has not gone in a direction conducive to creativity. The aim of this paper is to show the importance of creativity in teaching and the potential of open-ended tasks in response to the demand to encourage creativity in mathematics teaching.

**Keywords:** Creativity, Mathematics, Teaching, Open-ended tasks

### **Introduction**

Creativity as a phenomenon in the last few decades has been placed in the focus of many scientific disciplines and is undoubtedly of great importance for future humane schools. There is no single and generally accepted definition of creativity, but many point to the use of divergent thinking, thinking "outside the box", finding new solutions, adaptability, self-actualization, originality, and flexibility (Aleinikov, Kackmeister, & Koenig, 2000; Dubovicki, 2016; Jaušovec, 1987; Prentice, 2000; Robinson, 2011; Torrance, 1981; Treffinger, 2002). George (2005, according to Koludrović, 2009) defines it as divergent thinking that leads to unconventional solutions while solving conventional tasks. Kwon, Park J. H. and Park J. S. (2006) state that it is a human ability or skill to solve problems and create new knowledge. Amabile (2013) identifies creativity as an appropriate response, product, or solution to an open-ended task and identifies three important components to the process: relevant skills, the ability to think creatively, and intriguing motivation. Bognar (2012) approaches it from a psychoanalytic, humanistic and social point of view and emphasizes its importance in realizing human potential, encouraging better teaching and the development of society itself through creative individuals.

Rački (2013) notes the lack of an adequate theory on the structure of creativity (as there are on the structure of intelligence or personality). It can be classified into domains: everyday, scientific and artistic, and people are usually not creative in all areas at the same time. He also mentions the problem of related terms (giftedness, creativity, talent, intelligence, genius...) that appear in the literature, sometimes inaccurately or as synonyms.

In the modern information world, creativity becomes much more important than accumulating knowledge and facts (Koludrović, Reić Ercegovac, 2010), "correct" answers that students need to remember. Today, computers search for information and calculate much faster and more accurately than humans will ever be able to (Grégoire, 2016; Pehkonen, 2017), so encyclopedic

knowledge may not be the greatest imperative – the school has the task of teaching students how to think. According to Kadum (2011), the essence of school creativity is in discovering different solutions to a problem.

Many scientists emphasize the great importance of (creative) teachers (Kwon, Park J. H., & Park J. S., 2006; Kadum, 2011; Dubovicki, & Omićević, 2016; Grégoire, 2016; Rohaeti, Ramadan, & Fitriani, 2019), and Bognar (2008; 2012) & Matijević (2009) see the solution in encouraging creativity in the education of future teachers, stating that the didactic conception of Jan Komensky from the 17<sup>th</sup> century is inconsistent with creative processes. Only professional and creative teachers can create conditions suitable for developing creativity in students.

Since textbooks are still the most represented media in teaching, the question is how much their tasks stimulate students' creativity. This paper will particularly focus on mathematical tasks and their (non) encouragement of creativity.

## **Creativity in Mathematics**

It is unlikely that anyone will immediately associate creativity with maths. This is supported by textbook analyses (Dubovicki, 2012), in which the share of tasks that encourage creativity was only 1.7%. Similar results are obtained by Koludrović (2009), who notices encouraging creative thinking as advice in textbooks, but not in assignments in textbooks. The reason probably lies in the perception of mathematics as a complex subject with serious content (Dubovicki, 2016) in which there are ready-made algorithms for solving tasks that students need to adopt and one solution to be reached. It is clear that students need to master certain mathematical skills and strategies. However, this approach (characteristic of traditional teaching) should not dominate teaching because, in this way, students are insufficiently prepared for challenges outside school – education ends with acquired computing skills, but not the ability to apply these skills meaningfully (Mann, 2006).

Textbooks are more focused on teachers as a sort of manual in the organization of teaching than on students and their independent learning, and students (especially older) often perceive them as thorough, clear and useful, but also as dull and monotonous (Matijevic, Topolovcan and Rajic, 2013). Some researchers point out that textbooks are more “blindly” relied on by mathematics teachers with a completed pedagogical academy and a more extended work experience (Domović, Glasnović Gracin, Jurčec, 2012). Koludrović (2009) points out that the textbook is no longer a “learning book”, but a “learn how to learn book” and that the authors should write them in accordance with the dominant social, ideological and philosophical theories to be interesting and educational.

Since textbooks are often not didactically and content-wise designed for the challenges of modern teaching, the obligation to nurture and develop creativity is directed towards teachers, but also institutions that educate future teachers. Previous textbook analyses (Koludrović, 2009; Dubovicki, 2012) show devastating results encouraging creativity in assignments.

“A teacher in his work must not always be satisfied with the same, known and established forms of work. He must search, listen to the needs and interests of students, research and feel what is happening and find methods of initiating creative processes as well as the path for each student.”

(Dubovicki, Omićević, 2016, 122 – 123).

Mathematical creativity can be defined in two ways: the creation of new knowledge or the ability to flexibly solve problems (Kwon, Park J. H., Park J. S., 2006). The direction in which it will develop largely depends on teacher's approach and the tasks assigned to students. It is clear that different subjects require different efforts in showing creativity, especially if we consider the artistic group of subjects in which it is much more common, but there are some differences in creativity within the subjects themselves. The goal of mathematics should be creative

thinking and, consequently, innovation in the various scientific fields on which mathematics is based. Kadum (2011) states that mathematical creativity depends on imagination, independence and intriguing motivation and is expressed in the originality of procedures, the speed of observation and problem-solving.

George (2005, according to Koludrović, & Reić Ercegovic, 2010) proposes a “Matrix of the beginnings of questions and tasks that encourage creative/divergent thinking” that corresponds to Renzulli’s theory of encouraging creativity (2002), Guilford’s features of divergent thinking and Bloom’s taxonomy of educational goals in the cognitive field. Aspects influencing the encouragement of creativity are originality, fluency, flexibility, elaboration, curiosity, risk-taking, imagination and complexity (Dubovicki, 2016a; 2016b). Georg’s categorization of questions and tasks is very useful in researching creativity in teaching because it coincides with Bloom’s levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Koludrović, & Reić Ercegovic, 2010).

Exploring mathematical creativity of primary school students, Rački (2013) states that a small number of children will show originality by devising evidence, but much more often, they will show flexibility in using acquired knowledge in new ways. Mathematics is specific with its set of characteristics within which it is possible to act, and activities depend on the level of knowledge and intelligence. He concludes that mathematical creativity depends on intelligence but means little without the specific mathematical knowledge acquired. Linking creativity to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Rohaeti, Ramadan, and Fitriani (2019) conclude that students in the formal operational phase (age 11 to adulthood) achieve a slightly higher quality of creative thinking than students in the concrete operational phase (7th to 11 years). Although this research has a relatively small sample (N = 36), it indicates greater creative potential in more mature children and opens up opportunities for new research with a larger sample.

## Encouraging Creativity

“Students are creative to the extent that we allow them to.” (Dubovicki, Omičević, 2016, 123). Maslow (1976) argued that teaching all subjects should be more similar to art subjects that encourage creativity much more – they strengthen new types of human beings who know how to improvise, are confident and brave, autonomous and creative people.

As early as the 1960s and 1970s, Torrance (1965) proved in numerous experiments the possibility of encouraging creativity and suggested the following five principles in teaching: 1) respect for unusual issues; 2) respect imaginative and unusual ideas; 3) show children that their ideas have value; 4) provide time in which work is not evaluated and 5) combine evaluation with cause and effect. Kadum (2011, 169-170) provides similar guidelines: adapt the curriculum, as far as possible, to each student; encourage students to work independently; give students enough time for creative work because creativity is not always and immediately shown but spontaneously; divergent thinking in students should be provoked and encouraged; one should know how to listen to students, support and encourage the emergence of new and unusual ideas and answers; students should be allowed to choose and participate in decision-making (democratization of classroom work); should be adapted, if possible, to the interests and ideas of students; an atmosphere of mutual respect between students and between students and teachers should be created; criticism should be avoided (as much as possible) and one should not be afraid to start something new, different and initially uncertain.

Today we know different creative teaching methods that can be used in all teaching stages, as well as for achieving different learning outcomes. Some of them are morphological analysis, brainstorming, mind maps, six hats, guided fantasy, characters from fairy tales, cinquains, six universal questions and more (Bognar, 2012; Dubovicki, 2016; Dubovicki, & Omičević, 2016). The research results show that using creative teaching methods encourages student creativity,

develops divergent thinking, a pleasant climate and student motivation (Dubovicki, & Omićević, 2016).

Grégoire (2016) believes that encouraging and developing originality requires providing (“creating”) students with opportunities to work on incomplete or open-ended tasks, making mistakes and looking for more solutions to the same problem. With the development of positive emotions and intriguing motivation, they should recognize the importance of cooperation, discussion and support. As most math teaching consists of problem-solving, open-ended tasks are a way to enrich teaching and create a favourable climate for creative development. The following text states the role and importance of open-ended tasks in encouraging students’ creativity in and outside the classroom (homework).

Many researchers recognize the homework of modern schools as one that teaches children to think in relation to outdated learning of encyclopedic knowledge. Homework is a learning strategy in an extracurricular context, but it is firmly defined to enable the student to learn successfully. The results of previous research (N = 538 students) show that homework is often an indicator of the (over) workload of students (Peko, Dubovicki, & Munjiza, 2014; Munjiza, Peko, & Dubovicki, 2016). The future challenges require young people who will be able to solve problems and access information rather than possess it or develop mathematical thinking rather than just computing (Pehkonen, 2017). The answer to these requirements is recognized in implementing several open-ended tasks in teaching mathematics, which includes the possibility of research, experimentation, creativity and free expression.

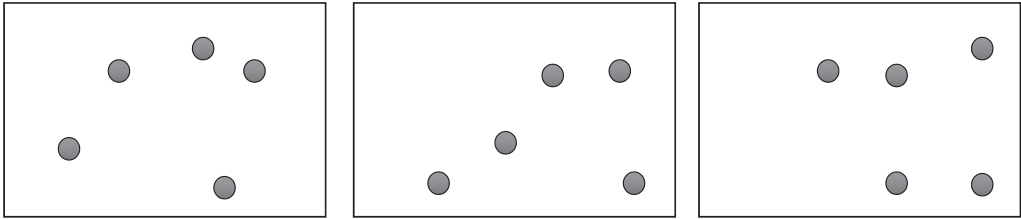
## Open-ended Tasks

Shimada et al. developed open-ended tasks in Japan in the 1970s, and since then, their value has been recognized in mathematics teaching research. Unlike tasks with a unique solution and way of solving, this type of task encourages students to seek more solutions or approaches to problem-solving (Nohda, 2000; Kwon, Park J. H., Park J. S., 2006; Fujita, Kondo, Kunimune and Jones, 2014; Sabilah and Manoy, 2017), encourages different strategies for developing intellectual potential and research experiences. Their purpose is not to solve a problem but the way students come to it – to research, create, problematize, discuss and generalize. Unlike closed-ended tasks, which show what students do not know, open-ended tasks also show what they can do (Sullivan, Warren, White, & Suwarsono 1998). Each student is given the opportunity to solve the problem in the way that suits him best, which gives the opportunity to use it in heterogeneous groups.

Due to their complexity, different specific approaches are required of teachers, some of which they are not sufficiently familiar with. Wu (2000) warns against the careful use of this task since students sometimes do not distinguish guessing and experimentation from valid logical reasoning. Teachers claim (Sullivan, Clarke, & Clarke, 2013) that open-ended tasks are a problem for students who want to find solutions quickly; some students are not accustomed to tasks that “require thinking” with little guidance, risk-taking or extra effort. Piano and Hershkowitz (2008) state that teachers often have problems evaluating all students’ work.

Shimada (Nohda, 2000) develops several different open mathematical problems, including the marble problem. In the examples of marbles thrown on paper, students need to decide how to determine the scatter (Picture 1) and thus determine the winner of the game. Tsubota (1988, according to Nohda, 2000) conducts classes analyzing this problem and concludes that students recognize the problem in a given situation, determine the approach to the problem, accept the diversity of solutions that carefully analyze and justify or refute. After defining the game’s rules, the students tested the game with marbles and found the weaknesses of their own solutions, after which they re-analyzed and refined them.

**Picture 1**  
Marble problem



Kwon, Park, & Park (2006) investigate the effects of implementing open-ended tasks in teaching by organizing 20 sessions in 5 high schools in Seoul. While teachers played the role of facilitator during comparisons and analyses, students were encouraged to give as many answers as possible (e.g. Picture 2). Comparing the test results with the results of the control group showed significant progress in fluency, flexibility and originality. The program developed during the research can help teachers develop students’ mathematical creativity. A similar “Open Access” (OPA) framework was presented in the Munroe case study (2015) as an example of supporting teachers in teaching, contributing to their education, and creating math curricula.

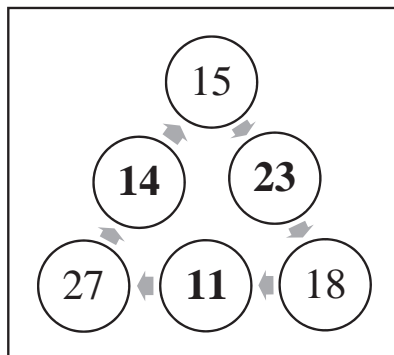
**Picture 2**  
Example of a multiple-answer task

Among the given numbers, choose the one that is different from the others.  
If possible, try to find as many different solutions as possible.

1 2 4 6 8 12

Pehkonen (2017) introduces solving the number triangle (Picture 3) into teaching as a method for perfecting computation in an unusual way. The task is to write the numbers in circles to equal the sum on each side of the triangle. Analyzing the effects of working on the number triangle during six lessons, he states that after solving simpler examples, students soon adopted rules for solving problems in the system of natural and integers and were very motivated to show their solutions and discussion.

**Picture 3**  
Number triangle



Aziza (2017) also concludes that open-ended tasks could encourage student creativity. She explores students' oral answers to the teacher's open-ended questions about given pictures that stimulate rich discussion during class and notices great fluency (number of different answers) but somewhat less flexibility (applying different strategies), probably due to the required reaction speed by oral expression.

Here are just some of the examples in which open-ended tasks are used to encourage students' creativity, which is evident in giving more creative solutions to the same task. Additional conditions for encouraging students' creativity in this way can be obtained if we, as teachers, are creative ourselves and consider this to be desirable in teaching (Dubovicki, 2016).

## Conclusion

In the hectic world we live in, a quick solution to the challenge seems to be the most important thing. Unsurprisingly, students do not cope with tasks requiring reflection, analysis, search for alternative procedures and solutions, abstract and critical thinking, and creativity – all those qualities that are expected in response to future challenges prescribed by the National Curriculum. Although there has been much talk about creativity, as well as mathematical creativity, in the last few decades, the question is how much it is truly encouraged in classrooms.

Previous research shows that the tasks of school mathematics textbooks almost always have a given algorithm, approach and solution and are therefore not suitable stimulators of mathematical creativity. Homework has proved to be an additional (over) burden for students, so in the context of homework in mathematics, it is necessary to focus on open-ended tasks that arouse curiosity and motivation in students, develop creative potential and bring original solutions. Therefore, many authors emphasize the importance of teachers as organizers of teaching processes in achieving this goal and the importance of encouraging their creativity during teacher training. Open-ended tasks have proven to be excellent promoters of creativity and a deeper understanding of mathematics and provide insight into students' ways of thinking and abilities. Many authors point out the positive results of greater implementation of such tasks in teaching, and further research in this direction would deepen understanding and give an example of good practice for encouraging creativity in teaching mathematics.

Due to the early use of modern technologies, today's generations of students who come to our primary school are often accustomed to quick solutions. As possible answer, it is necessary to create a climate in which students see the teaching of mathematics as a joy, and this is possible through the role of the teacher who often represents the personalization of the subject (Bognar, & Dubovicki, 2012). It is also desirable to use creative methods in teaching mathematics and turn the teaching of "fear" into the teaching of joy. Therefore, it is important to start with this approach in teaching mathematics as soon as possible because it is assumed that it will be an even greater challenge in the future.

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## **PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES AS DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN MATHEMATICS IN THE 2019 TIMSS SURVEY**

**Abstract:** The paper uses the data obtained within the framework of the international research study for measuring the achievements of students in Mathematics and Natural Sciences (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) from the measurement carried out in 2019. The sample consists of a total of 3270 fourth grade students from 150 elementary schools in our country.

The paper aims to show the importance of preschool education and children's involvement in early educational activities for later progress in primary education. According to the results obtained from the study, it can be observed that students from the fourth grade have higher achievements in Mathematics if they attended kindergarten, when they had activities for the development of literacy and mathematics skills in kindergarten, or when their parents included them in activities for literacy and development of mathematics skills at an early age in the home.

The results also showed that there is a significant positive relationship between Home Resources for Learning and Early Activities. Therefore, future actions aimed at improving the achievements of our students in Mathematics on international tests should focus on creating conditions for increasing the years of stay of children in kindergarten, as well as on the time that teachers and parents devote to various activities for development. of numerical literacy and mathematical skills at home and in kindergarten.

**Keywords:** Preschool education and education; TIMSS; Student achievement

### **Introduction**

TIMSS (The Trend in International Mathematics and Science Study) is an international study that measures trends in students' knowledge and abilities in mathematics and natural group subjects (physics, chemistry, biology, geography). IEA's TIMSS 2019 is the seventh assessment



cycle of TIMSS, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. TIMSS 2019 was conducted at the fourth and eighth grades in 64 countries and 8 benchmarking systems. Inaugurated in 1995, TIMSS has been conducted every four years since, providing 24 years of trends in mathematics and science achievement.

In April and May 2019, TIMSS testing was conducted in Macedonia according to a certain methodological research study for measuring the achievements of students in Mathematics and Natural Sciences (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), where 3270 students from the fourth grade were tested. (in sample 3531 students) from 150 primary schools. The average age of tested students in RSM was 9.8 years. The results of the research show that the achievements in mathematics are below the international average:

Average achievements in Mathematics	Female	Male
North Macedonia	472	472
International average	499	503

Source: IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study TIMSS 2019  
 Downloaded from <http://timss2019.org/download>

Most countries had fewer than 10 percent of their fourth grade students performing at the Advanced level. The median percentages of students reaching the International Benchmarks were as follows: Advanced-7 percent, High-34 percent, Intermediate-71 percent, and Low-92 percent. Many TIMSS 2019 countries had more than 90 percent of their fourth grade students reaching the Low Benchmark, which can be considered a level of minimum proficiency internationally. In 6 countries, essentially all the students reached this benchmark-100 percent in Hong Kong SAR and Chinese Taipei, and 99 percent in Singapore, Korea, Japan, and the Russian Federation.

In North Macedonia according to Advanced Benchmark (625), High Benchmark (550), Intermediate Benchmark (475) and Low Benchmark (400) the following percentages were achieved compared to the international average values:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Low International Benchmark – Students have some basic mathematical knowledge. They can add, subtract, multiply, and divide one- and two-digit whole numbers. They can solve simple word problems. They have some knowledge of simple fractions and common geometric shapes. Students can read and complete simple bar graphs and tables. Students at this level are familiar with numbers into the thousands. They can order, add, and subtract whole numbers. They have some knowledge of multiplication and division involving two-digit numbers. They can solve one-step word problems and number sentences. They can recognize pictorial representations of simple fractions. Students can recognize basic measurement ideas. They can recognize and visualize common two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes. Students can read and complete simple bar graphs and tables.

Intermediate International Benchmark – Students can apply basic mathematical knowledge in simple situations. They can compute with three- and four-digit whole numbers in a variety of situations. They have some understanding of decimals and fractions. Students can identify and draw shapes with simple properties. They can read, label, and interpret information in graphs and tables. Students at this level demonstrate an understanding of four-digit whole numbers. They can add and subtract four-digit numbers in a variety of situations, including problems involving two steps. Students can multiply and divide three-digit numbers by a one-digit number. They can identify expressions representing simple situations. Students at this level can add and order decimals and work with non-unit fractions. Students can solve simple measurement problems such as identifying the appropriate metric unit for linear objects and volume. Students can solve addition and subtraction problems involving hours and minutes. They can identify and draw shapes with simple properties and relate two- and three-dimensional shapes. Students can read, label, and interpret information in graphs and tables.

High International Benchmark – Students apply conceptual understanding to solve problems. They can apply conceptual understanding of whole numbers to solve twostep word problems. They show understanding of the number line, multiples, factors, and rounding numbers, and operations with fractions and decimals. Students can solve simple measurement problems. They demonstrate understanding of geometric properties of shapes and angles. Students can interpret and use data in tables and a variety of graphs to solve problems. Students at this level apply conceptual understanding of whole numbers to solve two-step word problems. They can multiply two-digit numbers and solve

Average achievements in Mathematics	Advanced Benchmark (625)	High Benchmark (550)	Intermediate Benchmark (475)	Low Benchmark (400)
North Macedonia	5	21	52	78
International average	7	34	71	92

Source: IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study TIMSS 2019  
Downloaded from <http://timss2019.org/download>

## Results

In the following, some of the results of this large research are presented according to the previously determined methodological goals and objectives from which two hypotheses were structured according to the fact that previous analyzes determined that students who attended kindergarten show higher achievements in mathematics:

	Visiting kindergarten	3 or more years	2 years	1 year or less	Not attend
Average achievements in Mathemat.	North Macedonia	505	492	478	446
	International average	509	495	483	464

	Home resurces for Learning	Many resources	Some resources	Few resources
Average achievements in Mathemat.	North Macedonia	550	485	406
	International average	562	498	433

Source: IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study TIMSS 2019  
Downloaded from <http://timss2019.org/download>

Accordingly, two hypotheses are put forward:

**H1.** Visiting a kindergarten determines the development of Early Preschool Activities with parents, further Activities in schools and the Developed Skills of children which are factors and determinants for achievements in mathematics.

problems based on the number line, fractions, and decimals. They can find multiples of one-digit numbers and factors of numbers up to 30 and can round numbers. Students can identify an expression that represents a situation and can identify and use relationships in a well-defined pattern. Students can solve a variety of one-step measurement problems. They can classify and compare a variety of shapes and angles based on their properties. They demonstrate understanding of line symmetry and can recognize relationships between two- and three-dimensional shapes. Students can solve problems by interpreting data presented in tables, pie charts, pictographs, and line and bar graphs. They can compare data from two representations to draw conclusions.

Advanced International Benchmark -Students can apply their understanding and knowledge in a variety of relatively complex situations and explain their reasoning. Students can solve a variety of multistep word problems involving whole numbers and show an understanding of fractions and decimals. They can apply knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes in a variety of situations. Students can interpret and represent data to solve multistep problems. Students at this level can solve a variety of multistep word problems involving whole numbers. They can find more than one solution to a problem. Students can solve problems that show an understanding of fractions, including those with different denominators. They can order, add, and subtract one- and two-place decimals. Students can apply knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes in a variety of situations. They can draw parallel lines and solve problems involving area and perimeter of shapes. They can use a ruler to measure lengths of objects beginning or ending at a half-unit and read other measurement scales. Students can interpret and represent data to solve multistep problems. They can give a mathematical argument to support their solutions.

**H2.** Home Resources for Learning determines the development of Early Preschool Activities with parents, further Activities in schools and Children’s Developed Skills which are factors and determinants of achievement in mathematics.

In order to have a clear picture of the research variables themselves that are structured in the hypotheses, in the research instruments according to TIMSS as a variable of further Activities in schools are stated as How Often\Read Books, Tell Stories, Sing Songs, Play Alphabet, Talk What Had Done, Book Discussion, Play Word Games, Write Letters Words, Read Aloud Signs, Counting Songs, Number Toys, Count Things, Game With Shapes, Building Blocks, Board Or Card Game, Write Numbers, Draw Shapes и Measure Or Weigh.

Children’s developed skills in the instruments are listed as Recognize Letters, Read Some Words, Read Sentences, Read A Story, Write Letters, Write Name, Write Words, Count By Him-/Herself, Recog Written Numeral, Write Numbers, Simple Addition и Simple Subtraction.

Early preschool activities with parents are listed in the instruments as Early Literacy Activities Before School, Early Numeracy Activities Before School, Early Literacy and Numeracy Activities Before School, Early Literacy Tasks Beginning School, Early Numeracy Tasks Beginning School и Early Literacy and Numeracy Tasks Beginning School.

As for the first hypothesis that emphasizes that Visiting a kindergarten determines the development of Early Preschool Activities with parents, further Activities in schools and the Developed Skills of children which are factors and determinants for achievements in mathematics, in an analysis with multiple responses in Table 1 shows the following frequencies:

**Table 1**

Preschool\_Attend and Early Activities with parents – Crosstabulation

			Early Activities			Total
			Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never	
Student Attended Preschool	Did Not Attend	Count	2265	3360	1035	1123
		% within	34.7%	42.7%	51.9%	
	1 Year or Less	Count	900	1050	240	371
		% within	13.8%	13.3%	12.0%	
	2 Years	Count	677	742	160	269
		% within	10.4%	9.4%	8.0%	
	3 Years or More	Count	2684	2718	560	1004
		% within	41.1%	34.5%	28.1%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>6526</b>	<b>7870</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2767</b>

According to the TIMSS research, as stated, it resulted that a large number of children did not attend kindergarten, therefore, according to the percentages in Table 1, we conclude that the percentage of children with Often Early Activities who attended kindergarten dominate, and that over 41% of them who attended kindergarten more than 3 years, 10.4% with Often Early Activities that followed 2 years of kindergarten and 13.8% with Often Early Activities that followed until 1 year of kindergarten versus 34.7% with Often Early Activities that did not follow kindergarten. On the other hand, about 52% of the children did not show Often Early Activities at all from the group that did not attend kindergarten at all, compared to the smaller percentages of those who

attended kindergarten. This means that more Often Early Activities were shown by children who attended kindergarten compared to children who did not. According to the above results of TIMSS 2019, Often Early Activities have shown to be the determinant of higher achievements in mathematics. So, attending kindergarten develops Early Activities in children, which are one of the factors for higher results in mathematics. However, the large number of children who still do not attend kindergarten due to socio-technical conditions at the state level should not be overlooked.

Also for the second variable from the Activities in school hypothesis, Table 2 shows the following frequencies in an analysis with multiple responses:

**Table 2**

Preschool\_Attend and Activities in school – Crosstabulation

			Activities in school			Total
			Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never	
Student Attended Preschool	Did Not Attend	Count	9573	8244	1820	1122
		% within	36.4%	43.3%	55.6%	
	1 Year or Less	Count	3556	2558	392	369
		% within	13.5%	13.4%	12.0%	
	2 Years	Count	2647	1806	249	267
		% within	10.1%	9.5%	7.6%	
	3 Years or More	Count	10542	6432	813	1000
		% within	40.1%	33.8%	24.8%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>26318</b>	<b>19040</b>	<b>3274</b>	<b>2758</b>

According to the percentages in Table 2, we conclude that the percentages of children with Often Activities in school who have attended kindergarten dominate, and more than 40% of them have attended kindergarten for more than 3 years, 10.1% with Often Activities in school who have attended 2 years of kindergarten and 13.5% with Often Activities in school who attended up to 1 year of kindergarten compared to 36.4% with Often Activities in school who did not attend kindergarten. On the other hand, about 55.6% of the children did not show Never or almost never Activities in school from the group who did not attend kindergarten at all, compared to the smaller percentages of those who attended kindergarten. This means that children who attended kindergarten showed more Often Activities in school compared to children who did not. According to the above results of TIMSS 2019, Often Activities in school showed that they are the determinant for higher achievements in mathematics. So, attending kindergarten develops Often Activities in school among children, which are one of the factors for higher results in mathematics.

Also for the second variable from the hypothesis developing Skills, Table 3 in an analysis with multiple responses shows the following frequencies:

**Table 3**  
Preschool\_Attend and Skills – Crosstabulation

			Skills				Total	
			Very well	Moderately well	Not very well	Not at all		
Student Attended Preschool	Did Not Attend	Count	2779	2079	1612	1104	1121	
		% within	37.9%	39.0%	43.1%	48.7%		
	1 Year or Less	Count	1033	691	470	281	368	
		% within	14.1%	13.0%	12.6%	12.4%		
	2 Years	Count	738	500	388	164	267	
		% within	10.1%	9.4%	10.4%	7.2%		
	3 Years or More	Count	2792	2060	1274	718	999	
		% within	38.0%	38.6%	34.0%	31.7%		
	<b>Total</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>7342</b>	<b>5330</b>	<b>3744</b>	<b>2267</b>	<b>2755</b>

According to the percentages in Table 3, we conclude that the percentages of children with the development of Skills Very well who attended kindergarten dominate, namely 38% of them who attended kindergarten for more than 3 years, 10.1% with the development of Skills Very well who attended 2 years of kindergarten and 14.1% with developing Skills Very well who followed up to 1 year of kindergarten compared to 37.9% with developing Skills Very well who did not follow kindergarten. On the other hand, about 48.7% of the children did not show any development of Skills Not at all from the group who did not attend kindergarten at all, compared to the smaller percentages of those who attended kindergarten. This means that children who attended kindergarten showed more development of Skills compared to children who did not attend. Developing Skills according to the above TIMSS 2019 results have shown to be the determinant of higher achievement in mathematics. So, attending kindergarten develops skills in children, which are one of the factors for higher results in mathematics.

According to the three analyzes of the variables that are part of the first hypothesis, we state that the first hypothesis where it is stated that Visiting a kindergarten determines the development of Early Preschool Activities with parents, further Activities in schools and the Developed Skills of children which are factors and determinants for achievements in mathematics, it is **confirmed**.

As for the second hypothesis, where it is emphasized that Home Resources for Learning determines the development of Early Preschool Activities with parents, further Activities in schools and Children's Developed Skills which are factors and determinants of achievement in mathematics, that means for the three variables (Early Preschool Activities, Activities in schools, Developed Skills) which according to TIMSS 2019 are determinants for higher achievements in mathematics, for its interpretation in the following will be analyzed to determine if these variables develop in children depending on Home Resources for Learning.

As for Home Resources for Learning and Early Activities, Table 4 shows small positive correlation coefficients and therefore  $R = .353 .286 .334 .175 .226 .212$  with  $\text{sig} = .000$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), with in other words, we state that the increase in Home Resources for Learning results in an increase in Early Activities among children. But the small positive correlation coefficient also shows the scarcity of Home Resources for Learning in households in Macedonia.

**Table 4**

Correlation between Home Resources for Learning and Early Activities

		Early Literacy Activities	Early Numeracy Activities	Early Literacy and Numeracy	Early Literacy Tasks	Early Numeracy Tasks	Early Literacy and Numeracy	Home Resources for Learning
Home Resources for Learning	Pearson Correlation	.353**	.286**	.334**	.175**	.226**	.212**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	2740	2731	2741	2691	2734	2765	2780

Also for the second variable from the Home resources and Activities in school hypothesis, Table 5 shows the following frequencies in an analysis with multiple responses:

**Table 5**

Home\_resources and Activities in school – Crosstabulation

		Activities in school			Total	
		Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never		
Home Resources for Learning	Many Resources	Count	2377	1058	124	198
		% within	9.0%	5.5%	3.8%	
	Some Resources	Count	21454	15026	2114	2193
		% within	81.5%	78.8%	65.1%	
	Few Resources	Count	2479	2985	1007	370
		% within	9.4%	15.7%	31.0%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>26310</b>	<b>19069</b>	<b>3245</b>	<b>2761</b>

According to the percentages in Table 5, we find that the percentages of children with Often Activities in school who have Some Resources and that over 81% of them dominate, as opposed to others with insignificant percentages of Many and Few Resources. Also, the other high percentages of cases where children Sometimes or Never or almost never did not show Activities in school are in the group of Some Resources, which means that children show or not Activities in school independently of Home resources.

Also for the second variable from the Home resources and Skills hypothesis, Table 6 shows the following frequencies in an analysis with multiple responses:

**Table 6**  
Home\_resource and Skills – Crosstabulation

			Skills				Total
			Very well	Moderately well	Not very well	Not at all	
Home Resources for Learning	Many Resources	Count	613	411	210	141	198
		% within	8.3%	7.7%	5.7%	6.4%	
	Some Resources	Count	6077	4341	2905	1486	2189
		% within	81.9%	81.6%	78.3%	67.2%	
	Few Resources	Count	731	566	595	583	375
		% within	9.9%	10.6%	16.0%	26.4%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>7421</b>	<b>5318</b>	<b>3710</b>	<b>2210</b>	<b>2762</b>

According to the percentages in Table 6, we find that the percentages of children with Very well Skills who have Some Resources dominate, over 81% of them, as opposed to others with insignificant percentages of Moderately, Not very well, Not at all. Also, the other high percentages of cases where Moderately, Not very well, Not at all children showed or did not show Skills are in the group of Some Resources, which means that children show or not Skills independently of Home resources.

According to these results, we conclude that Home Resources for Learning and Early Activities show a small positive relationship compared to Home resources and Activities in school, and Home resources and Skills, which show independence according to the percentages with multiple responses, therefore, we conclude that the second hypothesis is **partially sustainable**.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results shown, we conclude that more Often Early Activities were shown by children who attended kindergarten compared to children who did not, then that more Often Activities in school were shown by children who attended kindergarten compared to children who did not, and that children showed more development of Skills who attended kindergarten versus children who did not. According to the above results of TIMSS 2019, Often Early Activities, Often Activities in school and the development of Skills have shown that they are the determinant for higher achievements in mathematics.

As for Home Resources for Learning and Early Activities, we find that the increase in Home Resources for Learning results in an increase in Early Activities among children, then that children show or not Activities in school independently of Home resources and that children show or not Skills independently of Home resources.

According to these results, policies in the educational process should be structured in the direction of introducing mandatory preschool education for children aged 4 to 6 years. Then, to connect the skills acquired in the pre-school period with the school period. To improve the quality and access to preschool institutions for all children, especially for children from vulnerable groups (children from rural areas, children with disabilities and developmental disabilities, children from marginalized groups). To work on raising the awareness of parents about the importance of RUR on the later achievements of students in mathematics. To involve parents in activities for early learning and development of language and mathematical competences. To provide training for parents on various activities with children in the family during the preschool period, significant

for the educational achievements of their children. To encourage parents with a lower level of education to participate in the realization of various educational activities in the home during the preschool period. Organizing various forms of support for parents with lower socio-economic status that would include donating funds, toys and educational materials.

## Literature

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## OPINIONS OF STUDENTS TOWARD VACCINATION

**Abstract:** Ever since the global media fuss about vaccination in 2017, and especially during the recent pandemic, the whole world is questioning its benefits. Some people are second-guessing whether vaccinations are good for public health or actually causing additional illnesses. After this populist news got public, different institutions started recording a decline in the number of people around the globe getting vaccinated per season.

Due to the recency and relevance of the topic, the purpose of this work is to define the most common opinion regarding vaccination among youth and conclude whether their peers are successful in influencing it or not. The conclusions are drawn from desk research, by examining secondary sources, as well as a survey, where the primary data gathered through a questionnaire is used to reject or confirm the hypotheses. The sample consists of 109 respondents, which were non-randomly selected from the target population.

The main findings are that majority of the students have a positive outlook on vaccines (both mandatory and optional), students would be more prone to get vaccinated when the vaccines are free, and they believe that getting the mandatory vaccines is more important than getting the optional vaccines.

**Keywords:** Vaccination, Students, Opinions

## Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the attitudes of young people toward vaccination. The topic of the study was chosen due to its relevance given the anti-vaccine movements taking place since 2017. Societies need to take action against these movements as having more and more people refusing to get the mandatory vaccines will eventually lead to losing herd immunity. More specifically, once the majority of people (80% and more) are vaccinated against a virus, the likelihood of it spreading and affecting the non-vaccinated part of the population is significantly lower, therefore there is a positive spillover effect also for those that didn't get a vaccine.



Unfortunately, many cases of outbreaks of treatable diseases have been reported in developed countries across the world due to people supposedly losing trust in vaccinations and even doctors. For instance, a measles outbreak in France could have been avoided with a higher percentage of vaccinated children (El-Faizy, 2018).

The COVID pandemic surely made such research even more important, as the findings could be useful for making strategies that would popularize vaccination and help stop the spread of different dangerous diseases. Hence, it is highly recommended to continue researching this topic and conduct much broader studies. Unfortunately, due to limitations of accessibility to the whole population, this particular study focuses on the opinions of students enrolled in particular accessible universities.

## **Methodology and Findings from Exploratory Research**

To ensure a deep understanding of the topic, important for the further development of quality research instruments, the initial phase of the research included two types of exploratory research. Namely, the foundations of the overall research are based on the findings from relevant secondary data and in-depth interviews.

### **Findings from Secondary Sources**

Given the relevance of the topic, finding data from research conducted with a similar purpose caused no issues. However, it was important to ensure the dependency of sources due to the numerous conspiracy theories related to vaccination. Therefore, a strict criterion for choosing the sources was introduced, including recency of publication (no more than 3 years), credibility (authored by college professors from higher-ranked universities), and relevance (covering a similar population, more specifically, opinions of mostly students/young adults Europe).

The results from the literature review showed that even though the media is portraying the non-vaccination movement as a huge one, none of the studies found the respondents stating a negative attitude towards mandatory vaccines to be more numerous than the positive ones. These findings were used as benchmarks for the percentages in the hypotheses in the latter stages of the research, especially regarding the expected amount of positive/negative opinions on vaccination and for the identification of variables affecting the opinions that would need to be further researched.

### **Findings from In-depth Interviews**

Enriching the findings with additional views, in-depth interviews were conducted with a couple of students. The questions discussed were mainly about their history with vaccines, possible side effects and their general attitudes toward vaccination. All interviewees had been vaccinated as children, but only a few had additional vaccinations beyond the mandatory ones.

Though the overall attitude toward vaccination was positive, some interviewees from Macedonia had reservations due to a scandal involving expired vaccines being used instead of appropriately disposed of. However, interviewees stated that their closest friends and family members impact their opinions more than the media, and most believe that a negative attitude toward vaccination is a result of ill information or a lack of it. Moreover, some mentioned that they would get vaccinated against HPV if it were free. Hence, price sensitivity was included in the factors relevant for deciding regarding vaccination.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Aligned with the research problem defined as ‘Attitudes of students toward vaccination’, a research question was phrased as ‘*What has influenced students’ opinions on vaccination*’. Based on that, three research hypotheses were constructed:

- The majority of the students (over 60%) have a positive outlook on vaccines, both mandatory and optional;
- Students would be more inclined to get vaccinated if it was free;
- Students believe that getting the mandatory vaccines is more important than getting the optional vaccines.

## Methodology of Descriptive Research

For the descriptive part of the research, the survey method and the questionnaire instrument were chosen as the most appropriate for examining the opinions of a larger number of people. To achieve higher response rates by facilitating the data collection for the respondents, the questionnaire was conducted online and contained questions with standardized answers. Moreover, the lack of a sampling frame made it impossible to conduct probability sampling, therefore a judgement sample counting 109 respondents was used. Regarding their socio-demographic characteristics, the majority were obviously students (at the age between 19 and 25 years), coming from European countries.

## Results and Discussion

The data gathered with the questionnaire was analyzed with the help of SPSS.

Starting the discussion with socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the mode for the question regarding gender was *'female'*. In terms of nationality, the majority of respondents were Macedonian (49%) and Slovenian (38%). Given the deliberate efforts to reach young adults for the research, 88% of respondents chose the 19-25 age category and 73% stated that they are students.

Continuing with the questions in connection to students' opinions on vaccination, 91.7% of respondents declared having received all mandatory vaccines and 95.4% agreed that it should be mandatory to get vaccinated as a child. In terms of non-mandatory vaccines, only 34.9% of respondents stated to have had an additional vaccine, though another 34.9% weren't sure.

Furthermore, based on the exploratory research, respondents were given several options to choose from regarding the reasons to get vaccinated; 78.9% opted for *'to protect myself from potential illnesses'*, 22% chose *'I didn't make the decision myself'*, followed by *'Because my parents/peers persuaded me to do it'* with 20.2%. The rest of the options, *'Because it was free'*, *'Because everybody else was getting vaccinated'* and *'Because I read an article on the positive effects of vaccines'* were chosen by 15.6%, 13.8% and 11% of respondents, respectively. The last option *'Other'* was clicked by 5.5%, but none have stated a reason.

Including a semantic differential with five scales enabled constructing confidence intervals and using the data from the sample to make inferences for the population. From the results, it can be estimated with 95% confidence that students find vaccination to be more positive than negative (average agreement is between 4.13 and 4.52), more beneficial than harmful (average agreement between 3.97 and 4.39), more important than useless (average agreement between 4.22 and 4.61). Since most of the intervals overlap and the true value of the population parameter cannot be located with certainty, the statements cannot be compared and no conclusions regarding which is the highest can be drawn.

Moreover, the results from z-testing for proportions showed that the majority of students (more than 60%) have a positive outlook on vaccines, regardless of whether they are mandatory or optional. As shown in the table, the observed proportion is 90%, while the hypothesized was 60%. The significance level is 0, and because  $p < 0.05$ , we can reject the null hypothesis while we accept the alternative one.

**Table 1**

Results from SPSS – z-test for proportions

Binomial Test					
	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (1-tailed)
Group 1	2,00	86	,9	,6	,000
Group 2	1,00	15	,1		
<b>Total</b>		101	1,0		

Statistical testing on the data gathered with a five-point Likert scale was examined with a one-sample t-test because the means for parametric data had to be compared to make conclusions regarding the second hypothesis. The results, as shown in table 2, led to the conclusion that students would indeed be more inclined to get vaccinated if it were free.

**Table 2**

Results from SPSS – one-sample t-test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I would be more likely to get my (future) children vaccinated if vaccines were free (e.g., meningitis)	27,137	96	,000	3,856	3,57	4,14
A change in price of vaccines would influence my decision to get vaccinated	18,995	91	,000	2,804	2,51	3,10
I have a good understanding of vaccines and their side effects	26,686	90	,000	3,473	3,21	3,73
People who are against vaccination are reasonable	15,010	91	,000	1,891	1,64	2,14

Similarly, the third hypothesis was tested based on data gathered with a five-point Licker scale question and examined with a one-sample t-test.

**Table 3**

Results from SPSS – one-sample t-test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Getting the mandatory vaccines is more important than getting the flu vaccine	31,729	95	,000	4,052	3,80	4,31
I have read articles on vaccination	27,237	95	,000	3,729	3,46	4,00
My opinion on vaccination is largely based on what I have read on social media	18,055	95	,000	2,167	1,93	2,40

As it can be seen from table 3, the mean difference is 4.052, the significance level is 0, and  $p < 0.05$ , thus the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that students believe that getting the mandatory vaccines is more important than getting the optional vaccines, for example, the one against the flu.

## Research Limitations

Although done thoroughly, this research has potential limitations. The main limitation is the non-probability sampling technique undermining all the inferences for the population. In order to be able to use the findings as a basis for action, probability sampling techniques should be used. The lack of a sampling frame disabled the calculation of the required sample size, making the sample size arbitrary, therefore a larger sample drawn with other sampling techniques would perhaps better represent the population.

Moreover, due to the choice of survey method, where the distribution of questionnaires was done solely online, there was a very low sample and environmental control, which means that we cannot be sure that the respondents have provided honest answers, nor identify whether they were qualified to be part of the sample.

A future researcher studying the topic of students' attitudes and vaccination may find this study useful in their exploratory research, but they could fill in the gaps of our research by gathering more information to develop a sampling frame, thus determining the sample size and performing the study on a random sample.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Assuming that the sample is representative of the population, the study concludes that 95.4% of people have been vaccinated which would be enough to achieve herd immunity. That means that even if some people don't receive the mandatory vaccines, they would still be protected by the vaccination of others around them. The minimal number of persons needed to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity is theorized to be around 80% with a slight deviation upwards depending on the virus (Scand J Infect Dis., 2011).

*Students would be more inclined to get vaccinated if it was free.*

This hypothesis was concluded to be true, therefore countries should try to decrease the price an individual would need to pay in order to get vaccinated through government contributions if vaccination rates fall below the desired per cent.

*Students believe that getting the mandatory vaccines is more important than getting the optional vaccines.*

Though the deduction that students find mandatory vaccines more important than optional ones was expected and satisfactory, given the assumed higher importance of the compulsory vaccines, this could still be a basis for new research which would thoroughly examine the extent to which non-mandatory vaccines are found important. Based on the discovery that mandatory vaccines are viewed as more important than non-mandatory ones, countries should start stressing the fact that non-mandatory vaccines are also important.

*The majority (more than 60%) of the students have a positive outlook on vaccines, both mandatory and optional.*

The inference that students do have a positive outlook on vaccines and that the rate of students with a positive outlook on vaccines was made by an even higher percentage than hypothesized (90% of surveyed students have a positive outlook on vaccines, exceeding the hypothesized 60%). This is very encouraging to see since the vaccination rates have fallen lower than suggested by the herd immunity in some countries, such as France (Monique El-Faizy 2018).

The importance of studies on this topic has never been more highlighted given the recent worldwide pandemic. Further research on attitudes regarding vaccines would be useful to get a

better understanding of how to get more people to vaccinate themselves or their close ones so that we can keep our herd immunity and thus protect society from viruses that could be avoided.

Moreover, it would be interesting to additionally study the potential differences in opinions toward vaccination based on socio-demographic characteristics, as such findings would be beneficial for making more efficient and focused strategies for the popularization of vaccination. Likewise, the link between income and the tendency to get vaccinated could be examined, given the conclusion that students would be more inclined to get vaccinated if it was free.

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## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY – EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCES FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT**

**Abstract:** This paper aims to share empirical experiences and results from an international Erasmus KA2 project. The main objective of the project is to increase the social responsiveness of young people by integrating them in pro bono activities in higher education institutions. Pro bono is a voluntary activity that aims at supporting non-profit organizations in need with our professional expertise. The Erasmus project involved Spanish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, French and Hungarian universities, which were supported by intermediaries in the implementation of pro bono activities and campaigns. Three pilot pro bono activities were carried out at our university in the framework of the project. These were projects of varying duration, supporting a programme for the elderly, an organization for disadvantaged children and a foundation working for environmental protection. An important outcome of the international programme was the creation of a guide book containing the steps for implementing pro bono as a subject, in the form of an online course to help universities join the programme. We would like to expand the programme in cooperation with other universities by involving international students and promoting the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible.

**Keywords:** Volunteering, Pro bono, Cooperation, CSR, Generations, Higher education

### **Introduction**

In modern societies, volunteering is a form of civic activity. It can be considered effective when volunteering is organically linked to a local community or a wider area association and is widely represented by a range of organizations (Mirsfian – Mohamadinejan, 2012). The International Labour Organization (ILO) has attempted to summarize the benefits of volunteering in a lengthy study. The ILO mentions that it can not only have economic effects, but can also bring significant benefits to society or to the volunteers themselves. It can provide access to the workforce and a framework for employment. Volunteering can contribute to development goals. It can also result in services in the form of employment that a paid worker would not be able to provide. It also enhances social solidarity, social capital, political legitimacy and quality of life in society. Volunteering can help to promote social inclusion and integration (ILO, 2011).

In addition to the above, volunteering can also bring other benefits. According to a study by Owen and Celik activities such as volunteering can contribute to our mental health, thus strengthening the development of a healthy society (Owen – Celik, 2018). Mundle and co-authors (2012)

echo the previous idea. Volunteering has been associated with positive health and well-being outcomes for those who undertake it. Several other studies have demonstrated that many of those who volunteered experienced lower depression, higher mental wellbeing and satisfaction (Same et al, 2020). According to Morrow and co-authors (Morrow-Howel et al, 2003), older people who volunteer or are still working may have better mental health characteristics, demonstrating that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health (Morrow-Howell, 2010).

The international volunteering process really started to take off in the 1970s. It has been catalyzed by the expansion of globalization, which has enabled free movement in more and more areas of our lives. This process has been facilitated by international initiatives such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS), an international volunteering programme funded by the European Commission. It enabled young people aged between 18 and 30 to carry out international voluntary service with a business or public operator in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America for between 2 and 12 months. International data shows that the participation of younger people in volunteering is indeed increasing, which is encouraging for a programme that aims to promote volunteering (ESC, 2020).

Volunteering means giving pleasure not only to others, but also to oneself, as the volunteer derives satisfaction and pleasure from their work (Williems et al, 2020). Individuals can also volunteer in public or other roles to enhance their role in society. Juknevičius-Savicka (2003) also links volunteering to our role in society. It is an activity that we do for our environment without remuneration, but in return we receive moral recognition and appreciation (Wilson, 2020). The latter can motivate us to undertake such tasks (Paine et al, 2010).

Volunteering requires a certain level of human, cultural and social capital from the individual (Wilson – Musick, 1997). According to this formulation, volunteering is indeed a measure of the state of society. Where there is no social capital, the level of volunteering cannot be high. However, it does not matter whether we look at the individual or the organizational level (Czike – Kuti, 2006; Perpák, 2017). Organizations tend to turn to volunteering more often, especially in their CSR projects. Steven Howlett (2004) mentions that businesses are also consciously turning towards volunteering. Organizations want to know which aspects of their work can be affected by volunteering. More widely, organizations and companies are expected to do something for their immediate environment. Volunteering by individuals is mostly confined to the aforementioned giving. In the so-called World's Most Generous Countries Report published by Gallup, it is reported that although many people in Hungary give to charitable causes, our country still gives below average (Gallup, 2018).

With the changes of the modern age, volunteering is becoming more and more a part of our lives. From animal and environmental protection, to fighting hunger or poverty, climate protection and other areas, philanthropy is making inroads. In the pandemic era, care for the elderly, support for families, support for children have become more important. Fényes & Kiss (2011) have already outlined the strengthening role of volunteering much earlier. They argue that the crisis in welfare societies, changing work patterns and increasing leisure time all contribute to the strengthening of volunteering. It should also be pointed out that, in many cases, the inaction and problem-solving capacity of governments also fosters a sense of social engagement, which can also be felt on the corporate side in various ways. They may engage in donations, giving and financial support, but they may also engage in many other community value creation activities. The community value creation activities of organizations are significantly influenced by the behavior and attitudes of individuals, and thus the question of how to engage different generations in such (Rodell et al, 2017). According to Weissman (2014), volunteering also increases the value of the employee. On the one hand, it brings new skills into the organization. Volunteer activity helps to build networks, which can also help an organization to gain important new contacts

and partners. Volunteering can also help to build a career, gain prestige, and enhance an employee's own skills and professional development.

## **Method**

In this study, we present partial results of a primary study. The quantitative research was carried out within the framework of an international research project with the participation of Hungarian, Bulgarian, French, Portuguese, Spanish researchers, using a pre-tested, standardized questionnaire online survey. The recruitment of subjects in each of the sampling units was carried out using a snowball sampling procedure, resulting in 840 evaluable questionnaires in Hungary.

In this study we focus on the Hungarian results. The survey instrument was the same in all countries participating in the project for future comparability. The standardized questionnaire contained only closed questions at nominal and metric measurement levels. Attitudes towards volunteering were measured in all cases using Likert scales. Scale questions were asked on a scale from 1 to 7 due to the international nature of the research. The results showed that the majority of subjects do not know what the term pro bono means. However, those who had heard of it showed a clearly positive attitude.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the research showed that young people are absolutely open to pro bono activities, but they still need information, education and, last but not least, a mentor to encourage participation. An instructor or a company expert who can help them in their work and give them direction. The main motivation for them to take part in pro bon activities is to belong to a community, to fulfil themselves and to develop themselves. The research also looked at the most effective communication channels to get the message of a knowledge-based volunteering campaign across to young people. The results show that the main sources of information about the conditions for participating in a pro bono volunteering programme are, according to the respondents, recommendations and opinions of friends and family, shares on social media platforms they visit, and social media platforms of non-profit organizations promoting such programmes.

The highest proportion of the sample (42.2%) were those who had not yet participated in a volunteering programme but would like to try it. They were followed by young people (39.9%) who had already volunteered and would be happy to do so again. The smallest group (17%) had a negative attitude towards volunteering: they had never participated in a volunteering programme and would not like to join one.

Among those who had volunteered in their lifetime, the most popular were children's programmes (30.4%), programmes helping animals and programmes supporting people in need (homeless) (26%). This was followed in order by programmes targeting local, local problems (16.8%), programmes targeting global problems (8.4%) and others such as volunteering in student organizations and student councils (2%). Based on the results, it was thought that a strategically well-constructed education campaign and emotional messages that reinforce motivation would be the most effective way to attract young people with immature values. Rather than being socially insensitive or self-centered, their lack of motivation can be explained by a lack of a mature value orientation.

There is a large body of literature suggesting that young people's value orientation is more easily influenced, that they are easily won over by a good reference person, if only because they are characterized by a relatively strong social networking loss and seek out communities to join. And such communities can strongly influence young people's value judgements. [21], [22]. We also asked our respondents, that they would you like to be part of a volunteer program where you could help foundations OR organizations by sharing your expertise and experience.



We received the following answers:

- Yes, I would be happy to participate in such a program: 25.2%;
- Yes, I would be happy to attend, but only if I knew the organization who will be helped: 19.1%
- Yes, I would be happy to attend, but only if I am not alone participating (e.g., working in small groups or with the supervision of a more experienced professional): 49.4%
- Under no circumstances I would participate in such a program: 6.3%

Based on the results we can say, that young people are keen to join a volunteering programme based on knowledge sharing, as long as they do not have to do it alone, but in a team, possibly with the help of a supervisor. This shows that there is an openness to pro bono activities among young people and that a higher education institution can provide a really excellent opportunity for this community building by providing an institutionalized background.

## Conclusion

Three pilot pro bono activities were carried out at our university in the framework of the project. These were projects of varying duration, supporting a programme for the elderly, an organization for disadvantaged children and a foundation working for environmental protection. An important outcome of the international programme was the creation of a guide book containing the steps for implementing pro bono as a subject, in the form of an online course to help universities join the programme. We would like to expand the programme in cooperation with other universities by involving international students and promoting the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible. As a continuation of the programme, the Eastern Faculty will continue to offer students the opportunity to carry out pro bono activities in the form of project work. We would like to expand both the programme and the research in cooperation with other universities by involving international students. We believe that one of the limitations of the research carried out on the Hungarian sample is the sample, as it focused on Hungarian students and Generation Z. We think that it is worthwhile to extend the research to other generations, younger and older, and to include foreign students studying in our country among the sample. We believe that the perception of CR activities and pro bono activities is also culturally determined. By broadening the scope of the research and including foreign students in the pro bono programme, we have the opportunity to promote the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible. We believe that it is important to orient students towards ethical behavior and values and to strengthen their sense of community. In my experience, this kind of activity is a major contribution to graduates taking this ethos forward as employees and possibly as managers.

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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.

**Keywords:** Non-formal education, Education, Competencies, Career development

## **Introduction**

The ability to perceive, analyze, approach and solve the most complex tasks requires competencies acquired through education, which allows higher education to be the main driving force of quality changes in society. The theory presented in this way requires that the overall quality in higher education be improved, which will contribute to improving the competencies of students for creative professional work and active participation in a democratic society. All this will have a positive impact on society as a whole, encouraging socio-economic growth and development. Thus, the goals defined in our country should and must be in accordance with the goals defined by the EU.

Therefore, the educational process should be better adapted to the acquisition of the necessary competencies for students. In order to achieve this goal, essential changes are needed in the system of the higher education process, its organization, and the resources available to higher education institutions. Further development of quality assurance mechanisms is necessary to ensure system efficiency and optimal use of existing and new resources.

In this sense, it is necessary to encourage studies that are necessary for the education of personnel with occupations that are insufficiently represented in the existing system, and which are directly expected to increase employability and have a positive impact on the economy and society. In this context, the role of non-formal education as an option in the development and retraining of quality staff from different profiles should be highlighted.

## **Career Development Through Non Formal Education**

Since education is a dynamic process, which produces and provides individual knowledge and skills, which are significant and contribute to social growth and development, we can say that in modern society we distinguish 3 basic forms of education:

1. Formal education
2. Informal education, and
3. Non-formal education.

### **Formal Education**

Formal education is defined as an institutional form of education and the same implies a process that takes place within a clearly defined formal educational system, legally, with the end result, the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills. This term covers all forms of education, from primary to higher education, including secondary vocational schools and gymnasiums, whose founder is the state or a specific institution authorized by the state, and which fulfill certain regulations in the field of education, therefore formal education is often called “certified education”<sup>20</sup>.

The objectives of formal education or learning are clearly defined, they are periodically reviewed and lead to the acquisition of a diploma, which enables further education and/or admission to a particular job. This type of education is targeted and conscious, and some of its types are legally compulsory (primary and secondary education). In this case, lecturers must meet formal criteria, which are regulated by laws and other regulations in the field of education.

### **Informal Education**

Informal education implies various forms of acquiring knowledge and skills that include self-initiated or spontaneous forms of education, i.e. spontaneous forms of transfer of knowledge,

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<sup>20</sup> Mr. sc. Ermin Kuka, **KONCEPT NEFORMALNOG OBRAZOVANJA**, Sarajevo, Bosna i Hercegovina, 2011

attitudes, and skills. Informal education takes place in situations that are not usually perceived as learning situations. When a person experiences a new experience, sees, hears or does something new, and then thinks about the situation, then from such an experience he inadvertently gains new knowledge and has a learned experience.

Informal education can consist of: observing certain situations, testing, reading, using the media, practice, visiting professional fairs, exchanging experiences with other people, etc.

For these reasons, informal education is described as highly individual. It differs from non-formal because in most cases it does not represent conscious/intentional learning and is described as unsystematic learning in everyday life.

Informal education takes place in everyday situations, which are usually not perceived as learning situations. It develops from the experience that a person acquires, that is, from solving certain problems, and therefore it is not intentional, and only after thinking does the learning process itself takes place.

Such education is a form of individual learning and is related to the individual. Informal learning, from the student's point of view, is learning without a clear intention and takes place in everyday life and different contexts, in the family, at work, in free time, in the community. There are results, but these results are rarely recorded, have never been certified and are not directly visible to the student.

Official documents (diploma, certificate, certificate, etc.) are not awarded for the specified type of education.

### **Non-formal Education**

Non-formal education is a type of educational process that includes non-institutional educational activities that acquire certain knowledge and skills, and participation in such activities is voluntary.

Starting from the specifics of formal learning, in the opposite conclusion it could be concluded that informal is any education that takes place outside the formal, i.e. official school context and system.

However, there are some differences. Non-formal education is usually characterized as education independent of formal educational institutions. During non-formal education, the acquisition of knowledge and various skills happens very consciously, while achieving a specific learning goal. Therefore, non-formal education/learning can be said to take place in less formal institutions, establishments, organizations or groups.

The framework conditions, the structure and pace of learning, as well as the form of teaching, can vary significantly and are usually adapted to the needs of the target group. In this way, it is possible to establish clear, living and experiential contexts of education. Certificates (diplomas, certificates, certificates) are awarded independently of the formal education system.

*Non-formal education* offers a multitude of educational programs, which can be divided into two broad categories and these programs are intended for a wide variety of target groups:

1. Educational programs (for acquiring different knowledge and skills)
2. Programs related to education (learning attitudes and positive life values)

The target group in non-formal education has no age limit (of course, it must be within real possibilities, related to the program itself). For some people it may even be the only possible and only available education because, for various reasons, the door to formal, institutional education is closed to them. It can also be of great help to people who have acquired formal education, but it is not enough for them, so in that case we define it as "learning and empowering adults for work, life, social activities that are not directly subject to standardization and strict verification procedures".



On the other hand, the acquired formal education of a certain person can in some cases be of great practical use, but often formal education is completed after studies (undergraduate and post-graduate). And if a person follows the concept of continuous learning throughout his life, then, in addition to gaining practical and life experience, opportunities for informal education can be of great importance, even when a person is in his 30<sup>s</sup>, 40<sup>s</sup>, 50<sup>s</sup>. and later. Which means it's never too late to improve.

The objectives of formal education or learning are clearly defined, they are periodically reviewed and lead to the acquisition of a diploma, which enables further education and/or admission to a particular job. This type of education is targeted and conscious, and some of its types are legally compulsory (e.g. primary and secondary education). In this case, lecturers must meet formal criteria, which are regulated by laws and other regulations in the field of education.

## **How Important is Non formal Education for Career Development**

The need to pay more attention to non-formal education is conditioned by the accelerated development of science and technology in society, that is, as society develops, so does the need for additional knowledge. Precisely because of the differentiation of educational content, it must be flexible to suit all participants. What is typical of non-formal education is that there is voluntary participation of participants in these courses, seminars and the like, often regardless of age, experience and previous education.

Given the nature of formal education and the “rules of organization” of the learning process, it could not always keep up with the development of new knowledge. Therefore, in response to this phenomenon, non-formal education is being developed, which should provide an answer to the mentioned shortcomings. Thus, informal education serves to complement the formal one and give us the opportunity to access all those contents that are formally unavailable. In some cases, due to the lack of a sufficiently efficient model of flexible formal education, non-formal education is also the bearer of reducing the gap between the existing and required education, scientific disciplines and the wishes of young people. Non-formal education is carried out through activities such as courses, seminars, lectures, conferences, workshops, various types of training, as well as volunteering, which are carried out by Career Centers at the Universities.

On the other hand, non-formal education is intended for the most diverse population groups, from youth to adults, and is increasingly sought after and appreciated in the modern world and becomes a key factor for achieving success and competitive advantage in the labor market. Therefore, it is necessary to have a developed system of effective management and coordination of this type of activity in society. Everyone knows that without education there is no social progress. Such a conclusion comes from the fact that education is one of the basic pillars on which rests every community, society, and in a broader sense, this includes the state and the entire world.

It has become quite clear and obvious that non-formal education is an increasingly widespread and present form of learning and education, and that non-formal education has become a necessity of modern (business) life, work and living. Non-formal education expands cognitive possibilities, expands and builds on existing knowledge and skills acquired through formal education and acquire knowledge, abilities and skills not encountered during formal education. In this regard, non-formal education is implemented through the following forms:

- Seminars, trainings, courses, workshops;
- Summer camps and schools;
- Volunteerism
- Project work (teamwork)
- Conferences
- Lectures, etc.

Although it is difficult to make a final decision about it, it must be noted that, in addition to formal, non-formal education is of great importance. Thus, acquired formal education and employment do not necessarily go hand in hand, from which comes the importance of informal education, which lies precisely in the relationship between specific knowledge and jobs. The theoretical basis provided by faculties focused on scientific-research work and not on practice is in many cases not sufficient for working in dynamic industries. It is therefore often necessary to combine specific knowledge from professional programs with theoretical knowledge for university education.

## **What is a Winning Combination**

The best strategy for increasing the value of the labor market is a combination of formal and informal education. This means that informal education often ends with an internationally recognized certificate, which in certain cases can completely replace formal education. The most widely applied tool of further training through non-formal education is observed in professions related to information technology, such as: designer of software systems, programmer or system administrator. In addition to all this, for most careers that are mostly related to the IT sector, recommendations from working on projects under the guidance of a mentor, then “soft” skills and other tools from the informal education system play a very large role.

When thinking about education, whether it is formal or informal, one of the key factors must be taken into account, and that is the relationship between higher education and the business world, i.e. industry. This means that support in mastering transversal skills applicable to any job can be a stepping stone to a career.

The functioning of the system thus established would be in the interest of the society if the interested parties are trained with the real working conditions in the relevant branch of the industry. This would mean providing assignments in the form of real projects under the guidance of a mentor, business training as well as other skills. Through direct contact with the local industry, an attempt will be made to transform informal education into a sustainable career plan for each individual, and internationally recognized certificates will be an additional guarantee of success.

If we take into account that the world is developing at a high speed, and that there is a need for additional knowledge, it is necessary to offer an opportunity for training young people with a narrower specialization for a specific position in the business entity through specially created workshops, seminars, conferences etc. For this purpose, and with the intention of smooth development and support of current and future students, such activities should be conducted through Career Centers.

## **Who is Informal Education for?**

In the experience so far, it can be noted that formal and informal education are separate. This means that formal education ends with the completion of studies, followed by informal education, which is organized in various forms. However, practice shows that the best results are achieved when these two forms of education are realized in parallel as a form of complementing formal education. Therefore, attention should be paid to improving the knowledge of young people through equally theory-oriented with practical work and the involvement of students in the industry.

## **A Decision for Your Own Career**

Building one’s own career is guided by the personal affinities and habits of the individual. However, if we feel that we want to stay on top, then trends must be followed, and professional development during the career should not be neglected. Career advancement in developed countries is set in such a way that influence, experience, skills, readiness for teamwork and willingness to take responsibility play a major role.

Therefore, the best solution is to embrace the philosophy of lifelong learning and continue independently, through training to improve knowledge and skills and respond to the demands of the industry, which is constantly changing.

The choice will largely depend on our life rhythm, obligations, habits and ambitions. Whichever form of education we choose, we should pay attention to several key elements when choosing. Care should be taken in the choice of an educational institution, in order for it to be related to the industry that is developing, and in which we can count on our career advancement learning by working on real projects, equipped classrooms and usable experience. The choice of the appropriate educational institution. It will largely direct us towards satisfying our requirements and expected results as well as quickly finding a job after graduation.

## Conclusion

Today, globalization and hyper competition are common trends, both in the world and in our country, which together affect the daily changes in society. As a result of these changes, it is necessary to improve the existing knowledge and skills, which means that it is necessary for every person to follow the trends in social and economic development through the forms of informal education, to improve himself during his life, how would you answer to the challenges of change and would enable us to trace our path in career development.

Non-formal education, which was often underestimated in the past, is of great importance, not only for the entire educational system, but also for the economy. Namely, in this way, thematic workshops and trainings can be chosen precisely for the knowledge and skills needed to achieve business success, which is a great advantage over formal education, which is often too broad and unnecessarily extensive.

In accordance with the above, each person can specialize very narrowly in those skills that are most needed to perform a certain job, especially when it comes to various trades, as well as jobs in the hospitality and food professions.

In the non-formal education system, the process of knowledge transfer is interactive, two-way and based on experiential learning. Non-formal education complements formal education, and provides access to all those contents that may have been discussed during formal education.

Any learning that leads to personal development and progress, better coping in life, as well as a more proactive attitude in society, should be valued and respected. It is necessary to encourage people, both young and old, to take advantage of all opportunities to raise the level of their own learning and improvement, both in an educational context and outside it.

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## **WHERE DO CHANGES LEAD IN IDENTIFYING AND ENSURING THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN SLOVENIA?**

**Abstract:** In recent decades, early childhood education and care (hereafter ECEC) has been recognized globally primarily as an investment in people, with the aim of achieving “improved human capital” and higher economic growth. In this context, international (financial) organizations (e.g. OECD, WB, EU) report the need to increase the efficiency of ECEC and thus help countries to be more productive and adaptable to rapid global economic change. In order for early investment in a country’s “human capital” to pay off, ECEC needs to develop the skills to adapt and respond to new circumstances (especially in the labor market), a starting point that can also influence ECEC evaluation models that focus on assessing the systemic efficiency and profitability of ECEC. In this way ECEC identifies and ensures the quality (hereafter IEQ) for the sake of the child’s comprehensive development and learning. The chapter analyses the conceptual changes in the IEQ of ECEC which have been happening in Slovenia as a Member State of the European Union. We show that an IEQ model has been implemented which is in line with global trends, especially at the level of the European Union, and differs from the model that was designed years ago and allowed to create a comprehensive picture of the quality of ECEC. However, the current IEQ model leads to changes in the planning and implementation of the educational process in the direction of schoolification, and reduces the quality of ECEC to its efficiency in terms of monitoring and evaluating children’s learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Early childhood education and care (ECEC), Quality, Slovenia, Human capital, Effectiveness

### **Introduction**

Quality of education has been a subject of debates internationally since the 1980s, and the quality of ECEC has been a subject of debate internationally since the end of the 1990s. At the beginning, experts in the field argued that quality assessment in ECEC – while taking account of the basic premises that apply to all levels of education – needed its own model of quality assessment and assurance. They argued that the model should be formulated according to the formal and conceptual organization of each country and should therefore be developed independently by each country (cf. Marjanovič Umek 2002, p. 12). In fact, expert analyses and empirical research (Moss 1996, Woodhead 1999) have shown that ECEC systems and programmes vary widely across Europe and the world, and that they also differ in their target orientation, all of which leads to differences in educational practices. Other factors, such as the social and cultural environment in which ECEC takes place, also influence the quality of the educational process, the quality of children’s everyday life in ECEC settings and their development and learning (Bronfenbrenner 1979). This is why ECEC quality is a complex concept, generally defined by two interrelated areas: process quality and structural quality (Phillips and Howes 1987, Vandell and Wolfe 2000, Cassidy et al. 2011, Marjanovič Umek 2014).

Process quality refers to children's day-to-day experiences in ECEC settings and encompasses the social, emotional, physical aspects of children's activities and interactions with ECEC educators; their sensitivity, interest and participation in children's play and learning activities; their attitude towards children and their implicit views about children's development and learning; children's interactions with peers, and adequate didactic materials that are seen as the proximal determinants of child development and learning (Howes et al. 2008, Pianta et al. 2005, Thomason and La Par 2009, Phillips and Howes 1987, Vandell and Wolfe 2000, Cassidy et al. 2011, Marjanovič Umek 2014). It was well established that process quality is crucial as it reveals the strongest effects on children's development and learning (e. g. Melhuish et al. 2013, Slot 2018). For instance, high process quality has been shown to be positively correlated with children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Garcia et al. 2016, Hall et al. 2013, Mashburn et al. 2008, Melhuish et al., 2013, Vandell et al. 2010) and ECEC educators' warmth and sensitivity have been shown to be associated with children's social functioning (National Institute of Child ...2003).

The structural characteristics of ECEC quality, such as group size, children-to-educator ratio, and ECEC educators' qualifications (Howes et al. 2008, Thomason and La Paro, 2009) are the distal and regulable aspects of ECEC, and are regarded as important preconditions of proximal process quality (Cryer et al. 1999, Phillipsen et al. 1997, Pianta et al. 2005, Vandell 2004). Generally, research has shown that structural aspects, such as smaller group sizes and more favorable children-to-educator ratios, are associated with higher process quality (Barros and Aguiar 2010, Deynoot-Schaub and Riksen-Walraven, 2005, Thomason and La Paro 2009). In short, experts agree that the conception of the IEQ model of ECEC was to be guided by a reflection on the high quality of ECEC at both structural and process levels. This was based on the requirement to ensure the conditions for the comprehensive development and learning of preschool children, as well as their safety and well-being in ECEC settings (cf. Slot et al. 2016).

Around two decades ago, there was a breakthrough in the thinking and expectations of international institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and institutions of the European Union (EU)) with regard to ECEC quality. Decision-makers were not interested in the experts' reflections and findings on the process and structural factors of ECEC quality, but rather in the early investment in human capital and the return on financial investment in ECEC systems. In other words, they were not interested in ECEC quality for the sake of preschool children themselves, their comprehensive development and learning, or their well-being in ECEC settings.

An important element of this shift was the publication of research in the USA by Nobel laureate James J. Heckman (2006), which showed that the participation of children in quality ECEC brings a country a 13% return on investment per year. In this context, the return on ECEC and added value are measured and evaluated in terms of children's later school performance and the adaptability of individuals to the demands of the labor market, facilitating their employability (Heckman and Masterov 2007, pp. 4–5). The return on investment of an ECEC system is thus measured by comparing, on the one hand, the achievements in different areas of learning (in international knowledge assessment tests) of the children who have been included in ECEC and those who have not, and by asking whether children's achievements relate to the financial investment that countries make in each area (Lundgren 2006, Paananen, Kumpulainen and Lipponen 2015). If funders see financial investment as adequate or high, but the comparison of children's achievements shows that the differences between children who have been included in ECEC and those who have not large enough, ECEC is judged to be lacking or even ineffective (cf. Campbell-Barr and Nygard 2014, Paananen, Kumpulainen and Lipponen 2015).

Since then the criteria listed have been increasingly becoming part of the debate on the quality of ECEC in the political arena, particularly in international financial institutions, for example the OECD and the WB. They have also been adopted by decision-makers at the EU level – the

European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union (cf. European Commission 2006, Council of the European Union ... 2019), who have identified ECEC as a means to achieve the EU's stated economic and social objectives and its global competitiveness. Investment in quality ECEC has been recognized as a cornerstone of an effective education system and as a means to maximize the medium- and long-term return on public budgets (Education and Culture DG 2008, p. 1). Spending on ECEC is namely a high return early investment in human capital (Council of European Union 2018, p. 5). They advocate the establishment of a systematic and EU-wide comparable way of evaluating the efficiency of the design and implementation of ECEC programmes, their outcomes and the results of ECEC policies (European Union 2014, p. 66). This leads to expectations for comparable models for evaluating ECEC quality at the international level such as those that provide information on the efficiency of financial investments in ECEC through the measurement of children's achievements. However, they do not consider whether the expenditure per child for the quality of ECEC is high or at least appropriate when related to the quality of children's lives and in ensuring and implementing the conditions for the comprehensive development of personality and education of children, factors which are not and cannot be measured with only the results of knowledge assessments later on in children's education. ECEC quality evaluations no longer seek »in-depth understandings of complex early childhood systems, develop meaningful systemic evaluation« (Urban 2018, pp. 93–94, cf. Roberts-Holmes in Moss 2021). The quality of the educational process is thus essentially judged in terms of, or reduced to and equated with, its (in)efficiency.

We can conclude that we are witnessing a double shift away from the "traditional" conception of IEQ models that we presented in the introduction of this chapter. The first shift concerns the design of the evaluation model, which – to put it simply – does not take into account the differences between the formal and conceptual organization of ECEC in each country. The second shift relates to setting up a common IEQ model and efficiency of the education system through measuring the outcomes of preschool children. An IEQ model which meets economic requirements and which does not address the differences between ECEC and schools or consider the specificities of these two educational institutions. An IEQ model that requires national policies to measure the achievements of preschool children. At first, this may not seem problematic, but we should be aware that such expectations are fundamentally changing the "traditional" objectives of ECEC and educational practice itself, which now follows measurable outcomes, that is, children's achievements in the educational process, and leads to the schoolification of preschools (cf. Vallberg Roth 2014, Lundgren 2006, Otterstad and Braathe 2016, Paananen 2017).

We will now show that the expectations of international institutions regarding the added value and efficiency of ECEC have influenced the design and IEQ model of ECEC in Slovenia.

## **What about the IEQ Models of ECEC in Slovenia?**

### **... A Glimpse into the Past**

In the 1990s, in 1996 to be precise, Slovenia adopted legislation regulating ECEC, namely the *Organisation and Financing of Education Act* (Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1996) and the *Preschool Education Act* (Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1996a). Neither of the acts originally included provisions on the IEQ model of ECEC. The central aim of education is defined in the acts as the comprehensive development of the individual (cf. Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1996, Art. 2), that is to say the comprehensive development of children in different areas of development (cf. Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1996a, Art. 4). The *Preschool Curriculum* (Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1999), a document that is still in force today, includes among its principles the principle of critical evaluation, which ECEC educators are required to follow in planning and implementing ECEC at the level of daily interpersonal interactions, at the level of planning the individual areas of ECEC activities, content

and methods of work, the daily routine in the ECEC group, the provision of the necessary conditions for the implementation of ECEC, the monitoring of the development of the ECEC group and of the individual child, etc. and at the level of the rights and responsibilities of parents, the preschool, the local community and the ECEC's founder (Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1999, p. 16). In short, formal documents are based on providing an appropriate and supportive environment for children's development and learning, and on ensuring the conditions for a safe and healthy childhood. They aim to optimize the development of children's physical and cognitive abilities, which contributes to a higher quality of life for children and a better quality of life for families.

In line with the concept of evaluation indicated by the *Curriculum* (Ministrstvo za šolstvo 1999), its objectives and the ECEC objectives in the two above-mentioned legal acts, the IEQ model of ECEC was developed in Slovenia at the beginning of this century in the research and development project *Assessing and Assuring the Quality of ECEC* (2000–2002). It was designed according to the specific characteristics of this level of education (for more on that, see Kovač Šebart and Hočevar 2019). Its design includes the self-evaluation of structural, process and indirect levels of quality; the latter includes relationships in which children are not directly involved, but which have a significant impact on the work of the ECEC setting and, indirectly, on children themselves (e.g. ECEC educators' professional development and job satisfaction, cooperation among preschool staff, cooperation between the preschool and parents, etc.) (Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002, p. 40).

In *Assessing and Assuring the Quality of ECEC* (2000–2002) and the research project *Self-evaluation of ECEC: Quality Assurance* (2003–2005), measurement tools for assessing all levels of quality in preschools were developed and tested, and published in *Kakovost v vrtcih [Quality in ECEC settings]* (Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002) and *Pogled v vrtec [Looking at the ECEC setting]* (Marjanovič Umek, Fekonja and Bajec 2005). These tools provide ECEC settings with »the possibility to monitor their work for longer periods and independently« (Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002, p. 53). The analysis of the data collected from the measurement tools »allows the ECEC educator or team of professionals to reflect on whether the ECEC setting is creating the conditions to foster children's development and learning in multiple domains« (ibid, p. 51). Using the tools, ECEC teachers also assess the children's involvement in activities that relate to the quality of their activity (Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002, pp. 123–129), but do not assess individual children's achievements (cf. ibid.).

We conclude that the presented IEQ model (Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002, Marjanovič Umek, Fekonja and Bajec 2005) is based on a detailed knowledge of the objectives of ECEC in Slovenia, following the *Curriculum* (1999) to enable ECEC educators to monitor the quality of their work and focus primarily on the best interests of children, their comprehensive development and learning, and the development of their autonomy and critical thinking (cf. Marjanovič Umek et al. 2002). The design of IEQ is based on research conducted internationally (Layzer et al. 1993, Barnas and Cummings 1994, Howes and Olenic 1986, Pascal et al. 1999 in ibid.), which recognizes the importance of the quality of ECEC for the comprehensive development of each child, their well-being in ECEC setting, and quality play and learning there.

There is no information on whether and how the IEQ model has been put into practice. This is probably due to the fact that for decades the responsible Ministry has not allocated funds for the self-evaluation of the quality of ECEC settings.

However, policy makers in Slovenia became interested in the development of the IEQ model for the entire education vertical, including ECEC, a few years ago, when the country obtained funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds (Javni razpis ... 2008).

In the remainder of the text, we will therefore look into the projection of the expectations of EU institutions on the IEQ model of ECEC in Slovenia.

### ... A Glimpse at the Present

In 2017, the responsible Ministry adopted the *National Framework for Quality Assessment and Assurance in Education* (Ministrstvo za izobraževanje ... 2017), which includes criteria and procedures for self-evaluation in preschools at the national level. The IEQ model follows the expectations of international institutions, more specifically EU institutions, as outlined in the introduction, and this is consistent with the fact that the EU funded the projects on which it is based.<sup>21</sup> The document states that the IEQ model should be seen as part of a broader collective effort of the countries of the world, and in particular of Slovenia's involvement in the activities of developed EU countries (ibid., p. 2); that it is part of an effort to assess the quality of the education system through internationally comparable instruments and mechanisms (ibid., p. 13). It will draw data from international knowledge assessment programmes (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) (ibid. pp. 13–14). This will enable comparisons to be made between the achievements of children who have and have not been included in ECEC in international knowledge assessment tests between countries, thereby enabling the efficiency of a country's education system to be determined at the individual level and as a whole (cf. 7).

In short, it is an IEQ model that does not evaluate the quality of ECEC at the process, structural and indirect levels for the sake of the quality of education and life of children in ECEC settings. Rather, it requires the identification of learning and teaching achievements in the planned and implemented curriculum and their monitoring to verify the efficiency of ECEC settings in achieving them and for international comparisons. It is an IEQ model that evaluates the efficiency of ECEC in the manner described in the first part of this chapter.

The problem with the common systemic IEQ model when used for the ECEC level is that, having been developed for all levels of education, it completely ignores the specific features of ECEC. An even bigger problem is its formulation, which contradicts the systemic and conceptual design of ECEC in Slovenia. It introduces compulsory self-evaluation of learning and teaching in ECEC practice, even though today, according to formal documents, ECEC educators do not *teach* children. The IEQ model also includes the measurement of children's learning outcomes (ibid., p. 9), although all this is contrary to the formal and content design of ECEC. It is modelled on this – despite the fact that ECEC in the country is conceptualized and formalized in such a way that ECEC does not directly prepare children for school, nor does it track children's outcomes. An IEQ model has been created which contradicts the curricular and formal structure of Slovenian ECEC.

## Conclusion

This is the context in which we can answer the question asked in the title of the chapter about where the changes in the IEQ of ECEC in Slovenia are leading. They are leading away from what has traditionally been advocated by the profession in Slovenia, away from what is laid down in the legislation and the *Curriculum* (1999) and therefore away from the currently established concept of ECEC, away from the focus of the educational process on providing quality conditions for children's comprehensive development in various areas of development and learning, their safety and well-being. They are leading towards the "added value" and "efficiency" of ECEC. They are leading towards a change in the educational process in ECEC settings in the direction of its schoolification.

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<sup>21</sup> European Structural and Investment Funds financed two projects related to ECEC in Slovenia. The goal of both was to »develop and implement a quality model of ECEC settings and schools, and the definition of quality indicators at the national level (external evaluation) and at the level of ECEC settings and schools (self-evaluation)« (Javni razpis ... 2008, p. 2).



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### ANALYSIS OF THE CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS FOR I AND IV GRADE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

**Abstract:** Textbooks occupy a central place in the educational process and they are one of the dominant means for the realization of the curriculum. For these reasons, it is more than necessary to raise the standards for their development, because the existing evaluation methodology does not meet the basic and modern criteria for their evaluation. Namely, the textbooks cannot be evaluated with an universal methodology, due to the fact that each subject and adult year has its own specifics. The teaching and scientific contents in the textbooks need to be didactically classified. Viewed from several aspects, we can come to an established view that: the quality of education depends on the quality of textbooks.

The educational system in our country is subject to changes that occur in educational policy. In accordance with the new Concept for primary education (2021), new curricula and textbooks for I and IV grade have been prepared for the realization of teaching. From here, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the curricula and modern trends for the preparation of a textbook. We will see how all the components for the textbooks are represented to be modern, whether they encourage analytical and critical thinking, whether the adoption of new concepts is systematic and whether the students are trained for practical use of the acquired knowledge.

**Keywords:** Modern textbook, Curriculum, Textbook evaluation

## Introduction

The prehistory of the textbook begins with the appearance of the letter, and the use of the first textbook is considered to begin with the appearance of the first school. The textbook activity in our country begins in the middle of the XIX century, with the appearance of the Enlightenment

and the first books in Macedonian language. In pedagogical circles and literature, the textbook until the XIX century, is considered traditional and classical. The concept of making and structure of the textbooks was systematized according to the requirements of the “old school” – reproduction of the curricula and impressive presentation of the teaching contents by the teacher. At the beginning of the XX century, the “new school” movement emerged as a radical reaction to the “old school”. The requirements set by the “new school” are targeted at the modern textbook, which aims to enable the student through constant activity and involvement in the teaching process for: fulfillment of functional and problem tasks, independent work and motivation to search for new sources of knowledge. Due to the rapid development of educational technology and the enormous expansion of new knowledge and information, the demand for means and sources for acquiring and transferring knowledge is increasing by itself.

The modern textbook has lost the old monopoly position of the traditional textbook, because it is no longer the only and authoritative source for acquiring knowledge. Most often today the textbook is used in combination with other means of communication, so that its goals and tasks become more complex. However, it does not lose his dominant role, because he is the main coordinator of all teaching aids used for quality implementation of the educational process.

## Defining the Problem and Basic Concepts

In the pedagogical literature there are several attempts to define the term textbook. The difficulties in defining it arise from the diversity and complexity of its role, function, structure and physiognomy. Therefore, when defining a textbook, it is best to start from its global function in teaching, while taking into account other factors (teaching content, student, teacher). (Стојановска, 2012, 40)

**The textbook** is a source of knowledge and a teaching tool that is used to achieve the set educational goals. The textbook enables students to achieve the standards of knowledge and to encourage the development of skills in: **cognitive area** (development, analysis, synthesis of knowledge), **affective area** (acceptance of values and formation of one’s own attitude) and **psychomotor area** (encouragement to acquire manipulative skills and independent evaluation of practical work). (Концепција за изработка на учебник и методологија за вреднување на учебник, 2010, 13)

According to the requirements of the so-called modern school and teaching, the focus of learning is not only on the accumulation of knowledge, but also on mastering, developing and advancing knowledge. Due to the flow of a large amount of information, students need from an early age to adjust to distinguish: unimportant from essential and relevant from irrelevant. This task is shared between the teaching process and the textbook, as its integral part. This task is shared between the teaching process and the textbook, as its integral part. The writing, application and evaluation of a textbook is characterized by a number of specifics, which depend on a number of factors and aspects of consideration (pedagogical, methodological, psychological). The textbook is always a current issue, depending on the degree of dynamics of modern educational processes and its adaptability to monitor their pace. The task of the textbooks is to implement the curriculum practically and to verify its separate concepts.

**The curriculum** is usually defined as a system of contents, divided into subjects, according to the teaching plan. In this regard, we can say that the textbook is located between the program, students and all other factors that participate and make up the educational process. Therefore, it is necessary for the textbook to have a modern, dimensioned and multimedia character, but also to be structured in accordance with the set conditions for the realization of the curricula. From here, we come to one of the functions of the textbook, which we will focus on in this paper, and that is: **connection and adaptation of textbooks for certain subjects for I and IV grade in primary education, according to the curriculum.**

## Physiognomy and Structure of Textbooks

The physiognomy and the structure of the textbooks need to be in accordance with the laws of the educational process, because the structure of the textbooks reflects the structure of the teaching process. Textbooks should be didactically-methodically shaped, because their content depends on a number of criteria, such as: curriculum requirements, opportunities and abilities of students according to their age, receptive power, ability to stimulate motivation and activity in the learning process.

The structure of the textbooks is a whole that is composed of independent parts/ elements, which need to be interconnected and harmonized. The global structure of textbooks differs from other information tools used for learning, because each element of the textbooks that has the task of conveying information, has its own special structure and logical connection (Петроски, 1994, 24). According to the function of the textbook, the structural elements can be divided into three groups: presenting the content, adopting the content and more efficient learning and orientation when working with the textbook. (Требјешанин, Лазаревиќ, 2001)

The didactic structure of the textbooks is composed of two components: **textual part and extratextual part, so-called didactic apparatus.** (Маказлиева, 1995, 36)

### Text Component

The textual component is the main, most extensive and essential part of the textbook. It contains the basic information that students must adopt. The core of these texts is based on knowledge of basic concepts, laws and theories. This component is a combination of three individual text structures: **basic, supplementary, and explanatory** (Маказлиева, 1995, 36-37). **The basic texts** are in the composition of the main paragraphs in the textbooks, which are divided into smaller parts, for easier mastering. They contain: main terms, definitions, facts, generalizations, knowledge, principles, rules for application of knowledge, descriptions, logical operations and systematization, integration of teaching material, etc. Additional and explanatory texts serve as auxiliary or “bonus” text, with information to clarify and form a complete picture of the content being studied. According to this structure of the texts, the students are enabled to systematically and consequently adopt and apply the new terms.

### Extratextual Component (Didactic Apparatus)

By extratextual component, we mean everything that does not belong to the textual component, ie everything that is not a basic text, and yet is in function for its better adoption. **Illustrative materials** have a special place in textbooks. The illustrations in the textbooks are in color, which provides visibility of all the essential features of the objects that are illustrated. Depending on the age for which the textbook is intended, the nature of the subject and the content of the text, the following are used: pictures, drawings, illustrations from various scientific disciplines and areas, schemes, tables, graphs, etc. The purpose of the illustrations is to raise the interest of the students for the content that is studied, and thus to contribute to greater impossibility and permanence of the knowledge. Through the pages of the textbooks for grade I it is noticed that the illustrations are more present (0.75: 0.25) than the written texts, while the number of illustrations in the textbooks for grade IV is significantly smaller. In order for students to be able to quickly and easily navigate through the pages of textbooks, the so-called **orientation apparatus**, which consists of: content, introduction, titles and subheadings, graphic symbols, page numbering and overview (reminder) of terms. (Маказлиева, 1995, 38)

To get a complete picture of the structure of textbooks, it is necessary to emphasize the representation and role of questions, tasks and exercises (didactic components of the textbook). They are in function of complete and productive processing of the material that has been studied, and

the students learn how to learn and how to discover the essence of what they are learning. We can divide them into two groups: one is intended for introducing students to new content, and the other for developing, checking, determining the already acquired knowledge. When students are introduced to new content, they are in the form of instructions to encourage independent observation, research, thinking, connecting new knowledge with previously acquired knowledge and so on. The second group refers to the knowledge that the students have acquired and they are checked and determined. Knowledge is practiced by solving problem tasks or situations, they are determined and applied, which develops critical and analytical thinking. In this way, students are motivated to independently and interactively engage in the process of learning and reasoning, to develop the ability to explore, observe and fantasize – this will enable cognitive and emotional development.

## Criteria for Making Textbooks

The criteria according to which the textbooks are made in our country are contained in the Concept for making a textbook and methodology for textbook evaluation. The Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) is responsible for this document, in accordance with the Law on the Bureau for Development of Education and the Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education. The aim is to assist the authors in writing the textbooks, as well as the review committees, in providing objective, professional and quality evaluation of the textbook manuscripts. In this way, unified criteria for textbook development and evaluation are set. The document is structurally divided into two parts:

- **Part I: Conceptual solutions for the development of textbooks** – all general conditions that a textbook needs to meet are defined, for proper application in teaching. The following are determined: scientific-professional and methodological bases, didactic-methodological standards in the selection and systematization of contents, developmental educational functions, visual attachments, language and language culture. This section also includes the basic criteria for preparing textbooks:

1. compliance of the content of the textbook with the curriculum;
2. adherence to modern achievements in a certain scientific field and use of professional terminology;
3. compliance of the textbook with the age of the students;
4. upbringing function, positive attitude towards science/knowledge, development of civic and national identity, multiculturalism and gender equality. (Концепција за изработка на учебник и методологија за вреднување на учебник, 2010, 8)

In addition, we will make a global analysis of the new textbooks, so that we will see how compatible they are with the above criteria. The critical observation will refer to the textbooks for I grade (Macedonian language, mathematics, natural sciences, society) and IV grade (Macedonian language, mathematics, natural sciences, history and society).

The first criterion that the textbooks must meet, refers to its **content compliance with the curriculum**. Based on the requirements of the new curricula, new textbooks were completely developed for all subjects taught in I and IV grade. These textbooks are in use from this school year (2021-2022). The contents that are processed in certain subjects are compatible with the learning outcomes, which are defined in the programs. Based on this, the contents are harmonized with the fund of teaching hours, topics (areas) and terms that are introduced in the curricula for the subjects. The textbooks adhere to the interactive method of work, so the contents that are processed in a given subject are correlated with the contents of other related subjects, which allows expanding the horizons for acquiring comprehensive, lasting knowledge and generalizations, as well as using a wider „palette“ of learning resources. For easier application of the interactive method in teaching and more active approach of the subjects in it, in the curricula are given examples of

activities that can be implemented by the teachers in the adoption of the teaching contents. According to the prescribed requirements of this criterion, we realize that the Concept for making a textbook is not harmonized with the new curricula, which put the learning outcomes at the center of their structure. The Concept, which has not changed since 2010, still emphasizes the achievement of the intended goals in teaching, according to the requirements of previous curricula.

The second criterion refers to the **adherence of the textbooks to the modern achievements in a certain scientific field and the use of professional terminology**. The textbooks have a modern, multimedia character and are up to date with the modern achievements in a certain scientific field. They contain visual attachments, additional texts, questions, tasks, which result in additional activities for the adoption of the content, its generalization, development of the method of cognition, logical operations, etc. In order for students to acquire quality knowledge, it is necessary to pay attention to the chronological course in the acquisition of knowledge at all levels of thinking – from memory and reproduction, understanding and comprehension, application of knowledge, to practicing and encouraging the more complex thought activities (analysis, synthesis, evaluation ...). The contents that are intended to be adopted within individual subjects, should be processed according to the principle from general to complex, so that students will be introduced first to the basic information, concepts and terms related to the specific content, and then move on to them. decomposing, deepening and forming a logical whole. This is especially a problem when it comes to processing more complex content at a higher thought level, which students encounter for the first time (especially first grade students). In order for students to acquire knowledge in the field of mathematics in a more interesting and easier way, in the mathematics textbooks for grades I and IV, an innovation has been introduced in the learning approach (research-discovery approach, interwoven with dynamic text), which is in order to achieve higher achievements and increase the functional mathematical literacy. In order to master some more complex contents, it is necessary to have a larger part in the textbooks for the adoption and recognition of knowledge. In this regard, a shortcoming is noticed in the textbook of mathematics for I grade, in the part where operations start, addition and subtraction with numbers up to 20 (transition from first to second ten).

The terms that the students are supposed to adopt in the individual subjects are expertly used in terminology, so that scientifically based, structured and validated knowledge and information are offered. This begs the question: – How close and familiar are the professional terms and contents to the students? The answer to this question will be given in the review of the following criterion – **compliance of textbooks with the age of students**. This criterion refers to the developmental characteristics of students in relation to the age for which the subject is intended, emphasizes the need to use an appropriate understandable and interesting style of language and illustrations. Students should gradually get acquainted with the meaning of the professional terms in a certain scientific field, intended for the adoption and mastering of the contents of certain subjects. Analyzing the vocabulary used in the history and society textbook for grade IV, we notice: vague and complex expressions, difficult concepts to understand – which make the processing of the content at a higher weight and thought level, such as: nepotism, corruption, empathy, ect. Students are required to understand and judge these terms. The questions intended for practicing the studied contents are very similar and indeterminate, which causes confusion among the students. This can result in aversion or abstraction in students' expression, as well as difficulties in mastering and understanding the material. Also in the part related to the content – the environment in which I live, the set tasks have excessive demands from students up to the age of ten, such as: students are required to do research on cultural and historical heritage, and then summarize the results and finally present them to the local community or the residents of the municipality (Ангеловска, Илиоска, 2021, 67) or students are asked to think about the problems faced by the citizens in our society, to make a proposal for their solution, with the help of the citizens of

the municipality and then to present the problems to the mayor and the employees in the municipality. (Ангеловска, Илиоска, 2021, 59)

As inappropriate content we can single out – electricity and magnetism, in the textbook for IV grade in natural sciences. According to the set learning outcomes in the curricula, students are required to acquire knowledge about the components, types of circuits, as well as their function.

In the Macedonian language textbook for grade IV, the focus is on logical and expressive reading. A wide selection of popular science, art and non-literary folk texts is offered. Many of the texts are quite extensive and long (above the level for which the textbook is intended), so that students face difficulties in reading, understanding and interpreting them. The reason why the texts are at a higher weight level is due to the negative results and comments received from the last PISA (2018) test, in the area – reading comprehension, where the achievements are significantly below the OECD average (Јамева, 2020). Students should acquire the habit of reading from a very early age, through continuous practice and gradual practice of various techniques. The aim is to increase concentration when reading long, comprehensive and abstract texts. This will further enable students to identify the main idea, draw conclusions, personal views, make comparisons and link texts to their informal knowledge.

It is necessary for modern textbooks to have an **upbringing function, a positive attitude towards science/knowledge, development of civic and national identity, multiculturalism and gender equality**. We see that this criterion is composed of several parts that intertwine with each other. The upbringing function and the positive attitude towards science, without exception, are present in all textbooks. The next part refers to the development of civic and national instinct, which must be nurtured from an early age. Students need to gain knowledge about their homeland, the roots of their people and important historical events. These contents are present in the textbooks in society and Macedonian language (I grade) and history and society and Macedonian language (IV grade). In the contents, questions, tasks and illustrations that are represented in the textbooks, different ethnic / cultural communities are noticed, so that the students are introduced in the intercultural education. The aim is for students to get acquainted with the culture and roots of their people and homeland, the history and tradition of different ethnic/cultural communities that we have in our country, to promote the specifics of each community and to present interaction and friendly relations between them. The last part of this criterion refers to gender equality. The textbooks avoid implicit and explicit emphasis on gender stereotypes and division of male and female roles and professions. Special attention is paid to the equal presence of male and female characters in illustrations and texts, as well as the use of names from different ethnic/cultural communities. In this way, gender equality and human rights are sensitized. The textbooks are published in Macedonian language in Cyrillic alphabet. For students who belong to other communities, the textbooks are published in the language and script in which they teach.

- **Part II: Methodological dimension for textbook evaluation** – this section includes a set of several instruments, which refer to the four basic criteria for preparing textbooks. Based on these instruments, indicators for textbook evaluation are clearly defined. This section is intended for review committees, based on their professional competencies. The same instruments are used for all subjects of primary and secondary education. (Концепција за изработка на учебник и методологија за вреднување на учебник, 2010, 104)

## Conclusion

The curricula and textbooks used in certain subjects depend on the innovations and modifications that are introduced in the educational system. The Concept for making a textbook and methodology for evaluating a textbook has remained unchanged since 2010, and a new Concept for primary education (2021) was prepared, on which new curricula and textbooks were developed



and started to be applied, for I and IV grade. It is necessary to develop a new Concept for textbook development and methodology for textbook evaluation, in accordance with the new requirements of the curriculum. This will enable greater compatibility of textbooks with the set criteria for making in the Concept for making textbooks.

The methodology for evaluating textbooks is based on the basic criteria for preparing textbooks. According to the methodology currently used for evaluation, all textbooks for individual subjects are evaluated according to the same instruments and parameters, whether they are related or not, whether they refer to primary or secondary education. It is necessary to develop special instruments for groups of related subjects, according to the level of education (primary/secondary) and educational cycles, which will enable a more objective, professional and better evaluation of manuscripts for textbooks.

It is also necessary to pay more attention when creating curricula. In the new curricula, the central place is occupied by the setting of learning outcomes – what we expect students to achieve in specific subjects and grades. The curricula are based on the National Standards, based on competencies. By achieving learning outcomes, competencies are actually acquired: knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is necessary to balance the workload of the curricula with the expected learning outcomes, because they are set at a higher level than the real developmental abilities of some students.

From everything we have said so far, we realize that the structure of textbooks, whether they are modern or traditional textbooks, largely depends on the structure and requirements of the curriculum. Through the processing of the curricula, the scope of the curriculum and its depth are determined, which leads to the concretization of the requirements of the curricula. Due to this interdependence of textbooks and curricula, we ask the following question: – What does the students' workload depend on? The answer to this question can be seen from two sides: on the one hand it is considered that the curricula are overloaded, and on the other hand that the processing of the contents in the textbooks is at a higher level. As we have pointed out before, textbooks are compatible with the curriculum, so from this interdependence arises the dilemma of whether it is necessary to facilitate the curricula or the textbooks. In order to properly clarify this dilemma, we will refer to the structure of the textbooks, starting from the aspect that the volume of contents presented in the textbooks may be the same, but the workload of the textbooks may be different. From this point of view, we conclude that the workload of students is different, depending on the way of structuring the contents in the textbooks. Students up to the age of 10 are still thinking on a concrete level. Therefore, the language style that will be used for processing and mastering the contents in the textbooks should be understandable and interesting, and at the same time it should gradually encourage the development of abstract thinking and stimulation for concluding at a higher level of thought (from inductive to deductive).

When it comes to processing more complex content, they need to be supported by a number of appropriate examples, questions and tasks for practicing knowledge, so that clear instructions will be given for their fulfillment. This complex process indisputably depends on the way the teaching contents are processed and interpreted by the teacher. For that purpose, the curricula list proposed activities for the realization of the contents, which should reduce the burden of the contents in the textbooks, and also to facilitate the work of the teacher in the process of implementing the activities.

In relation to this current issue, there will always be conflicting opinions and views from various starting points, in accordance with the innovations that are introduced in the educational system. It is too early to draw any conclusions regarding the new curricula and textbooks. The outcome of these changes will be seen based on the achievements and results of the students in two years.

The most important thing is to emphasize and not to forget the basic purpose of the textbooks: **presentation of contemporary achievements in a certain scientific field in a simple, easily**

**understood, interesting and literary language, which will help students to more easily accumulate new, lasting and applicable knowledge, skills and abilities.**

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## **SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF STUDENTS WITH RARE DISEASES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** Rare diseases are complex, chronic, often degenerative and life-threatening diseases. They are characterized by a variety of diseases, symptoms that vary not only from disease to disease, but also in the disease itself.

Common characteristics of people with rare diseases are: the start of the disease in most people occurs in early childhood, they have no information about the disease itself, have a reduced quality of life, have a large psychological burden in terms of daily care for their health, difficult relationships with families and the community, stigmatization, discrimination, and difficulties in integrating into the community.

Students with rare diseases, due to the complexity of the diseases, symptomatology and treatments for their treatment and care, face health, social and educational problems in primary and secondary education.

The main goal of the research is to gain knowledge about social problems parents and their children face while the children are attending primary and secondary education.

Specific objectives of the research:

- Gaining knowledge about students with rare diseases for social problems they face during their schooling.

- Gaining information about the parents of students with rare diseases for social problems they face during their schooling.

The empirical research was conducted on the basis of application of quantitative methodology, for that purpose the survey technique was used for which two instruments were prepared: a structured questionnaire for students with rare diseases and a structured questionnaire for the student's parent.

A sample of research are students with rare diseases who attend primary and secondary education and their parents in the city of Skopje.

**Keywords:** Social problems, Education, Rare diseases, Students, Parents

## Rare Diseases

A disease or disorder is defined as rare in Europe when it affects less than 1 in 2000. One rare disease may affect only a handful of patients in the EU, and another touch as many as 245,000.

There are more than 6000 rare diseases. On the whole, rare diseases may affect 30 million European Union citizens. 80% of rare diseases are of genetic origin, and are often chronic and life threatening<sup>22</sup>.

The existing definition of rare diseases in the European Union was adopted with the Parliamentary Action Program for Rare Diseases 1999-2003, that is, rare diseases represent a prevalence of no more than 5 per 10,000 people in the European Union. The same definition is established in the regulation of the European Commission 141/2000, and based on that it is used by the European Commission to determine the so-called orphan drugs.

Defining rare diseases is quite complex, as different countries have adopted different definitions of a rare disease, and researchers are continuously identifying new diseases or disease variants. Therefore, the epidemiology of rare diseases—including the determination of prevalence (the number of people affected at any one time), incidence (the number of new cases in a given year), and disease patterns (for example, age distribution) in a population is inexact.<sup>23</sup>

Their number of people with different types of rare diseases is constantly increasing in global and national level. However, 80% of all rare disease patients are affected by approximately 350 rare diseases. Paradoxically, although rare diseases are of low prevalence and individually rare, collectively they affect a significant proportion of the population in any country, which according to generally accepted international research is between 6% and 8%.

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<sup>22</sup> EURORDIS RARE DISEASES EUROPE,

<sup>23</sup> National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information, Profile of Rare Diseases – Rare Diseases and Orphan Products – NCBI Bookshelf (nih.gov)

Rare diseases include genetic diseases, rare types of cancer, contagious tropical diseases and degenerative diseases.

Due to the low prevalence of each disease, medical expertise is rare, knowledge is scarce, care offerings inadequate and research limited.

In the area of diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of people with rare diseases, provision of effective drugs for people with rare diseases, quality health care differs significantly depending on the availability of expert services and health care opportunities for these people at the level of individual countries. In any case, the development of the health systems of individual countries plays a big role, in relation to their national health policies towards people with rare diseases. More non-governmental organizations for people with rare diseases are becoming active partners in the creation of health policies in terms of protection, promotion and representation of the rights of these people in several areas (health care, social care and education, etc.).

Based on EU criteria, according to the estimate that 6-8% of the population suffers from a rare disease, there should be about 189,000 patients with a rare disease in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Commission for Rare Diseases, which operates under the Ministry of Health, in the “Register of Rare Diseases and Patients Suffering from Rare Diseases” includes only diseases that are listed in the ORFAN list of rare diseases – revised January 2020. This group doesn’t include chronically debilitated or inadequately treated diseases, as well as patients with a rare secondary complication of a common disease.<sup>24</sup>

The program for the treatment of rare diseases in our country was adopted for the first time in 2009, for the treatment of two patients with the same rare disease, and in subsequent years the list of orphan drugs and treated patients with rare diseases has been constantly increasing. As of December 2020, a total of 575 people have been registered in the Register of Rare Diseases, of which approximately 185 people are provided with medicines through the Rare Disease Program. Through the Program for the treatment of rare diseases, a total of 35 drugs have been provided for the treatment of patients with rare diseases. All patients meet the criteria and have been given a positive opinion by the National Commission for Rare Diseases.<sup>25</sup>

## Characteristics of Rare Diseases

The majority of rare diseases appear immediately after birth and in early childhood, comprising 4-5% of newborns and infants (congenital anomalies and deformations, monogenetic diseases, hereditary metabolic disorders, rare tumors). Rare diseases are characterized by a progressive adverse course and very often by early death (30% die by the age of 5 years of life and an additional 12% by the age of 15 years)<sup>26</sup>.

From a medical point of view, a characteristic of rare diseases is the great variety of symptoms and disorders, which vary not only from disease to disease, but also within the disease itself. The same type of disease can have a very different clinical picture for sufferers, and very different symptoms can appear in one sufferer.

Rare diseases also vary in the severity of an individual disease, but on average, the life expectancy of people with this disease is very short. The impact of the disease on the duration of

<sup>24</sup> Prevalence and incidence of rare diseases: Bibliographic date ([https://www.orpha.net/orphacom/cahiers/docs/GB/List\\_of\\_rare\\_diseases\\_in\\_alphabetical\\_order.pdf](https://www.orpha.net/orphacom/cahiers/docs/GB/List_of_rare_diseases_in_alphabetical_order.pdf)).

<sup>25</sup> Програма за лекување на ретки болести во Република Северна Македонија за 2021 година, Министерство за здравство.

<sup>26</sup> Предлог национален план за ретки болести на Република Македонија, Национална алијанса за ретки болест на Р. Македонија, <http://challenges.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Nacionalen-plan-za-retki-bolesti-broshura.pdf>

life is different from one disease to another, so some cause death at birth, many are fatal and degenerative, while others can be lived normally if they are timely diagnosed and properly treated.

The first symptoms of rare diseases affect sufferers at different ages. For many, they appear from birth and in childhood, but there are also those that are specific to adulthood. The third possibility is that the first symptoms appear in childhood, but the disease worsens only later in life. Also, symptoms that are similar to the symptoms of some common and well-known diseases can hide the fact that it is still a rare disease. The combination of different symptoms can also lead to a wrong diagnosis.<sup>27</sup>

Misdiagnosis and non-diagnosis are major obstacles to improving the quality of life of thousands of patients with rare diseases.

On a global scale, people with rare diseases comprise a significant percentage in relation to the total population, morbidity, mortality and quality of life and health of citizens. The untimely and inadequate recognition and diagnosis of a rare disease often leads to permanent damage and even death of the affected, and this greatly affects the health and status of the family. The most significant current challenges of every community and every country in the approach and handling of rare diseases refer to inadequate recognition, inadequate and unequal classification and codification, insufficient availability of diagnosis, limited therapeutic possibilities for certain types of diseases, insufficient awareness of people and their families for the type of disease, unequal and insufficient quality of health care and high cost of treatment and care, serious consequences and isolation and marginalization of those suffering from rare diseases.

Despite the fact that there is more and more talk about rare diseases, especially from the side of individuals, families and the civil sector, through the media, there is still insufficiently developed awareness among the general and professional public regarding the significance of rare diseases and their impact on health and the quality of life of individuals suffering from a certain rare disease.

Rare diseases are characterized by:

- As much as 80% of rare diseases are of genetic origin, the rest are the result of infection, allergy, environmental factors or are degenerative and proliferative.
- In a total of 50% of people with rare diseases, the first symptoms appear immediately after birth or in early childhood
- A total of 30% of children with rare diseases live less than 5 years
- For more than 95% of rare diseases there is no registered therapy
- The most common consequence of rare diseases is permanent disability (mental or physical or both)

Most often, people suffering from a certain rare disease and their families face the same or similar difficulties that originate precisely from the rarity of the disease itself:

- Unavailable diagnosis or multi-year search for a diagnosis
- Lack of information regarding the disease itself, on where to turn for help, including a lack of qualified experts on the disease itself.
- Lack of scientific research, lack of drugs and appropriate medical devices
- High cost of existing drugs and treatment leads to impoverishment of the family and reduction of the availability of treatment
- Social consequences: stigmatization, isolation, discrimination, reduction of professional opportunities
- Lack of quality health care: exclusion from the health system, even when a true diagnosis is made
- Inequality: facing administrative obstacles in attempts to exercise the right to treatment or social protection rights<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> NORD, Rare diseases – Friedreich ataxia (google.com)

<sup>28</sup> The National Organization for Rare Diseases of Serbia – NORBS, What is rare diseases, <https://norbs.rs/sta-su-retke-boesti/>

Most common rare diseases appearing in Republic of North Macedonia are, morbus goshe, hereditary angioedema, lung arterial hypertension, multiple myeloma, phenylketonuria, myelodysplastic syndrome – MDS, GIST – recidivist solnatiniv, mesulate, acromegaly GEP – NET – tyrosinemia hereditary, galactosemia, fructose intolerance, a group of deposition diseases – mucopolysaccharidoses.

## **Problems of Students with Rare Diseases in Primary and Secondary Education**

Children with rare diseases remain, in many cases, invisible at the educational level, due to the small number of affected children, limiting the type of resources available to children and teaching personnel. This situation requires comprehensive interdisciplinary and intersectoral measures between health services and educational services to articulate a comprehensive approach focused on the clinical needs of children.<sup>29</sup> Children with rare diseases may spend a longer period in hospital or outpatient therapy. This period can be even longer if the child has a specific diagnosis where drug therapy and treatment options are still being investigated. The physical effects of certain rare diseases can make attending school in person difficult for both the child and their parents. For example, some of the effects of some neuromuscular disorders may include muscle weakness, developmental delays, and secondary conditions such as respiratory difficulties. This often means that children miss school days and, in some cases, are unable to meet significant learning and curriculum outcomes.<sup>30</sup>

Evidence in literature indicate that children living with rare diseases have reduced health-related quality of life and high levels of emotional difficulties (Cohen and Bieker 2010; Cole et al. 2013). The complexity of children's care needs means that living with a rare disease often has a major impact on their schooling and mastery of curriculum content. For children with rare diseases, school experiences such as absence from work, inaccessibility to educational facilities, missing physical education (sports) and academic activities have been reported.

Health-related stigma is another potentially negative consequence of a rare disease. Health-related stigma is a social process characterized by social exclusion, rejection, discrimination, devaluation, and emotional reaction as a result of one's health problem. It has a negative impact on individual and family well-being (Sentenac et al. 2011)<sup>31</sup>.

For now there isn't available a specialized center for rare diseases in Macedonia, an on health institutional level most of rare disease patients are documented and guided to the University child clinic, because rare diseases mostly occur and are discovered at early ages, just after birth or until 5 years or 15 years of age.<sup>32</sup>

The challenges faced by students with rare diseases in the Republic of North Macedonia refers to the lack of a systematic approach for adequate diagnosis and treatment of children with rare diseases, lack of information about the disease itself and about getting the necessary help, lack of scientific knowledge and information, social consequences that occur in relation to school,

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<sup>29</sup> Berta Paz –Luirido, Francisca Negre, Begona de la Inclesia & Sebastia Verger, Influence of schooling on the health-related quality of life of children with rare diseases | Health and Quality of Life Outcomes | Full Text (biomedcentral.com), Article number 109/2020, published 18 April 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Share4 Rare, How online education can help children with rare diseases | Share4Rare

<sup>31</sup> E.E. Adama, D. Arabiat, M.J. Foster, E. Afrira-Yamoah, K. Runions, R. Vithiatharan & a. Lin Full article: The psychosocial impact of rare diseases among children and adolescents attending mainstream schools in Western Australia (tandfonline.com), Accepted 07 Feb 2021, Published online: 22 Feb 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Предлог национален план за ретки болести на Република Македонија, Национална алијанса за ретки болест на Р. Македонија, <http://challenges.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Nacionalen-plan-za-retki-bolesti-broshura.pdf>

free time with the peer group, problems that are connected to their emotional and social life. A large proportion of children with rare diseases face an uncertain course of the disease; for a large number of rare diseases, there is no adequate therapy, unavailability of specific innovative disease therapies, lack of parents' ability to cover the costs of medical treatment of children with rare diseases abroad or providing adequate available medical therapy, the need for a special regime of nutrition and care; lack of adequate follow-up monitoring for individuals with a specific disease from the specific group of rare diseases, lack of national legislation regarding rare diseases in terms of their definition, classification and provision of appropriate health, social and educational services according to the individual needs of children. Most of the families of children with rare diseases face social problems related to lack of financial resources, unemployment and poverty.

Most often, students with rare diseases from primary and secondary education, in addition to health problems, depending on the type of disease, symptomatology and the changing clinical picture, most often have problems related to regularity in attending classes, transportation to school, provision of specialized services in the community, the need for educational support for mastering of the curriculum of subject programs, organizing their free time, the possibility of visiting extracurricular activities and informal education, the need for psycho-social support for students and their parents, reduced acceptance by the group of peers, occurrence of stigmatization, isolation and discrimination in certain communities.

Rare diseases not only influence the individual diagnosed with one, but also influence their families, custodians and society as whole.

## **Methodology**

The main goal of the research is to gain knowledge about social problems parents and their children face while the children are attending primary and secondary education.

Specific objectives of the research:

- Gaining knowledge about students with rare diseases for social problems they face during their schooling.
- Gaining information about the parents of students with rare diseases for social problems they face during their schooling.

The empirical research was conducted on the basis of application of quantitative methodology, for that purpose the survey technique was used for which two instruments were prepared: a structured questionnaire for students with rare diseases and a structured questionnaire for the student's parent.

A sample of research are 24 students with rare diseases who attend primary and secondary education and their 35 parents of the students with rare diseases.

## **Results**

From a total of 24 students with rare diseases from primary and secondary education who were included in the survey, the following results were obtained:

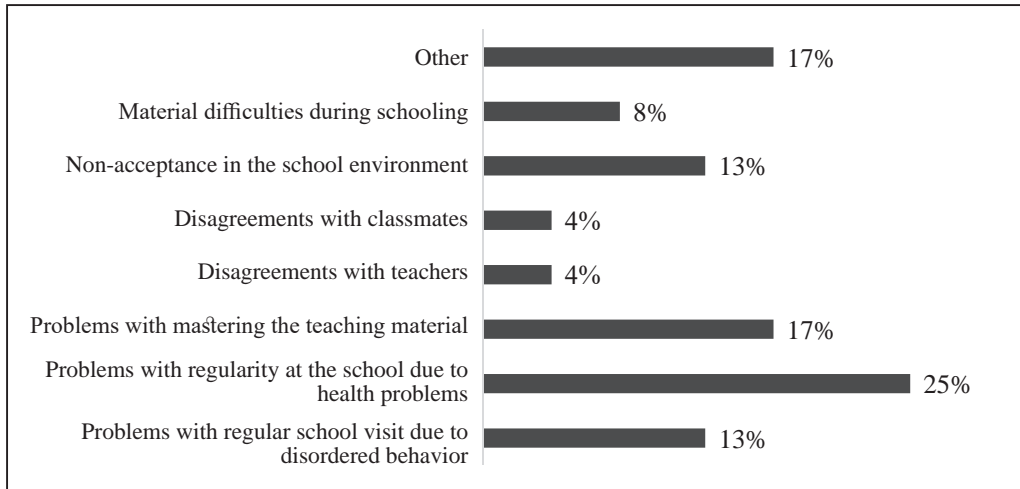
- 41.6% partially feel safe in school
- 61, 9% have got attendance problems
- 50% lack of financial means for living
- 33, 3 feel discriminated, of which 44.4% feel upset about their health condition.
- A total of 45.8% of students socialize with their peers outside of school activities, and 25% of students partially socialize.

The survey covered a total of 35 parents of children with rare diseases from primary and secondary education.



**Chart 1**

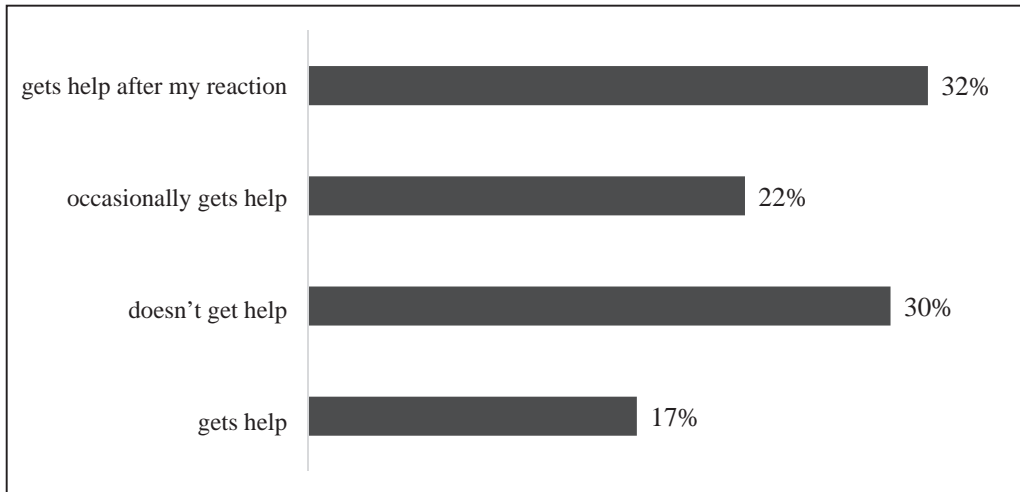
What problems are most often pointed out by parents of students with rare diseases in primary and secondary education?



To the question asked on chart number 1, a total of 25 % of the parents stated that they have problems with regular school visit due to disordered behavior, 17% have problems with mastering the teaching material and 13% with problems with regularity at the school due to health problems.

**Chart 2**

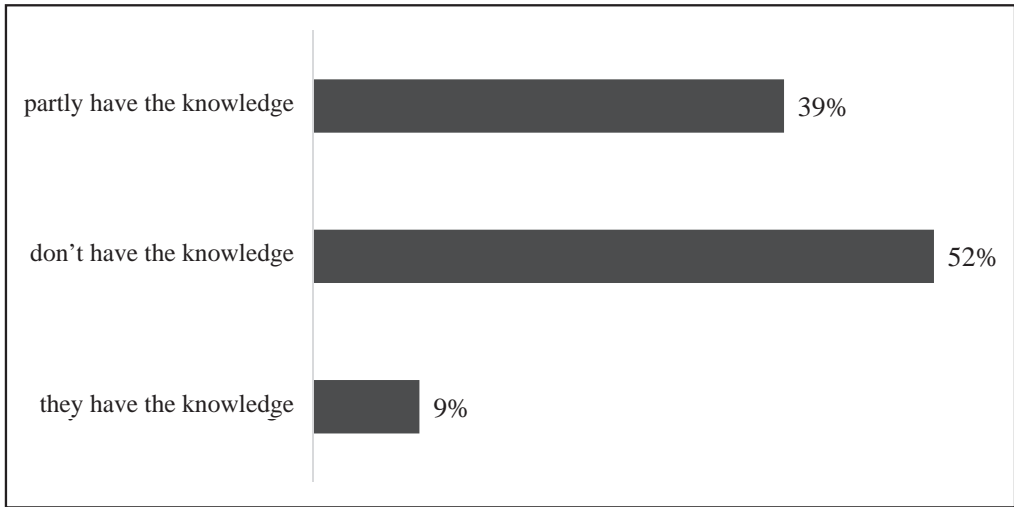
The support that students with rare diseases receive from the teaching staff in primary and secondary schools



A total of 32% of the surveyed parents declared that they receive help for certain problems of their children after their reaction, while a total of 30 % do not receive the necessary help.

**Chart 3**

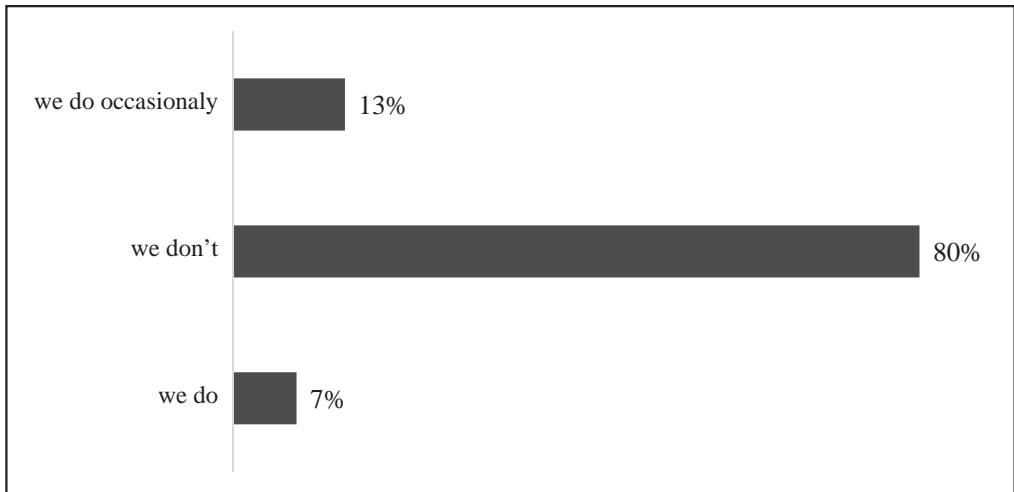
The knowledge that teaching and professional staff have about students with rare diseases



This question was answered by 52% of the respondent parents who believe that they do not have basic knowledge about children with rare diseases, and 39% of them believe that they have little knowledge about children with rare diseases.

**Chart 4**

The psycho-social support that students receive from the professional team in primary and secondary schools



A total of 80% of respondents answered they don't receive psycho-social support from the professional teams in primary and secondary schools, while 13% receive occasional psycho-social support, and 7% of parents receive psycho-social support from the professional teams.

## Conclusion

Rare diseases are diseases affecting a small number of people compared to the general population and special problems occur due to their low rate of frequency. Rare diseases are complex lifelong conditions that often require a multidisciplinary approach.

Although most inherited diseases are rare diseases, not all rare diseases have a genetic basis. There are very rare infectious diseases, as well as autoimmune diseases and rare types of cancer. A large number of children with rare diseases in our country, face health, social and educational problems. Due to the fact that for a large number of people with rare diseases, a problem arises regarding their diagnosis, thereby making it difficult to include these people in appropriate therapy.

Rare diseases are complex lifelong conditions that usually require a multidisciplinary approach. World health analyzes that also apply in our country show that 75 percent of rare diseases attack children. The first symptoms appear after birth or in early childhood. For more than 95 percent of rare diseases, there is no registered therapy or treatment protocol. The most common consequence of rare diseases is permanent disability (mental or physical, or both). Despite their mutual diversity, people with rare diseases and their families face the same or similar difficulties that originate precisely from the rarity of the disease itself. Taking into account the variable symptomatology itself, the clinical picture that constantly varies in certain rare diseases, children, i.e. students from primary and secondary schools, face a series of problems related to: diagnosis of the disease and information about the disease itself, frequent absences from the school due to the changing state of health, lack of therapy, reduced educational support for students in primary and secondary education, psycho-social support for students and their parents, poor material condition of the students' families, stigmatization, isolation and discrimination within school environments and in the community.

In terms of overcoming the social problems faced by students with rare diseases and their parents, obtaining adequate social support in the school environment and outside of it, in the community, it is necessary to include the social workers as a professional profile in primary and secondary education.

From the results obtained from the survey of the students and their parents, we received certain insights that should be directed in the area of the need for multi-sectoral action in providing health, social and educational services that will meet the individual needs of students in primary and secondary schools, greater psycho-social support by the professional teams in schools to the students and their parents, providing greater professional support to the professional teams in solving the current problems of the students, the need to increase the awareness of the teaching and professional staff in primary and secondary schools about children with rare diseases, increasing public awareness among students and parents for acceptance and inclusion of students with rare diseases in all social streams and reducing discrimination and stigmatization towards these people.

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## **INFLUENCING FACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT AND GRADING OF STUDENTS WITH SEN AND MAINSTREAM POPULATION**

**Abstract:** The inclusion of children with special educational needs in the regular school system has been the focus of educational practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students with special educational needs should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. This research aims to present the most influencing factors in the process of assessment and grading of students with SEN and mainstream population.

A total of 480 teachers took part in the research. The Teacher Questionnaire is adapted from the questionnaire that appears in the work of Mc Millan (2001), Duncan and Noonan (2007), and Gursky (2008). In order to determine the relationship between the data obtained from different groups of respondents, we approached the computer processing of data with a standard statistical program SPSS for Windows applying X<sup>2</sup> test, Fisher Exact test R x C contingency tables, as well as one-way analysis of variance – ANOVA.

This research shows that there is a difference in the approach used by teachers among students with special educational needs and students from the mainstream population. The invested effort of the particular student is the factor with the greatest influence in the formation of the grade as opposed to the comparison of grades from other professors which is the least represented.

The results we obtained highlight certain points of interest for future and further research regarding assessment and grading by teachers with a specific focus on students with special educational needs.

**Keywords:** Special educational needs, Students, Assessment, Grading

## **Introduction**

Inclusive education describes the process through which the schools are trying to identify all the students as individuals within the reconstruction of the curricular organization and regulation and dislocation of the researches in order to achieve equal possibilities. This can be achieved throughout the improvement of the teacher's efficiency, development of the resources and teaching materials, development of the sense for the right to be different and etc. Within inclusion into educational system, the students with special needs benefit easier development, their potential is actualized and they are enabled to include into society and through this process the quality of their life is highly improved.

Therefore, it is suggested, students with special needs should be educated, if it is possible, with their school mates in regular primary schools. (Jacova, 2004)

This point of view is continued by Rapaic et al. (2008) claiming that inclusive education considers different types of education with appropriate conditions, where the students feel that they are secure, accepted, worth and that they can attract attention. This way inclusive education is trying to make one adequate educational system that would be able to help the differences that exist between the children, by providing basic conditions that are necessary for realization of educational potential of the students with disabilities. Inclusion means a new approach to differences.

This research is focused on estimating and grading rules used by the teachers, factors that have influence during the grading process.

## **Grading and Monitoring the Students with SEN**

According Gursky, L.F. (2008), the best way to provide favorable opportunity during a studying process with numerous students with special needs is to provide appropriate, safe and adequate practice for monitoring/assessment and grading in a classroom.

Including important, careful and individual activities during assessment of the knowledge has a positive influence in studying process of a student. Different methods and assessment of the practices encourage active learning of an individual. There is a real need, teachers to use measuring techniques and assessment of the knowledge which would lead to easier mastering and acquisition of knowledge and through this process they will get real grades (Gursky, 2008).

In a wider sense, grading refers to all the components and phases in the process of monitoring and valuing. Planning the grades, following the studying process, recording the data, monitoring, informing about student's development, grading the efficiency and quality of education are the main activities that make the grading process. This is also the basic and the most important perspective from which we should observe and realize the grading process. The term grading is also used in a narrow sense when it refers only to execution and definition of the descriptive and global grading. In this phase, the teacher analyses all the available data, organizes it into numerous feedback and through this we get a descriptive grade or it is integrated into general assessment or even more it is a conclusion that communicates with a student as a global grade. Making conclusions about students' achievements is an important part of evaluation process and the whole grading process is not just limited on defining and making conclusions about the success and the whole formative strategy of evaluation cannot be simplified. When it is not completely clear from the context, it should always be emphasized if it refers to wider and full meaning or it refers to narrower and more specific meaning (Havelka, Hebib, Baucal, 2003).

The students' progress in education should constantly and carefully be monitored and the teachers should intervene if it is necessary. A teacher can overlook the possibility to assist to the student if the knowledge is not monitored more often, carefully and constantly (Campell, Collins, 2007). For this reason we can agree that multiplied methods and different types of assessment instruments give their contribution to the students with special needs (Rieck, Dugge and Wadsworth, 2005).

## Research Methodology

### The Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to show the factors that have influence in the process of assessment and grading for the students with special needs and for the students from the regular classes.

The instrument that is used is a Questionnaire for the teachers that consisted of 3 parts. This way the teachers were enabled to describe their assessment practices and grading practices according to POP. This Questionnaire is adopted according to the questionnaire that appeared in Mc Millan, 2001, Duncan and Noonan's work, 2007, as well as a questionnaire than was used by Lisa Francine Garski in her thesis named "Assessment and grading practices for the students in inclusive classrooms by the teachers from secondary schools" (Gursky, L.F. 2008, Secondary Teachers Assessment and Grading Practices in Inclusive classrooms. Saskaton: University of Saskatchewan).

### A Sample and a Population

There were 480 teachers that took part in this research and they were divided into 3 groups: teachers from the regular classes, teachers that worked with students in inclusive classrooms and the teachers that worked with special needs students.

### Statistically Processed Data

In order to determine the relationship between the received data from different groups of examinees, we have used computer processed data with a standard statistical program SPSS for Windows with X2 test, Fisher Exact test R x C contingency charts as well as an one way variance analysis – ANOVA. The difference in importance level of  $p \leq 0,5$  is considered as statistically important difference.

### Analyze of Research Results

Regarding the question in which level the teachers feel prepared to face the challenges to teach the students with POP it is interesting if we study the results for all of 3 groups of teachers, altogether. According to the results, 14% of the teachers do not feel prepared at all and 20% feel that they are not prepared enough (Chart 1).

#### Chart 1

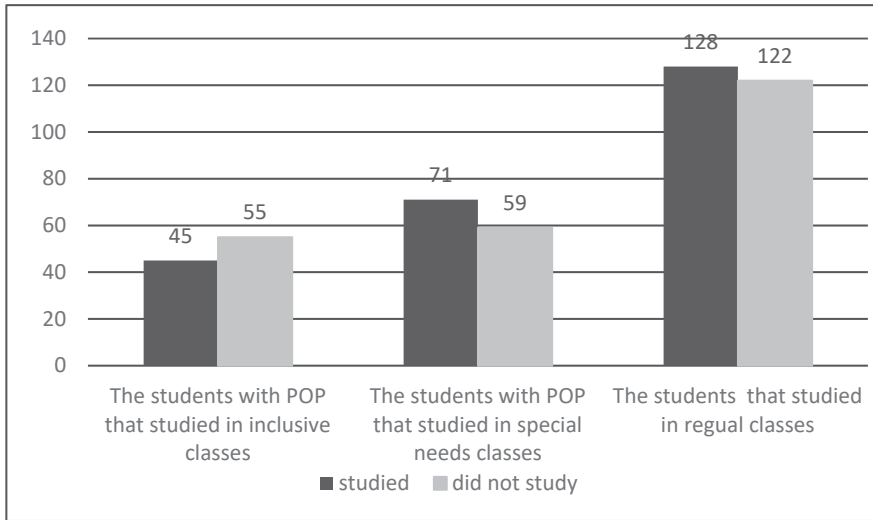
The level of readiness for 3 groups of teachers

Level of readiness	Frequency	Percentage
I am not ready at all	67	14,0
I am ready at certain level	135	28,1
I am satisfied with my readiness	89	18,5
Completely ready	95	19,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>100,0</b>

When we talk about the additional education and if we study the results altogether, half of the teachers took part in several additional courses for students' monitoring and grading (picture 1).

**Picture 1**

Additional education of 3 teachers' groups



**Factors that Influence Grading Process – Real Practice/Wanted Practice**

It was our interest to research if there is a difference in real practices, i.e. the things that teachers use regularly and the things that teachers find important and necessary in the process of valuing and grading in special needs classes. We got the following data. In Real practice the factor that has the most influence is the student’s effort – the quantity of effort that he/she uses (M=3.52), while it influences the grade at the smallest level – comparison with the grades of other subjects (M=2.47).

In Wanted practice the factor that has the biggest influence is the invested effort, student’s improvement, behavior and other unmeasured indicators (M=4.05), while the comparison with the grades of other subjects is the least influenced factor.

Our research showed that there is a significant difference in factors that are used in grading process by the teachers.

The F test (F=39.581, p <0.01) that we got by ASNOVA shows that there is a difference between the three groups of the teachers (Chart 2).

**Chart 2**

The difference in factors that teachers take into consideration during grading process

	Sum of squares	df	Middle square	F	Sig.
Between the groups	5378.835	2	2689.417	39.581	.000
In groups	32410.896	477	67.947		
<b>Total</b>	<b>37789.731</b>	<b>479</b>			

From Chart 3 we can see that those teachers that work with students with SEN in inclusive classes emphasize that better success comparing with the beginning of the school year has the biggest influence on grades and comparing with other subjects has the least influence on student’s grades.

The teachers that teach the students with SEN in special needs classes value the student's effort the most, the level of effort that a student uses to learn the material, but the least valued detail is a comparison with the results from previous years.

The teachers that teach in regular class value the students' activity, concentration and the level they take part in activities the most, while the factor that is the least important is a comparison with grades of other subjects.

It is confirmed that from all the factors that take part in defining a grade the highest arithmetic mean has the invested effort, while the comparison with other subjects' grades has the lowest influence.

**Chart 3**

The factors that influence defining the grades at 3 groups of teachers

A. Factors that have influence in grading process			Inclusive classroom	Special needs classes	Students from regular classes
1.	Performances compared with a scale of percentage accuracy	M	3.03	2.50	3.18
		SD	0.88	0.84	0.87
2.	Completing of specific learning objectives	M	3.16	2.95	3.34
		SD	0.76	0.75	0.81
3	Academic performances as opposed to other factors	M	3.21	2.43	3.17
		SD	.93	.91	.89
4.	Student's ability level	M	3.46	3.20	3.57
		SD	.92	1.04	0.95
5.	Student's efforts – the capacity of invested efforts	M	3.46	3.53	3.55
		SD	.92	1.18	.98
6.	The quality of completed homework	M	3.29	2.56	3.52
		SD	.89	1.10	.91
7.	Attendance and completed homework	M	3.30	2.76	3.65
		SD	.92	1.13	.99
8.	The level of student's concentration/ does he/she take part in discussion	M	3.40	3.05	3.72
		SD	.93	1.12	.98
9.	Improvement, behavior and other unmeasured indicator	M	3.10	3.40	3.69
		SD	.98	1.02	1.09
10.	Improved performance compared with the beginning of the school year	M	3.52	3.19	3.67
		SD	.93	1.12	.98
11.	Working habits and neatness	M	3.33	3.20	3.53
		SD	.98	1.02	1.09
12.	Student's performance compared with other students' in class	M	2.80	2.45	3.15
		SD	.92	1.04	0.95



13.	Student's performance compared with other students' from previous years	M	2.69	2.38	2.90
		SD	.98	.72	.69
14.	Comparison with other teachers' grades	M	2.53	2.07	2.63
		SD	1.10	1.13	1.13
15.	Disruptive performance	M	2.61	2.76	2.93
		SD	1.12	1.22	1.31

By data processing of the part of the teachers' questionnaire with opened type of questions, we have faced the unexpected results:

Teachers that teach in regular classes find that descriptive grading is not a good option, while the special needs teachers as well as the teachers that work in inclusive classrooms find that numeric grading should permanently be replaced with the descriptive grading for the students with SEN; Teachers that teach in regular classes and the students with SEN have an impression that students' interest for finishing their obligations and duties has reduced during the past years. The students act disinterestedly towards the education and they do not finish their tasks and obligations; The teachers have noticed that there is no enough communication between the teachers and the parents. There is an opinion that there is not enough interest in student's progression by the part of parents; The students from regular classes i.e. from inclusive classrooms do not show satisfactory level of empathy and understanding towards the special needs students. They show their displeasure in every opportunity when their classmate gets a grade according IEP which is not relevant or deserved according to their opinion or they have to invest more effort and to prove more knowledge for the same grade; The teachers that teach in inclusive classrooms find grading difficult when it has to be according to IEP. Huge number of teachers thinks that it is not fair towards their classmates or at least there should be a notice in the student's certificate that the student is graded according to IEP.

From the received data we can conclude and give suggestions for improving assessment and grading practices in Republic North Macedonia:

We should organize internal and external trainings and seminars in order to educate the teachers about assessment and grading methods; We should organize internal and external trainings and seminars in order to train the teachers not only to work with special needs students but to work with students that have studying difficulties, too; We should support the school staff in process of strengthening their capacity for planning, implementing and monitoring the inclusive process; Cooperation between primary schools and parents of the students with special needs in order to advice, educate and offer other kind of help and support; Taking an active role in seminars for preparing individual educational plans (IEP) for the special needs students; Providing an inclusive climate in schools by organizing different workshops and raising awareness for reciprocally acceptance between the students from regular classes and students with IEP; Promotion of teaching approach which will contribute to higher students' achievements; Providing additional support for the students with special needs.

## Conclusion

In this research we have shown the factors that have influence in the process of forming the grades with the special needs students as well as with the students from the regular classes by the teachers. During this process we have concluded that there are different factors that have influence depending on what kind of students the grading process is about. This difference is due to the teachers' commitment that grading and assessment should be adopted according to the student.

According to this analysis we have concluded that:

The teachers think that the most important factor during the grading period is the student's invested effort; The teachers think that the less important factor during the grading period is comparison with other subjects' grades;

At the same time, Villamero's results show that the teachers use different grading strategies with the special needs students. These strategies are based on factors that the teachers have recognized the necessity that we should find grading practices that are relevant and that respond to these students' needs.

If we find grading in the classroom for the key factor in improving the studying process for all the students equally there is a real necessity all the teachers to be educated properly about assessing and grading practices.

The results we obtained highlight certain points of interest for future and further research regarding assessment and grading by teachers with a specific focus on students with special educational needs.

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## ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUNICIPALITIES

**Abstract:** Environmental research is the basis for protecting the environment from the uncontrolled creation of landfills for industrial waste of various nature, especially from waste containing phosphogypsum and radio nuclides.

The integral environment is composed of the two subsystems, ecosphere and geosphere whose formation and transformation is not with human participation, but the technosphere as their subsystem is transformed by man. All three subsystems are closely related to the socio-economic environment. The technosphere is divided into two subsystems: production (industry, agriculture) and social (education, health, security, defense, judiciary, etc.).

In the development of the ecosystem, the relations between the structure and the function are especially important, not only where things are located but also what is happening there.

The circular flow with the circulation of chemical elements covers both living and non-living part of ecosystems and such cycles in ecology are known as biogeochemical cycles.

The development of specific education policies for sustainable development seems to lag behind the rate at which the education sector integrates the overall agenda for Sustainable Development Education in national education policies.

From the researches made for the impact of the uncontrolled creation of landfills, the need to establish a system in education should be seen where ecology should be studied in all segments of the school subjects that are taught.

The experience so far shows that educated citizens are likely to recognize and adopt new practices and technologies for environmental protection, which will meet the goals of sustainable development of municipalities that represent a clear vision for a sustainable future and a new era of business.

**Keywords:** Ecology, Education, Landfill, Sustainable development, Phosphogypsum

## Introduction

The term ecology has existed since 1866 when it was defined as the science of studying the relationships between plant and animal organisms in which they enter into direct or indirect interrelationships. With continuous research over the years, ecology is defined by different definitions, e.g. (Stanković: 1961) defines ecology as a biological discipline, (Kovacs, 1975) defines the subject of ecology as an independent scientific discipline. From these two definitions it can be concluded that: Ecology is a part of biological science that examines the laws of the very complex interactions of the abiotic and biotic components of the environment (Mulev: 2003).

There is a growing interest in this scientific discipline and its importance today due to the growing disorders of various nature in the environment.

From the numerous points of contact that this science has with several scientific fields, from the complexity in the study of problems arises its interdisciplinary character.

For the mentioned reasons, in the field of ecology, besides biologists, agronomists, forestry engineers, medics, chemists, technologists and experts from other fields are also included.

The link between ecology, education and sustainable development requires the use of risk assessment and life cycle assessment methods in order to assist in life cycle improvement decisions. The aim is also to imply that methods such as risk assessment and life cycle assessment, if used individually, can provide only a limited amount of information. Therefore, additional methods are needed for economic and social well-being in order to complement these methods, and that is the concept of sustainable development. The environment is in the service of human present and future needs that are defined by the rules of the laws of nature. Ignoring or deviating from those laws, the entire global system is in danger, and the results will be devastating for the entire planet, including human well-being and economic prosperity.

Education has an important function in every society. Because of the importance of education, every government wants to define its concept and content, for each individual to accept the value and norms of the system. Therefore, the state provides funding for education.

Through education, feelings of one's own culture, respect for principles and solidarity are also developed; the consciousness and point of view of the individual are shaped, when it comes to processes in society and the system of the government. All education systems are based on knowledge of the history of society. The institutionalization of education, despite the fact that based on the adoption of a set of rules and social values, is reflected in the knowledge and skills that the individual masters in the training process. A strong education system changes the structure of society, the family and the profession.

Experience suggests that educated citizens are likely to be more inclined to recognize and adopt new practices and technologies that will help them and their communities thrive. With education, those citizens will be positioned to build and maintain energy infrastructure that will sustain their countries for a long time.

Environmental education programs are also crucial to significant progress in many national and regional efforts to fight climate change and protect aquatic, air and terrestrial ecosystems. But that kind of education can reach its full potential only when a critical mass of the inhabitants of a country or region has the basic learning skills that come with primary and secondary education. With the advent of Planet Earth, neither man nor technology had the power to harm biodiversity. But with the increase of needs, the improvement of technology, the growth of the population and the activities of man, that connection is broken and the survival of nature and humanity is endangered on a daily basis. Unforeseen changes occur in the atmosphere, soils, water, between humans, plants and animals.

Sustainable development goals are a clear vision for a sustainable future and will create a new era for businesses. The leadership in turning these goals into drivers of sustainable business is the Global Compact. International organizations, formed by sovereign states, have laid the foundation for sustainable development in the Declaration of Environment and Development. The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has continued its environmental activities, such as the 1980 World Conservation Strategy. This new human development strategy is developed through an understanding of the conditional link between the three Economic and Social Benefits and Environmental Benefits that are priorities for the world. Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, sustainable water use, restore and promote the sustainable use and management of terrestrial ecosystems by stopping reverse land degradation contributes to stopping biodiversity loss and protecting planet Earth.

Our environment works on our present and future needs defined by the rules of the laws of nature. If we deviate from those laws, the whole global system will suffer, and with it the support of life, including human well-being and economic activity. In order to achieve balance in this whole global system, as well as to effectively achieve sustainable development in a municipality as an important part of that system, several strategies will have to be considered and a series of methods developed to achieve the desired results. The two strategies available to municipalities are education and politics. The plan for implementation of the sustainable development of the municipality, on the other hand, will have to use the available methods for development of the best option of action (Callow: 2009).

For many years, sustainable development has been the focus of governments, environmentalists, industry, economists and other entities of the social public. There is no natural or social science discipline that does not rely on sustainable development. All socio-economic life is based on this concept. Rapid technological development and the overall dynamics of the needs for modern living can threaten the survival of humanity and the planet in general if we continue with the unsustainable way of acting/developing human activities.

Experience and scientific research show that sustainable development is not at all simple and it seeks to change the view of the world and the future of humanity in general. There has been considerable debate about how to achieve this; improved environmental conditions without sacrificing current economic benefits.

Uncontrolled dumping and hazardous and toxic substances are risks caused by human activities that have a major impact on the global environment. In order to assist in these debates, environmental experts from all sectors develop methods for preserving the environment (e.g. risk assessment, life cycle assessment, environmental impact assessment, environmental policies, etc.), which is a huge step forward in uniting environmental perceptions in a range of possible actions.

These methods provide excellent mechanisms for understanding and managing activity-related risks.

Risk assessment/management is increasingly used to assess the potential impact of new hazardous substances on the environment.

Although these methods seem powerful, they do not balance the needs for improving the environment given the economy and social duty. Therefore, improving the environment has so far been a classic: ongoing economic considerations (such as the cost of capital to implement the improvement) or ongoing social issues.

What is needed is a concept and, ultimately, a process that will assist society in making decisions taking into account the balance of environmental needs, economic realities and social aspirations – the concept of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a concept that seeks to combine the importance of environmental protection with a healthy economy and social duty.

But sustainable development is different from the term sustainability despite their frequent use as synonyms. Because sustainability is a state, and sustainable development is a process from which we aim at the ideal state.

The Constitution of Macedonia, as the highest legal and political act, guarantees the right of every citizen to a healthy environment but also the obligations to preserve and promote it. The Constitution contains the basic principles of sustainable development, where, among other things, it is established that the citizens of Macedonia are responsible to future generations for the rich cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Constitution stipulates that the state should ensure economic well-being and social justice for all citizens.

In this sense, the Constitution speaks of social and economic rights, as well as the right to a healthy environment. It determines the other elements of sustainable development, namely the right to work, free choice of employment, the right to social security and social security, the right to education and the right to health care. Undoubtedly, the Constitution of Macedonia emphasizes the importance of the many elements of sustainable development. Thereby, in the Constitution some elements are determined in a direct way, while others are determined in an indirect way, but, in any case, the vision of the Constitution is clear, which is aimed at the numerous elements of sustainable development.

Macedonia, as a candidate country for full membership in the European Union, strives to meet the criteria for approximation with the elements of sustainable development which are contained in several laws. The Law on Environment, in the part that regulates the basic principles of environmental protection, establishes the principle of sustainable development, as one of the basic principles of the environment. The Law on Nature Protection, in the part that defines the basic goals of the Law, determines the principle of sustainable use of natural resources, in the interest of the current and future development. The use of natural resources should be done so as not to lead to significant damage to parts of nature and as little as possible disturbance of the natural balance (Sapuric: 2010).

Sustainability and sustainable development are based on several principles: Principle of sustainability, Principle of precaution, Principle of prevention, Principle “Polluter pays”, Principle of proximity.

The principle of sustainability is “To meet the needs of a healthy environment, as well as the social and economic needs of current generations, without compromising the rights of future generations to meet their own needs, when undertaking any activity or performing any activity, the rational and sustainable use of natural resources must be taken into account.”

The precautionary principle refers to the management of unknown risk, where impacts can affect larger areas or spread over a long period of time. The consequences of carelessness indicate a precautionary action that is anticipatory (predictive) or preventive.

The principle of prevention means taking action to protect the environment at an earlier stage, meaning avoiding the damage rather than repairing it when it occurs is better to prevent than to

cure. Prevention applied for example in industrial processes is better in terms of design and material selection decisions than retrospective risk management of poorly designed or problematic materials.

The “polluter pays” principle suggests that all waste producers should be legally and financially responsible for safe handling, environmentally safe disposal and creating a habit of producing as little waste as possible. This principle encompasses many approaches to charging for pollution and is a principle for the slow uptake of currently non-market costs that do not arise from the environment and society into organizational decision-making.

The Law on Environment of the Republic of Macedonia, in the principle “the polluter pays” emphasizes that the polluter is obliged to reimburse the costs for eliminating the danger of environmental pollution, to bear the costs of remediation and to pay fair compensation for the damage caused to the environment, as well as to bring the environment, as far as possible, in a state as before damage.

The principle of proximity is risk management and says that the treatment and disposal of waste should be as close as possible to the place of production, as far as it is technically and environmentally possible. This would mean avoiding the excessive costs and risks associated with transportation.

In addition to the principles, the models of sustainability and sustainable development also play an important role. The challenge for sustainable development is to identify the commercial decisions, local actions and global policies that embody the essential principles of survival. These decisions will undoubtedly vary substantially and culturally, but the foundations in common clear principles are fundamental. The saying, “Think globally, act locally!” Is often used because global action or local thinking is also important. There are countless models of sustainable development that are of great help in the implementation of local decisions within larger units (e.g. Circles of balls and cycle, Russian doll, model of three circles, Leaving an ecological trace).

What they all have in common is that the economy, society and ecology are the basic postulates for sustainable development where the conditions for sustainability coincide when the decisions are in the central zone where the ecological, social and economic characteristics are located (Brady: 2009).

Switching to implementing the principles, processes and methods of sustainable development will require commitment and education at all levels of the organization.

Unlike other methods that take into account only one problem of the needs of the environment or even scientific problems of the environment, the approach of sustainable development unites and balances the needs of the environment with the needs of economic and social duty of the municipality. This approach integrates all parts of the decision-making process and improves the overall process efficiency. The sustainable development approach helps a municipality gain control of its own destiny. Often in the field of environment, municipalities are reactive to government rules and never seem to have the ability to plan for the future effectively.

Sustainable development encourages both short-term and long-term work, enabling municipalities to influence the direction of this problem and ultimately get out of the reactive way of working.

Thinking about sustainable development is a natural evolution of society’s needs to balance a growing set of priorities.

This approach is a tendency that is inevitable for every modern municipality.

Accepting sustainable development does not require economic balance; on the contrary, the municipalities that will accept the axiom of sustainable development should actually improve their economic situation by balancing these problems.

The thinking process has the power to preserve existing and create new jobs, to influence the direction of technological development and finally to improve the competitive position of organizations.

Sustainable development is a new, scientific way of thinking that provides a useful framework for working in collaboration with various sectors (e.g. NGOs, industry, government institutions and academics). This transformation within a municipality helps to develop a new and more effective language between disciplines, helps to recognize gaps in knowledge and information, and supports innovative solutions to problems.

More importantly, sustainable development helps to identify economic, social and environmental problems related to municipal activities or plans and helps to identify and implement long-term solutions.

Finally, embracing and implementing sustainable development creates a moral uplift for citizens and the business community. With such a vision, the economy, citizens and the local community can have the same goal of economic, environmental and social stability and improvement.

Components of sustainable development are environmental protection, a healthy economy and social duty.

Environmental protection occurs as a result of the approaches, systems and methods used to identify, implement and maintain environmental improvement in relation to any activity. In the environmental component, the interest is focused on human health and the depletion of natural resources.

For example, the risks to the environment or human health associated with discharge of hazardous substances and/or consumption of materials.

Considering the fact that the uncontrolled creation of landfills with hazardous industrial waste (such as phosphogypsum and radio nuclides) which with their radiation, in addition to endangering the environment, have harmful radiation to humans and other living organisms, without control and preventive action can have catastrophic consequences.

The Earth's population is constantly exposed to various types of ionizing radiation. According to the origin, radiation sources are divided into natural and artificial. Exposure to artificial sources is the result of their application in: medical purposes (diagnostics and therapy), industry or radio nuclides present in the environment as a result of nuclear tests and the Chernobyl nuclear accident of the last century. Based on a number of studies, it has been proven that the largest contribution in the total population exposure originated in nature. In the group of natural sources are cosmic and terrestrial radiations. The dose received by man during one year of external cosmic radiation in the open is mainly a constant value for a given space (depending on altitude) and is much lower than the dose derived from terrestrial radioactivity (UNSCEAR: 2000). The research in Veles found higher values of the measured specific activities than the natural ones, proven by their comparison with the results published by previous studies made in the Republic of Macedonia. The mean values of the measured total alpha and beta specific activities in phosphogypsum are higher than the corresponding mean activities published for soil samples in the vicinity of Veles. There are a number of studies in the literature that have examined the content of radio nuclides in phosphogypsum and its application.

Further research on the effects of the landfill on the environment is recommended. Based on a number of scientific studies published in the literature, it is possible to apply phosphogypsum in construction and agriculture. As a result of the research, rapid reactions for waste processing for useful purposes are inevitable, which will be in favor of the economy but also in favor of environmental protection (Jancev: 2022).

Due to the more frequent appeal from nature, the environmental researches are more frequent, the results of which are inevitably necessary for the institutions, the municipalities, the state as well as on the planet Earth.

In the field of education, the government and the municipality first determine the target group of the educational program. Possible focal areas are voters/citizens, consumers, employees, teachers, students, the mass media, interest leaders and any practitioner of sustainable development in

general (i.e. in the private sector, management, designers, engineers, finance, manufacturing, procurement, human resources etc.). Once the target group has been identified, the program content will need to be adapted for a specific audience. The educational message should be followed by action that is already recognizable to the audience (for example, to put sustainable development as a natural extension of the current interest in recycling). Further consideration will be given to teacher training programs, the use of practical examples and the introduction of sustainable development education into the curriculum for all levels, through thematic conferences, etc. Which ever way is chosen for the educational program, the importance of this dimension in achieving sustainable development should be recognized.

Successful implementation of sustainable development requires a detailed strategy in education in both the public and private sectors. Efforts should be made to increase the understanding of the actions to be taken and the examples of sustainable development through many mechanisms: to teach teachers; to influence thought leaders and to establish forums in order to educate citizens through the mass media to obtain information.

This information and insights will provide opportunities for interaction with all stakeholders (e.g. government, municipalities, NGOs) to ensure that future policies and guidelines are based on a scholarly understanding of the overall environmental, economic and social impacts in relation to the proposed policy. This function of education then becomes an important external link for the municipality.

Its role in the future will be not only internal communication and education but also developing processes for proactive external communication.

In order to be able to implement the sustainable development program, it is important to identify the need to implement it. To identify the needs for the development of programs and strategies, environmental research, prevention, planning of priorities, long-term plans and action to achieve long-term goals for sustainable development of the municipality are inevitable. As a municipality progresses in implementing sustainable development, the lack of data will become more apparent.

Several important principles need to be considered in developing data collection efforts and making them available:

1. Researches with transparency of data collection methods (by preserving the confidentiality of data in accordance with legal regulations).
2. Development of minimum standards for research data quality.
3. Development of goals and data quality indicators.
4. General guidelines for data size and database management systems.

The conceptual framework for quality of life cycle assessment data provides additional principles and guidelines. The existence and access to data for researchers can be one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development. Multiple sector groups should make efforts to establish a process and guidelines on how to most effectively achieve data quality in the research cycle.

Aspects of the social welfare component of sustainable development require significant development. Social criteria are considered essential for decision makers.

However, it is necessary to develop and integrate the measurement parameters for social welfare that can be used in relation to the parameters for environmental protection and a healthy economy.

In the end, however, a decision will be made, in any situation, whether it is a simple or complex case. Often the decision is made based on the criteria of the final decision maker (Municipal Council). Therefore, the development of acceptable assessment techniques is very important to ensure better decisions and that they can be accepted by all stakeholders.

The conceptual framework for quality of life cycle assessment data provides additional principles and guidelines. The existence and access to data for many researchers can be one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development. Multiple sector groups need to make efforts to establish a process and guidelines on how to achieve data quality in the most efficient way.



The purpose of environmental research is to propose frameworks in which the methods and the Sustainable Development Plan can be applied, which provides a system for efficient implementation of procedures in order to continuously improve the quality of the environment, healthy economy and social welfare of individuals and of society, which leads to long-term sustainable success of municipalities and society.

Municipalities that have integrated the policy of sustainable development in all aspects of their actions will become superior compared to other municipalities of the same type and that are their contemporaries.

There are many methods needed to implement a sustainable development strategy.

Methods in environmental research such as risk assessment and life cycle assessment will provide useful information about local environmental risks as well as possible global impacts. But no single method gives all the answers. Life cycle assessment provides the researcher with information on categories of global impacts, such as climate change and the consumption of natural resources.

Risk assessment gives the risks associated with the production and use of hazardous substances. Risk assessments are often performed locally or regionally, while life cycle assessments are performed at a more global level.

Although there is no formula for success, several recommendations come to the surface, it should be started immediately, to appoint a team with a responsible person, to pay attention to the sources, commitment from all citizens, continuous improvement and regular and open communication.

The end result will be that the municipality will be prosperous which will reduce its financial obligations to the environment and ensure long-term healthy economy and social responsibility. For governments, this means more efficient use of funds; for individuals, this means a consistent quality of life; and for companies, this means a competitive advantage and an improved image of the organization and its products.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the need for environmental research as key values in education for sustainable development of municipalities that are part of social life, to propose and prepare applicable frameworks in which the methods and the Sustainable Development Plan can be applied, which will provide a system for efficient implementation of procedures to achieve the goal of continuing education, to improve the quality of the environment, healthy economy, welfare of citizens and the community, which will contribute to the long-term sustainable success of municipalities and the society.

By setting up and operating the triangle Environmental Research – Education – Developed Municipality, the benefits will result in safe environment – prosperity – welfare of the population.

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## **EDUCATIONAL AND ADVISORY WORK IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY: TEACHER PERSPECTIVE**

**Abstract:** When it comes to the advisory educational work of pedagogues, we must point out the lack of literature and publications that would indicate the greater importance of this topic. On the other hand, the larger works that exist relate to the institutional organization of counseling work in the school. This research contributes to a prominent topic, because it examines the attitudes of teachers about advisory work in the school community. The question arises of the necessity of permanent organization of the advisory work of pedagogues, which contributes to the adequate development and strengthening of social competencies of children and youth. The results have shown that teachers who have a higher level of humanistic pedagogy focus on the permanent development of social competencies through advisory work as a focus of methodological educational activities. The paper offers new knowledge of the development of social competencies of children and youth in order to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships that are important for recognizing the level of culture, while giving several topics for new research.

**Keywords:** Advisory work, Educational activities, Social competencies, Self-actualization, Encouragement

### **Introduction**

Upbringing and education are becoming an imperative for the quality of life. Adopting culture, forming attitudes and opinions, reasoning and gaining a positive view of the world are just some pedagogical values of education and upbringing. Education and upbringing are interrelated and their importance must not be neglected. Recognizing the fact that the development of students takes place and is monitored within the school framework, it is important to consider the conditions of such a life. Dysfunctionality in the student-student or student-class relationship, the presence of peer conflict relationships or disagreements can lead to various changes in the functioning of the personality.

As part of the professional team, the pedagogue is expected to be a person of trust, a person who will provide a haven, listen to problems and find solutions. By counseling, the pedagogue identifies with the student's personality, gradually penetrating the deeper side of his personality. His work should be focused on encouraging critical thinking, expanding the domain of thinking, and enabling individuals to learn from their mistakes. The process of counseling, as the most effective preventive measure, develops other personality qualities. Through conversation, directed guidance, listening, and developing communication skills, a person learns tolerance, empathy, understanding, and humane action. These and many other values should strengthen a person and develop his moral side.

The intention of this paper stems from the desire to pay more attention to advisory work and consider its pedagogical values and benefits for personal development. The method of theoretical analysis with the technique of content analysis was used to understand the theoretical setting of this topic. We believe that this topic will contribute to the development of the modern scientific

discipline of pedagogy and shed light on newer, more efficient pedagogical values and measures in modern practice.

## **Theoretical Approach to the Research**

What is counseling an educational work? How do teachers see the competencies of pedagogues in relation to the need for permanent organization of advisory educational work? A number of questions arise from the concretization of advisory work that contributes to the adequate development and strengthening of social competencies of children and youth.

Counseling is an interpersonal relationship — it is determined by the professionalism of counselors and the activity of counselors whose problems are mostly developmental in nature, and the goal is to achieve satisfaction in life. Counseling is an activity — the application of psychological knowledge and techniques in working with people who function relatively normally, but experience problems of development and adaptation. Counseling is a process that leads to changes in behavior, beliefs and liberation from emotional distress (Jukić, 2004; Jurić, 2004).

Advisory work and counseling are defined as theoretically and methodologically based, systematic, and planned activities that require training and responsibility. It also relies on the results and implications of scientific empirical research in this area (Hatchler, 2012). Counseling work includes school and personal counseling as a recognizable area of the work of pedagogues and psychologists. The purpose of this activity is reflected in the formation of their professional identity, but also in the quality of personality development of those who are users of this type of treatment (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Advisory work implies the participation of pedagogues in the indirect shaping of school educational and social space, on narrower and broader issues of teaching, school culture, software and organization (Bognar, 2001). According to the pedagogical approach, counseling is defined as a planned activity based on scientific knowledge, for the more complete success of which such support is needed. The act of counseling is only one logical step behind a set of meaningful educational activities of various subjects, participants, and directions that open a series of new activities. Authors Hetchler (2012) and Tomić (2006) state that counseling is a specific response and reaction to the state of human indecision. In the psychological approach, counseling is defined as a part of applied psychology and a special method of professional help to an individual, group, or organization. Counseling emphasizes learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and support for an individual or group in crises (Petz, 2005). The goals of counseling can also be considered in two directions:

1) goals aimed at alleviating weaknesses and difficulties (curative-intervention counseling) and 2) goals focus on growth and development (preventive-development counseling) (Jurić, 2004; Hečler, 2012).

The most common problems that the subjects of the counseling process face are: the need to communicate with others, dissatisfaction with themselves, dissatisfaction with the environment or relationship with it, specific difficulties and problems, and the need to confirm the correctness of their decisions and actions.

Specifics of advisory work:

1. Advisory work is a specific pedagogical activity that requires a special pedagogical approach.
2. Advisory work is done by an expert (pedagogue, psychologist, social worker) who is qualified for this activity.
3. Advisory work implies knowledge of the goals of education, the subjects being taught, and the techniques and procedures of educational activities.
4. Educational action, corrective and therapeutic work are an integral part of personality education (Kristančić, 1982; Tomić, 2006; Hetchler, 2012)

5. Advisory work can already be understood, especially when we talk about advising an individual to choose a certain school, profession, mastering the technique of learning, and the like.
6. In the process of counseling work, the personality of educators is maximally engaged and motivated to contribute to their development and the development of others.
7. Advisory work contributes to enabling young people to freely choose, make decisions, and take responsibility for the implementation of decisions and the consequences that arise from them (Kristančić, 1982; Bognar, 2006; Zuković, 2017).

The principles of pedagogical activity represent the basic guidelines that the pedagogue respects to realize educational activity according to the established goals, the requirements of the theory of education, and the needs, possibilities, and interests of the pupils. They are not universal models that always bring the desired results, but they are principles that an expert creatively applies to achieve better results in his daily work. One of the key ethical principles of counseling is to respect and accept the personality of the counselor. The counselor must accept the person with his or her behavior, specifics, characteristics, and experiences (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Another ethical principle is truth-orientation, which implies that the counselor must take a truth-based position. This process includes the necessity for the counselor to face truths that may not be favorable for him or that he may not have noticed until then (Bognar, 2001; Relja, 2010). The third ethical principle is the commandment of freedom in the sense that a person decides independently which way he will direct his actions or solve a problem (Bognar, 2001; Mandić, 1986).

The school, as one of the educational factors, operates with its institutional activities with several goals: spreading and maturing the mental qualities of the individual, mastering moral and ethical values, socializing the individual into a community, and mastering their mental abilities (motivation and ambition). Through the educational role of the school, society transmits values from one generation to another and thus ensures the spiritual and cultural survival of a particular community and society (Relja, 2010; Narančić, 2017). Transferred to the school area, counseling can, in addition to solving problems, also influence the development of personality. Advice, exchange of ideas, opinions, attitudes, and encounters of different emotions between counselors and counselees are some desirable traits that need to be encouraged.

Educating humanity means cultivating generosity, love for others, and developing social and emotional intelligence. How the quality of education is achieved are praise for the good work of students, encouragement to help others, organization of collecting help from people close to the environment, showing warmth and love for students by teachers, talking about their own and other people's feelings, recognizing other people's feelings and helping to solve problems (Relja, 2010).

Counseling should provide an opportunity to get to know and develop the moral side of your personality. In this regard, counseling should achieve freedom of moral choice, responsible behavior of the individual, formation of the moral character of the individual, development of moral feelings and moral will, and adoption of appropriate ethical knowledge, values, and norms (Jovanović & Minić, 2015).

The basis for the formation of moral components is moral education. This can be achieved if we talk about morality as a system consisting of a subsystem that consists of moral consciousness and conscience, moral desire and autonomy, morals and principles. The list of components of moral education is being extended, so some authors (Corbi, 2006; Jevtić, 2012; Jukić, 2013) emphasize the rational, emotional, and voluntary components.

Moral reasoning, thinking, beliefs, and convictions are based on moral principles. The purpose of this rational component is reflected in the ability of a person to act according to the requirements that arise as a product of the social community and which are by their value system (Jevtić, 2012). The voluntary component is the synthesis of previously adopted values. The way a person behaves is a picture of those emotions that he has previously adopted into his value system

(Jukić, 2013). The emotional component is based on the moral feelings and duties that arise from it. Corby (2006) believes that the essence of this component is in freeing the individual from the guilt that arises as a product of moral rules.

It is important for advisory work how much the pedagogue can understand the needs and problems of his students, and how much he shows honesty in respecting their personalities in the process of mutual communication (Relja, 2010).

What are the important competencies of a pedagogue as a person who contributes to the quality of personality development?

1. Understanding one's own emotions — a pedagogue who knows his emotions, his good and bad sides, is able to critically judge and evaluate his actions and correct possible mistakes. This trait allows him to work on developing his personality and skills.
2. Ability to self-motivate — to find the strength for further work and to show love for the vocation and the student means to feel satisfaction in work and pride for teaching and giving yourself to students.
3. Empathy or understanding the emotions of others — the basis of educational work is the recognition of students' emotions and the need to act using appropriate educational methods.
4. The possibility of establishing emotional connections with others — openness in communication, warmth, cordiality and helping skills enable and facilitate the socialization of students. (Jurić, 2004; Relja, 2010).

The prediction for moral education in school is the relationship between students and teachers on the one hand and students and pedagogues on the other. The pedagogical relationship is determined by specifics such as the intention to help, representing the interests of students, educators' responsibility for the quality of the pedagogical relationship (quality dialogue), the relationship of trust, justice, and patience (Lambie, & Williamson, 2004), teacher personality and moral character (Jurić, 2004). Counseling is an integral part of the professional practice of all professionals who are focused on supporting others in their personal growth and development. In this context, the essence of counseling work is reflected in helping individuals or groups to recognize their strengths, to interpret their actions and lifestyle, and to make the right decisions accordingly.

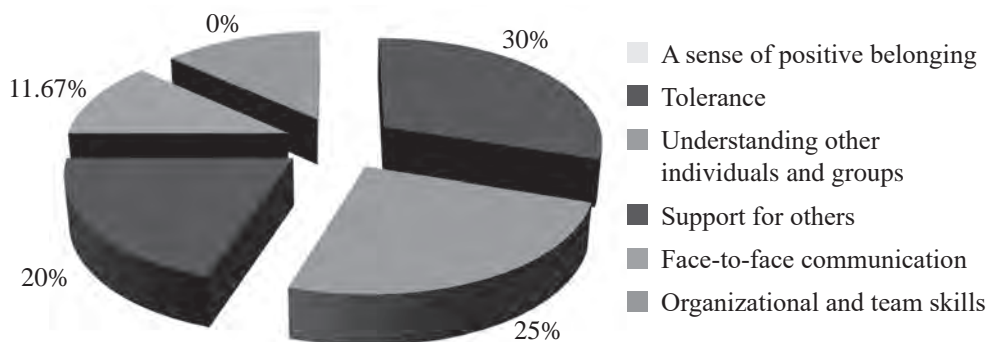
Whether a child will be socially competent depends on his ability to regulate emotions, knowledge, understanding of the environment, social skills, and ability to behave accordingly. A socially competent child can take advantage of incentives from the environment and achieve good developmental results that enable him to participate in his community.

Based on the importance of organizing the advisory work of pedagogues in strengthening the social competencies of children and youth, the subject of this research is to examine the attitudes and opinions of teachers towards the implementation of advisory work of pedagogues in strengthening the social competencies of children and youth through cooperation between pedagogues and teachers. The general assumption refers to the necessity of permanent organization of the advisory work of pedagogues, which contributes to the adequate development and strengthening of social competencies of children and youth. For the successful realization of advisory work, it is necessary to engage all participants in the educational process. The permeation of these forms of counseling is certainly of great importance to the pedagogue himself, who in the process should establish good relations with teachers, children, and parents. Establishing positive relations in these relations will affect the outcomes of counseling work, but also the self-confidence and motivation of pedagogues in the further realization of counseling work, since he has a great responsibility because counseling work is certainly one of the complex pedagogical activities. On the other hand, emphasizing only one of the mentioned forms of counseling would lead to a partial one-sided view of the problem and neglect of other subjects of the educational process that are necessary for the successful functioning of the preschool institution. That is why it is necessary

to permeate all forms of counseling because it contributes to the adequate realization of counseling work and achieves a more complete impact on students and children.

**Graph 1**

Differences in the attitudes of teachers about the components of social competencies



Social competencies are necessary for children and young people to be able to interact with peers and adults and thus improve their competencies. We can notice that most teachers, regardless of their years of work experience, believe that social competencies should strengthen respect for diversity and tolerance. Such attitudes show that children and young people must develop the skills of respecting numerous differences between people, be able to accept those differences and to avoid misunderstandings. Also, many teachers believe that social competencies need to develop respect for other individuals and groups, which is again related to the fact that each child is an individual for himself, but also that children should be taught to understand and recognize the thoughts and feelings of others. When necessary, to understand the needs of other children. Competence that is important for functioning in modern society refers to organizational and team skills. When it comes to developing a sense of positive belonging to a nation and civilization, we will notice that no teacher thinks it is necessary to develop this social competence, which is again a bit confusing, because this competence includes skills related to the sense of belonging to the environment in which children live. Knowledge and nurturing of language, customs, and culture, but also coping in different communities and cultures. The development of all these social competencies can certainly be effectively achieved in the children's team. Teachers and pedagogues are in charge of that, as experts and bearers of educational activities. The basic role of teachers and pedagogues is to provide children with opportunities to develop productive interpersonal relationships, and for children to adopt social competencies as their models of behavior. Thanks to that, the socially competent population will harmonize their behavior with others, find a common language, exchange information... Teachers showed that competence, in their opinion, would be important for the development of the children's population, but overall, in educational institutions, it is necessary to develop all the above competencies for children and young people to be successfully included in social life.

To develop social competencies, team support activities should most often be used. That is, for children to be able to achieve a certain goal, they need to act together. As we have stated, social competencies are best learned in social situations and social environments, and that certainly offers work with a group of peers in a team. All activities for strengthening social competencies initiate joint activities of children, whether it is group projects of children, group introduction of children, team support games, or games in pairs. Since the activities that can strengthen children's social competencies are numerous and diverse, pedagogues choose the ones that, in their opinion,

can contribute to that in the best way. Namely, children need a wider interaction than their family can provide, and aware of that, actors in educational institutions meet this need. In this way, tolerance and respect for diversity are strengthened. Considering that we started from the assumption that activities that initiate mutual acquaintance and the establishment of partnerships are used to strengthen children's social competencies, we can say that we have confirmed this hypothesis. As a rule, children easily give their trust, so at all times you should use the opportunity to convince the child that he can speak freely. Therefore, when children get the impression that they can speak freely and express their thoughts and feelings, that they are not afraid of being condemned to disapproval, the counseling conversation itself will certainly have a positive outcome.

The approval and encouragement of the teacher by the pedagogue, in those actions that have a positive effect on his work, can be a good way to encourage him. Identifying his success causes satisfaction in the teacher and has a stimulating effect on his work, on cooperation with the pedagogue, and also on investing efforts in those activities that require additional engagement and commitment.

The pedagogue has the competence to crystallize his role in a wide range of partnerships with the actors of the educational process, especially when it comes to pedagogical and instructional work. This paper is an attempt to affirm the need for pedagogues, to show that their necessary existence is justified, and to respond to frequent and general criticisms of the work of pedagogues with arguments.

## **Conclusion**

The advisory work of pedagogues is a creative process, which has the task of encouraging development, eliminating problems and difficulties in development and searching for the best ways of self-actualization of personality. Considering the attitude towards the subject of the counseling process, there are two basic approaches — directive and non-directive. A directive approach to counseling requires less child participation than a non-directive one. Already in the first contact, when he uses the directive method, the pedagogue takes matters into his own hands. He examines, asks questions and draws conclusions, and decides what the next steps are in gathering information. After gathering information about the child, he defines the problem and lets the child know that he is taking action and action, and will communicate what the next steps are. The basic approach here is the ability to convince the child that he will be best helped in this way. The weakness and partly its advantage, is that this approach, in essence, values the social environment more, values what suits the environment more than the individual. Acceptance of the rules of the environment by the individual will be facilitated if he understands the environment in which he is and if he values the existing norms (Suzić, 2005). When it comes to the advisory educational work of pedagogues, we must point out the scarcity of literature and publications that shed light on this topic. On the other hand, most of the existing work refers to the institutional organization of counseling work in the school. With their attitudes, the teachers contributed to the elucidation of the highlighted topic. The question arises of the necessity of permanent organization of the advisory work of pedagogues, which contributes to the adequate development and strengthening of social competencies of children and youth. It has been shown that teachers who have a higher level of humanistic pedagogy focus on the permanent development of social competencies through counseling work as the focus of methodological educational activities. The question is whether there can be teaching (education) at all without upbringing? Each class is educated in a certain way. The problem is not that the teaching has an educational character, but that it explains in which direction and in what way it is necessary to act in an educational way in the process of education. The essence of educational problems is reflected in a better and more modern organization of the work of students and teachers, in the development of motivation that allows

the group of different motives to be dominated by those who are most desirable for education; in creating conditions for expanding and solving the possibilities of educational activities in the educational process, and above all, in creating more favorable conditions for more successful, efficient solving of the problem of individualization and socialization. In modern, increasingly complex conditions of life, work and upbringing, one should look for the most diverse and efficient methods, methodical procedures, and means of upbringing.

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR EDUCATION IN ANCIENT MACEDONIA

**Abstract:** Thousands of years ago, people attached great importance to the upbringing and education of children and young people. Despite the different approaches to these processes in different cultures, the main goal was mutual – to build a mentally healthy and physically strong



person who will cope with all the challenges of life. Greater unification in the educational process on European soil came for the first time in the Roman Imperial period, when most of Europe, as well as North Africa and Asia Minor, are part of this powerful Empire. Archaeological remains have been discovered on this entire territory, witnessing that, in the ancient period, attention was given to education, not only in building the body but also the spirit of young people.

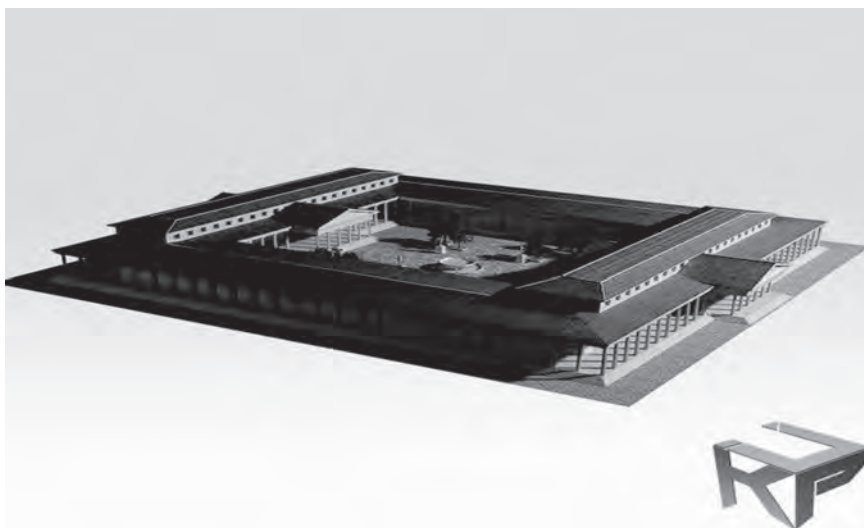
On the territory of Macedonia, we have written, and material remains of institutions where the local population was educated. The best archaeological evidence is the Gymnasium discovered in the ancient city of Stibera, near Prilep. It is a school where the boys, under the supervision of teachers of reading and writing, philosophy, and also sports and military skills, continued their previously acquired home upbringing and education. This gymnasium in Stibera is a well-preserved rare example of a building with this purpose, whose architectural remains are complemented by the numerous sculptures of young epebes that the school was proud of. (Микулчиќ И., 1996, 15-35; Вучкович Тодорович Д., МСМЛХИИ, 59-101; Темелкоски Д., 2020, 97-109)

The gymnasium as an institution originated in the Hellenic world, that advanced civilization in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, on whose foundations many modern scientific, cultural and artistic achievements are built. This happened in the seventh century before the birth of Christ, when the rest of Europe was still in deep prehistory. (D. Stavrou, 2016)

Just like everything else in human history, this institution recorded its own development, first from a simple path for physical exercises and sports competitions, to grow a few centuries later into a magnificent building, the pride of the city and its inhabitants, a building with a specific, defined form and accompanying facilities, with their own rules of operation. (T. Ioannidis, 2008)

### ***Figure 1***

Reconstruction of an ancient gymnasium



Numerous ancient records testify that the gymnasium is a place where young men, starting from the age of 14 or 15, primarily focused on sports activities in various sports disciplines. Some examples are running, wrestling, javelin and discus throwing, long jump, and riding (Perry, T.P.J. (2013).

**Figure 2**

Reconstruction of part of the activities in an ancient gymnasium



**Figure 3**

Depictions of various sports activities on ancient painted vases



These sports activities were controlled by experienced teachers who also imparted their theoretical knowledge to them. The Hellenic world was in absolute awe with sports. It had great respect for the winners of sports competitions, held in numerous sanctuaries, of which the most famous are the games in Olympia, which even today, in a modern guise, are the most significant and massive sports event.

This physical education of the boys was important not only to prepare them for sports competitions, but also for eventual military engagements, in which their sportsmanship, endurance,

fortitude and character were often of vital importance. But, even in the early ancient times, people realized that a person could not be wholesome if they were only physically healthy, skilled and strong. Thus, parallel to the body, the enhancement and betterment of the spirit also begins, or as the ancient Romans put it succinctly – *Mens sanum in corpore sano*, or: *A healthy mind in a healthy body*.

Therefore, equally great attention was paid to the intellectual development of the boys in this educational process. More precisely, they were taught to read and write, they acquired knowledge of philosophy and mathematics, they studied poetry, rhetoric, music and even calligraphy.

Thanks to the archaeological research of a large number of ancient cities, primarily in the Mediterranean area, today we are able to see the remains of a large number of well-preserved gymnasiums, which were centers of education in the ancient world. The best examples of that are depicted in the figures below.

**Figure 4**

The Gymnasium of Pompeii



**Figure 5**

The gymnasium in Messina, on the Peloponnese peninsula



*Figure 6*

The high school in Cyrene, Libya



*Figure 7*

The gymnasium in Amphipolis, Greece



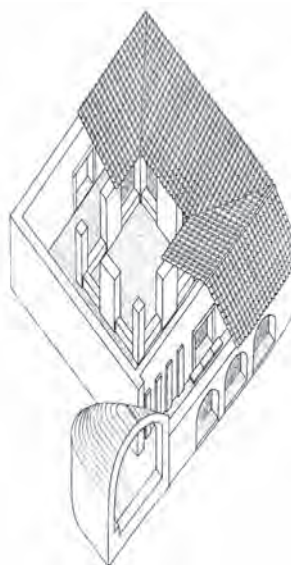
From these photos, it can certainly be noted that the basic architectural concept of all gymnasiums is a rectangular or square space around which a peristyle is built, i.e. a circle of pillars that carry a covered porch, where people could be sheltered from the strong sun or sudden rain. This was also the place where students could listen to the theoretical lectures of their teachers.

There were gymnasiums in all major ancient cities, and even more in the largest cities. For example, in the city of Athens there were as many as eight gymnasiums. This was certainly the case with the ancient cities in Macedonia, but for now only from the ancient city of Stibera, through archaeological excavations, we have found concrete architectural remains and epigraphic

monuments, which testify to its existence from the middle of the first century to the middle of the third century. The archaeological excavations of Stibera began in 1953 and, with brief interruptions, they continue until today. (The results of these excavations have been published in several scientific publications, of which the most significant ones are: D. Vuckovich Todorovich (1963), I. Mikulcic (1996), D. Temeloski (2020), V. Kalpakoska (2004).



Drawing of the foundation from the gymnasium in Stibera (according to D. Vuckovic – I. Mikulcic)



Reconstruction of the gymnasium in Stibera (according to I. Mikulčić)

**Figure 8**

View of the archaeological remains of the high school in Stibera (taken by D. Temelkoski)



In addition to the architectural remains that reveal the character of this building, the discovered inscriptions and sculptures provide reliable confirmation of its function. Three stone stelae inscribed with the properties of a total of 71 ephebes, i.e. boys who went through the training and education process of this institution, are the most direct and indisputable testimony to its purpose.

**Figure 9**

Stone stelae with lists of epebes from Stibera



**Figure 10**

Fragment of a stele with 14 names of epebes from Stibera



Next to them stands the name of Stibera's gymnasiarh derived from the person who was among the richest and most respectable people in the city and who received the honor of being the manager and financial patron of the gymnasium. The gymnasiarh was obliged to host all the guests with food and drink at the organized celebrations, but also to continuously supply the gymnasium with olive oil, which the epebes used to anoint their bodies before trainings and matches. Of course, these were significant expenses for one person, so other wealthier citizens and city officials voluntarily took care of the functioning of the gymnasium. The city, in turn, repaid them by placing their statues and honorary inscriptions in public places. As part of the gymnasium, there was also a temple and a heron, where statues of the Emperor, the donors, the most prominent epebes and the deities who were considered protectors of the young were placed: the god of health Asclepius, the messenger of the gods, the flying and swift-footed Hermes, the greatest

**Figure 11**

Marble sculpture of a distinguished epebe from Stibera`



**Figure 12**

Marble sculpture of the god of health Asklepios



mythical hero Heracles as a symbol of strength, skill, courage and honesty, Eros as a symbol of love, and Nike was often present as a symbol of victory. Whole or parts of their sculptures were found during the archaeological excavations of Stibera, as well as sculptures of prominent city figures, which is why this city received the epithet Macedonian Pompeii.

Finally, the lists of ephebes were crucial for a city, as that was how a candidate for numerous city offices was chosen. When comparing with today's society, where public officials such as mayors, councilors, ministers and MPs often have questionable educational credentials, the past can serve as a reminder of how public servants' physical and cerebral education was of utmost importance when planning for society's future. Hopefully, delving into the centuries of past experience, our societies can learn to respect education and build a better future.

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## **CHALLENGES AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR LEARNING THROUGH A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Abstract:** Developmental laws are imperative for the need for knowledge and learning through play, interaction and creative activities. In order to ensure a correct growth and development of a child in the context of life, finding new creative ideas, content and activities are selected, which enable acquiring of immediate and diverse life experiences. At the same time, the emphasis is on encouraging and developing of socio-emotional, cognitive, linguistic and physical-motor skills. A starting point is the holistic approach, which, as a way of working with children, includes different learning styles, opportunities for children to learn in various ways interactive contents, and to experience them through various aspects of their personality. Therefore, the approach is integrated, with the inclusion of all educational domains. The goal of learning is the very learning process, where the goals are not aimed at what the children are not able to do, but on the contrary, to what the children can do and are able to do, as well as to encouraging children's symbolic,

fantasy and reasoning strategies for thinking and expressing, which are very important for adequate developmental age.

**Keywords:** Early childhood development, Holistic approach, Learning process, Creative solution

## Introduction

The line from a children's poem from Latvia is inspiring that "books and letters are magical gates that allow us to enter many new and different worlds".

Children learn by watching adults treat books and gradually begin to imitate that behavior themselves. While adults read a picture book to small children, an interaction is created through which children's interest in reading is built, which is the beginning of the process of developing an interest in mastering reading.

If we want the child to develop good communication skills, to enjoy reading and writing, to be successful in school, to be able to get information and to be able to manage in the environment, he should be directed in that way while he is still small.

It was these insights that challenged the author's team to start thinking about creative solutions and the creation of manual literature for children (Biljana Kamchevska, Vesna Makashevska, Simona Palchevska, 2014).

Creative solutions in the creation of the manuals allow improving the skills of children of different ages, a holistic approach to early childhood development, as well as strengthening the pedagogical skills of educators. But also, educators and parents should become familiar with the importance of reading with children from the youngest age through the use of manuals that can be applied in the kindergarten and home (Biljana Kamchevska, Vesna Makashevska, Simona Palchevska, 2014).

Developmental laws are an imperative for the need for cognition and learning through play, interaction and creative activities. In order to ensure the development of the child in the context of life, in the creation of the manual literature, contents and activities have been selected that enable the development of the child's personality in all domains, as well as the acquisition of immediate and different life experiences.

In manual literature, no matter how much a well-organized system of knowledge is offered, if it does not offer an active attitude of the child towards that knowledge, its influence on the child will be limiting. Respecting modern approaches, the author's team of manual literature for preschool children tried to create manuals that contain interesting, current contents, presented in a form that implies active, thinking, logical and creative engagement of the child in discovering new knowledge. In fact, the main function of manuals is to support the educational process, as well as to encourage the individual work of children.

The second function is the connection of the educational content with the real everyday life of the children, which ensures the practical significance of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities.

The third function consists in systematizing and adapting the predicted knowledge to the cognitive capabilities of the children.

## Modern Approaches in Creating Manual Literature for Preschool Children

Modern approaches applied in the creation of manual literature in an innovative way emphasize the importance of preschool upbringing and education as the most significant development cycle. Through various activities, games, performances, workshops, children get opportunities to gain different experiences and enrich their understanding. The offered conceptual solutions enable



situations through which the child will create quality relationships with other children, will use his emotional, motor, social and intellectual abilities. At the same time, in this way, the child's desire for learning and for successful coping in the living environment is encouraged. Special emphasis is placed on the quality encouragement of children's developmental potential through constant cooperation with the family.

The reference literature for children, just like the picture book, is the first a book for the child, for which should be given special attention, in order to be interesting and yes her follow program for early learning and development and yes enables a different interaction and communication between parents/educators and children.

The meaning of reference literature for the children from preschool age is so much large what is also unique a medium that stimulates interest and at the same time awakens interaction between children , as well as between children and adults.

It represents a significant source on information and means for acquisition knowledge in a fun way and learning through game, a source that affects in a special way the various aspects in the development of the child's personality.

### **Conceptual Solutions**

The conceptual solutions in the creation of the manuals are not structured according to separate methodological areas, nor are they separated in any way in terms of content and time. They are generally based on following and encouraging the child's interest and initiative. At the same time, the positivist conception of learning is dominant, that is, the use of controlled teaching methods and the transfer of disaggregated small doses of knowledge in favor of enabling the child's productive activities, ensuring the quality of his experiences and realizing a dynamic approach to learning. Different choices are provided to the child, which encourages the self-organizing potential of his activities. Developmental laws are an imperative for the need for cognition and learning through play, interaction and creative activities. To ensure the development of the child in the context of life, in the creation of manual literature, contents and activities were chosen, which enable the acquisition of immediate and different life experiences. At the same time, the emphasis is placed on encouraging and developing socio-emotional, cognitive, language and motor skills. The holistic approach is emphasized, which as a way of working with children, includes different learning styles, opportunities for children to deal with educational content in different ways and to experience it through different aspects of their personality. Therefore, the approach is also integrated, involving all domains of development. The goal of learning is the learning process itself, where the goals are not to give correct and incorrect answers, but to encourage children's symbolic, fantasy and thinking strategies for thinking and expression, which are very important for the specific developmental age.

### **Guiding Principles in Creating the Manual**

Through the synthesis of relevant knowledge from the field of developmental psychology, didactics and preschool pedagogy, the research team offers a model of organization of a manual intended for preschool children. We have identified and defined 7 fundamental scientific principles that guided us in creating manuals for different age periods of preschool children:

Humanistic-developmental orientation, holistic-integrated principle, life context of knowledge and skills in the offered conceptual solutions, coherence and clarity of the structure of visual elements and text, realization of a motivational function and support of children's curiosity, encouraging children's thinking through the creation of cognitive conflict and individuation.

The humanistic developmental exemplary orientation of the manual is aimed at developing the capacities of each child with respect for his interests, needs and rights. The conceptual solutions are developmental, open and dynamic in nature.

The holistically integrated principle implies complete upbringing and education, consistent with the integrated nature of the child's development and learning. The foundation of this principle allows for a comprehensive learning context that leads to a greater opportunity to cope in life. Integrated learning implies perceiving a problem from different dimensions, different angles and sides. The integrated model implies an active child. It is not just about transferring information and knowledge, but much more about solving problems, asking questions and actively seeking answers in one's environment. The positive aspects of this model are in the direction of applying knowledge in life, perceiving phenomena from different approaches, developing a flexible opinion and increasing the child's motivation. In fact, the human brain acquires and remembers information best when it can be connected in a meaningful network of meanings.

Illustrative These parts are an important component and convey a special visual message conscious function yes her mirror age appropriate content on the children. The illustrations they create direct way on communication with the child encourage the thinking one process, develop the imagination and the he way contribute stimulation perception and development of the intellectual potential for all children. They allow children to "read" from illustrations instead from text through visual – perceptual recognitions and perceptions, with which they were influenced and the mental process.

The manuals are designed to satisfy the so-called integrated component, which is why they are covered standards you for early learning and development like everyone else thematic contents of the Program. At the same time, they present educational manuals that include content from specific topics that are implemented in kindergartens, with the possibility of doing the same at home (Biljana Kamchevska, Vesna Makashevska, Simona Palchevska, 2018).

## **Structural Elements of the Manual**

For the successful realization of the function of the manuals, their structure is extremely important, that is, the adequate composition of the elements of the structure. In doing so, the grouping of elements is particularly important in order to ensure the necessary systematicity.

The structure of the manuals consists of:

1. *elements that are in function of presenting the contents*

This group of elements includes short texts with the help of which the contents are presented verbally and pictures (illustrations) with the help of which the contents are presented visually. Since we are talking about children of preschool age, the main emphasis is placed on the pictures and other artistic and graphic elements that enable the graphic presentation of the contents, which clearly highlights the basic messages of the text and highlights the most important. This is in accordance with the cognitive process of children in the preschool period, which should be supported by visualization.

2. *elements that are in function of content acquisition and efficient, active learning (didactic-methodical equipment)*

The didactic-methodical equipment is in function of acquiring knowledge, developing abilities through systematized activities, as well as training children for their application. So, the main goal of these elements is to provide quality activities for children that will guarantee the adoption of the content. The didactic-methodical equipment consists of questions, tasks and art-graphic attachments, symbols and various instructions and guidelines for children.

### 3. elements that are in function of easy finding, orientation in working with the manual

Manuals have a significant place in the realization of that on the program and the program goals and tasks. According to conception ta, as well as according to the content, they should yes comply with the standards for early learning and development.

The contents of the Manuals are subordinated according to the mastery standards on skills from the various aspects of children's development, enabling an appropriate approach to learning.

And so, the contents that are presented in the Manuals refer to the education of children from all areas and all foreseen educational – educational topics, so what the illustrations, the texts and the assigned tasks that should be completed by the children, are intertwined in unity and connected with specific activities with which children know and learn through \_\_\_ game.

Depending on the age for which they are intended, the Manuals are designed to encourage critical thinking, verbally and artistically, expression through drawing, coloring, connecting, cutting, gluing, with what everything creates a pleasant and stimulating atmosphere. A great pleasure for children is the opportunity to encourage their creativity, participation in research games and solving simple problems. The most important of all is the process of following their development needs and interests, respecting them all children and offering quality and encouraging activities for everyone a child.

The aim of the manuals is to have a positive influence in the early learning and development on the child. They are useful above all for preparing children before starting school as well as developing independent and critical thinking.

The manuals everything created on way yes be interesting for the children because of the interesting questions in function on the pictures – the illustrations, tasks that the children have to perform, which in the beginning everything simple and later they become more complex. Certain tasks offer opportunity for connection on the mathematical ones notions with the everyday environment on the children. And so there are tasks for development on voices, exercises for getting rich on the dictionary with words, exercises for development on the sentence, for spoken creativity and understanding on text. All together where children initiate independence, attentiveness and encourage a desire to learn through play.

Manuals are primarily intended for children from 2 to 6 years old, but except what everything intended for the children, they everything excellent opportunity for the work of the educator in realization of the educational work and implementation of the program goals and tasks, as well as for work in domestic conditions and opportunity for interaction between adults and children. The manuals are an excellent guide for those who know how to initiate a desire for knowledge in all children (Biljana Kamchevska, Vesna Makashevska, Simona Palchevska, 2021).

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## 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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## **UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN LEARNING AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** Routines and processes in the classroom should be designed in a way that all students are able to have access and a level of success. In order to have effective inclusive education we need to build a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that will provide flexibility in the presentation of information, flexibility in the engagement of students, reduction of barriers in instruction and provision of appropriate accommodations for all students, including students with learning disabilities.

The main focus of this qualitative research was determining the essential elements for such a framework. For this purpose, an extensive systematic review was conducted with which we summarized all empirical evidence that fitted the pre-determined criteria for eligibility.

One approach to designing inclusive instruction is the utilization of the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is characterized by three major principles: multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement. This approach to teaching and learning allows individuals to draw upon and utilize their particular learning strengths, while acknowledging that not all students learn in the same manner.

Another essential element is Response to Intervention (RTI). This is a systematic decision-making process designed to allow for early and effective responses to children's learning and behavioral difficulties, provide children with a level of instructional intensity matched to their level of need, and then provide a data-based method for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional approaches.

**Keywords:** Universal Design in Learning, Response to Intervention, Inclusive education

### **Introduction**

As the core principles of inclusive education consider taking into account all the different needs of students and diversity in learning, as well as quality education through appropriate teaching (Odarich, Sofronov, Shickiyakh, 2021) the Universal Design in Learning and Response to Intervention can be used as approaches to enhance the inclusion process of all children.

Universal Design in Learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn (CAST, n.d.). This approach to education strives to remove discriminatory practices, as the learning needs of most students are taken into account (Dalton et al. 2019). According to Meyer, Rose and, Gordon (2014, as cited in Garcia-Capmos, Canabal & Alba-Pastor, 2018), the UDL approach promotes attractive and flexible teaching environments that proactively start at the acknowledgment of student diversity and highlights the need to maximize learning opportunities for all students.

The origins of UDL stem from the earlier concept of Universal Design (UD) that emerged in the field of architecture in the 1980s (Fovet, 2021; Hamraie, 2017) when it became a concept for including all people in the design process. UD quickly became revolutionary and its impact spread beyond architecture. That is how it found its place in education as well.

The UDL is based on three main principles developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, n.d.): multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and

multiple means of action and expression. The three principles are then broken down into 9 guidelines, and the guidelines into checkpoints. A simplified table of the principles and guidelines of the UDL design is presented below.

**Picture 1**

UDL principles and guidelines (Baumann & Melle, 2019)

Principles		Provide multiple means of engagement	Provide multiple means of representation	Provide multiple means of action & expression
Guidelines	Access	1. Recruiting interest	4. Perception	7. Physical action
	Build	2. Sustaining effort and persistence	5. Language & symbols	8. Expression & communication
	Internalize	3. Self-regulation	6. Comprehension	9. Executive functions
Goals		Purposeful & motivated	Resourceful & knowledgeable	Strategic & goal directed

The principles of UDL are in the same scope of inclusive education that allows for a time frame that accommodates human differences (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a relatively new term for a very commonsensical approach to understanding and addressing students’ school difficulties, which consists of two main features: response – the act of responding; and intervention – the act of intervening. The term *intervention* can also be changed with the term *instruction* (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). It is a multi-tier approach of early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs (RTI action network, n.d.). According to Sailor (2009) RTI is best understood as a model used to guide efforts to teach (intervention) based on measures of student progress (response) and grounded in the idea of prevention. The same author (Sailor, 2009) describes the key features of the approach to be the following:

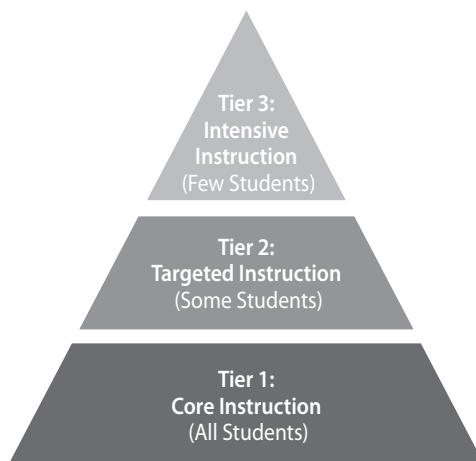
- A three-tier system of matching interventions to assessed student academic and behavioral needs;
- Systematic screening of young children using scientifically acceptable measuring instruments;
- Interventions that have solid grounding in research and for which there is scientific evidence that they improve behavior or academic achievement, or both;
- Progress monitoring of students identified as being at risk for low academic achievement, again using scientific measures;
- Decision rules concerning levels of support provided through intervention.

The RTI approach begins with a screening of all children for academic and behavior problems, then the progress of those at risk for difficulties in these areas is monitored and in the end, intense intervention is implemented based on the progress monitoring assessment (Vaughn &

Fuchs, 2003 as cited in Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). In the following picture can be seen the purpose of each tier of the RTI approach.

**Picture 2**

RTI pyramid model (Listenwise, 2021)



**Method**

The main research goal of this paper was to determine the effects of UDL and RTI usage in the inclusive classroom. Due to the fact that none of these approaches are used in the classrooms in our country, in order to see the effects for future implementation, we conducted a systematic review. A systematic review collects secondary data and is a synthesis of all available, relevant evidence that brings together all existing primary studies for review (Cochrane, 2016 as cited in Phillips & Barker, 2021). With this qualitative approach, we wanted to gain information on what has already been done in the field, and what are the experiences so far.

To form the sample, a thorough search of two databases was conducted: Google Scholar and Wiley Online Library. Because there is no empirical research that examines the effects of both UDL and RTI approaches at the same time, the search words that we used were divided in two parts: *UDL and inclusive education* (first part), and *RTI and inclusive education* (second part).

Giving that the main difference between the narrative and systematic review is that the second one starts with the development of a protocol detailing the plan of the review (Misra & Agarwal, 2018), eligibility criteria were set for our study in order to determine the inclusion or exclusion of the research found by the search keywords. The 4 eligibility criteria we set were:

- The study to represent an empirical research;
- To be published in a scientific journal;
- Not to be older than 2013;
- To be published in English.

First, the abstracts of the studies were analyzed if they met all the above criteria. Then, the analysis moved towards the content of the whole studies that were selected. The studies were analyzed through the following research questions:

- RQ1 – What are the effects of UDL and RTI on the academic performance of students with disabilities?
- RQ2 – How are the principles of UDL met in the inclusive classroom?
- RQ3 – At what level of education are the approaches mostly used?

After checking the fulfillment of the criteria, it was concluded that 15 studies were eligible to create the research sample.

## Results and Discussion

As mentioned before, in this systematic review 15 empirical studies regarding the use of UDL and RTI in the classroom were analyzed. The number of studies about the use of UDL is higher, 9 in total, and the rest 6 are empirical studies for the RTI approach. In table no. 1 are presented the data regarding the methodological framework of the sample studies.

**Table 1**  
Methodological framework of sample studies

<i>Methodology</i>	<i>UDL</i>	<i>RTI</i>
<i>Quantitative</i>	3	5
<i>Qualitative</i>	4	1
<i>Mixed method</i>	2	/
<i>Total</i>	9	6

What is evident from the table is the number of studies that use the qualitative approach for the examination of the UDL approach (4 in total). The situation with the RTI approach studies is the exact opposite. We cannot say that these results are unexpected. The research of the UDL application requires a systematic approach that usually takes longer in order for the effects to be seen. Also, the focus on flexibility, proactive, and iterative design inherent to UDL makes it difficult to consistently measure (Basham, Gardner, & Smith, 2020). Another thing is that both practitioners and researchers operationalize UDL in a variety of ways and most of the time, only a snapshot of the observed learning environment is observed (Bryk et al., 2015; Lewis, 2015). All of these reasons make it clearer why researchers find the qualitative approach to be more suitable when the effects of UDL in the classroom need to be analyzed and why most of the qualitative research designs were presented as case studies.

On the other hand, the effects of the RTI approach are simpler to be analyzed because the outcomes are easily measured. In its nature, the RTI models tend to measure growth in achievement over time in response to effective instruction or intervention (Schatschneider, Wagner, Crawford, 2008). In this case, researchers considered the quantitative methods to be used in their studies (5 out of 6).

Regarding the first research question (RQ1), the sample studies indicate positive effects on the academic performance of students when UDL or RTI approaches were implemented. Katz (2013) shows a statistically significant difference in students' academic engagement. Since this is quantitative research modeled as a quasi-experiment, the author states that the students from the classes where the UDL approach was implemented were significantly more active (socially and academically) than their peers from the other classes.

The results of Almumen (2020) are compatible with the previous results of Katz. In this study, UDL seemed to be effective in engaging all students, including those with disabilities. Besides the improvement of engagement in the learning process, students' showed greater expression of their learning. Significant positive outcomes in the motivation to learn and demonstration of understanding of learned concepts (science concepts) are noted in the study of Yu et al. (2021). The main positive UDL outcomes from the sample research are presented in table no.2.

**Table 2**  
Main UDL outcomes

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Outcomes of UDL</b>
Katz (2013)	The Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Engaging students in inclusive education	Better social and academic engagement
Almumen (2020)	Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Across Cultures: The Application of UDL in Kuwaiti Inclusive Classrooms	Increased engagement and expression of learning.
Yu et al. (2021)	Findings From a Two-Year Effectiveness Trial of the Science Notebook in a Universal Design for Learning Environment	Significant positive outcomes in tstudents' motivation to learn.
Baumann & Melle (2019)	<i>Evaluation of a digital UDL-based learning environment in inclusive chemistry education. Chemistry Teacher International</i>	Using a specifically designed software students with and without special educational needs learn in an individualized and differentiated way on a common learning object.
Kumar & Wideman (2014)	Accessible by design: Applying UDL principles in a first year undergraduate course	Students found the design of the course, based on UDL principles, to be highly effective in their ability to access materials.
Dean, Lee-Post & Hapke (2016)	Universal Design for Learning in Teaching Large Lecture Classes	UDL environment has significant impact on perceived and actual learning
Black, Weinberg, Brodwin (2015)	Universal Design for Learning and Instruction: Perspectives of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education	When professors used approaches followed by the UDL principles, students expressed these were conducive to their learning, since it allowed them to succeed in higher education.
Hansen et al., (2021)	Making Computer Science Accessible	UDL framework for differentiation opportunities that were necessary for the diverse students studying computer science in elementary school.
Hall et al., (2015)	Addressing Learning Disabilities With UDL and Technology: Strategic Reader	Students using the online tool experience significant growth in comprehension scores.

When it comes to the RTI approach, the sample research indicates positive outcomes as well. The longitudinal study of O'Connor et al., (2013) analyzed the results of the students who participated in tier 2 intervention in a Response to Intervention model focused on reading across Grades 1–4. In the end, one-third of the students who were identified for special services due to

learning disabilities were not identified until the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In similar context are the conclusions of the study made by Coyne et al. (2018). Tier 2 intervention implemented within a response to intervention can impact key reading outcomes when intervention significantly increases instructional intensity.

**Table 3**  
Main RTI Outcomes

Authors	Title	Outcomes of RTI
O'Connor et al., (2013)	Special Education in a 4-Year Response to Intervention (RtI) Environment: Characteristics of Students with Learning Disability and Grade of Identification	Improvements in reading, one-third of those identified were not identified until grade 4.
Coyne et al. (2018)	Evaluating the Effects of Supplemental Reading Intervention within an MTSS or RTI Reading Reform Initiative Using a Regression Discontinuity Design	Tier 2 intervention impacts key reading outcomes.
Grapin, Waldron & Joyce-Beaulieu (2019)	Longitudinal effects of RtI implementation on reading achievement outcomes	Students' long-term reading comprehension outcomes were measured. Students who experienced the early phases of RtI implementation during Grade 2 generally had higher mean comprehension scores in Grades 4 and 5
Sharp et al. (2016)	The Relationship Between RTI Implementation and Reading Achievement: A School-Level Analysis	Tier 3 implementation integrity significantly predicted student reading outcomes when controlling for significant demographic predictors
Noltemeyer, Boone & Sansosti (2014)	Assessing School-Level RTI Implementation for Reading: Development and Piloting of the RTIS-R	Not direct outcomes, but stresses the importance of instruments for implementation adherence, once the RTI model is applied in school.
Fisher & Frey (2013)	Implementing RTI in a High School: A Case Study	Students benefited from the instruction they received and, along the way, ensured that special education eligibility decisions were considered only after a student had access to quality instruction and a range of interventions

In the second research question, about the ways UDL principles are met in the inclusive classroom, the sample studies show a variety, and on another hand, creativity in meeting the three

main UDL principles. The principle of engagement is mostly accomplished through group discussions on a particular topic, and sometimes, depending on the age of the students, role play is used. Of course, in order to make students more engaged in the process of learning, teachers tend to use as many didactic materials as possible (pictures, real objects, and etc.). Including students in different activities for the same topic is another way the authors mentioned about actively engaging students in learning.

The second UDL principle, representation of learning content, according to the sample studies is mostly met through the use of multiple formats for material presentation. This includes videos, audio materials, pdf documents, presentations, and of course, printed materials. This was stated to be very useful when students receive the materials before class, especially when it comes to large lectures.

Often, in order to implement multiple means of representation in the process of teaching, technology is used. Specially created computer soft wares, or learning management system platforms (LMS) are mentioned in the analyzed studies for this review many times. Students there could find the formats that fit their needs best, including students with disabilities.

About the expression of students' knowledge (third UDL principle), students are most often given a possibility to choose how to answer an exam question: to give a description, draw a chart or perform a demonstration. Another possibility is multiple deadlines for task completion to be set. Students can choose the deadline.

What is noticeable when analyzing the studies chosen for the review is the level of education where the two approaches, UDL and RTI, were used in an inclusive setting (RQ no.3 and table no.4). Teachers were able to implement the principles of UDL through the whole education span. Elementary classes can be easily adjusted to fit diverse learners, but also the classes for much older students in higher education. Of course, there are age-appropriate adjustments, but UDL principles can be incorporated into every level of education.

Since one of the core terms the RTI consists of is *intervention*, it is understandable that at-risk students should be identified as soon as possible so that an intervention could take place. Both identification and intervention should take place early in the education process of the student and that is why almost every study analyzed in this review is measuring the effects of the RTI approach in elementary classes (5 out of 6). That is the key difference between the two approaches, the RTI is most effective early in schooling, and the effects of properly organized UDL can be noticed in any inclusive classroom, no matter the education level.

**Table 4**

Leve of education

Level of education	UDL	RTI
Elementary	5	5
Secondary	3	1
Higher	3	/
Total	11	6

According to the review of the sample studies, it is evident that the UDL approach has a wider use throughout education subjects and areas. UDL principles were used for chemistry teaching, science, computer science, marketing, biology, society, health sciences, and reading. On the other hand, the studies found for this review were conducted only in the field of reading, like most of the early research about RTI that focused on reading improvement (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). Besides learning, the RTI is supposed to support students with behavioral needs as well, but no such empirical research was found in accordance with the eligibility criteria.



## Conclusion

The positive effects of both UDL and RTI approach in inclusive classrooms are apparent, seen through the analysis of previous research in the systematic review. There is a possibility the two approaches to be simultaneously implemented in order to gain the best effects, but it certainly requires a wide set of skills of teachers and organization of the school environment in general.

Regarding the UDL, it might look like it is a time-consuming approach for the teachers who need to do all the adaptations for the 3 principles to be met. But, because the time for additional task explanations for the students is decreased due to the previously prepared materials, the teachers actually gain some time back.

If the RTI approach is to be implemented in schools, standards in the field of learning and behavior need to be set so appropriate screening can be performed and the at-risk children to be identified. If implemented properly, both UDL and RTI can contribute to inclusive education that takes into account all the diversities learners might have.

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## **ADAPTATION OF STUDENTS TO DISTANCE LEARNING DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC**

**Abstract:** The coronavirus has significantly affected the overall functioning of our lives, including the way of studying. In the Republic of North Macedonia, starting from March 11, 2020, all universities were closed for onsite lectures, as a necessary measure to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Two years later, most of the university activities are carried out online, which significantly changed the way of studying.

Our research aimed to determine the adaptation of students to the newly created conditions of the study. Through the research, we measured the challenges, motivation for learning, and social connection of the students during distance learning. The research was conducted through a questionnaire with Likert type of questions, answers were collected through Google Form and distributed to the faculties all over the country. The research lasted 2 months and it was conducted on a sample of 234 university students (197 females and 37 males).

According to the results, about 33% of students do well in online studying, compared to 10% who cannot cope at all. In terms of their perception of professors' skills, only 23% manage to respond well to the task, compared to 12% who face serious problems during online lecturing. Socialization and social interaction among the students are among the areas that faced the greatest challenges.

The research detects some of the challenges in distance learning and emphasizes the need for its advancement to the needs of students.

**Keywords:** Distance learning, Universities, COVID 19, Students

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the entire way of social functioning. Among the first measures taken in the spring of 2020 was the reorganization of higher education, the universities very quickly had to switch from face-to-face to emergency remote education. The new measures affected 1.5 billion students and youth who had to immediately adapt to new models and forms of work that included limited access to facilities and less contact with peers and teachers, while at the same time being exposed to more autonomy (1).

In particular, in the Republic of Macedonia, by the recommendations of the Ministry of Education, on 11.03.2020, a two-week complete suspension of the educational process began, so that the course of the semester can continue through electronic communication between students and professors, electronic exchange of information and materials for work. The initial period, i.e. the first semester after the declaration of the pandemic, did not include the implementation of lectures and exercises because e-learning platforms are still being developed.

This paper focuses on the adaptation of students to the new teaching forms and methods that resulted from the COVID 19 pandemic. We aimed the research at determining the priorities, motivation, and perseverance, as well as the feeling of social connection in the extraordinary circumstances as a result of the pandemic situation.

## Studying in Emergency Lockdown

Online education was among the first emergency measures to protect against Covid 19. It was accompanied by many external stressful factors, such as uncertainty, fear for one's health and the health of loved ones, daily happenings at home, and reduced social activities, which strongly impacted students' ability to adapt to the new educational process (2). In addition, during this period, students faced a series of restrictions important for their personal and professional milestones, such as canceled study events, study trips abroad, extracurricular activities, social events, graduation ceremonies, etc (3).

Being in such a situation, the students faced serious challenges, on the one hand, to respond to academic needs, and on the other hand, to postpone the realization of their individual development tasks, mostly staying in their families. It is reasonable to assume that these circumstances will certainly affect their mental health and mental capacities to cope with academic challenges. A significant part of the students also had to deal with dysfunctional family patterns. Research conducted in our country showed that nearly 25% of the students are facing problems in family functioning during the covid situation, furthermore, 42% of the students have difficulties in mutual management of time and space with their siblings (4). Similar research was conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia by News agency – Meta (2021), where 57% of young people reported increasing psychological pressure and deterioration of family relationships during this period (5).

Unlike regular education that is conducted online, the change to emergency remote learning during COVID-19 was not voluntary, which may have had a negative influence on students' study motivation (6). According to the research of Biwer et al. (2021) students reported being less able to regulate their attention, effort, and time and were less motivated compared to before. They also invested more time and effort in their self-study, while feeling less connected to the university. This pattern, however, was not true for all students (7). In the process of adaptation of the students, the individual characteristics of the students, as well as the socioeconomic conditions in which they find themselves, certainly play a big role.

In the past two years, a series of researches were carried out to evaluate self-determination theory during covid learning. Given the uniqueness of the situation and individual differences in self-regulated learning, they assumed that students would differ in their abilities and approaches to adapt to emergency remote learning (8). Some students struggled more with time and effort investment, whereas others struggled more with attention and motivation. This multidimensionality of resource-management strategies suggests a tailored support approach for students. While the surrenders might benefit from more structure and social interaction, the overwhelmed students might need more support in stress management (9).

According to Balaron (2020), 80.38% of the students agreed with the stoppage of schools, and 59.25% disagreed with the conduct of the Online-Blended Learning Approach. The primary reason for these students was poor internet connection (10).

The lack of face-to-face contact had a strong impact on the formation of appropriate communication between the students themselves, as well as in the student-professor relationship. The strong impact of the lack of communication can be observed especially among students who have just started the educational process, without having built solid communication links and a sense of belonging in the environment, which very soon became virtual. A sense of belonging is known to significantly influence college students' social, psychological, and academic outcomes (11). Well-established communication practices are crucial for distance learning success (12). In the professional literature, there is a debate about the effect of online versus on-site learning, according to some the effect is the same and we can make a comparison between the achievements of students (13), while according to other research, online education can have harmful effects (14). What the opposing views have in common is that they agree on the importance of preparing teaching staff and students for online education to achieve the desired effect, but the urgency of the situation left both teachers and professors unprepared.

## Research Methodology

The subject of the research is the possibility of adaptation of the students to the new learning conditions.

In the direction of the research subject, we set the following tasks:

- To examine the challenges faced by students;
- To examine the motivation and persistence of students for learning;
- To examine the social connection between students

An online cross-sectional survey was designed and conducted during the initial peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the late Spring of 2020. Participants were recruited from the student population. Student respondents were determined using the snowball technique, the survey was published using the online survey platform Google Form on April 26, 2020, and data collection remained open almost for two months, until June 18. We have responses from 234 university students, aged 18 and above ( $M=21.77$ ,  $SD=3.73$ ). The study involved only those students who had access to the internet. It is important for the research period that it was the initial period of the pandemic when the most serious restrictive measures such as several-day quarantines and movement bans at certain times of the day were in effect.

## Results and Discussion

### Students Priorities

The first question was about the students' priorities, and which three things they would single out as the most important during that period. According to the results, the students are most concerned about how their educational process will take place (the lectures, the exercises, as well as the evaluation of the acquired knowledge). As many as 65% of students singled out the educational process as the top priority at the moment. Health is singled out as the second priority (own health and the health of the closest family members), 45% of students singled it out as a priority, which is certainly in line with expectations given the health risks we are exposed to during the pandemic. Regarding the third priority, we received a variety of answers, of which financial security stood out as the most frequent reason for concern among students. The percentage representation of the obtained results is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Presentation of the three most important priorities that cause the most intense feeling of concern among students

What worries you the most right now? (at most three things)		
	N	%
Health	105	45
Socialization	13	6
Education	152	65
Financial stability	41	18
Family	14	6
Failed plans for the future	7	3
Uncertainty	15	6

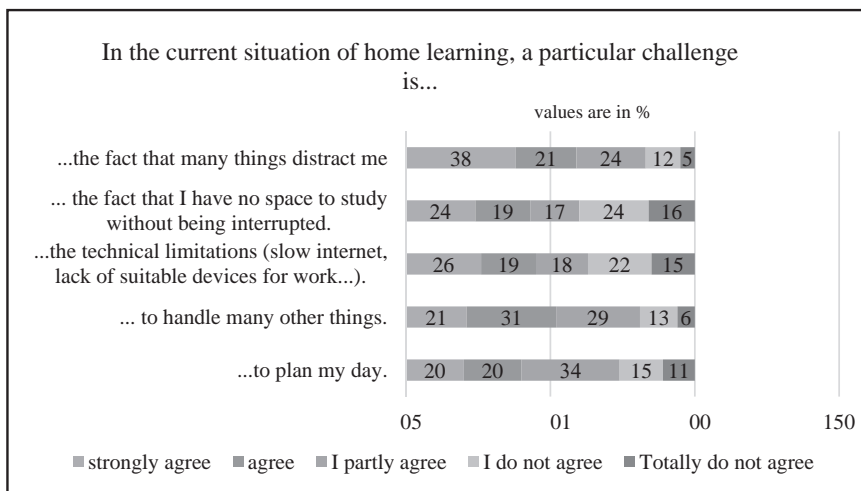
Stability in the country	5	2
Nothing	4	2

Further analysis revealed to us the most common challenges that students face in terms of their education, as the priority that causes the greatest concern for them during this period. =Most often students are worried about the quality of the education they receive: the inability to understand part of the teaching material, the inability to perform practical teaching, uncertainty regarding the methods of passing the upcoming exams, the validity of the exams as well as the validity of the whole semester, in addition, the numerous obligations they receive from the professors – “we spend too much time with online obligations” were cited as a challenge. It is worrying that the students make serious criticisms of the very concept of online teaching, which according to their experience is poorly organized and does not produce the desired results, and on the other hand, online teaching was not organized for all the subjects that are planned for the student’s current semester.

Regarding the challenges of students in the current study from home, the biggest challenge stands out as the over-engagement of students and the problem of focusing on learning and responsibilities in college. As many as 38% of students completely agree and 21% of students agree with the fact that many things attract their attention. Almost half of the students in the sample do not have an adequate space to study without being interrupted (24% strongly agree and 19% agree with the challenge), and they face technical shortcomings important for conducting online teaching (26% strongly agree and 19% agree with the challenge). A detailed presentation of the obtained results is shown in Graph 1.

**Graph 1**

Presentation of the percentage representation of the intensity of students’ challenges when learning from home

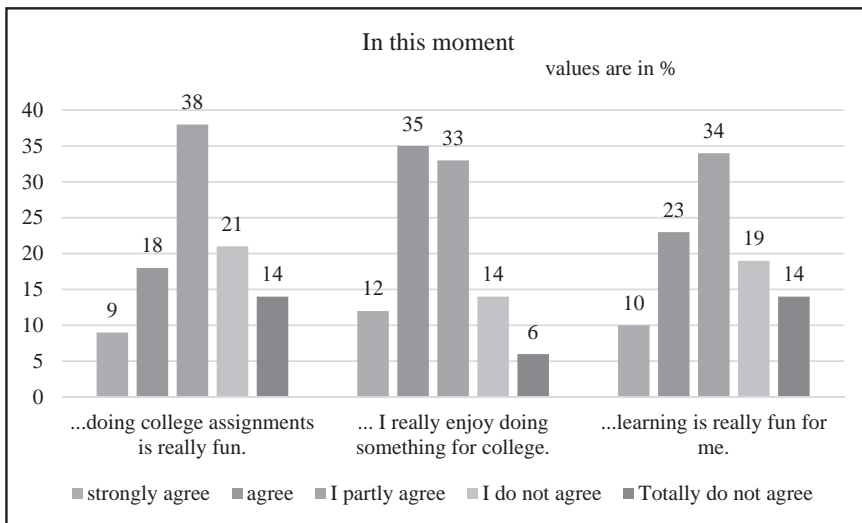


**Motivation and Perseverance**

In terms of motivation, the largest percentage of students feel partially motivated when performing activities related to the faculty. The fact that almost a third of them do not perceive studying and performing college-related tasks as a fun activity is worrying. The results of students’ motivation are presented in Graph 2.

**Graph 2**

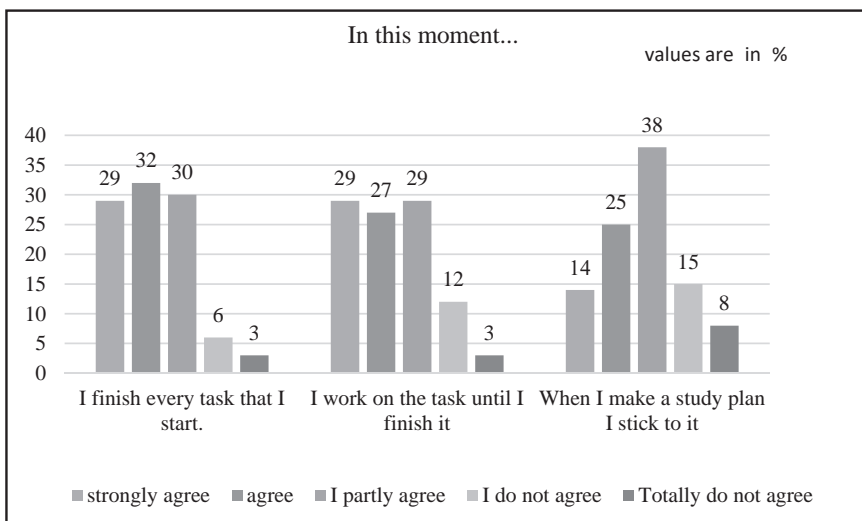
Presentation of the motivation that students currently feel when learning or performing tasks related to college



Even though the students do not feel sufficiently motivated, according to their subjective assessment, they are extremely persistent in the realization of the assigned tasks. More than half of the students surveyed completed every task they start (29% strongly agree and 32% agree with the statement), and work on the task until they finish it (29% strongly agree and 27% agree with the statement). However, students experience partial difficulties when they have to stick to their study plan. The obtained results in terms of persistence are presented in Graph 3.

**Graph 3**

Presentation of the current persistence of students in terms of study and university responsibilities:

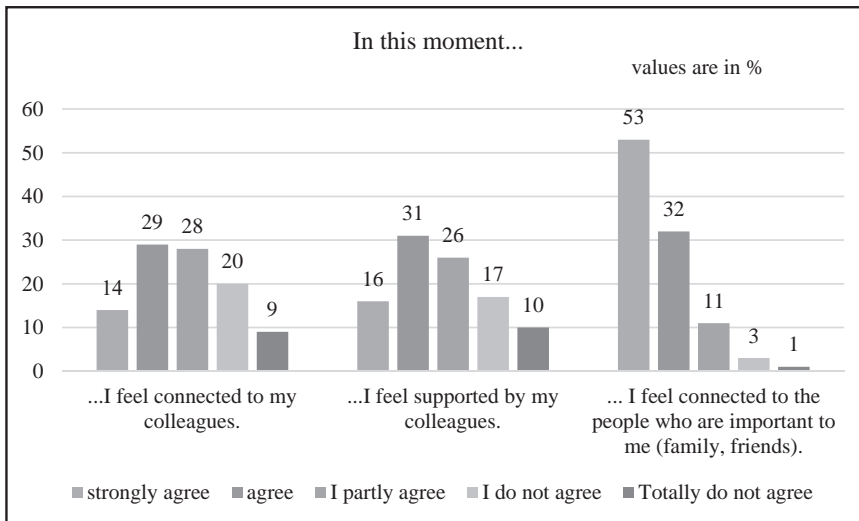


## Socialization

According to the obtained results, students feel less connection with colleagues compared to the connection they feel with family members and friends. About 43% of students feel connected to their colleagues (14% strongly agree and 29% agree with the statement), while 47% feel supported by their colleagues (16% strongly agree and 31% agree with the statement), as opposed to 85% of students who feel connected to family members and friends (53% strongly agree and 32% agree with the statement). Such results are quite expected, given the need for protection against the virus, that is, the recommendation to stay at home, we believe that it intensifies care and attachment to family and family members. The results are shown in the following chart.

### Graph 4

Presentation of the current social connection of the students



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The need for urgent remote learning is already far behind us, most universities have returned to on-site lectures with face-to-face interaction between students and professors. This means that higher education is slowly returning to already known and proven ways of functioning, but definitely, the past period of online education and remote experiences will leave an important stamp for an extraordinary time that required emergency measures. On the other hand, it is quite certain that online learning will leave an important mark in future educational formats. We must use the experience we had, and in the future universities must be prepared when there is a need for urgent remote learning.

According to the results of our research, distance learning is a serious challenge for students, facing a lack of technical support for teaching, but also a feeling of being burdened by numerous obligations. Students are most motivated when they are doing something for college (47%), but they perceive learning less as fun (33%). Persistence is perceived by students as the strongest characteristic of the examined variables, 61% complete every task they start, 56% work on the task until they finish it and 39% stick to their study plans. Despite serious socialization challenges, 47% feel supported by their colleagues, and 43% are connected with their colleagues, but 85% feel the greatest connection with their family members.

The implementation of quality online education certainly requires a better learning platform, as well as well-prepared teaching staff, but also the preparation of the students is particularly



important. Under the preparation of the students, we support the basic technical skills of the student, but also technical support and assistive technology necessary for the implementation of online teaching, but in the process of preparation, the adaptive abilities of the student and his resilient skills play an equally important role. Hence, higher education must also take care of the student's mental health, build a support system during the entire educational process, and especially in crises such as the pandemic.

This research may serve as a framework for future research on a tailored intervention to support students adapting to online and remote education. Important aspects that should remain in focus during online teaching are the student's socialization and sense of belonging while taking into account their motivation, attention, and effort regulation during self-study.

## Limitations

The present study is not free from limitations. To assess the adaptation of students to distance learning during the first pandemic months, only a self-report measure was used. While participants may not be representative of North Macedonia students, this represents a substantial sample for a rapid, time-sensitive survey. For a better understanding of the adaptation of students to distance learning during a pandemic situation, a longitudinal study is more recommended, considering all other factors that affect distance learning.

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## COMPREHENSION READING AS PART OF A TEXT INTERPRETATION

**Abstract:** Understanding a text in teaching is based on reading and experiencing it. One of the tasks of the Macedonian language refers to training the student for independent experience, understanding and evaluation of literary works of art from different genres.

Interpreting a literary work in the text-teaching-student triangle implies several levels of consideration of teaching literature: teaching purpose and tasks, program content, interpretive models, textbook, teacher characteristics and student's cognitive-experiential possibilities.

The purpose of teaching Macedonian is for students to master the basic laws of the language in which they will properly express themselves orally and in writing, to get to know, experience and be able to understand certain literary works.

**Keywords:** Text, Reading comprehension, Interpretation, Realization

Understanding a text in teaching is based on reading and experiencing it. One of the tasks of the Macedonian language refers to training the student for independent experience, understanding and evaluation of literary works of art from different genres.

Interpreting a literary work in the text-teaching-student triangle implies several levels of consideration of teaching literature: teaching purpose and tasks, program content, interpretive models, textbook, teacher characteristics and student's cognitive-experiential possibilities.

The purpose of teaching Macedonian is for students to master the basic laws of the language in which they will properly express themselves orally and in writing, to get to know, experience and be able to understand certain literary works.

In the third and fourth grade, in the program provided for the Macedonian language, the students are introduced deeper in the process of reading and understanding what has been read. When interpreting a given text, the analytical and synthetic method are used to a greater extent, and it needs to be interwoven with solving problematic problems arising from the text and experiences through which the student will begin to perceive, discover, research, evaluate and conclude. In this way the curiosity, the conscious activity and the research activity of the student are stimulated.

Comprehension of the text is a state in which cognitive, emotional and motivational factors act. Attention is paid to certain objects or situations based on previous experiences. In this way a unique experience is formed, which Kant denotes by the term "unique experience." This real, special, unique, that a text can provide can only be achieved in direct interaction between the individual and the work.

Understanding what is read has different meanings that refer to understanding the cause-and-effect relationship, identifying the problem and defining it as perceiving, devising, linking new information or new content to what has already been adopted. In determining the understanding, the inclusion of the new and the unknown in the circle of the old and the known is emphasized, ie the connection of new information with the previously adopted, the realization of the essence and the

various functional connections and relations. "This connection can consist of different thought operations: classification (new information is classified into some learned information), analogy (new information is similar to certain previous information), placement of new information in a sequence."

Understanding is often equated with understanding, that is, "Understanding is sometimes defined as the result of cognition, but not the ultimate goal in teaching, but as a prerequisite for practical application."

Understanding what is read as well as spoken communication is based on discovering and actively processing meaningful information. When studying the process of understanding, there is a path that starts from a formed speech statement and that leads to understanding its content, through a general thought contained in the text and finally, to the motive that underlies it. The process of understanding the text is possible from three conditions. First, the recipient must know how to perceive and understand a particular word-lexical unit of speech. The phonetic composition and the meaning of the word are the basic material of the process of decoding the utterance. Then, it is necessary to understand the structure of the sentence, ie to discover the meaning of the word system that allows the formulation of certain thoughts. Finally, as certain sentences, which are elementary statements, become clear, the decoding process moves to the final stage – understanding what is being said. Just as the meaning of a sentence is not equal to the sum of the meanings of certain words, neither is the meaning of the utterance exhausted by the meaning of individual sentences. To fully understand what is being said, the order of the sentences, the recipient must select those that are crucial and formulate a general thought from the utterance, and then decipher the motive of the utterance that makes up the subtext.

In order to reach that meaning, it is necessary to go through a long and complex cognitive path, which the reader himself educates and transforms. The reader's search for meaning symbolizes the perseverance and patience of the "shaping and spiritual journey" of the literary text in "its repetition and metamorphosis", in order to examine and explore until "middle convergence" emerges, the hearth from which the whole structure radiates and the whole meaning, which Claudel calls a "dynamic pattern."

In order to achieve the goal of teaching literature, which refers to understanding when reading a literary text, the analysis should bypass the superficial part and through the internal subtext to reach the teaching of the general meaning, up to the motive that is hidden, in the behavior of the characters in the text.

In the scientific and professional understandings of the literary and artistic text, the application of the logical whole and the research is techniques. The elements of the structure of a text are analyzed, and the meaning and implication are synthesized. Understanding is an attempt to get closer to the value of the work, the effort to discover the ultimate truth. Through thought-out teaching, students are trained to independently judge the value of the text. If we put this in a broader context, the teaching opinion of literature can be transformed into a student opinion of life in general. The programmatic determination of the understanding of the literary text in the teaching of literature does not specify the notion of understanding. The literature available to the teacher treats this complex problem from different aspects (philosophical, psychological, literary theoretical, methodological). It is emphasized that there are no established, universal and valid methodological and methodological systems of understanding applicable to every literary text equally.

The experience and understanding of a literary text as a goal of teaching literature is operationalized in several levels, each of which is divergent and none is final. The literary text is like a living organism, and not just a subject of study, it is a constant challenge for the interpreter. In the interpretive model in the teaching of literature in the student's consciousness the meaning of a literary text is formed. The text is especially interpretive for the student whose experiential-cognitive possibilities at the entry line of intellectual and psychological development in general, as well as the development of his special inclinations and interests.

Comprehension reading is one of the psychological processes that most people intuitively accept, so it is very difficult to give an expert definition for it. The only useful definition of this process could be: “Reading with understanding is the simultaneous separation and construction of meaning through the practice and interaction of written language.” The content of this definition highlights two main determinants of this complex cognitive activity. Namely, the phrase separation and construction emphasizes that one direction of the process of reading comprehension is the activity of the reader, which is as stated in the definition, in interaction with the other important element, the properties of the materials being read.

Comprehension reading generally covers three stages of the reader who performs this process, the properties of the text to be read and understood, and the reader’s activities through comprehension reading. What is meant by “characteristics of the reader” is intelligence, knowledge he possesses, motivation and others.

The most important for the process of reading comprehension is certainly one of the intellectual abilities in the domain of language – the ability to read comprehension. The basic property of the text for the process of reading comprehension is considered to be readability, which is a relation of structural features and comprehension of the texts. Reading with understanding or also called conscious reading, is a logical side of reading, and it consists in the student reading understands the thoughts of the content of the text. Listening to the student read with understanding, we, after the modulation of the voice and the emphasis (emphasis) in certain places and sentences, conclude whether the student understands what he is reading. The student must understand what he is reading. Reads with understanding: a) if he / she understands the meaning of words, terms and pictorial expression or at least captures the meaning of the content; b) if he understands the meaning of the text, ie. if he knows how to find what is main and important in its content and to express it in a few sentences; c) if the student understands the conceptual orientation of the content and knows how to express his / her conceptual opinion by reading. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the unknown words in the reading classes, to perform a content analysis of the text and to explain the basic idea of the text. If the student does not understand some sentences in the text, he / she will understand the content only in rough lines or maybe he / she will understand only certain things that he / she will not be able to connect with each other. If the child memorizes some words while reading, and does not know how to explain their meaning, then he memorizes them incorrectly. It happens that the student misunderstands the content of the familiar words. Therefore, it is very important to know that in order to understand a text, when it is read, it is necessary to include the following 3 stages: explanation of unknown words, content analysis of the text and explanation of the basic idea.

Explaining unfamiliar words, how to get to the meaning of unfamiliar words or words with a figurative meaning: do students ask for an explanation or does the teacher ask about it? What is the form of explanation: in the form of a definition or some other form? How deeply we can go in and explain, without harming him, but intensifying the experience of the text.

There are different answers to these questions: It is up to the student to ask for the unknown words to be explained to him, because he asks the one who wants to know more. However, there are teachers who do not know what the student knows and what needs to be explained. The student must sense when the time is right to ask a question. After reading a certain whole, there is a small psychological break and then it is the right moment to ask a question.

If the students read the text (based on previously assigned tasks) at home, they need to notice the unknown words and ask the school to explain them. First we could get the 4th graders used to looking for the explanation of the unknown words at home in dictionaries, lexicons or other literature, and then from the teacher. The most important unknown words should be explained because of them the student will not understand the text or will misunderstand it, so it is important to explain either in the introductory part or in the reading or in the content analysis

of the text. Students will understand the content of many sentences from the context, so there will be no need to explain them.

When explaining words, it would be convenient to have the explanation in the context of a sentence in the text. Explanations of words should sometimes be visual because students have not seen or seen those objects but do not know what they are called. So it would be good to see that object live or in a picture to understand it better. Explanations of unfamiliar words should not be long, but short, but to emphasize the part that is related to the text. In some cases it is enough to just say a synonym for the word that will be familiar to them. Abstract words are the most difficult to explain, especially those that express feelings, emotions, or character traits. We often explain such words from personal experience or from everyday life.

Content analysis of the text certain thoughts, their interrelationship and the main thought in the read text, students will not understand without being explained. The explanation is done by asking questions from the text or such questions with the help of which the connection between certain thoughts will be explained or the content will be divided into parts, the main thoughts will be found in the parts and the main thought of the whole text. In order to determine the main thought in the text, questions from the text are asked, all in order for the students to understand the content of the text, and at the same time the speech is practiced, so that the answers they give should be complete and correctly pronounced. The scientific-popular texts are divided into logical wholes, and the literary-artistic texts according to the number of important events in the text.

The plan of the board also occupies a very important place in the content analysis. It can be in the form of a picture or in the form of questions. This type of plan is the easiest and is most often used in the first and second grade. Somewhat more complicated in the form of a sentence is the plan that is found in the third and fourth grade. However, often the teacher can make a combination of several types of plan to bring the content closer to the students. The plan can be made with the help of several pictures that show an event. The teacher attaches the pictures, and the students find the parts to which the pictures refer in the text. The students read that part and explain, after which they concluded that that part of the text refers to that picture. Drawings by students can also be used to compile such a plan. In such a case, the text is divided into several parts and it is determined which of that part should be displayed with a drawing. Later, the most successful drawing is selected for each part. Students then arrange the drawings in the order in which the text takes place. Students can also be asked to find in the sections those sentences that best express what is on the drawing and write it under it. In this way a combination of a plan with sentences and drawings is obtained. Such tasks force students to delve into the content of the text, to read carefully and understand what is read, in order to create a better idea of what they need to draw. When working on a certain text should not be exaggerated by asking questions. Only the most necessary questions should be asked and only in order for the student to wander a little and delve deeper into the text and make a conclusion about what he has read. At the same time, working in groups is recommended, in order to activate all students.

Explanation of the basic idea the basic idea (thought) in a literary-artistic text must not be imposed on students. For that, it is necessary to ask them such questions and tasks with the help of which they will take a certain position on their own. There are texts in which the main idea or thought consists in the title of the text, and it can also be written at the end of the text as a message or lesson. Moreover, there are texts in which the student really needs to delve deeper and elaborate on the text to arrive at the main idea.

The meaning of some literary-artistic texts will be much clearer if the teacher reads the text to them expressively, with good intonation in certain places where expressions of feelings and emotions are found. At the same time, it can often play a big role, and that in the text are found parts of text from other subjects already known to children, such as. from nature and society. If

these two hours are put in the schedule one after the other, then understanding the meaning of the text will be much easier because the two contents are interrelated.

Comprehension reading ability is usually tested with standardized comprehension reading tests. These tests usually consist of a small number of texts, which can be of different lengths, the understanding of which is usually checked with the help of several questions of choice. Possession of such a psychological instrument has great theoretical and practical significance.

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## PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CAREER DECISIONS

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to analyze the results of the career quiz launched by Brainster in November 2020. The career quiz was solved by 7009 participants as of December 20, 2021, making it one of the biggest, if not the biggest self-assessment study on this topic in the country. The career quiz includes three types of question: 32 questions which are intended to determine the personality type of the respondent in accordance with the 16 Myers–Briggs personality types; 30 questions to determine the respondents' affinity towards digital skills based on their personal characteristics and 4 questions focusing on the personal data of the participants required for getting personalized career suggestions. Once they completed the quiz, participants received their specific personality type, the digital careers that are a good fit for such personality type as well as how the specific personality type would act in a team and as a leader. The results show high validity of the quiz results in regards to both the specific personality type and recommended career based on the feedback of the participants regarding how true and relevant the results are to them (4.27 and 3.97 respectively on a 5-point Likert scale).

**Keywords:** Personality traits, MbtI types, Career personality, Career decisions

## Introduction

One of the greatest challenges our country faces in the field of education is the incompatibility of what is offered by formal education and the needs and requirements of the labor market as well as the new types of professions that are not covered by formal education. This has been confirmed by research conducted in 2019 by Mojsoska-Blazevski [1] which states that only 45% of respondents without higher education reported that the skills and knowledge acquired during the educational process are useful to perform their current jobs' tasks and responsibilities, while 23% reported that the knowledge and skills acquired through the educational process are useless in the context of their existing job, and 30% answered that they could only partially use the acquired knowledge and skills in the context of the existing job. Similarly, only 52% answered that their educational field is relevant to their job, while 22% answered that their current job requires a completely different field of education from the one they went through in their educational process.

The numbers are slightly more positive for respondents with higher education, where just under 70% stated that their educational qualifications and study field are appropriate for their current job, 13% reported that their current job requires a completely different educational field, while 10% reported that their current job does not require knowledge and skills in any particular educational area. Considering the above stated, we, as an organization that is a leader in formal and non-formal education in our country, have decided to conduct our own research by creating a tool named "Career Quiz" that we launched in December 2020. The online tool has operated publicly since its launch as it is still open to the public. Anyone interested can take the quiz at the following link: <https://careers.brainster.co/quiz>

In addition to the aforementioned discrepancies between what the formal education system offers in our country and what is required by the labor market, we decided to explore yet another relationship closely related to the abovementioned discrepancy through the usage of our tool, i.e., the mismatch of the respondents' current careers with their ideal careers and career goals. With this tool, we also analyzed the personality type of each respondent and which digital profession would suit the respondent best, given that digital professions are resistant to automation and extinction. For this purpose, we used the 16 Myers – Briggs personality types which are based on the Carl G. Jung theory for psychological types [2], where all respondents who took the test were placed within one of these 16 personality types. We chose the Myers – Briggs personality type as the basis for determining the personality type since according to Stein and Swan [3], MBTI tests are one of the most commonly used metrics through which personality traits are measured and which are not only quite popular but also have long lifespan since this test has been first used 70 years ago. According to the above-mentioned research, over 2 million people take the MBTI test each year and 89 of the Fortune 100 Most Successful Companies List use this test for their employees as a regular practice, making a sufficient argument to base our tool on this test.

The results of the career quiz discussed and analyzed in this article refer to a period of just over a year, i.e., from the launch of this tool in November 2020 to December 20th 2021. This time period was chosen in order to provide a significant sample and an appropriate number of career quiz results so that relevant conclusions can be drawn. As mentioned above, the purpose of the career quiz is multifaceted:

- Respondents will determine and acquaint themselves with their personality type and personality code based on the 16 Myers – Briggs personality types.
- We shall determine the relationship between the respondent's personality type and their ideal career.
- We will analyze the proportion of people whose current career is the same as their dream career.

## Methodology

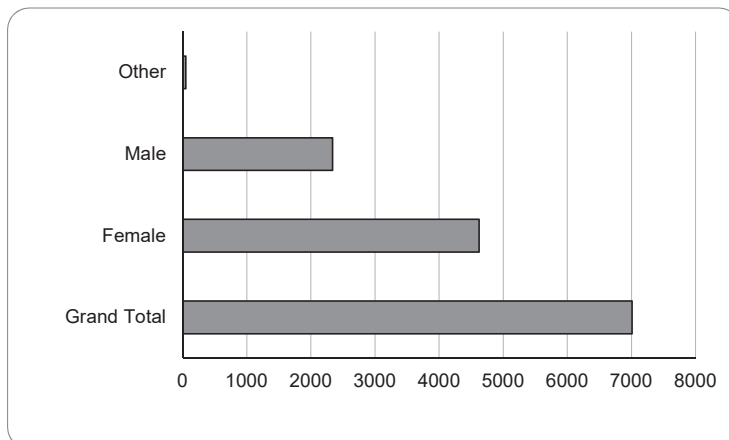
The career quiz comprises 3 parts with a different set of questions. The first part is composed of 32 questions for the respondent to determine which of the 16 types of persons they belong to. Each of these personality types has its own characteristics and strengths that are best associated with certain professions. In this set of questions, respondents chose their preferences on a 5-point scale to fit into one of the 16 Myers – Briggs personality types. The second part consists of 30 questions to reveal the respondents' affinity for digital skills related to their personal characteristics. Based on the answers to this set of questions, the respondents received suggestions about which type of digital profession would suit them. The answers in this part were also on a scale of 1 to 5 stars, where 1 star means the least, and 5 stars that the respondent most agrees with the statement or question. The third and last part consists of 4 short personal data entries for each respondent, which are necessary to determine the personalized result for the personality type and their related career suggestions generated by this tool.

## Results and Discussion

From the quiz launch until December 20th 2021, a total of 7009 respondents completely answered the career quiz with relevant data that can be analyzed. Such a large number of respondents is representative of our research. We analyzed the demography of the respondents as well as the period when they took the quiz and here we provide summarized results in a couple of charts. From the demographic and informative data, we can derive (Fig. 1), it is clear that more female respondents have taken the quiz, which may indicate that females are much more interested in finding out more details about their careers, what is their personality type, and what career options from the corpus of digital technologies best suit their personality type. In terms of age (Fig. 2), it is clearly visible that 18-year-olds are most interested in discovering which personality type they belong to, as well as which career options from the corpus of digital technologies correspond to their specific persona, which is not surprising since at that age students complete their high school education and decide whether to proceed with university education and what they will do if they do not. Also unsurprisingly, the ages 19 to 26 are the following most prominent age categories that were most interested in the career quiz which is to be expected taking into consideration that at this point in life it is usually easiest to make career changes, given that people at these ages have merely just started their first jobs and are at the very beginning of their careers.

**Figure 1**

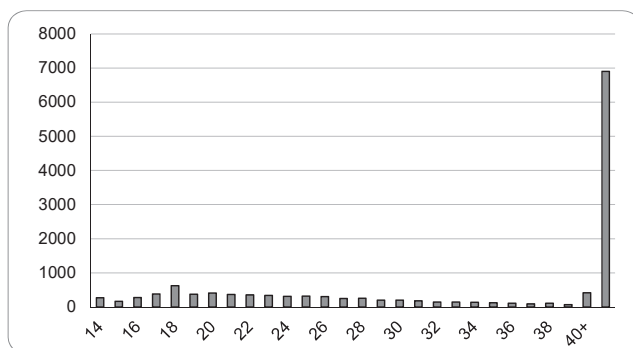
Respondent gender distribution





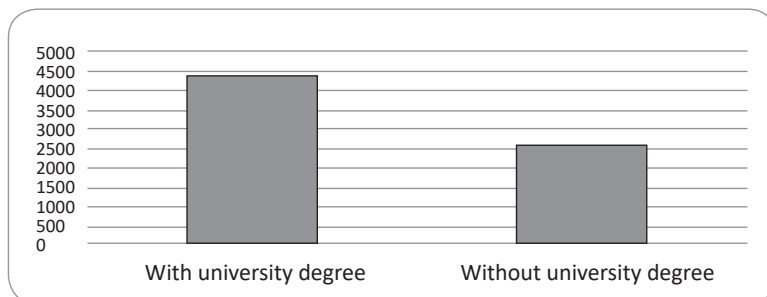
What is interesting is the representation of the 40+ age group. There are just over 400 participants who took the quiz and who have more than 40 years. We found this quite surprising, which can be told from the bare fact that we didn't even offer them an option to select their age, but instead we put them into a 40+ cluster. This result clearly indicates that there is no upper age limit regarding self-awareness and potential alternative career options. Although at first quite an uncommon finding, when we searched the available literature to see if this is just a coincidence or a phenomenon, we found that many researchers have reported that tech-savvy jobs are interesting for every age group [4] and are motivating people to switch to these creative, digital careers even later in life after pursuing a given traditional career for years and even decades [5]. Our results offer a proof to these findings.

**Figure 2**  
Respondent age distribution



It is also an interesting fact that most of the respondents have a university education (Fig. 3) which indicates that even though many people have already gone through higher education, they do not stop thinking about their career and the direction it may take. This, as an occurrence, was quite uncommon, even unthinkable a few decades ago when careers of university-educated individuals were entirely dependent on the study field in which they graduated. The lifelong learning concept is slowly but surely ensuring that university degrees become indecisive for an individual's career. Although they can help kickstart the young students' careers, the long-term development of one's skills and the profession that the person will be working in isn't conditioned by the university the one visited.

**Figure 3**  
Respondent educational distribution

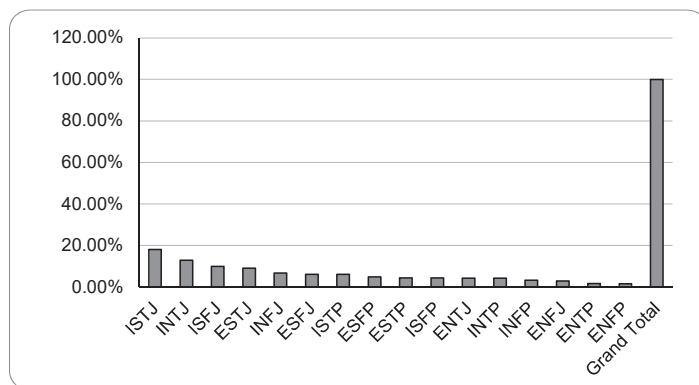


When analyzing the distribution of the personality types (Fig. 4), we wanted to check how Macedonian respondents' personality types are distributed compared to the US population. We took the US population as a benchmark since MBTI tests are the longest implemented in the USA.

Interestingly, the most common personality type of the respondents is ISTJ, a result received by 18% of respondents, which is not far from the data of Lawrence and Martin (2001) [6] according to which 11.6% of the US population falls under this personality type, making it the third most commonly represented in the American population. A greater discrepancy occurs in the second most common personality type, where 12.9% of them found that they belong to the INTJ type, which is present in only 2.1% of the American population and is the 3rd rarest personality type in the USA. And at the bottom, we have an even greater discrepancy between our respondents and the American population. The rarest personality type among our respondents was ENFP with 1.6% which is represented by 8.1% of the American population and thus ranks 7th out of 16 personality types in the USA. We have a more minor discrepancy among the second rarest type of personality in our quiz – ENTP which is represented by 1.7% of our respondents while in the American population it is represented by 3.2% which is the fourth rarest type of person in the USA.

**Figure 4**

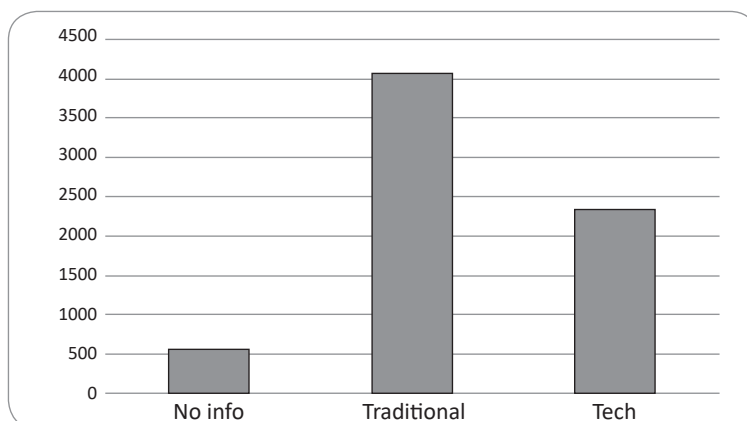
Respondent personality type based on the 16 Myers – Briggs personality types



In addition to the analysis of the above-presented data, the purpose of the career quiz was to find the particular area in which the respondents' ideal career falls and whether it belongs to the category of professions of the future (predominantly digital professions) or in the traditional professions (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5**

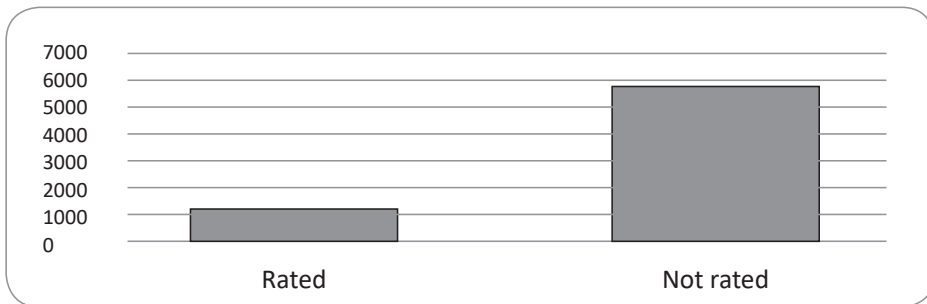
Category of the chosen ideal career



As the chart shows, the results from this part of the career quiz indicate that a large proportion of participants (almost twice as many) still opt for traditional professions as their ideal careers. These results are similar to those from the research by Mann, Denis, Schleicher, et al. (2020) [7] who showed that about half of respondents coming from 41 countries and who are 15 years old expect or want to work in one of 10 careers marked as traditional, some of which are at risk of vanishing due to the growing trend of automation. This research also states an interesting fact regarding the careers and professions marked as traditional, i.e., professions that have existed for over 2 centuries such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, veterinarians, engineers, police officers and business managers. It is interesting to mention that these traditional professions are actually becoming increasingly popular among teenagers in the last 20 years, despite all the changes and transformations in the jobs that have already occurred, that are still happening and will continue to happen in the coming period. This research found a very small or almost non-existent correlation between the career aspirations of the teens involved in this research and the anticipated needs of the labor market, which indicates that market signals and new trends in the world of work do not reach young people or awaken their imagination. However it must be taken into account there are differences between our analysis and that of Mann, Denis, Schleicher, et al. (2020) [7] in the aspect of the respondents' age, i.e., in their research, the respondents are exclusively teenagers, whereas our career quiz has no age limit and our respondents' age ranges from 14 to above 40. During the research and analysis of the career quiz results, we also wanted to examine whether and to what extent the respondents believe that they actually match the personality type they received as a result of the career quiz. These results are presented in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

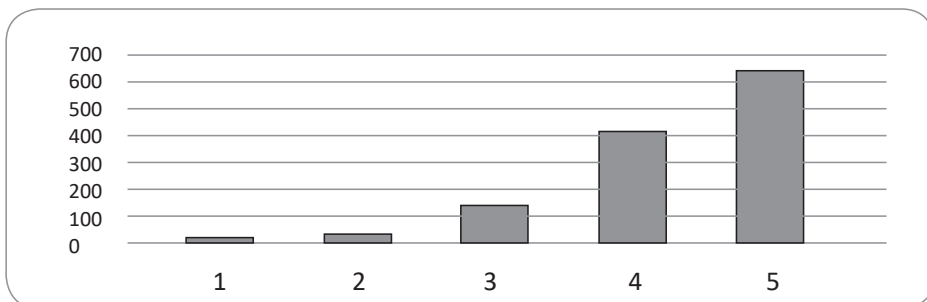
**Figure 6**

Number of respondents who answered whether they match the personality type according to the results of the career quiz



**Figure 7**

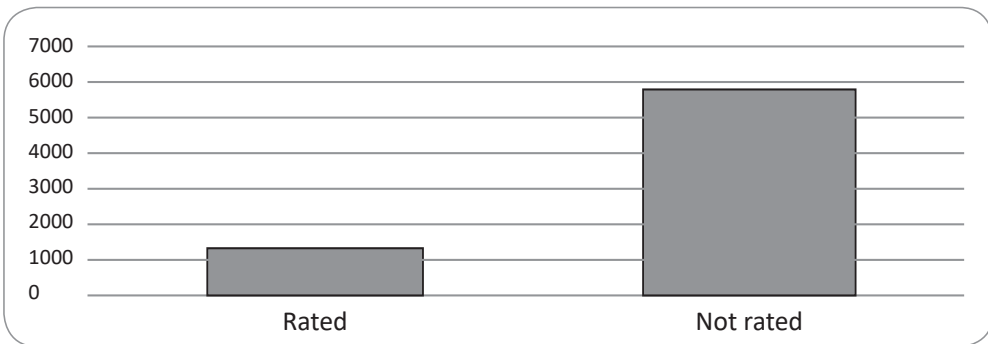
Match between perceived personality type and the personality type based on the results of the career quiz (1-not match at all, 5-perfect match)



As seen from Figure 5, only 1259 respondents answered whether and to what extent they match the type of person they belong to according to the career quiz results, while 5749 did not give an answer. One of the reasons why so few respondents answered this question might be the fact that this question was asked after receiving the results of the career quiz, as an optional question whose intention is for the respondent to evaluate the experience with the quiz. Out of 1259 respondents, the average score in terms of how much they match the personality type they belong to according to the results of the career quiz is 4.27 (Fig. 7), which indicates the high reliability of the results of the quiz given the fact that each of the respondents best knows whether they match and the extent to which they match the description of the personality type result that they received from the quiz. To further examine the validity of the quiz results, we also analyzed whether and how many respondents think that the professional suggestions recommended to them based on the quiz result are suitable. We did this by offering them an option to rate the results that the tool generated and evaluate whether the results actually match their perception of their strengths or not. They could evaluate the tool's results on a 5-point scale with 1 being less correct and 5 being the most correct prediction. The results are presented in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

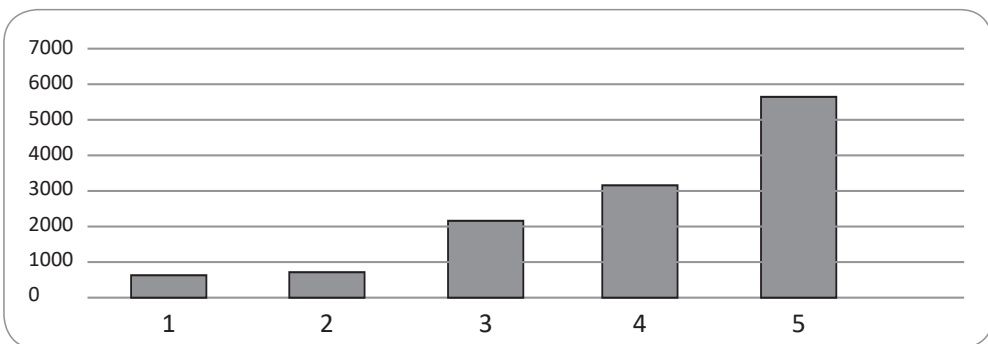
**Figure 8**

Number of respondents who answered whether the professions that were recommended to them based on the results of the quiz are suitable to them



**Figure 9**

Evaluation of the suitability of the professions that were recommended to the respondents based on the result of the quiz (1-not suitable at all, 5-perfect match)



The ratio of respondents who answered whether and how much they relate to one of the professions that were recommended to them based on the quiz result is very similar to the results that referred to the previous question – 1240 respondents answered, 5768 did not answer. This is not surprising given the fact that this optional question followed immediately after the previous optional question in the section that requires an assessment of the experience with the quiz by the respondent. The average score in this instance was 3.97 which is slightly less compared to the corresponding average for the previous question, but it is still high enough to confirm the validity of the career quiz in this part as well – whether and how many respondents relate to any of the professions that were recommended to them based on the result of the quiz.

Finally, we analyzed the data on how many respondents believe their current career is ideal. We based this analysis on answers from the questions related to both the current and ideal career, i.e., if the answers to both questions are identical, it is considered that the respondent is currently working in his ideal career. Only 25% of the respondents left relevant answers to both questions, and 42.2% answered that their current career is also their ideal one. This data may indicate that as many as 57.8% of the respondents are ready for changes in their careers, given that they did not evaluate their current career as ideal. These figures are not far from the results of Dishman (2021) [8] which showed that 52% of workers in the United States want to make a change in their careers.

## Conclusion

The career quiz can rightly be called one of the biggest researches in Macedonia in the field of career analysis. Given that in less than 13 months the career quiz was taken 7009 times (with relevant data that is the subject of this analysis), it can be concluded that this is a valid representative sample for the analysis and conclusions included in this article. One limitation of this research is the validation of the data entered by the respondents in terms of their identity, age, gender, and education. This data was provided solely by the respondents and was not verified in any way. Some type of verification could be added as a mechanism, but it is our opinion that such a mechanism would undoubtedly reduce the number of respondents who would participate in such research. It is very important to point out that the validity of the quiz results in terms of the personality type and the recommended profession based on the personality type is confirmed by the high average scores (4.27 and 3.97 respectively on a scale from 1 to 5) that the respondents gave in terms of the extent to which they consider the obtained results to be accurate and relevant, increasing the research value of this quiz. Another noteworthy fact is that the quiz is based on the 16 Myers – Briggs personality types developed following Carl G. Jung's theory of psychological types that are the basis for the MBTI tests have been used for over 70 years all around the world which allows the results of this quiz to be compared with the corresponding results from many countries that have conducted similar research. Finally, the fact that as many as 57.2% of respondents believe that their current career cannot be described as their ideal career leaves room for the results of this quiz to help them examine whether their personality type fits any of the digital professions of the future and thus, through re-qualification and retraining to be able to pursue a career in one of these highly paid and demanded professions.

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## **REPRESENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN CROATIAN RESEARCH ON EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has posed numerous challenges in various fields and areas of life. This research paper is focused exclusively on the field of education. The aim of this research is to determine how much the topic of education in the COVID-19 pandemic is represented in Croatian research on education and which guidelines the researched sources provide in response to pedagogical challenges.

The research was conducted within the quantitative paradigm by the documentation analysis process. The analysis of all available original scientific papers published in scientific journals in the field of pedagogy in the Republic of Croatia is focused on the time period from the beginning of the pandemic to the time of the research. Apart from the analysis of the representation of analyzed researches, which is one of the research questions, all sources are categorized according to the criteria of the subject of the educational process to which the papers are directed (parent, teacher, student). From all available scientific research papers, a synthesis of results was made, presented by selected categories. The concluding part of the paper discusses the results of the analyzed sources and their reflection on the field of crisis pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Educational challenges, Crisis

### **Introductory Remarks**

The year 2020 brought the global pandemic to the world caused by the SARS-CoV-2 corona virus. The arrival of the virus rapidly changed the form and function of all social subsystems, as well as the established everyday life of most of the world's population. What was initially a health crisis soon began to have a significant effect on the realms of trade, tourism and the economy, and the educational system was also not spared the consequences of the global reach of this disease. This was also how it was in the Republic of Croatia, where by means of various *decisions, recommendations* and *models* adopted by the Government, attempts were made to prevent or limit the harmful effects of the pandemic on education. In so doing the Government tried to

find a way to respect the requirements of the various disciplines, professions and groups in organizing classes, and children's right to education on the one hand, but in this situation also the much more important right, the right to health, on the other. In order to respect both these rights, remote learning was found to be the most appropriate form of education. On 16th March 2020, the *Decision to halt teaching at institutions of higher education, high and elementary schools, and the regular work of pre-school educational establishments and establish remote learning* (Government of the RC, 2020) was adopted, and remained in force until May. During this period of time, and later, as support to teachers and students, teaching was organized by means of television broadcasts<sup>33</sup>. In September of the following school year (2020/2021) the Ministry of Science and Education offered three models of teaching to which individual elements of the school system or schools were to align their work according to the current epidemiological situation on a local level. The models offered were: Model A – in which educational work and classes were conducted in the school, Model B – which was a mixed form of education work/classes (some in the school, some remote – two days in school, three days at home, or one week in school, one week at home), and Model C – which related to remote education work and classes. The Decision on the application of and move to a specific model was left to each school principal, in cooperation with the founder and the competent local crisis office (MSE, 2020). Later procedures were regulated by various documents, primarily *Models and recommendations for work in conditions related to COVID-19 in the 2021/2022 school year* (MSE, 2021).

However, alongside the Government of the RC and the MSE, other stakeholders in society also tried to respond to this crisis situation. Members of the academic community were certainly amongst them, coming from various scientific perspectives, and often using a multidisciplinary approach, to study the various ways, features, directions and consequences which the pandemic was placing before us. In this paper, which is pedagogic in nature, we focus exclusively on the field of education in order to establish the representation and focus of scientific articles published in the Republic of Croatia since the beginning of the pandemic.

## **The Methodology of the Empirical Part**

The aim of this paper is to establish how far the subject of education during the COVID-19 pandemic is present in Croatian educational research, and which pointers the sources researched provide in response to the educational challenges.

The first task of the research was to establish the presence of studies on the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially singling out the scientific field, the type of study and the journal. The second task was aimed at establishing the branch of pedagogy to which the analyzed studies belong. The third task aimed at establishing a perspective in relation to the subjects of the educational process:

- students (grades 1-4, grades 5-8, and high school and university students),
- education workers (teachers of grades 1-4, subject teachers (grades 5-8), high school teachers, pre-school teachers, educational staff in pupils' hostels and children's homes, principals),
- parents
- adults and/or third age persons.

The fourth task was aimed at singling out and categorizing challenges in the field of education, from the content of the selected sources.

On the basis of the aim set and the tasks of the research, the following hypotheses were defined:

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<sup>33</sup> This is not the first time that this form of classes has been organized in the Republic of Croatia. In 1991. a special educational programme was organized entitled *Wartime TV School* and *Wartime Radio School*.

- H1: There is a visibly varied selection of studies on topics arising from the COVID-19 pandemic
- H1.1: The social sciences make a visible contribution
- H1.2: Scientific papers make a greater contribution than professional studies
- H1.3: The analyzed topic is evenly distributed through all educational journals
- H2: Didactics and school pedagogy as branches of pedagogy are most common in research papers
- H3: All subjects are equally represented in research
- H4: The contents of studies indicate the many challenges in education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the sample for this research we primarily chose all journals with published papers related to the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic with a published ID number on the portal for scientific journals of the Republic of Croatia – Hrčak (Table 1). From the chosen scientific fields, we targeted the category of social sciences, and the field of education. Within the social field of education, we focused exclusively on scientific papers (original scientific articles, prior communications and review papers), whilst professional and all other studies were not the subject of analysis (Table 2). Further selection was conducted according to the criterion of pedagogic orientation, that is, the journals were selected whose titles and content in terms of papers indicated that they deal primarily with educational matters. For example, journals that state that one of their fields of interest is pedagogy, but the titles and Abstracts of the papers do not indicate a clear primary orientation towards education were not included in the analysis (e.g. *Turizam: međunarodni znanstveno-stručni časopis, Jah; Educatio Biologiae, Eho* etc.). Further, only those journals with published papers dealing with the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic were included in the analyzed journals, along with those which had papers published after 11th March 2020 when the World Health Organization declared the previous epidemic a pandemic. Using these criteria, we selected the following fifteen journals: *Hrvatski časopis za odgoj i obrazovanje; Metodički ozori; Napredak; Metodički ogledi; Školski vjesnik; Život i škola; Acta Iadertina; Obrazovanje za poduzetništvo; Andragoški glasnik; Politehnika; Magistra Iadertina; Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja; Mostariensia; Inetrdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems and Odgojno – obrazovne teme* (Table 3). The units of analysis in this research are scientific papers published in one of the issues of the analyzed journals in Hrčak. All the analyzed journals had their own classification of papers, which we respected in our analysis. Of the total of 1617 scientific papers published, by selective analysis we singled out a total of 31 papers that comprised a unit of analysis in the empirical part of this study.

The instrument we used was created for the needs of this research, and consists of a protocol with a coded plan for analysis of scientific papers, where the protocol corresponds to the research questions set. The research was conducted in May 2022. The intention was to classify papers by multiple readings, responding to the hypotheses set. In the search for answers, it was sometimes sufficient to use the Abstracts of the papers (H1 and H2), but in the search for answers to the other hypotheses studious, multiple readings of the entire papers was necessary. To confirm or refute the last hypothesis, H4, each paper was analyzed by singling out the key challenges in the field of the paper, detected by both researchers separately, followed by the joint constructive alignment of the challenges detected.

For categorization of the papers according to the chosen criteria, we were guided by the *Regulations on Scientific and Artistic Areas, Fields and Branches* (2009). When a paper was categorized in the appropriate scientific area, we would categorize the paper in the branch of pedagogy to which it belonged in terms of content. We categorized some papers in several branches of pedagogy due to the nature of the content and the subject of research (e.g. didactics and school pedagogy). Data from the protocol were aligned manually, in a way that made quantification possible.



The categories relating to the replies to the hypotheses stemmed from the expressions the authors used when listing the aims of their research, therefore there are visible terminological inaccuracies, especially in relation to didactic and pedagogic topics which were especially relevant to the pandemic. This problem was researched separately by the authors Nemeth-Jajić and Jukić (2021), who pointed out the existence of different terminological definitions, such as: remote teaching, on-line classes, distance learning, e-classes, on-line learning, e-learning etc. The processing of the data with the separate variable of the representation of educational challenges in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic in Croatian research on education included manual alignment, categorization and establishing of frequencies.

## Analysis of the Results and Discussion

In the search for an answer to the first hypothesis, we analyzed the available sources that were pointed out in the selected sample. The analyzed data are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

The number of papers in relation to scientific field

No.	SCIENTIFIC FIELD	N
1.	Biomedicine and Health Sciences	560
2.	Social Sciences	479
3.	The Humanities	211
4.	Technical Sciences	131
5.	Interdisciplinary scientific fields	98
6.	Natural sciences	77
7.	Biotechnology	41
8.	The Arts	21
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1617</b>

Table 1. shows that the presumption was confirmed that the subject of the pandemic and its effect on various subsystems of society has been dealt with by scientists from various scientific areas. This confirms hypothesis H1. From all the scientific areas selected, Biomedicine and Health were most prominent, which is to be expected in view of the nature of the pandemic. From the same table it may also be seen that social research made a visible contribution, whereby sub-hypothesis H1.1. was also confirmed.

Since the subject of this paper focuses on the social area, in this paper we targeted the sources belonging to the social area of pedagogy, and divided them up according to the type of study. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

The number and type of papers published in the social field of pedagogy

No.	Social field of pedagogy	N
1.	Scientific papers	55
2.	Professional papers	35
3.	Others	12
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>

The analysis confirmed that the number of total sources for analysis in the field of pedagogy was 102 of which 55 papers were in the category of scientific papers, 35 professional and 12 others (brief statement, presentations, introductions etc.). Table 2. shows that we also accepted the sub-hypothesis H1.2 because the leading place amongst these papers was held by scientific papers. Further, in our analysis of the sources, we focused exclusively on scientific papers published in journals with dominantly pedagogic topics, because they were appropriate for the aim of the research. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

The number of scientific articles published in journals with dominantly pedagogic topics

No.	Scientific journals	N
	Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems	1
	Acta Iadertina	3
	Obrazovanje za poduzetništvo – E4E	1
	Andragoški glasnik	3
	Croatian Journal of Education	2
	Školski vjesnik	2
	Politehnika	1
	Magistra Iadertina	1
	Metodički obzori	1
	Metodički ogledi	3
	Život i škola	2
	Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja	1
	Moštariensia	1
	Napredak	8
	Odgojno – obrazovne teme	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>

Table 3. gives us the opportunity to confirm sub-hypothesis H1.3 because it shows the representation of papers in different journals dealing with the area of pedagogy.

The content of the second hypothesis of the research, H2, led us to an analysis of the selected papers related to a specific field or branch of pedagogy. Our analysis of the papers confirmed that some studies touched on several branches of pedagogy, such as for example special education, school pedagogy and didactics.

**Table 4**

The number of scientific papers published in journals in relation to the branch of pedagogy

No.	Branch	N
	5.07.01 general pedagogy	1
	5.07.02 didactics	20
	5.07.03 general and the national history of pedagogy	0
	5.07.04 pedagogy of early and pre-school education	3

	5.07.05 school pedagogy	9
	5.07.06 pedagogy of higher education	5
	5.07.07 adult education (andragogy)	2
	5.07.08 social pedagogy	0
	5.07.09 family pedagogy	2
	5.07.10 special education	2

The highest number of papers is clearly in the field of didactics, meaning we were able to accept the second hypothesis set, H2.

The third hypothesis, H3, focused research on the subjects of the research. The categorization of papers in relation to this particular element may be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5**

The number of scientific papers published in relation to the representation of subjects of education in the research

Subjects	Field	N	
Students	Grades 1-4	0	17
	Grades 5-8 (subject teaching)	3	
	High School	4	
	University Students	9	
	Students with disabilities	1	
Education Workers	Grade 1-4 Teachers	4	13
	Subject Teachers	5	
	High School Teachers	1	
	Principals	1	
	Pre-school Teachers	1	
	Educators in Homes	1	
Parents		5	5
Third Age		1	1
Other		3	3

From the analysis of the results of the research, we disproved hypothesis H3. It is clear that not all subjects were equally represented. It is clear that students were in the center of attention of the research, and only after them education workers, with the emphasis on teachers employed in elementary schools. Parents were significantly less represented in the research, and adults, especially the elderly and infirm, minimally. Even if the paper was focused on students, it is clear that not all students were equally represented. The research showed that education workers and parents had the greatest problems in the field of didactics and school pedagogy, especially relating to an early school age. Specifically, these are students in grades 1-4, but their representation according to separate criteria is not visible. It may be concluded that the authors from the research sample were mainly focused on students whose developmental age, in terms of the possibility of self-regulation in studying, made the highest level of satisfaction with remote learning possible, and whose life experience and maturity made it easier to respond to the challenges in the field of

crisis pedagogy. We presume that those participants were most accessible for research in the age of the pandemic, and that the reason for this distribution of studies on the basis of subjects stems from the principle of accessibility. This question also opens up a topic for further research, because the most vulnerable group was also the least represented in this research.

The fourth hypothesis, H4, focuses on the challenges mentioned in the research sample.

In the area of early and pre-school education, the quality was researched of the partnership cooperation between teachers and parents during the time of exceptional life circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A correlation was found between their self-assessment of the partnership cooperation and the length of their work experience and the professional qualifications of the teacher. The results of the research show how teachers assessed the partnership cooperation with parents during the pandemic as good and see themselves as competent to build a partnership relationship with parents and to provide support to parents of children with disabilities. Teachers with more years of work experience see themselves as less competent in using digital technology and believe that in that regard they need more practical experience and additional theoretical training (Jurčević Lozančić and Kudek Mirošević, 2021).

Physical activity and movement were pointed out as a particular challenge in education during the pandemic. The analysis of the studies found empirical findings from a comparison of the physical activities of students and pupils, which differ in relation to gender. Statistically significant differences were found between female and male students and pupils, where male students and pupils are more involved in physical activities (Šunda, Babić and Andrijašević, 2020; Lovrinčević, 2021). In remote learning, the greatest challenge was the lack of physical contact, and the reduced autonomy and independence of students. The research into physical activity and health and physical education lessons during the pandemic was aimed at students from vocational high schools, for whom a significantly higher level of participation in recreational activities was found before lockdown than during it. In order to increase physical activity during remote learning, the authors Vrbik, Vrbik and Miholić (2021) proposed some possible solutions related to student movement and motivation for physical exercise. Some research, conducted exclusively in music schools, emphasized how it was vital to implement classes in real time during remote learning (Mičija Palić, 2021). As a particular challenge from the students' perspective (lack of) singing during the pandemic was mentioned, where it was demonstrated that members of choirs and ensembles felt more intense dissatisfaction, and that restricting singing by 5th to 8th grade students in elementary schools caused negative emotional reactions (Jurkić Sviben, and Jambrošić, 2021). A particular challenge relating to technical culture classes was mentioned in connection with remote learning. According to the authors Purković, Lapov Padovan and Delač (2021) who conducted qualitative research from the point of view of technical culture, through a semi-structured interview, it is clear that remote learning in technical culture classes was not able to develop the targeted competences in students, and cannot be an equivalent alternative to in-person classes due to the impossibility of systematic development of technical competences and the lack of social interaction (verbal, physical and emotional). In Croatian language classes, the authors Sunara Jozek and Franjo (2021) saw remote learning as the last-choice solution because in that form quality is lost which is achieved through inter-personal communication, both verbally and non-verbally, whilst the author Marčius Logožar (2021) opens up the possibility of cooperative learning in a virtual classroom. Some authors mention e-assessment as a particular challenge, pointing out the problems of student independence and the level of mastering teaching content, and thereby bring into question the purposefulness and relevance of e-assessment (Matijašević and Maras, 2022), whilst Čurković, Krašić and Katavić (2020) mention that in remote learning the teachers' personal equation changed, and they became less strict.

In the field of education of children with special needs, mainly work relating to children with disabilities was mentioned, whilst gifted children were completely overlooked. In the case study

by Alić and Kolega (2021) it was clear that their physical activity was reduced in the categories of coordination and explosive power.

Terminological differences, especially relating to didactic and pedagogic terms, which particularly came to the fore with the arrival of the pandemic, such as: remote learning, on-line classes, distance education, e-learning, e-teaching, e-classes, internet classes, virtual classes, and distance learning, were dealt with by the authors Nemeth-Jajić and Jukić (2021). Further, the results of empirical findings indicate different views of remote learning from the point of view of grade 1-4 teachers and students of education (Kostović-Vranješ, Bulić and Periša, 2021). The students' perspective can be seen in research showing the level of satisfaction of students with remote learning during the pandemic, at the Faculty of Education of the University of Zagreb. Students' satisfaction was tested in relation to four aspects: the organization and implementation of classes, the quality of the teaching content, assessment and feedback, and support and the accessibility of information. The results indicate that students were more satisfied with on-line classes, but differences were also found in their assessment of satisfaction in relation to their status (regular or part-time students). The results also indicate the need for additional education for teachers, but also a more detailed insight into students' characteristics and predispositions for successful participation in on-line classes (Šenjug Golub, Rajič and Dumančić, 2020). The results of another piece of empirical research from the students' perspective show that most students were satisfied with remote classes. Participants in the research gave the highest scores to the aspect of the structure and planning of classes, emphasizing the goals of learning and the clarity of teaching, and they gave the highest scores for the encouraging environment in the virtual classroom. The qualitative part of the research showed that participants differed in terms of their degree of adjustment to remote learning, where their personal affinities came to the fore. The research especially emphasized the importance of the role of university teachers in the teaching process, whether in in-person or on-line classes (Bušljeta Kardum, R. and Jurić Vukelić, 2021). In the research by Odak, Sesar and Vasilj (2021) the research sample comprised students, and the results of the research demonstrated that in the second semester of on-line classes they showed a higher self-assessment of their skills in the use of technology, while no differences were found between the two semesters in the level of motivation for following classes and completing tasks, or in their skill in organizing their time. Regarding satisfaction with remote learning, students in both semesters assessed the classes conducted with an average grade of "very good". As part of research into students' satisfaction with classes, the level of students' satisfaction with on-line classes in a foreign language was tested (Bačić and Krstinić, 2021). Students' attitudes were surveyed within the categories of satisfaction with the teaching, and the materials and tools available for conduct of on-line classes. In all categories, they expressed a very high degree of satisfaction, which leads to the conclusion that self-regulation is an important factor in the conduct of remote classes in the category of success and satisfaction, and this is proportional to the age of the subjects. This was also confirmed by the results of the research by Kolak, Markić and Horvat (2020a). In the challenges related to education in the conditions of a pandemic, the experiences of education workers are also an important indicator. On behalf of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Anđelić, Vučić and Buić (2020) conducted research into the experience, attitudes and needs of education workers related to conducting remote classes. The conclusions of the research show that education workers, according to their own self-assessment, demonstrated a high level of competence in the IT field, and the authors of the paper particularly emphasize digital pedagogy in work with students and other participants. The authors Ivić and Blagojević (2022) conducted comparative research into the use of IT technology by school and university students, and found that both were open to using it, and expressed a positive attitude towards the implementation of that technology in the teaching process. Some authors focused on the perception of learning from the perspective of students of two-subject courses, and in the results of their research they pointed out the factor of the excessive burden they bear (Miletić

and Radoš, 2021). The research by Šijaković and Miljković Krečar (2022) on a sample of students showed that remote learning suits part-time students significantly more than regular students. Further, the opinion of principals of special education institutions about the quality of the effectiveness of on-line classes showed their somewhat lower satisfaction with the support from the authorities. They expressed the need for additional education of students, parents and teachers, and pointed out that various needs arose related to the specific digital teaching materials intended for on-line lessons (Bakota, Pavičić-Dokoza and Punjek, 2021).

Challenges in educational work in children's homes were categorized in three groups: organizational, technological and pedagogic. From the point of view of teachers/educators in children's homes, the greatest challenge was the new, dual function of the home's educator as a substitute teacher and a substitute parent (Sovar, 2021). The parents' perspective in extraordinary distance learning was researched by the authors Drvodelić, Domović and Pažur (2021) whose aim was to establish the perception of extraordinary remote education of parents of 1st to 4th grade students. According to other research (Kolak, Markić and Horvat, 2020a) in this paper too categories were mentioned in particular indicating the high level of parental involvement in children's learning process, which increases parental stress and disturbs the everyday conduct of their own business and family obligations. One third of the participants in the research stated that remote learning was too demanding and the extent of the burden on them was related to their own level of education, employment status and their children's level of independence. The experience and opinions of 5th to 8th grade elementary school students relating to remote learning indicate that students mentioned twice as many weaknesses than advantages, which the authors Runtić and Kavelj (2020) explain by the well-developed critical attitude of students, and the difficulties with the new form of learning. The advantages mentioned most often by students were the interesting and fun classes, the use of digital quizzes and games, and the possibility of sleeping in, and the weaknesses they mention, similar to the research conducted in 2020 by Kolak, Markić and Horvat, 2020, were being given too much homework, the impossibility of socializing with their friends, difficulties understanding the class content, and the lack of explanations and teaching given by some teachers. This research indicates that only 1/3 of the participants in the research demonstrated complete independence in following and participating in on-line classes. It is positive that the results of this research prove that one quarter of parents assessed that they talked with their children, studied and showed love more often than before the pandemic, and almost half the parents assessed that they played more with their children than before lockdown, which is also in line with the research by Višnjić-Jevtić and Visković (2021), who stated that family relationships were pointed out as one of the most important dimensions of parenthood. In addition, the author Bistrić (2021) states that the level of the parents' education affects their attitudes towards the influence of television content on pre-school children during the pandemic, and Ivančević and Igić (2021) showed, from the point of view of parents of elementary school pupils, that the parents' level of education, their active employment status, and older age correlated with more positive attitudes towards the use of IT technology in remote classes during the pandemic.

The author Žiljak (2020) analyzed the obstacles and new opportunities in the field of adult education for participant management in cultural centers and institutions of adult education. The analysis was based on data on the implementation of projects in eight organizations from various parts of the RC. The significant obstacles mentioned were the impossibility of participating in educational and cultural activities by people with a lower level of education and lower social and economic status, elderly people, the disabled, the long-term unemployed, and people who live outside the main urban centers. In the field of gerontology, the challenge was mentioned of communication with elderly and infirm people, which affects their psychological state and quality of life (Stanić, Hinek and Perkušić, 2021). This source was the only one analyzed in this research, indicating the lack of research in the area of education aimed at people in the third age of life in the new circumstances.

## Concluding Remarks

The analysis of these sources using a central data portal, which brings Croatian scientific journals together in one place, offering open access to its papers, showed that the entire scientific community became actively involved in the search for answers to the questions and offering solutions to the problems caused to the entire world community by the virus. The analysis of published papers showed the dominance of the scientific field of medicine, and immediately after medicine, the field of social sciences. The field of pedagogy (education) had a visible contribution, but not all the disciplines within pedagogy were equally represented. The greatest focus was on the area of teaching, especially on-line forms of teaching, which were marginalized before the crisis caused by the pandemic. In reference to the question of the subjects of the educational process, the whole subject area is dominated by a child-centered approach, which is to be expected in a situation in education that can be called a crisis. There are no scientific papers that cover the entire school system systematically and comprehensively (although there are some scientific monographs, studies and reports), but there are numerous partial studies that cover individual parts of school subsystems or specific areas. For instance, as part of the didactics of teaching, the field of teaching methodologies appears in individual areas, that is, the methodology of individual subject areas, such as the teaching methodologies of health and physical education, music and technical culture. The sources indicate the importance of movement and physical activity for students, which may be reflected in the school system regardless of the pandemic crisis and with consideration for the sedentary style of teaching. The power of music and its connection with students' emotional reactions underlines in particular the importance and influence of students' emotions during learning activities and achieving the learning outcomes set. The analysis demonstrated that, within the field of special education, gifted students remain marginalized even in a crisis situation. The age of education workers was shown to be an important factor in responding to challenges, especially in terms of their IT competence. Taking on the role of substitute teacher and parent, and integrating the roles of parents, teachers and educators raised awareness of the importance of a joint, student-centered approach, with respect for their welfare. As expected, an excessive burden on all subjects was detected as a particular challenge, and in the field of didactics, the independence and self-regulation of students stand out as crucial factors. The parents' perspective, which was slightly less represented in the research, indicates an examination of life values and establishing priorities. The lack of any focus in educational research on the field of adult education, and especially gerontology, is an alarm to which an urgent response is needed in educational research in Croatia.

Finally, we conclude that most of the analyzed sources focus on an examination of the state and satisfaction of the subjects, which in education in a crisis situation corresponds to one of its main pillars – awareness and the process of enlightenment (Amini, 2004). Within these challenges, it can be seen that most authors find a link between awareness and meaning, and indicate that the current crisis offers an opportunity for successful transformation into potential for development.

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## **HOLISTIC DIMENSION OF CHILD ORIENTED PEDAGOGY – CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES IN EARLY LEARNING**

**Abstract:** Modern discourses indicate that the child learns and develops in his specific way that means it participates in own development. It uses original ideas thus offering challenges for pedagogical creations and influences on its individual development. Hence, we can talk about child oriented/centered pedagogy. The other side of the modern pedagogical discourses refers to the holistic approach in organizing the educational influences. It means the child is an eco- system

whose behavior reflects its interaction with the nature and the socio-constructivist environment. Hence, child development is determined by interaction with the environment.

This presupposes an educational system that relies on children's individual approaches to learning that can only be expressed through the freedom of children's interpretations and expressions. This concept corresponds to the contextual or so-called natural learning which, at the same time, provides a holistic, integrated and active educational process and enables the development of own learning style.

In order to determine whether the development of child own learning style can be integrated in the holistic integrative concept of early childhood development a sample of 106 educators, principals and professionals from several kindergartens in the area of Skopje was surveyed. As well as was interviewed 30 educators arranged in five focus groups. With the help of the descriptive method and the application of an appropriate methodological framework, the research showed significant results that presuppose interventions in terms of redefining some curricular aspects, as well as revision the professional development of educators in preschool education.

**Keywords:** Early learning, Holistic approach, Learning style

## Introduction

The influences on the development of the child's personality are based on two pedagogical dimensions that are in a congruent relationship: 1. pedagogical concepts oriented to the treatment and the role of the child as an individual with its own integrity and needs and 2. pedagogical concepts oriented to the simultaneous influences on the child's nature – holistic approach to development. In other words, one pedagogical dimension refers to children's individuality and integrity. The other dimension, on the other hand, treats the issue related to the child's development as a complete eco-system on which all organized influences should act simultaneously on the totality of his personality.

The child learns, develops and discovers in his own specific way and thereby participates in his own development. It uses original ideas thus offering challenges for pedagogical creations and influences on his individual development. In this way, the child builds his own learning style as a basis for lifelong personal development and as a basis for building self-awareness and confidence. However, the child also represents a complete system whose behavior is a reflection of his synergy and interaction with nature and with the socio-constructivist environment. In fact, child development is determined by interaction with the environment. Accordingly, we can talk about natural or contextual learning that encourages personal affinities towards appropriate and relevant learning styles in each child, according to his potentials and possibilities.

This requires a holistic influence in accordance with the child's nature, which is why it is necessary:

- An educational system that supports children's individual (personal) learning approaches that can be expressed only through the freedom of children's interpretations and expressions, on the one hand and,
- An educational system that encourages contextual (natural) learning and that provides a holistic, integrated and active educational process as opposed to academically organized education

Namely, many theorists indicate that the child's natural curiosity in the early development period can be turned into a conscious research and learning interest only with the support provided by natural learning processes. Contextual or so-called natural learning corresponds to this concept, which, at the same time, provides an integrated and active educational process that ensures "...simultaneous engagement of all functional, socio-emotional, physical, cognitive and intellectual processes, which, in turn, implies an integrated approach to child development, that is,

holistically targeted influences on development” (Koteva-Mojsovska, 2015, p.6). Of course, this would go in favor of developing critical awareness among children. In this direction, a reorganization of the educational process in organized early childhood education is needed. Namely, a process is needed through which the spontaneous curiosity of children will be transformed into a directed learning process with reflection. According to this, it can be said that academic knowledge and achievements are not acquired through academic and scholastic approaches to learning, but through active, participative-experiential and continuous learning – modes of learning that develops the various abilities for the formation of academic knowledge.

Holistic discourse presupposes an educational process that will influence all developmental aspects of the person simultaneously in an organized manner. That is why the question arose whether the isolated conceptual setting of domain so-called approach to learning in the Early Learning and Development Program, enables the implementation of strategies and activities that will integrate the development of one’s own learning style into the simultaneous holistic influences on the overall development of children in preschool education. In other words, this discourse poses the dilemma of whether educators are able to incorporate children’s individuality in the process of organizing and realizing the holistic-integrative educational concept within the preschool educational system?

## **Method**

Reflections on the possibility of integrating the development of the child’s own learning style into the holistic integrative concept of early childhood development led to the need for research that surveyed a sample of 106 educators, directors and professionals from several kindergartens in the area of Skopje. Also, 30 educators distributed in five focus groups were interviewed. With the help of the descriptive method and the application of an appropriate methodological framework, the research showed significant results that assume interventions in terms of redefining some teaching aspects, as well as a revision of the professional development of educators in preschool education. The subject of the research was: Conceptual setting of the developmental domain called approach to learning in preschool education and education as a basis for developing one’s own learning style. The goal referred to the need to determine whether strategies and activities are implemented in practice that will integrate the impact on the child as an individual with personal integrity and own learning style into the holistic integrative concept of early childhood development. The following were taken as basic paradigms and directions that represented a landmark in the research:

- We connect the development of the child’s personal integrity with the development of his own learning style
- The foundations for the development of one’s own learning style are laid in early childhood development
- In the Early Learning and Development Program, they (the foundations for developing your own learning style) are laid out in the approach to learning domain

The subject of research was studied from the following aspects:

- The placement of the approach to learning domain as a basis for personal development
- The recognition of difficulties in the understanding and realization of the domain approach to learning by educators
- Educators’ awareness of their role in the implementation of the elements of the concept for the development of the approach to learning;
- Educators’ awareness of professional competence for realizing, monitoring and evaluating the approach to learning as part of the child’s development.

- The connection between the creation of one's own learning style in children and the development of self-awareness, responsibility and self-respect in them
- The explicitness in the curricular setting of the concept approach to learning
- The recognition of the concept of approach to learning as an integral part of all educational settings and development domains that are defined in the preschool curriculum

Among the research techniques and instruments used were the following: Analyzing the program for early learning and development; survey of educators, directors and people from professional services from several kindergartens in the central city area of Skopje; interviewing educators arranged in five focus groups.

## **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of the survey data showed interesting results. In accordance with the parameters determined for this paper, only a part of them will be presented here, which are related to the general question posed. However, it is still good to emphasize that the results assume interventions regarding:

- Redefining some curricular aspects, as well as
- Revising the professional development of educators in preschool upbringing and education.

From the analysis of the program, it emerged, among other things, that the approach to learning, although it is a separate part in the program for early learning and development, its essential settings are recognized throughout its other segments as well as through other domains or subdomains in the same program, but with a slightly different formulation. . They are recognizable in:

- The principles of the program
- The objectives given in it
- The role of the educator
- Other domains and subdomains
- Didactic recommendations

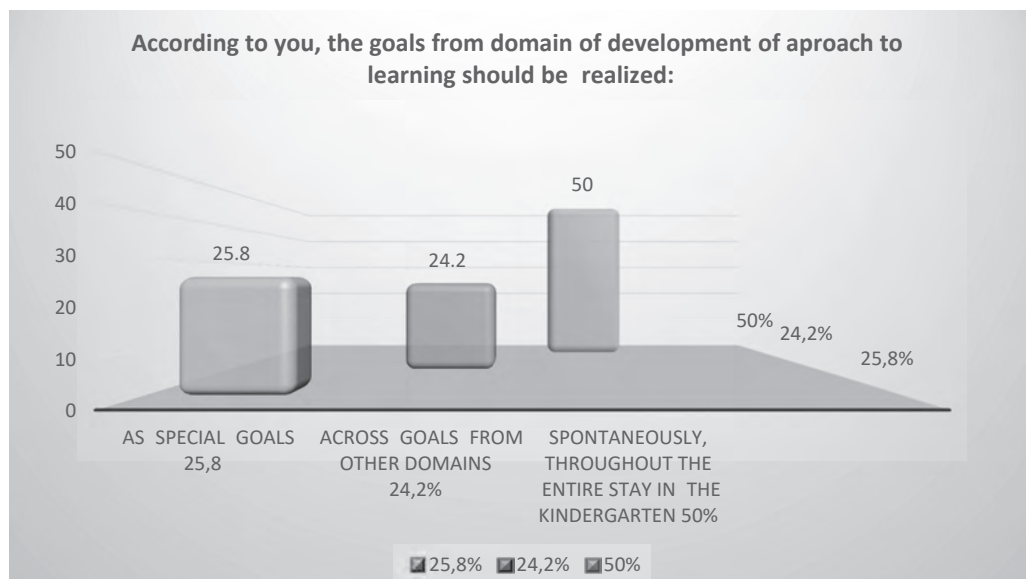
From the analysis of the data obtained with the interview, it emerged that:

- The approach to learning is not sufficiently recognized as an integral part of all educational settings and developmental domains determined by the preschool curriculum
- Planning the goals, contents and activities from the domain approach to learning with an emphasis on its separation from other educational influences, makes the holistic approach to the development of the child's personality difficult.

Hence, the respondents' dilemma arose whether the domain under study should be incorporated into the curricular integration of educational goals or should remain a separate domain with special goals as it is already given. In relation to this, the answers in the questionnaire showed the opinion of the respondents that the approach to learning should still be realized through the overall educational influences in the organized educational process. Namely, in the largest number of cases, ie 50% of the respondents, they believe that the approach to learning should be realized throughout the entire stay of the children in the kindergarten (Chart 1). The opinions of the rest of the respondents are equally distributed between two opposing answers, that is: 25.8% of the respondents chose the answer that the approach to learning among children should be realized through special goals in the educational work with children. A small percentage of the total number of respondents, or 24.2% of them, believe that the approach to learning in children should be realized through the goals in other domains of early learning and development. If a total is made between the answers (the answer: throughout the entire stay of the children in the kindergarten

and the answer: through the goals of other developmental domains) that are against the view that the approach to learning should be realized with its own special goals (74.2%) then we can state that the respondents consider that the approach to learning should be incorporated through the overall educational influence within the organized educational process.

**Chart 1**



In addition to the attitude of incorporating the researched developmental domain into the overall impact on the child’s development, the data also shows that 81.8% of the respondents believe that the approach to learning should be realized as an integral part of the overall holistic impact on the child’s personality, i.e. through all other development domains (Table 1). A small percentage of respondents, 18.2%, believe that this domain should be implemented as a separate development domain.

**Table 1**

	%
Standalone development domain	18,2
An integral part of all development domains	81,8

In the same direction is the opinion of the respondents in relation to the goals of the approach to learning. Namely, the respondents, in 63.6% of cases, appreciate that although the approach to learning is a separate domain in the Early Learning and Development Program, its goals can, however, be fully realized through other development domains, while 31.8% of them believe that they can be partially implemented through other developmental domains that are given in the Early Learning and Development Program.

However, in relation to the planning and realization of the holistic approach and in the conditions of an isolated conceptual setting of the domain approach to learning, educators have difficulties in planning and realizing its integration into the overall holistic approach in the educational influences on children, which is also evident throughout the interview of the educators with the focus groups.

The data with which educators confirm the connection of their own learning style with the development of some personality traits in early childhood development is interesting. Namely, it is about self-respect, self-awareness and responsibility among children and their direct connection with the development of their own approach to learning. Regarding this question, 66.7% of the respondents appreciate that the creation of their own learning style is related to the development of self-awareness in children (Table 2). In addition to this are the answers obtained through the interview in the focus groups. And in that part of the research, the respondents appreciate that self-awareness and self-respect are of great importance so that the child can build his own learning style and successfully use it in the process of discovery. According to a participant in a focus group "...self-awareness enables the development of learning style. Self-awareness is a motivating factor for using various sources of knowledge, as well as for using what has been learned..." (from the focus group interview)

**Table 2**

trait	%
Self-awareness	66,9
Self-confidence	9,1
Responsibility	9,5
Transmitting and adopting facts	14,5

## Conclusion

- The concept of approach to learning in curricular frameworks is presented in isolation, which is why it is not explicit enough for its realization within the framework of modern holistic-integrative educational practices.
- The separation of the approach to learning domain was made in order to emphasize the importance of the development of one's own learning style in each individual child.
- Although the approach to learning is a separate part in the program for early learning and development, the analysis of this document showed that the essential settings of this domain are also recognized through other segments of the educational process within other domains or subdomains in the same program and they are realized through different forms, methods, contents and goals through holistically organized influences depending on the professional capacities of the educational persons.
- The isolated domain makes it difficult to plan and implement a holistic approach to the development of the child's personality.
- The analysis showed that educators do not recognize difficulties in understanding the approach to learning domain, although the percentage of respondents who define it inappropriately is not small - but they recognize difficulties in its planning and realization as an integral part of the overall educational influences.
- The conceptual setting of the developmental domain approach to learning, although it is theoretically recognizable, does not allow to sufficiently implement integrative strategies and activities that will bring the development and personal learning style in connection with the simultaneous holistic influences on the overall development of children.
- The difficulty of this process in practice leads to the need for larger and more organized trainings for educational staff in which the main actors would be the institutions and persons who educate educational staff and the institutions whose priority is the development of preschool educational practice.

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## KRSTANOSKA Marija

### TUTORING PUPILS FROM THE ROMA POPULATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

**Abstract:** This paper will focus on approaches to improving the quality of education, improving the success of Roma pupils and the role of the tutor, as a mediator between the school and the NGOs sector in terms of extracurricular work with pupils, its irreplaceable place in schools, its role, significance and contribution to the system of primary education with pupils from the Roma population.

The purpose of this paper is to prove the justification, need and effectiveness of tutoring that is focused on primary education of pupils from the Roma population. Also, included is determining and examining the educational needs of teachers and tutors, the process of micromethod

modeling in relation to the tutoring work of the Roma population. The research is aimed at finding and determining the perceptions of working with pupils from the Roma population, improving their education and the resources provided by NGOs as a instigator to help advance knowledge.

This would contribute to additional approaches and methods that are valuable to implement and help increase educational opportunities. The idea of hiring tutors would contribute to the formation of a team spirit and the implementation of an inter-institutional support program.

**Keywords:** Tutoring, Roma pupils, Teachers, Educational needs, NGOs

## **Introduction**

A great benefit is using the opportunity to collaborate as a mentor/tutor with Roma population in Macedonia. Tutoring is the most necessary in the educational process, it leads to the acquisition and addition of knowledge and as an intermediary between schools and the family. It is a necessary assistant to the primary education.

For this reason, the motivation for writing this paper is to describe the current state of the education of Roma pupils and to show its importance. The choice of the topic is influenced by the fact that the term tutor is very rarely found in our schools. It's a very young profession that is constantly developing. The sources for the research problem are insufficient, there are few publications, and they are only partially focused on this theme. Tutoring is still another unfamiliar concept to many, and this feature is so important to pupils. However, none of the studies on this topic can provide information's on the effectiveness of tutoring. The effectiveness of tutoring can be determined based on tutor action, observing pupil's performance documented over a longer period of time. The main goal of this work is to point out the justification and importance of the tutor for pupils from the Roma population in the educational process.

## **Interpretation of Basic Terms – Tutoring in Primary Education**

The concept of tutoring is synoptically presented in several definitions by different authors. For example, Kowalczyk/Ottich (2006, 85) also defines tutoring as lessons that take place outside of regular school hours, more or less regularly and often temporarily, and aim to ensure success after school hours and are used to teach thematic units. Abele/Liebau (1998, 37) describe tutoring as “a method of extracurricular support [...]” (Dohmen, Erbes, Fuchs, & Günzel, 2007, 16) All the statements are aimed at one goal, that is, that tutoring is extracurricular activity and is used to improve school performance.

The highly increased number of pupils transferring to the next grade has resulted in a penetration in pupils knowledge, among pupils from lower classes, especially among pupils from the vulnerable category. This encourages certain forms of tutoring. During the last few years, the central and local authorities in Macedonia have assumed increased administrative and financial responsibility for the expansion of successful pilot projects in the non-governmental sector.

## **The Role of the Tutor in Primary Education**

Pupils from the Roma population grow up in an environment with a distinctive culture, language, values, different educational styles and methods, which affect the development of the whole person. When there is a stimulating speech environment, it has a huge impact on the development of the individuality. It leads to the development of vocabulary, the child acquires the ability to communicate with people. Speech affects the child's behavior and leads to the development of intelligence. An important factor, reflected in the school success of Roma pupils, is the socio-economic background of the family.

The initiation of this type of activity also supported by the combined schools is to take constructive ideas and methods of work, for the benefit of the whole organization, with a impact on



the cohesion of teachers, the quality of teaching, and the success of pupils. Considering the novelty of the profile of the tutor for professional insertion, it is normal that there is a lack of models of effective practice, a series of procedures, materials to support the activities.

The task of the primary school in Roma education is to face the initial failure of Roma pupils, to overcome language problems, to create a positive attitude towards education for pupils and parents, to form special additional tutoring classes to overcome these barriers. The aim is to complete compulsory education in primary school and enable them to choose an area for further education. Emphasis is placed on creating positive relations between Roma and non-Roma pupils, tolerance of learning and cooperation, respect for the cultural and social situation.

The work of the tutor begins after the end of the teaching. It is guided by the diagnostic tests performed at the beginning of the school year, according to a scale that explains what each pupil should be helped to supplement their knowledge. All the tutor's work aims to make Roma pupils more successful and satisfied at school. It is necessary for him to be able to stand behind his pupils, to be able to respond to their capacities. In this case, information are implemented with direct contact with parents of Roma pupils with the school is provided.

Tutors need to connect pupils with prior knowledge, life experience, and their interests with their liking goals. They plan teaching according to the developmental characteristics of the pupils. They should develop teaching activities and learning materials for pupils to adapt according to their needs, help pupils in understanding through teaching strategies that are appropriate to the subject, using materials, resources and modern technologies to make the subject more accessible. Their role is vital in evoking enthusiasm and inspiring a person to learn and sharpen intelligence and wisdom. According to personal experience, and the experiences of other tutors, models and forms of work are determined immediately before the lesson, or during the lesson, depending on the achievements of the pupils. Individual and individualized forms of work are most often used. Depending on the subject the pupils study, methods are used that correspond to the thematic unit.

“Tutoring programs that support the use of data and ongoing informal assessments allow tutors to more effectively tailor their instruction to pupils individually.”

Successful tutoring organizations often have clear learning goals and engage in rigorous evaluations to assess the effectiveness of their program.” (Robinson, Kraf, & Loeb, 2021, 9)

In order to support the pupils, in terms of learning, if necessary, tutors can be hired for teaching in schools. The tutor will provide support in the education of persons from vulnerable categories. Sufficient attention should be paid to this pedagogical staff, who will be significantly involved in the integration of Roma in the school, so that conditions will be created for the development of communication between the mentor/tutor, teacher and pupil. The tutor function for pupils who need support in acquiring initial literacy, early reading and writing – contributes to easier overcoming of these obstacles. It can be a person who knows very well the environment and the customs of the Roma population.

Considering that tutoring work with pupils from the Roma population is not so common, and no specific work models have been developed, the tutors themselves find which models and techniques they will concretely use during the additional extracurricular work.

## **Tutoring as a Model for Inclusion in Inclusive Education for Supporting Pupils from the Roma Population**

One important concept that we must all embrace is that all pupils have an equal right to an education. Ensuring equal participation and full rights requires an analysis of the school environment that hinders or positively affects individual pupils as a whole. Including pupils of diverse backgrounds and abilities in schools often means examining current classroom practices. All that needs to be done is to recognize and manage the differences between pupils, to recognize their

strengths and weaknesses, to plan lessons accordingly, to use teaching strategies and to adapt the curriculum to suit the abilities and backgrounds of each pupil, and most importantly, one needs to know how to connect parents and community members to cooperate with schools in order to ensure quality education for pupils from the Roma population. Inclusion is not just about providing pupils with disabilities access to mainstream classrooms. This means rejoining all pupils, regardless of race, language, class, geographic location, and disability, with an e and effective education.

Implementing effective inclusive practices involves a set of behaviors, activities, and interactions by teachers and pupils without disabilities to provide a meaningful and successful learning environment for pupils. Effective instruction in inclusive settings requires continuous change in the types, frequency, and quality of teacher – pupil and pupil – pupil interactions (Thousand, Burchard, 1990).

There are several reasons why Roma pupils leave school, but they are mainly related to poverty. Among the main obstacles are the unavailability of books and school items, lack of appropriate clothing, poor living conditions and lack of infrastructure, the expectation that pupils must contribute to the family income and/or take care of younger brothers and sisters, actually is difficult for Roma families living in substandard improvised houses to think about and provide learning conditions for their children. In addition, seasonal and internal migration is also a problem. In these cases, pupils are absent from school before the end of the school year, and many of them simply drop out. With educational inclusion, the school can intervene to help, for example through special non-governmental organizations with a tutoring system to support and improve the knowledge of pupils from the Roma population. With this help, pupils from the Roma population not only receive additional help and support to build on their knowledge gaps, but also provide an overview of each pupil's learning progress at any time.

Inclusive education is a process that responds to the different needs of children, youth and adults by increasing participation in learning, in school and in the community; It involves modifying educational content, approaches, organization and strategies to enable quality education for all and implies that all pupils, regardless of their particularities; Inclusive education pays special attention to the inclusion of those pupils who may be marginalized, discriminated against or excluded from the education system, regardless of their potential or weaknesses in some areas, are included in regular classes and are provided with appropriate conditions for learning, progress and participation in the life of the school. (Inclusive school: Guide to the work of the school inclusive team, 2020, 7)

**The “Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020”**, in the educational component, directs and aims to encourage the awareness of Roma about education, as well as success and passability in the following grades, creating a set of key competencies as a level that is achievable for them and to prepare them for further education and employment in society. They are pupils from an environment that is socially, culturally or linguistically different from the environment in which pupils from the majority population grow up. Some integrate easily in regular schools, others may face difficulties due to their language differences or because they are influenced by families and their cultural customs, which is reflected in the behavior, the concept of raising pupils, the attitude towards education, etc. Among the measures that should be applied for the implementation of the strategic goal, tutoring is mentioned as an additional support.

## **The Non-governmental Organisations and Their Support of Educational Inclusion of Roma Pupils**

Non-governmental organizations pay attention to some specific problems and issues, which are usually left out by the state, and do not pay enough attention, like the question of this research problem, how effective tutoring for students from the Roma population is, for improving

and increasing the level of their success, with the help of non-governmental organizations. Therefore, they also provide financial support and help financial expenses. For example, support can be offered in the purchase of textbooks for pupils in schools or technical support.

Cooperation between primary schools and NGOs, learning support centers and other primary schools can take place in several ways: direct support of pupils, support of parents/guardians, support of educational staff and support of the wider social community. The basic tasks of the non-governmental organizations are: provision of textbooks and teaching aids, individual educational plan which implies adjustment of educational standards, use of adapted teaching aids and assistive technologies, overcoming language barriers, difficulties with reading, writing and speaking Macedonian language. In this research, 3 non-governmental organizations will be covered: Roma Resource Center, Sonce and Sumnal.

## Research Subject

The subject of this research is aimed at improving the success of Roma pupils and the role of the tutor, as a mediator between the school and the non-governmental sector in terms of extra-curricular work with pupils, his irreplaceable place in schools, that is, his role, meaning and contribution in the system of basic upbringing and education with pupils from the Roma population.

The purpose of this research is to determine educational models and the efficiency of tutoring work with pupils from the Roma population, and the need for inter-institutional support of this category.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

It is stated as a general hypothesis: Inter-institutional support from relevant institutions has a positive effect on establishing educational models and increasing the efficiency of tutoring work with pupils from the Roma population.

The dependent variable in this research is the attitudes of teachers, the educational programs of non-governmental organizations, the attitudes of tutors, pupils from the Roma population. Independent variable is: educational models of tutoring work.

## Methods, Techniques and Instruments

This research is characterized by **qualitative and quantitative** features and will use a quantitative data collection technique. Also, the research is dominated by the research method, and the techniques that will be applied in this research are the following: survey, analysis of documentation. Instruments that will be used are: survey for teachers, survey for tutors, survey for non-governmental organizations.

With the survey questionnaire for **teachers**, will be examined their views and opinions regarding: the contribution of tutoring classes to improving the success of tutored pupils, the efficiency of tutoring work, the educational needs of teachers, the benefits of educational support of tutoring work on improving the progress of pupils from the Roma population. The survey questionnaire for **tutors** will examined their views and opinions regarding: their opinion on the position of tutor, cooperation with teachers, cooperation of tutors with primary schools and with non-governmental organizations, the contribution of tutoring classes to improving the success of tutored pupils, educational needs of tutors, the method and process of micromethod modeling of the extracurricular process, the concept of tutoring work. With the survey questionnaire for the **non-governmental organizations**, their views and opinions will be examined regarding: models of educational support, models of cooperation with schools, support of tutoring work.

The research will cover the following samples: municipalities, primary schools, teachers, tutors, non-governmental organizations and relevant documentation. 3 non-governmental organizations that already support tutoring with pupils from the Roma population in schools to increase and develop different potentials will be covered. This group also includes the municipalities where the primary schools are located, including: primary public schools distributed in several municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia. The choice of primary schools is made according to the representation of pupils from the Roma population, within the framework of educational support and increased opportunities for educational inclusion. The research will include 110 primary school teachers (from the second to the fourth grade) who already carry out regular teaching in primary schools, in which tutoring will be carried out, and 30 tutors, who are already carrying out the tutoring extracurricular program with pupils from the Roma population in primary schools. Project documentation, educational programs for tutoring, analysis of relevant documents and more.

According to the characteristics of the research, that is, taking into account the research techniques and instruments that will be used, the data obtained from this research will be processed in a qualitative and quantitative way, the obtained data will be entered into the SPSS program.

## Conclusion

Due to difficulty in surveying some of the tutors from municipalities outside of Skopje, this research is still ongoing. The data will be processed in a qualitative and quantitative way, and the obtained data will be entered into the SPSS program. According to the obtained results, conclusions and recommendations will be drawn.

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## HISTORICAL-EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

**Abstract:** The paper explores the academic discipline history of education and historical-educational research related to it. Their development needs to be seen in a broader socio-political context of the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the period of separation of Europe and the Cold War, the historical-educational research developed separately: in the countries of the Western Europe, history of education was influenced mainly by the rise of postmodern thinking; considering the countries of the Eastern Europe, it was mainly the impact of sovietization. However, both parts of Europe experienced a serious crisis in the field of history of education. The second severe crisis occurred in the 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall, again, in both parts of Europe, however, because of different reasons. This crisis led to doubts whether we need history of education at all. The aim of the paper is to point out: 1) important milestones in the development of the academic discipline history of education and the related historical-educational research, 2) change in the paradigm in the historical-educational research in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and 3) current issues and trends in this field. How the world and its organisation will change after the Covid-19 pandemic and after the invasion of Russia to Ukraine remains an open question.

**Keywords:** History of education, Historical-educational research, Development, Present

## Development and Important Milestones in History of Education and Historical-Educational Research in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, a methodological turnover in science occurred thanks to the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey (1833-1911) argued that the field of science, the subject of which is man, who is evolving and changing, must have both a historical and anthropological aspect. The original role of science extended also to understanding history and analysing historical contexts, by which Dilthey pointed out an important fact: man's connection to history creates *anthropological conditionality* – man shapes history by their action and at the same time, man is influenced by history.<sup>34</sup> The Frenchman Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), the founder of sociology, also influenced methodology of the study of education. According to him, historical and sociological studies are like “close relatives” and education is interlinked with both, just like psychology (Durkheim, 2005). He characterized education as the socialization of young generation through which society renews itself. The development of history of education was also influenced by the Englishman Brian Simon (1915 – 2002). According to him, history of education should clarify the essence of education as a social function that is primary in every society. According to Simon (1966), the main task of historical research in education is to find out what function it fulfils in various phases of social development and thus, achieve deeper understanding of the role it is to play at present. According to McCulloch (2012), both Durkheim and Simon emphasized the importance of developing history of education within the broader context of education, history and social sciences.

The development of history of education was significantly influenced by the discussion of methodological issues in the framework of general historical research, which went hand in hand with the search for a new position of modern history and the definition of its subject. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis in the field of historical sciences shifted to the social dimension of history. It was the theory of one of the most important historical schools, which originated in France around the journal *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale* (since 1929). Education has also become an important area of research, e.g. child and childhood issues (P. Aries: *Geschichte der Kindheit*, 1975). Several works that dealt with the function of education in society were created. Although adherents of this direction sharply criticized classical historical research, they did not question history as such and its subject. According to Kasper (2008, p. 2), a fundamental reversal of classical historical research and its questioning were brought about by the representatives of linguistic theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who “rejected the possibility of rational discussion and questioned the concept of historical truth”. This was reflected in the crisis of history as such and also of its subject matter and methodology.<sup>35</sup>

General historians at the time of the advent of postmodern thinking also doubted the subject and methodology of history of education. According to them, overly optimistic narratives did not provide answers to serious problems in education in Western Europe, which led to a serious crisis in the development of history of education in the 1960s and 1970s. Historical-educational research as well as history of education reached the edge of interest (cf. McCulloch, 2008) and there was a “a rapprochement with social history, while in the subsequent phase, especially between 1980 and 1990, the link with cultural history was paramount ” (cf. Depaepe, 2020, 239). Educational policy in Western Europe in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which resulted in many hastened reforms, ignored the development of education in the past, which gradually distorted its identity and historical continuity. According to Bridges (2006, in Lawn – Frulong, 2011), in

<sup>34</sup> This knowledge was applied for instance in the work of the French historian Henri-Irénée Marrou, who pointed out the relationship between an individual and history and who is well-known especially for his work *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité* (1948).

<sup>35</sup> The ideological source and best known representative of these theories was the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913), whose linguistic structuralism became the basis of philosophical structuralism.

this period, educational theory was influenced by a wide repertoire of new theories, e.g. literary theories, cultural theories, feminist theories, postcolonial theories, which claimed to analyse and comment on educational issues and very quickly began to “undermine” the classical theoretical foundations of education in the English-speaking world (philosophy, sociology, psychology, history), which Barnett (1990) referred to as “the end of security”. All this was also reflected in the undergraduate training of teachers in Western Europe in the 1980s, when emphasis began to be placed on specific teacher competencies – “how to teach” (Crook, 2002) and theoretical training was marginalized. Holey (1982) called it a “turn to educational practice”.

Paradoxically, this crisis in the field of history of education represented a challenge for a new model of cooperation between historians of education and experts in the field of historical and social sciences. Their aim was to research and develop history of education in the times of the loss of certainty and significant changes, but also, new integration tendencies in Europe. The result of this effort was the emergence of several associations specializing in history of education in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the countries of Western Europe, but also in the non-European countries. Each of these associations holds regular conferences and has its own journal, such as: *The UK History of Education Society* (1967, the journals *History of Education* and *History of Education Researcher*), *History of the Education Society* in the USA (1960, the journal *History of Education Quarterly*), *Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society* (1971, the journal *History of Education Review Journal*), etc. Subsequently, these organizations began to network and in 1978, ISCHE – *International Standing Conference of History of Education* was established, which brings together several institutions focused on history of education. Its aim is to help internationalization of historical-educational research and cooperation of historians of education. Every year it organizes a worldwide conference in one of the countries of the world and its platform is the journal *Paedagogica Historica*.

Regarding history of education and historical-educational research in the countries of Eastern Europe, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their development was significantly influenced by the then political situation and isolation from Western Europe. Science became one of the ideological tools and the principle of historical materialism was an essential part of every methodology. This caused great damage, especially in the humanities and social sciences. Likewise, education was an ideological tool through which the ruling political establishment shaped new generations in accordance with the accepted political doctrine (Kestere, 2014).

It may be stated that the countries of Eastern Europe, like the countries of Western Europe, faced strong attacks to maintain continuity in the development of education in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was due to different factors. In the countries of Western Europe, these ruptures were caused mainly by the rise of postmodern thinking and the non-adaptation of education to the new understanding of man, it was more of a natural developmental crisis. In the case of Eastern European countries, it was more about the influence of political factors. However, in both parts of Europe, we can talk about a crisis in the history of education.

In the 1990s, another serious crisis in the field of history of education and historical-educational research can be discussed. In Western Europe, there were discussions on its meaning and direction (e.g. Hargreaves, 1996; Woodhead, 1998; Tooley-Darby, 1998), which even led to the question whether we still need history of education at all (e.g. Lowe, 2002). As Depaepé points out, in almost all teaching courses, national and international alike, the subject of history of education “if indeed not already abolished, was gradually moved from the core of the curriculum to the periphery” (Depaepé, 2020, p. 240). However, historians of education from the Eastern part of Europe also reached identical considerations, even though this situation was caused by different facts. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the contents of individual humanities gradually began to be re-evaluated and transformed, the academic discipline of history of education began to be marginalized and eliminated due to the previous ideologisation of its content;

historical-educational research began to lose its validity (e.g. Kasper, 2008; Kudláčková, 2006, 2010; Sztobryn, 2010; Kasperová, 2015). As stated by Miovska Spaseva (2022, p. 16), “within this concept of curriculum, the history of education as a separate discipline and the historical aspects of the content of other disciplines became less relevant or irrelevant”.

## **New Possibilities and Consequences of Internationalisation in History of Education at the Beginning of the 21st Century**

Cooperation of historians of education through the already mentioned historical-educational societies and their activities in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opened up new possibilities in the field of historical-educational research – it allowed to exceed the limits of individual scientific and methodological potential, as well as the potential related to a specific region, nationality, culture, religion... One can talk about a new paradigm in the development of historical-educational research, which has changed its character and quality. These were new opportunities for historians of education to meet at major international scientific conferences, new platforms for reflecting on educational past on the pages of newly established historical-educational journals, where authors from various cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds as well as various methodologically oriented backgrounds were published. The cooperation and internationalization of historical-educational societies found its fulfillment especially in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and creation of the European Community (later the EU) have helped. This was accompanied by the possibility of easier travelling within Europe and completely unlimited travelling within the countries of the European Union. Also, a rich offer of scientific and study stays within various European grant agencies, the aim of which was to support mobility of researchers and university teachers, can be noted.

Consequences of these changes were named at the ECER (*European Conference on Educational Research*) symposium in 2008 in Gothenburg, Sweden, where, among other things, further direction in the field of historical-educational research were discussed. According to Goodman and Grosvenor (2011), scientific networks have a significant impact on the development of the history of education as a scientific discipline, which they called *the moment of growth*. The second feature they specified was “crossing” the boundaries of education, thus expanding and erasing the boundaries of individual educational disciplines, which they called *the moment of insecurity*. Raising questions about the nature of the discipline of history of education and finding intersections with other disciplines causes “permeability” of its boundaries, which may lead to temporary disintegration. On the one hand, this represents a certain risk and, on the other hand, it opens up space for new possibilities, which they labelled as *the moment of curiosity*. Transcending own borders and transdisciplinarity create a space for cooperation with scientists from other scientific disciplines, application of knowledge of these disciplines, possibly, their scientific methods. All this may cause uncertainty, which, however, can ultimately lead to the development of history of education and opens up new perspectives on the educational past and new possibilities for methodological approaches to its study. However, the author of the paper agrees with Depaepe (2020, p. 241) that “nevertheless, a certain common ground related to theory and methodology is required”.

The above mentioned actualities are confirmed by Goodman and Grosvenor (2011) in their research, which analyzed the content focus of studies in journals in the field of history of education in the Anglo-Saxon environment, as well as generally oriented British educational journals.<sup>36</sup> The research revealed the following trends in the field of historical-educational research:

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<sup>36</sup> This includes the journals *History of Education*, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *History of Education Review*, *Paedagogica Historica* that are generally considered to have a worldwide reach. The journals with general educational focus include the following five British journals: *British Education Research Journal*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *Educational Review*, *Oxford Review of Education* and *Cambridge Journal of Education*.



the growth of new methodological approaches to the study of educational past; penetration of new topics (e.g. focus on education of girls and women – often, the research has opened a kind of a “black box”); the prevalence of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective that blurs the lines between individual educational and scientific disciplines; a tendency not to be limited to narrowly focused historical-educational journals and a pre-determined circle of readers; penetration of researchers from other areas of education, as well as other scientific fields, who are not historians of education into the field of history of education.

In the countries of the former Eastern Europe, or broader regions like Central Europe, there are no formalized societies of historians of education yet. The tradition in the field of history of education and historical-educational research has been disrupted here so significantly that in some countries only a few historians of education are recorded (e.g. Slovakia, the Czech Republic); in Poland the situation is better. The current status is rather about individual research, while the occurrence of conferences of a historical-educational nature and projects focused on historical-educational research are relatively rare. The first manifestations of a more systematic cooperation among historians of education in the countries of the former Eastern Europe can be dated back to 2010.

The initiators were the countries of the former Yugoslavia that organized an international colloquium *Pedagogical Flows in the Countries of Former Yugoslavia*, together with the workshop *Comparative Study on Development and Actual Trends of Pedagogy Textbooks as an Indicator of Changing Cultural Identities in South Eastern Europe* at the University of Maribor (Slovenia). The event was attended by opinion-forming historians of education from the countries of the former Yugoslavia and representatives from Hungary and Austria. This meeting gave rise to the preparation of the *Historic Comparative Research for Development of Teacher Education* project, supported by European sources (Protner – Vujisić-Živković, 2015). Apparently, beginnings of informal cooperation of historians of education from the countries of Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe can be traced here. Education in these countries is “based on the original German tradition” and “has still a relatively large amount of similar features” (Kudláčová – Rajský, 2019). This is evident from themes and discussions pursued at international conferences in a number of countries in recent years: e.g. Maribor 2010, 2012 and 2015; Prague 2012, 2018; Smolenice 2010, 2013 and 2016; Lodz 2012 and 2014; Belgrade 2014; Liberec 2013 and 2015; Warsaw 2016, 2018, Sarajevo 2018, Nikšić 2019.

The fruitful collaboration of historians of education from the given region resulted also in establishment of the journal *Historia Scholastica*<sup>37</sup> in 2015, under the editorial leadership of T. Kasper, and it represents a platform for historians of education not only from the Czech Republic and Slovakia but also from Central and South-Eastern Europe (T. Kasper – M. Pánková, 2015, p. 1). Also, the publication by Kudláčová – Rajský (eds.): *Education and “Pädagogik” – Historical and Philosophical Reflections (Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe)* from 2019 is a result of cooperation of authors from 13 countries.<sup>38</sup> It contains a philosophical and historical reflection of education and pedagogy as an academic and scientific discipline in the countries of Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe that were impacted by the German educational tradition. Another significant activity is the thematic issue of *Paedagogica Historica* (2022), devoted to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. A publication by Kasper, Nóbik and Kestere (eds.): “*Zero Hour*” – *Sovietization of Pedagogical Science in the 1950s in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*, which is an analysis of the beginnings of ideologisation and politicization of education in the countries of the former Eastern Europe, is currently in print. This cooperation and

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.historiascholastica.com>.

<sup>38</sup> This includes the following countries: Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Bulgaria.

publication outputs move the historical-educational research of the countries of the former Eastern bloc into a standard international discussion and thus make it possible to objectify the view on European history.

## **Particularities and Current Trends in Historical-Educational Research**

Historical-educational research has its particularities, which are related to the specificity of its subject – educational past, which no longer really exists. It can only be reflected from the records, because the studied phenomena cannot be repeated, unlike in the natural sciences. The educational past took place in specific historical, political, cultural, anthropological and other contexts. The historian of education creates a picture of the educational past based on the remnants of the past, which they subject to historical criticism and confrontation and subsequently, reconstruct the picture of the past.

Another particularity is individual subjectivism. According to Skladaný (1998), it may be even the so-called double subjectivism: on the one hand, the subjectivism of the mediator of the educational past and, on the other hand, the subjectivism of the researcher, which is historically determined. The period in which the historian of education lives is necessarily reflected in their work, but it should not be reflected to such an extent that it would update the presented picture of the past. However, the researched educational past is influenced by a certain “vision” of the world of the particular historian of education, their preconceptions, which cannot be completely eliminated. The plurality of current methodological approaches can lead to confrontation of the results of individual work of historians of education and subsequently, to their objectification.

The so-called collective subjectivism might also be an issue. A narrow, regional view of a nation on a certain section of its own history, a certain fact in history, or overall, of their own history. This problem was typical especially in the period in which the idealistic-teleological approach prevailed, emphasizing the continuity of history and it was significantly associated with writing of textbooks for prospective teachers in teacher seminars (late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Its opposite was an empirical-positivist approach, characterized by grouping of facts, which, however, proved to be too sterile, fragmentary, depersonalized and forgetting about the meaning of history. Rajský (2014, p. 20) states that “strict source historical work remains a *sine qua non* condition, without which it is not possible to reconstruct the past. On the other hand, it is not sufficient if our intention is to understand the past and to gain a view that respects a broader social and anthropological (and educational) context”. A historian leads a discussion “with the past”, which differs from the current situation of the historian, and therefore, requires an interpretation of the meaning. This is also confirmed by Depaepe (2020, p. 240), who states that “historical texts and materials – and this applies a fortiori to used quotations and slogans – must always be read and interpreted in their context”. At present, the history of educational thinking is understood as a space that is characterized by continuity and discontinuity of educational thought constructs and strategies, which are analyzed within broader social and cultural-historical contexts (Cohen, 1999).

Internationalization in historical-educational research also bears some risks. On the other hand, however, it reveals new layers of meaning in the confrontation of the outputs of historical-educational research and different views on the same phenomenon – e.g. the Second World War, colonization, Jewish question, genocides, totalitarian regimes. Good internationalization goes beyond the national and regional approach, while enriching it, not excluding it. Different views on the same fact and thus, its problematisation lead to objectification of both national and common history.

In addition to classical methods: archival research and the study of sources, school legislation and school documents, newer methods are increasingly being used today, focusing more on testimonies of individuals who shaped this history. This is the so-called history of everyday life, or

microhistory, which represent a change in the perception of the past (Zounek, Šimáně, Knotová, 2017). Historians are more interested in the life stories and daily actions of ordinary people, which Le Goff (1983) called “exploring history from below” (for example, the method of oral history, the method of life story of a teacher or student, etc.). It is necessary to apply these methods also to investigate, for instance, the period of socialism, because research in the archives, where official documents are archived, reveals only one aspect of life in the society. Records in the archives about the real lives of ordinary people and many activities that were not in accordance with the state doctrine cannot be found there. In comparison with traditional historical approaches, microhistory is based on the so-called small facts, which are usually not part of the archival sources. However, the aim of microhistory is not to replace traditional methods of historical research, but to supplement and refine the results of their research.

A change in the perspective of the study of educational past may lead to greater openness in accepting new findings: no outcome of historical research may be definitive and permanently valid. This does not mean that the historical fact has changed, it remains unchanged, but we can see it in broader or new contexts. The fact that the outcome of historical research may not be permanently valid is often considered negative and it was one of the arguments for questioning historical research in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is legitimate that a certain historical fact is seen differently by a historian of education in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The constant reassessment of educational past concerns not only the countries of Eastern Europe, or countries with experience of totalitarian regimes, but also the countries in which history of education has developed in freer conditions. The reflection on educational past is never over.

## **Conclusion and Open Questions**

History of education will probably never be part of the mainstream, which is related to the fact that historians of education publish mainly in specialized journals and for a predetermined circle of readers. On the other hand, historical-educational research is understood as an important part of research in the field of education as such, which, through the reflection on educational past, “bridges” the past with the present. In recent years, there has been a greater permeability of the boundaries of the discipline of history of education, which opens up space for joint historical-educational research across a range of scientific disciplines, countries, regions, research methods, etc. Historical-educational research based on confrontation of scientists from various scientific fields, nationalities, methodological schools, etc. represents a new, qualitatively higher level. The “permeability” of the boundaries of history of education also causes the opposite phenomenon – current general educational research is beginning to pay attention to the historical dimension of individual educational phenomena. The analysis of the educational past can thus lead to designing the educational future. According to the Danish historian of education Larsen (2012), justification of the importance of history of education for current education needs to be reconsidered and backed up by new ideas and arguments. This would entitle it to regain a place of honour in the midst of educational disciplines and courses in the training of prospective teachers that has been lost.

Two new realities have entered our world today. The first is a pandemic that has paralysed life around the world, set the rules and various limits. It has moved education to the online space, prevented scientists from meeting and organizing scientific conferences, which could also take place only online. And the second reality is the aggressive war in Ukraine, the global impact of which cannot be estimated yet. However, it is certain that this war will also have geopolitical consequences. We may but believe that the war upon its end will not leave the world divided in a bipolar manner, like during the Cold War. However, it is apparent already at present that an objective reflection of (not only) educational past and the formation of historical consciousness in

(not only) young people is necessary. People in countries with totalitarian regimes are purposefully cut off from historical traditions and their historical consciousness is disrupted, or distorted: historical facts and actualities are distorted to suit the ruling party. Only people who know their own roots, traditions, their own history, are capable of respecting the roots, traditions and history of other cultures and nations. If this is not the case, we can see that it is devastating...

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# **THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS ON THE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS FROM RNM IN TIMSS 2019**

**Abstract:** TIMSS 2019 (the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) was conducted in the fourth and eighth grades in 64 countries and 8 benchmarking systems. The Republic of North Macedonia participated with population sample from IV grade.

The TIMSS 2019 are based on the Mathematics and Science 2019 Framework which are organized around two dimensions: a content dimension and a cognitive dimension.

The results from TIMSS 2019 were announced on December 8, 2020.

The aim of this study is to get data and answers for:

- The level of our students' achievement compared to the other states and what's the educational system like in the states that great results are accomplished;
- The teaching process, teachers' preparation and their professional development;
- How is the institutional organization of the educational work of the educational systems different from ours.

In the study in R. N. Macedonia 3531 students and their 150 parents from randomly selected primary schools, as well as their class teachers and school principals.

The methodology and the instruments that are used in this study are the same for every country-participant.

The students from R. N. Macedonia are on 45<sup>th</sup> place from 58 states in Mathematics, and 51<sup>st</sup> place in Science.

From the received results we can conclude that: there are significant differences in the average achievements of the students from R. N. Macedonia according to the socio-economical status of the students and resources of schools.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Mathematics, Science, Achievement, TIMSS

## **Introduction**

Large-scale international assessments can play a key role in identifying factors that have an effect on students' learning and achievement. With the implementation of such measurements of student's achievements, in addition to the one that are measured, numerous data are obtained about educational systems, curricula, the teaching process, students' achievements, the work of teachers, as well as comparing students' achievements at the international level. The

implementation of such international measurements often encourage reforms in education in order to increase the quality in education.

The results of international studies are used for further development and modernization of the educational system, i.e. the educational process for:

- determining the profile of students' basic knowledge and abilities;
- determination of achievements, goals and standards for educational improvement;
- stimulation of curriculum reforms in order to modernize them;
- improving teaching and learning through research and analysis of study data;
- defining students' achievement levels;
- professional training and improvement of the teaching staff;
- defining standards for evaluating students' knowledge in the areas being tested.

All collected data from international studies are used not only to find out where we are today, but also how to be better tomorrow, in which direction to move to increase the quality of our education, what are the world trends in education, in what conditions students learn from countries that achieve better results than us and to make a detailed analysis of all the elements that are part of a good education system.

If we ask ourselves, "*Are international studies relevant to our education system?*", we would certainly answer with YES. But, *are they the only relevants for the development of education?*, the answer is certainly NO. There are other indicators, such as: state testing, exams that are an integral part of the state matriculation exam, integral evaluation, self-evaluation in schools, etc. Conclusions can be drawn from all of it in the direction of improving the entire educational system.

The international study measures trends of students' knowledge and ability in Mathematics and the IEA's Mathematics and Science Subject Group (TIMSS), as the most significant international study of classroom teaching in these subjects, is increasingly important in supporting the continuous improvement of the quality of education. In the period from April to May 2019, the main TIMSS 2019 testing was carried out. Through the questionnaires students, teachers, parents and directors, obtained data on how the school climate and culture, teaching practice, the goals of the curriculum, the socio-economic conditions of the students and schools, the systematic arrangement of education and others affect the achievements of the students. The results were announced in December 2020. 64 countries participated in TIMSS 2019, of which, 58 countries and 6 economies with a population of the fourth grade. It is especially important that in TIMSS 2019 with a population of 4th grade all the countries of the region participated (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo and Albania), so we can see the achievements of our students in relation to the achievements of the students from other countries in the region, as well as the influence of the factors.

Educational researchers have been working for decades on the factors that determine students' achievements. They are a complex phenomenon that is influenced by numerous factors, primarily the personality characteristics of the students, the socio-economic status of the student, and of course the environment and conditions in which the teaching takes place. There are many reasons for school success or failure of students, and they are usually classified into three groups:

- family and peers (family relationships, socio-economic status, family structure, expectations of parents and peers, relationships with peers),
- the school (curriculum, teacher training for educational work, student-teacher relationship, teacher's expectations, student assessment methods),
- students' personal resources (intelligence, values, self-esteem, expectations, assessment of self-efficacy) (Gutwein, 2009).

The research question in this paper is *What is the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on the achievements of students in mathematics and sciences in TIMSS 2019 in RS Macedonia.*

## Sample

The population for this study in RNM was all students from the fourth grade of primary schools in which teaching is conducted in Macedonian and/or in Albanian. The average age of students in RNM at the time they were tested is 9.8 years old, making them one of the youngest in the region with an average of years. The sample included 150 primary schools, of which: 86 in the Macedonian language, 30 in Albanian language and 34 in Macedonian and Albanian languages. Out of a total of 3531 students from RNM in the sample on the day of testing, 3270 students were tested, i.e. 93%. Out of the 58 countries participating in the study, RNM is in 45th place in Mathematics with an average score of 472, and in 51st place in Sciences with an average score of 426. Compared to other countries in the region, RSM students achieved better results in Mathematics from: Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Sciences only from Kosovo.

## Data Sources and Analyze

The database from TIMSS 2019 will be used in this analysis.

Students' achievement is analyzed according to Students' Questionnaires and Parents' Questionnaires regarding the availability of five resources on the Home Learning Resources scale that provide insight into families' socio-economic status (SES). In doing so, the focus was placed on the indicators of the socio-economic status of the students: home resources for learning, the education and the occupation of the parents. A scale (Home Resources for Learning) was made from the answers to the questions of the students and parents related to the socio-economic parameters in the home. It contains data on: number of books at home, number of children's books at home, home support for learning (own room, internet connection), education and occupation of parents/guardians. The scale is divided into three categories:

- Students with many resources – students who have: more than 100 books at home, their own room, internet connection and at least one parent with a university degree.
- Students with few resources – students who have: 25 or less books in their home, do not have their own room, do not have internet and parents have not completed more than secondary education.
- Students with few resources – students who do not belong to any of the previous two categories.

Students' achievements will also be analyzed according to the opinions of School Principals from the Questionnaire for Principals regarding how many schools have resources for teaching Mathematics and Sciences in grade school.

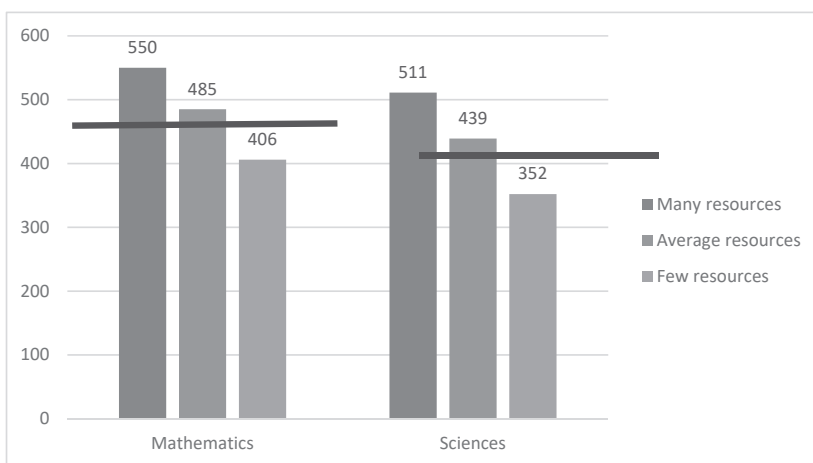
For data analysis it was used IEA IDB Analyzer.

## Results and Discussion

The data from TIMSS 2019 show that the SES status of students in RNM, and through them and the school's, are strongly related to the achievements of students in both cognitive areas (Mathematics and Sciences). In R.N. Macedonia, 7% of the students at home have many resources, compared to 17% at the international level. While 15% of the students have several resources, and only 8% at the international level. The largest percentage of students in RNM have average resources at home (78%). The TIMSS study showed that the students who have more resources at home achieve higher results in both Mathematics and Sciences. Between the three categories of the scale there are statistically significant differences in student achievement. The achievements of students in RNM who belong to the categories of many resources and few resources are higher than our national average (472 for Mathematics and 426 for Sciences), while, on the other hand,

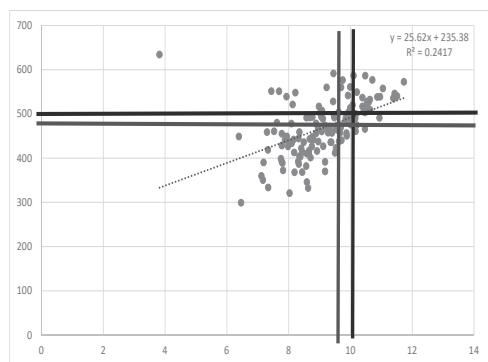
students from the category of few resources are far below the national average. The difference in the achievements of students from the category of many resources with the international average in Mathematics is 12 points, and in Sciences 46 points. These differences increase linearly moving towards the few resources category (for Mathematics the difference is 27 points, and for Sciences even 62 points). The achievements of the students differ statistically significantly in relation to which category they belong to. All of this implies that at the school level, the higher the SES of the school, the higher the achievement at the school level. The analysis by school showed that 73% of the schools in RNM belong to the Average resources category, and the rest are from the Few resources category, while there are no schools at all from the Many resources category.

**Graph 1**  
Home Resources for studying

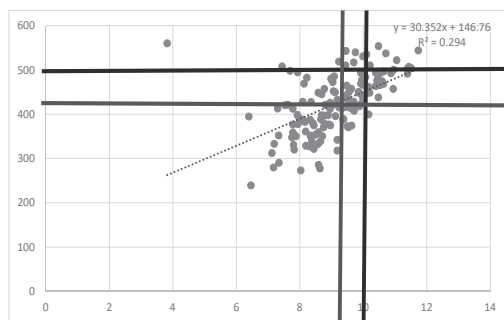


The distribution of schools, by their average Math and Science achievement, and school’s SES, by student SES can be seen in the graphs above. Average school-level achievement is significantly related to school SES. In particular, the positive value of the slope of the socio-economic status shows that students with more favorable conditions achieved better results in TIMSS 2019 than students with unfavorable conditions. In particular, 24% of the variation in Mathematics scores and 39% of the variation in Science scores between schools can be explained by the school’s socio-economic profile.

**Graph 2**  
Mathematics



**Graph 3**  
Science

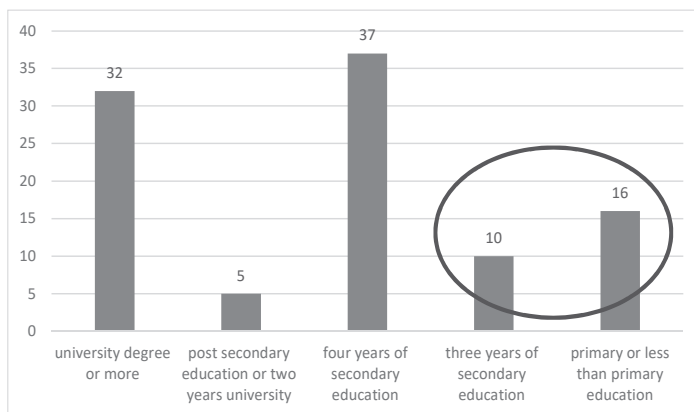




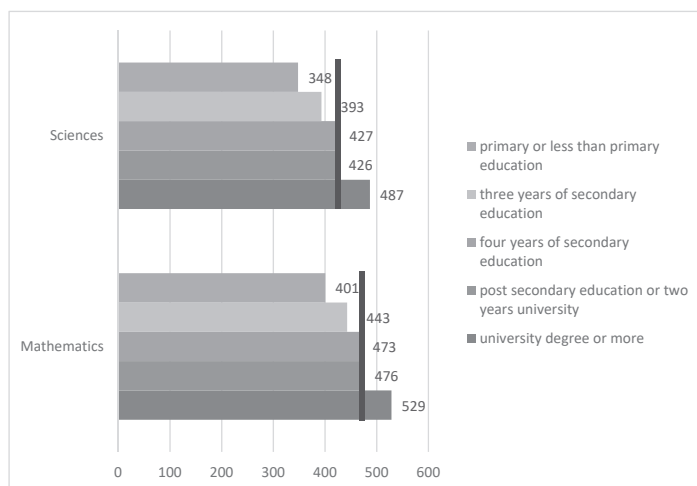
If we consider each of the factors that appear in the SES scale individually, it can be seen that each of them has a statistically significant effect on the average achievements.

This study showed that there is a strong positive relationship between students' achievement and parental education. In general, the higher the parents' education, the more highly paid professions they have, that is, the family has a higher socio-economic status and has more resources at home.

**Graph 4**

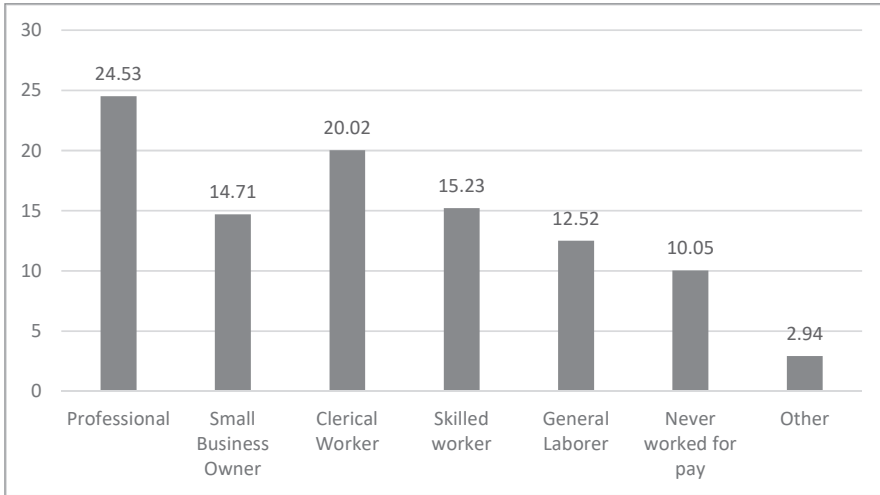


**Graph 5**

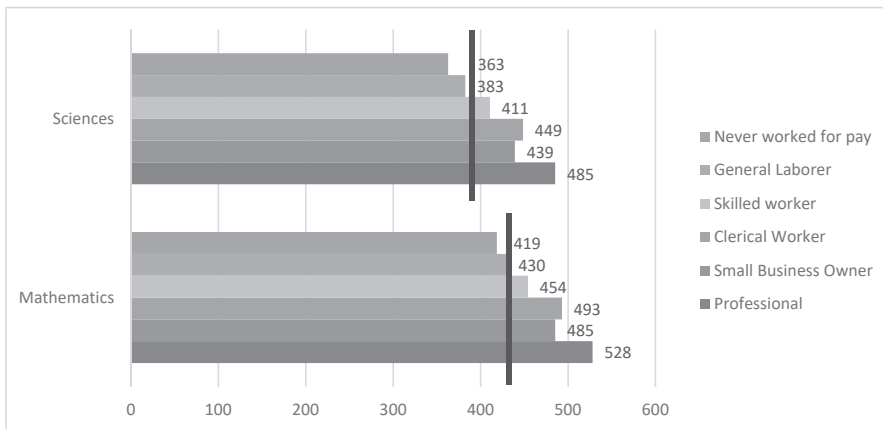


The level of education of the parents can be considered a statistically significant factor of the students' achievements in Mathematics and Sciences. The differences are significant so that students whose parents have a higher level of education have statistically significantly better achievements in Mathematics and Sciences. The average student whose parents completed primary or less than primary education or only three years of secondary education achieve lower results than the average RNM results in Mathematics and Sciences (that's about a quarter of the students). The achievements of these students in sciences are below the low reference level (lower limit of 400 points), and in Mathematics at the minimum level. Students whose parents have a higher education also achieve higher results.

**Graph 6**



**Graph 7**



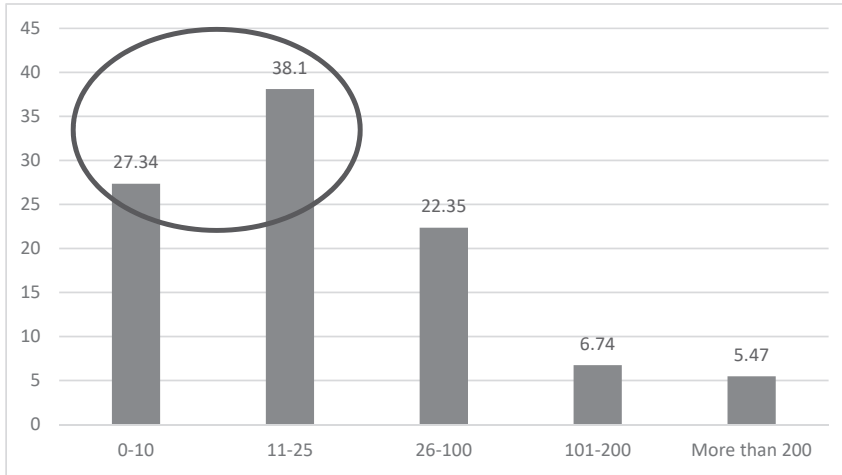
Also, parents who have more prestigious occupations, their children achieve better results. Children whose parents are experts in their profession have the highest achievements in Mathematics and Sciences. Their average achievements are statistically significantly higher than children whose parents have some other profession. Parenting is a significant factor in a child's success on Math and Science tests.

Another factor that enters into students' SES is the number of books in the home. As many as 65% of the students surveyed have under 25 books in their homes. The achievements of students who have up to 25 books at home have statistically significantly lower results than those students who have more than 25 books at home.

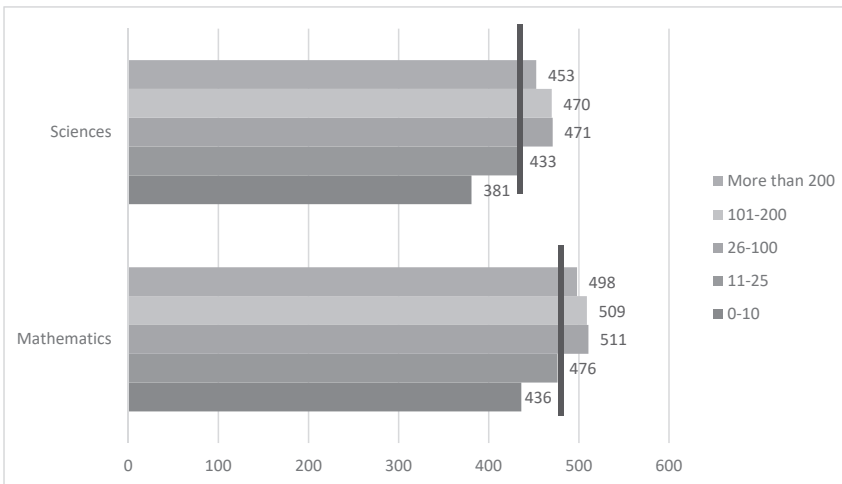
In addition to the students' SES, the resources in the school are also an important factor. According to the answers of the Principals of the schools involved in TIMSS from RSM, 8% of the schools have many resources in Mathematics, and 10% in Sciences. While 13% of schools do not have resources for Mathematics, and 19% for Sciences. The other schools have average resources.

RNM students who attend high-resource schools have higher achievement than those who attend low-resource schools. This difference in achievement in sciences is statistically significant.

**Graph 8**



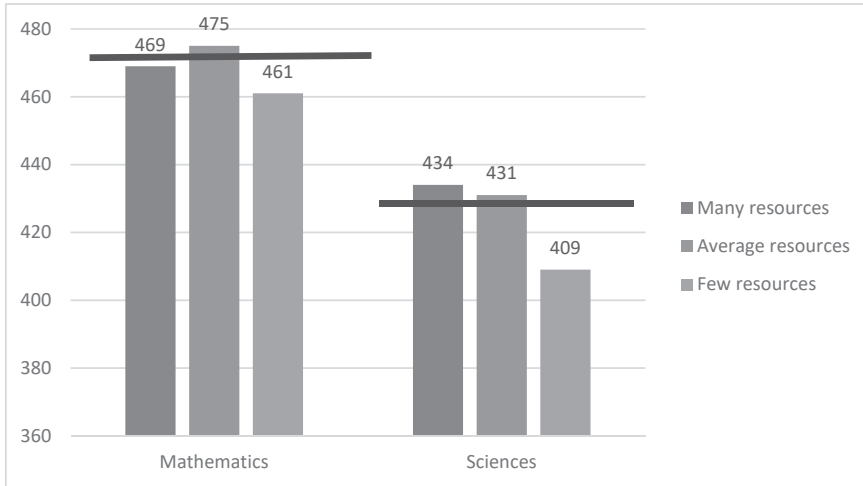
**Graph 9**



While, on the other hand, those students who attend schools with many resources and schools with few resources do not have large differences in mathematics achievement, even this difference is inversely proportional.

Very important fact for teaching in the field of Sciences are the resources available to schools for the implementation of teaching, especially in the practical part. It certainly has a particular impact on the success of Science students. But resources, in addition to being an important input, are not necessarily a sufficient condition in themselves to achieve the desired results. Appropriate use of resources in the teaching process is also an important factor. The use can be reflected through the implementation of practical research in teaching. Conducting hands-on science research is an important component of science curricula in many states. According to school principals' responses about whether their schools have resources to facilitate hands-on science experiments and use a science laboratory, on average, across TIMSS 2019 participating countries, 36% of fourth grade

**Graph 10**



students study in schools with a science laboratory, and their average achievement is higher than the 64% of students studying in schools without a laboratory (496 vs. 486). Of course, school lab availability may also be related to other economic factors that are related to achievement. Students were also asked about the frequency with which they conduct experiments in science classes. In the fourth grade in RNM, 40% of the students stated that they conducted experiments “at least once a week”, 31% “once or twice a month”, 22% “several times a year”, while 7% “never”. Students who declared that they do experiments “once or twice a month” achieve the best results (454 points), in contrast to those who answered that they do them “at least once a week” (409 points) or “never” (406 points). Just like the international level and in RNM, students who declared that they do experiments “once or twice a month or several times a year” achieved higher average achievements than students who did them once a week or never.

## Conclusion

Every educational system should strive for a fairer and more just system, in which the achievements of students should be the result of their efforts and will, and not the consequence of contextual factors such as gender, socio-economic status, family structure or place of residence. It is very important, despite the unfavorable socio-economic status and low achievements, that the school does not reduce the expectations from the students, and sets expectations from the students that are above their current achievements, which together with the students they will revise and gradually increase, with goal-developing their self-efficiency. Schools and teachers should use a blended pedagogic approach in which student-centered learning is combined with clear guidance and guidance from the teacher, continuous formative assessment to monitor and guide progress and ensure adequate understanding of learning content and objectives.<sup>39</sup>

Schools facing low achievement due to unfavorable SES should attract the best quality teachers and be supported in providing conditions for professional development of staff, especially in terms of working with students from vulnerable categories; mentoring new teachers; offering

<sup>39</sup> Villaseñor P. The different ways that teachers can influence the socio-emotional development of their students: A literature review, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/285491571864192787/Villaseno-The-different-ways-that-teachers-can-influence-the-socio-emotional-dev-of-students.pdf>

financial and career incentives with the goal of retaining quality teachers. Socio-economic inequality between students clearly reflects inequality in achievement. Although the educational system cannot directly reduce inequality between students, it can, through various mechanisms, mitigate its impact and enable every student to have the same opportunities, conditions and adequate support to achieve high results, regardless of the disadvantages that surround him in the home.

In that context, the schools that have students with the lowest achievements have the greatest need for support, which is not only material and technical, but above all pedagogical and mentoring.

Consequently, the investments in these schools should be primarily in the direction of professional development of the staff and involvement of parents.

Considering that our state provides the basic conditions for free education (textbooks, transportation), additional ways to improve the situation of students with unfavorable SES include:

- Right to free school meals;
- Offering mentoring support by teachers and/or the professional service with the aim of achieving the expected learning outcomes;
- Tutoring help from other students within the school and/or home, as a measure to reduce mutual stereotypes, develop empathy and develop competencies for peer learning;
- Effective use of additional teaching, which should offer approaches to work adapted to the needs of each student, different from the approaches they usually use during classes;
- Inclusion of students with unfavorable SES in all activities in the school, with the aim of their acceptance by other students and developing a sense of belonging to the school;
- Developing additional skills of school inclusive teams and forms of mutual exchange of experiences between teams from different schools.

Considering that parents of students with lower socio-economic status are less involved in their child's education, different communication strategies should be developed between the school and parents/guardians, with the aim of joint action in improving achievements. These strategies can include: support from the wider community where the student lives, home visits to the student, using digital tools to communicate more frequently with parents/guardians, etc. depending on the assessment of the situation and needs.

In addition, the teaching staff should reconsider their potential stereotypes and prejudices in order to be able to develop positive relationships with all students and to give each student the appropriate support. In certain schools, this may mean restructuring the classes in order to have more effective interaction and better opportunities to use more appropriate teaching and learning strategies.<sup>40</sup>

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## **THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SUPPORTING PLURILINGUALISM IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS: INSIGHTS FROM LONDON**

**Abstract:** For educators working in diverse contexts, where they encounter many different languages, a key question is: How can an educator be able to actively support bilingual/multilingual learners to maintain home languages and to support all learners to develop plurilingual skills, if they themselves have no knowledge of languages used by their learners? Many educators see this issue as a significant obstacle for engaging with plurilingual practices in their own school communities and classrooms.

This paper will address that question through an analysis of good practice examples and relevant initiatives in London, as a global city. The theoretical part of this paper will draw on conceptualization of plurilingualism and plurilingual practices as defined by the Council of Europe. Based on the analysis of examples of good practice in London, this paper aims to provide guidance on the role educators have in: supporting bilingual/multilingual learners to integrate their home languages into their learning, create opportunities to develop plurilingual skills for all learners, including those who identify as monolingual, and develop practices which encourage all learners to use their linguistic background as resource for teaching and learning. Examples of good practice come from London as one of the lead global cities, which is characterized by hyper diversity and has 233 world languages recorded in its schools.

**Keywords:** Plurilingualism, Plurilingual practices, Role of teachers, Home languages

### **Introduction**

This article is aimed at practitioners, researchers and training providers in education looking to gain insights into well-established classroom initiatives which exemplify how teachers can support development of plurilingual skills for all learners in their learning communities. The main focus of this article's analysis is the fact that in diverse contexts teachers cannot be skilled users of all languages their learners use, in some cases teachers may not be at all familiar with many languages used in their school communities. It is therefore not surprising to find that teachers experience linguistic diversity as something they are not able to work with and support.

A select number of classroom practice examples from London schools challenges these views by showcasing different roles teachers may take in order to overcome language barriers and develop plurilingual classroom practices. In the conclusions, further readings and recommendations are provided for those wishing to explore this topic further.

### **Context**

According to the latest figures London has a population of 9 million (<https://www.trustfor-london.org.uk/data/geography-population>).

Global Cities Index (<https://www.kearney.com/global-cities/2021>) ranking, which is based on five criteria, places London as the second global city in the world. Two landmark studies map the linguistic diversity of London: Multilingual Capital (Baker & Eversley, 2000) and Language Capital (Eversley et al, 2010). Collected data shows that well over 50 percent of the school children in inner London classify as bilingual and in individual schools it can be as high as 70 to over 90 percent. It needs to be emphasized that the broad and inclusive definition of bilingualism used in this study and by London schools to collect relevant data being: ‘exposure to more than one language at home or in the community’, is necessary and suitable to the context where there are many different types of bilingualism with various degrees of competencies in languages used. Language Capital (2010) lists 233 languages recorded as used by school children. The main challenge is that many bilingual/multilingual children often experience their home languages as of little value in the education system and perceive them of value only within their communities (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, Mehmedbegovic, 2008, 2009).

Despite many challenges experienced by educators in this hyper diverse top ranked global city and a main site of multiple migration waves, pockets of excellent practice have been developing in many schools. This article aims to outline four such initiatives which exemplify approaches to linguistic and cultural resources for the benefit of individual and communities.

## Key Concepts

### Plurilingualism and Plurilingual Skills

I would like to begin this section by arguing that the concept of plurilingualism, as introduced and promoted by the Council of Europe (2001) provides a significant shift in terms of understanding and conceptualizing language teaching and learning, as well as developing innovative models of practice, which include all linguistic experiences of our learners as resources for learning languages used as medium of education or target foreign languages.

How is this shift achieved? It is helpful to begin by reflecting on the goals of language learning as positioned by the post-second world war trends in linguistics and language learning, although the concept of ‘native speaker’ originates in the 19th century and has close links with the concept: one nation, one language, one state (Hackert, 2012).

Language learning trends set in the 1960-ties have imposed an idealized goal that still dominates what is expected of language learning and which is impossible to achieve for most learners: ‘native speaker like competence’ (Paikeday, 1985). As many will know from their own experience, even those who live immersed for decades in another language and culture often have a recognizable difference in their language production, that makes the native speakers ask: ‘Where are you from?’. Achieving native like competence through foreign language learning only in one’s country of origin is a goal that makes many language learners and teachers experience a sense of failure. In a synthesis of relevant theories (Calvino, 2011) reaches the same conclusion: ‘We can observe either from the Psycholinguistic Issues as for the Sociolinguistic and Discourse Issues perspectives that there are several difficulties which may account for the hindering of the acquisition of native-like competence in Second Language Acquisition. These obstacles, which are most of the time difficult to overcome, lead us to the conclusion that it might be difficult not to say impossible to happen that a non-native speaker achieves native-like competence’.

In a study conducted in London, one participant, who at the time was working as a head teacher, reported learning a language in school as an extremely negative experience: ‘I remember learning French in school and being left with a profound feeling of failure’ (Mehmedbegovic et al, 2015). This sentiment reflects experiences of many learners who after learning a foreign language in school for 6 – 8 years feel they do not have even basic confidence to engage in a conversation

in the target language or in a similar task. These types of experiences are reflected in the decreasing numbers of learners opting to study languages, which we have been seeing across different stages of education in the UK. 'Entry rates for modern languages have declined steadily, at both GCSE and A-Level, since the early 2000s. GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) entry data, for example, show that the combined total number of pupils taking French, German, Spanish and other Modern Languages last year was almost half that of 2001 (Fisher et al, 2022)'.

A specific challenge in Anglophone contexts is also that the power of English as the current global language is widely interpreted as: 'English is enough'. This perception that English speakers do not need to speak other languages is based on the dominance of English unrivalled by any other language in our history. David Crystal (2000) highlighted its unparalleled power at the beginning of the new millennium by saying: 'No other language has been spoken by some many people in so many places ... one in four of the human race is competent in English'. Over two decades later its power and domination are prominently continuing to be on the increase.

Comparative European Union Data collected in 2012 placed the UK, at the time, as the third on the list of EU member states with a population 'least likely' to be able to speak a foreign language. According to the survey, 61% of the UK population could only speak one language. The only EU member states with a higher percentage were Hungary (65%) and Italy (62%) (European Commission, 2012). Considering that the most up to date British Council Language Trends (2022) are reporting decline in study visits and language immersion for the UK students in other countries, student exchanges and availability of language assistants from different countries, there can be no realistic expectation that the UK has improved its ranking since the EU report was published in 2012.

Plurilingualism recognizes an all-encompassing communication competence that is made up of different languages that one person has been exposed to and acknowledges the partial nature of the knowledge anyone can have of one language, be it their mother tongue or not. Therefore plurilingualism removes the ideal of the native speaker as the ultimate achievement and replaces it with the aim of an effective pluralistic communicator who draws on his/her varied repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge in, a flexible, creative and individual way (European Council, 2001).

Plurilingual practices in education are further defined in Coste et al (2009) as:

'The school's first duty regarding languages and cultures is therefore, partly contrary to its formerly established functions, to contribute to: the drawing up of a plurilingual and pluricultural learner profile, familiarization with the resources enabling this profile to be further developed, progressive mastery of the means permitting dynamic management of this multiple competence and recognition and upgrading of the knowledge and skills thus acquired.'

The following examples of good practice shed light specifically on types of resources which can be utilized to develop plurilingual practices in schools and what roles teachers can take in managing the processes involved in developing plurilingual skills.

## **Examples of Good Practice**

### **Translation Nation Initiative, Stephen Spender Trust**

Translation Nation Outline: The Translation Nation (<https://www.all-languages.org.uk/news/translation-nation>) project introduces children at primary school to translation. It promotes inclusivity of all languages and uniquely links community languages with a curriculum focus on literacy including listening skills and the use of phonics. Translation Nation aims to inspire children at



primary school to begin a lifelong exploration of literature from around the world, an enjoyment and appreciation of literary English as well as taking pride in the many languages that have become part of the community. Outcome: Translation Nation is a celebration of the languages spoken in Primary schools in England. By sharing their languages with their peers, students become fascinated by the different worlds that language can create and develop a respect for those with linguistic ability. Parents are able to find new ground on which to communicate with their children and build a bridge between their childhood and their child's. Schools are able to offer parents different ways of becoming involved within the school community and teachers become inspired to adopt more creative ways to engage with their students. The project is a partnership between Eastside Educational Trust and the Stephen Spender Trust. Translation Nation brings together the expertise of Eastside's work in educational settings and Stephen Spender Trust's commitment to literature in translation.

### **Bilingual Learning for Second and Third Generation Bangladeshi Children: Language, Culture and Curriculum**

This was an action research project based in two primary schools in Tower Hamlets (Kerner et al, 2008). It examines how second and third generation British Bangladeshi children learn bilingually in after-school community language classes and investigates the benefits that can be gained if children use Sylheti/Bengali alongside English in the mainstream classroom. Year 2, 4 and 6 children were visited at their after-school Bengali classes to find out how they learned language, literacy and mathematics in their mother tongue. With the help of community class teachers, primary teachers and bilingual assistants, the research team then devised bilingual activities that children could do in mainstream school to link with the curriculum.

Children found it difficult to use Sylheti/Bengali in the classroom, although they were accustomed to using it in the playground and at community class, where they switched between languages. Children wanted to be able to use Bangla for learning in school and felt it was an important part of their identity. Working in both languages can enhance children's learning, through conceptual transfer, use of translation, developing metalinguistic awareness and drawing on cultural knowledge.

Second and third generation children still have bilingual skills, but are in danger of losing them unless they have sufficient support to develop home language. In addition to community language classes, children need to do academic work bilingually in mainstream school in order to fully develop concepts and skills in their home language as well as English. Only then will they achieve the full benefits of bilingual learning.

### **Using Dual Language Books to Support Bilingualism and Biliteracy in English and Albanian**

This action research project explored the ways in which dual language books can be used in England to support bilingual pupils in school, in a context in which the languages of the home rarely feature on the curriculum (Sneddon, 2008). In the context of a project in which an education authority provided dual language books to primary schools, two mothers used Albanian/English story books to teach their six- year-old daughters to read in Albanian. The study reports on how the mothers and their children used both texts to transfer skills from one language to another, to negotiate meaning in both languages and to compare reading strategies.

At the end of the school year the girls, as well as reading in Albanian, were reading in English with the best in their class. They were developing fluency in Albanian and using it more in the home. Their mothers had become closely involved in their daughters' schooling and reported improvements in their own English literacy skills. The teacher's role was crucial: by providing support and resources to parents she enabled them to help their children become additive bilinguals in a situation in which they were beginning to lose the active use of their first language.

## **Autobiographical Approaches: Developing Intercultural and Plurilingual Skills**

This autobiographical approach was developed by the author of this article and introduced to several London schools as a part of the structured speaking and listening curriculum unit (Mehmedbegovic, 2012). The key element of this approach is a teacher led presentation of his/her own model narrative based on multimedia elements: a soundtrack, a photograph, a poem, a video clip, just to name a few types of multimedia elements. This model is used for learners to gain insights into developing their own autobiographical writing and oral presentations using: photographs, films, music and literature. Following the model lesson, students worked with their class teachers for three weeks on researching their backgrounds, talking to their family members, collecting multimedia elements and developing a presentation which was based on a poster with written text and visual elements. Learners who are bilingual/multilingual are encouraged to write and present using their different languages. On the day scheduled for pupils' presentations, there were a number of guests in the classroom: head of year, where possible head teacher, school governor. These guests were invited with the intention to give children a sense of special occasion and having a real audience. Each pupil was then invited to present their own narrative. Children said in their feedback:

“Doing a presentation in front of my class and guests, made me feel like I was a teacher!”

“A lot of the stories I heard during family gatherings, only started making sense when I did this project.”

The teachers on the other hand say: ‘children who never put their hand up, kept asking when they can present their narratives’ and ‘children with special educational needs, were more eager to share their cultures’.

At the European level a project based on personal memories has been developed in order to bring different generations together and emphasize the importance of individual experiences. Although the London project presented in this chapter has no direct links with this bigger initiative at the European level, there are many common features. The European Memories Initiative (<https://europeanmemories.net>) makes a case for developing an understanding of history which is not only about accumulating pieces of information, but having a personal insight into emotions and thinking of individuals caught up in the processes of upheaval and change.

The Council of Europe published ‘The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters’ in 2009. This document is essentially a toolkit for reflecting on one’s experiences of otherness. The reflection process is guided by a sequence of questions based on relevant research and it is adapted for different age range. The aim of this toolkit is to provide educators and young people with means of reaching a better understanding of the self and others. Its goal is to support the development of relevant skills and intercultural competencies. It has multiple possibilities of use: as a self-reflection or self-assessment tools, not shared with anybody; for one-to-one work and confidential sharing, or for collaborative learning in classroom or group settings. In terms of its place in the learning cycles or curricula, this approach can be built in at regular intervals with the intention of following the process of developing awareness and skills or it can be used as a response to a positive or negative event (study visit or a racial incident).

## **Role of Teachers in Supporting Plurilingualism: Commonalities and Implications across Different Initiatives**

Considering the four initiatives outlined above, it can be identified that there is a division on the two initiatives where the teachers engage with supporting children from many different linguistic backgrounds: Translation Nation and Autobiographical Approaches and the two initiatives

where the teachers are focused on one specific type of linguistic background and type of bilingualism: Sylheti/Bangla-English bilingualism and Albanian-English bilingualism. This reflects well London context in which a small number of local authorities, such as Tower Hamlets where the Sylheti/Bangla-English initiative took place, have high concentration of children with a particular linguistic background, whereas most of inner London local authorities have a high level of diversity and in many schools, there will commonly be between 40 – 70 languages used by pupils (Eversley et al, 2010). However, in all four initiatives the teachers leading the projects in mainstream schools are not users of the languages they are supporting their pupils to use as a part of structured teaching and learning activities.

In these initiatives there are different ways used in which the linguistic barriers between pupils and teachers are bridged. In Translation Nation teachers work in partnership with community workers and professional translators who can engage with pupils in their home languages. In the initiative with the bilingual Albanian-English books, the partners are mothers. In Autobiographical Approaches pupils are encouraged to present their narratives bilingually, in writing and orally, and they themselves act as the experts on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This initiative is of particular importance and interest for this topic since it is an example where teachers do not depend on bringing in external partners, that may require funding, or parents, who may not be available. This initiative exemplifies how teachers can utilize their learners as the main resources for supporting plurilingualism in classrooms and empower them by allocating them the role of experts on their linguistic and cultural background. The comment of a learner, who reflected on his experience during this initiative by saying: 'I felt like I was a teacher' (Mehmedbegovic, 2012), perfectly encapsulates how learners recognize the significance of being given center stage in the classroom to present his narrative and to provide insights into his linguistic and cultural background. Utilizing bilingual/multilingual learners as the main resources to support plurilingualism in classrooms has multiple advantages: firstly teachers are fully in control of planning relevant activities without any limitations which occur when working with external partners, mainly funding and availability; secondly by structuring opportunities for their learners to take the role of experts on their cultures and languages many important pedagogical aspects are achieved: learners acquire the role of the leaders of plurilingual learning in their classrooms, which can be expected to have a positive impact on higher self-esteem, enhanced engagement and therefore better academic achievement.

The most important implication, that we can draw from all these examples, is that the awareness needs to be raised amongst educators that through working in partnership with parents, community workers and other types of professionals, such as translators, and by empowering learners as leaders of plurilingual learning in classrooms, plurilingual initiatives and projects can be planned and delivered with great success. The teacher takes on the role of a facilitator and where appropriate joins in as a learner, with the aims of acquiring cultural and linguistic knowledge relevant to his class and school community. In the words of Jim Cummins through such classroom practices teachers provide 'an affirmative mirror' (Cummins, 2000) to linguistic and cultural capital of their learners.

Previous research also shows that the teachers who experience seeing their learners complete tasks in their home languages with competence and expressiveness, have higher expectations of these learners in their mainstream classes too. Being new to English in a school, can often be interpreted as a special educational need and it has been documented, in a review of research into practices with children with English as an Additional Language in the context of schools in England, that children new to English are often registered as special needs and placed into low ability classes even though they are simply at a natural stage of acquiring a new language (Andrews, 2009). Seeing learners who struggle to complete a simple task in an English classroom, perform at a high level of competence in another language, for example in a play or a poetry reading, teachers have described as seeing their learners demonstrate a 'hidden talent' which then changes their perception of their overall ability (Mehmedbegovic, 2011).

Therefore planning for and facilitating opportunities as a part of curriculum time for children to utilise their home languages as a resource for their own learning, but also as a resource which supports development of plurilingual skills of all children and adults belonging to that learning community, has a wider impact and implications on equality of opportunity and participation of learners, inclusive classroom practices and ultimately social justice. Learners who are inappropriately identified as special needs and inappropriately placed in low ability sets are described by some educators as: ‘children with no language’, ‘severe EAL’ and ‘children with bilingual problems’ (Mehmedbegovic, 2011). Although we need to acknowledge that all teachers work with the best intentions for their pupils, this kind of terminology shows a lack of understanding of plurilingual learners and plurilingual practices.

A recent research report provides evidence that teachers in England have developed classroom practices which are inclusive of home cultures, but home languages are still seen as an aspect unavoidably left out for the reasons discussed above:

‘Another commonly used strategy by the class teachers was making reference to EAL students’ home cultures. Many teachers reported that they could not ‘do much about languages’, since they did not speak them. However, they found it a lot easier to make reference to EAL students’ home cultures, particularly in activities involving history, environment, weather, festivals and religions’ (Arnot et al, 2014).

This dichotomy of classroom practices where diverse cultures are explored and well integrated in the school environment, for example through displays, assemblies and school events, whereas diverse languages used by learners in a school might only appear in a tokenistic way such as welcome signs at the school entrance, demonstrates an urgent need for the relevant professional development of teachers and school leaders. Educators in different roles need opportunities to gain insights into ways to engage with linguistic diversity in their contexts in creative ways as facilitators of plurilingual development for all members of their learning community. The most important shift in thinking which this professional development needs to provide is for educators to overcome a well-established perception, expressed above as: ‘we could not do much about languages, if we do not speak them’ (ibid, 2014).

## **Conclusion and Further Readings**

The range of initiatives outlined in this article exemplifies different approaches and roles educators can consider in order to develop plurilingual practices in their classrooms, even though they may not have any knowledge of languages their pupils use. The examples given in this article, are only a select small sample of good practice from London schools. The author of this article has developed a website: Healthy Linguistic Diet, <http://healthylinguisticdiet.com/>, which provides further examples of good practice and relevant publications.

Healthy Linguistic Diet approach is based on interdisciplinary research and aims to provide a gradual way into developing plurilingual practices based on the analogy between physical and mental health. Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are important factors in maintaining physical health. In the same way, the learning of languages and their regular use provide essential mental exercise, leading to a better brain health and an increase in “cognitive reserve” resulting in a later onset of dementia and an improved cognitive outcome after a stroke (Mehmedbegovic & Bak, 2017). Healthy Linguistic Diet model has been successfully implemented as a regional strategy in Italy (Cinganotto et al, 2022).

As final words of advice and recommendations for all those educators wishing to support plurilingualism and develop plurilingual practices in their own classrooms, the most important starting points for transforming own practice are:

- Educators do not need to be skilled user of languages their learners use in order to provide to support their utilization in their classroom and provide ‘an affirmative mirror’;
- Children and adults (teaching assistants, parents) in your school community are our most valuable resources, consider how they can be utilized and empowered for the benefit of developing plurilingualism;
- Good practice can be developed by taking small, but regular steps – for example: by introducing one classroom activity per day which supports development of plurilingual skills or one homework a week with the same aim.

To evaluate your own classroom and practice you can reflect on these three questions:

- Does my classroom reflect my learners – for example: in terms of bilingual/multilingual reference book or displays?
- Is every learner in my classroom encouraged and given regular structured opportunities to invest his/her language background fully in the process of developing plurilingual skills?
- Are all languages learners bring into the classroom experienced as useful resources for all?

Educators prepared to invest time and efforts into developing plurilingual practices and use of home languages in mainstream classroom can expect to see positive impact on academic achievement across the curriculum, as documented in various studies, Cummins (2000) lists 160 studies conducted in different countries with learners from different socio-economic background.

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## EVALUATION OF SCHOOL – AGE STUDENTS THROUGH A PORTFOLIO

**Abstract:** The article examines the successful use of student's portfolio as a tool for assessing at all educational stages in school and the benefits for students and teachers. The problem of qualitative assessment of students' achievements is considered, so that it reflects the set goals as much as possible. The emphasis is on the usefulness of applying the portfolio method and self-assessment. Development of critical thinking, related to cooperation and independence, influenced by interests in life situations, which will develop students' competencies and social skills. The formative assessment of the educational process is commented and obligatory – assessment for the purposes of the programme.

**Keywords:** Student's portfolio, Assessment, Formative assessment, Self-assessment

## Introduction

*Evaluation* – is a systematic, critical analysis of data, processes, development, source data. It is a process of characterization and evaluation of various aspects of educational activity. It can also be considered as a professional activity of the pedagogue, which he must perform if he wants his teaching to be accessible and understandable, to meet modern requirements and needs, and the results of the learning process to be the best. In Bulgaria, assessments are prepared by certified assessors in a given field. The assessments must be prepared in accordance with the Law of Independent Assessors and the assessment standards adopted by the Chamber of Assessors in Bulgaria (KNOB). The main aspects of evaluation are: usefulness, probability, relevance, precision, and evaluation must be performed objectively, using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The definition of quality assessment includes a systematic, detailed and critical analysis of the student, consistent with: the ultimate goals of the program; input data; the processes of teaching, learning, overall learning and assessment; the initial data – built competencies. An important focus is the management of quality control systems and quality assurance systems, and curricula and institutions are evaluated. The main indicators are objectivity and evidence. The goals should be clear, publicly accessible, collectively established by a commission of external assessors, evaluation of the characteristics of the quality of education. It can be emphasized that quality assessments at school age should be as objective as possible and based on evidence. A key part of qualitative assessment involves gathering evidence. It is important to create a portfolio in which everything is kept in chronological order. At the end of the year it should be presented to the students' parents and teachers.

A distinction needs to be made between “quality of training” and “quality of education”. “The quality of training is a direct result of the learning process, depending on the level of qualification of the teaching staff, the teaching and methodological processes, the state of the school environment and technical equipment, the intellectual potential of students. The quality of education further includes requirements for graduates and evaluation from the point of view of the employer. (Madjirova, K., V. Mircheva and team – NIO. Monitoring the activities of the school, GEA 2000, Sofia, 2004)

The dynamic nature of learning and teaching shifts the burden of interaction, communication, dialogue and partnership not only between teacher and student, but also between students themselves. There is also a need for a change in assessment – from the assessment of presented results and knowledge, it becomes an assessment of the general development and achievements of the student, assessment of activities and practical skills. In this way the assessment is accurate and stimulates student's performances. Formative assessment is an ongoing process that allows information to be gathered about the strengths and weaknesses of learning, focusing on what students can do, rather than on their weaknesses and mistakes. This gives students peace of mind and confidence and increases the effectiveness of learning. Students should always be explained “WHY?” they are doing (learning) something. The new nature of assessment requires evidence of cognitive achievement and immediate correction of gaps.

## Method

The most popular approach to performing formative assessment is the portfolio. The educational portfolio is a modern educational technology that is used as a tool for self-assessment and reflection of the author. As an alternative way of formative assessment is a collection of collected and arranged materials and documents aimed at achieving a specific educational goal. The e-portfolio is a working file folder containing information that documents the acquired experience and achievements, a set of individual works on academic subjects or topics. In modern education, the concept of portfolio is becoming very popular in learning environments, as learners are the main actors in the development of different types of portfolios. The main reason is that working with a portfolio makes learners responsible for their own learning and development. Unlike

the traditional methods used in the classroom, which determine the teacher at the center of the educational process, teaching focused on the individual interests of students and determined by them most clearly defines the basic principle of working with the help of a portfolio. The portfolio approach imposes the method as an important tool for the continuous development of the learner's competencies. In the context of the portfolio, documenting the training and its results is much more than collecting documents, products, tests, essays or pictures. From a methodological point of view, through the portfolio it is necessary not only to preserve a set of information, but also to place the object in the appropriate context. This means that each document in it needs to be accompanied by data that includes information about the purpose, purpose, outcome, and most importantly about the real progress of training. The most important process for the portfolio is important during the documentation and this is the development of the "reflection" process. Students are able to reflect on the learning process, to prove their main achievements and discoveries, to make a connection between their knowledge and experience, as well as to change the direction of work depending on the results of previous learning and extracurricular activities.

The views of Petar Petrov, Mika Atanasova, Vessela Gyurova, Vanya Bozhilova, Katya Stoyanova are of special importance for theory and practice. According to them, the portfolio is the modern educational technology that reflects the relationship between theory, scientific knowledge and pedagogical practice. It is expressed in processing, modification, modeling, construction of theories, principles, approaches, methods. Integrates knowledge from different fields of science and practice to optimize the effective achievement of educational goals. (Petrov, Atanasova 2001; Gyurova, Bozhilova 2008; Stoyanova 2017)

According to William Cerbin, the portfolio is more than just gathering evidence for learning – learning tasks, programs, achievements. It includes analyzes and reflections, arguments, case studies, summaries and notes of the student about learning. This is the reason why some authors accept it as a concept and not as a simple documentation folder. The fact that the student will select the information about himself, will support and present it, helps to increase the level of his self-knowledge and helps build his own personality. (Cerbin 1994)

The main purpose of the portfolio is the formative assessment of the educational process and mandatory – assessment for the purposes of the programme. The portfolio method aims to build competencies and skills for self-assessment, as a powerful learning strategy in which students receive answers and discover their own mistakes.

## **Results and Discussion**

The aim of the present study is to explore the possibilities of the portfolio as a tool for objective assessment of students in different educational levels. 180 teachers from all stages of school education from the cities of Sofia, Varna, Blagoevgrad, Pazardzhik and Kyustendil were studied.

The toolkit includes an author's questionnaire for researching the possibilities of the portfolio as a tool for objective assessment of students – 3 questions with questionnaires for respondents gender, teaching experience and educational degree, 7 real questions with closed answer, 2 questions with open answer.

In Figure 1 we present the gender distribution of the pedagogical specialists who participated in the study. As can be seen from the figure, only 19% are male participants.

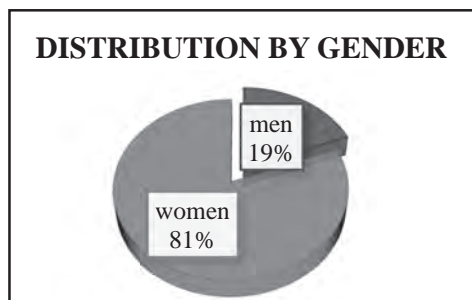
Regarding the distribution of the surveyed teachers in relation to the pedagogical experience they have (Figure 2), the results are almost uniform, with a slight predominance of 29% occupied by teachers with experience between eleven and twenty years in the education system.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of pedagogical specialists according to the educational level in which they work. The largest share of them are primary school teachers, respectively 30% and 10%, which is due to the fact that the research criteria relate to the use of the portfolio, are teachers in junior high school and high school stage of the respondents.



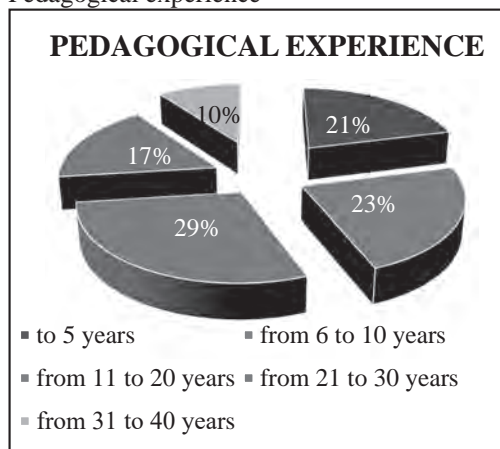
**Figure 1**

Distribution by gender



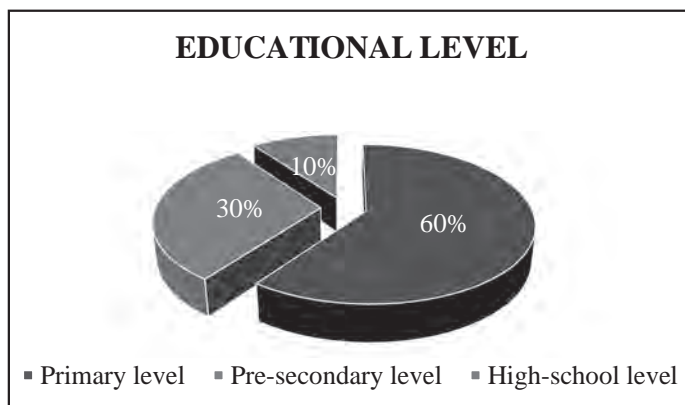
**Figure 2**

Pedagogical experience



**Figure 3**

Educational level



To the question “*Do you know the essence of the portfolio?*” (In terms of educational level) only one third of the surveyed teachers (16-31%) answered positively that they know the approach, and more than half (43-53%) think that they are partially familiar with the essence his, which generally speaks of a high degree of knowledge of the portfolio by teachers. (See Table 1)

**Table 1**

DO YOU KNOW THE ESSENCE OF THE PORTFOLIO  
(in terms of educational degree)

Teachers at Primary school level			Teachers at pre-secondary school level			Teachers at high-school level		
yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no
31%	53%	16%	23%	53%	24%	16%	43%	41%

To the question “*Do you know the essence of the portfolio?*” (In terms of teaching experience) it is impressive that teachers with experience of 5 to 20 years know the essence of the portfolio

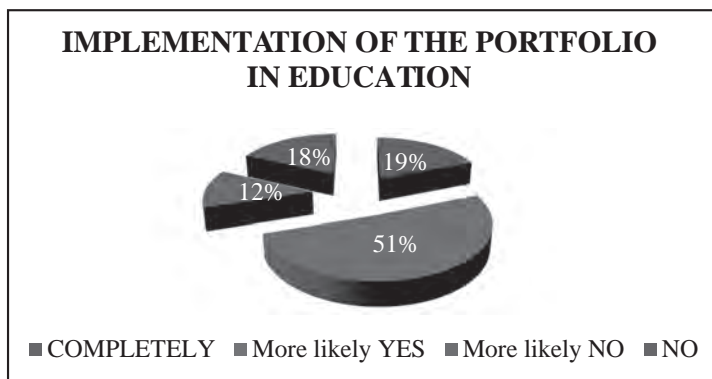
21-29% answered positively that they know the approach, and a small part 10-17% think that they are familiar with its essence, which generally indicates a medium level of knowledge of the portfolio by teachers. (See Table 2)

**Table 2**  
DO YOU KNOW THE ESSENCE OF THE PORTFOLIO  
(in terms of teaching experience)

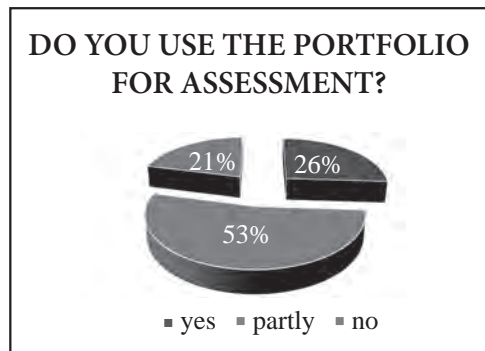
Pedagogical experience up to 5 years			Pedagogical experience 6-10 years			Pedagogical experience 11-20 years			Pedagogical experience 21-30 years			Pedagogical experience 31-40 years		
yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no	yes	partly	no
30	47	23	32	49	29	35	52	13	23	42	35	15	35	50
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

To the question “*Do you use the student portfolio as a tool for assessment in education?*” the results are presented in Fig.4. A good impression is made by the fact that 51% of the surveyed teachers believe that they are rather prepared and only 12% answer that they are definitely not prepared for the application of the approach in the learning process.

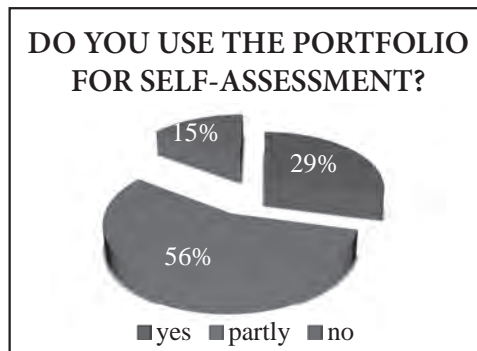
**Figure 4**  
Implementation of the portfolio in education



**Figure 5**  
Do you use the portfolio for assessment?



**Figure 6**  
Do you use the portfolio for self- assessment?



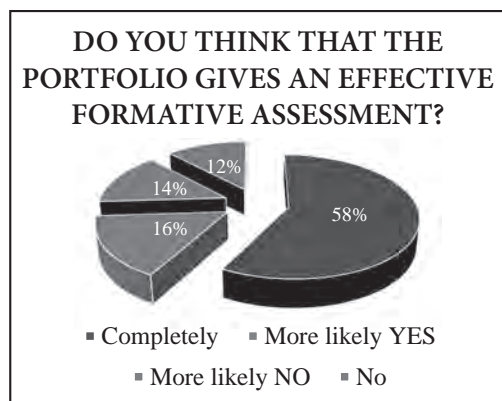
Figures five and six present the results of the questions concerning the constant use and application of the portfolio by the pedagogical specialists. As can be seen from the figures, about a little over 50% of teachers apply it partially in classroom form 26-29% of teachers use it successfully in assessment and self-assessment training, compared to only 15-21% of those who do not fully use the approach for formative assessment.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of results regarding the opinion of teachers on the effectiveness of the use of the portfolio. The highest percentage of pedagogical specialists 58% are fully convinced of the effective assessment that is obtained. 16% of the surveyed teachers need more in-depth and continuous analysis. A small percentage of teachers 12-14% do not think the tool is effective.

Educators see the innovative potential of the portfolio as a pedagogical tool structured in this way: 42% are fully convinced of the portfolio as a tool for assessing the individual progress of each student, 44% give a positive opinion of the tool for improving the effectiveness of assessment and a small part of respondents 6-8% believe that it is not an innovative approach to assessment.

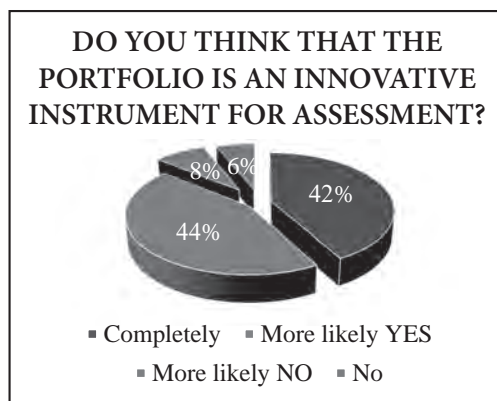
**Figure 7**

Do you think that the portfolio gives an effective formative assessment



**Figure 8**

Do you think that portfolio is an innovative instrument for assessment



There are many participants in the study who have different ideas for improving the quality of student assessment in school. This finding is evidenced by the suggestions made by 47% of teachers. The most common recommendations are the following:

- to create opportunities for practical work, performance of students, teamwork;
- to widely apply the portfolio approach as a tool for formative assessment;
- to provide more and more diverse literature, methodological resources, etc.
- to use the student portfolio in all educational levels;
- to involve parents and the public by working in partnership with them.

## Recommendations

There are still teachers who do not know the nature of the educational portfolio;  
Some of those who claim to know the instrument cannot actually define its essential characteristics;

A very small proportion of respondents are considered fully prepared to apply the classroom approach;

Teachers use the portfolio more often because it is innovative, i.e. different approach to evaluation;

More than half of the respondents have a need and would be confident to participate in organized qualification forms related to the approach, with priority given to short-term training and vocational specializations. There are many who prefer to acquire new knowledge and skills through self-study;

Teachers are convinced that the student portfolio should be implemented at the school level by all teachers in order to have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that understanding the approach to portfolio assessment in training is extremely important and its application will contribute to the realization of learning objectives and will help improve the quality of the educational process.

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## STUDY HABITS OF STUDENTS IN RELATION TO UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

**Abstract:** The paper addresses some general questions about study habits: How students acquire knowledge in general education programmes, and what are the expectations of university teachers in this regard in terms of assessment? In their productive focus on the processes of learning, do university teachers neglect the importance and necessity of the transmission and acquisition of historically accumulated knowledge, studying of the literature, without which quality study in the humanities and social sciences is inconceivable?

The questions were answered by interpreting the survey results we conducted with a sample of 429 students from various study programmes at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana. Students answered questions about their study habits in relation to their exam performance. The hypothesis that when studying for exam requirements, students clearly adhere to their teachers' requirements and expectations, therefore studying just enough to meet these expectations was confirmed. Based on their responses, the conclusion was

derived that the assessment criteria for a particular subject are an important determinant of the knowledge that students acquire. And this is to a significantly greater extent than their interest in the subject content. We argue, therefore, that it is not justified for university teachers to complain that students are no longer studying and are only interested in fulfilling the obligation and obtaining a certificate, but rather to question their expectations and consistency regarding the study of literature and the criteria for assessing knowledge, which are concerned with quality knowledge.

**Keywords:** University teachers' expectations, Bologna reform, Assessment criteria, Study habits

## Introduction

One of the key assumptions of the implementation of the Bologna reform in 2004 was the expectation that the university paradigm would change in Slovenia too, in order to “make study programmes and their course units or modules student-centered/output-oriented” (Tuning General Brochure, 2007, p. 11). As we pointed out in an article in *Sodobna pedagogika/Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* (Kovač, 2006), this expectation was based on the prediction that within the new study programmes studying would no longer be based on the “traditional paradigm of ‘sitting time’, but on a new paradigm of earned credits that combine effectively invested student study time [...] with verification of learning outcomes” (Zgaga, 2004, p. 123). In other words, post-Bologna study programmes and their modules built on the expectation that students would invest the “envisaged amount of personal study of adequate quality” into achieving the required standards of knowledge (ibid., p. 96).

The thesis was based on an attempt to reduce the importance of core/compulsory subjects in favor of optionality and an approach that “claims to take into account differentiated needs” (Furedi, 2016, p. 158), where the content of study (and study programmes) should to a large extent correspond to the interests of students and the needs of the labor market. Reflections on the importance of transmitting accumulated knowledge that is not necessarily directly applicable but should nevertheless be an inherent part of university study remained in the background when this paradigm was being designed.

The Bologna paradigm was also accompanied by the expectation that students would devote more time to the preparation of seminar papers, independent projects and, consequently, autonomous reading and study, and less time listening to *ex cathedra* lectures, which the proponents of the reform apparently believed to be less effective than autonomous work by students, since otherwise it would not be necessary to increase the amount of the latter at the expense of the former (Zgaga, 2004, p. 123). In substantive assessments the requirement for effectiveness appears to have outweighed the requirement that the knowledge acquired should be of good quality. Even in university study programmes, knowledge understood as a useful tool has become more important than knowledge as a value in itself (Gauchet, 2011; Kovač et al., 2020; Kovač Šebart, & Kovač, 2019).

At the same time, those of us who teach at university also encounter students who cannot see reasons why they should acquire knowledge, since the (only) important thing is that they are able to find it; who believe that the point of studying is to learn how to find and apply recipes that will facilitate their responsiveness in the profession or occupation they pursue in the future (see also the survey results below regarding resources and students' motivation for study). The question that concerns us here is “how to connect a person's inner orientation to an external apparatus” (Gauchet, 2011, p. 72). It is precisely in this development that we can also look for the “root of a supremely paradoxical phenomenon, namely the hidden yet persistent *intellectual decline* we are encountering in the knowledge society. This phenomenon is actually less surprising than it seems, if we consider that, while the social role of knowledge is growing, it has nevertheless become degraded in the subjective sense. Why should someone immerse themselves in knowledge at all if knowledge is no longer something that one needs to acquire as an end in itself, in order

to better understand the world, but is instead merely an external and functional factor for which it is enough that we learn to use it?" (ibid.).

In the light of the findings of our study, which identifies the views of students on how they have acquired knowledge or prepared themselves for exams, the question that raises itself is whether many university professors are already acting in accordance with the explanations described above, at least in terms of the requirements that students must satisfy in order to complete a course unit, at least as regards undergraduate students.

The ambition of the study that forms the core of this article is a modest one, although it fits entirely within the broader context of seeking an answer to the question of what is happening in university studies today: we wanted to find out, in the case of students enrolled in various programmes at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, how and what they studied in the 2018/19 academic year, in other words: what resources did they rely on and what (judging from their responses) was the quality of the work (i.e. study) they invested in achieving the expected knowledge that, in their judgement, was sufficient to pass their exams?

## Research Methodology

We carried out the study in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years. Our random sample included 429 students from the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education, 305 (71.1%) of whom were enrolled in first-cycle programmes and 124 (28.9%) of whom were enrolled in second-cycle (master's) programmes. With regard to the total number of students enrolled at the two faculties (6,689 students in the 2018/19 academic year – figures from *Univerza v številkah* [University in Numbers], 2020), our sample represents 6.4% of the basic population, which ensures that it is sufficiently representative.

We collected data by means of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire containing 34 closed-ended questions and one assessment scale. The questionnaires were completed during lectures and seminars in the presence of professors. We processed the data using descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to present the data, we used structural tables (f, f%) and checked our hypotheses using the chi-square test.

## Research Findings

An interesting starting point for further reflection is the fact that the average grade of the students included in the study is 8.0 for first-cycle (bachelor's) students and 8.3 for second-cycle (master's) students. Taken alongside the information on the average grades of the students included in the study, students' answers to the question of how they prepare for exams are all the more interesting (see Table 1).

*Table 1*

Students' answers regarding exam preparation

Claims	In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	Total
When preparing for an exam I study assigned <b>reading material</b> that I know the professor will test me on.	10 2.3	35 8.2	60 14.1	150 35.2	171 40.1	426 100.0

Claims	In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	Total
I study <b>from notes alone</b> if the professor only tests on material taught in lectures.	37 8.7	63 14.8	74 17.4	151 35.5	100 23.5	425 100.0
I study the <b>reading material regardless</b> of the professor's requirements.	98 23.2	173 40.9	83 19.6	59 13.9	10 2.4	423 100.0
I study the <b>reading material</b> in subjects that <b>interest me regardless</b> of the professor's requirements.	76 18.0	137 32.5	91 21.6	59 14.0	59 14.0	422 100.0
I study the <b>reading material for all subjects</b> because education requires knowledge that is not always tied to my interest.	138 32.6	141 33.3	76 18.0	61 14.4	7 1.7	423 100.0
I study <b>reading material</b> related to <b>directly applicable knowledge</b> that I will need for the performance of a job.	44 10.4	107 25.2	110 25.9	123 29.0	40 9.4	424 100.0
I <b>also</b> study <b>reading material</b> that does not give direct answers for the performance of a job.	177 41.7	129 30.4	63 14.9	33 7.8	22 5.2	424 100.0

The answers of the students included in the study reveal that a relatively low share of students (16.1%) **study the assigned reading material** in all subjects or at least in most subjects **because they believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests**. Just over a quarter (28%) of students answered that in most subjects or (as a rule) in **all subjects that interest them, they study the assigned reading material regardless of the professor's requirements**, which indicates that interest in the content of an exam had a slightly greater influence on their study of the related literature, although in the light of their answers this share is still low. The mere fact that a student is interested in specific content does not in itself guarantee that the student will also study the assigned reading material and absorb knowledge from it. On the other hand, a statistically significantly higher percentage of students with higher average grades (33%) answered that in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects that interest them they study the assigned reading material because the subject interests them, regardless of the professor's requirements. Among students with lower average grades, the percentage who gave this answer was under 15% (See Table 2).

**Table 2**

Average grade and study of assigned reading material in subjects that interest students

Average grade		I study the reading material in subjects that interest me regardless of the professor's requirements.					Total
		In practically no subjects	In less than a quarter of subjects	In approx. half of all subjects	In most subjects	As a rule in all subjects	
average grade up to 7.9	f	29	36	33	11	6	115
	f%	25.2%	31.3%	28.7%	9.6%	5.2%	100.0%
average grade at least 8	f	44	100	53	46	52	295
	f%	14.9%	33.9%	18.0%	15.6%	17.6%	100.0%
Total	f	73	136	86	57	58	410
	f%	17.8%	33.2%	21.0%	13.9%	14.1%	100.0%

$(\bar{X} = 20.812; g = 4, p = 0.000)$

The answer that in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects they also study assigned reading material related to directly applicable knowledge that they will need for the performance of a job was selected by 38.4% of the students (Table 1). This share draws attention to expectations that clearly relate to university education understood primarily as a means of acquiring knowledge as a tool that is needed for the labor market and for responding to it. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that only 13% of students answered that in most subjects or almost all subjects they studied reading material that does not give answers directly related to doing a job (Table 1), which is close to the percentage of students who answered that in all subjects or at least in most subjects they study the assigned reading material because they believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests, i.e. including reading material that does not give answers directly related to the performance of a job.

Significantly, three quarters (75.3%) of the students included in the study (Table 1) answered that in most or all subjects they prepared for exams by studying assigned reading material that they know the professor will test them on (the share of such students is slightly higher in the first cycle (78%) than in the second cycle (69%)). This means that, regardless of their interest or of the fact that knowledge was directly or indirectly applicable, they studied reading material if they expected it to come up in the exam or if their professor included the requirement to study specific reading material literature in the assessment criteria. Not only that, but 59% of students studied in most subjects or (as a rule) in all subjects from notes alone if they knew that their professor was only going to test them on material taught in lectures. When preparing for exams, only just over 16.3% of students also study reading material regardless of the professor's requirements in most or almost all subjects (Table 1), which is practically identical to the percentage of students who believe that education requires knowledge that is not always related to their interests.

Table 3 reveals that the answer most frequently selected by students was that when preparing for an exam they use their own lecture notes (77.1%). Around half also use their own notes on reading material (54.7%) and literature in Slovene from the list of compulsory reading material (50.2%). Those who answered that they most frequently use their fellow students' notes on reading material or notes they find online accounted for 36.5% of those included in the study. Just over a fifth (20.6%) chose the answer that they study using photocopied lecture notes.



**Table 3**

Sources most frequently used by students when preparing for an exam

When preparing for exams, I most frequently use:	f	f % (of n= 428)
my own lecture notes	330	77.1
my own notes on assigned reading material	234	54.7
photocopied lecture notes	88	20.6
notes on reading material made by my fellow students or notes I find online	156	36.5
reading material from the list of compulsory reading material in Slovene	215	50.2
reading material from the list of compulsory reading material in a foreign language	60	14.0
reading material from the list of additional (non-compulsory) reading material	4	0.9

Almost 65% of the students included in the study selected both answers simultaneously, i.e. that they study from their own notes on reading material and from notes on reading material made by other students or found online. Over 60% of students (59.3% in the first cycle and 63.4% in the second cycle) answered that they most frequently study from their own lecture notes and at the same time from their own notes on reading material. Almost 48% of students (41.3% in the first cycle and 64% in the second cycle) answered that they most frequently study from photocopied lecture notes and notes on reading material prepared by fellow students or notes found online. This figure is particularly interesting in the light of the considerations mentioned in the introduction that there are too many students enrolled in first-cycle study programmes and that it is only possible to expect and demand more of them in second-cycle study programmes; the figure is also interesting in light of the findings of the study with regard to students' average grades, which are higher in the second cycle than in the first cycle. All of this points to a need in the future to study the assessment criteria employed by professors in the programmes under consideration and, in this way, answer questions about their expectations regarding the type and quality of knowledge acquired by students. It will also be necessary to verify how many students work for a living despite being enrolled in full-time courses of study, and whether there is a significant difference in this regard between first-cycle students and second-cycle students. It would be useful to ascertain how many students are present at lectures and other prescribed activities at the faculty and, again, whether there is a significant difference here between first-cycle and second-cycle students. Finally, it will also be necessary to understand how it is possible that, even in second-cycle teacher education programmes in the humanities and social sciences, a significant proportion of students respond that they do not study the compulsory reading material but instead study from notes on the material made by their fellow students. Does the post-Bologna university environment thus differ from the expectations presented in the introduction? Are second-cycle study programmes perhaps even more oriented towards directly applicable knowledge and job-related competences that require the "mastering of recipes" more than the analytical and critical study of literature?

## Conclusion

The assumptions of the Bologna reform, which introduced new practices with the implementation of the reform, promoted an increase in student motivation. The results of the study, however,

show that motivation alone is not enough to ensure that students read compulsory reading material and thus acquire the knowledge that only this type of study can bring. It will therefore be necessary in the future to permit a reflection on the thesis advanced by Furedi (2016, p. 185) that practices that build primarily on motivation and a focus on the student are doomed to failure – when it is good-quality knowledge and not merely knowledge oriented towards direct applicability that we have in mind – for the simple reason that it is practically not possible to believe that the majority of students would be motivated to engage with, say, abstract knowledge and would therefore study texts of this type. It will therefore be necessary to consider whether calling for motivation that is tied to interest might not actually have the effect of putting students off reading material that is not related to their direct interest.

The figures from our study warn us that it is not realistic to expect that all students will be motivated to study the contents of every subject within a study programme, but this should not be allowed to exonerate professors from insisting that students should acquire knowledge of the contents in all subjects. Interest and motivation are not, in fact, merely the consequence of an autonomous desire of the student, and therefore it is not right to automatically equate the internal (natural) positive orientation of a student with interest. It also describes an orientation towards specific content that is conditioned by external factors (professor, grades, success, etc.), including the desire for knowledge, which is mediated by these external factors (more on this in Kovač Šebart, & Krek, 2001; Štefanc, & Kovač Šebart, 2020). As the answers of those included in the study show, students in most cases adapt to the requirements and expectations of an individual professor. It should not be forgotten that students know what an individual professor requires and what they need to know in order to pass that professor's exam. This is something they learn quickly, while information about this is also passed on from generation to generation of students. In short: when students are preparing for an exam, as a rule they also take into account the professor's implicit and explicit expectations and typical approach to assessment. Studying or learning is, in fact, always studying or learning for a concrete assessment of knowledge that takes place in specific circumstances and in a specific manner – which is something that necessarily affects the student's approach to studying. The average grades of the students included in the study warn us that university professors do not reflect this to a sufficient extent, or that they do not have the power to insist that their students at least read and master the required reading material.

It should not be forgotten that students enrolled in a university course, even though this is built on motivation and interest and student-centeredness, must nevertheless confront the issue of acquiring knowledge that does not interest them. University professors must confront the same issue, and also their expectations towards students, in that they cannot expect students to be driven to study and acquire knowledge merely by a thirst for knowledge. This is something that is also indicated by the findings of our study. Not only that, but the findings tell us that students can even have an interest in knowledge but – perhaps because acquiring knowledge also requires an investment of energy and work, while at the same time they are unable to see its directly applicable value – they will not study for an exam directly from the sources simply out of an existing desire for knowledge. They will only do this when the knowledge acquired through the study of the assigned reading material is seen as a requirement or an obligation.

For this reason, if studies are to realize their fundamental objectives, they must also contain an element of obligation: this means that the study of assigned reading material and, consequently, students' knowledge will be dependent on assessment criteria, in other words on the professor's definition of a “good” grade. If students are required to demonstrate knowledge acquired through the autonomous study of assigned reading material in order to achieve a passing grade, they will have to demonstrate, for example, analytical and critical knowledge of the texts concerned during their assessment. On the other hand, if the professor expects no more than the kind of “superficial” knowledge that can also be obtained by studying from notes made by other students, and

expects no more than a reproduction of his or her own lectures, then students will respond accordingly as they acquire the knowledge. If, then, in order to obtain a grade – and not only the highest grades – it is necessary to demonstrate the attainment of objectives that are tied not only to lectures but also to assimilation of the assigned reading material, this is precisely the type of knowledge (more in-depth, analytical, etc.) that students will endeavour to acquire, since, as is also demonstrated by the answers to the survey questions, students in most cases adapt to the requirements and expectations of the individual professor. In short, when students are preparing for an exam, they generally take into account their professor's implicit and explicit expectations and typical approach to assessment and grading. Studying or learning is, in fact, always studying or learning for a concrete assessment of knowledge that takes place in specific circumstances and in a specific manner – which is something that necessarily affects the student's approach to studying.

The data from the study also warn us that we will have to think about the implications for university study programmes of an obsession with the kind of “practical” knowledge that is deemed to be necessary for graduates' future professional activity and, consequently, consider how such an obsession might affect students' requirements and knowledge. How are we to cultivate interest in any of the fundamental intellectual questions of a discipline if at first glance these appear to have no direct connection with the situation in the labor market? (Furedi, 2016, p. 58).

From a historical point of view, an important component of high-quality formal study at social sciences and humanities faculties consisted of providing students with the kind of knowledge that was not accessible to them via their direct experience of everyday life. The value of such knowledge is that it enables those who acquire it to transcend their own experience and gain a certain understanding of the social and natural world to which they belong. Today it seems that, even at university level, knowledge has lost this meaning and has been “dumbed down” to a skill that helps people work. The focus on work and activity enables us to avoid questions regarding the meaning of knowledge: by focusing on the application of knowledge in unfamiliar situations, we avoid having to think about what the content of the knowledge applied should actually be. From this point of view, concern for knowledge that is not directly applicable is also seen as an obstacle to the ability to adapt to change. That is why even the educational establishment frequently shows indifference if not outright contempt for abstract theoretical thinking and knowledge developed in the past. Both are frequently criticized as irrelevant or outdated; only new knowledge that can be applied and acted upon is deemed suitable for the age of learning (*ibid.*, pp. 52–54).

Students' exam preparation therefore depends significantly on what kind of knowledge university professors expect from them and how they assess it. In the context of university study that primarily encourages the acquisition of directly applicable knowledge related to an occupation, where any abstract and general knowledge will be viewed with suspicion on the grounds that it places an unnecessary burden on students and even represents an obstacle on their path towards what actually counts as meaningful and useful for the occupation they are studying for, it is difficult to expect students to study core reading material that is not related to directly applicable knowledge. The answers to the survey questions would appear to indicate that even in university study programmes in the humanities and social sciences, students of which are included in the survey, knowledge is seen as an “externalized” tool that helps us solve particular everyday “problems” and must therefore also be directly applicable (Gauchet, 2011, pp. 66–77). For this reason, reflections on why students do not read compulsory reading material cannot be satisfied with answers about mass enrolment in undergraduate study programmes. Instead, we must focus more intensively on the knowledge that those of us in various specialized fields and society in general would wish graduates of first- and second-cycle university study programmes to possess. Reflection will also be necessary on the demands and expectations placed on students by university professors, including with regard to criteria for assessing their knowledge.

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## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS**

**Abstract:** This review paper brings an outline of information gathered from content analysis of available scientific literature on Professional Learning Communities in schools. As it is not a new concept in education, we feel the need to explore nowadays understanding and practical implications, both positive and negative, of this concept in schools. With the current strong digital transformation of today's schools, comes the need for new strategies and transformation of approaches to empowering teachers towards efficient and sustainable collaborative work in their professional learning communities. The aim of this research was to find new evidence that would help neoteric researchers, education authorities and decision makers in schools to instigate the use of this concept, upgrade crucial aspects of these communities and boost their efficiency to better the educational process in schools. Research has shown various possibilities and strong potential of this concept which should be considered a valuable asset of human resource management in education.

**Keywords:** Management in education, Professional learning communities, Schools

### **Introduction**

This review paper brings an outline of information gathered from content analysis of available scientific literature on Professional Learning Communities [PLC] in schools. As it is not a new concept in education, we feel the need to explore nowadays understanding and practical implications, both positive and negative, of this concept in schools. With the current strong digital transformation of today's schools, comes the need for new strategies and transformation of approaches to empowering teachers towards efficient and sustainable collaborative work in their professional learning communities. Today's educational management in schools face various, often conceptually different educational reforms that present big challenges to their operational and strategic activities. As stated by Fullan (1995), the educational systems are in its core conservative and any change often comes to a non-fruitful soil so it becomes, at best, a surface change. If any change is to be executed, the transformation needs to be essential and fundamental. Therefore a change needs to be non-partial but a change in ideas, thoughts and active participation. None of the changes in schools can come to light if the people that do the main activity in a system are not included in the transformation process. One of the core ideas of change in schools is professional development (education) of teachers, often stated in school reform documents and guidelines. One of the concepts that should be able to bypass the obstacles that the management faces are PLCs. The fact that social areas of business, economy, anthropology, psychology and engineering are areas where this concept also found its place, gives us additional drive to research how effective it can be in schools and how applicable it is in our schools and how effective it has been, worldwide. PLCs are a concept of teacher education within their working communities to enhance and develop effective learning methods and approaches. Nowadays educational authorities seem to forget the basis of any work related learning, meaning the importance of learning communities in schools. PLCs in practice tend to be left to the work enthusiasm and work ethics of teachers as well as school management; head teachers, pedagogues etc. This paper refers to recent scientific research done on this concept as well as explore new concepts within PLCs with the recent burst of IT usage in schools. The variety of definitions and explanations of the concept have guided us in researching the concept's main ideas in order to shed light on the concept itself and its possibilities in nowadays virtual, IT area that schools share. Shortly said, PLC's are regular structured teacher meetings for the exchange of ideas, constructive dialogues and discussions, sharing good

practices with the goal of upgrading continuity in teaching, using effective teaching strategies for improving the pupils learning experience. The cooperative activities need to have tangible results, be striving to improve and developing curricula for the benefit of the pupils and teachers. According to Pang & Wang, (2016) PLCs are a professional development strategy implemented in many countries worldwide. IT in nowadays schools offers modern education tools and PLC concepts that offer teachers and school authorities new ways of ensuring teacher development and the achievement of teaching outcomes in everyday classes. These shouldn't be ignored by management in education and educational decision makers, as one of the core goals of any school reform is to ensure teacher and pupil development towards desired learning outcomes in schools.

## **Theoretical Background**

Professional learning communities [PLC] are a concept in education from the early ages of education. The idea of professional learning communities originated in the business sector, according to Walker (2002), who states that the idea organizations can learn is as old as Mary Follett's (1924) work, *Creative Experience* on human relations movement in business which led to democratic ways of relating in the workplace. W. Edwards Deming's work in the 1940's post war Japan industry reform where he was called to develop effective management of work processes. Max Weber's systems theory (1947) derived an early understanding of the influence of the social and organizational context in organizations. The term professional learning community (PLC) emerged among researchers as early as the 1960's when the concept was revised within the teaching profession. The research began to become more explicit in the late 1980s and 1990s. These ideas consequently led to Senge (1990) reintroduced the term "learning organizations" in his book *"The Fifth Discipline"* and the work of, Shirley M. Hord (1997) who issued a white paper titled *"Professional Learning Communities: Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement"*. Rosenholz (1989) states that in the mid 1990's, the idea of PLC in schools emerged with the idea to „re-culture schools by examining the effects of school organization on teachers' work and their commitment to school improvement“. Other research (Little, 1989; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1994) concluded that studies focused on teacher working conditions; particularly how teachers learn from one another in school settings influenced their job satisfaction and responsibility for pupil learning. All of these (and many more) show a historical, continuous search for finding effective ways of using the concept of PLC in education which gives us a boost for interdisciplinary scientific research of the phenomenon.

### **PLC's in Schools**

As these research show, the phenomenon of PLCs is a complex social structure. A topic that needs to be understood as not just a collection of teachers working together or a social network of educators who share stories, materials, and advice (Coburn, & Russell, 2008; Protheroe, 2008). PLCs as a term are wrongly used to describe committees, school teams meetings or planning meetings where teachers undertake data-based decision making (DuFour, 2004; Jessie, 2007). This misconception is something that needs to be shattered or displaced from schools and educational institutions. PLC's have been described in various definitions and descriptions. Bognar (2009) depicts it as a social structure that connects what is learned with the possibility of increased interaction between learners with their teachers who become participants in the learning challenge. Lieberman et al. (2011, 16) state PLC's are groups of teachers who "meet regularly for the purposes of increasing their own learning and that of their students". Schaap, & Bruijn (2018) state that PLC's are "communities within schools, composed of voluntary participating teachers facilitated by school principals with a specific task to accomplish as part of a larger innovation project". Broadie (2021,2) gives a definition of PLC's as groups of teachers who come together to

engage in regular, systematic and sustained cycles of inquiry-based learning, with the intention to develop their individual and collective capacity for teaching to improve student outcomes which other confirm; (Hairon et al. 2017, Stoll et al. 2006). As these definitions offer a wide spectrum of this educational phenomenon we feel the need to narrow the core focus of PLC's. With that in mind here are the most common characteristics of PLCs: Shared values and vision; (Bolam et al., 2005; DuFour, 2009; etc.) teachers and school management share a common vision focused on pupils learning and personal and organizational drive to improve. Collaborative school culture; (Bolam et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006; etc.); the schools collaborative efforts bring benefits to the teachers in a way that they facilitate a mechanism for sharing responsibility for pupils learning and a means to work together among colleagues for a common purpose. Focus on examining outcomes to improve student learning (DuFour, 2004; Reichstetter, 2006; etc.) PLC's are outcome oriented and their focus is wider than data collection and review but, if done correctly, develop teachers' collective efforts for outcome achievement. Shared (distributive) leadership; (Louis, & Bryk, 1994; Mitchell, & Sackney, 2006; etc.) PLCs characteristic is the idea that school leaders/administrators/head teachers are committed to distribute leadership and decision making among colleagues within the teacher community to benefit the educational process. Shared personal practice (Louis, & Kruse, 1995; Wignall 1992; etc.) teachers are the main participants of PLCs. These communities thrive to learn and work together with inquiry based activities to tackle the shared obstacles in their teaching experiences.

These characteristics are not, or shouldn't be a list of "wishes" but goals to achieve before and while carrying out PLCs at schools. In addition, the many definitions of PLC may vary in "steps" or concepts but they all have this common "note" that: teachers meet, discuss and collaborate, use creativity, critical thinking and inquiry to benefit teaching and pupils.

In addition, our research has found that there are several concepts and approaches, for example: Three big ideas; a focus on learning, a focus on collaboration and a focus on results (DuFour, 2007). Seven stages of PLC's; 1) Filling the time, 2) Sharing personal practices, 4) Planning, 5) Developing common assessment, 6) Analyzing pupil learning and 7) Reflecting on instruction (Graham & Ferriter, 2008). Two ground assumptions (Vascio, Ross & Adams, 2008); first, it is assumed that knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experience (Buisse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). Second, it is assumed that actively engaging teachers in PLCs will increase their professional knowledge and enhance pupils learning.

This content analysis of available literature shows a constant, diverse and well-developed scientific interest in this concept.

## **IT and PLCs**

Information technology has, especially in this pandemic era forced teachers to face new challenges in their profession. Dubovicki, Jukić & Topolovčan (2022, 155) choose a description that teachers have "sailed" into a sea of online tools, platforms and materials to, as effectively as possible, teach classes in a digital surrounding. This fact has affected the whole educational system worldwide. In that perspective, research was done on the usage of IT professional learning communities. The data is relatively new, diverse but indicative and informative. The usage of IT in PLCs in education, has been fairly less researched than these phenomena separately. This "combination" has brought new artefacts into education and our research has shown that they are still to be researched and evaluated. Some of the artefacts used in the available data are E portfolios [EP], Massive open online courses [MOOC], social media and Virtual PLCs. Lim & Lee (2014) explore Teaching e-portfolios and the development of professional learning communities. Their research has shown that the usage of teacher E portfolios may have a plausible role in the "quality enhancement of higher education teaching and learning, and its impact on culture, beliefs,

policies and practices in the context of implementation to build a professional learning community.” In other words, their research has shown that the usage of this IT tool is somewhat a challenge even in higher education. Other research studies (Lyons, 1998; Stone, 1998; Wolf & Dietz, 1998; Xu, 2003) have shown that teaching e-portfolio may be used as a tool to develop PLCs among higher education teaching staff. Xu (2003) concludes that EPs within his study, served as a means of generating teacher “reflection and collegial sharing in the school community.” As the data on EP is positive but scarce and not extremely indicative we feel this tool within PLCs needs to be further researched. Social media, (Facebook, Twitter etc.) as a tool for developing PLCs, have been researched from 2011. Goodyear, Parker, Casey (2019) examined the characteristics of a specific Twitter-based professional learning community. Their research shows that social media is a contemporary form of professional development. They state that Twitter groups can address the clear challenges associated with teacher learning and, in turn, enhance the quality of teaching and improve student learning outcomes. Bostick (2018) concludes that social media had a positive impact on teacher perceptions of efficacy and potential retention of teachers within PLCs. One particularly interesting research was done by Pimmer et al. (2019, 19) on Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), meaning massaging through WhatsApp and/or Viber groups. This massive communication phenomenon and its educational use can be seen as a “genuine form of mobile learning”, state the authors. Their results show PLCs governed and conducted with these applications showed “lower professional isolation (during the pandemic), higher job satisfaction, and the perceived transfer of school knowledge to work practice within the teacher groups examined. This tool has been studied to a limited extent up to date. MOOCs are a fairly well researched digital tool (Sai & Siraj (2015); Milligan & Littlejohn (2014); Akoglu, Lee & Kellogg, (2019) etc.) used for PLCs. According to Chen et al. (2020), MOOCs, which became a globally used IT educational tool for teachers in the era of the pandemic, are recognized as a potential contributor to teacher personal development. Massive online courses have been a source for teacher education for some time. There are several MOOC platforms (Teacher academy, Futurelearn, Coursera, edX, etc.), some free and some commercial, that offer and provide such opportunities to the teacher population worldwide. All of these digital tools that offer teachers possibility to have a functional PLC show how the development of IT in education, meaning schools, should enable school leaders to actively advice teachers to use these possibilities to enhance their digital teaching skills and knowledge.

## **Research Methodology**

As stated before, the goal of this paper is to find new evidence on PLC’s that would help modern researchers, education authorities and decision makers in schools to instigate the use of this concept, upgrade crucial aspects of these communities and boost their efficiency to better the educational process in schools. With that in mind, we explored nowadays understanding and practical implications, both positive and negative, of this concept in schools. In addition, with the current strong digital transformation of today’s schools, comes the need for new strategies and transformation of approaches to empowering teachers towards efficient and sustainable collaborative work in their professional learning communities. This educational phenomena has been researched during the period of March 2021 and April 2022 with content analysis of available scientific literature on the concept of PLC itself as well as modern prospects of these communities in light of information technology in schools worldwide.

All of these have raised 2 crucial research questions:

RQ1: Are PLC’s a concept that can effectively raise the quality of the educational process in schools?

RQ2: What are the prospects of teacher IT usage for PLC’s?



Positive answers should help deepen the understanding of the PLC's and the usage of IT within this educational concept in schools.

## Discussion & Results

In our search for our RQ1 answers the search was confined to scientific data on the effectiveness of PLC's as means to raise the quality of the educational process in schools. Data collected shows PLC's are effective in raising the quality of education. As collaborative ways of developing personal education of teachers, PLC's consequently lead to better academic and personal success of pupils as stated in (Bolam et al. 2005; Doğan & Adams 2018; Lee, 2020; McMahon, & Thomas, 2006; Reynolds, 2016; Stoll, Vescio et. al., 2008; and Watson, 2012; etc.). All of these authors, and many others, advise the usage of PLCs in education. Nevertheless, they also critically question various aspects of this concept. Watson (2012, 27) questions this paradox "ideal" concept of PLCs. He states that the easy, "assumptions that underpin the notion of community are not self-evident truths which lead inexorably to enhanced professional learning and school improvement. Critical and comprehensive research done in this work concludes PLCs have a potentially significant role to play in nowadays dynamic organizational processes, he states that they can "shake" the rigid approach to education in schools, organizational and personal towards the teachers "but in order to achieve this it might need to re-examine the meanings attached to those three purposefully chosen words". Stoll, McMahon, & Thomas (2006) choose an approach that the effectiveness of PLCs should be judged in three ways: impact on students' learning; impact on the professional learning, work experience, and morale of the staff; and the extent to which PLC characteristics were in place and leaders were using PLC processes. In other words they "unpack" it with three main parts: pupils, teachers and school leaders. This spreads the effectiveness to three school artefacts which could be separately researched. Authors conclude with the idea that what is required is continual and sustainable professional learning and improvement, sharply directed at pupils' learning. This task, they believe, is critical for education leaders at all levels. Reynolds (2016, 11) examines PLCs positive effects. She states that her research has shown how "strong professional learning communities ensure that school and system goals align with the importance of student achievement". She also emphasizes the importance of head teachers and their role(s) in effective PLCs as they ought to be "trustworthy leaders". Lee (2020, 206) examines the effectiveness of PLCs and finds that "professional learning communities have a positive effect on teacher efficacy" but also concludes that school organizational culture is a better predictor than PLCs. Bolam et al. (2005) offer a wide and comprehensive research on the effectiveness and possible models of effective professional learning communities and assess the generalizability and transferability of such models. They conclude PLCs should be seriously consider by education leaders for adopting the PLC approach and the methodology. Vescio et al (2008) offer a literature review paper on the impact of PLCs to pupils and teacher achievement. Their research concludes the positive sides of PLCs; as far as the "possibility of shifting educational paradigms" for teachers and pupils but the research needs to have "Rigorous reporting of research methodology is essential if we are to build a credible justification for the resources necessary to sustain PLCs." As this paper is somewhat limited we consider the research to be extremely motivational for further research and discoveries. Doğan & Adams (2018, 21) state that there are some questionable methodology research done in thirteen papers they covered but, nevertheless, state that "PLCs remain a powerful format for teacher learning to thrive". So, if we can wish to summarize the researched data, negative aspects of PLCs are best depicted by Bolam et al. (2005). In their research paper, they offer a focused "list" of downsides/obstacles to successful PLC implementation: a) Staff resistance to change; b) resources (time) and budget being dependent on central and local policies; and c) staff turnover, especially at the leadership level.

At the same time, we conclude, guided by the researched data and the experience of the author of this article that this educational concept has reinforcing, current and “state of the art” strong points:

- derives its effectiveness in continuous and substantial scientific research;
- it is based on social learning; cooperative activities are considered desirable in modern educational settings;
- it is stimulus for teachers; teachers claim “ownership” of the work done in PLCs;
- it sends progressive methodical impulses; It is in line with modern lifelong learning aspirations towards self-regulated learning in groups;
- derives the need for transformative (pedagogical) leadership; visible in nowadays tendencies in school leadership.

The search for answers to our RQ2, IT in PLCs has shown clear evidence that the usage of IT in PLCs offers a wide spectrum of possibilities. This answers our RQ2; yes, there are (some) prospects for teachers to use IT in PLCs. We also found that this is area has not been thoroughly researched. MOOCs in PLCs have been found to be most often and plausible to be used, but as our research shows, they still need to be analyzed, researched and developed to have a scientific basis for use in schools within PLCs. If we consider that Varga, Peko & Geiger (2018) state “future-oriented thinking, critical and creative thinking, classroom management skills and responsible decision-making” are the future of education, PLCs offer an educational “setting” that can trigger the teachers to thrive and succeed an all of these. IT can be of assistance as a form of “filling” in the possible social obstacles (like the pandemic). In short, we would advise more and analysis, research and development of IT in PLCs especially with the use of Future studies methods.

Both of the researched educational artefacts, PLCs and IT in PLCs consider a common basis, collaboration. If we take into consideration that many researchers (Slater & Ravid, 2010; Lawson (2004) Goulet et.al. (2003); etc.); have proven that collaboration has a positive affect to education and learning, it can be downsized to a single paraphrase; Effective collaboration among teachers affects student achievement in a positive manner when collective inquiry focuses on the right work (DuFour et al., 2010).

## Conclusion

First we wish to address the use of IT in our schools which has been rising and it is a current fact, scientific interest on its aspects is rising every day. IT in PLCs on the other hand, has very little data to be explored. That doesn't mean it cannot or shouldn't be used for PLCs. It shows that more research needs to be done to clear the information surrounding it and defining and evaluating the prospects of it. In addition to these beneficial side(s) of this concept, we mustn't forget that very few research has been done on the downsides of the concept. In this way, a clear indication for the need of future research of IT in PLCs is needed for future prospects of education. In addition, the usage of IT in PLCs needs further research done to confirm the usefulness of combining these two concepts. Secondly, our research has shown how the concept of PLCs in education has been proven to have positive influence on the development of innovative ideas, creativity and cooperative ventures of schools teachers. Evidence shows how effective and beneficial it is to: the development of curricular content, usage of innovative methods in teaching, cooperative and inclusive decision making among teachers, raise of democracy and that it benefits school management. It has also vivid that this concept, if done properly, influences school culture and overall hidden curricula within schools. All of this data shows that PLC's have the capacity and scientific background that should encourage school leaders, head teachers and the education authorities to include this concept into teacher education within schools. This also leads to the need of including this concept into future teacher education, meaning teacher colleges and universities.

There should be research done on the real, everyday situations, especially in our south east region of Europe for the reason of very little or none done so far. It is possible that PLCs are organized in schools in this geographical area but, there is no clear evidence of it. Also, there is very little evidence, if they are being conducted properly, on their work or visible scientific data that confirms their existence. Finally, we conclude that PLC's should and could be the future of teacher education within their schools and institutions. If its strong points, previously offered would be considered, if all the characteristic of an effective PLC have been met prior to the practical implementation, the results will come. These results can have the desired effect on pupils, teachers and consequently head teachers, which will surely be beneficial to the educational process in our schools. With that in mind, this paper offers vivid content analysis of various aspects of PLCs. This should guide educational leaders, decision makers and management in education to include this concept into future development of education in south east Europe.

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### INITIAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL FACULTIES

**Abstract:** The initial education of teachers represents the basic part of the preparation of the teaching staff. This phase is just a prerequisite for starting the career development of the class teacher, which continues through permanent education.

The functionally established continuity between initial education and vocational training presupposes quality. For these reasons, the pedagogical faculties are the most appropriate institutions that are also responsible for the entire approach of the creation and development of the teacher's profile.

The subject and purpose of the research in this paper refer to the following: analysis of the current situation in our country regarding the systematic professional development of primary school teachers in the primary school and determining a system of thematically structured activities and trainings for the teaching staff, which would be realized at the pedagogical faculties. According to the goal, we determine the operational tasks and hypotheses, as well as the research methods, techniques and instruments that will be listed in the paper.

Through the research we have acquired specific data on what types of training teachers need to actively participate in. From the ranking of the received answers by frequency, it is evident that the teachers need training most, which refers to modern models and strategies of teaching work.

The analysis give us the opportunity to classify the offered trainings based on how desirable and necessary they are for the teachers. When creating the type and content of the trainings, we will start from what teachers emphasize.

**Keywords:** Initial, Education, Teacher, Training

## **Theoretical Components**

### **The Initial Education of Primary School Teachers**

The initial education of teachers represents the basic part of the preparation of the teaching staff. This phase of staff preparation is extremely important, as it represents the starting point. But it is only a prerequisite for the career development of the class teacher to begin, which continues through the continuous (permanent) education of the teacher, which is also called professional (professional) improvement.

Within the initial education of the teacher, the competencies on the basis of which his profession is realized and which represent the basis of his activity begin to be formed. The functionally established continuity between initial education and professional development presupposes quality teaching work. The organizational setting of professional development should be at the level of upgrading the already acquired knowledge and experiential knowledge. For those reasons, pedagogical faculties are the most suitable institutions that are also responsible for the complete approach to the creation and development of the teacher profile.

Overcoming traditionalism in the teacher education system is in constant progress, there are also official documents that support the innovation. We can expect more complete effects at that moment, when there will be complete changes in the consciousness of both teachers and other structures in society about the meaning of the profession. Observed from a current angle, the changes, although they are slow, are still reflected in reality. Faculties that educate teachers are modern in many aspects, but in that direction, they should be constantly improved in the field of: organization of teaching; equipment with technical and informational means and aids and other didactic means, dedicated teaching material, etc. appropriate spatially organized structure of the faculty; professional teaching staff; openness and flexibility towards innovation in all educational segments.

In the initial education of teachers, we start from the fact that we know how a teacher should behave and how to work with students. In the interest of the proper preparation of the teacher, in his education we should apply ways and systems of work that we expect him to apply in his work with students.

Modern educational trends of teaching faculties are aimed at the integration of science and teaching. Science followed in current trends, science that evolves following changes and additions in scientific thought. This integration represents the process of discovering new scientific knowledge. The initial education and training of the teacher should be at the level of a scientific degree, which is applicable in the primary working environment of the teacher.

When we talk about the initial education of the teacher, we are focused on education that enables the creation of a motivated and creative teacher, capable of flexible communication, within educational frameworks and beyond. The preparation of future teachers is also aimed at how to ensure the development of qualities that encourage the cultural way of life and work, creating conditions for quality of action, way of thinking and lifestyle, tolerance, criticality and self-criticism, engagement and fig.

The modern school has an anticipatory character, which means that the education acquired by the future teacher should be futuristically oriented. When we form a teacher, we form him so that he can exert a productive influence in the future. The students that that teacher of the present time will train will be active members in social life in the future.

The education and training of primary school teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia is four years long, and is carried out at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy (Institute of Pedagogy).

Studying at the faculties is conducted according to the so-called parallel model. The parallel model presupposes the study of the profession from the aspect of its scientific and academic basis and certainty, and the study of pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodical contents, strategies and variant models of teaching work. An integral part of the parallel model is the pedagogic practice, which is realized with hospitalizations in schools, during which the students follow mentor teaching, teach with the help of a mentor and teach independently.

The interrelationship of the professional and pedagogical competencies of the teacher throughout the training is very important. The teacher should be a factor in the parallel and integral implementation of the scientific and pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodical aspects of the student's development. Starting from this finding, it is necessary to enable the passage between these two types of content during the teacher's education, which is most successfully achieved through the connection of theory with pedagogical practice.

### **Professional Development of Primary School Teachers**

Permanent education actually represents that education which: takes place after the completion of formal educational degrees; builds on previously acquired education; it is realized institutionally or extra-institutionally; it is in function of building a person who will anticipate the future; lasts until the end of life.

Scientific and technical developments produce a lot of new information and expand and enrich the existing ones. Information becomes part of our consciousness through institutional and non-institutional education, which is the need of every modern person.

With the acquisition of a diploma of a certain educational level, the teacher is qualified for work immediately after the completion of formal education. The education of teachers should be continuous and realized in different ways. In order for the teacher to be able to follow modern trends in his work, he must be constantly upgraded and perfected. There is no doubt the need for it to become a functional part of every teacher's life (for his personal interest and for the interest of society as a whole). Therefore, the question of how to encourage teachers' desire to learn and their own professional development is constantly being asked.

The professional development of the teacher can be observed and developed in two ways: when it is a function of his overall development and when it is a function of development and improvement in his own profession as a teacher. Professional development offers the opportunity for the teacher not to accept changes in his profession as a given, but opens up opportunities to plan and organize it according to global educational needs, but also according to the needs of the specific students he works with. As long as the individual experiences and realizes permanent education in this way, she will be ready to face education in every new situation.

The permanent education and professional development of the teacher can function through the following ways and forms of improvement: Formal and informal cooperation, individual improvement, group improvement.

**The trainings for teachers** – as a model of the aforementioned group training, represent a form of professional development, organized and led by an accredited trainer/s, where the teacher acquires a variety of knowledge, skills, abilities and ways of communication in an organized manner. Trainings are usually organized for a group of teachers on a particular topic that is the focus of interest of the given group of teachers. The topic of work should derive from: current situations; innovative didactic-methodical solutions; new scientific knowledge; changes in documents that regulate education as a process, and primarily from the needs of teachers for their professional development, which is actually a function of correct and functional implementation of

their educational activity. The topic can also have a higher scientific level, which will implicitly affect the teacher's basic activity. Training should be interactive. Teachers should be involved in activities where they will think and interpret their own ideas in relation to the problem that is the topic of work. It can last several hours, but also several days, depending on what it is aimed at and what is the ultimate goal of its realization. For a successfully completed training, the teacher receives a certificate from the institution organizing the training, where the trainer as the holder of the program structure of the training should be indicated).

## Methodological Components

**The subject of the research** in this paper is the following: analysis of the current situation in our country in terms of systematic professional development of primary school teachers and determination of a system of thematically structured activities and training for the teaching staff, which would be implemented at our faculty.

**The purpose of the research**, which derives from the subject of the research, is to analyze the current situation in our country in terms of the professional development of the teacher and to determine a system of thematically structured activities and trainings for the teaching staff.

According to the goal, we determine the following **operational tasks**:

- To examine the situation in our pedagogical reality, in terms of the methods and content structure of the professional development of teachers;
- To establish whether the professional development of teachers is sufficiently systematized and equally accessible to all teachers;
- To examine the opinions and attitudes of teachers about whether and to what extent the existing ways and forms of professional development meet real needs;
- To determine the needs for adopting a package of activities and trainings for primary school teachers, as a starting model for work in the field of professional development of teachers;
- To introduce a systematized package of activities and trainings for elementary school teachers.

### Research hypotheses:

- In our pedagogical reality, professional development of teachers is realized;
- The professional development of teachers is not sufficiently systematized and equally accessible to all teachers;
- According to the teachers' opinions and attitudes, they are involved in more ways and forms of professional development;
- Teachers' opinions and attitudes indicate that the existing ways and forms of professional development do not meet real needs;
- There is a need to adopt a package of activities and trainings for primary school teachers, as a starting model for work in the field of professional development of teachers;
- There is a need for a system of thematically structured activities and trainings for teaching staff.

**The population of the research** we carried out is made up of all primary school teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia. We determined **the sample** consisting of a total of 126 teachers from eight elementary schools by random selection.

In the research, we applied the following **research methods**: Theoretical-analytical method and analytical-descriptive method. **Research instruments**: survey.

## Results and Discussion

Analyzes of teachers' answers to the questions asked give us the opportunity to classify the offered trainings based on how desirable and necessary they are for teachers. Accordingly, we



can build a list of trainings that we could offer to teachers, in a pre-conceived package of activities for professional development of teachers.

We note that most of the teachers felt benefited from the trainings, which leads us to the conclusion that the implemented trainings were still successful.

Since the opportunity was given to choose more than the offered answers, all teachers opted for multiple choice, that is, they chose several of the proposed trainings. The number indicated next to the training indicates how many teachers opted for that training.

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From the answers of the teachers of several questions, we come to the knowledge that teachers most need the following types of training: Training in the field of inclusive education on multiple bases, Training in the field of teacher preparation for teaching work, Training in the field of organization and implementation of teaching, Training in the field of individual teaching subjects, Trainings in the field of informatics, Trainings in the field of psychological components in teaching, Trainings in several fields. Also, teachers believe that strategies for the realization of educational competencies should be found as part of their training. From the ranking of the answers received by frequency, it can be seen that teachers are most in need of trainings related to models and strategies of teaching work, and also feel the need for help in developing an individual educational plan.

The most significant benefit of this paper will result in a systematized package of activities and trainings for primary school teachers. With the mentioned package, a system of activities is created that will contribute to the professional development of teachers to be realized at an appropriate academic level.

**The systematized package of activities and trainings** for elementary school teachers will contribute to:

- Greater affirmation of the pedagogical faculty in the field of organization and implementation of activities for the professional development of teachers;
- Utilization of the capacities of the faculty necessary for the organization and implementation of activities for the professional development of teachers;
- Multiple benefits for the institution partner of the activities;

- A higher degree of self-confidence among teachers when realizing the competencies;
- Higher motivation of teachers for their own professional development;
- Greater engagement of teachers in terms of their own progress;
- Improving the quality of teaching;
- Multiple impact on student development.

## Conclusion of This Paper

Namely, the data we obtain with this examination will be the starting point for forming a training package for the professional development of primary school teachers. These will be trainings that correspond to the requirements and needs of teachers on the one hand, and on the other hand to modern European and world courses for the education of teachers of the specified degree. When creating the type and content of the trainings, we will start from what the teachers emphasize. We will structure their requests and proposals according to the studies and proposals of professors from different scientific fields, which correspond to the type of training that will be carried out. The trainings will be in the form of active workshops, where teachers will have the opportunity to participate with their suggestions and views, questions and reflections.

All of that should be solved systemically, through an organized approach by schools as partners who will ensure the presence of teachers and finance the trainings. The certificates that will be issued by faculty as an accredited institution with accredited trainers, will be applicable for documenting the realization of the professional development of teachers.

Through the research we have acquired specific data on what types of training teachers need to actively participate in. The analysis give us the opportunity to classify the offered trainings based on how desirable and necessary they are for the teachers. When creating the type and content of the trainings, we will start from what teachers emphasize.

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## **THE ROLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** Education is one of the key factors on which the quality of society's social and economic life depends. It represents an activity of public interest, and with the strength of its quality, it operates on two levels: the level of personal development of citizens and the level of social development. The development of education contributes to the creation of significant opportunities for the inclusion, participation, and influence of each individual on the community's life.

Through the process of decentralization, the municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia became directly responsible for defining and implementing the education development strategy at the local level (starting from the analysis of the environment, through the creation of strategic documents, to their implementation, evaluation, and control). This gave municipalities the authority to make key strategic decisions for the development of municipal primary and secondary schools.

The role of local self-government in promoting the educational process in the municipality comes to the fore through supporting the cooperation of schools with the public sector, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and volunteer associations, through the provision of appropriate resources (financial, spatial, material-technical, personnel and other resources) and improvement of the conditions for carrying out the educational process.

Planning the future in education is not a separate process of local self-government, but implies the involvement of all affected parties, especially the involvement of teachers and students as direct participants in the educational process. That is why it is necessary to respect the opinions and educational needs of teachers and students when determining the strategic and programmatic setting of education in the local context and to include them in the creation and development of educational policies at the municipal level.

**Keywords:** Local self-government, Strategy, Education, Teachers, Students

### **Introduction**

Acceptance of the Concept of basic education, changes in the conditions for the implementation of the educational process as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for digitization of education, and the need to be included in the existing state, regional and international educational streams, imply the need to redefine educational policies of municipalities following the Education Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia for 2018-2025.

Municipalities, following the legal competencies they have in the field of education and the existing conditions in the educational system, should define their appropriate local education strategy, which will be based on a clear determination of the main challenges in the educational sector and a careful definition of priority areas that should be given attention in the coming period. Analogous to the role that local self-government has in education, local authorities must define appropriate activities to support education, which will be taken into account when drawing up the municipal budget and programming the next phases of educational development in the Municipality, after the development of education in the Republic of North Macedonia.

## Education and Decentralization

The future of the upcoming generations is undoubtedly related to the provision of top-quality education that will keep pace with the frequent changes in the environment.

The analysis of the situation in education showed that one of the key problems in the sphere of education is emphasized centralization. With the centralist arrangement of the educational system, educational institutions were brought into the role of immediate implementers of educational policy, with the impossibility of fulfilling the role of immediate creators of their activity. (National program for the development of education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005, p. 22-23)

Decentralization of education contributes to strengthening responsibility for education, raising the quality of educational services, and efficient use of resources in education. In addition to the transfer of competencies to local self-government units, decentralization also implies strengthening the autonomy of schools.

The process of decentralization in the Republic of Macedonia began on July 1, 2005, and thus local governments assumed responsibility for education. Municipalities have taken ownership of school buildings, their maintenance, and student transportation, for which the Government provides a dedicated subsidy. The decentralization of education was carried out in two phases.

The first phase of decentralization of education included the transfer of ownership of the school building, its maintenance, and student transportation, for which the Government allocates a dedicated subsidy.

The second phase, which began in 2007, includes the municipality's responsibility for teachers, and technical and administrative staff. Competencies for primary and secondary education (including their financing) were in this phase transferred to the local level in all municipalities that entered the second phase of decentralization, by the Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units. Three levels can be identified within the system of primary and secondary education: the central level of government, the level of local self-government, and the school level. Each level has its rights, obligations, and competencies (Review of decentralization 2008, p. 13).

Decentralization in education implies the participation and coordination of several participants in education, such as Local Self-Government Units, school principals, parents, and students at the local level and the Ministry of Education and its branches at the national level. (Overview of decentralization 2008, p.14).

Through the process of decentralization, Macedonian municipalities became directly responsible for the development of education at the local level, as well as for the implementation of the entire process of strategic management (from environmental analysis, through the creation of strategic documents, to implementation, evaluation, and control). They became managers who should make key strategic decisions for the development of municipal primary and secondary schools.

By the new responsibilities in education, which the municipality received through decentralization, there was a need to reform the old school management system and create a local education strategy to improve the management and quality of education in the coming years. Therefore, it is of great importance for the local self-government to create a coherent plan that will unify (integrate) the most important, long-term goals of the municipality, its policy, and programs. With this strategic plan, the local self-government will get a clear picture of the situation in the education sector and will strive in the right direction to improve the quality of teaching, improve the quality of school equipment and improve school premises. (Committee for Education at the Municipality of Tearce with the help of the PLUUM team, 2007, p.3)

Planning the future in education is not a separate process of local self-government, but implies the involvement of all interested parties and respect for the priorities of all participants and interested parties in education, starting from priorities at the national level and down to the smallest unit in educational local government. Strategic planning depends on the priorities of students, teachers, school administration, school board, local community, local government, and the state.

Each of these interested parties has its visions and priorities, and only through their coordination and togetherness is it possible to create conditions for the successful implementation of educational policies and the realization of a quality educational process.

## **Competencies of Municipalities in Education**

In Article 22 of the Law on Local Self-Government from 2002, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 5, 2002, p. 3), one of the original responsibilities of local self-government units in education. The local self-government should fully recognize and respect the importance and role of education in the development of the municipality and the complexity of the competencies that the municipality has in education. The municipality must recognize the need for quality human, material, and financial resources, on which the quality implementation of this competence depends.

The municipality implements its powers in education through the Department of Education, which monitors work in primary and secondary education in the municipality, analyzes the situation and gives initiatives, proposes measures and activities for their improvement and problem solving, performs planning and financing tasks, and the participation of representatives of the Municipality in governing bodies in primary and secondary schools and student dormitories, proposes measures and activities to raise the level of student standards, and provides information and data on the activities of the Municipality in the field of primary and secondary education.

In carrying out the tasks for which the Department of Education is responsible, the guidelines of the Government Institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Institute for the Development of Education and Training, the Center for Vocational Education, the Center for Adult Education, the State Examination Center, the State Educational Inspection, as well as the guidelines obtained from certain international organizations. The education sector develops and applies mechanisms and tools to implement local strategies, as well as local policies that are in line with the National Education Development Strategy. In this way, through the creation of a development framework, a more complete approach to the management of the extensive matter imposed by education as a field will be enabled. This is necessary, given a large number of schools and a large number of students and teaching staff, that is, the developed network of primary and secondary education in the municipality.

Schools, and thus the Department of Education, plan and implement the content of work according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Institute for Education Development, and the Center for Higher Vocational Education. The municipality supports the educational process in schools with its powers and the Law on Local Self-Government. Communication between the municipal administration and schools takes place continuously, through various mechanisms: personal visits to the municipal administration, exchange of documents, as well as joint meetings of all schools in the municipality. The municipality respects legal obligations and has appointed representatives to school boards (SB) in all schools. According to their obligations, schools report to the mayor once a year on their work, by submitting annual programs and annual reports.

## **Local Educational Policies in the Function of Supporting Education**

Based on their democratic and autonomous role, as local authorities, municipalities can define their own local goals and priorities in their strategic planning. Each municipality is different and specific to itself. The needs for planning and the capacities they possess are different, so each municipality decides for itself where and to which areas it will focus its attention during planning.

To enable optimal efficiency and successful management of primary and secondary education, which are of great importance to the local community, the Municipality must plan and provide continuous support to primary and secondary schools in the following segments:

- Support educational institutions in the planning and implementation of the Annual programs of school work in classes, outside of classes, and school projects;
- Material and technical equipment of schools;
- Support for students from socially disadvantaged categories;
- Support for students with special educational needs;
- Support for successful individuals and good educational practices

The municipality also supports the work of primary and secondary schools in the area of:

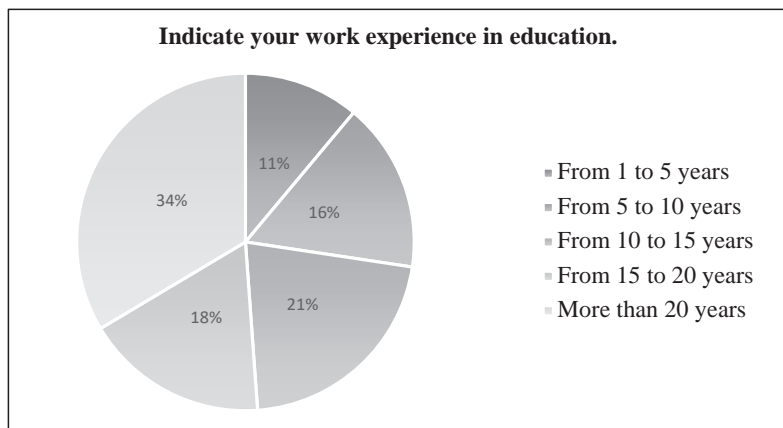
- interethnic integration in education – which consists in supporting the implementation of interethnic integration programs, foreseen in the annual programs of schools in the municipality;
- youth activism – which consists in supporting events, workshops on topics of interest to young people, supporting young people’s ideas for creating a better living environment, etc.;
- health care that includes dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic among young people at the local level, education for health promotion, etc.

To examine the attitudes, opinions, and educational needs of teachers and students of primary and secondary schools in the municipality of Kumanovo regarding the determination of the strategic and programmatic setting of education in the local context and their involvement in the creation and development of the educational system. policy at the municipal level, the research was conducted in 16 primary schools and 5 secondary municipal schools by surveying teachers and students. The subject of the research, in a broader context, is the determination of the inter-institutional connection between local self-government and primary and secondary schools in the area of the municipality of Kumanovo. The survey questionnaire for teachers was answered by 292 teachers who teach in the Macedonian language of instruction and 141 teachers who teach in the Albanian language of instruction, or a total of 433 teachers. The student questionnaire was answered by 557 students who teach in the Macedonian language of instruction and 521 students who attend classes in the Albanian language of instruction, i.e. a total of 1078 students.

Most of the surveyed teachers have more than 20 years of work experience in education (33.6%)

**Chart 1**

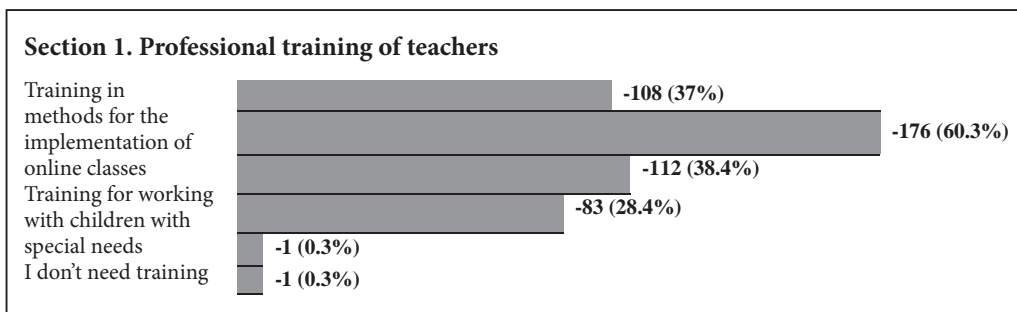
Structure of the sample of surveyed teachers



When asked what kind of training they need, the teachers state that they need the most: training for evaluating students in the conditions of online classes, training for working with children with special needs, and training for methods of conducting online classes.

### Chart 2

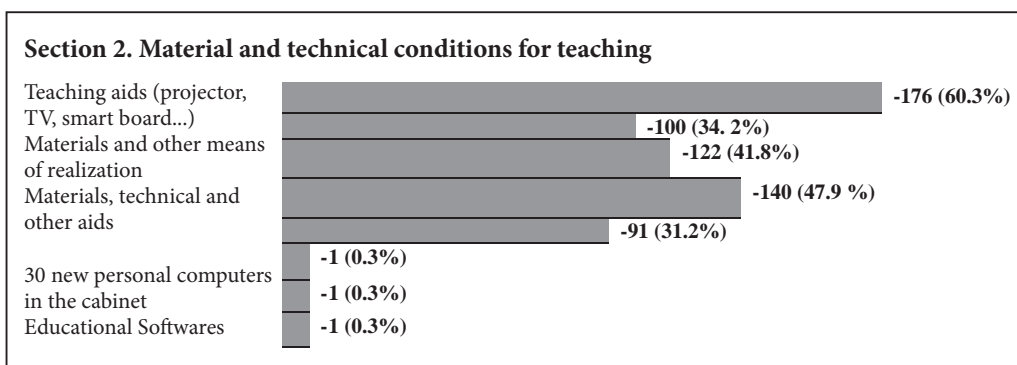
Needs for professional training of teachers



When asked about the necessary resources for teaching, the teachers declared that they needed teaching aids (projector, TV, smart boards, maps, etc.) -60.3%, material and other resources for conducting practical lessons and ICT equipment – 47.9%

### Chart 3

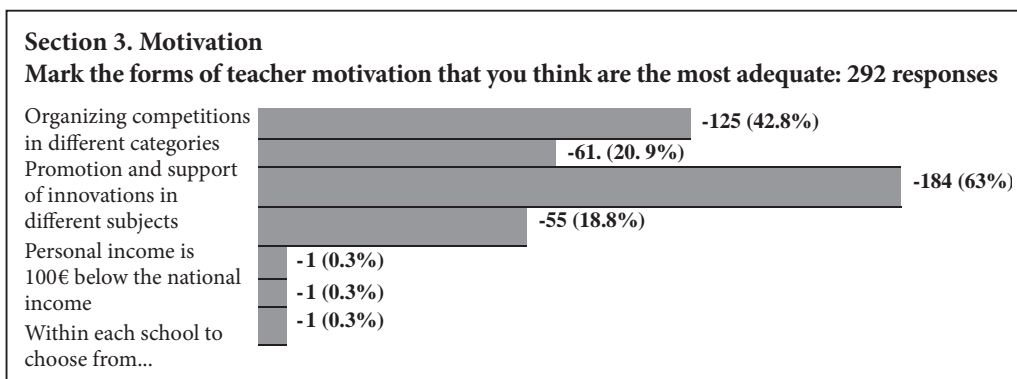
Material and technical needs of teachers



Forms of motivation that, according to teachers, the municipality should support and organize are the promotion and support of innovations in different teaching subjects, and organizing competitions in different categories.

### Chart 4

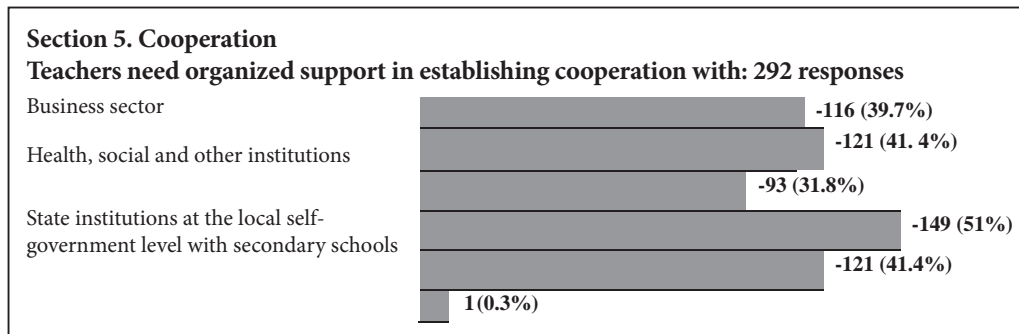
Motivational needs of teachers



According to the research, teachers need organized support and cooperation with state institutions at the level of local self-government, with organs and bodies at the level of local self-government, with the economy, and with health, social and other institutions.

**Chart 5**

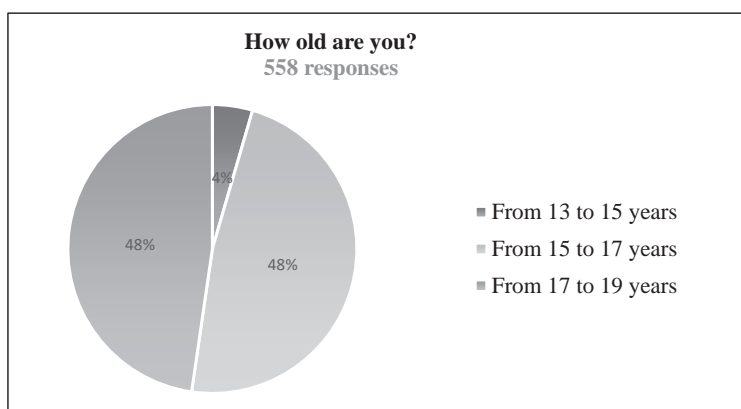
Support needs in cooperation with institutions, etc.



In addition to teachers, students aged 13 to 19 were also surveyed.

**Chart 6**

Structure of the sample of surveyed teachers



To successfully follow the lessons, the students stated that they most needed materials and other resources for conducting practical lessons and ICT equipment.

According to the students' statements in the survey, different student activities should be organized at the municipal level, and the students believe that the following are the most necessary:

1. Cultural and entertainment activities
2. Free professional IT training and
3. Research and innovation in various fields

For the realization of these student activities, according to the opinion of 88.05% of the surveyed students, the Municipality should establish and support the Secondary school Municipal Center. Through the Secondary school Municipal Center, students could organize with the support of the Municipality: public municipal competitions and contests; workshops/lectures in the field of theater, film, music, and fine arts; discussions; forums and meetings with authors, football



players, doctors, professors and other experts from various fields; research from different fields; presentation/exhibition of any good work or project; creation of educational pages and portals for young people; cultural and entertainment activities; sports activities and competitions; street performances for young talented artists; literary clubs; canteen, etc.

## Conclusion

The role of local self-government in the development of education is expressed through the support that the Municipality provides to primary and secondary schools in the implementation of the educational process, in the implementation of project activities, education and support of student activism, support in the local connection of schools for the development of the local community, and the promotion and support of successful school practices and individuals from education.

According to the conducted research, the support that the municipality of Kumanovo should provide to municipal primary and secondary schools should be based on the following conclusions from the research:

- teachers from primary and secondary schools need additional appropriate material and technical means and conditions for teaching, including in pandemic conditions;
- teachers should attend seminars and training on various topics to strengthen their professional development and improve their motivation to work;
- secondary school students need the additional resources they need to successfully attend classes;
- secondary school students need involvement in youth activities organized by the Municipality;
- by the Department for Education of the local self-government of the municipality of Kumanovo, there is a need to promote proposals, requests, and interests of young people;

Forms of support for education and models of cooperation between the Department of Education of the local self-government and competent educational institutions should be included in the municipal Education Strategy.

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Concept for extracurricular activities in primary education.

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## **IS MACEDONIAN SOCIETY READY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DYSLEXIA?**

**Abstract:** This paper aims to investigate the problem of dyslexia in the Republic of N. Macedonia, in relation to the awareness of the population about this condition, the need for this condition to be treated from an educational point of view and the involvement of the state authorities in the creation of inclusive living conditions for persons with dyslexia, with special focus on education. People with dyslexia are invisible to the institutions in charge of education policy in our country. Evidence for this is the inadequate educational policies and the lack of a precise legal framework that will regulate dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty. There is a big lack of dyslexia professionals and experts in our country. In addition, we are faced with a lack of standardized instruments for the detection of dyslexia. The most devastating fact in our society is the treatment of dyslexia with medication, especially the one where antipsychotic medication is prescribed. Macedonian faculties offer “poor” study programs about dyslexia. The teachers do not study dyslexia during their studies and therefore they are facing problems in recognizing the students with dyslexia. The teaching staff constantly appeals to the institutions to provide quality training to enable them as teachers to know how to recognize and help students with dyslexia. The awareness of the population about this condition today is significantly higher than in 2013, when the term dyslexia was almost unknown. Our society may be slowly but surely moving up with world trends about this condition.

**Keywords:** Dyslexia, Inclusion, Law legislation, Education

### **Introduction**

Dyslexia is a condition in which the brain processes written or spoken language differently. One in ten people on the planet has dyslexia, and the Republic of North Macedonia enters this average as well. Dyslexia can best be described as a combination of abilities and difficulties related to learning processes in several areas, such as reading, writing, spelling, and sometimes mathematics.

For the institutions in charge of creating educational policies in our country, people with dyslexia are invisible. Evidence of this is the unadjusted education policies and the lack of a precise legal framework that will regulate dyslexia as a specific condition that causes learning difficulties.

Dyslexia was the prerogative of medicine until the mid-20th century, but this concept began shifting and dyslexia was treated as an educational problem. Since North Macedonia is more than half a century behind other developed countries, this condition is still treated from a medical point of view, instead of as a learning difficulty.

There is a great lack of professionals for dyslexia in the Republic of North Macedonia, and in addition, we face a lack of standardized instruments for detecting dyslexia and other conditions that cause learning difficulties. The most devastating fact for our society is the treatment of dyslexia with drug therapy, especially therapy where antipsychotic drugs are prescribed.

In the world, there are a lot of specialized methods for working with students who face any of the learning difficulties that are practiced by licensed coaches or trainers. There are only three methods and five coaches/trainers on the territory of our country, and they use the methods of Ron Davis, the Orton Gillingham method, and the AFS method.

Macedonian faculties offer a “poor” study program in terms of dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia. Closely related faculties where these conditions should be studied are the Faculty of Pedagogy, the Faculty of Speech Therapy, the Institutes of Pedagogy, Psychology and Special Education and Rehabilitation. Of all the listed, only the Institute for Special Education and Rehabilitation has introduced a subject in its study program where the listed conditions are studied in detail. At other faculties and institutes for these conditions, there is very little teaching material that is included in other subjects or is not represented at all.

The current teaching staff had not studied dyslexia during their studies and therefore they face problems in recognizing the students who face this condition. The teaching staff constantly appeals to the institutions to provide quality training with which, they as teachers would gain knowledge on how to recognize learning disabilities and how to help students with dyslexia.

## **Research on the Prevalence of Signs of Dyslexia among Secondary School Students in the Republic of North Macedonia**

The Association for Dyslexia – EINSTEIN within the project “Info-wall for dyslexia”, funded by the USAID Citizen Participation Project, conducted a study on the prevalence of signs of dyslexia among secondary school students in our country. The research was conducted in 8 planning regions of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from September 2017 to January 2018.

### **Research Method**

In the conducted research, a descriptive method was used, i.e. a description of the situation for the prevalence of dyslexia in secondary schools in the Republic of North Macedonia.

### **Instrument**

For the purpose of the research, a questionnaire for assessment of dyslexia was prepared – “Dyslexia assessment test” by a licensed dyslexia trainer – Slavica Tasevska-Nikolovska and prof. Dr. Orhideja Surbanovska from the Institute of Psychology at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius. The test contained 30 questions related to the indicators of dyslexia. Students answered a 4-point Likert scale from 1 – does not apply to me at all, to 4- often refers to me. Cronbach’s Alpha 0.85 was obtained by statistical processing of the tests given to 2328 respondents for the reliability of the test. This shows that the test is consistent in measuring the degree of dyslexia in students. An item analysis was also performed which showed that all the claims in the questionnaire were consistent in assessing dyslexia.

To test the validity of the instrument, an online testing of two dyslexia tests was performed. The first of these tests was by the author’s Smith and Everett (Smythe & Everatt, 2001), which is used in the Republic of Serbia as a valid dyslexia assessment test. The second test was made by Tasevska-Nikolovska and Surbanovska (2017) for the purposes of this research. A correlation analysis was performed which showed a statistically significant correlation between the two tests ( $r = 0.72$ ), which is additional proof of the validity of the test. The test was translated and adapted into Albanian and applied to the Albanian student population as well.

## **Respondents in the Research**

The research included students from the first year of secondary school education (15/16 years old) from 8 planning regions in the Republic of North Macedonia. A total of 2328 students were tested, of which 1178 male students and 1150 female students. Of the tested students, 1757 were Macedonians, 571 students were Albanians. The research covers a total of 15 secondary schools, of which 5 gymnasiums, 4 secondary schools that offer both gymnasium and vocational education and 6 vocational secondary schools.

From table number one it can be seen that the signs of dyslexia in students in the surveyed secondary schools are represented by 12.2%, which confirms hypothesis number one\* It is expected that dyslexia in secondary schools will be expressed in about 10 to 15% of students, and the pronounced form of dyslexia to be present in about 2 to 4% of students.

## **Dyslexia in the Republic of North Macedonia**

Unlike Western countries, and even some Balkan countries, in North Macedonia dyslexia is still a distant topic. Dyslexia is not included in the North Macedonian legal system on any grounds. State institutions have not adopted guidelines for working with people with dyslexia, nor have they adopted a definition of this specific difficulty.

The lack of staff that specializes in specific learning difficulties also prevents the existence of an institution that will diagnose dyslexia and offer support to those who face this condition. The Law on Primary Education regulates the inclusion of children with special needs, but in the by-laws, dyslexia and other specific difficulties such as dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia, are not included in any category

The Ministry of Education and Science in the Strategic Plan 2018-2020 among the first priorities envisages the establishment of a system to support inclusive education. Students with dyslexia should find a mandatory place in this section. It is necessary to define the situation as a specific difficulty in learning, as well as to establish precise bylaws that will regulate the obligations of educational institutions and other institutions.

The commitment of the Dyslexia Association is clear: students with dyslexia are not students with special needs, but students with specific educational needs. In the state institutions in charge of creating educational policies, there is a tendency for dyslexia to be included in the category of “special needs”, but such a classification must not be allowed, because in this way we are taking steps backward instead of going forwards.

State institutions involved in the process of creating educational programs and policies make efforts to create an inclusive society for students with dyslexia. But such efforts create additional chaos in the education of dyslexics, primarily due to the unprofessional staff for this condition in our country.

## **Medical Treatment for Dyslexia**

There are two “specialized” institutions in our country where detection and treatment for people with dyslexia are performed. These are the Institute for Mental Health of Children and Youth and the Institute for Rehabilitation of Hearing, Speech and Voice. Parents of children with dyslexia, for the problem that their children face, turn to these two institutions where they receive some help and support. In these two institutions, parents can also receive confirmation that the child is experiencing dyslexia, although in North Macedonia there are no professionals in charge of detecting dyslexia unlike in other developed societies. From this it can be concluded that dyslexia is treated from a medical point of view in our country, unlike all developed countries where the medical aspect of dyslexia has been abandoned for years. However, the positive step is that the

awareness of parents and their will to seek help in institutions under the state cap has been raised. Although these institutions do not have a narrowly specialized staff for such conditions, still, in the absence of a special center, parents can turn for help, advice or support for their children.

According to the analyses conducted by the EINSTEIN Association in these two institutions, the lack of narrowly specialized expert staff for work and diagnosis of people with dyslexia was identified. Speech therapists, special educators, psychiatrists, pediatricians, psychologists, and pedagogues work in these institutions, but there is a lack of trainers who are skilled in specific methods for treatment of people with dyslexia. This is followed by another problem, i.e. the general lack of such expert staff in our country. At the same time on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, there are only four people who are trained in one of the world-recognized methods for treatment of people with dyslexia. Therefore, we cannot say that we have reached the level of a serious approach in the treatment of people with dyslexia until modern methods and instruments are introduced to diagnose and help children with dyslexia.

According to the representatives of the two institutions in charge of detection and treatment of dyslexia, the “diagnosis” of this condition is performed as a team, i.e. usually by a speech therapist, special educator, psychiatrist, psychologist, pedagogue, orthodontist, otolaryngologist and audiometric.

In terms of diagnosing dyslexia, these two institutions face a problem regarding the duration of the diagnostic procedure, because according to “My appointment” this time is limited to 30 to 40 minutes, which according to the employees of the institutions is very short. Dyslexia treatments in these institutions are really long-lasting and according to the statements of the parents last from 1 to 3 years and are limited to 30 to 40 minutes, 2 to 3 times a week. For the treatment of dyslexia and other conditions that cause learning difficulties in these two health institutions, various methods and exercises are used, i.e. general re-education of psychomotor skills, exercises for the development of pre-reading methods, exercises for development of auditory perception, exercises for the development of visual and spatial perception, classical methods, parts of the ABA method related to reading, etc. However, it is important to note that these methods are not specialized for dyslexia and staff working in health care institutions need additional education on dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.

A devastating fact for the Macedonian society as a whole is the prescribing and use of medications in the treatment of dyslexia, something that is not a practice at all in any developed society. According to a survey of 75 parents who have children with dyslexia, 35.8% of children were prescribed various medications. Children with dyslexia are prescribed everything from vitamin therapies to antipsychotics. It is important to note that according to the prescriptions submitted by a number of parents who were prescribed therapy, drugs such as Ritalin, Paracetam, Escitalopram, Tanacan and similar drugs were prescribed to children that are generally applicable to diseases such as depression, schizophrenia, dementia and the like.

## **Macedonian Teachers Need Education to Work with Students with Dyslexia**

Primary school teachers only partially knew the term dyslexia three years ago, and the situation hasn't changed much since then. According to a survey conducted by the Association for Dyslexia – “EINSTEIN” in four Skopje municipalities: Karpos, Kisela Voda, Centar and Aerodrom, more than half of teachers said they did not have enough information about this difficulty.

The situation is leaning towards a better path, but not enough, shows the latest survey of the Association, conducted in April 2018, in the same schools. There are still a large number of teachers who know very little about the condition, but it is positive that many of those who already had knowledge, in recent years have been further educated to work with children with dyslexia.

Awareness of the existence of dyslexia among students in our primary schools has increased in recent years, but teachers still lack training for easier recognition, as well as techniques for working with children with learning difficulties, research shows. A huge number of teachers today claim that they urgently need further education on this topic, because in each class they meet more than two children who have difficulty reading and learning, most often at the ages of 7-8 years.

In 2015, over 70 percent of teachers in the conducted survey said that the term dyslexia was never defined or it was only mentioned in training for reading and learning difficulties. In 2018, such an answer was given by about 30 percent of the surveyed teachers, who stated that they had only encountered this term and had no additional information. A repeated survey shows that the number of those who in recent years have been educated on how to recognize the first signs of dyslexia among students in some municipalities has grown to 50 percent. As a positive step in this direction, the surveyed teachers evaluated the trainings for learning difficulties, in which they received more detailed information about dyslexia and the ways to treat these students organized by the Association for Dyslexia – EINSTEIN.

Although with only partial information, some teachers even three years ago as well as now are sure that they would recognize a child with learning difficulties, including children with dyslexia. However, over 65 percent of those surveyed in the primary survey said they needed additional training to work with these children, while in the re-survey, less than 60 percent of teachers required training due to the large number of trainings and seminars conducted by the Dyslexia Association EINSTEIN.

According to a large number of teachers, a different approach needs to be taken when working with children with dyslexia both in classes and out of classes (homework) so that they can successfully master schoolwork. According to the answers of the teachers from 28 schools from all municipalities, most often dyslexia and other learning difficulties are recognized in the second and third grade. This is the period when children learn to read and write, and begin learning the basic mathematical operations. In the cases of the teachers, they usually meet between 2 and 3 students where they notice learning difficulties, which corresponds to the number of 10 to 15 percent of students with dyslexia. The majority of teachers, about 60 percent, considered dyslexia and learning disabilities to be transient and that the need to work with these children was equal for both teachers and parents.

## **Macedonian Society May be Slowly but Surely Catching up with World Trends Regarding Dyslexia**

It can be said that in the past six years major steps have been taken to raise public awareness of dyslexia, with many teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators, and speech therapists showing interest in expanding their knowledge in this area with purpose and desire to provide adequate support to this category of students.

In the past few years, organized by the EINSTEIN Association, and with the support of the University American College – Skopje and the Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje, a total of 53 educational seminars and webinars on dyslexia and specific learning difficulties were successfully realized on the territory of North Macedonia. Through this type of education, with fundamental knowledge and techniques, over 5000 teachers, psychologists, special educators, speech therapists and pedagogues gained adequate knowledge about working with students with dyslexia. From 2018, the Association EINSTEIN began with the realization of the second module of seminars, i.e. seminars for acquiring practical tools and techniques for working with students who face learning difficulties.

With the realization of the project “Focus on dyslexia” funded by the Foundation Open Society – North Macedonia, the Association for Dyslexia – EINSTEIN educated about 600 class teachers

in the Municipality of Strumica, the Municipality of Center and the Municipality of Cair. Within this project, a manual “Focus on Dyslexia” was prepared, which was made available to teachers in order to more easily identify students with dyslexia and provide adequate support to these students.

Through the project “Info wall for dyslexia” 700 secondary school students got acquainted with the condition of dyslexia, how to recognize it in themselves and their classmates, and also got acquainted with practical self-help techniques that they can use if they face any of the conditions that cause learning difficulties.

An important step in terms of education of the psychological-pedagogical services from the primary schools in the City of Skopje was made through the project “Inclusive educational policies for students with dyslexia”, which was funded by the Foundation Open Society – North Macedonia. Through this project, about 250 representatives of the professional services from 60 primary schools were educated to recognize and support students with dyslexia. For the needs of the project, the first handbook for identification and support of students with dyslexia was created for pedagogues, psychologists and special educators. The manual is available in electronic version on the EINSTEIN Association’s website so that all interested parties can use it, in order to provide inclusive educational conditions for students with dyslexia.

The Republic of North Macedonia is a leading country in the Balkans, especially among the former Yugoslav republics in raising public awareness of dyslexia. Even though in neighboring countries, where dyslexia associations have existed for more than 15 years, public awareness about dyslexia in North Macedonia has been more readily raised by the EINSTEIN Association which began active work in 2015. This was possible through the Association’s campaigns to raise public awareness and educate the teaching and professional staff of schools, which led to big success in raising awareness of this situation at a very high level in a very short period of time throughout the Republic.

A great contribution to the creation of inclusive educational conditions for people with dyslexia was given by the Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation, which through the Commission for Information and Computer Technologies at the Faculty of Philosophy created the Cyrillic font DyslexicFZF. This specific font was specifically adapted for people who deal with dyslexia and have difficulty reading both on the computer and/or printed forms of text. This font is actually the first Cyrillic font in the world that is adapted for people with dyslexia.

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## **THE ROLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PANDEMIC – COVID 19 IN EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** In the last two years, the world has faced a pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. In addition to health, the pandemic has created several economic and social challenges that have also affected the work of local self-government units. Ban on organizing events in larger groups, organizing online classes in schools, maintaining social distance, reducing the number of employees, and other preventive measures. The municipality of Kumanovo and its institutions, as well as municipal primary and secondary schools, adapted their operations to the new conditions and respected the decisions of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia related to the fight against the pandemic.

During its work in all conditions of the pandemic, the municipal headquarters for protection and rescue paid special attention to the implementation of the educational process in primary and secondary schools, as well as the work of kindergartens in conditions of the pandemic. These are institutions where there is a large concentration of people who may be carriers of a virus that spreads easily.

In such conditions of the rapid spread of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, state institutions, as well as local self-government institutions, have taken measures for the safe development of the educational process through electronic communication, until September 2021, where, according to the recommendations of the Commission for Infectious Diseases and by decision of the Government, classes in primary and secondary schools were organized with a physical presence. This paper analyzes the situation with the pandemic in schools and the activities of local self-government institutions, for the safe organization of the educational process in pandemic conditions.

**Keywords:** Local self-government, Pandemic, Education

### **Local Government (Setting)**

Society is continuously faced with various types of risks and threats that seek to threaten its vital values. Through its institutions, the state takes care of maintaining the legal order based on the legal order established by the parliament, the constitution, and all other positive legal acts.

History is full of many accidents and disasters, which unfortunately caused unfathomable consequences and great suffering to human civilization.

Even today, such events are not rare, which is why, like never before, the world mobilizes and undertakes joint efforts to reduce the consequences of such events, which are becoming more frequent, more aggressive, and cause great human casualties and material losses. An important feature of hazard is that it includes the concept of probability of occurrence.

Accident/disaster risk management requires risk sizing and measurement that takes into account not only expected physical damage, casualties, and associated economic losses, but also social, educational, organizational, and institutional factors. Difficulties in achieving effective disaster risk management are partly due to the lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework for disaster risk that would facilitate multidisciplinary assessment and intervention.

To evaluate the existing or necessary capacities of the competent institutions, they must have benchmarks in fulfilling their duties, which are necessary not only for measuring risk but also for the conditions for its management. For this, it is necessary to define the entities that will control



risk reduction policies as factors that will determine priorities in their management activities, and at the same time measure the effectiveness of these activities. After the natural disasters and other accidents that hit the area of Kumanovo municipality in the past period, it can be concluded that they are mostly the result of natural forces. Natural disasters in the area of the municipality of Kumanovo have so far caused mainly material damages on smaller and larger scales, but they have also posed a danger to the life and health of the population. Considering this finding, there is a need for a complete and complex determination of the situation and problems in the prevention and protection of the population and material assets.

In carrying out protection and rescue in the area of the local self-government unit, following **the Law on Protection and Rescue<sup>41</sup>**, the Mayor performs the following tasks:

- 1) Proposes a protection and rescue plan;
- 2) Monitors the situation related to the implementation of the decisions of the Council of the local self-government unit to prevent the occurrence and eliminate the consequences of natural disasters and other accidents;
- 3) Is responsible for the readiness of the protection and rescue forces formed by the local self-government unit;
- 4) Decides on the engagement of protection and rescue forces organized by local self-government units;
- 5) Leads and coordinates the protection and rescue operations carried out by the local self-government unit until the activation of the regional headquarters;
- 6) Monitors the implementation of actions to clean local roads, streets, and other infrastructure facilities in case of natural disasters or other accidents in the area of the local self-government unit;
- 7) Asks for help in engaging spatial forces for protection and rescue, which are formed by legal entities from the area of the local self-government unit and
- 8) In conditions where the protection and rescue forces referred to in point 4 of this article cannot remove the consequences of natural disasters and other accidents, it is necessary to engage the republic's protection and rescue forces.

## **The Role and Competencies of Local Self-government According to the Law on Crisis Management**

According to Article 5 of the Law on crisis management<sup>42</sup>, municipalities are obliged to carry out a risk assessment for their own needs, for effective prevention and early warning of a potential crisis, within the framework of their legally established competencies. and hazards at the local level, determine needs, and plan resources.

In solving crises, municipalities also perform the following tasks:

- They monitor situations, actions, and phenomena that can lead to the emergence of a crisis in the area of municipalities;
- Create an assessment of the threat of risks and dangers of the emergence of a crisis in the area of municipalities;
- Adopt a municipal revitalization program even after the end of the crisis;
- They implement the Government's decisions on managing crises in the area of municipalities and the city of Skopje and
- Decide on the number of resources for managing crises from the municipal budget;

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<sup>41</sup> Law on Protection and Rescue (Official Gazette No. 36 of 2004)

<sup>42</sup> Law on Crisis Management (Official Gazette No. 29 of 2005)

The assessment from paragraph 2, indent 2 of this article is made by the regional centers for crisis management.

In dealing with the crisis, the mayors of the municipalities:

- Ensure coordination of participants in the crisis management system at the local level.
- The forces for protection and rescue established by the Law on Protection and Rescue, in a crisis participate in removing the consequences of it.

In the prevention and handling of a crisis, public enterprises, public institutions, and services, as well as trade companies that are of special importance for work in a crisis, must protect and save the employees, the persons who happened to be with them and the material goods, as well as removing the consequences of the crisis.

In solving crises, municipalities also perform the following tasks:

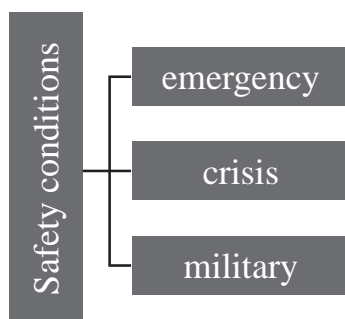
- monitor conditions, actions, and phenomena that can lead to the emergence of a crisis in the area of municipalities;
- carry out an assessment of the threat of risks and dangers for the emergence of crises in the territory of the municipalities;
- adopt a municipal revitalization program even after the end of the crisis;
- implement Government decisions related to crisis management in municipalities and
- decide on the number of funds for managing crises from the municipal budget.

In solving the crisis, the mayors of the municipalities ensure the coordination of the participants in the crisis management system at the local level.

Depending on the degree of risk, threats, and threats in society and the state, special regimes of behavior and taking special measures can be introduced. Such conditions can be of the following types:<sup>43</sup>

**Figure 1**

Graphic representation of the types of safety conditions according to the degree of danger



According to the Law on crisis management, a crisis cannot last longer than 30 days. If there is a need for a longer term, then it must be approved by the Assembly (in this case it was not possible in 2020, given that the Assembly was dissolved) or if the period of crisis is not extended, then a state of emergency is declared.

The differences between declaring a crisis and a state of emergency are as follows:<sup>44</sup>

- When declaring a state of crisis, the Center for Crisis Management is the competent body that must act according to the constitution and the law.
- When declaring a state of emergency, the Government is the competent body that should act by the Constitution and the law.

<sup>43</sup> Nikolovski M., Spaseski J., Gerasimoski S. Security systems, Faculty of Security, Skopje, 2010, 182

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 183

In this specific case, during the period of the spread of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the Government declared a state of emergency in its entire territory, to direct all its potential to overcome such a situation and protect the health of citizens.

## **Local Self-government in Pandemic Conditions**

When it comes to the current situation, as in the specific case, in which a state of emergency has been declared as a constitutional possibility, but not regulated by legal acts, then an appropriate compilation of existing systemic solutions must be made, provided by the law, in the specific case by the Law on crisis management and appropriate institutional legal solutions that ensure appropriate institutional competence and competencies for responding to the situation. By finding inappropriate solutions, on the one hand, the role of Government bodies and bodies for dealing with such situations is extinguished – eliminated, by the formation of a new coordinating Government body called **the General Headquarters** and through it coordination and communication with local self-government units, state bodies, and state institutions. Institutions, formed exclusively in such situations for this purpose, are left out, shifting the focus of activity to the burden of local self-government units, through the activation of Municipal Protection and Rescue Headquarters, which is already difficult to do in such complex situations with limited capacities and resources to deal with the current situation. At the same time, standard operating procedures that are valid and refer to the manner and behavior of all institutions included in the system for handling, each separately within the framework of legal competencies, which in turn represent a framework for action in a given situation, have also been set.

In contrast to a state of emergency, a state of crisis at the regional level, in these and similar situations, the Regional Headquarters of Regional Center for Crisis Management Kumanovo is activated throughout the pandemic crisis, which represents the highest operational and professional body, and whose composition includes labor representatives from regional units, departments of ministries and others state administration bodies, as well as representatives of local self-government units, and, if necessary, representatives of other local institutions.

In the aforementioned and further activities and behaviors of local self-government units in the conditions of a declared state of emergency, one of the priority goals and tasks of the Municipality of Kumanovo is the preparation of appropriate assessments, plans, programs, and analyses. For extraordinary events – events that can threaten the life, health, and material goods of citizens and thus cause a crisis or an emergency event, crisis circumstances, or crisis.

How **important the role of local self-government and its bodies** is in the prevention and suppression of the coronavirus epidemic can best be seen from the emergence of the coronavirus epidemic and the declaration of a state of emergency. The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, at the session held on March 18, 2020, based on Article 125 paragraph 1 of the Constitution<sup>45</sup> of the Republic of North Macedonia, submitted a proposal – declaration of a state of emergency in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia to prevent, spread and suppressing the COVID-19 coronavirus, and by the pandemic declared by the World Health Organization as a new type of virus that spread to all continents and affected the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

During a state of emergency, the Government passes decrees with legal force without passing through the legislative body. That is, all the decisions that the Government will make during the state of emergency will be implemented immediately to deal with the infection more urgently and effectively.

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<sup>45</sup> Gazette of RM 1/92

## **The Work of the Municipal Headquarters for Protection and Rescue – Kumanovo, in the Conditions of the Declared Pandemic**

The first case of a coronavirus patient in Kumanovo was on March 22, 2020. On the same day, the first death from the coronavirus was also recorded, also from Kumanovo.

One of the main requests of the municipal headquarters for protection and rescue to the government is the request to introduce a full quarantine for Kumanovo with precisely established protocols for the behavior of institutions, citizens, and legal entities, with control points at the entrances and exits from the city and reinforced more rigorous restriction measures, after the number positive increased to 47 people.

In dealing with crises, the Municipality is organized in such a way that there is and operates a Municipal headquarters for protection and rescue, established by the Decision of the Council of the Municipality of Kumanovo, by the Law on Protection and Rescue. The municipal headquarters is managed by the headquarters commander, chief of the headquarters, and assistants of the chief. The sessions of the Municipal Headquarters are also attended by representatives of other institutions (a representative of the Regional Center for Crisis Management, a representative of the Regional Department of the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, representatives of health institutions, representatives of local institutions, representatives of municipal public enterprises, representatives of the Kumanovo Municipality Council and others). The first positive case in the Republic of North Macedonia was registered on February 26, 2020, and by March 18, 2020, and the declaration of a state of emergency, the number of confirmed cases was 35 positive cases out of a total of 400 tested persons.

From the very beginning, that is, from the appearance of the first case of the Republic of Macedonia infected with the coronavirus on February 26, 2020, the Municipal Headquarters started holding regular meetings. The first meeting of the Municipal Headquarters for Protection and Rescue was held on March 11, 2020. The headquarters met daily. The main coordination headquarters was formed much later. During this period, the municipal headquarters has already started taking over activities on prevention and protection against the epidemic.

On March 14, 2020, by decision, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia established the Main Coordination Crisis Headquarters to ensure full coordination of state administration bodies, legal entities founded by the state, as well as local self-government units, in connection with the prevention, introduction, and spread of the coronavirus COVID -19 (Main coordination crisis headquarters).

The time frame of the research is January 2020 – December 2021, during this period the Municipal Headquarters for Protection and Rescue made significant decisions and recommendations for more successful suppression of the further spread of the coronavirus. Among the numerous conclusions, we would single out a few more characteristic ones:

- The public enterprise “Chistota i zelenilo” should intensify the activities of disinfection of public surfaces, public spaces, and facilities;
- Disinfection of common rooms and equipment (elevators) in collective housing facilities;
- Reduction of public transport, and then the complete abolition of public transport in the territory of the Municipality;
- Establishment of support teams for vulnerable categories of the population;
- free provision of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, other equipment) for the socially vulnerable population (users of social assistance, elderly people with difficulty moving, and other vulnerable population groups);
- free meals, taking care of the socially vulnerable population (users of social assistance, elderly people with disabilities, and other vulnerable population groups);
- Ensuring exclusively free delivery of food, groceries, and medicines to the population that needs this service (through economic entities, employees of the administration, or volunteers);

- sharing information on the website of local self-government units for business entities for the delivery of food, groceries, and medicines during curfew;
- Helping operators to secure queues in front of banks, pharmacies, and institutions;
- Ensuring a special way of movement of farmers, during the curfew;
- Adaptation of cultural services in crises (outdoor concerts);
- The following means of personal protection were distributed: masks, protective gloves, protective suits, glasses, visors, hats, vests, protective glasses, and food packages for vulnerable categories of citizens.

Financial measures to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on the private sector:

- reduced utility tax for companies (company tax);
- reduced utility fee for leasing public space;

## **Local Self-government in Pandemic Conditions and Education**

From infectious diseases such as the epidemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, there is no possibility of endangering buildings and infrastructure in the sense of any physical deviation, collapse, or complete demolition. In terms of the sensitivity and coverage of facilities and infrastructure that is sensitive to the risk of infectious diseases and epidemics, it is any facility that in its current work, due to the nature of the work, includes, accumulates (collects) a large number of people in the same place. Such facilities are schools, higher education institutions, nurseries (kindergartens), centers of culture, theaters, cinemas, sports halls, etc.

All of these facilities are subject to the risk of infectious diseases and epidemics, but especially as a space with a large concentration of people who are potential carriers of various viruses, parasites, bacteria, and other infectious diseases.

For the above reasons, as additional measures and activities to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, on the proposal of the Commission for Infectious Diseases of the Ministry of Health, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a conclusion at the session held on March 10, 2020, suspends the teaching process and classes for the next 14 days to all primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions and public scientific institutes in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. All extracurricular or additional programs such as foreign language courses and the like are also suspended.

Also, at the Government session, information with a package of measures from the field of education related to the implementation of the educational process in the conditions of the COVID-19 crisis, at the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Science, was discussed and adopted.

The first measure refers to classes in primary and secondary schools, which have been determined to be organized remotely, that is, learning from home, using means of electronic communication, until June 10, 2020.

With these two decisions, the entire education system in the Republic of North Macedonia was put to the test, and it became clear to all parties in the education sector that the system itself would face an unprecedented challenge. With the adoption of the last Decree of March 23, the school year entered its last quarter, that is, less than two months and twenty days remained until the end of the school year. As a result of the challenges faced by teachers themselves, as well as parents, and with the assumption that physical presence in schools is almost impossible, the Institute for Educational Development issued a Guide for teachers on how to evaluate students, hoping that a document to assist in the successful completion of the school year.

While students were eagerly awaiting the physical start to school in September 2020, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia at its 81st session accepted the recommendations of the Commission for Infectious Diseases for the organization of classes in primary and secondary

schools, according to which the educational program for 2020/2021. It should take place online with the following exceptions:

- 1) Students from the first to the third grade attend classes with a physical presence in the class, according to the possibilities of the schools for the implementation of the plan and protocol of the Ministry of Education and Science and with the consent of the parents. For students who have chronic diseases, classes should take place remotely (online)
- 2) Teaching with a physical presence in class can be conducted in schools with ensured sanitary and hygienic conditions for maintaining general and personal hygiene specified in the Protocols, by the epidemiological situation in the area/municipality, but only if the founder of the school, the school submits a request to the Ministry of Education and Science with an explanation of the fulfillment of the criteria and conditions according to the protocols and only after obtaining the consent of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, after receiving a positive opinion from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Commission for Infectious Diseases at the Ministry of Health.
- 3) In schools that have classes where dual education is conducted, the practical part of teaching, in companies, should take place with a physical presence at the workplace, respecting the general protection protocols and the protocols of companies where practical teaching is conducted.

With this decision of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, the educational process in the academic year 2020/2021. it took place through distance learning, which brought to the surface all the shortcomings in the educational process, the unprofessionalism of certain subjects, weak coordination, as well as the lack of professional training, as well as the unpreparedness of teachers to teach in this way.

## **The Situation with COVID-19 in the Area of the Kumanovo Health Home as of 31.12.2020**

### **Status with Positive Cases in 2020**

#### *Table 1*

In the area of the Kumanovo Health Center on December 31, 2020, a total of 4,676 cases of COVID-19 were reported ( $I=3,258.79/100,000$  inhabitants).

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of patients</b>	<b>Incidence /100,000</b>
Kumanovo	4171	2906,8
Lipkovo	466	1547,5
Staro Nagorichane	39	998,2
Total	4676	3258,8

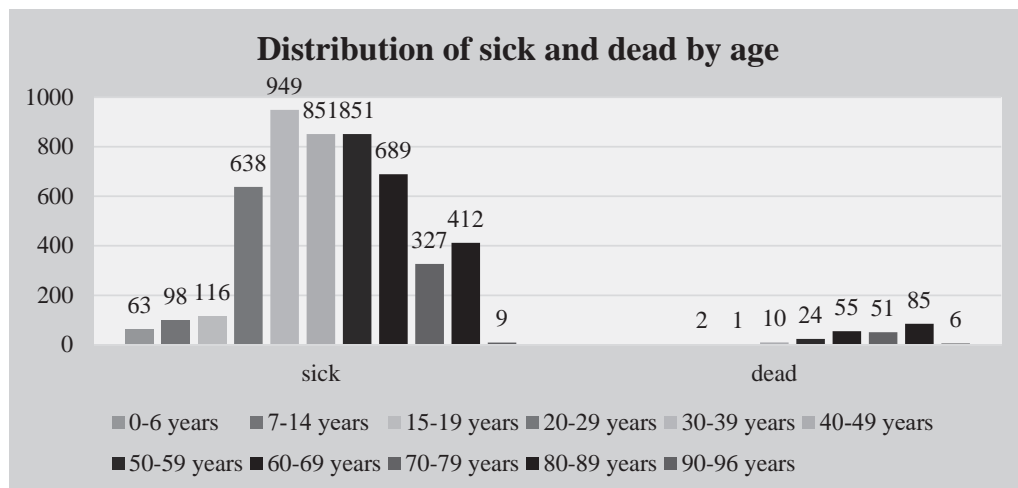
As for the date of registration, the first case in the country was registered on 26.02.2020, while in the municipality of Kumanovo the first case was registered on 21.03.2020. The first death was registered on 21.03.2020, in a 57-year-old woman, who was hospitalized at the Infectious Disease Department of the Kumanovo General Hospital, and it was confirmed that she was positive for COVID-19 on 22.03. 2020.

In 2020, the Kumanovo municipality recorded a downward trend in the number of patients in May ( $n=23$ ) as a result of the measures taken to prevent the emergence and spread of COVID-19

before the introduced quarantine. In the coming months, an increase in the number of sick people was recorded, especially after the lifting of the quarantine, as well as due to the non-observance of recommendations to prevent the appearance and spread of COVID-19 by the population. The largest number of positives was recorded in November ( $n=1363$ ) with a slight downward trend in December ( $n=810$ ).

**Graph 1**

Distribution of patients with COVID-19 by age group, ( $n=1446$ ) in 2020



The age of the patients is from 0 to 96 years. The largest number of patients are aged 30-39, 949 (20.3%), followed by the age groups of 40-49 and 50-59 with – 851 (18.2%), and over 90, where only 9 cases (0.19%) are registered.

171 deaths with lethality (3.6%) were registered. Most registered cases are in the 80-89 age group ( $n=85$ , 49.7%), followed by the 60-69 age group ( $n=55$ , 17.5%). 2 deaths were also registered in the age groups of 20-29 years.

**Status with Positive Cases in 2021**

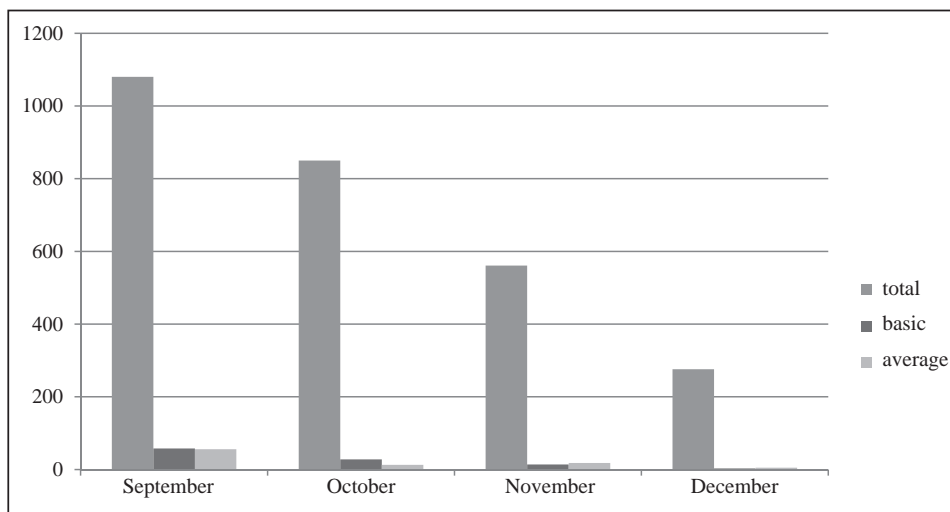
**Regarding the academic year 2021/2022 when classes in schools take place with a physical presence, the situation with COVID-19 in schools in the municipality of Kumanovo is as follows:**

The total number of students in primary education in the municipality of Kumanovo in the academic year 2021/2022 is 10,209 students (16 schools for primary education).

The total number of students in secondary education in the municipality of Kumanovo in the academic year 2021/2022 is 4423 students (4 schools for secondary education).

**Graph 2**

The number of positive students in the academic year 2021/2022 for September, October, November, and December 2021, is about the total number of patients for the specified months in the municipality of Kumanovo.



**Table 2**

The number of positive students in the academic year 2021/2022 for September, October, November, and December 2021 about the total number of patients for the specified months in the municipality of Kumanovo.

Month	The total number of patients in the Municipality of Kumanovo	Total number of patients in primary schools	Total number of patients in secondary schools
September	1080	58	56
October	850	28	13
November	561	14	18
December	276	3	5

From the table, it can be seen that the largest number of positive cases for COVID – 19 in September, i.e. a total of 1080 positive cases of all ages from the Municipality of Kumanovo, 114 students from primary and secondary schools, i.e. about 10%. **The next decreasing trend** in October, November to December 2021, out of a total of 276 positive cases, there are only 8 cases among positive students.

### The Impact of the Pandemic on Education

The pandemic has caused serious consequences for the entire educational system in the Republic of North Macedonia. Problems in the functioning of the education system during the pandemic have further deepened because schools and teachers did not have enough material resources to carry out classes of this type. Many students living in rural areas did not have technical means to monitor lessons, did not have access to digital devices, nor did they have an Internet connection. This time, inequality in society and social differences came to the fore. Primary and secondary schools



have started distance learning through distance learning platforms created by the Ministry of Education and Science. This means that both professors and teachers should have skills in managing digital devices, creating digital lessons as well as selecting materials to present in 30-minute classes.

A special burden on the municipalities was the management of schools during the conditions of the pandemic, due to the lack of material and financial resources, lack of digital devices, and weak or non-existent internet connection.

Students also had problems, some students did not have digital devices, and in some areas, there is no internet and a weak connection. In addition, parents also faced problems because they often had to help their children navigate the platform, and many parents from vulnerable categories could not provide their children with a digital device at all.

In this context, the municipality of Kumanovo, to help overcome the problem of the lack of technical devices for electronic monitoring of the educational process, provided donations for socially vulnerable groups, namely: 660 electronic device tablets, 82 smart boards, and 54 laptops. distributed in primary and secondary schools in the territory of the municipality.

The pandemic is an indicator that the educational process must be reformed, adapted to the new times, developed, and improved to more successfully and readily adapt to the new challenges that the educational system is facing in the coming period.

## Conclusion

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 also had an impact on the functioning of the local self-government units, especially in terms of adapting and continuing the educational process in the newly settled conditions. With the declaration of a state of emergency and the government's decision to stop organizing the educational process with a physical presence, the institutions of local self-government took on a series of activities to adapt the schools, provide technical support and continue classes through an online platforms. The local self-government allocates a part of the funds from its budget and invests them in equipment and provision of adequate conditions for the uninterrupted development of online classes, as well as continuing with the physical presence of students up to the third grade and when the conditions allow it.

The local self-government faced several challenges in the organization of the educational process. Special reactions are visible from the representatives of the local self-government that none of their representatives is included in the working groups at the Ministry of Education and Science to define the protocol for conducting classes in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, given that each local self-government and each school has its specificities. be taken into account when determining protocols with greater flexibility in their application.

Despite all the difficulties, thanks to successful management, the local self-government institutions managed to safely organize the educational process in these conditions of the pandemic without serious consequences for the health of students and teachers, which is also reflected in the analyzes made at the level of the local self-government unit.

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## THE QUALITY OF ONLINE TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC<sup>46</sup>

**Abstract:** Striving to change the paradigm of education has always been an imperative in our society. It had its full echo during the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus. In this context, our educational system had to adapt quickly to changes in a way that has no consequences for the implementation of teaching and especially its quality. In Serbia, the entire school system from primary schools to colleges has undergone crucial changes that have been reflected in the sudden transition from traditional to virtual classrooms with the help of various electronic platforms. The subject of this empirical research is reflected in the examination of the quality of university teaching. The focus of this research was successful on examining and assessing the quality of teaching, the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching, the attitude of teachers and students towards the conceptual implementation of online teaching through the most commonly used e-platforms. This issue has been studied from the perspective of university teachers and associates of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, with the difficulty of seeing the benefits and limitations of online teaching in pandemic conditions. The paper uses a descriptive method, scaling technique and the Liker-type Rating Scale instrument (JOZJMAN-Covid-19) constructed for the purposes of this research, the consistency and reliability of which were tested by the Conbach Alpha test. The obtained research findings are considered in relation to the independent variables of the research: teachers of social sciences, humanities and philology, and in relation to the title of university teacher. The results of the research are presented in tables and graphs with the help of descriptive and parametric statistics parameters.

**Keywords:** Teaching quality, University teaching, Change and innovation, Covid-19

### Introduction

The declaration of a pandemic caused by the appearance and spread of the coronavirus in March 2020 directly affected the changes in the educational systems of almost all countries in the world. In just a few days, teachers / professors and students were forced to move from their traditional classrooms to virtual ones, created via e-platforms (such as *Microsoft Teams*, *Zoom*, and *Google Hangouts Meet*). This unexpected change marked the beginning of a challenge to reestablish order within the changed education system. "The transition from the traditional method to online teaching was fast – overnight, teachers and students were forced to adapt to new circumstances" (Novaković, 2021, p. 106). Namely, important pedagogical, social and economic issues of how justified this type of realization of the teaching process have crystallized. The results of a large number of studies suggest a positive impact of online learning on the quality of teaching and the achievements of students (Baby & Sridevi, 2018; Lapitan et al., 2020), but there are also studies that suggest that online learning does not offer comparable or better results relative to the traditional (classroom) type of teaching (Galy et al., 2011; Thomas and Rogers, 2020; Omodan, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Kulikowski et al., 2021),

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especially the reduction of motivation, interactions and focus on classes (Dhull & Saksh, 2017; Yusuf & Ahmad, 2020). However, considering the predictions that by 2025 it will become the dominant form of teaching (Shailendra et al., 2018), it is extremely important to consider the attitudes and opinions of all participants in the teaching process – both teachers and students, as well as professors and university students, because it is the only way to produce practical solutions to improve both its quality and the degree of satisfaction shared by staff and students. During the two-year pandemic, researchers and scientists looked at students' attitudes towards online teaching (Novaković & Božić, 2020; Prodanović & Gavranović, 2020; Đorđević et al., 2020; Butunaru et al., 2021; Mutuprasad et al., 2021; Chakraborty et al., 2021), while there are far fewer who analyze the opinion of teachers, especially university professors, on crucial issues of organization and implementation of online teaching.

It is important to remember that the contemporary forms of online teaching were introduced at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when online courses were first organized. Duffy & Kirkley (2001) and Garrison & Anderson (2003), note that at the beginning of the new millennium, the first trainings were organized to prepare teachers for online teaching, followed by the first online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2008; West, Waddoups, & Graham, 2007; Aspden & Helm, 2004; Barker, 2003). A number of studies have noted that teachers who teach online have a much more complex task than teachers who teach in the traditional classroom (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2011; Barker, 2002; Bawane & Spector, 2009; Berge, 2001; Goodyear et al., 2001). Baran et al. (2011) note that the online environment is changing the nature of the interaction between teachers, students and content, with teachers again trying to adopt new and more accessible approaches.<sup>47</sup> Timely planning and adjustment of online teaching is an indispensable factor in the effectiveness of online teaching (Lloyd et al., 2012). Simon (2012) in his experimental research “The impact of online teaching on higher education faculty’s professional identity and the role of technology: the coming of the age of the virtual teacher” asserts that teachers who taught online courses were not satisfied with their potential, believing that it cannot replace the traditional form of teaching. Vingo et al. (2017) expressed concerns concerning the productivity of students during online classes, emphasizing the need for technical assistance in the implementation of this type of teaching. Chin et al. (2018) point out that the biggest challenge for university professors is the lack of skills and experience for teaching in an online environment,<sup>48</sup> while Xaferi et al. (2018) note that teachers disagree that the traditional form of online teaching should be replaced. Davis et al. (2019) believe that barriers to the complete implementation of online courses are expectations set by the traditional (classroom) method of teaching, lack of feedback from students and reduced interpersonal connections.

Regardless of the previously mentioned attitudes and beliefs regarding the effectiveness of online teaching, with the beginning of the pandemic, teachers had to take on many roles “overnight”, realizing teaching in the online environment, which is why the concept of “digital pedagogy” comes to the fore, in which “formation and improvement of digital competencies of the teachers” appears as its primary component (Toktarova & Semenova, 2020). Johnson et al. (2020) note that university professors, whether or not they had previously taught online courses, had been able to adapt quickly to the new environment. Even those who were opposed to technologies in education quickly developed skills suitable for online teaching, through the use appropriate tools (Shenoy et al., 2020). Most instructors began experimenting with the new approach as they did not have the opportunity to teach using the technologies of distance education before the pandemic (Bonk, 2020). Rapanta et al. (2020) mention that during the pandemic which was caused by the emergence and spread of the virus, many “tips and tricks” for teachers appeared, none of which had been not applicable in the absence of the necessary experience of working in an online environment. In his study “Teachers’ Attitude Towards

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<sup>47</sup> As early as 2001, Berg recognized four roles of teachers in the online environment: 1) teaching; 2) socialization, 3) organizing and 4) integrating technology.

<sup>48</sup> The teacher appears in two roles: the designer of the teaching process and the one who implements it (Goodyear & Dimitriadis, 2013).

Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia” (2020), Hermanto noted that 52.1% of the teachers surveyed do not have any problems with online teaching, but that only 23.9% are satisfied with the online teaching environment. Moralista et al. (2020) in the study “Faculty Perception towards Online Education in a State College in the Philippines during the Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) Pandemic” says that online education in colleges is characterized by a higher degree of academic dishonesty and impersonality, with compound with technical difficulties. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents relative to age, gender, academic status and years of employment, with opinions generally divided on the effectiveness of online teaching, which is a consequence of confused feelings about the new circumstances. Analyzing the attitudes of university professors towards online teaching, Pena et al. (2021) in the paper “Professors’ Expectations about Online Education and its Relationship with Characteristics of University Entrance and Students’ Academic Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic” reveal that 84.9% of surveyed professors responded that they have improved their skills for online courses, while from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment of research, their positive attitude towards online teaching remained the same. Due to this, Fauci and Kusuma (2020) find that 80% of teachers are dissatisfied with online teaching, both due to technical problems and the inability to plan, evaluate and adapt, while Kirikur (2021) seeks to determine whether practical work at home can provide equivalent learning experiences as learning in a laboratory setting. Lee and Young (2021) in their paper “Instructional Changes Instigated by the University Faculty during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Effect of Individual, Course and Institutional Factors” reveal that teachers have functionally improved and modified existing courses as part of adapting to online teaching, without introducing special innovations into the teaching process. The difference in relation to the traditional (classroom) type of teaching was the change in behavior conditioned by the use of technology. The results of this study are fully compatible with the results of research by G. Lorenzo from 2008, in which he concluded that higher education is often slow to adapt to new tools and innovations.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the above, Peša & Kamarova (2021) in their study “Socio-psychological Problems of the Transition of University Teachers to Distance Employment During the Covid-19 Pandemic” singles out social isolation associated with lack of communication as the biggest socio-psychological problem of university professors with participants in the teaching process of all ages.

Despite the existence of several studies, very little is known about the attitudes of university professors towards online teaching. Therefore, in this paper we will try to look at the attitudes of university professors and associates of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Nis regarding the quality and important aspects of online teaching. That is why it was necessary to conduct a research in which the opinions of teachers, especially university teachers, towards online teaching will be examined, with the aim of better understanding the way a “new” type of teaching works and how it can be improved improvement.

## **Methodology of the Research**

The subject of the study is the examination of the attitudes of university teachers and associates on the quality of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the aim of examining the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the field of higher education. In accordance with the subject and goal of the research, the following research tasks were conceptualized: 1. assessment of the quality of online teaching, 2. assessment of the relationship between teachers and students according

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<sup>49</sup> Over the last twenty years, several studies have evaluated the factors influencing the acceptance of online teaching: support from institutions (Moore & Anderson, 2003; Sumrall, 2002), individual characteristics of the participants (Granic & Marangunic, 2019; Tatcher et al., 2007; Agarwal & Prasad, 1998), socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, experience and intrinsic motivation (Allan & Seaman, 2012; Chapman, 2011; Ko & Rossen, 2003; Shea, 2007).

to the conceptual realization of online teaching through the most frequently used platform at the Faculty of Philosophy. 3. assessment the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching.

### Procedure and Instruments

Research on the quality of online teaching was conducted in April 2022. A descriptive method was used to assess the characteristics of online teaching from the perspective of university teachers. To measure the degree of the properties that are the subject of this research, the scaling technique was used with the measuring instrument of the Likert-type assessment scale with response modalities from 1 – I do not agree at all to 5 – I completely agree.

For the purposes of the presented empirical research, the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient was used, which is used to measure the reliability of the measuring scale. This parameter examined the internal consistency of the measurement scale where Cronbach’s Alpha is  $\alpha = 0.99$ . With this measurement result, we can conclude that the Likert type assessment scale constructed exclusively for the needs of this research is reliable and that it satisfies one of the basic metric characteristics of research instruments.

The instrument was distributed to teachers of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Nis, in the form of a Google questionnaire and the findings we obtained through this instrument were collected from respondents who voluntarily participate in this research.

### Participants

Respondents who make up the sample were informed about the context of this study and were familiar with its ethical aspects. The sample has the characteristics of convenience sampling, is based on a voluntary basis for participation in the research and was completely anonymous. For the purposes of this research, we collected 60 respondents who expressed their perceptions about the quality of online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The presented research does not generalize data to the entire population of university teachers.

### Method of Data Collection

Statistical data processing was performed through the SPSS program, and the following statistical parameters were used in the statistical analysis: Cronbach’s Alpha test, parametric statistics with t-test and F-test parameters. The results are presented in tabular and graphical charts.

### Research results

Although online learning and teaching is not a novelty in education, it may now prove more necessary than ever. It is a form of teaching which is conducted on an online platform, through digital technologies. Below are the views of university teachers and associates on this issue.

**Table 1**

Perceptions of university teachers about online teaching relative to gender

Gender		T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
Male	M	1.00	2.20	1.20	1.00	2.20	1.05	3.10	2.15	1.00	3.40
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
	SD	.00	1.00	.41	.00	.89	.22	1.16	.93	.00	.68
Female	M	1.32	4.62	3.60	2.90	4.35	2.35	4.82	4.42	2.45	4.85
	N	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
	SD	.94	.49	.92	1.29	.69	.483	.38	.50	.67	.361

$t = -11.92; df = 58; p = 0.0001$

Table 1 provides the individual answers of male and female respondents about online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic (*T1 – Before the emergence and spread of the corona virus, I taught online; T2 – I prefer the traditional (classroom) type of teaching in relation to online type teaching; T3 – It took me time to get used to the online working conditions; T4 – I needed additional practice for the realization of online classes; T5- I improved my digital competencies at the beginning of the pandemic; T6 – I regularly encountered technical problems; T7 – Online platforms (Hangouts Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) through which classes were conducted served their function; T8 – Online teaching is suitable for the realization of theoretical teaching; T9 – Online teaching is suitable for the implementation of practical classes; T10 – I have adapted my courses to the realization in the online environment*).

The research findings show that online teaching did not take place before the spread of the pandemic, but also that teachers did not need a lot of time to get used to the new way of working and that they did not need additional practice for online teaching. In general, male teachers believe that they had digital competencies even before the pandemic caused by Covid-19. Summarizing the answers from Table 1, there is a noticeable disagreement that online teaching is suitable for conducting theoretical and practical classes. Male teachers are undecided about claiming that online platforms are functional and that they have managed to adapt their courses in an online environment.

We can see slightly different attitudes based the arithmetic of female responses, which show that they prefer the traditional approach to teaching, that they have improved their competencies during the pandemic, and that online platforms are functional, but that theoretical teaching is suitable for online by the way. The parametric type of testing, t-test on a smaller sample, shows a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female respondents. By calculating the answers of the respondents in the SPSS program, a statistically significant difference was obtained,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.0001$  and that the female respondents grade the statements higher than the male respondents.

The statements were also tested relative to another independent variable related to the scientific field of the university teacher. Comparing the means of the answers of the teachers of philological and social-humanistic sciences, it is noticeable that the attitudes towards items from T1 to T10 are more positively evaluated by the teachers of social-humanistic sciences. T-testing revealed differences between the answers of respondents in philology and social sciences and humanities, where it was found that teachers of social sciences and humanities preferred traditional forms of teaching, showed difficulties in adapting to the new situation and that they needed additional help to implement online classes, and so they perfected their digital competencies during the pandemic. Also, teachers of social sciences and humanities believe that the online platform was functional and feasible for the implementation of practical classes and that they managed to adapt their courses in the online environment. Views of teachers of social sciences and humanities differ significantly from teachers of philological sciences,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ .

Statements about the concept of conducting online teaching were also tested with regard to scientific title. Regardless of the fact that the sampling did not include a homogeneous distribution of respondents in relation to scientific titles, Fisher's test determined that there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with regard to a given independent variable. The differences are statistically significant,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . F test and measurement of arithmetic means showed an increase in positive attitudes about the given items, which are grouped into a single variable, and can be seen from the lowest to the highest titles (researcher  $M = 44.33$ , Teaching associate  $M = 40.60$ , Teaching assistant  $M = 39.00$ , Teaching assistant with PhD  $M = 36.00$ , Assistant Professor  $M = 32.75$ , Associate Professor  $M = 26.10$ , Full Professor  $M = 16.85$ ).

Online teaching can be very successful if interaction is provided through adequate teaching methods and efficient use of web assets and applications. It is certain that the means of information and communication technologies offer unlimited possibilities for creative activities that enhance

the dynamism and exchange of opinions of students and thus affect the greater efficiency of teaching. The results refer to the survey of respondents' attitudes about the following statements: *T11 – Online teaching had a positive impact on the achievements of (my) students during the pandemic; T12 – Lack of physical contact has a negative effect on student achievement; T13 – Online teaching requires more discipline on the part of students; T14 – During online classes, interaction with students was at a high level; T15 – It was significantly more difficult for me to motivate students to actively participate in teaching; T16 – During online classes, interaction among colleagues was at a high level; T17 – A considerable issue in online teaching was the students not using their cameras; T18 – A big problem in online teaching was the students not using their cameras; T19 – I keep the camera on all the time during my online classes; T20 – Students prefer communication via text messages (over live oral communication).*

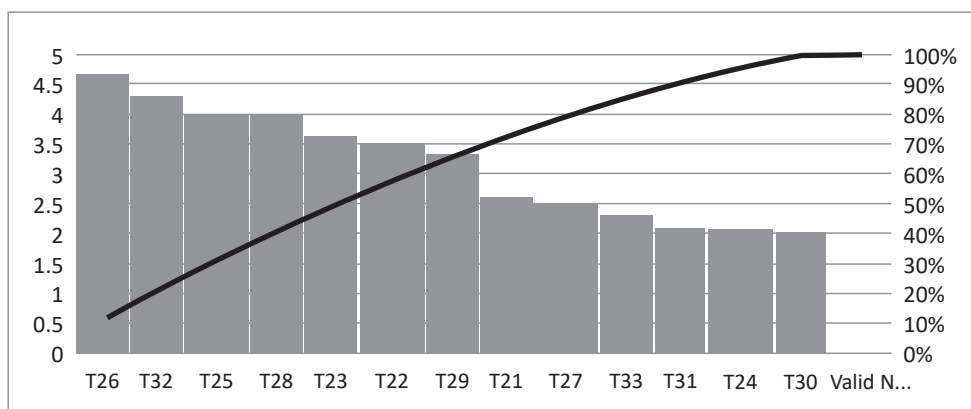
Disagreement towards uncertainty is dominant on most of the stated statements,  $M = 2.00$ ;  $M < 3.00$ . A greater degree of agreement is noticeable in the attitudes that the lack of physical contact probably affected lower academic achievement, that online teaching requires more discipline among students, that it is more difficult to motivate students to actively participate in online teaching, and that students commonly do not use their cameras while all university teachers keep the camera on during lectures,  $M = 3.00-4.00$ .

Parametric testing and application of the t-test displays statistically significant differences in the respondents' answers about the attitude of teachers and students towards the conceptual realization of online teaching relative to gender. By grouping the items a unique variable was created that tested the differences in responses with respect to gender. Comparing the means of the answers, it is noticeable that the answers of the female respondents ( $M = 39.35$ ) differ significantly from the male respondents ( $M = 15.35$ ). The difference is statistically significant ( $t = -13.90$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p = 0.0001$ ).

A similar finding can be seen relative to the variable scientific field. Parametric testing and application of the t-test examined statistically significant differences in the respondents' answers about the attitude of teachers and students towards the conceptual realization of online teaching with regard to the scientific field of teachers. Comparing the arithmetic means of the answers, it is noticeable that the answers of the respondents from the field of social sciences and humanities ( $M = 46.44$ ) are significantly different from the respondents from the field of philological sciences ( $M = 25.86$ ). The difference is statistically significant ( $t = -12.05$ ;  $df = 51.48$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ).

**Graph 1**

Benefits and limitations of online teaching from the perspective of university teachers



Fisher's test examined the attitudes of university teachers about the views of teachers and students towards the conceptual realization of online teaching with regard to the scientific title. ANOVA F-test reveals a statistically significant difference in the answers of the respondents with regard to the stated independent variable. In this case, too, it is noticeable that respondents who have a hierarchically lower title have more positive attitudes towards higher titles (researcher M = 48.50; teaching associate M = 46.60; teaching assistant 43.50; teaching assistant with a Ph.D. M = 40; assistant professor M = 35.75; associate professor M = 26.90; full professor M = 13.43). The difference is statistically significant at the level of statistical significance,  $F = 185.39$ ,  $p = 0.001$ .

Many universities have had difficulty adapting online and virtual platforms for the needs of classes, and academic staff had not been fully trained in digital technology. Accustomed to traditional teaching, teachers had to change and adapt their work to the conditions of online teaching and achieve the intended learning outcomes and goals. Graph 1 shows the attitudes of the respondents about the following statements: *T21 – It took me longer to prepare for my classes*; *T22 – I used various online teaching tools*; *T23 – I can create electronic interactive materials for students*; *T24 – I regularly use the electronic whiteboard (as part of work in virtual classrooms)*; *T25 – I use presentations regularly during my classes*; *T26 – I share my teaching materials with students*; *T27 – Exams during online classes are more difficult for students*; *T28 – It is more difficult to take exams in an online environment*; *T29 – I think that during online classes students had an easier access to me compared to the time when I taught in a (traditional) classroom*; *T30 – I had negative experiences working in an online environment*; *T31 – I was faced with the lack of adequate space for classes from home*; *T32 – I would love to return to the traditional classroom*; *T33 – I believe that online teaching will replace the traditional (classroom) type of teaching in the near future*. By examining the graph, it is possible to analyze the range of arithmetic means in a ranked sense, from the most positive to the most negatively evaluated responses to these statements. Among the above claims, university teachers and associates give a positive answer to share their materials with their students ( $M > 4.50$ ), they mostly agree that they would be happy to return to the traditional classroom but state that they regularly use presentations during their lectures. University teachers reveal that it was much more difficult to conduct exams in the online environment compared to regular conditions. Their predominant agreement on the Likert scale is expressed in the view that they know how to create electronic materials and that they used various online tools during online classes. Teachers did not have much trouble finding space at home to teach and do not agree with the statement that they were not inaccessible to students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The adaptability of online teaching as one of its greatest advantages is reflected in the production of greater opportunities for individualization of teaching as a requirement of contemporary education. Thanks to the Internet, students can access an ocean of information that will be valuable for them to master knowledge from various fields.

The results analyzed in Graph 1 are grouped into a single variable that has been transformed into a variable globally related to the attitudes of university teachers about the benefits and limitations of online teaching. The T-test determined that this research task also showed a statistically significant difference with regard to gender, where women ( $M = 49.52$ ) are more aware of the benefits and limitations of online teaching compared to men ( $M = 25.10$ ). The difference is statistically significant at the level of statistical significance,  $t = -11.55$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p = 0.0001$ .

Similarly to the previously analyzed segments of this study, there is a noticeable difference in the responses of the participants and with regard to the scientific field. All scientific fields are highly specific, implying a specific approach to teaching and content analysis, so it is not surprising that there are differences in the attitudes of university teachers in the field of social sciences and humanities ( $M = 57.75$ ) and the university teachers of philology ( $M = 35.43$ ). The difference is statistically significant at the level of statistical significance,  $t = -11.29$ ,  $df = 57.82$ ,  $p = 0.001$ .



Differences in the answers of the respondents are also noticeable considering the socio-demographic characteristics among the participants. The attitudes of full, associate professors and assistant professors differ from teaching assistants, teaching associates and researchers. The advantages and disadvantages of online teaching are differently perceived, probably with regard to work experience, and the title can certainly affect the critical perception of this way of working in relation to young associates who are likely to adapt quicker and more easily to novel situations. The difference is statistically significant at the level of statistical significance,  $F = 140.81$ ;  $df = 6$ ;  $p = 0.001$ .

## Discussion and Conclusion

Teachers have become engineers and implementers of online courses, regardless of whether they advocated for the use of computers and mobile phones in teaching or strongly opposed it before the pandemic. Teachers who had prior experience, i.e. possessed digital competencies, relatively easily adapted to the new circumstances, while, unfortunately, it was much harder for those teachers, digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001), who did not want to accept the use of computers and mobile phones in teaching, believing that modern information and communication technologies cannot help achieve better teaching results (Novaković, 2021). It was not easy for students, on the other hand, to accept change and get used to the new teaching environment, even though they belong to the generation of digital natives (Coman et al., 2020). Both the benefits and disadvantages of online teaching quickly showed themselves.

In the research presented, the results show that the teachers of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Nis, did not have the opportunity to express their views on whether online teaching systems should be implemented, but they acted very professionally and quickly adapted to the circumstance. Attitudes are divided in terms of which contents are suitable for teaching and which are not, but they do agree that theoretical teaching is suitable for online teaching, practical teaching. The views of university teachers about online teaching differ according to gender, scientific field and scientific title, therefore the first hypothesis was confirmed. Social distancing and increased stress are elements that could have a negative impact on student satisfaction and social skills, i.e. the level of motivation in learning. There was also the question of ensuring the quality of online teaching given the speed of adaptation to changes caused by the pandemic, and it was not possible to ignore the risks that the pandemic posed to students and university teachers. The research showed that teachers have a very clear attitude when it comes to the attitude of teachers and students towards the conceptual realization of online teaching. Teaching was realized without any problems, but there was an obvious lack of interaction with students, which is causally-consequential with their motivation to learn and therefore their poorer academic achievement. Statistically significant differences with regard to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were also noticed when examining the relationship between teachers and students, and the second research hypothesis was confirmed.

Finally, one of the research tasks was to examine the views of university teachers regarding the benefits and limitations of online teaching, and the aim of the study was to point out the importance of strengths, opportunities and potential ways to overcome weaknesses and threats to academic success during the Covid-19 pandemic. The advantages are certainly that the teachers have adapted to the novel conditions of teaching, that they have used online platforms, web tools, and shared materials with students. However, based on the expressed views, it is a common view that the traditional type of teaching is more efficient. The third hypothesis of the research was confirmed because there are statistically significant differences in the answers of the respondents about the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching with regard to gender, scientific field and scientific title.

The empirical research presented is just another attempt to shed light on this issue; however it focuses exclusively on the perspective of university teachers. In order to get a more complete picture, this issue should be examined from the perspective of teachers, students, parents, and it can also be put in the context of examining the entire educational system. This topic was chosen because there are very few studies that examine the quality of online teaching from the perspective of those who conduct it. For this reason, the noticeable differences with regard to the aforementioned sociodemographic characteristics may be an incentive for some other, futurological studies, but they may also represent a model by which this research can be compared to others.

These results contribute to our narrow academic community and there is no tendency to generalize data to the entire population of university teachers. In other studies, the weakness of online teaching in relation to its strengths is noticeable, as is the opinion that it cannot replace the traditional face-to-face teaching. As a convenient solution, a combination of traditional and online teaching in the form of a hybrid model is proposed, with one complementing the other. Through this method, the weaknesses of one teaching model could be compensated for by others, and the strengths could be maintained and increased.

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## THE EFFECT OF FREQUENT TESTING ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE

**Abstract:** This study aims to evaluate the effect frequent testing has on students following computer programming courses in an online environment. The experiment consisted of 26 students divided into two groups: 12 students who took tests after each lesson during the module introducing them to computer programming and 14 students who only took the final exam. The first group of students took 14 tests over the course of ten weeks. All 26 students took the final test at the end of the module. The test presented after each lesson to the first group of students consisted of 10 multiple choice questions related to the material covered in the class. The final exam consisted of 30 multiple choice questions, 10 completely new questions, 10 of the least correctly answered and 10 of the most correctly answered questions during the frequent testing phase. Students received immediate feedback on the test score and could see the correct answer to each question after submitting the quiz. The results show that students who took tests after each class

scored 13% higher on the final exam than those who only took the final exam. This result holds true when comparing the final exam scores on new questions only, on questions already seen and all together. The evident difference between the two study groups is statistically significant since the difference is large enough to secure higher grades for one of the groups.

**Keywords:** Exam frequency, Student achievement, Knowledge evaluation

## Introduction

Evaluating student achievement during schooling is vital to the student experience. Students' destinies can be tailored by their grades during their schooling life, whether it is a primary school, a high school, faculty, or beyond. We often witness scenarios where students from different schools with the same GPA scores drastically differ on various entrance exams and student competitions. The current educational system is set up so that students get their knowledge tested periodically, most often at semestral exams which are held twice a year. This means that students must study throughout the whole semester or course duration and then get their knowledge evaluated on a single test conducted in a single day. Even the brightest students can have a bad day and fail to show their knowledge on this particular day which then acts as a huge disappointing factor and can pave the students learning path in a completely different direction than desired. On the other side, mediocre and even bad students can get lucky on that single occasion and get a good result, which can later lead to a lot of frustration for the students, the teachers and educational institutions if these students happen to choose a career path for which they are not motivated enough or even not capable of acquiring.

Although the problem is clear and people in charge of providing educational programs are well aware of it, no particular solution is put to practice in most schools. And the solution is pretty straightforward – instead of assessing students once per semester or per course, introduce a system of frequently testing their knowledge and forming their grades as a result of their consecutive learning and effort put into their studies. Experiments regarding which exam frequency works best for various courses have been done, and different periods have been proposed throughout the past decades [1,2,3]. Yet, even if many experiments showed that frequent testing improves student achievement and that even students report them as being helpful, rarely frequent testing is put into practice. The most probable reasons for this are the logistical barriers. First, the educational institution willing to consider frequent testing will need to prepare appropriate tests for each class, which shouldn't be an issue since many other materials are required for each class to be successfully conducted. But, the professor should then, after each class, check and grade each student's test, provide feedback and deliver the results back to students. This can

mean that a new job position may be required for specifically doing this work, knowing how much effort conducting even semestral exams takes, including delivering the tests, monitoring the students while the test lasts, reviewing the results and giving individual feedback to each student. Educational technology is by definition “the combined use of computer hardware, software, and educational theory and practice to facilitate learning.” [4]. It understands incorporating technology in the education process to enhance the performance of either of its stakeholders, from students to teachers, parents, administration, external collaborators, etc. It doesn't mean that specific software or hardware needs to be used for a process to be considered as part of the educational technology. Even technology's theoretical or heuristic implementation can be assumed to be part of the ed-tech world. Despite this, most of the time an institution or process is qualified as ed-tech if it incorporates some kind of software or hardware solutions during the studies [5]. One of the main goals of educational technology is to improve students' learning performance by incorporating technology into the educational process [6]. It can do so by providing different tools students can use during their studies. All kinds of learning management systems (LMSs)

already exist which optimize students' experience with the complete learning process. One of the features that can easily be implemented in most of the LMSs publicly available or in the custom-built ones is the option to test students. Especially questions whose answer is easily validated by computers, like multiple choice or yes-no questions or questions expecting a specific number, word or sentence as an answer. Open-ended questions are more complex to be checked by computer and they require either the professors to check them or some kind of peer-to-peer checking and scoring mechanism. New machine learning (ML) techniques using NLP (Natural Language Processing) have already proven to be able to check open-ended questions [7, 8] and score them even better than humans without any kind of bias, a possibility for corruption, etc. The very good thing about these models is that once developed, they can easily be adapted to serve for different courses and in different languages [9,10]. This means that a single trained ML model can grade students' answers in all courses taught during the study's duration, expertise incomprehensible for a single human being.

## **Methodology**

The methodology used in this research is quite straightforward. A class of students was divided into 2 groups. The first group was tested after each class for 2 months and then took the final exam. Before taking the final exam, the participants of this group were tested 14 times. The second group consisted of students that only took the final exam. The students were aware of the experiment and they got to choose which group they will fall into. The 14 tests that were given to the first group were presented to students right after the class finished and after their colleagues from the second group left the class. The classes were conducted online, same as the testing. For this purpose, a digital platform for testing was built. Each test consisted of 10 questions derived from the material that was just taught during the class, so the students were supposed to keep attention during the class in order to score better on the test after the class.

The final exam was realized on the same platform as the individual tests, only it consisted of 30 questions. Of those, 10 questions were pulled from the questions that students from the first group answered mostly correctly during the frequent testing phase. Then, the next 10 questions in the final exam were selected from the questions that students from the first group most often answered incorrectly. Finally, the remaining 10 questions on the final exam were completely new and no student was already familiar with any of the questions in this group. All of the questions in each of the tests were multiple choice questions. This means that each question had suggested answers and students had to choose what they think is the correct answer. The students were aware that only one of the suggested answers was true. No negative points were awarded if someone answered incorrectly, which means that students could randomly select an answer for a question and still have a chance of answering it correctly. After the students answered all questions and submitted their solutions, they were presented with immediate feedback about which of the questions were correct and which were incorrect. Because they were still online with their instructor, they could ask for further explanations about certain questions and the instructor would explain them after all the students had submitted their tests. The test was not time-limited, but the students and the instructor stayed online after the class until all students finished their test and the maximum time for test completion was 15 minutes (derived from the log files).

The methodology for analyzing the results is comparing the scores students from both groups got on the final exam. In this research, we are not analyzing the scores on the individual tests. We are only interested in discovering whether frequent testing helped students score better on the final exam.

## Results and Discussion

The results that each student got on the final exam and info on how many tests each has taken are shown in Table 1. In the table we can see that out of the 12 students who participated in the first group, 9 took all 14 tests, 2 of the students missed one test on the days when they weren't able to attend the class and one student only took part in 8 tests and then took the final exam.

**Table 1**

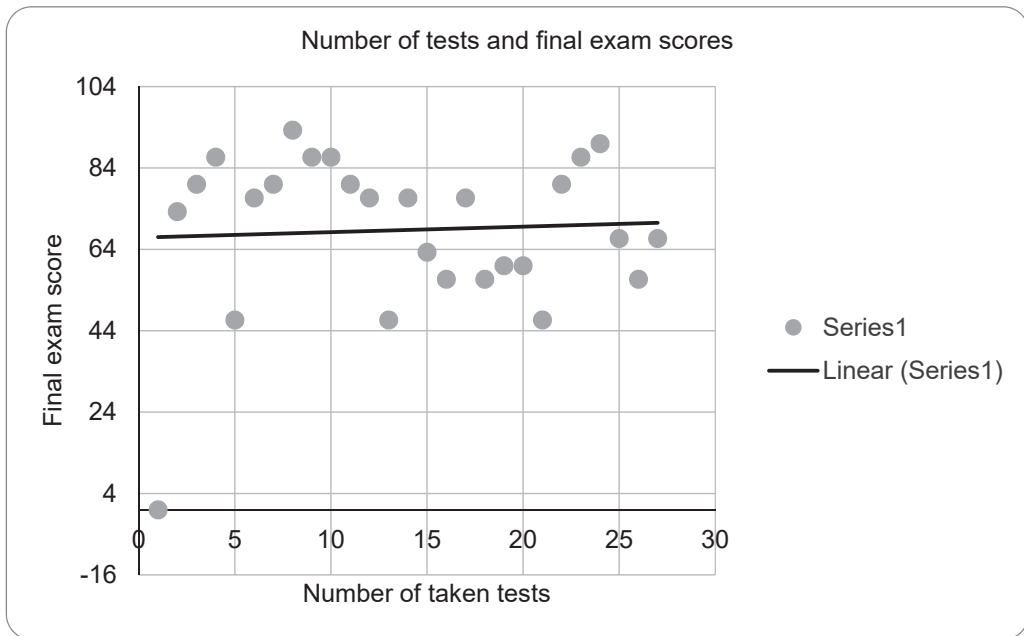
Tests taken and final exam score

Student	Student group	# tests	Final score
Student 1	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	73.3
Student 2	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	80
Student 3	Frequent testing group	13 + final exam	86.67
Student 4	Frequent testing group	8 + final exam	46.67
Student 5	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	76.67
Student 6	Frequent testing group	13 + final exam	80
Student 7	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	93.33
Student 8	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	86.67
Student 9	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	86.67
Student 10	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	80
Student 11	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	76.67
Student 12	Frequent testing group	14 + final exam	46.67
Student 13	Final exam only group	final exam	76.67
Student 14	Final exam only group	final exam	63.33
Student 15	Final exam only group	final exam	56.67
Student 16	Final exam only group	final exam	76.67
Student 17	Final exam only group	final exam	56.67
Student 18	Final exam only group	final exam	60
Student 19	Final exam only group	final exam	60
Student 20	Final exam only group	final exam	46.67
Student 21	Final exam only group	final exam	80
Student 22	Final exam only group	final exam	86.67
Student 23	Final exam only group	final exam	90
Student 24	Final exam only group	final exam	66.67
Student 25	Final exam only group	final exam	56.67
Student 26	Final exam only group	final exam	66.67

A visual representation of the data shown in Table 1 can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Correlation between the number of tests and scores on the final exam



What we can see from the results in the table and from the graph is that there is a linear correlation between the number of tests taken and the scores on the final exam. The results on the final exam are definitely not deterministic by the number of tests one has taken. We can see that based on the second group of students who only took the final exam – there are students in this group who answered most of the questions correctly (Student 22, Student 23). And in both groups, the least successful student has the same score of 46.67 points. If the number of tests unconditionally influenced the success rate on final exams, we would have expected the minimum score for the students from the frequent testing group to be higher than the scores of the worst students from the second group, yet this did not happen.

## Conclusion

In the results section, a detailed overview of each student’s scores is given. There are 2 findings arising from this research that can be drawn out from the results based on the dataset that was used. The first conclusion is that the number of tests presented to a student doesn’t necessarily mean that the student will do better in any case. We can conclude this based on the same lowest scores in each of the groups and the excellent scores students from the second group got on the final exam, despite not participating in any of the previous tests. So, frequent testing can improve student performance but does not guarantee it.

The second conclusion is that students being tested frequently score better than their colleagues who only took one test when we observe them as a group. The finding visible in the results section that students that were tested frequently during the course length scored 13% higher on the final exam is a significant difference and can contribute toward students getting a whole higher grade in an academic context. In combination with the previous conclusion, this conclusion can be formed to express that being in a group that is frequently tested increases one’s chances of scoring better results on the final exam but does not guarantee that happening.



## Future Work

The results presented in this paper are based on an experiment performed on only 26 students. This is a pretty small dataset and one of the ongoing processes while writing this paper is replicating the same experiment with more students. In the future, we will be able to do this analysis on a larger representative sample once more data is gathered. The findings of this study are expected to be confirmed, if not even amplified, as the sample size grows. Another analysis that can be done on the current dataset, but will be even more interesting as the sample grows, is to analyze the student's performance on final exams divided into question groups. As mentioned in the methodology section, the final exams consist of 30 questions of which 10 are questions that were answered correctly by most students during the frequent testing phase, 10 are questions that were mostly answered incorrectly and the last 10 questions are completely new. An analysis of these question groups can show whether students perform better on questions that they have already seen, whether complex questions whose feedback was already given to students are easier the second time they come around and whether the frequent testing improves student achievement only on familiar questions or on new questions as well.

The final thing that arises as future work from this research is to deliver a survey to each student, especially to each student from the first group of students (who were tested regularly), asking them to evaluate their experience with the frequent testing, whether it was stressful for them, whether they liked it and whether they believe that the frequent tests contribute toward their education. Based on the results from this survey and analysis of the students' stress levels regarding having frequent tests can be evaluated and the process for conducting tests can be adapted and optimized regarding the findings in the survey.

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## **CHALLENGES IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND TEENAGER STUDENTS**

**Abstract:** We live in a dynamic century, information technology has entered all spheres of life, and new professions have emerged, but let us not forget that educational institutions are and have been the engine of the past, present and future. Students in their teenage years are a challenge for the teachers as they bear the brunt of the “communication”. This is why I would like to shed some light and emphasize on the following points:

1. Communication – a necessity and a factor for joint activity.
2. The essence of Pedagogical footwear.
3. “Teenage age” – The challenge.
4. The role of the teacher and the challenges in communicating with students.

The importance of communication is invaluable not only as an activity between individuals, but also for society as a whole. The whole human culture is built and developed throughout communication.

Pedagogical communication is a specific type of social communication because it bears the marks of professional culture and purposeful creative activity. Pedagogical communication is an objective necessity for the realization of the goals and tasks of the pedagogical process, but it is also subjective, because each of the partners presents themselves through their knowledge, positions, views, beliefs and attitudes towards others around them.

The role of the teacher and the challenges in the communication with students – teaching is an art, art is as well communication. It requires not only a diploma, but professionalism, stable mentality, experience, wisdom, tolerance, ability to reach the heart of the student, empathy – to understand and sympathize, to give, to love, to be infinitely patient, because only one word can have dire consequences.

Democracy, pluralism, authenticity and honesty in the relationship between teachers and students can build strong bonds and enable learners to discover their potential in educational work.

A good pedagogue is a responsible person, convinced that with their activity and proper communication they contribute to the development of adolescents, to building their characters, to turning young people into worthy people.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Communication, Teachers, Students

The topic is interesting and in itself full of challenges. Communicating with whomever is a challenge, and with teenagers – even more. But the one who bears the brunt of the problem of “communication” is the teacher, so I will try to address the issues:

1. The professional image of the modern teacher
2. Communication – a necessity and a factor for joint activity
3. Pedagogical communication – essence
4. The trial called “adolescence”
5. The teacher’s role and challenges in communicating with students

### **The Professional Image of the Modern Teacher**

The work of the teacher has always been a decisive factor for the improvement of the material and spiritual reproduction of society. The quality of pedagogical work and the level of pedagogical training in all its aspects are the basis of successful professional realization and performance. The presence of physical and mental comfort guarantees the teacher full fulfillment of relationships in the

sphere of communication with students, parents and in other types of activities. The problems of the professional characteristics of pedagogical work and the functions of the teaching profession have always been relevant due to their dynamic structure. This makes our scientists K. Petrov, T. Trifonov, St. Zhekova, E. Pencheva to work on the essence of the problems (1992: 42). According to Art. Zhekova and R. Valchev, the peculiarities of the pedagogical process are in the following directions:

*“information explosion, requiring readiness not only for rational choice, but also for transformation and presentation of growing knowledge; increase in educational aspirations, primarily related to the democratization and massification of education; professional mobility, requiring the readiness of the pedagogical staff for substantive and technological variation with a view to directing students to different professional fields; increasing the role of science and technology, which means a break with the reproductive model of teacher training, training in innovative and alternative thinking, broad readiness to handle didactic techniques; acceleration processes affecting the multifaceted development of children; development of the mass media, which enter the unified and complicated system of influence on all; a break with the system – teacher training is not simply a reflection of schooling.” (2004 : 17)*

In recent years, there have been some significant changes, both in the educational process and in the requirements for the teacher. He is a key participant in the educational process with all his professionalism, psychological and moral potential. Its advantages increase the quality of education, and its disadvantages are multiplied in the system. Professionally – the personal qualities important for the profession are important ingredients for the mental readiness of the pedagogical work.

The teacher must be involved in the educational process with all his individuality, but he has a particularly strong influence with his personal qualities. V. Naydenova notes that *“a good teacher is not just a collection of knowledge on the subject he teaches, plus knowledge and skills in didactics. The teacher combines in himself the wisdom of the time in which he lives, the kindness of the mother and the reason of the father, the charisma of the leader who inspires and the quality and efficiency of the enthralling, the sensitivity of the artist, the beauty of the ideal that goes beyond the educational content laid down in the program “. (2004 : 9)*

The quality and effectiveness of education largely depend on the competence, motivation and resourcefulness of teachers. The thesis is confirmed that professional-pedagogical training should be based primarily on the acquisition of certain educational content and certain competencies. V. Naydenova points out that the teacher’s professional competencies are: *“complex personality formations formed after mastering a certain set of knowledge, skills, experience and behavior”. (2004: 10)*

The successful professional implementation of the pedagogical activity is impossible without good psychophysical health and optimal functional and motor training. Only in the presence of health, the teacher can show his socially-personally and professionally significant qualities.

## **Communication – a Necessity and a Factor for Joint Activity**

The formation and development of every personality and human community are the result of communication. Psychologists have long concluded that in the historical development of mankind the most important factor is the purposeful activity of people, which is called work, but for the course of their individual lives the most essential are the processes of interpersonal communication. It is thanks to these processes that the continuity between the different generations exists, that joint activity between people takes place, and that their social way of life is realized and regulated.

Communication is a necessity, a condition and a decisive factor for the realization of people’s joint activity – it is necessary to exchange ideas, feelings, attitudes, evaluations, feedback, etc. between the participants. It is crucial for the effectiveness of activity, both of small and large groups of people. Without interacting with each other, humans could not survive as a biological species

in the struggle against the elements of nature and the multitude of stronger and more adapted to independent living predators.

The importance of communication is invaluable not only as an activity between individuals, but for society as a whole. All human culture is built and developed through communication.

## **Essence and Characteristics of Pedagogical Communication**

Pedagogical communication is a specific type of social communication. By its characteristics it is professional and bears the marks of professional culture and purposeful creative activity. It is characterized by purposefulness, systematicity, regulation and is secondary to the everyday, domestic communication of the individual, pursues the realization of a number of specific tasks.

A. A. Leontyev considers that “pedagogical communication is the professional communication of the teacher with the students in the lesson or outside it in the process of training and education/having certain pedagogical functions and aimed/if it is full and optimal/to create a favorable mental climate, optimization of the learning activity and the relationship between the teacher and students in the student collective”. The author considers that the requirements of the teacher as an organizer of the socio-pedagogical interaction with his/her partners are at the forefront.

In Bulgaria Mrs. St. Zhekova presents in a synthesized form the features of pedagogical communication:

- It is a lasting intellectual-emotional impact;
- It has as a general regulator the ultimate goal of the educational process – the formation of the child’s personality;
- Pedagogical communication is active, multifaceted, dynamic and transformative;
- There are obligatory feedback and forms of realization;
- It is comprehensive and continuous;
- It is an important factor in the construction of the child’s personality;
- Pedagogical communication is socially oriented and purposeful. It is aimed at solving pedagogical goals and tasks that are socially determined;
- It has a deeply subjective character. Each of the participants in pedagogical communication has an equal place.

For me, pedagogical communication is an objective necessity for the realization of the goals and objectives of the pedagogical process, but it also has a subjective character, because each of the partners presents himself through his knowledge, positions, views, beliefs and attitudes towards others around him.

## **The Trial Called “Adolescence”**

An age that comes on like a whirlwind-suddenly and with a rush. The previously meek and calm girl or boy suddenly changes, becomes unrecognizable, as if with a magic wand changes his character. He becomes closed, does not trust anyone, communicates only with peers, wants to prove himself, does not want advice, does not tolerate objections, does not need prohibitions, needs freedom, but at the same time the students want love, support, understanding.

This is the age of puberty, and often temperament plays a role, and depression and aggression can be fatal. Boys become more rambunctious and may try to replace depression with stealing, lying, fighting, drugs, cigarettes, or other antisocial activities.

Girls may become shy, withdrawn, brooding, or indulge in another extreme – promiscuous sex that can end with severe consequences and low self-esteem.

Adolescence is a crisis period in a person’s development that occurs to change something-to bring a storm to the inner world of a child who has been doing what his parents wanted him to do and the way his parents told him to do it. However, the period has arrived when the adolescent has

taken in enough information and emotion from the outside world with various examples from everyday life and living, and the question “Who am I?”, “What am I?”, “What makes me important and significant?”, “Am I really important and significant?” or “What if I don’t like my parents’ opinion?” is confronted with poignancy. A process of trying out, a process of testing adult resilience, personal maturity, growth. But at the same time, parents are afraid lest their child make a mistake, veer into the “wrong path,” ruin his life. They want to protect him from mistakes, but often in their quest for good, they can cause irreparable harm if they struggle to obsess over their offspring. It is as if they have forgotten that behind the mistakes is also the experience that one grows with the mistakes. They discover a new path, give birth to new ideas and truths. Understanding and support are most important and necessary at this age.

## **The Teacher’s Role and Challenges in Communicating with Students**

“When God decides to punish someone, he makes him a teacher.” When I read Socrates’ thought years ago, I was amused and smiled. Being a teacher of teenage students is not only challenging, it is heroic!

Teaching is an art, and communication is an art. It requires not just a degree, but professionalism, strong nerves – i.e. “ship ropes” nerves, a stable psyche, experience, wisdom, tolerance, ox patience... Very often problems in families become a “stumbling block” because children cannot or will not accept what is happening between the people they love, who are their parents. Separation/divorce may be a solution for adults, but children have a hard time accepting the fact. It is not rare for separated parents to create new families and the child is not wanted.

The teacher becomes a guardian, even a friend. Tactful, delicate, understanding should be the attitude towards the sufferer. He is obliged to find warm and reassuring words, to counsel, to comfort.

Trauma for life can leave adolescents with illness or death of a parent/parents, alcoholism or other addiction. In addition to friends to share with, students often cry and share their pain with a designated teacher if they felt they could confide. Again, the educator must find the strength to help, refer the middle school student to a psychologist, be interested in the progress of the problem or the opinion of the specialist.

In recent years, the teacher also faced the problem of Covid-19. Distance learning turned out to be a niche, but it cannot fill the voids of personal contact with the teacher, social contacts have become limited, stress and depression have increased, communication with peers is a minus for young people. In many places, teachers were forced to provide their graduates with paper media due to lack of computers, phones, laptops, internet.

And yet there is something good about working with young people, to see students change, grow, build character before your eyes. The perimeter of pedagogical communication expands. Students are interacting with more teachers, and attitudes are changing. Teens value in communication not only the professional, but also the person with whom they can share or from whom they can seek advice or help. They show themselves as active subjects, expressing, exchanging thoughts, views, evaluations. Communication with friends is increased, especially during leisure time. At high school age the intellectual potential is quite high. The position of the personal “I” vividly stands out. When interacting with educators value the ability to understand, responsiveness, professional competence, fairness in relations. In communication they wish to be equal partners, even giving way to student initiative, independence, creative expressions. Educational communication is good communication.

Democracy, pluralism, authenticity and honesty in the relationship between teachers and students enable learners to discover their potential in educational work.

The need for benevolent attention, cooperation and emotional support should not be thought to be unique to students. Teachers have similar needs. They also need different expressions of

support and empathy as do their students. This is not a paradox, but an expression of approval, joy, and sympathy on the part of students, who thus activate, excite, and delight their teachers. Teachers experience satisfaction in the way they interact with their pupils. Conversely, the manifestations of apathy, indifference and negativity on the part of students make teachers feel frustrated and disappointed. This can affect their professional performance and cause them to become indifferent to their teaching duties or stimulate them to seek more appropriate ways of understanding and interacting with each other.

The teaching-educational process is revealed first of all in the professional-pedagogical communication, which is the main “tool” with which the main goals of pedagogical activity are reached. The dialogue between those involved in the educational process is significant and relevant for the modern Bulgarian school. Good dialogic communication stimulates the development of the cognitive sphere of the personality of students, enables them to reveal their experiences, optimizes cooperation, builds spirituality, morality and orientation towards human values. It implies a principle of goodwill, tolerance and trust between the subjects of communication. Thanks to it, not only the cognitive abilities of students are enhanced, but their spiritual culture and personal development are enriched. They develop useful qualities and skills- observation, empathy, tolerance of other people’s opinions, skills of listening and understanding the partner ... that last a lifetime.

A good educator is a responsible person, convinced that his activity and proper communication contribute to the development of adolescents, to the building of their characters, to their becoming worthy citizens.

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## THE CHALLENGES OF TANDEM TEACHING IN PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION FROM THE ASPECT OF THE GRADE TEACHER

**Abstract:** In the last few years there has been a positive revolution in the organization of physical education and health education, in fact with the latest changes to the Law on Primary Education in Article 54 paragraph 5 it is clearly emphasized that for conducting physical education and health education from first to the fifth grade includes a teacher of physical and health education, ie together with the grade school teacher the class according to the Law will be realized together with a teacher of physical and health education. According to the initial knowledge, there are positive effects

given by the tandem teaching of physical and health education in primary schools, especially when viewed from the aspect of the class teacher. The subject of physical education has been introduced in the teaching process, which is taught by subjects in addition to the class teachers. The aim of this paper is to discover and present the challenges offered by tandem teaching process from first to fifth grade for pupils through the prism of the grade teacher. While the focus of the paper is on the role of the class teacher in the part of tandem teaching process. As a conclusion from this paper are the positive aspects of tandem teaching for both pupils and the grade school teacher.

**Keywords:** Tandem teaching process, Grade school teacher, Pupils, Law of primary education

## **Introduction**

In the last few years there has been a positive revolution in the organization of physical education and health education, in fact with the latest changes to the Law on Primary Education in Article 54 paragraph 5 it is clearly emphasized that for conducting physical education and health education from first to The fifth grade includes a teacher of physical and health education, ie together with the class teacher the class according to the Law will be realized together with a teacher of physical and health education

According to initial information, there are positive effects given by tandem teaching of physical and health education in primary schools, especially when viewed from the perspective of the class teacher. The subject of physical education was introduced in the teaching process, which is realized jointly by the subject and grade teachers.

When we determine the function of the teacher in the process of transformation of the educational system in the modern social-pedagogical institution, then it is necessary to emphasize that the teacher is the living human factor in which all complex social-pedagogical processes are directly experienced, which are characteristic of modern educational trends. In order for today's teacher to function in these complex processes and to design his pedagogical practice, it is necessary for him to understand the essence of the total social movements.

The Bureau for Development and Education in cooperation with the Faculty of Physical Education, Sports and Health from Skopje, as well as the teachers of physical and health education through direct practical and verbal communication on the successful realization of the teaching in the schools on the whole territory of our country the very physical and health education class with the class teachers or the so-called "Tandem teaching".

## **Theoretical Background of the Paper**

### **Modern Teacher in the Educational Process**

In the time in which we live and work the role of the teacher greatly increases and significantly expands the responsibilities of those he had in the traditional school. At that time the teacher was asked to direct the student to accurately reproduce certain contents and their interpretation, he was responsible only for the progress of the class and the subject he teaches, to give information-instructions, to explain, evaluate, to insist on customs, traditions, morals and other norms. The teacher's activity was reduced to verbal contacts with the students, which seeks to influence them and their cognition.

The main function of the teacher in the modern school should be the mediation between the student and the knowledge, and less as a transmitter and source of information. The quality and quantity of learning, educational and teaching procedures, methods and forms of work, social and human relations in the classroom and beyond depend on the teacher.

The teacher should know the students well how to accurately and in time reveal to them their inclinations and interests, needs and opportunities, abilities and reaction to various teaching

situations, ensuring a positive emotional relationship and establishing the necessary communication in the class (Anastasovski Ivan 1995: 14-17). The teacher is a creative person and has a special function in working with young people, which in a special way contributes to the development of the overall student personality and all his human potentials.

### **The Notion of a Grade School Teacher**

There is no generally accepted definition of what a grade teacher is, but there are still various attempts to structure and define the notion of a grade teacher, which in recent history has been predominantly female. According to Utah Maharyan's writing from 2010, a class teacher is a person who is part of the pedagogical-educational process that teaches all subjects in the classroom. Class teachers usually teach in preschool and elementary school (Uttam Maharjan, 2010).

Grade school teacher is a person who raises and educates students (children) and actively participates in the educational process. The role of the class teacher is in many cases formal and monotonous, it is performed in a school or other place where formal upbringing and education is performed. In most countries, a person aspiring to become a class teacher must first obtain specified professional qualifications or accreditations from a university or faculty. These professional qualifications may include the study of pedagogy, the science of education.

Grade school teacher is one who helps children develop reading, writing and learning skills. Elementary school teachers play an important role in developing an educational path for students because they are the foundation of learning and transfer knowledge. They are responsible for teaching children from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Grade school teachers are responsible for developing necessary skills in junior school pupils such as identifying shapes, colors, etc. If any person enters this profession, he/she will be the best in all subjects. In fact, it doesn't matter what age and subjects you want to teach, you have to be best in a range of subjects from maths to English and physical education.

Grade school teacher work at an essential stage for pupil's education as they are responsible for developing life skills in pupils and encourage children to actively participate in classroom activities. They have to create interactive and engaging teaching methods that encourage children to learn, and help them develop verbal, numerical, reasoning and cognitive abilities.

### **The Notion for Teacher for Physical and Health Education**

Generally speaking, a teacher of physical and health education is a person who is part of the pedagogical-educational process which is obliged by law to realize the class of physical and health education in primary education.

In conditions of the new organization of the internal life and the educational work in the school, the role and function of the teacher of physical and health education is fundamentally changing. His activity is not limited only to the teaching work entrusted to him, but also extends to various types of organized educational education for time and outside the teaching within the school (Aleksandar Anastasovski, 1990:145).

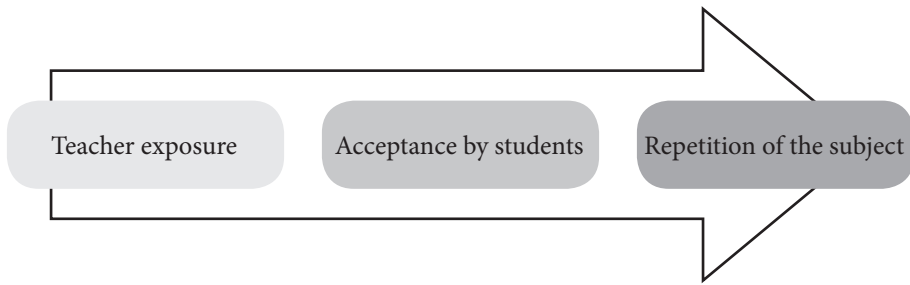
### **Concept for Class for Physical and Health Education**

The teaching class as an organized planning unit of the educational work was first applied in the 16th century, whose didactic foundations were given by the Czech educational and religious leader Jan Amos Komenski. Komenski sets the organization of the class in three stages (see Figure 1): Teacher exposure – Acceptance by students – Repetition of the subject (Aleksandar Anastasovski 1990: 97).



**Figure 1**

Organization of the class according to Jan Amos Komenski



### **The Challenges of Tandem Teaching in the Class of Physical and Health Education from the Aspect of the Class Teacher**

As positive effects can be assessed so far what gives the popular tandem teaching of physical and health education in primary schools as in addition to the class teacher and a teacher of physical and health education.

Physical education in the world stands out with its diversity in terms of the elements it contains, their preparation and implementation in practice. In the country, until a few years ago, physical education was reduced to teaching where the student rarely had the opportunity to develop his motor skills, and thus to accelerate the psycho-social development of children of school age where until now the class teacher was responsible.

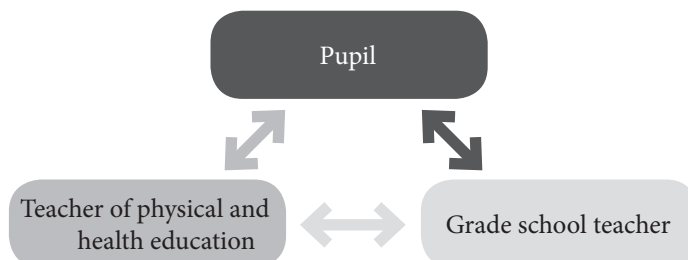
The new reform “Tandem” physical education classes, which includes a teacher in addition to the class, is expected to contribute to improving the quality of teaching, improving physical abilities, motor skills and knowledge in the field of physical and health culture in children.

This reform was adopted at the request of the scientific institution Faculty of Physical Education, Sports and Health at University Ss Cyril and Methodius which is in charge of producing staff for the needs of physical and health education. This revolutionary act is in accordance with the latest amendments to the Law on Primary Education published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Northern Macedonia No. 161/19 and 229/20 when officially in Article 54 paragraph 5 a provision is entered which reads education from first to fifth grade includes a teacher of physical and health education.

According to the latest amendments to the Law on Physical and Health Education in primary schools, the pupils has such an opportunity to receive guidance from the class teacher and the teacher of physical and health education (see below, Figure 2) who are in charge of its implementation.

**Figure 2**

Stakeholders in the physical education and health education class



What can be stated in this paper is that in this day and age of modernization, technology and internet revolution, ie the time of information society, the teacher gets new numerous and different roles that relate to teaching and learning, and those roles and Tasks are: the teacher should be a friend, a person of trust, a counselor-mentor, a transmitter of cultural values, a person who actively participates in the development of each young person and in some cases (and in modern times a larger number), replaces the parents.

That life dynamics in us humans causes big changes that we must follow, but those changes are also felt in the part of the educational process, especially for the youngest or the students from the grade teaching. In that segment, the class teacher has a great responsibility in the overall realization of the teaching, which includes the class in physical and health education.

The challenges posed by that segment of the classroom teaching are the fact that children need to be developed and directed properly in order to improve the psycho-somatic status of children as well as the health aspects of the teaching itself. Therefore, as class teachers, we can only welcome and support these reforms in the area of physical education and health education, which seriously improve our position in terms of placement in the HIF class and motivate us to build with all our capacity to realize this important segment of teaching, in order to improve the health and social aspects of students in lower grades.

## Conclusion

Viewed through the specificity and complexity of the teaching process in the classroom teaching and the new reforms that were adopted for the class of physical and health education (PHE), it can be concluded that the joint pedagogical activity of the two teachers (classroom and PHE) is to be welcomed and it moves in a positive direction in order to facilitate the work of the class teacher and to give importance to the practical work of students from first to fifth grade. Based on all the above and stated, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Of great importance was the amendments to the Law on Primary Education in the part of the physical and health education class where tandem teaching was done.
2. The role of the class teacher in the process of tandem teaching is very important, especially for students who have a high level of trust in the "teacher".
3. It is unquestionably important for the two teachers to conduct the teaching in the HIF class in sync and with full trust.
4. It is a fact that the teacher of physical and health education is of great benefit to the class teacher in the class of PHE in many aspects (practical, health, social, etc.).
5. Finally, the reform in the primary education in the part of the class of PHE is generally accepted, which is of great benefit for the students themselves, as well as the teaching process and for the class teachers.

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## **EDUCATING PHRONESIS AND PHRONESIS FOR EDUCATORS: TWO NEO-ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVES**

**Abstract:** Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* lays the foundation of the concept of intellectual virtues and of phronesis as a virtue crucial for attaining eudaimonia. However, Aristotle did not elaborate on detailed implications of phronesis considering education although this topic has wide theoretical potential. The neo-Aristotelian reflections on education, motivated mainly from the development of virtue ethics, shed new light on the educational potential of phronesis in two directions: first, directed towards moral education theory, and second, directed towards professional ethics in educational practices.

This article will make brief overview of these two “reconstructivists” perspectives. Firstly, the discussion will be focused on their attempts for explaining the development of phronesis-guided virtue form habituated virtue and its educational implications. Secondly, the fundamentals of the role of phronesis in developing professional wisdom in the educational practice will be discussed. Lastly, the theoretical and practical successfulness of the two perspectives as well as their role in ethical education in contemporary classrooms will be elaborated on.

**Keywords:** Education, Phronesis, Neo-aristotelianism, Virtue ethics

### **Phronesis**

Phronesis or practical wisdom is firstly explicitly elaborated in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* as one of the intellectual virtues. He distinguishes between two kinds of virtues: intellectual and ethical. Ethical are the virtues of character (justice, courage, temperance etc.), while intellectual are the virtues whose purpose is to provide the measure of right reason. They are divided into two subgroups: cognitive, which deals with eternal truths, and deliberative, which is related to practical life. The first includes: scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη/episteme*), intuitive reason (*νοῦς/nous*) and theoretical/philosophical wisdom (*σοφία/sophia*), and the second: art/skill (*τέχνη/techne*) and practical wisdom (*φρόνησις/phronesis*). Aristotle defines phronesis as “a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man.” (NE 1140b4-6)

Phronesis is a virtue that represents the excellence of the decisive, judgmental part of the rational soul and refers to the ethical virtues as their guide and regulator in an ever changing life contexts. Phronesis mediates and supervises the ethical virtues so that they find their proper goal and the appropriate means to achieve that goal. The properness and appropriateness of the virtuous action in Aristotle’s ethics are put in terms of finding the middle course that lays between two extremes, or popularly said – to find the golden mean. For example, courageous person lies between the coward and the rash person; temperance is between self-indulgence and insensibility, and liberality between prodigality and meanness. However, the mean is not universally given, but takes into account the context of the agent. The dietary mean of the athlete is not the same as of the non-athlete. Finding the mean in a particular situation requires detailed and thoughtful deliberative process in which phronesis gets the prime role. “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom [phronimos] would determine it.” (NE 1106b36-1107a3) The excellence in deliberation, according to Aristotle, should always consider the end, the manner and the time of action and phronesis should recognize them in every situation. It engages the agent in a decision-making process that leads to specific context-sensitive actions. Practical

wisdom is a kind of mediation between the general and the particular and the ability to bring the two aspects into a binding relationship. This leads to a good life that is not a straight line; but a complex, context sensitive and recognizable in principle. Aristotle metaphorically links phronesis to the specific measuring ruler of the builders from the island Lesbos that could measure uneven surfaces, thus making an analogy with the unevenness in ethical life. The prime goal of phronesis is achieving eudaimonia (“happiness”; or “well-being”, “flourishing”) and all decisions that are made in order to find the proper mean should be in the light of providing a well rounded life.

*Phronesis has been re-contextualized in modern ethical theories within the ethics of virtue. Plurality of interpretations emerged, implying various directions of thought. These neo-Aristotelian perspectives have recently been intensively introduced in relation to educational practice. In this paper I will elaborate on the key points of the two segments in which phronesis is connected with education – how phronesis can be educated and how phronesis can improve the educational practice.*

## **Educating Phronesis<sup>50</sup>**

The emergence of extensive and elaborate theories of educating phronesis is expected considering the intensive revival of phronesis-inspired moral education theories. However, as Kristjánsson points out, it is a mystery that elaborate discussion on the actual cultivation of phronesis lacks and is reduced to general discussion of virtue development or to repetition of Aristotle’s truisms. (Kristjánsson, 2014, 152) Empirical research, especially in the field of psychology, has contributed in the wisdom discussion and recently has got the much needed philosophical input in the direction of virtue ethics. (Darnell et al., 2022) Whatever pretentious and hopeful our expectation may be, this question lays in the foundations of the perennial problems that refer to acquiring virtues and attaining eudaimonia. The everlasting question of whether or how practical wisdom can be taught is out of the scope of this article, but several key points considering this question will be exposed. Aristotle’s positions are the beginning points for every neo-Aristotelian phronesis developmental account and there is where we begin.

Since phronesis deals with both the general and the particular, two categories are extremely important for phronesis development – time and experience. Aristotle considers young people not to be phronetic because they lack experience. However, young people do good, but their actions are not completely autonomous. This is achieved by habituation and disposition to act good in a constant manner through external guidance (parents, teachers etc.). Those who learn to acquire virtue are like “those who have just begun to learn a science”, they “can string together its phrases, but do not yet know it; for it has to become part of themselves, and that takes time” (NE 1147a20–22). By constantly practicing virtuous acts, the agent is nurturing disposition (hexis) for acting good, thus building stable character state. In this process, the agent is making conscious deliberative nuances of the ethical situations and his/her behavior culminates in an informed and phronetically directed practice. But the question arises: how does the transition from habitual virtue to phronesis-inspired virtue is made?

Aristotle draws a kind of model of moral development although it should not be understood in a contemporary moral developmental sense. The first stage is that of “the many” where the young children and many of the adults who have failed to connect with their reasonable part are. The many “do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment” (NE 1179b11-13). The “incontinent” are at the second stage who, although act virtuously most of the time because they know what is morally right and can resist the painful passions, can still be easily overwhelmed by

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<sup>50</sup> Parts of this subheading draw materials from my previous paper Поновска (2018).

counter-moral pleasures. “The continent” are on the third level. They are those who can overcome both the painful and pleasant pleasures, have a high self-control, and the non-reasonable part of their soul follows the reason. However, self-control is not considered as an exemplary state, and the “continent” person still has base passions and wants to act badly, even if s/he refrains from doing so. The fully virtuous agent is at the fourth stage. S/he can manage to attain full alignment of the passions and feelings with reason. S/he is constantly in a state of desiring the right goal, with developed, and only for him/her, specific phronesis that can acquire the goal of the mean. This condition is not acquired counter naturally because each child has the natural aspiration to overcome the three degrees, but this demands a difficult educational process in which a qualitative change in character occurs.

What can be deduced from the already said is that phronesis development is not a leaping process and is a gradual one. The child gradually learns to look at things from a more nuanced perspective and is gradually introduced to the critical sphere under the guidance of external mentor. The child is building moral insights through experiences that are increasingly more and more dependent on him/her. At the end, the child, now probably adolescent or adult, adds innovation in his/her deliberations and actions since now can better make decisions that fits best his/her context and affinities. This process represents qualitative progression of the character which gradually changes the attitude of “*so and so to act*” towards “*why so and so to act*”. In this developmental context, Annas uses the skill analogy. (Annas, 2011) Aristotle himself is against the art/skill (techne) – phronesis identification, despite the fact that he himself points to such analogies; for example, we acquire the virtues as the builder builds and as lyre-player plays the lyre. Still, Annas believes that this analogy can solve plenty of dilemmas considering virtue. According to Annas, learning of the skill requires both trusting the teacher and be aware of the process of learning, but also of our independent understanding of that process. She accentuates two important aspects of the analogy, namely trough virtue-art/skill learning is cultivating both the need to learn and the drive to aspire.

A great deal of effort is put in recent literature in order to reconstruct Aristotle’s initial points in details and to adapt them in more contemporary vocabulary and context. The better understanding of the phronesis development we have, the better understanding of the methods of its acquiring we will have. Varieties of approaches can be traced; amongst the latest phronesis dichotomy approaches arise the ones that are “intrinsicly” and “extrinsicly” (towards the others) oriented. Darnell et al. (2022) in the operationalization and measurement of their phronesis model accentuate four components: constitutive function (virtue identification, selection and relevance), integrative function (action choices and justification), blueprint function (moral identity) and emotion regulation (empathy and perspective taking). Rajský and Wiesenganger (2021) accentuate the relationality and “the other” as a key aspect for the constitution, acquisition and realization of virtues as opposed to the perspective of acquisition of interior personal qualities.

Until phronesis measurement is proved possible (if it really is!) we are left with several key premises that authors agree on. Although he does not specify how, a good news is that Aristotle gives two important directions: 1. a great deal of acquiring phronesis is left on education and on life experience, and 2. phronesis is developmental. Phronesis cannot be learned exclusively in schools, but a possibility is left for a phronetic classroom and curriculum development. In that context, ethical education should be insisted on at all levels of education and throughout the educational curriculum. Both universals and particularities, but also their unification, should be taken into account at the same time by educational models and methods that can be effective, like, practical learning, role-playing, problem solving, philosophy with children approach (Peterson&Bentley, 2015) etc. Many of them does not hold a monopoly over phronesis development, but surely can contribute to character building. Exactly because this aspect of the education is emphasized, these methods are introduced in the so-called “character education” programs, developed all over the world.

Methods can be changed and developed considering the particularities of every educational system, however another dimension of phronesis development should be inevitably stressed here that we think bears the most important role – that of the phronetic teacher. The most important factor for phronetic classroom are not the methods that contribute to phronesis development, but that of the phronetic teacher. The teacher should not be taken as an external factor of the pupil's internal moral processes, but as a key factor for properly guiding and motivating pupil's own affinities by connecting them with their life contexts. And this bring us back to the fundamental ethic discussion in Plato's *Meno*, namely who counts as the teacher of the virtues?

## Phronesis for Educators

In the last two decades, phronesis intensively appears in the field of professional ethics. (Walker&Ivanhoe, 2009; Bondi et al., 2011; Kinsella&Pitman, 2012) Aristotle's text does not offer any kind of such particularist endeavor as special phronesis and he would, probably, even contest such a concept; nevertheless, the neo-Aristotelian reconstructivist and transformative attempts found a rich and promising concept that can seriously improve the foundations of professional ethics in various professions. The introduction of phronesis in this field is primarily intended to escape the formalism of rules and norms in professional ethics in the so-called "people professions" (nursing, social work, education, psychotherapy, law, business, army, police). The aim is to reconsider the evidence-based rationality and the scientific views in professional practices that are dominant in most of these professions and to stress the importance of the dimension of ethics and values, rather than that of science, facts, skills and competences. Terms such as "profession", "professionalism", "people professions" understood as standard operational and behavioral skills or competencies are avoided, and the terms "practice" and "people practices" are used instead (Dunne, 2011). In this sense, even the term "professional ethics" is problematic and instead "practitioner's ethics" is used<sup>51</sup>. These reconsiderations affect not only the moral deliberation and action in these practices, but also the education and training.

Phronesis is related to education in the framework of the field of ethics of education. Phronesis is here treated as practical professional wisdom that can be cultivated in professional education. According to this phronesis narrative, the language of professional competencies is considered to be incompatible with the moral dimension of teaching practice in which context sensitive decisions and deliberations of a particular kind should be made, nurtured by care and warmth and encouraged by human relations leading to well-being and flourishing. Phronesis relates to educational knowledge that is action oriented; is embedded in experiential educational realm that takes into consideration particular educational contexts that correlates the universals; is driven by the character of every participant in that educational context, primarily that of the teacher; and has a goal to achieve well-being in the educational process taken as a whole.

With this phronesis narrative, the emotional practice of education and the emotions in the educational discourse are introduced where the cultivation of personal qualities and character are required, as opposed to the exclusively impersonal and disinterested educational approaches. According to the phronesis narrative, the educational practice does not represent a technology of pedagogy based on behavioral science of learning, nor is it a procedure subject to experimentation and observation that is standardized and measurable. There must be a strong moral component emphasized in these activities, because education itself is a moral act and teaching is an ethical practice that should lead to phronesis.

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<sup>51</sup> Being aware of this distinctions that some authors accept (for ex. Dunne, 2011), later in the text will be used the term "professional ethics" in a broader sense, as is used in most of the literature in the fields that connect ethics and special fields of work.

The introduction of phronesis develops a praxis-phronesis perspective (Kristjánsson, 2016) versus a rule based profession – an attempt to bridge the gap between educational theory and practice. Educational reasoning and reflection are associated with pronesis, and the education with practice in order to overcome the educational techne that develops educational technicians with measurable skills. The process of education involves complex context-sensitive deliberation; it is a practice that requires flexible and sensitive judgment in context-changing educational circumstances. The teacher should nurture receptivity to specific educational situations and problems, flexibility in their interpretation and solution, openness to new and unexpected situations and ability to relevantly and creatively apply the general pedagogical knowledge.

Phronesis in the complex educational situation can be understood in several directions, not only in individual, but also in a collective term. Phronesis can refer to the overall educational situation, the classroom, the school, the curriculum, the teacher himself, the students, the social processes etc., but dominantly to that of the teacher. Various approaches are recognized relying on different aspects of phronesis: situationalist, rationalistic, moral character approaches (cf. Noel, 1999) etc. Phronesis can be related to “giving practical arguments” (Fenstermacher, 1987), “discrimination” (Sherman, 1989); “discernment” (Schuchman, 1980); “phronetic insight” (Dunne, 1993), “pedagogical tact” (Van Manen, 1991) etc. The ancient Greek term “krisis” (discernment, discrimination) has important role in the educational exercise of phronesis, especially in the educational interplay between particulars and universals. Also is emphasized perception, or practical perception, in correlation with the metaphor of the vision and the eye used in Aristotle for description of phronesis. (Dunne, 1993) In these approaches, a slight tip over of the particularist view can be observed, probably as a reaction of the dominant rule/principle-based approaches.

So, how can phronesis be enhanced in the educational practice? The conclusion for this part will, in part, coincide with the previous. Namely, ethical education should be included in educational curriculum for educators, both as a separate course and throughout the curriculum. Both universals and particularities, but also their meaningful unification should be taken into account simultaneously. The general ethical theories should be infused with (practical) examples that will function as illustrations, not as prescribed, observable and measurable behaviors and principles; and every particular insight should refer to its conceptual foundations. However, despite the constant insisting of this kind of pre-service preparation, teacher education is neglecting this essential aspect; and where this aspect is not neglected it is not contributing adequately, especially in terms of applying it in individually accountable practices. (cf. Campbell, 2011) Even the literature considering character education for teachers, the discussions and terminology often resemble the standard scientific narrative. (Jope, 2014)

The relation of specific (professional) and universal phronesis is our final concern for this part of the paper. How can anyone nurture professional phronesis without being phronimos? Driven by the logical principle of subalternation by which the particular is implied by the universal (mainly articulated by Aristotle), but also relating to the nature of phronesis as an all-encompassing concept that leads to human flourishing, we believe that the professional phronesis that relates to the specific educational practice should coincide with the universal phronesis. Professional morality should be derived from already established general moral identity that is molded through the specificities of professional educational contexts. Hence, a good phronetic teacher should be a phronimos. However, having undergraduate ethics education for educators does not warrant developing full phronesis, but it inevitably extends the previously nurtured moral experience and knowledge. It is not too late – teachers get acquainted of their own character, beliefs and values about themselves as teachers, but also about the society and the world; however, this is not sufficient. This brings us back again to the beginning and the importance of early phronesis development; similarly, as the Aristotle’s *circulus virtuosus* of acting and being virtuous, we are put into circularity, but now in the context of education.

## Conclusion

In the both neo-Aristotelian perspectives that connect phronesis and education we propose enhancing the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, as well as the pedagogical undergraduate one, with ethical education, but encompassed in a meaningful and character infused way. This call is not a novice; it has been repeatedly insisted on. (ex. Донеб et al., 2019; Sanger and Osguthorpe, 2013) However, the challenges of phronesis in general, whose elaboration exceeds the scope of this paper, are numerous; and the “two-way illumination between particular and universal” (Nussbaum, 2001, 306) in educational contexts has its own specific challenges. Universals like: various theories of the goals of education and teaching, curriculum goals and contents, teaching methods, school and classroom rules, lesson planning etc., should be connected with particulars like: particular teacher with her/his own teaching and personal specificities, particular students that come from various particular socioeconomic, cultural, religious, political, intellectual, emotional contexts in particular school and particular classroom etc. Having in mind all of these variables and invariables one can get the impression that educational context is an inhospitable ground for developing phronesis. However, the same applies to life. Referring to Nussbaum and her reflections on conditions of human life, Jope (2014) discuss the educational challenges in the framework of the concepts: uncertainty, vulnerability and particularity, as conditions of the educational and especially of teacher’s life. Life, as well as classrooms, are changeable and uncertain; the risk of loss and the danger of conflict in the (educational) world of perishable objects and relationships makes us vulnerable; our human life lays always in the particularities and is historically/contextually embedded. According to her, it is of ethical relevance how everyone in the educational context, especially the teacher, is reacting to this uncertainty, vulnerability and particularity because it is precisely where phronesis arises.

From this point of view, it can be said that cultivation of (educational) phronesis is a cultivation of oneself to open to the uncertainties of the curvy line of (educational) life, to expose oneself to the unexpected (educational) outcomes, and, still, in these circumstances, to valiantly “measure” the bumpy terrain with the specific ruler of our character in order to build well rounded (educational) life. As educators, we are left with the optimistic and humanistic Socratic idea that virtue can be learnt and we should do as much as the school form enable us. That is why we vehemently search ways how to educate educators not only to educate virtue, but also to be virtuous. We search for curriculum developments, methods, moral development theories etc. Wherever this endeavor will leave us, at the end phronesis has to be left open, unfinished, since phronesis itself is an open concept. This does not entail that methods and theories are not utile, but that are not definite; and this never-ending search in the indefinite (educational) realm makes our endeavor meaningful as educators, but also as human beings.

Phronesis has been reread, revisited and re-conceptualized within every philosophical paradigm and era. It always retained its basic presupposition, but has always been “flavored” with the local and temporal “spices”. These spacio-temporal philosophical specificities had, as their background, the problems and needs of the contemporaneity. One of the “spices” of the XXI century re-conceptualizations, for example, is that we even speak about specific phronesis – educational phronesis, medical phronesis, business phronesis etc. This reflects our deep devotion to separation, partition and specialization of concepts and ideas in different fields. However, this is not methodologically wrong; neo-isms are supposed to shed new contemporary contextualized light over the old concepts. Old concept should, in return, remind the present of some valuable ideas that can reshape it. Neo-Aristotelian phronesis is a good way to start!

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## EMPIRICAL PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH BETWEEN THE TWO WARS – THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

**Abstract:** The influence of socioeconomic factors on children's development and school performance is a field of research that is receiving increasing attention in the international and national environment. Addressing inequalities resulting from the child's environment is directly related to the issue of the fairness of the school system. This article investigates the beginnings of empirical research on this topic in Slovenia between the two world wars. Along with the methodology,

we are mainly interested in the theoretical paradigmatic and political context in which the initiatives for this type of research were formed. The first empirical pedagogical-sociological research was conducted in 1926 by dr. Franjo Žgeč. Two years later, he upgraded the study and carried it out within the Pedagogical Center in Maribor. This first wave was followed by a second wave of empirical research a decade later. To the extent that the motives for research in the first wave were still tied to the paradigm of reform (progressive) pedagogy, the actors of this research in the second wave were already more politically motivated. It is a group of young left-wing teachers who have joined the “Teachers’ Movement” group. Their activity in the article is reconstructed based on their publications and memoirs. We especially emphasize the statistics course organized in 1939 and 1940 for teachers from all parts of Yugoslavia by the School of National Health in Zagreb, where the organizers systematically selected left-wing teachers who already had experience with empirical data collection.

**Keywords:** Empirical research, Pedagogy, History, Slovenia

## Introduction

Although equity in education cannot be unambiguously defined, it is one of the central themes of school policy at the global level and a challenge to the constitution of national school systems. Regardless of differences in perceptions of equity, the background to the problem is the generally accepted realization that the socioeconomic status of students (as well as their gender and immigrant background) is an essential predictor of learning success in terms of learning motivation and professional ambitions. In recent years, this fact has been most strongly confirmed by PISA research (OECD, 2017), which points out that some children have an advantage in achieving school success simply because they were born in a favorable socioeconomic environment that offers them higher emotional support, provides more favorable learning resources and is generally more encouraging. A school that ensures school success regardless of the child’s socioeconomic status would therefore be fair, so its task is to mitigate differences resulting from reasons beyond the child’s control.

In Slovenia, the thesis on the connection between socioeconomic status and students’ learning achievements (and the related choice of secondary school after completing compulsory primary education) has recently been unequivocally confirmed by research by the National Examination Center (Cankar, G., Bren, M. & Zupanc, D., 2017), which linked data on student achievement in various external knowledge tests (national knowledge test in sixth and ninth grade and general and vocational matura) and data on education, occupation, income, the value of real estate owned by them, etc. It is research based on a sophisticated methodological approach that manages to avoid some disadvantages of other research of this kind. The source of data on children’s school achievement and socioeconomic status of their families is not the children themselves or their teachers but databases collected and maintained by the RIC based on the annual national test of children in 6th and 9th grade and general and vocational matura after graduating from high school. As the RIC has the identification number of each child, it was able to connect this data (of course anonymously) with the data on the child’s family kept by the Statistical Office of Slovenia. Thus, this research is based on valid and reliable data on how, according to the socioeconomic status of families, children in Slovenia enroll in different types of secondary schools after finishing primary school, what are the real family income (in EUR), what are the differences in income and the wealth of high school students’ families compared to vocational high school students, and the connection between students’ achievements and their parents’ education.

Research on the impact of social origin on children’s development and school performance has a long tradition in Slovenia. Among the more high-profile study of this kind are the research of Ivan Toličič and Leon Zorman (1977) in the late 1970s and the research of Jan Makarovič

(1984) in the 1980s, in which he proved the connection between intelligence results and social background. Almost unknown to the Slovene professional public is the research entitled *Environment and Development of the Slovene Child*, conducted in 1957 by Milica Bergant (Bergant, Bonač, Glonar & Kmet, 1962), the founder of pedagogical sociology as a subject in pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. It is a groundbreaking study in the development of post-war socialist pedagogical doctrine, as it established a paradigmatic shift from the deductive to the inductive approach to pedagogical research announced and advocated in 1952 by Vlado Schmidt (1982), one of the leading ideologues of socialist pedagogical thought in the post-war period in Slovenia and the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In the introduction to this research, Milica Bergant (Bergant, Bonač, Glonar & Kmet, 1962) pointed out that the tradition of researching Slovenian children's social, cultural, and economic situation dates back to the period between the two world wars. Franjo Žgeč and his book *Problems of Education of the Broadest Layers of Our Nation* from 1923 were the first to introduce empirical pedagogical sociological research. She emphasized the presence of a clear Marxist analysis of pedagogical goals, as Žgeč "harmoniously connected the educational interests of the individual at that time with the progressive social aspirations and benefits of the oppressed Slovene working classes." (p. 6)

The emphasis that the beginnings of empirical research on the social position of children in Slovenia are linked to the Marxist analysis of pedagogical goals puts this topic in a specific epistemological context. It helps us to reconstruct the pronounced pluralism of pedagogical concepts that were established in the period between the two world wars. Previous research on pedagogical theory at that time showed the presence of five pedagogical paradigms: in addition to Herbartianistic pedagogy, Catholic pedagogy was traditionally present, which derived educational goals from theological foundations; reform pedagogy, which derived educational goals from children's nature and relied on psychology; spiritual (cultural) pedagogy, which derived the educational goal from culture and relied on the philosophy of life; and socially critical pedagogy, which derived the educational goal from the child's environment and relied on sociology. (see Protner, 2000) In the classification of pedagogical paradigms, it makes sense to rely on the classification offered by Zdenko Medveš (2015), who, as a common denominator for labeling pedagogical scientific paradigms, introduced the logic of understanding the educational process derived from factors known in teaching theory as a didactic triangle (teacher, student, learning content). He added a well-known fourth factor in educational approaches, namely the living environment. All the above factors are present in every educational process. Still, in defining the pedagogical paradigm, it is necessary to determine which factor is at the forefront – it has the most significant role. Medveš understands this factor as a *pedagogical medium*. Based on the medium of education as a criterion for classifying pedagogical fields, Zdenko Medveš offers us four:

- reform or autopoietic pedagogy – the medium is the child;
- Herbartianism – the medium is the teacher;
- spiritual or cultural pedagogy – the medium is the content (teaching material) and
- socially critical pedagogy – the medium is the social environment (see also Protner, 2020).

The aim of our paper is to reconstruct the beginnings of the constitution of a socially critical pedagogical paradigm in Slovenia. In doing so, we will pay special attention to the origins of empirical pedagogical research that has established itself within this paradigm. In analyzing the published texts from this period, we will also use commemorative records created after the Second World War and help us understand the ideological and professional motives of the main actors. In the first part of the article, we will highlight the work of Fran Žgeč, considered the pioneer of empirical pedagogical and sociological research in Slovenia. In the second part of the article, we will outline the activities of the younger generation of teachers who initiated the second wave of this research in the late 1930s. In conclusion, we will evaluate their contribution to pedagogical science.

## The First Wave of Empirical Pedagogical and Sociological Research in Slovenia

The first person in Slovenia to draw attention to the close connection between a child's mental and physical development and the environment in which he lives was dr. Fran Žgeč. In addition to being socially critical, Žgeč was a typical reform pedagogy representative. This duality in pedagogical views can be explained by the various influences that shaped his pedagogical views. As a prisoner of war, Žgeč experienced the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. Apart from the ideas of socialism, during this time, he also became acquainted with the pedagogical concept of a *productive school* (one of the concepts of reform pedagogy) developed by the Russian pedagogue Blonsky. Shortly after returning to his homeland, in early 1919, he sought contact with the Communist Party in Ljubljana and established a party cell in his home village. He also continued his party activities illegally as a student at the University of Ljubljana. (Žgeč, 1991)

These political and pedagogical influences are present in the book *Problems of Education of the Broadest Layers of Our Nation* from 1923 (Žgeč, 1923). It is his doctoral dissertation, which was awarded the Saint Sava Prize of His Majesty the King, which enabled him a one-year study stay (1923/24) and further training at the Sorbonne in Paris with prof. Simon (Laboratory for Experimental Pedagogy). On his way back from Paris, he also spent some time at the Rousseau Institute in Geneva and personally met some of the leading representatives of reform pedagogy (Claparède, Dottrens, Ferrier) and their views (Tancer, 1991, p. 10), which strongly marked Žgeč's reformist pedagogical design, and it is very likely that he also became acquainted with the possibilities of empirical research.

In the book mentioned above, Žgeč (1923) analyzed the social situation of proletarian and peasant youth. Regarding the lives of proletarian children, he referred to the statistics of the German Marxist-oriented politician and pedagogue Edwin Hoernle and the liberal-oriented and socially engaged politician and pedagogue Johannes Tews. He developed the thesis that social circumstances determine a child's development. To enable proletarian children to develop healthily "requires ambitious social reform, a change in the social position of children and parents, and the education of the proletariat, especially proletarian mothers." (p. 45). He strongly condemned the existing capitalist social system: "This evil [general misery and poverty – E.P.] cannot be eliminated by today's social order at all because the capitalist mode of production is based on the difference between possessors, exploiters, and exploited, and because all capital development goes in the direction of expropriating mass and wealth passes into the hands of individuals. Poverty, on the one hand, is today a condition for wealth, luxury, and enjoyment on the other." (p. 46-47)

Despite the clear Marxist diagnosis of the existing social system, its political and pedagogical ideas cannot be attributed to revolutionaryism. Žgeč (1923) explicitly writes that in this discussion, there is no room for finding a "final solution" but is satisfied with how "already in this social order, which is based on such differences and which he does not like to give up, but we find the possibility for the education of the proletariat, or at least in part." (p. 47) A fundamental feature of Slovene socially critical pedagogy is already present here: the focus was not on class struggle but on the position of the proletarian and peasant child and the appropriate didactic form of schooling that would enable the child to emancipate himself in capitalist exploitation. In Žgeč's work, we do not find those emphases formed in the left wing of German social democracy and later embodied in communist doctrine, which understood socialist education as the direct introduction of children into economic and political class struggle in accordance with party guidelines. Žgeč seems to derive from the doctrine of the right pole, which consistently avoids indoctrinating children with political goals. However, we must know that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was banned (announced) in December 1920. Six months later, the State

Protection Act also banned all communist activity that had moved illegally (Dimitrijević, 1963). For this reason, we can assume that Marxist teachers self-censored the public publication of their texts, as otherwise, they would be exposed to police persecution.

In the book in question, Žgeč illustrated his theses with his own observation of individual cases of the miserable social situation of children in the most backward environments in Slovenia. He took the first concrete steps toward empirical research into the development of the child in the context of the environment in which he grew up in 1925 when the Pedagogical Didactic Circle (later the Pedagogical Center /Pedagoška centrala/) in Maribor published a *Questionnaire on Child Development* on his initiative which covered questions on the social situation, physical development and mental developmental stage of children. About forty schools were asked to participate, selected in such a way as to adequately reflect the differences between bourgeois, proletarian, and peasant children (Žgeč, 1926). Based on the collected data, Žgeč (1962a) published a study in which he used the standards of normal development of Western European children, set by C. H. Stratz, as a criterion for comparing the physical development of Slovene children. He acknowledged the purpose of the research: "I admit that I would like to prove the difference in the physical and mental development of our child in the different milieu and also justify the freedom of the school in its operation – the widest and deepest autonomy of the school. But this requires extensive study. It would be too early to draw far-reaching conclusions from our data!" (Žgeč, 1926a, pp. 56-57). The statistical processing of data in his study is too modest to draw any relevant conclusions (according to today's criteria of empirical scientific research). The results are presented unsystematically, but in general, it is possible to recognize certain deviations from Stratz's norms and a certain interdependence between the social environment and the weight and height of children. It seems that Žgeč is more about arguing for the need for school autonomy, which he understands in the spirit of the new pedagogical movements of reform pedagogy. In this context, Žgeč devotes the last chapter to analyzing the *working school* as a new didactic form based on the child's interests. Concluding the tasks for the future, he says that it is necessary to continue "systematic observation and study of the child in all strata of our nation, its interest and its needs for mental and physical development. Propaganda must be carried out to understand the child better." (Žgeč, 1926a, p. 110)

His initiative to explore the interdependence between a child's development and his social environment seems to be more aimed at getting to know the child than at analyzing the social situation in the context of social criticism. But this dimension has always been implicitly present in the empirical pedagogical sociological research he encouraged. In 1928, Žgeč (1928) wrote the Work Program of the Pedagogical Center and announced, among other things, "deepening and studying the child's mentality and social, economical, hygienic and cultural circumstances in which the child develops" and "scientific work and research, which is essential for the development of our education" (p. 149). Empirical studies have been developed within this program guideline, in which the socially critical dimension was more pronounced than in Žgeč. These are mainly articles by A. Šuligoj's (1928 and 1929) *The impact of economic and housing conditions on child development* and *Housing conditions and their impact on children*, the book by K. Doberšek (1929) *The Influence of Social Conditions on Children in Prevalje* and the book by J. Jurančič (1930) *From the School for the Nation*. Their work was created during the growing economic crisis and a tense political situation. The fact that they were all members or sympathizers of the Communist Party speaks volumes in this regard (cf. Protner, 2000, p. 73). Their ideological definition strongly influenced the younger left-wing teachers united in the *Teachers' Movement* (Učiteljski pokret – UP). Their activity represents the second wave of organized empirical research on the development of Slovenian children depending on the social environment.

## The Second Wave of Empirical Pedagogical and Sociological Research in Slovenia

The first program guidelines for the work of the Teachers' Movement began in 1936 when the authorities banned the activities of the *Association of Young Intellectuals* in Maribor, where the most numerous and most active left-wing unemployed young teachers were. These teachers began to look for ways to legalize their activities in the aggravated political situation. Paradoxically, they succeeded in this by referring to the depoliticization of the umbrella association of Yugoslav teachers (JUU – Yugoslav Teachers' Association) and highlighting the need for didactic modernization of the Slovenian school or, as F. Strmčnik (1980) wrote: “[...] the UP's actions were mainly socio-political, which their ideologues cleverly covered up with pedagogical arguments.” (p. 84) The *Teachers' movement* was officially confirmed on October 11, 1936, when the administrative and supervisory board of JUU – section Ljubljana established it as one of the autonomous organizational units of the association for “sociological and pedagogical study and practical application of results in school and extracurricular activities.” (Delo in položaj /.../, 1937). The conceptual management of the entire project was taken over by the Maribor *Working Community of the Teachers' Movement*, established on January 5, 1937, which summarized the program at the inaugural meeting in the following points:

1. *We urgently need independence from political parties and a closer reliance on a professional organization.*
2. *A more detailed study of where the teacher works is needed because only after a thorough knowledge of the area's economic situation will the teacher properly direct his school and extracurricular work.*
3. *Closer contacts between school and home are needed.”* (Božični /.../, 1937)

At this meeting, the organizational structure of the *Teachers' Movement* was presented, which proved highly effective in the following years. They provided a network of clubs and organizational units in smaller towns, which systematically encouraged teachers to participate and collect empirical data based on questionnaires on children's development and their social environment. Until 1941, the *Teachers' Companion* (Učiteljski tovariš), the central bulletin of the JUU – Ljubljana section (where they managed to hire their section), reported weekly on their activities and promoted cooperation. Soon they could present concrete results of field data collection in which many teachers were involved voluntarily.

The results of the first research, which dealt with the socio-cultural living conditions of children in rural, semi-industrial, and industrial environments, were published in the supplement of the *Teachers' Companion* in 1938. At the same time, they set up a new survey on how Slovenian children dress, depending on the social environment. (Bergant, 1962)

In 1939, they began researching the physical development of Slovenian children. This was a time when the activity of the Teachers' Movement had already attracted attention in other parts of Yugoslavia, especially in Croatia. As early as 1937, the *Teachers' Comrade* reported that Croatian teachers were sympathetically following the work of the Slovenian Teachers' Movement and called for cooperation. (Hudales, 1937) In the same year, calls for empirical pedagogical and sociological research of villages based on the Slovene model appeared in Croatia. (Odnos hrvaških tovarišev /.../, 1937) In 1938, the *Teachers' Comrade* had already reported on the *Cultural Cooperative “Ivan Filipović,”* which organized an exhaustive empirical study of the Croatian countryside in Croatia. (Hudales, 1938) At the same time, Slovenian teachers began to learn about the lack of statistical knowledge and began to look at the literature, which in Croatia was already aimed at raising the scientific level of such research. When they started researching the nutrition of Slovenian children

in 1938, they translated and published an article by Kamil Bresler entitled *How I will Scientifically and Easily Research the Nutrition of my School Youth*. (Naša nova anketa, 1938)

Professional cooperation culminated in 1939 when the management of the *School of National Health* in Zagreb organized a one-month course in *vital statistics* during the summer holidays. The course was organized with the aim of “teachers getting acquainted theoretically and practically with some statistical methods to be able to continue their research work more successfully.” (M.M., 1939) Teachers from all parts of Yugoslavia attended the course. The condition was that they already had experience in collecting material and prepared data, which were here under the leadership of prof. Fedor Mikić statistically processed. Participants from Slovenia, with expert guidance, statistically processed already collected data on the physical development of a Slovenian child. Undoubtedly, the statistical knowledge acquired here has significantly raised the scientific level of research. When the research results were published, one of the researchers was proud to say that for the first time, Slovenians have received “mathematically reliable data for typing, or, if we want to call it that, the normal physical development of our children.” (Debevc, 1939, p.2) This research attracted the attention of the broader professional community. Thus, Božo Škerlj, a private assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Ljubljana in 1940, estimated that the research on a sample of 6,000 children was representative and that the results were methodologically well processed and concluded: “It is a great and unique merit of the teachers united in the ‘Movement’ if we have norm tables today for our growing youth. Therefore, special thanks should be given to them here!” (Čuček, 1940, p.4)

The research results on the physical development of Slovenian children were the starting point for the research on their diet, which was conducted in 1940. They were based on the finding that “for those sections of the people who are economically and socially weaker, the percentage of physical backwardness is growing in parallel, which is largely due to a deficient and improper diet.” (M.M., 1941, p.3) These data were also statistically processed in the second course of *vital statistics* in the summer of 1940 in Zagreb, but the outbreak of World War II prevented their publication.

Undoubtedly, the primary motive for the empirical research organized by the *Teachers' Movement* was pedagogical. Knowledge of the social situation of the Slovene child and their dependence on the socioeconomic circumstances in which they grew up was an argument for the didactic reform of the school, in which the concepts of reform (progressive) pedagogy prevailed. On the other hand, one cannot overlook the ideological and political motives that the leading ideologues of this movement sought in the Marxist theory of society. These motifs cannot be reconstructed based on written sources from the period between the two wars but only based on the memories of the participants. Thus in the Slovenian press from that time, we find the only emphasis on the importance of statistical knowledge that the participants gained at both courses in Zagreb. But we get entirely different information when we read their memoirs. Thus, for example, in her memoirs, the Croatian participant in both courses pointed out that the organizers had made sure that the course included “the most advanced teachers /... / members of the CPY [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] or at least experienced sympathizers – activists” (Babić-Weiner, 1974, p. 288) a Slovenian participant, however, the benefits of the course summarized as follows: “It was this kind of study and working together that gave me the strength to understand better the need for a revolutionary struggle for the final liberation of the working people.” (Špindler, 1974, p. 174)

## Conclusions

We find that the beginnings of organized empirical sociological pedagogical research in Slovenia are undoubtedly connected with the activity of left-wing teachers. In doing so, however, we encounter the methodological problem of resource interpretation. On the one hand, in the pre-war pedagogical press, we can follow a series of publications of their theoretical and empirical

studies, which were created under the pressure of self-censorship. Due to the political ban on communist activity, their theoretical derivations may have less political recognition and ideological sharpness than they would have if they could have publicly defended their Marxist views. On the other hand, we have at their disposal memoirs in which they interpreted their pre-war “progressive” pedagogical activity after the war. Following the prevailing socialist doctrine, they may have emphasized their Marxist pre-war ideological orientation more than it was in their pre-war pedagogical activities. Given this dilemma, it is possible to confirm at least the thesis that this pedagogical movement relied on independent theoretical thinking that did not follow party instructions, as the Slovene leadership of the Communist Party showed no interest in the activities of left-wing teachers (see Protner, 2000, p. 77).

Regardless of the political and ideological basis of their activity, we can say that these teachers are the pioneers of empirical sociological pedagogical research in Slovenia and that, in parallel with the development of the dominant university pedagogical doctrine, they formed a legitimate social critical pedagogical paradigm which has its firm position in the epistemological structure of pedagogical science even today. It should be pointed out that their research has made the pedagogical public aware of the impact of the child’s environment on his school success and thus paved the way for a modern understanding of school justice. It should also be pointed out that the initiative for this type of research came from the teaching staff and that teachers participated in data collection voluntarily, which is an ideal concept of scientific-pedagogical research even today. However, future research will need to pay more attention to their idea of didactic reform of primary school, as they seem to have neglected efforts to make education accessible to children from disadvantaged social backgrounds at all levels of schooling.

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## PEDAGOGY WITHOUT TELEOLOGY

**Abstract:** The development of pedagogy in Croatia in the period between the two world wars was strongly influenced by reformist trends. Cultural pedagogy, also called theoretical or philosophical pedagogy, explores pedagogy as a scientific discipline and fundamental teleological questions of pedagogy and education. It is based, on the one hand, on conceptual pluralism, individualism in education, and balanced approach to child's personality needs and, on the other, on community expectations, increasing the appreciation of child's personality. Cultural pedagogy contributed considerably to the establishment of academic autonomy of pedagogy and education, to the clarification of relationships between pedagogy and education, pedagogy and philosophy, psychology and culture in general, of relationships between culture and education, and personality and education, as well as to the problem of defining educational goals and a number of other essential pedagogical questions.

A productive development of pedagogy in Croatia was crudely interrupted after the Second World War. Within the new, socialist socio-political framework and under ideological control, pedagogy was forced to forget its heritage and break ties with international developments.

After independence and renewed pluralisation of society in the 1990s what predominates is an eclectic selection of various pedagogic research from among international resources, without critical questioning of their theoretical and methodological grounds, without exploration of the meaning and purposefulness of pedagogy and education.

The following paper analyses circumstances and consequences of the disappearance of pedagogic teleology, which has reduced pedagogy in Croatia to studying educational methods.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, Teleology, Croatia

## Introduction

Initial discussions about education in Croatia go as far back as Humanism and Renaissance: Nicola Vitov Gučetić (1549-1610), a philosopher and polymath from Dubrovnik, published his important first work *Govorno della famiglia* (Gučetić, 1998) in Venice in 1589, which addressed, among other questions, the theory of education. Regardless of this and other relevant, if sporadic, contributions dating from older times, a more intense development of the pedagogical theory started in Croatia in 1850 with the appearance of *Obuka malenih ili katehetika: za porabu učiteljem i svećenikom*, a book written by the then priest and school prefect Stjepan Ilijašević (1814-1903). Since that period, pedagogy in Croatia has been developing through four stages: (I) pedagogy of the “enlightenment” (until the First World War), (II) pluralist scientific pedagogy (between the two world wars), (III) monistic socialist pedagogy (after the Second World War) and (IV) a return to pluralism in pedagogy (since Croatian independence at the beginning of the 1990s) (for more details, see Radeka, 2007).

## Prolegomena to Pedagogy in Croatia

At different periods during the span of almost seven decades of the first stage of the so-called pedagogy of the “enlightenment” (1850-1918), three different and in many respects contrary tendencies were assuming dominance: the absolute dominance of the theological orientation in pedagogy (from 1850 to the 1870s), the supremacy of the Herbart’s approach in pedagogy (from the 1870s to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the strengthening of reformist trends in pedagogy with gradual weakening of Herbartianism (from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the First World War). These three trends were not isolated from one another, but to a certain extent interspersed, so the dominance of either of the three tendencies appeared gradually. During this stage, pedagogical materials were created without scholarly pretensions or originality, for the purpose of educating the teaching staff and enlightening the wider public. This stage is significant for the development of pedagogy in Croatia as an introduction to its later scholarly recognition (for more details, see: Radeka, 2007).

## Pluralized, Scholarly Recognized Pedagogy in Croatia

In the second stage of the development of pluralized scholarly pedagogy in Croatia, during more than twenty years between the two world wars, not only the practice of pedagogy had been improved, but also the theory. Various reformist pedagogy trends from abroad took theoretical precedence, creating plurality of pedagogical ideas, approaches and theories. At that time, discussions about pedagogy were no longer focused on educational politics, the system of schooling, and the assembling of different approaches more or less passively taken from foreign pedagogical literature, as was the case during the first stage. Pedagogy was beginning to be built on scholarly foundations and in an active relationship to international pedagogical trends.

Among the kaleidoscope of influences from various fractions of reformist pedagogy, working school and cultural pedagogy left the most visible trace in Croatia. By the number of supporters,

both theoreticians and practitioners, **working school** was certainly the most popular reformist movement in Croatia. It was focused on introducing practical work in schools, but it also created a positive environment for changes in the pedagogical theory. It was very well accepted among readers. **Cultural pedagogy**, also called “theoretical” or “philosophical” pedagogy, triggered great changes by its holistic exploration of pedagogy as a science and of fundamental teleological questions in pedagogy and education. Cultural pedagogy created a rich pedagogical heritage in Croatia, which is based on conceptual pluralism, individualization and personalization of education, on a more balanced approach to the needs of the student on the one hand and the community on the other, along with increased appreciation of the student’s personality, on respecting the values of a civil society in education, on establishing a scholarly autonomy of pedagogy and autonomy of education, on explication of the relationship between pedagogy and education, of relationships between pedagogy and philosophy, psychology and culture in general, of the relationship between culture and education and personality and education, on resolving the issues of defining the aim of education and social and cultural dependency of education, on recognizing the power and limits of education, as well as other essential questions in pedagogy and education. As a consequence of the development of cultural pedagogy, at that time pedagogy in Croatia completed its process of becoming an independent scholarly discipline and reached the level of international pedagogical trends (for more details, see Radeka, 2000).

### **Socialist Pedagogy in Croatia**

After the Second World War, the process of pluralist development of pedagogy and education in Croatia was suddenly interrupted. After the liberation of the country, pedagogical science could not continue its natural growth in the totalitarian socialist context. Ideologically and politically controlled pedagogy in Croatia was forced to forget and sever the ties with its own pre-war heritage and global pedagogical trends. Monistically based socialist pedagogy was reduced to a passive reception of ideologically determined pedagogy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics headed by Russia and after the links with the countries of the socialist block were broken, to creating its own path of development within the politically determined socialist ideological framework<sup>52</sup>.

In the post-war period, there were two phases: before the political separation of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (of which People’s Republic of Croatia was a constitutive part) from the Soviet Union, pedagogy and the new approach to education grew under the direct patronage of the USSR: after the separation, there was a period of socialist development with a gradual decentralization of society and a search for own, so-called third way of developing a self-managed socialist pedagogy, which followed its own path, diverging from the Soviet-type socialism, but still maintaining a distance towards civic democratic societies that it considered “bourgeois” and anti-people.

Despite gradual democratization of social (as well as pedagogic) circumstances, during the entire period of socialist pedagogy (from the Second World War to the Croatian War of Independence

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<sup>52</sup> The post-war socialist totalitarian society caused an even sharper interruption in pedagogy than the previous Nazi-fascist totalitarianism imposed after the second stage. Socialist pedagogy severed its ties with its own heritage, as well as with the German cultural circle on which Croatian pedagogy had been focused until the Second World War. In contrast, during the so-called Independent State of Croatia, that quisling entity existing in Croatia during the war allowed the usage of certain segments of pedagogical heritage (not only of working school, but also of cultural pedagogy) and was informed by some aspects of German pedagogy (such as pan-pedagogism of Ernst Krieck, social pedagogy of Paul Natorp etc.). For that reason, a significantly more destructive state totalitarianism sponsored by Nazi Germany during the war, in a system that had caused incomparably more human suffering and material damage, paradoxically allowed more freedom for the development of pedagogy and education than the post-war socialist era.

in the 1990s), there was no visible relationship between the pedagogy in Croatia and the German cultural circle, or indeed the pedagogical heritage of the Western block. During this period, pedagogy relied on the value system established upon politically proclaimed goal of education in the service of socially conditioned pedagogy, which was based on collectivism in education, socialist patriotism and the development of a new socialist man in accordance with the prescribed social values.

Under these circumstances, the post-war development of pedagogy in Croatia was determined by a non-pedagogical social context. Pedagogy had to align its internal structure with ideologically predetermined requirements of the state. It became a servant to the regime. Fundamental, essential questions of pedagogy and education were defined by the leading ideological and political body – the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (1920-1952), later named the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (1952-1990).

## **A Return to Pluralist Pedagogy in Croatia**

Free development of pedagogy in the democratic Republic of Croatia began in the 1990s, after the country gained independence and the process of de-ideologization started. Since that time, over the last three decades, pedagogy in Croatia has been opening towards international pedagogical trends. However, what predominates is an eclectic reception of various pedagogic research from abroad, without a clear stance towards its theoretical-methodological grounds. On the other hand, pedagogical research in Croatia is focused on studying educational methods.

Consequences of such an approach can already be felt in the tumult of unclear cross-influences of various theoretical and practical starting points, with inconsistent interlacing of the dominant empirical pedagogy with different, often unclearly articulated constructivist approaches, with influences from normativism, as well as elements of a paradigmatic approach, hermeneutics, postmodernism and other perspectives. Such an eclectic selection of various international pedagogical research, without critical questioning of its theoretical-methodological grounds and without exploring the meaning and purposefulness of pedagogy and education, has resulted in a large amount of ambiguity.

During the period of socialist pedagogy in Croatia, which lasted for almost half a century and in which the strategic guidelines for the development of the whole society were defined by the said political party officially proclaimed as the avant-garde of the revolutionary society, the basic questions of pedagogy and education were outside of the scope of scholarly research. The democratization and de-ideologization of the society created large expectations from pedagogy. Unfortunately, pedagogy in Croatia is still focused on the questions of methods of education. For that reason, experts familiar with the existing pedagogical circumstances in Croatia agree with the prominent Croatian pedagogy scholar Antun Mijatović (1939-2005), who claimed, in a kind of pedagogical testament, that *Pedagogy in Croatia at the beginning of the 20th century had a better academic standing and was in a better state than at the beginning of the 21st century* (2001, p. 149). The relationship to pedagogical and educational research has not changed since.

Today, Croatia is faced with a number of new challenges – such as globalization and EU integration, migrations and multiculturalism, the implementation of lifelong learning primarily as a leverage of economic growth while ignoring the humanist foundations, the reduction of education to acquiring competencies for the world of labor instead of advocating integral education of responsible citizens in a challenging world (for more details, see Radeka, 2011; 2022) – which is why contemporary pedagogical research in Croatia should, more than ever, question the status of pedagogy under the new circumstances, explore the power and limits of education, re-open the problem of defining the goal of education, as well as other fundamental teleological questions in pedagogy and education.

In that context, after an unnatural, discontinuous development, pedagogy in Croatia should take a new approach, complementary taking into account two important aspects: a revalorization and a scholarly redefinition of its own heritage, whilst critically accepting relevant international pedagogical and educational research (for more details, see Radeka, 1998).

It is particularly important to re-conceptualize the achievements of cultural pedagogy in Croatia between the two world wars, as it can offer answers to a number of significant teleological questions that have been unjustly ignored. The time has come to pay due attention to the roots of pedagogical science in Croatia. Not only for a clearer past, but for a safer future.

## Recent Challenges for Pedagogy in Croatia

The key problem of the current development of pedagogy in Croatia is that it still has not found a direction and a way of development suitable for the listed challenges. It is focused on researching practical educational problems, primarily methods of education, and while trying to answer the question *how to educate*, it has completely ignored the question *what is education*. Pedagogy has thus seriously limited its own possibilities and its scope of influence. “If we compare current pedagogy with the pedagogy of its founder Johann Friedrich Herbart (1779-1841), we can identify certain key losses in the current period, such as the absence of pedagogical teleology, an incoherent structure of the pedagogical science, ignored role and importance of education in the development of moral character, moving away from the articulation of the teaching process and the educational nature of teaching etc.” (Radeka, 2011: 664). Therefore, critical interrogation of the status of pedagogy and the position of education in contemporary society should be a starting point of essential pedagogical changes in Croatia.

In terms of such a role and significance of pedagogy, Stjepan Pataki (1905-1953), one of the leading figures of cultural pedagogy in Croatia, agrees with the normative approach of Johann Friedrich Herbart when he says: “(...) Just as pedagogical discipline stems and begins from practice, so it should eventually come back to practice, to serve it, to guide it and organize it, in the scope and meaning, of course, in which the nature of the educational function requires and allows. To that purpose, it has appeared and it exists. Only in that way, pedagogical discipline will completely fulfil its task and will not stop half way” (Pataki, 1936: 8). These are the questions that pedagogy in Croatia today is not taking into account.

Indeed, there are very few authors who engage in a critical discussion about the existing crisis of pedagogy and education in Croatia. Apart from Antun Mijatović, among these few there is also Ante Vukasović (1929-2021), a Croatian pedagogue devoted to moral education, who addressed the issue critically, stating that “until the end of the Second World War, Croatian philosophical and pedagogical thinking was very prolific and inspirational. That is our positive philosophical-pedagogical tradition and value-based pedagogical heritage. (...) New generations of Croatian pedagogues should not forget and abandon our rich and valuable pedagogical heritage. We must return to it, study it and use it to enrich the pedagogic theory and the practical work of education” (Vukasović, 2010: 112). The key role of education is not in gaining knowledge, which can be achieved, as Vukasović points out, by any common criminal; instead, it is in human development or education as a more complex phenomenon. He continues: “Educational work is very complex, the process of educating is layered, multifaceted, comprehensive. Its object is man, his growth, development, formation of cultured personality and its lifelong existence. Human education is related to a totality of culture and civilization, it encompasses all areas of science, art, morality and spirituality in general. It gives necessary knowledge and practical skills and habits to all human beings, developing their physical and intellectual powers and abilities, and builds positive characteristics of a cultured personality.” (2010: 100). In this context, he concludes, teleology is of utmost importance: “In education, pedagogical teleology contemporizes the question of meaning, educational

ideal, educational purpose and principal tasks of education. These are primary questions on which the entire educational effort depends. Without clear answers to these questions, education would have no direction, no signpost, it would be disorganized, practice-based, blind and powerless. Pedagogical teleology defines it, lights its way, shows its importance, gives it value-based meaning. It is part of the education theory that deals with determining the meaning and main purpose of educating, in short – it is a theory of educational purpose.” (Vukasović, 2010: 105). Along these lines, Vladimir Filipović (1906-1984), an esteemed Croatian philosopher close to cultural pedagogues, points out that the educational ideal provides the basis, direction and purpose to all pedagogical work: “First, I need to know where I want to go in order to find the quickest and shorter routes. First, I need to know ‘what I want’ in order to choose the best ‘how I want it’” (1934: 1).

Unfortunately, all three authors (Antun Mijatović and Ante Vukasović as pedagogues and Vladimir Filipović as a philosopher) belong to older generations and are no longer with us. Today, there are no more discussions about key issues of pedagogy and education in Croatia. Even though there are five programmes of study, at undergraduate and graduate levels, four of which offer postgraduate doctoral studies, employing a substantial number of academics professionally researching pedagogy and education, the basic teleological questions have been completely ignored in Croatia.

This problem affects not only the quality of the work performed by the existing 1,200 pedagogues – who work in professional development teams in 1,300 elementary and secondary schools and student homes that aim to improve the education of 450,000 pupils – it affects the education of teachers in elementary and secondary schools, who acquire their pedagogical competencies in such context. Vukasović is, therefore, right when he says: “Today, pedagogy is a diverse discipline. It encompasses many pedagogical branches or fields. However, in spite of the richness of disciplines and the diversity of systems, pedagogical teleology and axiology are utterly forgotten; they are not studied nor taught in teaching and pedagogy related university programmes. This also indicates the need to return to our value-based pedagogical heritage. (...) Disregard of the educational function is closely followed by disregarding the training of teacher-educators and pedagogues for performing specific educational tasks. They should all be thoroughly familiar with the purpose of education, and pedagogical teleology is not a part of their pedagogical training” (2010: 113).

## Conclusion

If pedagogy decreases its influence on the methods of education, it becomes removed from the essence of its discipline and the fundamental purpose of its study. There is no true pedagogy without a continual search for answers to current issues that people encounter in contemporary society, just like there is no true education without an integral, informed and collaborative action of educators and students that provides answers to contemporary challenges. An informed and critical approach to practice is a condition of success in that respect. In that context, without returning to fundamental teleological questions and without a holistic assessment of pedagogy and education, there is no way out for Croatia from the blind alley in which it now resides.

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## **SOCIAL DISTANCE OF THE PARENTS OF STUDENTS WITH TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION<sup>53</sup>**

**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to examine the willingness of the parents of students with typical development to accept a certain type of social relations with peers with disabilities. A modified Bogardus social distance scale was used for research purposes. The sample consisted of families of students with typical development who attend inclusive primary schools on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. From the total of 398 students in the sample, 136 (34.2%) attend the class with children with intellectual disabilities, 57 (14.3%) children with autism, 51 (12.8%) children with behavioral disorders, 38 (9.5%) children with motor disorders, 33 (8.3%) children with learning disabilities, 31 (7.8%) children with developmental dysphasia, and 52 (13.1%) children

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with sensory impairments. In terms of the employment and education, 291 parents (73.1%) are in permanent employment, 171 parents (43%) have completed high school, while 29 parents (7.3%) have a master's or doctorate degrees. The results of the study showed that the parents of students with typical development generally do not reject the social contacts of their children with peers with disabilities, which is shown by the total low social distance, but the social distance increased in the areas of emotional and physical closeness, i.e. in the areas which are ranked as the highest level of closeness. The highest social distance exists towards peers with autism, while the lowest social distance exists towards peers with sensory impairments.

**Keywords:** Social distance, Students with disabilities, Bogardus scale, Degree of closeness

## Introduction

Of the many factors that lead to rejection and lack of acceptance of persons with disabilities, the prejudices and negative attitudes of persons without disabilities are particularly distinguished (Kovačević, & Radovanović, 2020). Persons without disabilities often perceive persons with disabilities in a stereotypical way; consider them inferior, less intelligent and consider that they prefer a friendship with other persons with disabilities (Henderson, & Bryan, 1997). In terms of the emotional aspects of prejudices, the feelings of pity or admiration of persons with disabilities are common (Norden, 1994; Shapiro, 1999) and discomfort during contacts (Leutar, & Štambuk, 2006). If a person refuses any, or even the most remote, contact with a member of some group, it shows that the prejudices against that group are very pronounced. By rejecting the closest forms of contacts only, prejudices are less pronounced, but can still be very damaging to the victim of prejudice, and even to the person performing such behavior (Maričić, Kamenov, & Horvat, 2012). Prejudices are taught in the same way that other attitudes and beliefs are taught and acquired in the life. They are most commonly acquired in the childhood, by learning according to the model of the parents, the teacher and the social groups in which the child grows up. Childhood and early childhood play a significant role in creating a child's value system. Therefore, the influence of parental behavior and messages is especially important for gaining early experiences in the field of emotions, behavior and creating relationships with the others. If the parents clearly express their prejudices, they will become a social norm that children are expected to accept. Thus, the parents are an important link in the educational process, but also a model of shaping the attitudes, principles and character of their own children (Tomić, & Nikolić, 2021). Unlike the attitudes that can change when we supplement knowledge with new facts that are contrary to the previously acquired belief, prejudices are difficult to change, because they are very stubborn. According to many authors, prejudices are the basis of discrimination and negative social distance (Fishbein, 2002; Milosavljević, 2005; Nelson, 2003) especially towards children with disabilities and persons with disabilities.

Social distance is operationalized as a willingness of respondents of the general population to engage in direct, immediate, reciprocal social interactions with persons of another group and to achieve a degree of closeness through these interactions (Stanimirović, 1986; Stanimirović, Veselinović, & Dimoski, 2018). It is assumed that if one accepts a social relationship with members of some group at a certain social distance, he or she accepts other relationships over a greater distance, while not accepting a relationship means rejecting and avoiding those that are even closer (Stanimirović, Veselinović, & Dimoski 2018). Social distance is one-dimensional construct with a positive and negative pole. The greater the social distance, the more it influences community behavior and communication with a particular group (Vidanović, 2006), which is why many researches viewed this construct as a conative component of the attitude (Stanimirović, 1986).

The term *social distance* was first used by American sociologist Park (Park, 1902, according to Havelka, Kuzmanović, & Popadić, 2004) and meant various degrees of understanding and intimacy in personal and broader social relationships that are more appropriate to measure than



prejudice itself (Park, 1924). Emory Bogardus began studying national and race relations in America in the 1920s. As a theoretical framework, he accepted the notion of social distance, not social attitudes, and at Park's suggestion constructed a scale for its measurement. He believed that social distance can be a result of stereotypes and prejudices (Bogardus, 1925). The term social distance which was defined by Bogardus as a degree of sympathy or understanding among individuals and groups, today is often used to describe the attitudes towards stigmatized groups (Oullette-Kuntz, Burge, Brown & Arsenault, 2010, according to Stanimirović et al., 2018).

### **Study Objectives**

Research on the willingness of general population to accept the presence of persons with disabilities in its environment shows that the possibility of acceptance is not excluded, but there is still resistance to emotional intimacy and coexistence (Milanović, 2010; Stanimirović, 1986; Stanimirović et al., 2018; Injac, 2003). However, research on the willingness of the parents of students with typical development to accept a certain type of social relations of their children with peers with disabilities has not been conducted both in our country and abroad. Research is mainly focused on examining the attitudes of the parents of children with typical development, as well as the parents of children with disabilities towards inclusive education, and therefore the aim of this study was to examine the willingness of the parents of students with typical development to accept a certain type of social relations of their children with the peers with disabilities.

## **Method**

### **The Sample**

The sample consisted of 398 parents of students with typical development who attend inclusive primary schools on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. In terms of the employment and education, 291 parents (73.1%) are in permanent employment, 198 parents have completed secondary school (49.7%), 171 parents (43%) have completed high school, while 29 parents (7.3%) have a master's or doctorate degrees. From the total of 398 students in the sample, 136 (34.2%) attend the class with children with intellectual disabilities, 57 (14.3%) children with autism, 51 (12.8%) children with behavioral disorders, 38 (9.5%) children with motor disorders, 33 (8.3%) children with learning disabilities, 31 (7.8%) children with developmental dysphasia, and 52 (13.1%) children with sensory impairments.

### **Methods, Tools and Techniques**

For research purposes an adapted Social distance scale was used according to the Bogardus model, taking care to retain the original features of the scale. The scale consisted of 6 claims which were the same for all respondents. The claims in the scale are ranked according to the decreasing degree of closeness with the claim 1. indicating the highest degree of closeness ("I do not want for my child to have a peer with developmental disabilities and disorders as a close friend."), then sitting together in a class, attending the same class, attending the same school, performing the extracurricular activities, until the last one, the sixth, which represented the most distant relationship ("I do not want my child to meet children who have some disability or developmental disorder downtown."). The answers offered were of a dichotomous type (yes/no). The internal consistency and reliability of the scale was at a satisfactory level, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.790. Prior to the implementation of the Scale, a pilot survey was conducted to verify the established levels of closeness.

The basic advantage of the Social distance scale is its simple application, while its diagnostic value presents the quality of relationships between different social groups. If low, social distance indicates acceptance of a group, while high social distance indicates non-acceptance and

discrimination of a particular group. The results of the social distance survey show the extent to which members of certain groups are present in the society, how much are they accepted and to what extent are they desirable or undesirable to other members of the society (Kovačević, & Radovanović, 2020).

### Data Processing

Statistical measures of descriptive statistics: frequencies and percentages were used to process the collected data.

## Results and Discussion

Results of parents' agreement with the claims on the Social distance scale, regardless of the type of disability are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Parents' agreement with the claims on the Social distance scale

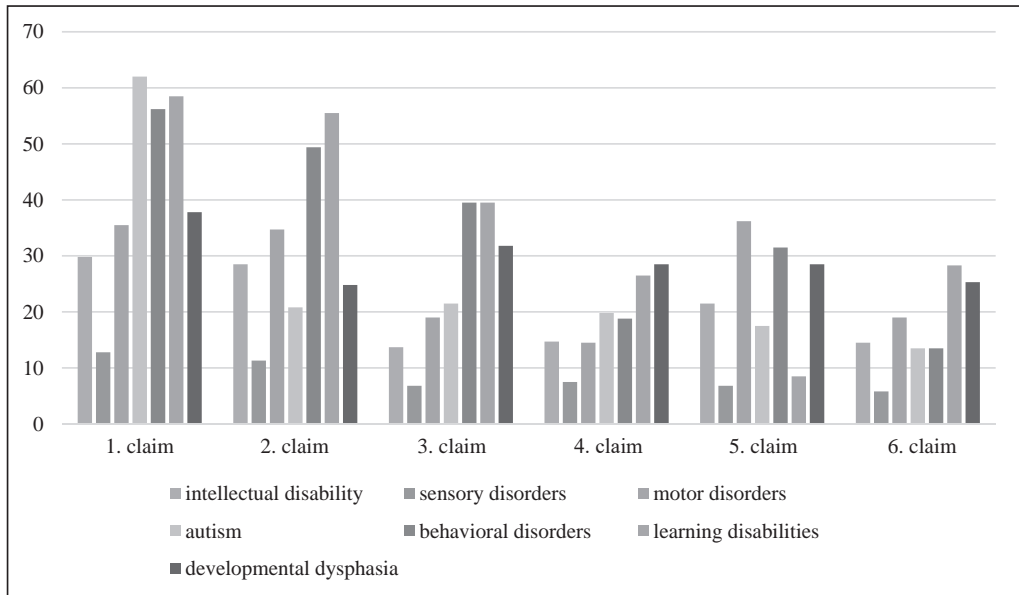
Claim	Agreeing to the Claim	
	f	%
I do not want for my child to have a peer with developmental disabilities and disorders as a close friend.	154	38.7
I do not want for my child sit together in a class with a peer who has some disability or developmental disorder.	125	31.4
I do not want students with disabilities and disorders in my child's class.	89	22.4
I do not want my child to go to school with children who have some disability or developmental disorder.	73	18.3
I would mind my child attending extracurricular activities with children who have some disability or developmental disorder.	84	21.1
I do not want my child to meet children who have some disability or developmental disorder downtown.	69	17.3

The results of the research showed that parents of students with typical development generally do not reject their children's social contacts with peers with developmental disabilities, but the answers depend on the offered level of closeness, so that the social distance increases in the areas of emotional and physical closeness, i.e. in the areas that are ranked as the highest degree of closeness. In relation to individual statements, the results show that the greatest social distance is taken by parents in terms of the friendship with a peer with developmental disabilities in the class. Slightly more than a third of the parents (38.7%) agreed with the claim *I do not want for my child to have a peer with developmental disabilities and disorders as a close friend*, while 31.4% agreed with the claim *I do not want for my child sit together in a class with a peer who has some disability or developmental disorder*. The smallest social distance was achieved on the claim *I do not want my child to meet children who have some disability or developmental disorder downtown* (17.3%). Thus, rejection appears when it comes to relationships that are ranked as the highest level of closeness, which is in line with the findings of research of Leutar (2003) and Maričić et al. (2012).

Results of the research on social distance of parents regarding the type of disability are displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Parents' agreement with the claims regarding the type of disability



Regarding to the type of disability, in terms of the relationships that express the highest degree of closeness, the parents of children with typical development showed the greatest social distance towards the peers with autism on the claim *I do not want for my child to have a peer with developmental disabilities and disorders as a close friend* (29.8%). However, on the claims that are also ranked as a high level of closeness *I do not want for my child sit together in a class with a peer who has some disability or developmental disorder* and *I do not want students with disabilities and disorders in my child's class*, the greatest social distance is showed towards students with learning disabilities (55.5%/39.5%) and behavioral disorders (49.4%/39.5%). According to the parents' responses, there is a decrease in social distance with decreasing levels of closeness, so the smallest social distance was recorded at the meeting of peers in school and downtown. In terms of the extracurricular activities, the lowest social distance was taken towards the students with sensory disorders (>10%), while the parents took the greatest social distance towards students with motor disorders and behavioral disorders. In general, the parents expressed the lowest level of social distance in all claims towards students with sensory disorders.

## Conclusion

The results of this research show that despite inclusive education that has been systematically implemented in the Republic of Serbia for a little over a decade, the parents of children with typical development maintain a social distance towards children with developmental disabilities and disorders. The obtained results can be interpreted as insufficient readiness of parents of children with typical development for inclusive education (Dimoski & Nikolić, 2015). Although significant progress has been made in the education of children with special needs in Republic of Serbia over the past years (the implementation process of inclusive education began with the adoption of the new Law on Education in 2009), the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education still requires permanent changes in the field of creating the necessary conditions for quality implementation of legal regulations, economic and social support, as well as the development

of positive attitudes and beliefs towards children with disabilities. The practice shows that there are still significant barriers in the form of prejudices and that a certain degree of “tolerance” to systemic discrimination complicates and slows down the process of implementing inclusion. The results of this study show that it is necessary to work on: more comprehensive information about the potential of children with disabilities, education of parents through various school programs for parents, organization of joint activities of parents of children with disabilities and children with typical development within school events or other manifestations in school.

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## **THE COMPETENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

**Abstract:** Didactic education and/or in-service training of teachers in higher education institutions based on the (self)assessment of their own competencies and educational needs are or should be the basis for their professional development. According to such assumption, founded on the current didactic approaches, and rooted in the constructive alignment and andragogical participatory planning, we researched the opinion of teachers and associates of higher vocational studies to find out how they assess their pedagogical-didactic ability, to address on that basis induced dilemmas, and if possible, to offer certain solutions for teachers' professional development in the domains of pedagogy and didactic. The research was conducted on a proper sample of teachers and associates employed in vocational high schools in Novi Sad and Belgrade (N=124). Data were collected by an instrument that combined survey-type questions and three-level descriptive assessment scales. Significant differences in the assessment of individual competencies of teachers and associates according to the length of teacher's service, working position and according to the owned pedagogical and didactic education were found, while most of the teachers and associates (88.7%) stated that they do not have special pedagogical and didactic education. Based on these results, we concluded that professional development of teachers and associates in vocational education should be participatory and competency-based planned, implemented, and evaluated, while plans and programs for their professional development should be based on specific educational needs and competencies assessment, gained differences, and grounded on constructive alignment with implementation and evaluation.

**Keywords:** Vocational education, Professional development, Pedagogical-didactical competences, Constructive alignment, Andragogical participatory planning

### **Introduction**

The research of didactical competencies and educational needs of teachers and associates employed in vocational high schools was the part of project Professional Development of Vocational Education Teachers with European Practices (Pro-VET). It was Erasmus+ Project Capacity Building in Higher Education. The main aim of this project was to provide a systematic approach to continuous professional development on European VET policy and practice for VET teachers (in-service trainers, instructors, mentors etc.) and HE teachers engaged in VET teacher training and work-based settings for Serbia and Russia by e-learning tools. Pro-VET provided opportunities for HE/VET teachers for pedagogical skill development and increased work-life relevance and collaboration with proven European approaches and methodologies in VET. Pro-VET therefore addressed the challenges of the educational quality, relevance, delivery, and management of the VET systems following VET pointers for policy development. The project lasted from 2018 to 2022 (the final conference will take place in October 2022, at University of Belgrade, Teacher Education Faculty). More about project and its results one can find on official project web page: <http://www.provet.online/>.

The starting point in the research was the understanding that didactic education and/or in-service training of teachers in higher education institutions based on (self)assessment of their own competencies and educational needs is or should be the basis for their professional development. Anticipation in one's own professional development implies the alignment of planned goals and outcomes with the didactic approach (choice of teaching content and activities), as well as with evaluation, which should include an assessment of the achievement of goals, an assessment of the quality of teaching and learning resources, and an assessment of the related choices. In the base of the contemporary didactic approach (so-called constructive or curricular alignment) as well as the in the base of andragogical model of participatory planning (Knowles, 1980) is described anticipation.

The essence of constructive alignment lies in solving the “old new” didactic issue about the interdependence of teaching and learning goals, content, and activities (Radović, 2021). Hodolidu (2013) points out that this didactic trend has been present since the second half of the previous century, when the first international tests appeared on the educational scene and when “educational experts” around the world understood that the “curriculum on paper” (i.e. the goals as formulated) was not the same as the “implemented curriculum” (i.e. the curriculum developed with students). Such recognition implies even greater concern about necessity for aligning assessment with teaching and learning resources. The expression “educational opportunity” directly pointed to this aspect of curricular alignment. In order to obtain data on “educational opportunities”, teachers were asked to review each task in the test and to state whether they taught the students the content that the task examines, i.e. whether students had the opportunity to learn the examined content. Predictably, students with the broader educational opportunities (according to teachers' assessments) achieved better results on the international tests, especially in the field of mathematics and science (Hodolidu, 2013). Regardless of the used terminology (constructive alignment or curricular alignment), we cannot ask students for what we have not provided to them.

In the context of research the didactic competences and educational needs of teachers and associates of higher vocational studies, constructive alignment opens up the broader question of the alignment of goals with the educational needs of students, and thus with the offered contents and activities, so that the planning and programming of professional development would not lead to a disparity between “curriculum on paper”, “realized curriculum” and “realized outcomes”.

The andragogical model of participatory planning implies that the professional development programs should be based on previously determined needs for learning and education, through collaborative inquiry and decision-making (Auerbach, 1992, Bond & Blevins, 2020). In this model, that emphasizes participation in deciding on the choice of content and pace of learning, synchronized/asynchronized access to learning content, and especially the teacher's self-directedness as an adult student (Ovesni & Radović, 2021; Radović et al., 2020), analysis of needs for learning and education for planned activities is based on essential human experience and its constant change and requires a long-term abstraction of complex reality for analytical and research purposes (Knowles et al., 2015).

## Method

As we already pointed out, didactic education and/or in-service training of teachers in higher education institutions based on (self)assessment of their own competencies and educational needs is or should be the basis for their professional development. According to such assumption, founded on the current didactic approaches, and rooted in the constructive alignment and andragogical participatory planning, we opted to research the opinion of teachers and associates of higher vocational studies to find out how they assess their pedagogical-didactic ability, to address on that basis induced dilemmas, and if possible, to offer certain solutions for teachers' professional development in the domains of pedagogy and didactic. Hence, the main purpose of our

research was to explore the competence-based development of teachers in vocational education. Data were collected using instrument consisted of survey-type questions and three-level descriptive assessment scales. For data processing, in addition to frequencies and percentages, the  $\chi^2$  test and Kramer's V correlation coefficient were used. The research was conducted on a proper sample of teachers and associates employed in vocational high schools in Novi Sad and Belgrade (N=124). Most of the teachers and associates in sample have over 20 years of service (42.7%), 37.1% of them work from 10 to 20 years and 20.2% of them have less than 10 years of job tenure. They have a different working position: professors of vocational studies (50.8%), lecturers (21.8%), assistants (14.5%), trainers (4.0%), senior lecturers (3.2%), foreign language teachers (2.4%), teaching associates (2.4%) and demonstrator (0.8%).

## Results and Discussion

Considering the structure of the sample according to the length of job tenure and working positions, especially the fact that the majority of professors and associates have work experience of over 10 years and that they are mostly professors of vocational studies and lecturers, the first important result that we got was the respondent's statement about the lack of didactic competences. In particular, 88.7% of respondents declared that they do not have special pedagogical and didactical education. A few respondents received didactical competencies within various professional development programs (3.2%) or online courses (8.1%). Therefore, the most respondents are teaching without systematically obtained pedagogical and didactic education within the initial professional education or programs for professional development.

The assessment of didactic competencies (45 items, Table 1) varies from "possess knowledge about ways how to support students from vulnerable social groups" (M=2.33; SD=0.729), "possess knowledge about the characteristics of cognitive development of young people" (M=2.42; SD=0.651), "possess knowledge and abilities to diagnose individual abilities, potentials and talents." (M=2.57; SD=0.614) to "possess pedagogical skills of group management" (M=2.94; SD=0.278), "possess knowledge how to act in accordance with the principles of multiculturalism and non-discrimination" (M=2.95; SD=0.215), and "possess skills and knowledge for planning own professional development based on the results of self-evaluation and external work evaluation" (M=2.96; SD=0.198). A more detailed overview of the assessment of personal didactic competences is in the Table 1. These are very moderate assessments aligned with the statement of the most of respondents about the lack of their pedagogical and didactic competences.

**Table 1**

The assessment of VET teacher's didactic competencies

Items	M	SD
Planning professional development based on the results of self-evaluation and external evaluation of your work.	2.96	0.198
Acting in line with the principles of multiculturalism and non-discrimination.	2.95	0.215
Developing pedagogical skills for managing groups (students).	2.94	0.278
Active and constructive participation in the work of a teacher's institution.	2.93	0.290
Taking into consideration the other colleagues' initiatives for improving the institution's work.	2.93	0.290
Possessing the knowledge of the relevant content areas (academic courses) and the curriculum for the course you are teaching, as well as their correlation with other academic courses (content integration).	2.92	0.273

Active participation in teamwork and your institution's activities.	2.92	0.302
Using an adequate and available educational technology.	2.91	0.313
Improving teachers' own teaching by using the knowledge acquired through professional development.	2.91	0.313
Planning teaching and making the course content available to students (intriguing, understandable, interesting).	2.90	0.323
Giving clear instructions to students that indicate a further transfer of knowledge.	2.90	0.323
Cooperation that encourages the development of your own social competencies.	2.89	0.365
Cooperation with other colleagues, encouraging an exchange of opinions, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust in a joint work in the interest of students.	2.88	0.351
Continual professional development in the scientific field(s) that your academic course belongs to.	2.88	0.351
Acting in line with ethical and professional codeces.	2.88	0.374
Planning different forms of monitoring and evaluation of students' work and achievement.	2.86	0.386
Encouraging students' critical, analytical, and divergent thinking.	2.85	0.376
Monitoring and evaluation of student achievement by implementing an objective, public, continual, and stimulating assessment, as well as by providing a clear feedback to students regarding their work.	2.85	0.376
Continual improvement of teachers' own pedagogical practice based on the analysis of student achievement.	2.85	0.376
Active work on improving your relationship with students.	2.85	0.376
Planning various activities for encouraging students' creativity and initiatives.	2.84	0.391
Preparing the academic course syllabus in line with the standards of achievement and the course curriculum, while taking into account students' individual differences, and making sure that the syllabus is well-balanced in terms of the time allotted for covering the specific course content.	2.82	0.424
Continual monitoring and evaluation of student achievement by using different types of evaluation in line with the specificities of the core academic courses.	2.82	0.424
Implementing different forms of classroom interaction and activities in line with students' knowledge and experience, their abilities and needs, set goals, outcomes, content, and characteristics of the teaching and learning context.	2.80	0.423
Realization of functional and educational goals in line with the general principles, goals, and outcomes in higher education, as well as the course curricula, while adapting them to meet the students' needs and abilities.	2.79	0.428
Monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of relevant instruments in monitoring and analyzing students' work relative to their progress.	2.79	0.428



Being informed about the innovations in university-level teaching and knowing how to implement them.	2.78	0.434
Planning and undertaking measures to support students based on the analysis of their achievement.	2.78	0.434
Understanding the importance of cooperation with other partners in educational work, primarily with other educators and partners from the local community.	2.77	0.462
Knowledge of one foreign language.	2.77	0.439
Planning and harmonizing one's own work with students' psychological and physical developmental characteristics, acknowledging students' developing personality.	2.76	0.449
Monitoring and evaluating student achievement in line with their individual abilities by using the prescribed assessment criteria.	2.75	0.471
Continual monitoring and evaluation of student achievement by using evaluation procedures that are in the function of further learning.	2.75	0.471
Monitoring and analyzing different aspects of learning and achievement by using different evaluation techniques.	2.74	0.457
Possessing didactical-methodological knowledge necessary for the implementation of the core academic course (didactical models, teaching methods, forms of classroom interaction).	2.73	0.462
Knowing about different types of motivation and the ways for motivating students.	2.72	0.487
Planning different forms of motivating cooperation with others.	2.72	0.470
Possessing the knowledge of didactical principles, educational goals and outcomes, as well as the general and specific student achievement standards and their correlation.	2.68	0.469
Using different strategies for monitoring the development of different aspects of students' personality (cooperation with other students, conflict resolution, responding to failure, etc.)	2.68	0.519
Planning a systematic cooperation with other partners in education based on the analysis of the potential partner network and available resources.	2.65	0.497
Identifying, mobilizing and encouraging the development of the capacities of all students, along with the acknowledgement of their individuality.	2.64	0.575
Possessing the knowledge of the nature of learning, different learning styles, and learning strategies.	2.63	0.533
Possessing the knowledge of and the skills for identifying individual abilities, potential, and talents.	2.57	0.614
Possessing the knowledge of the characteristics of the cognitive development of the young people (from age 18 to age 24).	2.42	0.651
Possessing the knowledge of the ways of providing support to students from vulnerable social groups.	2.33	0.729

In the assessment of individual didactic competencies, significant statistical differences between respondents with different years of service and working positions, as well as in assessment of personal pedagogical and didactic education were found.

The results (Table 2) indicate that there is a stochastic connection between the length of service and the need of VET teachers to obtain more detailed knowledge:

- for the course preparation, considering the standards of achievement, study plan and program and individual differences of students, considering time and content harmonization,
- for the teaching in accordance with the principles of multiculturalism and non-discrimination,
- for the monitoring and assessment of different aspects of learning and progress, using different evaluation techniques,
- for the participatory educational planning and programming, aimed to make the content accessible (receptive, understandable, interesting) to students,
- for the relevant areas (study subjects) and knowledge of the study plan and program of the courses they realize, as well as correlation of these courses with other areas or subjects (content integration), and
- for the realization of functional, educational and upbringing goals in accordance with the general principles, goals, and outcomes of higher education, with the study subject curriculum, and for their adaptation to the possibilities and needs of students.

**Table 2**

Statistically significant chi-square test results for the length of VET teacher’s service and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge

<b>Length of VET teacher's service and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Cramer's V</b>
course preparation, considering the standards of achievement, study plan and program and individual differences of students, considering time and content harmonization	14.188	4	p < 0.01	.007
teaching in accordance with the principles of multiculturalism and non-discrimination	13.739	4	p < 0.01	.008
monitoring and assessment of different aspects of learning and progress, using different evaluation techniques	13.033	4	p < 0.05	.011
participatory educational planning and programming, aimed to make the content accessible (receptive, understandable, interesting) to students	12.373	4	p < 0.05	.015
relevant areas (study subjects) and knowledge of the study plan and program of the courses they realize, as well as correlation of these courses with other areas or subjects (content integration)	12.107	4	p < 0.05	.017
realization of functional, educational and upbringing goals in accordance with the general principles, goals, and outcomes of higher education, with the study subject curriculum, and for their adaptation to the possibilities and needs of students	11.630	4	p < 0.05	.020

Also, as presented in Table 3, the results indicate that there is a stochastic connection between the working position and the need of teachers to obtain more detailed knowledge:

- for the course preparation, considering the standards of achievement, study plan and program and individual differences of students, considering time and content alignment,
- for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of student achievement using different methods of evaluation in accordance with the specificity of the study subject,
- for the continuous professional development in their teaching subjects or in the scientific field of their interest,
- for the active and constructive participation in the organizational performance,
- for the relevant areas (study subjects) and knowledge of the study plan and program of the courses they realize, as well as correlation of these courses with other areas or subjects (content integration), and
- for the active performance directed to improve their relationship with students.

**Table 3**

Statistically significant chi-square test results for VET teacher's working position and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge

VET teacher's working position and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge	$\chi^2$	df	Sig.	Cramer's V
course preparation, considering the standards of achievement, study plan and program and individual differences of students, considering time and content alignment	77.597	14	p < 0.01	.000
continuous monitoring and evaluation of student achievement using different methods of evaluation in accordance with the specificity of the study subject	65.048	14	p < 0.01	.000
continuous professional development in their teaching subjects or in the scientific field of their interest,	28.877	7	p < 0.01	.000
active and constructive participation in the organizational performance	26.101	14	p < 0.05	.025
relevant areas (study subjects) and knowledge of the study plan and program of the courses they realize, as well as correlation of these courses with other areas or subjects (content integration)	14.728	7	p < 0.05	.040
active performance directed to improve their relationship with students	24.097	14	p < 0.05	.045

The results, as presented in Table 4, indicate that there is a stochastic connection between the possessed didactical-methodical competences of VET teachers and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge, especially

- the need of teachers to obtain more detailed knowledge to recognize individual students' abilities, potentials, and talents, and
- the form of the preferred professional development activities (traditional, online, combined).

**Table 4**

Statistically significant chi-square test results for the obtained VET teachers didactical-methodical education and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge

<b>VET teachers possessed didactical-methodical competences and their needs to obtain more detailed knowledge</b>	$\chi^2$	df	Sig.	Cramer's V
the need of teachers to obtain more detailed knowledge to recognize individual students' abilities, potentials, and talents	10.782	4	p < 0.05	.029
the form of the preferred professional development activities (traditional, online, combined)	13.049	6	p < 0.05	.042

These are significant research results, which could be of interest to the authors and implementers of professional development programs regarding to the extent that set goals, planned, and implemented didactic activities cannot be uniform, same for the everyone, indifferent to real educational needs. Due to the purpose of this paper, we will not enter the debate of which group of respondents specifically lacks certain competencies for which statistically significant differences were recorded. However, we focused on acknowledge that certain stochastic connection exists, on necessity to reflect them as much as possible and on requirement to integrate them into professional development programs to address different educational needs through didactically various activities. Since the mission of the Pro-VET project was improving VET in Russia and Serbia through the professional development of teachers via knowledge-building and practice, reflecting the European VET experience, the above mentioned results were integrated into the online course *Interactive (teaching and learning) strategies in vocational education*, which included the selected contents, i.e. topics for which the respondents declared in the open questions, and that concern the teaching process from its planning to evaluation.

The research results of the opinion of professors and associates (VET teachers) about the possession of certain pedagogical and didactic competences, as well as the considerable differences that were found regarding to the length of VET teacher's service, to their working position, and to obtained VET teachers pedagogical and didactic education, helped us not only in the process of choosing the topics we cover in the online course, but also at the level of designed online course, as well as to create wide environment for the tasks and activities of the participants in which they will reflect on their own practice.

## **Conclusion**

Professional development of teachers and associates in vocational education should be participatory and competency-based planned, implemented and evaluated. Plans and programs for VET teachers professional development should be based on specific educational needs and competencies assessment, gained differences, and grounded on constructive alignment with implementation and evaluation. This conclusion, however, hides multiple challenges. Precisely, in the creation and implementation of the online course *Interactive (teaching and learning) strategies in vocational education* (that is one of the results of the Pro-VET project), fully based on the findings of research of didactic competences and educational needs of teachers and associates employed in vocational high schools, appeared challenges like: lack of motivation for online course, organizing online group discussions (majority teachers and associates in sample wanted blended learning), reminder for trainers – updating tasks and deadlines (24 hours working day), getting feedbacks about implementation of knowledge obtained at this course etc.

Despite these challenges, and also considering that this research is performed within the framework of a specific project and on an appropriate sample, that further researches are necessary and desirable, especially in the domain of the effectiveness of *Interactive (teaching and learning) strategies in vocational education* and other professional development programs, we believe that the competence-based development of teachers can be the basis for the development of a professional development programs that will be in content harmony with real educational needs, based on reflection on foreign experiences, but also on personal practice and on contemporary andragogic and didactic approaches that prioritize the active participation.

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## FROM NORMATIVE MORAL EDUCATION TO EDUCATION OF A PHILIATIC MORAL CHARACTER

**Abstract:** Aristotle's well-known theory of friendship (*philia*) distinguishes between two kinds of imperfect, false friendship (for pleasure and for profit) and true friendship, the goal of which is moral good. The issue of friendship completes the discussion on virtues in the Nicomachean Ethics and highlights the positive quality of interpersonal relationships as *areté*, that is, a disposition that can be purposefully pursued, i.e. intentionally formed. In addition to the vertical gradation of this quality with regard to its perfection, it also offers a horizontal differentiation of forms of social realization of friendship in the context of community (*favor*, *eunoia*) and wider society (*concord*, *politiké philia*). Political friendship is thus presented as a civic virtue, worthy of effort (cf. *EN VIII.10, Pol. III.5, IV.2*). Character education, with the focus on the development of this quality, is manifested not only as the subject of cultivating the individual personality for the purpose of a "happy life" of man, but also as a political requirement, reflecting the interest of the state. The paper points out the renaissance of Aristotelian aretology in the context of current debates on school education and shows an example of how education for "political friendship" is implemented in the structure of the school subject Ethical Education in Slovakia.

## Introduction: Ethics of Justice (Rules) versus Ethics of Friendship

The contribution addresses two basic questions, the second of which follows directly from the first one, and therefore the answer to the first question is directly reflected in the answer of the second one:

1. What is the main distinguishing criterion for assessing a person's level of moral quality?
2. What is the cardinal object of moral education that would lead to higher levels of moral development of the pupil?

In the environment of school moral education, as well as among theories of moral pedagogy, the deontological-cognitivist thesis has prevailed, which says:

1. The level of moral quality is measured by the fulfillment of the norm, set before man by the requirement of justice.
2. The cardinal object of moral education, which leads to higher levels of moral development of the pupil, is their ability to judge morally in relation to the rules (law).

The contribution points out the reductivity of this conception of morality, as well as this model of moral education; also, the (neo) Aristotelian conception of social friendship, which transcends the requirement of legal justice, will be introduced.

In his earlier work, *Philosophy of Moral Development* (1981), Lawrence Kohlberg established the philosophical foundations of moral development by analyzing ethical theory from Socrates, through Kant to Rawls, and others; he tried to determine own subject of moral education – he concluded that it was justice – and on the basis of this criterion he distinguished three levels and six stages in the moral-educational process (his second work being *Psychology of Moral Development* (1984)).

1. preconventional level
  - orientation of obedience (avoidance of punishment)
  - reward orientation
2. conventional level
  - orientation towards approval (being a “good” child)
  - orientation to authority and rules
3. postconventional level
  - orientation to the social contract
  - orientation to universal ethical principles (e.g. justice, dignity)

Kohlberg anchored his theory in normative ethics, which has its roots in Kant's deontological ethics (ethics of duty) and which results in normative pedagogy. He determines the criteria of behavior required of persons (children, pupils, adults) based on the stages of their development. The normative nature of morality (and moral pedagogy) makes it possible to clearly phase out the educational process and verify the achievement of the set educational goals. It gives the institution and the teacher an authoritative tool for measuring, controlling and also the execution of power. On the other hand, normative ethics and normative pedagogy bypasses the education itself (it focuses mainly on ethical learning), renounces the ambition to form the moral identity of individuals, as well as to co-experience and influence the contents of moral practices.

Kohlberg established justice (and the resulting normativity) as own subject of moral education. Justice is the primary requirement of every coexistence, it is a universal precondition for the functioning of every society. However, the requirement of justice appears to be only one of the possible moral principles, it does not apply as an exclusive measure of morality (cf. Gilligan, 2001, others).

In our conception, we anchor the theory of moral education especially in the **ethics of virtue**, which has its roots in classical Hellenic-biblical anthropology and results in relational education

and character education. We start from the premise that it is not enough if the social dimension of behavior is ensured by law enforcement, although adherence to a cultural norm is one of the important contents of moral education. We do not understand prosociality as subordination to society, but as an internally acquired habitus, motivated by the moral imperative of benevolence.

Our concept of moral education presupposes prosociality (and the resulting educational relationality) as its own object. Prosociality can be summed up, in terms of content, by concepts such as benevolence, altruism, generosity, love for others, responsibility for others, solidarity, etc. It does not deny justice, but fulfils it and transcends it with its claim (cf. the following text). After all, civilized humanity shaped by the ideal of “Love your neighbor as yourself” also implies the rule “Give everyone his due”.

## Friendship is More

Why do we think that prosociality is a more appropriate object of moral education than justice? Of course, we are not talking here about justice as a condition of equal distribution, but as a man of inherent virtue.

Plato’s **Socrates** says in the work *Republic* (332c): “(Simonides) made a riddle, after the fashion of poets, when he said what the just is. For it looks as if he thought that it is just to give to everyone what is fitting, and to this he gave the name ‘what is owed’. “According to Socrates, such justice is useless (it is more effective to ignore justice) and crafty (it does good only to friends, it harms the enemy). “If someone asserts that it’s just to give what is owed to each man—and he understands by this that harm is owed to enemies by the just man and help to friends—the man who said it was not wise. For he wasn’t telling the truth. For it has become apparent to us that it is never just to harm anyone.” (335e).

According to Plato, the virtue of justice goes beyond the logic of retribution, with regard to building a “good community”: “So we should neither return an injustice, nor do harm to any man, regardless of what we suffer at his hands.” (*Crito* 49c). In the *Laws* (VI, 757a-b) he questions the uncritical acceptance of equality as the sole criterion of justice and creates space for invoking the ontological value of man (dignity) as a source of law: “There is an old and true saying that “equality produces amity,” which is right well and fitly spoken; but what the equality is which is capable of doing this is a very troublesome question, since it is very far from being clear. For there are two kinds of equality (...) The one of these any State or lawgiver is competent to apply in the assignment of honors,—namely, the equality determined by measure, weight and number (...); but the truest and best form of equality is not an easy thing for everyone to discern. It is the judgment of Zeus.” Plato, like Aristotle later, points out that above justice δίκη (*diké*) rises φιλία (*philia*), favor, friendship.

Aristotle devotes the entire 5<sup>th</sup> book to justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* and constantly returns to it in *Politics* (V, 1, 1301b, V, 2, 1302b, V, 10, 1310b, VI, 1, 1317b). Fundamental is his distinction between general virtue (“virtue itself” for the benefit of others) and part of virtue – “partial justice”, which is further divided into distributive (right as the center of merit – proportion against injustice) and commutative (with respect to profit and loss: *do ut des*). The main criterion of legal justice is equality and its goal is a good citizen. Aristotle suggests that partial justice is confused in speech with general justice (“it bears identical name”), as both have their principal jurisdiction over the other, but only one (legal one) “pertains to honor, money, or preservation – or to some one thing if we were able to encompass all these by a single name – and arises on account of the pleasure associated with gain. The other [one] pertains to all the things with which a serious person is concerned.” (*EN* 1130b). Justice as a holistic virtue pursues the main criterion of one’s own human value, “dignity” (ἀξία, *axia*), and its goal is a good person. And “it is not the same thing in every case to be a good man and to be a good citizen” (*EN* 1130b).

The Roman but also the scholastic tradition interpreted justice in the sense of a formal definition as a norm, that is, as a relation to the law, in front of which we are all equal. It is a habit to give everyone what belongs to them, in terms of *aequitas*, equality with one another. *Habitus* is understood here as a synthetic and, above all, architectural ratio of equality.

The current distributive-utilitarian (market) model of interpersonal relationship even rejects as an indecent simple care of one for the good of the other. Experience with the consumer world encourages us to seek another form of justice, one that transcends the formal condition of equality and provides an opportunity to appreciate the dignity of life.

## Friendship as the Height of Virtue

In pedagogical practice, but also in theoretical works, there is a demand for the return of the issue of virtues to serious discourse. In the context of justice, this means re-establishing the theme of friendship – *φιλία*, *filia* as a virtue that can form a “good relationship” between human beings. A “good relationship” cannot be based solely on the “distribution” of goods and obligations.

A friend is not a general agent of rights. He is a concrete subject whose dignity and value are not disturbed by the compassion or mercy of another. Friendship is a synthetic disposition that applies to the person of the other, not to his need. This disposition in relation to the other expresses appreciation and dedication, regardless of any state of emergency. “If an emergency arises, the friendship will quietly express a message of this kind: I appreciate and consider it a great sign of your trust that you allow me to help you.” (Angelini, 1994, s. 239-240). In any case, the other (friend) must never be reduced to their need (in the sense of the equation *do ut des*).

Friendship is such a radical disposition of life that it applies to all forms of personal relationships. The possibility of appreciating every other good depends on it. Aristotle gives justice as a “perfect virtue” a dimension of friendship: “justice, alone of the virtues is held to be another’s good, because it relates to another. For it does what is advantageous to another (...). Best is he who makes use of virtue not in relation to himself but in relation to another. For this is a difficult task.” (EN V, 3, 1130a). According to Aristotle, friendship, favor, seems to be the dimension of virtue that gives justice the opportunity to overcome the criterion of equality. “For friendship is a certain virtue or is accompanied by virtue; and, further, it is most necessary with a view to life” (1155a). Aristotle, as it is well known, sees an exceptional virtue in friendship, which he devotes the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to him, true friendship unites man with man on the basis of a free and dignified reason, and not according to the criterion of pleasure or gain (1157a18-21). False friendships “involve equality. For the same things come from both people involved, and they wish for the same things for each other, or they exchange one thing for another—for example, pleasure in exchange for a benefit.” (1158b). He sees equality as a natural condition for coexistence (in terms of particular justice), but emphasizes its inadequacy in striving for perfect virtue. “But perfect [gr. *teleia*] friendship is the friendship of those who are good and alike in point of virtue. For such people wish in similar fashion for the good things for each other insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves.” (1156b). Friendship “is not at all similar to the case of lenders: lenders feel no friendly affection toward their debtors but only wish that they be preserved so they may recover the debt. Those who have done others some good, on the other hand, love and are fond of those who are the recipients of it, even if these recipients are not useful to them and might not be such later” (1167b). It follows from these and other passages (1168-1170) that Aristotle considers legal justice to be the necessary minimum of peaceful coexistence, but not the goal of the effort with which we should be satisfied. “Lawgivers are more serious about [friendship] than about justice. For like-mindedness [gr. *homonoia* = concord] seems to resemble friendship, and lawgivers aim at this especially (...). When people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they do need friendship in



addition” (1155a). Aristotle even suggests empathy as a way of realizing a friendly relationship: “Is a friend who shares our joy in good fortune and our sorrow in affliction, for our own sake and not for any other reason” (Rhetoric II, 4, 1381a).

### True Friendship and False Friendships (Vertical Division)

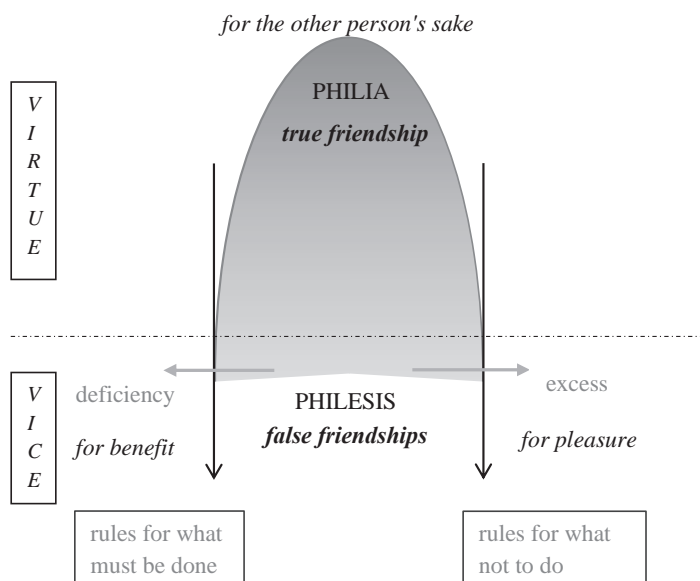
It is no coincidence that the theme of friendship is the culmination of the whole work in the Nicomachean Ethics, where the author devotes the whole eighth and ninth book to it and it follows only after introduction of the previous virtues and moral dispositions (especially justice, reason virtues and moderation). According to Aristotle, friendship is the dimension of virtue that transcends justice and fills it with vertical content. Friendship (gr. φιλία, philía) is a virtue that can form a “good relationship” between human beings (EN 1155a). A “good relationship” cannot be based solely on the “distribution” of goods and duties. A well-fulfilled and good-looking relationship is a virtuous relationship that unites man to man for a free and dignified reason, and not according to the criterion of pleasure or gain (cfr. EN 1157a18 – 21). The benefits and pleasures are good that we can get from a friendly relationship, but if the relationship is motivated by these “random goodies”, it is not a real friendship, but an exchange, a business.

Perfect friendship as a virtue lies in the middle between imperfect forms of love, philēsis (superficial, fleeting love), specifically between friendship for benefit, which is the lack of love, and friendship for pleasure, which is its excess.

The crucial key to define a good relationship is the phrase: “But those who wish for the good things for their friends, for their friends’ sake, are friends most of all” (EN 1156b); friend is someone “who wishes for and does things that are (or appear to be) good, for the other person’s sake, or as someone who wishes for his friend, for the friend’s own sake, to exist and to live” (EN 1166a). Certainly, Aristotle cannot be included to personalistic philosophers, but the statements on benevolent friendship as the goal of human effort confirm our intuition about the inadequacy of just equality to define what is foremost important to us in life. The philía is a higher and more dignified goal of action than its minimum premise, such as justice (1155a). Love or favour is the

**Figure 1**

Vertical division of the quality of the philiatric relationship



quality of a “good relationship” that innervates any pursuit of justice. The filia is the nerve of a culture that transcends the levelling laws of nature and society, it is a capillary of justice. However, is the Aristotelian philia an asymmetrical relationship between a moral subject and another? It is not. Aristotle places friendship on the level of self-love (gr. filauthia). Man wants real good above all for themselves, and that is their own being – they prefer themselves, they are themselves a source of thought, joy and sadness, they care most about themselves. Love for myself should not be understood as selfishness, but as a good relationship with my best friend, who is myself. And in the view of this essential relation to oneself, **“the friend is another self”** (EN IX, 4, 1166a).

The emphasis in a friendly relationship is on common experience (gr. syzén), common perception (gr. synasisthésis), common thinking (gr. syngnórisein) and especially common action (gr. synergein) (cf. Eudemian Ethics VII, 1, 1245b). The relationship of love for another can be compared at the highest level with the relationship of love for oneself, but it will not exceed it. A virtuous person loves another as themselves (cf. e.g. Mark 12:31). In the other person and in their confirmation of what is good for life, my self finds a kind of reflection, a confirmation of the goodness of my being. The key word of a friendly relationship is the word “we”, a platform on which we help each other to perfection. Aristotle’s friendship can be at most symmetrical, it does not imply the primacy of another, which we meet e.g. in the Christian concept of kenosis (self-sacrifice), or charitas (charitable love), or in the ethical conception of E. Lévinas.

As highlighted above, if there is friendship between people, they do not need justice (EN VIII, 1, 1155a26). According to Aristotle, perfect friendship is between good people and requires mutual affection (gr. antiphilia) and mutual choice (gr. antiprohaireisis). Reciprocity, the return of benevolence is a necessary condition of friendship. As our ancient author emphasizes, it is not possible to have many friends, the philia is not the positive relationship to another that could be extrapolated to the whole community or to every existing human individual. There is exclusivity, uniqueness and unrepeatability in a friendly relationship.

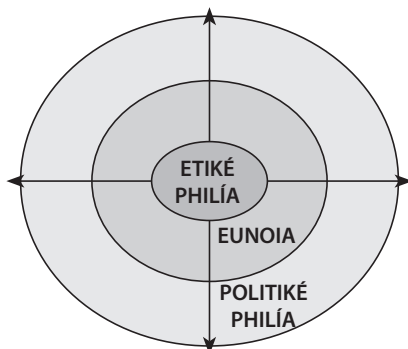
### The Concentric Circles Model (Horizontal Division)

Does it seem that philía is not intended as a feasible model of practical good social relations, to which we could set moral education? Does the requirement of justice in its normative level, or directly education according to the ethics of rules, return to the game again?

Similar to the later issue of the “third” in the ethics of Lévinas, we find a certain solution in Aristotle, even though it is only outlined in the Nicomachean Ethics. The solution to the problem of “love for many”, or “love for everyone” lies in the model of concentric circles, at the core of which stands the relationship of perfect friendship (gr. philía) and its quality diffuses progressively like a wave in

**Figure 2**

Horizontal division of the quality of the philiatric relationship



symmetrical circles heading “beyond the horizon”. The individual circles of benevolence are simultaneously affected by the strengthening elements of justice, order and security, i.e. those elements of social relations and structures that protect coexistence from the abuse and arbitrariness of the ruthless. However, the ethical basis of friendliness and orientation towards common goals prevails in them. In Aristotle, these circles have the names favour (gr. *eunoia*) and concord (gr. *politiké philía*).

Favour is a good relationship with strangers or those who do not know about our goodness, or for various reasons do not return it. It is a virtuous attitude of a moral subject who maintains the respect, esteem and disposition to help, to contribute to the good of others without being in a close and near relationship of friendship. Favour is also referred to as the “idle friendship”, it is a kind of germ or preparation for the *philía*. *Eunoia* literally means “benevolence” or “goodwill.”<sup>54</sup> It lacks a common choice and a mutually confirmed agreement on what is a good goal of life, as in the case of friendship. Retaliation for such benevolence and charity by gratitude cannot yet be considered an expression of friendship, it is only the fulfilment of the requirement of justice. However, friendship can grow out of favour, and there is no friendship that does not come out of favour.

Concord is also called “civic friendship” (gr. *politiké philía*). It represents a broad circle of friendship-like relationships that unite individuals in a narrower community (gr. *koinónia*) or in a broad political community (gr. *polis*) in accordance with common goals and common values, that is, with regard to what society is to strive for. The minimum basis for such agreement is the common belief that a virtuous life leads to bliss (gr. *eudaimonia*). Concord ensures the sense of belonging and encourages mutual solidarity, which goes beyond the demands of justice, especially in situations of danger. If a community is united by the concord of its members, the society does not need to make too much effort to enforce the common good, because civic virtue naturally does it. Evil people, as Aristotle writes, cannot be united by concord because they cannot be friends, and their quest for immediate individual gain will cause the death of the common good and the deployment of coercive procedures. Such a society does not allow a “good life” for its members and degrades itself to a collective similar to a flock or a clamp from the subhuman world. Civic friendship should therefore be a valuable asset that every community should cultivate if it wants to maintain its vitality and its own dignity. The contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2003, p. 650) therefore points out that friendship is not given to people in advance, it is a virtue that everyone must strive for, practice and improve in it as in other virtues. An individual is too fragile to build a “good life” on his own, he needs a community, a community framework. One can become a friend in the community and in the *polis* environment, which will favor his good upbringing and character formation. Even in this context, cultivating prosociality shows us as a suitable and necessary way to develop morality.

We have indicated above the hypothesis of “focused circles” as a model offering a solution to the problem of “love for many” or “love for everyone”. In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find the center and at the same time the culmination of a benevolent relationship in the “perfect friendship” *philía*, to which it approaches and at the same time spreads as a diffusing quality in circular waves of favour (gr. *eunoia*) and concord (gr. *politiké philía*). The farther the wave is from the center, the more it integrates with the institutions of justice, order and protection against the abuse of power, but it continues to refer to the source of its movement. The trajectory of this “wave” can be defined as the inside out, respectively, from the center to the sides, potentially “beyond the horizon” of the visible.

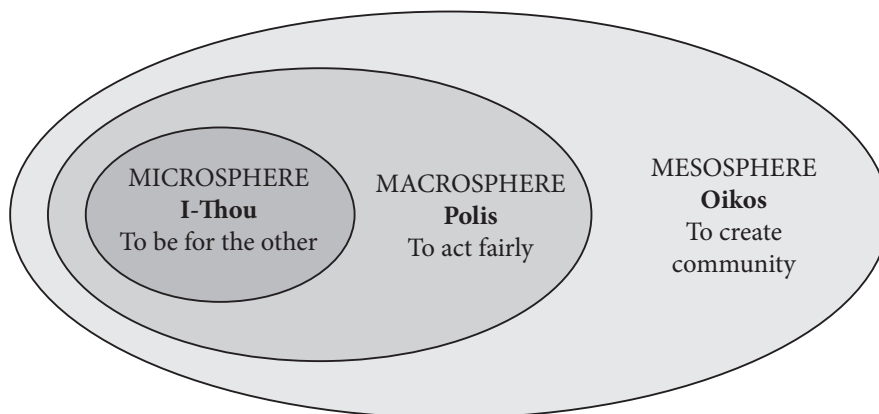
<sup>54</sup> *Eunoia*, εὐνοία means exactly “good mind”. In this naming of favour as a precursor of friendship the etymological relation with a later definition of virtue as a quality of mind can be seen: “*Virtus est bona qualitas mentis*” (Thomas Aquinas, *STh I – II*, q. 55, a. 4). St. Thomas refers here to the more original definition of virtue according to St. Augustine. If the favour *eu-noia* is a certain virtue, the more the virtue must be the friendship *philia*, in which a good “common mind” *syn-noia* takes place (συννοία, concentration of the mind, in the ancient Greek also “care”, or “friendship”).

We have already sketched this model in the monograph *Man to Man...* (Rajský, Podmanický et al., 2016, pp. 32 – 33), where we asked ourselves a pedagogical question:

“How to morally educate and accompany so that the personal morality of responsibility for another (which is another term for expressing the ethics of favor, friendship or altruism) is not an obstacle to life in the real world – on the contrary, it is a moral benefit to it?” We have outlined a plan that we have called “from home” out into society, that is, “from the ethics of responsibility for the other’s face to the ethics of social justice, from the education of personal benevolence to the education of a sense of justice.” It is a process that begins in cultivating the closest interpersonal relationships I – You in the “home” community, transcends the boundaries of family, kinship and the immediate community, i.e. intimacy of home, into the community (school class, school, extracurricular educational and leisure groups, social environment of the municipality and the city) and finally enters the sphere of a broad political society up to the planetary level of humanity. “The term ‘prosociality’ acquires a strong meaning in this respect – it contains the dynamics of innervation of social morality by the ethical imperative of the personal dignity of the other person. The concept of ethical education as education for prosociality includes precisely this process in which the formation of a relationship with You is guided as a capillary in the body of education of the “good life” in society” (ibid., p. 33).

**Figure 3**

Horizontal division of education of philiatric moral character



### **The Mesosphere of Home**

The question of the continuity of the “ethics of encounter” (especially in the Levinas` sense) between the intimate microsphere of the exclusive personal relationship I – You and the impersonal political macrosphere is primarily a question of the function and role of the mesosphere that connects and integrates moral demands of love (being-for-another) and justice (social normativity). This mesosphere is characterized by the phenomena of home, dwelling, family, fatherhood, sonship, femininity, hospitality, brotherhood, etc. The mesosphere of home, community and hospitality is proving to be a key space for education in the ethics of good relations. It creates a typical anthropological situation in which respect for You becomes a paradigm of every interpersonality, even, at the level of regulation, of every social structure. At the same time, the requirement arrangement, order and security of the home is seen as a commitment to respect for what is common and what allows individuals to face each other. The structure of oikos makes it possible to combine love of neighbor with respect for the rules. The political community, which forms the macrosphere of our coexistence, has in the structure of oikos the pattern of its inner

human order. Polis, in which the politiké philía is to dwell, must support an oiko-logical moral education, i.e. an education of personal and social benevolence.

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### **PRACTICAL WORK THROUGH THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS – FUTURE TEACHERS**

**Abstract:** The work presents the results of the research conducted among students-future teachers as a part of the process in the realization of internationally supported pilot-project.

Students participated in an online – workshop and in the structured activities of the preparation for the practical work in university setting with the live presence, during the pandemic with Covid-19, October – December 2021.

The aim of the research was to gather data about students-future teachers's attitudes concerning practical work during their initial teacher education.

Practice-based teacher education is typically organized to develop a set of core teaching elements such as: content delivery, engagement of pupils in active learning, providing stimulative learning environment, evaluation of the results, etc.

To develop advanced understandings, an implementation of new concepts and methods, practice-based pedagogies should also support the critical attitudes of future teachers about practical teaching. Based on the premise that an inquiry stance is a key attribute of the adaptive expertise and teacher professionalism, this paper examines the function and value of inquiry within practice-based learning.

Findings confirmed that the common denominator of all the answers is the achieved experience, which is shown in the acquisition of teaching competencies in a real space.

**Keywords:** Students-future teachers, Practical work, Initial teacher education, Teaching competencies

## **Introduction**

Contemporary educational approaches to the quality of education have significantly changed. Based on the previously applied concept that the university's major aim is to provide students with certain types of knowledge that they are expected to apply later in their professional life, universities are now focused on the process that enable students to reach teaching competences.

The main idea is to create content, mechanisms and environment where students can obtain knowledge by themselves and practice to work in ways that enable them to solve issues that will appear in an uncertain future classroom environment. In this way gaining knowledge is a starting point for further professional development of students – future teachers.

University curricula have to provide students with competences that will help them develop communication, organization and planning, collaboration and teamwork, flexibility and adaptability. In the field of education, there are the requirements of a “competency-based” teacher education and include the knowledge, skills and values.

The competency, which is essential to an educator's pursuit of excellence, is more than just knowledge and skills; it involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including values and attitudes) in a particular context. Teachers need a wide range of competencies in order to face the complex challenges of today's world. Teaching competency is an inherent element of an effective training process, one that aspires to contribute to the welfare of a particular country or the world itself. The success of education and training of students-future teachers depends on their preparation, erudition and performance quality.

## **Aim**

The aim of this work was to examine attitudes of students-future teachers toward the concept and realization of practical work during the winter semester (October -December 2021) at the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje", North Macedonia – Faculty of Pedagogy "St. Kliment Ohridski in Skopje" and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

The data of this research is a part of information that were gathered during the realization of the QUAMEN pilot project that introduced the training and content-based mentoring system for students – future teachers. The purpose of the precisely structured activities within was to raise the awareness of the necessity to fill the existing gap in the initial teacher education – to coordinate student's knowledge reached at the university with the teaching competences that has to be acquired during the practical work in kindergarten and schools. The pilot project was financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided by the European Wergeland Center from Oslo, Norway.

The research was accomplished in the period of global pandemic with Covid-19, with restriction of public gatherings and prohibition of conducting the practical work in kindergarten and classroom settings. The main strength of the QUAMEN pilot project was in the possibility to offer sessions for students-future teachers with physical presence and also on-line, with the realization of an intensive mentoring process in mutual cooperation: university professors-mentors-students (planning, preparation, realization of practical work at university settings, observation, feedback).

Before and after participation in the pilot project activities, we sent survey to all students – participants.

## **Active Learning during Preparation of Sessions**

In the realization of the pilot project QUAMEN, the practical work of the students is the most important segment in their acquisition of competencies to become a competent teacher.

After accomplishment of all activities in the conceptual preparation of students – future teachers (webinar) – next phase of the pilot project was implemented: preparation for the realization of the practical work.

We implemented the active learning process of all participants based on the precise directions given in the manual of prof. Gollob "Experts for learning in practice" (Gollob, 2020). It involves close and intensive collaboration in coordinating activities between the student, the teacher, and the university professor. All activities were understood as a process of sharing knowledge, experiences and attitudes. The most important part was the joint cooperation in preparing the planning for the realization of the lesson. The students independently organized the proposed idea as the base on which the mentor and the university professor in an open conversation gave suggestions, advice, rethinking the details together with the students. In that way, all stages in each daily preparation were checked in the terms of realistic possibilities for application in the real classroom.

The students' lack of experience in the work with pupils was supplemented by professional support from the more experienced colleagues – mentor and university professor.

The purpose of such relations was to create a professional working atmosphere of relaxed, but at the same time focused active process of joint thinking and creation. It was fascinating to experience that all parties were involved in active learning:

- The student, by acquiring knowledge and receiving professional advice based on the experience of the mentor and the university professor,
- The mentor, by acquiring new quality knowledge for an active methodological, pedagogical guidance of the student by using new adequate communication strategies,
- The university professor, by gaining insight into the thinking processes of the students and the mentors, gathering experiences in the realization of first-hand teaching.

## **Survey for Students – Questions and Analysis of the Data**

To gathered data about different aspects of student`s practical work during their participation in the QUAMEN pilot project, we conducted an online survey after the realization of all project activities. The total number of respondents were 24 students, with the survey that was conceived by giving free answers to 5 questions.

The goals of the survey were to get students views, impressions, opinions concerning the process of practical work. This was the reason why we decided to include the open-ended questions. Despite the fact that these types of questions are less structured than questions that are intended to obtain quantitative information, they provide input into the ways of thinking, the motivations, and the approaches to a topic or situation; they provide answers on “why” and “how” questions (Agee, 2009; Irwin & Stafford, 2016).

Our intention was aimed to understand the opinion of a certain group (in this case students) with relatively homogeneous professional status and chronological age, but with different personal qualities. To obtain information that presents the experiential, vivid aspects of a particular phenomenon, we decided that the analysis should be phenomenological which goes in line with the views of Walston, Redford, & Bhatt (2017); Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, Mueller (2016). This choice also corresponds to the findings about of surveying of small groups of participants confirmed by Agee (2009), Irwin & Stafford (2016). They prove that qualitative analysis provides and understanding of the phenomenon and of the process, with both: the strengths and the weaknesses of the process of interaction we were interested about.

The metacognitive abilities of students were particularly in focus, because in order to fully understand their approach and reactions, it was necessary to activate the reflection about their own learning process with the questions (Jiang, Y., Ma, L., Gao, L., 2016; Hausman, H., Myers, SJ, Rhodes, MG, 2021).

The questions were defined in a way to obtain information for each segment:

1. Attitudes, 2. Competencies, 3. Values, 4. Expectations, 5. Skills.

### **First question:**

*If you think ahead to when you will be a teacher – what is most important about the opportunity to do practice work in a real-life classroom during your studies?*

This question detects the views of students regarding the importance of practical work during their studies, and before their employment.

Students state that practical instruction is extremely important to:

- gain experience of real school situations and
- to acquire the teaching competencies – presentation and communication skills.

Regarding the first segment – practical teaching in the context of experience, students often named the help of mentors as a crucial in overcoming anxiety and stress, also in perceiving the realistic atmosphere in the classroom, in transmission of adequate approaches, vibrations and



positive energy to encourage pupils for active collaboration. Their answers refer to the value of practical work with mentors in terms of gaining emotional stability and active relaxation in communication with students.

The second segment of the first question – the importance of practical work for acquiring teaching competencies arises as a systematization of student’s answers, including:

“Well-designed organization, content and understanding of the purpose of the class activities”; “Opportunity to use various methods, techniques and teaching materials to motivate students and to transfer knowledge”; “The productive teaching content to attract the pupils’ attention with various methods”; “To organize time, environment and materials, to try and apply new activities.” The answers present the students’ awareness of segments of the teaching process for which practical work is proved as necessary by their own experiences during enrolment of own academic studies.

### **Second question:**

*What did you get out of the practice work you have realized?*

The common denominator of all the answers is the achieved experience, which is shown in the acquisition of **teaching competencies** in a real space. This confirms the students’ confidence in the importance of the practical work for the personal development of the teachers: “solid foundation for building the personality” – self-reflection; “A wonderful experience where you can see the progress and the mistakes that need to be addressed” – self-criticism; “Experiencing the situations that were mentioned only theoretically, but also those that are new, both require adequate response” – creativity.

This is followed by **teaching competencies** such as: “organization of time”; “Cooperation with students and empathy”; “Building an atmosphere of active communication”.

### **Third question:**

*Why do you think it was and is valuable for you future teachers to be able to practice in a real-life classroom with the support of a trained mentor?*

The interaction with the pupils was emphasized as the greatest value that is realized in the classroom with the help of a trained mentor. In this context, their answers were presenting the quality of cooperation with the mentor in: “getting acquainted with the atmosphere in the classroom”; “opportunity for application of knowledge and mental readiness in interaction with students”, “Interaction with students, application of the shared ideas from colleagues into teaching strategies and activities”.

Students also added: “A wonderful experience where the progress and obstacles the shortcomings that need to be overcome are visible”; “Practice with self-confidence, understanding and realization of the administrative obligations”; “Gaining more self-control, courage in applying new ideas.” As a strong benefit that arise from practice in a real-life classroom with the support of a trained mentor.

The main drawback was the realization of practical exercises in the university premises, instead of classroom due to the pandemic with Covid-19. In this way the real interaction with the mentors was even more emphasized.

### **Fourth question:**

*What did you expect from you mentor and how did the experience meet these expectations?*

The focus in this question is on obtained information about the **value of trained mentors** in the realization of the practical work, which is confirmed by all students’ answers: “more experience in planning and interaction is given”; “an opportunity to see how mentors behave in certain situations in the classroom”; “to be able to use methods for appropriate sharing of real-life experience with students”, “to be able to observe carefully, to guide and advise professionally”; “to

be able to convey situations that are not learned from books". Students' perception of the mentor based on the level of professionalism is especially pointed out: "a trained mentor who will guide"; "a trained mentor who enable student to experience what it is like to be a real teacher"; "an important mediator in the realization of pedagogical practice".

The answers mirrored an idealistic image of the mentor in the eyes of the students, i.e., they believe that the main value for them is the will of the mentor to help, guide, advise. These answers presents a strong belief in the inviolable competencies of the mentor, which shows the students' trust in quality interaction with the mentors.

This clearly presents the correlation between the real competencies of the mentors and the students' expectations of the mentors' competencies. The answers to the second part of the question present satisfaction from the mutual communication: the mentor does not judge us, but gives advice, guidance"; "Mentors accepts us as a partner and not as her opponent"; "Collaboration and visions that imply creativity"; "Great guidance through personal example."

#### **Fifth question:**

#### ***How will the observation-based feedback of the mentor contribute to your skills as a teacher?***

The responses stated that the feedback and transfer of the experience from the mentor to students will contribute to: "Easier to cope with the unexpected situations, become better prepared and trained for parents' meetings"; "Acquisition of new knowledge through practice"; "Personal practical experience and active application of applicative advice", "Conducting of the theoretical knowledge into the real situation"; "Perceiving the mistakes and shortcomings".

Many responses presented the **emotional relationship as a value** that students gained receiving feedback from mentors: "a better sense of time and organization of activities"; "The sense for the teaching as a profession and excitement to have the responsibility to teach"; "The desire to work as a teacher".

It can be concluded as a summary of all the received answers, that the interaction between the students and the mentors was perceived as: enthusiastic, greatly accepted and supported and also beneficial in regards to shared experiences. Two responses mentioned "building a partnership with mentors." The students received an active relationship from their mentors that met their expectations and gave them the needed support, assistance, and evaluation.

Most of the students stated that they received both criticism and advices, which implies that the mentors were not just observers, but that they actively evaluated all student activities, not only in the preparation phases, but also in the practical implementation of the teaching content.

This confirms that despite the clear guidelines given to the mentors for the necessity to actively observe students (provided by the expert and the trainers) with no critical review, only as a mirror – takes more time. The real application of focused observation of students by the mentors requires longer training and practice.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings and analysis of the data, we can conclude that the participants in the research, students-future teachers referred critically to the implementation of practical work during the pandemic with Covid-19.

They all in own way conformed the need for a professionally guided practical work. Even with restricted possibilities to conduct the practical work with students in real classroom, preparation realized in close contact with university teacher and mentor gave adequate esteem and guidance to students. They presented their daily preparations in a model class teaching in the university setting, and prove that this segment of practical work is essential for quality performance of teaching content as well as exercise for communication with pupils.

The main result of the research was documented presentation of metacognitive skills of students-future teachers regarding their involvement and performance in practical teaching and learning. This competence is essential for their quality professional engagement in all teaching subjects.

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## RÉKA Saáry

### ANALYZING PERCEPTION OF SECURITY FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Abstract:** The changing nature of the environment has a major impact on an individual's sense of security. The way in how individual perceptions of danger and risk are shaped, and how cognitive and emotional information is processed, plays a key role in the development of subjective perceptions of security. This paper examines perceptions of security from a psychological perspective, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of cognitive vulnerability and exposure as a result of unprecedented information overload. The factors influencing the development of subjective feelings of security are measured through quantitative research. In the light of the results of this research, the factors that threaten psychological security were identified, and using cluster analysis, segments that can be described by individual preferences based on their attitudes towards security were described. Based on the findings, attention is drawn to the educational challenges to reduce society's vulnerability to psychological influence.

**Keywords:** Psychological safety, Cognitive safety, Threat perception, Cognitive and emotional components

## Introduction

For historical and environmental reasons (globalization, digitalization), research related to individual and human security has become a topic of major importance, yet the academic works available in the context of security studies tend to present a traditionally narrow (state-related) approach to security (Owen, 2008). Feeling secure, however, goes beyond the security of individuals as guaranteed by the state; it is in fact the result of a set of interrelated external and internal factors (Blynova et al., 2018) and, as such, it is highly subjective. According to Brauch (2011), security can be understood both in an objective and a subjective sense, from an objective point of view it can be measured by the absence of threats, while subjectively it can be described by the degree of fear of being attacked. Accordingly, not only the absence of objective threats, but also the absence of subjective fear is essential to achieve security.

Examining perceptions of security is difficult for several reasons. Firstly, it is obvious that the development of the perception of security is a dynamic process, and in a given situation, an individual may perceive new threats that change his or her current state. On the other hand, the latent nature of security also raises problems, since security usually becomes important only in its absence. Thirdly, the feeling of being secure is a basic need for a normal human being, so that the individual's behavior is fundamentally guided by the pursuit of a secure state (Zotova, & Karapetyan, 2018).

An individual's perception of security can be examined from several perspectives (e.g. physical security, existential security, social security etc.) and can be interpreted in terms of different roles (e.g. citizen, urban resident, house tenant, customer, employee, student etc.). In this paper, security is examined from a psychological perspective in the context of everyday existence and consumer behavior.

This paper analysis the factors that threaten psychological safety, with a particular focus on the context of individual's consumer behavior. The objectives of the research are defined as follows:

RQ1: Exploration of the factors influencing the general sense of security of individuals/consumers, with a focus on attitudes towards security in relation to purchasing.

RQ2: Identifying individual differences of respondents on the indicated topic.

RQ3: Exploring the relationship between psychological perceptions of security and demographic variables of individuals.

After the introduction of the essential terms and concepts, the study presents research methodology and data collection methods. Following the presentation of the demographic characteristics of the sample, the article presents the quantitative analysis of the individual responses. The results section also discusses the findings and implications while conclusions on the research topic are made in the last section of the paper.

## Literature Review

Psychological security is a fundamental human need, it refers to the sense of control over life which reflects the ability to handle problems, and the faith in the love and acceptance of others (Jia et al., 2018). According to Zotova and Karapetyan (2018) psychological security is the state of person when he or she can satisfy his or her basic needs for self-preservation. Psychological security, as defined by Edmondson (2014), describes perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a given context. As seen earlier, researchers typically measure psychological security by including the perception of potential threats and risks, the likelihood of victimization, as well as by using the cognitive and affective and conative components known from attitude related researches. Overall security in this sense can be described as a state of inner peace, trust, positive attitude, confidence, subjective well-being, openness and relaxation (Zotova, & Karapetyan, 2018).

Psychological security is also widely discussed among theorists of organizational behavior. Authors in this field define the concept at three levels: individual, group and organizational, and typically examine the relationship between psychological safety and the effectiveness of the company. In this context individual's psychological security is essentially the intrinsic motivation and mental state that help the individual to fulfil his/her psychological role (Qi & Wen, 2019).

The subjective perception of security has been studied using both psychological (Brown et al, 1996; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Baeva & Bordovskaia, 2015; Mahrous et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019) and ontological approaches (Hiscock et al., 2001), in the context of certain roles of an individual (citizen, urban resident, employee, etc.). The results of the studies using psychological approach are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Dimensions of psychological security in the literature

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Research context</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>
<i>Brown &amp; Leigh (1996)</i>	Employee	Workplace climate i.e supportive management, clarity, opportunity for self-expression
<i>Tynan (2005)</i>	Team members	Self psychological safety (self-perception of others is safe) and others psychological security (communicating with others feel that they are safe)
<i>Edmondson &amp; Lei (2014)</i>	Employee	Individual dimensions: in-role behavior, speaking up voice Organizational dimension: performance, learning Group level dimension: roles of psychological safety
<i>Baeva &amp; Bordovskaia (2015)</i>	Students and teachers	Educational environment, teaching methodology, psychological well-being of students, self confidence
<i>Mahrous et al. (2018)</i>	Urban residents	Personal attributes, social attributes, physical characteristics
<i>Wang et al. (2019)</i>	Residents	Self-psychological dimensions Social environmental dimensions Natural environmental dimensions Social security

Source: Author's own construction

Regardless of context, the threats affecting psychological security have changed a lot in the recent decades. Beck (2011) defines three contemporary characteristics of threats and risks such as de-localization, i.e. the fact that neither the causes nor the consequences are limited to a specific geographical area, unpredictability and non-compensability, which calls attention to the principle of precaution by prevention (Beck, 2011). In addition to the phenomena described above, individuals also need to be prepared for the challenges of the information society, which poses serious challenges to the education system. According to Miljkovic and Pešić (2019), psychological safety from this perspective can be described as a state of mental protection from the impact of negative information factors that threaten to deform consciousness and conduct. The first step is to make individuals aware of the psychological impact of negative information, and then to train them to acquire the tools (even physical ones) and skills that ensure self-protection.

Psychological safety can therefore be examined from various viewpoints and in a wide range of contexts. This study examines the factors that threaten psychological safety in general and in relation to purchasing, and identifies the relevant groups of individuals with different attitudes toward the topic.

## Method

In present study consumer’s general perception of security was analyzed from a psychological perspective using quantitative methods, with the aim of exploring individual’s overall opinion on the subject. Consumers’ perception of several dimension of psychological safety was measured using a 4-point Likert scale, as the use of the four categories helped to ensure that respondents were not neutral about particular statements. However, due to the nature of the topic, the option of selecting “Not applicable” was also available.

Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires, partly online and partly through face to face interviews. Due to the sampling method (non-probabilistic method, convenience sampling) the sample is not representative. Data were processed and statistically analyzed using SPSS 20.0 software, through the application of descriptive statistics, Chi-square test, and cluster analyses.

## Results and Discussion

The Hungarian population from the age of eighteen, the Hungarian consumers constituted the target group of the research. During the data collection 489 responses were received. The relatively heterogeneous sample allowed to get an insight into the individual opinions of each demographic group. 56% of respondents were female, 44% male and 90% had a high school or college education. Additional demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Demographic composition of the sample

Type of residence	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Budapest (capital)</i>	229	46.8	<b>18-25</b>	179	36.6
<i>Large city, county seat</i>	68	13.9	<b>26-39</b>	114	23.3
<i>Small town</i>	118	24.1	<b>40-59</b>	150	30.7
<i>Village</i>	74	15.1	<b>60-</b>	46	9.4

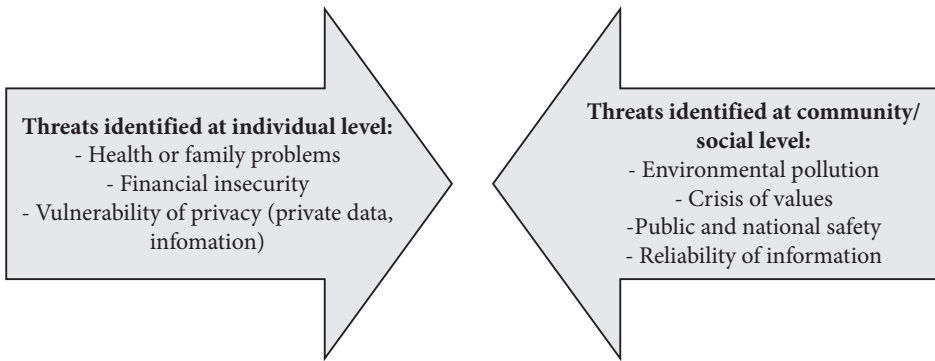
Source: Author’s own construction

The overall sense of security was measured using a metric scale, where participants were asked to indicate how safe they felt on a 1-to-100 scale. The most frequently given rating was 80, with an overall mean of 74.18 and a standard deviation of 19.23. The results indicate that respondents generally feel safe.

Factors that threaten the perception of safety were assessed using an open-ended question. According to the answers provided by the participants, two categories emerged. Based on the frequency of mentions, personal factors in the micro-environment of the respondents, such as health and family problems, financial insecurity and the vulnerability of privacy, appear to be of high importance. At the same time, concern about environmental pollution was surprisingly frequently mentioned in the responses, and the value crisis, information insecurity and fears about public safety and national security were also highlighted as macro-environmental elements. (Figure 1.)

**Figure 1**

Factors threatening the sense of security

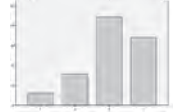



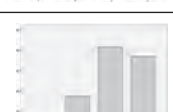




Source: Author's own construction

Homogeneous responses were received on overall attitude toward security and the safety aspects of everyday purchasing situations. (Table 3.)

**Table 3**

Results on statements related to perceived security

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Distribution of responses
<i>When buying a product/service security is a priority for me</i>	489	3.06	.860	
<i>I am willing to pay more for a service/product I consider safer</i>	489	3.15	.881	
<i>I am concerned about the privacy of my data and the information about me</i>	489	3.21	.881	
<i>I do a lot to protect my data and privacy</i>	489	3.02	.879	
<i>I am aware of my immediate physical environment</i>	489	3.11	.834	
<i>I can influence the things that determine my security</i>	489	2.73	.809	

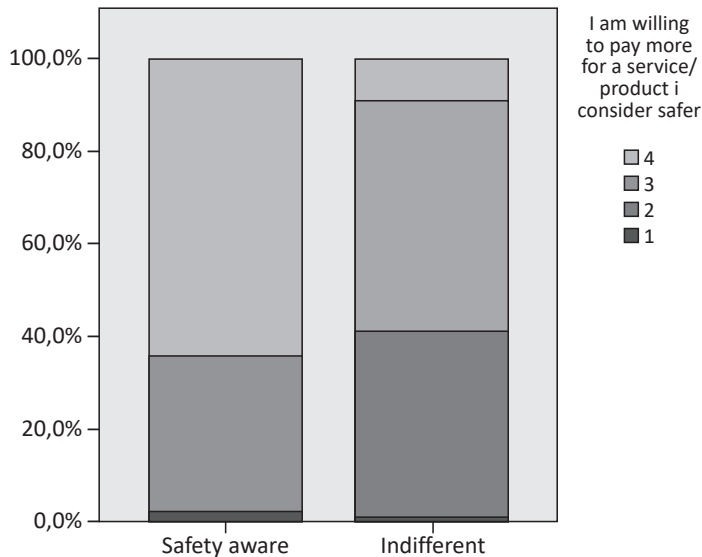
<i>It is important for me to be well informed about the risk around me</i>	489	3.24	.817	
<i>I often think about the factors that reduce my sense of security</i>	489	2.51	1.000	

Source: Author's own construction

The results reflect the importance of awareness of risk factors (AVG=3.24, SD=0.817) and respondent's concerns about the security of private information and data (AVG=3.21, SD=0.881). However, we also see that worries about safety and security are not necessarily a part of everyday life (AVG=2.51, SD=1.000), perhaps because respondents feel they have little control over the factors that determine their sense of security (AVG=2.73, SD=0.809)

Further analysis was carried out for the statements in the question block, but prior to statistical analysis sample items with incomplete responses were excluded as a result of data cleaning. Based on the cluster analysis, using centroid method, two respondent segments emerged, which can be named as the group of Security aware (n=261) and the Indifferent (n=102) according to the member's perceptions on security related issues. While those who were Security aware typically said that they do a lot to protect their privacy and data and that security is important to them when buying products, both groups had similar views on the measures they take to protect their physical environment. The most significant difference between the two groups was in their attitudes towards buying safe products. Well over 50% of Security aware fully agreed with the statement that they would be willing to pay more for a product they perceived to be safer. This mentality is way less common among the Indifferent respondents (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
Differences of opinion between clusters



Source: Author's own construction



The relationship between demographic characteristics and cluster membership was tested using Chi-square test. The results showed that gender ( $p=0.978$ ) and place of residence ( $p=0.257$ ) did not affect the respondent's attitudes towards security, while a significant but weak relationship was found between age ( $p=0.021$ , Cramer  $V=0.164$ ) and education level of the participants ( $p=0.007$ , Cramer  $V=0.184$ ) and their opinion on security related questions.

## Conclusion

This paper examined perceptions of safety and safety aspects of purchasing decision using a psychological approach. The preliminary research objectives were met as follows. After a brief literature review of the dimensions of psychological security, the primary research examined respondents' perceptions of security. It was found that the research participants considered security issues to be fundamentally important, however, concerns about threats were not common among them, since they believed that they had little control over the factors that influence their perceived security.

Respondents can be basically described by two main attitudes in the light of the survey results. The majority of them are conscious of security and are even ready to make sacrifices in order to achieve a greater sense of security. However, there are also some (typically older and less educated participants) who are less concerned about how their security is evolving and are not willing to change either their physical environment or their exposure to information threats.

The analysis suggests that education and good communication can play a key role in creating a society with a positive perception of security. It should be noted, however, that attitudes towards security always reflect a current state of affairs, and therefore the perception of security can only be measured with limitations. The generalizability of the results of this study is also affected by the sampling method used in the research and the intuitive nature of the scale design. Further research and a more detailed overview of the dimensions of the perception of safety is therefore needed in order to gain a more detailed picture of the issue.

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## RE-THINKING EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

**Abstract:** Lifelong learning as a contemporary educational concept is striving towards re-thinking educational goals and setting and realization of the overall educational process in the “learning” societies. Its core lies in crucial transformation of the present educational systems in order to provide competences for continuous and consistent learning and education throughout individuals lives which will result in creating critically conscious, learning stimulated, adaptable to changes and competent people who will pursue for changes in personal and professional life. All of these transformations are presupposing different approaches of national authorities and “consumers” towards the phenomenon of education and learning.

Recent national educational analyses in North Macedonia show that educational system fails to implement main goal of the lifelong learning concept. Implemented educational reforms in the last couple of decades are focused towards superficial re-shaping of the system instead of answering the crucial questions about: What are the main educational goals throughout the prism of national context? How can we produce students that can answer personal, social and professional challenges in contemporary societies? and How can we integrate the concept of lifelong learning in national educational system?

To obtain precise insight of this complex problematics we will try to make a vivisection of several key issues that affect contemporary educational systems: national strategic goals in the context of European and world tendencies, initial education of teachers and educational staff, teaching strategies, evaluation methods and techniques, participation of the societal environment and the business sector in accomplishing educational goals, etc. The analyses of these issues will try to eradicate the main challenges that education is facing and trace the future path towards lifelong learning integration in education system at all levels.

**Keywords:** Lifelong learning, Educational paradigms, Re-thinking educational process

### Introduction

Lifelong learning as a contemporary educational concept is striving towards re-thinking educational goals and setting and realization of the overall educational process in the “learning” societies. Its core lies in crucial transformation of the present educational systems in order to provide

competences for continuous and consistent learning and education throughout individuals lives which will result in creating critically conscious, learning stimulated, adaptable to changes and competent people who will pursue for changes in personal and professional life. All of these transformations are presupposing different approaches of national authorities and “consumers” towards the phenomenon of education and learning. “Understood as an integral concept, lifelong learning does not mean a simple continuation of education after the period of completion of formal education, nor just a mechanical and organizational connection of youth education and adult education, but much more than that.” (Savicevic, 1983)

In order to realize the goals of the concept of lifelong learning, “it is necessary to fundamentally transform the existing educational system in an organizational sense, overcome its dichotomy and establish creative links in the chain of continuity of education and learning”. (Savicevic, 1983) Transformations assume a different approach to the phenomena of education and learning.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of international research related to school education point to a series of shortcomings that relate primarily to the motivation to learn, which is one of the basic prerequisites for the successful realization of the lifelong learning concept. Unfortunately, Travers’ thesis (Travers, 1978) that “schools kill interest more than they develop it” is still current. It has been empirically proven many times that the more time a person spends in educational institutions (schools), the more he loses his interest, curiosity and motivation for learning.

From the empirical research that we undertook at the end of year 2006 on 200 students from the third and fourth year of higher education institutions in Republic of Macedonia for the ability of students with the competence of learning to learn, we received overwhelming results that speak of the (in)succes of the entire educational system in the context of the realization of the goal of lifelong learning. Namely, two thirds of respondents are not motivated to learn and continue learning after completing their initial education. They mostly use external motivators as motivation, i.e. the certificate qualification or guarantee that they will acquire after graduation, than the personal qualifications that consist of the competencies that they will acquire as a result of their schooling.

## **What Can Be Done?**

The educational reforms that have been carried out for the past two decades on the territory of Republic of Macedonia are mainly oriented towards the form, and not towards the essence of educational and educational problems. They deal with problems such as the structure of the educational plans and programs (curriculum), number of classes, number of subjects and contents, textbooks, digitization of educational process, etc., without trying to answer the essential questions: *What are the main educational goals throughout the prism of national context? How can we produce students that can answer personal, social and professional challenges in contemporary societies?* and *How can we integrate the concept of lifelong learning in national educational system?*

It seems that we cannot get the answers and solutions to these questions and dilemmas using old methods. In order to get a more accurate insight into this complex problem, we will try to touch on several key topics that affect the contemporary educational systems.

To obtain precise insight of this complex problematics we will try to make a vivisection of several key issues that affect contemporary educational systems: national strategic goals in the context of European and world tendencies, initial education of teachers and educational staff, teaching strategies, evaluation methods and techniques, participation of the societal environment and the business sector in accomplishing educational goals, etc. The analyses of these issues will try to

eradicate the main challenges that education is facing and trace the future path towards lifelong learning integration in education system at all levels.

The “burden”, or rather the responsibility of constructing and implementing a new modern curriculum in which the basic principles for lifelong learning will be integrated, should be taken by all stakeholders in the educational process: teachers, pupils/students/adults, management structures in educational institutions, the creators of educational policies, the local community, the business sector, cultural and artistic institutions, etc. In other words, it is a complex process from which both individuals and society as a whole would benefit if they work together in the realization of its goal – to train individuals who will learn for life, ready to deal with challenges and the development of contemporary societies. (Rizova, 2021)

The change in teaching from *transferring knowledge to learning to learn* is the basic task that is set for teachers in order to change the teaching process in function of lifelong learning. Therefore, it is necessary to work on changing the initial education of the teaching staff, and what is more important, to work on changing their way of thinking (mindset) in relation to *learning to learn*. (Rizova, 2021)

At the same time, *the students' love for learning* should be developed and nurtured, and *motivation* for learning should be worked on as well, that is, their encouragement for continuous learning and critical thinking. It is necessary to use the plethora of methods and techniques for evaluating and assessing the achievements of the students, while not neglecting and underestimating what they have acquired through learning in an informal and informational way.

Innovation of national curricula is almost a daily occurrence in all countries of the world. Schools are desperately trying to maintain their primacy as bastions of knowledge, while fighting the relentless influx of information, its distribution through the mass media, the development of technique and technology, etc. However, the educational systems cannot in any way find a new and modern school model that would free itself from the shackles of the old educational system with subjects, classes and school hours set by the famous Czech pedagogue J. A. Comenius in the 17th century. (Rizova, 2021)

Although there are frequent attempts to redefine teaching curricula in European and world countries. Most often, they are aimed at combining multiple subjects (for example, integrated humanities or integrated natural sciences) in order to enable students to see the connections between disciplines, especially when applied to real-life situations. However, the results of such practices say that it is very difficult to teach in that way, and students fail to acquire the basic competencies for the individual disciplines. (Hargreaves, 2004).

What worries us the most is that when evaluating the students' achievements, only what the student *knows* is taken into account, and not what he can *do* or *understands*. Tests are the most common (and according to many educational officials who work in institutions for monitoring and supervising the work of teachers) the most “objective” instrument with the help of which students' knowledge is evaluated, while their skills and attitudes are neglected, because the tests can hardly measure them.

We must emphasize that in no case do we try to underestimate the importance of knowledge in the development of the student's personality. On the contrary, we believe that without knowledge of certain facts and information it is not possible to further develop skills and attitudes. However, we want to point out the dominance of knowledge, at the expense of the neglect of skills and attitudes among students, a condition that contributes to losing interest in learning and alienating it from the student's personality.

Very often in our educational system at all levels, we have not noticed the evaluation of generic or key competencies, those skills that are not related to the contents of a specific subject: problem solving skills, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility for own learning, etc. It is these skills that are invaluable for the development of lifelong learning, and they have become marginalized

due to the fact that the student achievement assessment system does not recognize them. We believe that as long as only students' knowledge is valued and testing dominates, teachers and students will cultivate an instrumental attitude towards what they do, and this undermines the essence of education and the prerequisite for lifelong learning – the capacity for continuous and uninterrupted lifelong learning throughout individuals lives. (Rizova, 2021)

It seems that the integration of those skills that are considered in the recent pedagogical literature as “soft skills” or “life skills” in the traditional curricula of educational institutions would help in building the lifelong learner. Some of those skills or abilities are the following: problem solving ability, critical thinking ability, research ability, interpersonal skills, inventiveness, entrepreneurship, initiative, curiosity, managing one’s own learning, communication ability, conflict resolution skills, etc. (Rizova, 2021)

All these skills and abilities are an integral part of the key competences for lifelong learning covered in the 2018 European Framework of Reference for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Therefore, a logical conclusion would be to integrate the key competencies into the teaching curricula in order to ensure the reliable realization of the concept of lifelong learning from the earliest age. The integration of key competencies for lifelong learning does not presuppose a significant change in the content part of the curriculum, but emphasis and support in the adoption of certain competencies that are trans-disciplinary and cross-curricular. Of course, the complexity of the skill levels should be adjusted to the age of the students.

Austrian researchers Schober and Spiel (Schober and Spiel) develop ten most significant theses, which according to them represent the most important prerequisites for preparing school students for lifelong learning. These theses should certainly be taken into account whenever a teaching curriculum is created for any level of education.

**Table 1**

The most important preconditions for the preparation for Lifelong Learning in schools (Ohidy, A. according to Schober and Spiel)

<b>The most important preconditions for the preparation for Lifelong Learning in schools</b>	
1.	The creation and conservation of positive learning motivation should begin as early as possible.
2.	The personality and interest of students should play a greater role.
3.	School should become more open: there should be cooperation and coordination between learning in school and learning outside school
4.	The independent learning management process and the bearing of responsibility for the effectiveness of one’s own learning process should be given a central role.
5.	Group-learning forms and project-learning methods in lessons are very important.
6.	The development of competences as learning goals should receive more weight.
7.	Pedagogues should learn the application of feedback, which increases the motivation to learn and students’ performance.
8.	Equal opportunity of genders should be assured.
9.	Age and other developmental characteristics are to be taken into consideration.
10.	In teacher training and teacher work, learning methods that increase motivation should play a greater role.

## Conclusion

Although the potential of the concept of lifelong learning is widely recognized in European and global frameworks, the efforts at the national level for its implementation are at an unenviable level. Looking futuristically at the educational development of humanity as a whole, we believe that the challenges that individuals face will intensify, there will be increasing number of older population that will need flexible forms and quick educational solutions for retaining or advancing the workplace, acquiring basic competencies, improvement of social skills for active participation in society, etc. The problem with the changing demands of the labor market will deepen, which will result in the emergence of new and extinction of old professions, rapid obsolescence of the population's qualifications, which will cause the educational process to be reconceptualized, again and again. The challenge with the rapid development of technique and technology, which, although it has a large number of advantages, brings with it intensive requirements for immediate adaptation and improvement of human digital and other competencies, which will be reflected in the increase of the gap in social, educational and economic exclusion. All of these challenges increase the complexity in designing the lifelong learning concept for the future, a concept that should be integrated in the educational process in order to secure a solid base for its future realization.

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## **NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN TEACHERS FROM PRIMARY EDUCATION – AS A COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Abstract:** In different school contexts, there is a discontinuity between teachers' initial education and the needs of school practice. In order to overcome this discontinuity in education, it is necessary for the teachers themselves to become aware of the necessity for continuous professional development as an opportunity for their own development. Vocational training is part of the professional development of teachers that takes place through various activities aimed at developing professional knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The paper presents results obtained from an empirical test of teachers' readiness for professional development. The results were obtained by applying the SPR-N, 5 point Likert scale, from Beara (Beara & Okanović, 2010) which consists of 17 items that refer to: awareness of the importance of improving the teaching profession, external motivation for professional development and self-motivation for improvement.

The research was conducted on 120 teachers of grade and subject teaching in 30 primary schools, which differ in several demographic characteristics (gender, age). In order to test the hypotheses that assume differences between teachers in the readiness for professional development in terms of gender and age, descriptive and inference statistics procedures (t-test and ANOVA) were applied. No differences were identified in terms of awareness of the importance of improving the teaching profession for any of the demographic characteristics of teachers.

**Keywords:** Professional development, Teaching profession, Motivation, Self-motivation.

„... we cannot have students who continuously learn and collaborate effectively, without teachers who have the same characteristics...“

Michael Fullan

### **Introduction**

The continuous reforms in the educational systems, which have taken place in the previous decades in the world, impose changes in the education and practice of teachers, imposing many roles on them. They are expected to be highly sensitive to issues related to the individual and cultural differences of students, to promote tolerance, to respond adequately and promptly to numerous unpredictable situations that they face on a daily basis, to actively apply new information technologies, to be aware of new knowledge in the field of their work, understanding the needs of society, children and young people, identifying competencies and skills that students need for life in modern conditions and finding ways to develop them in the students.

In order to respond to these challenges, the knowledge and skills that teachers have acquired within the framework of formal education are not enough, that is, the need for professional development is necessarily imposed before them. Professional development implies the acquisition of new professional knowledge and certain pedagogical-psychological, didactic-methodical and sociological knowledge and skills that are necessary to be able to successfully carry out teaching and education. (Avramovic, Vujacic, 2010, 157).

Continuous professional development is an indivisible whole of the concept of the professional development of teachers and is a significant prerequisite for professional advancement and for ensuring the quality of educational work. Professional development implies a one-time activity, i.e. programs that are implemented in a short period of time and from which long-term effects are expected (Lieberman, 1996; Pesikan, 2002). The process of professional development of teachers is very complex and in the literature it is usually defined through four of its components: 1. *continuity of the process* – which indicates its duration from the beginning of professional work until retirement; 2. *adoption, enrichment and monitoring of new knowledge* from the narrower professional area in which the teacher works; 3. *improvement of the abilities and skills* that are necessary and important for realizing the modern roles of the teacher; 4. *personal growth and development* of the teacher and his professional advancement (Stamatović, 2006, 28).

On the other hand, the activities for professional development take place continuously over a longer period of time, and in the ideal case, during the entire professional life. They represent a key component for building and maintaining quality, that is, for the professionalism of teachers and are an integral part of individual and organizational plans. In the context of the goals and tasks of their professional development, there is a unique attitude of the educational policy makers across Europe that the system of professional development of teachers has as its ultimate goal the development and improvement of professional competences, and not the raising of formal qualifications to a higher level (Alibabić, Šegrt, 2010; Marušić, Pejatović, 2013; Stanković, Vujačić, 2011).

For a better understanding of the motivation for professional development of teachers, the Theory of Self-Determination is particularly significant (Self-determination Theory, Deci, Ryan, 2000). By introducing normative standards as an extrinsic motivator, teachers' intrinsic motivation that contributes to higher levels of work efficiency is reduced. Such an effect can be interpreted as a consequence of the reduced feeling of autonomy when performing certain tasks and activities. In order to check the practical application and value of the obtained knowledge, Deci and Ryan (2000) conducted a series of researches, based on which a continuum of self-determination was created (Deci, Ryan, 2000; Šarčević, 2017). On the left side of that continuum is a motivation (complete absence of motivation). When teachers are motivated for their own professional improvement, they have a feeling of incompetence, and they detect external factors as reasons for their own behavior or for the absence of reactions and opportunities to control the current situation. These teachers wonder why professional development would be important for them after initial education, and that is why it is very difficult for them to respond to the challenges in their daily work (Vallerand, 1991, според Šarčević, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation explains an individual's behavior that is not self-determined, but is supported by external factors. Depending on the degree of self-determination and the perceived locus of control, there are several types of extrinsic motivation. (Velki, 2011): 1. *external regulation*-indicates the absence of self-determined behavior (for example, I participate in various forms of professional development because it is in accordance with the rules and I have to); 2. *introjected regulation* – involves a low level of self-regulation, (eg, I participate in various forms of professional development because I feel guilty if I don't); 3. *identification*-indicates the presence of a high level of self-determination (for example, I participate in various forms of professional development because it is my priority); 4. *integration*-full self-determination (eg, I participate in various forms of professional development because I enjoy it and feel very good).



*Internal, intrinsic motivation* represents the innate tendency of a person to engage, guided by his own interests, seeking challenges and overcoming them Deci (1975, according to Vuković, 2016, 16) says that people who are intrinsically motivated perform an activity because they are satisfied with the performance of the activity itself. They are interested in what they do, express curiosity, explore new stimuli and work to meet new challenges. Intrinsic motivation is based on the need for autonomy and competence. In the context of *satisfying the need for autonomy*, it is important to allow teachers a choice when it comes to different types of professional learning and development, to avoid competition, mutual comparisons, to encourage the development of intrinsic motivation for realizing the personal plan for professional development. *Satisfying the need for competence* implies opening opportunities for teachers to apply what they will adopt during various training programs in practice (reflective practitioner) and to improve the quality of their own educational work; to create more different activities in which the competence of the teacher would be manifested and further developed (teacher forums); giving feedback to teachers about the ways in which the performance of certain teaching activities can be improved. And finally, *meeting the need for connectedness* would refer to developing and maintaining teachers' needs for horizontal learning. Showing collegiality and mutual encouragement of teachers, respecting different levels of competences and opportunities for their advancement.

## **Method**

### **Problem**

Do primary school teachers have positive attitudes towards professional development needs and do teachers of different genders and ages differ in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for professional development and self-initiative for professional development. We assumed that: **Hypothesis 1**-Teachers have a positive attitude towards professional development. **Hypothesis 2**- Female teachers and younger teachers have a more pronounced need for professional development compared to male teachers and older teachers.

### **Sample**

The sample consists of 120 teachers from class and subject teaching from the region of Kumanovo. Out of the total number of teachers, 65 are from primary education (45 are female and 20 are male), and 55 are from subject teaching (38 are male and 17 are female).

### **Instruments**

The SRP-N scale, authored by Beara (Beara, Okanović, 2010), was used to measure the readiness of teachers for professional development and it consists of 17 statements that are divided into five subscales: 1. External motivation for improvement (4 statements) . claims). Statements are answered by expressing agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). According to the author of the instrument, its reliability expressed through Crombach's alpha is 0.83.

## **Results**

When tabulating the results related to teachers' answers about their attitudes towards the need for professional development, the answers are reduced to three categories: I don't agree (this category includes the answers I don't agree at all and I don't agree), I can't to decide, I agree (this category includes the answers completely agree and agree) and they are shown through percentages.

**Table 1**

Attitudes of teachers towards the need for professional development

<b>Attitude towards the motivation for professional development expressed in percentages</b>			
	Do not agree %	Not decisive %	Agree %
1. I am only interested in the mandatory seminars.	66.67	12.50	20.83
2. The reason for attending seminars is the number of hours I get in return.	75.00	16.67	8.33
3. I participate in seminars because the director expects it from me.	57.50	5.00	37.50
4. Professional development takes my time.	45.00	11.67	43.33
<b>Attitude towards self-initiative for professional improvement expressed in percentage</b>			
1. I independently identify the skills in which I need to improve.	41.67	17.49	40.84
2. I have a personal plan for professional development.	15.00	0.00	85.00
3. I independently try to find opportunities and ways to improve my skills and knowledge.	36.67	17.50	45.83
<b>Attitude towards the importance of professional development for the teaching profession expressed in percentages</b>			
1. The teaching profession requires continuous professional development	20.82	4.18	<b>75.00</b>
2. In the teaching profession, compared to other professions, constant professional development is important.	8.33	16.67	<b>75.00</b>
3. The teacher needs to improve professionally, regardless of whether someone else asks him to do so.	37.50	5.00	57.50
4. Every year I try to get involved in some organized type of professional development.	43.33	11.67	45.00
<b>Attitude towards the importance of professional development for quality assurance in teaching, expressed in percentages</b>			
1. The work can be performed successfully even without additional professional training.	33.34	25.00	41.66
2. I do not need additional professional training.	30.83	19.17	50.00
3. I would be a successful teacher without further training.	75.00	8.34	16.66
<b>Attitude towards following up-to-date achievements expressed in percentages</b>			
1. I keep up with the development of the subject area I teach.	40.84	14.16	45.00
2. I keep up with the development of modern teaching methods.	45.83	34.17	20.00
3. On my own initiative, I talk to colleagues and the director about career development.	12.50	1.66	85.84

Regarding the motivation for professional development for the largest number of teachers (75%), the reason for attending seminars is not the number of lessons they would receive in return. They are not only interested in mandatory seminars (66.67%), nor do they get involved in them because of the director's expectations (57.50%) and they do not agree that professional development takes their time (45.00%). The largest number of teachers (85%) have a personal plan for professional development and independently strive to find opportunities and ways to improve their skills and knowledge (45.83%). The largest number of teachers believe that the teaching profession requires constant professional development (75%). The largest number of teachers do not agree that they can be successful even without additional training (75%). Also, the largest number of teachers (85.84%) talk on their own initiative with their colleagues and the director regarding career development. These findings support Hypothesis 1 which postulated that-Teachers have a positive attitude towards professional development.

To test the hypotheses, the responses from the subscales are grouped into three categories: *awareness of the importance of professional development* (with a theoretical range of scores from 9 to 45), *motivation for improvement* (with a theoretical range of scores from 4 to 20) and *self-initiative for improvement* (with a theoretical range of scores from 4 to 20). By applying t-test and ANOVA, the significance of the differences in the attitudes of the teachers in terms of their gender and age was tested.

**Table 2**

Significance of differences between teachers of different genders in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for improvement and self-initiative for improvement

Awareness of the importance of professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	t	p
male	67	31.13	5.89	0.201	0.347
female	53	31.11	5.29		
Motivation for professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	t	p
male	67	7.96	3.56	-0.151	0.890
female	53	8.06	3.63		
Self-initiative for professional development					
gender	N	M	SD	t	p
male	67	13.22	4.42	1.807	0.437
female	53	11.64	4.62		

Teachers of different genders do not differ significantly in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development ( $t=0.201$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), motivation for improvement ( $t=0.151$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and self-initiative for improvement ( $t=1.807$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

**Table 3**

Significance of differences between teachers of different ages in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development, motivation for improvement and self-initiative for improvement

Awareness of the importance of professional development – ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	30.19	Between the groups	10.311	15	0.687	0.732	0.779
35-44	34	31.50	In the groups	102.056	104	0.981		
45-54	42	30.76	Total	112.367	119			
55-62/64	12	30.33						

Awareness of the importance of motivation for professional development – ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	9.08	Between the groups	8.891	11	0.808	0.494	0.903
35-44	34	6.88	In the groups	176.576	108	1.635		
45-54	42	8.19	Total	185.476	119			
55-62/64	12	7.58						

Self-initiative professional development ANOVA								
Age	N	M	Source of variation	SS	df	Middle square	F	p
25-34	32	13.00	Between the groups	8.907	13	0.685	0.702	0.758
35-44	34	11.26	In the groups	103.460	106	0.976		
45-54.	42	13.26	Total	112.367	119			
55-62/64	12	12.25						

The values of the F-test show that in terms of awareness of the importance of professional development ( $F=0.732$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), motivation for improvement ( $F=0.494$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and self-initiative for improvement ( $F=0.702$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) no statistically significant differences were determined between teachers of different ages. However, it can be concluded that the awareness of the importance of motivation for professional development is greatest among employees aged 25-34, the awareness of the importance of professional development is greatest among teachers aged 35-44, and the self-initiative for improvement is the largest among teachers aged 45-54. These findings do not support Hypothesis 2—which postulated that: Female teachers and younger teachers have a more pronounced need for professional development compared to male teachers and older teachers.

## Conclusion

Most educational reforms recognize that teachers are the most important agent in those reforms. The role of the teacher in educational reforms – as a subject and as an object of change – contributes to the professional development of teachers being a challenge for research. In this context, Kostović and Oljača (2012) indicate that the management of changes in the school in modern conditions is the most important strategy for professional development and for achieving

quality at all levels of the educational system. If the introduction of changes is a priority for the school, then the entire team must be activated to identify the needs for changes, the pressures and resistances that will appear in relation to the changes, the content of the changes and the implementation process in their own work and in the work of everyone a member of the collective.

In addition to the mentioned changes in the macro context (institutional and personal changes), requests for changes in the approach to education and for teacher training are also being initiated. Since the teacher's roles are changing and expanding it is necessary that he be ready to become familiar with those roles and accept them. Considering that the quality of the school is imperative to the reforms in education, it is necessary through the policy of education, as well as through the improvement of the specific conditions in the schools, to enable the teachers to develop professionally, learn and improve.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CAREER GUIDANCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Abstract:** The process of career guidance helps the individual to know the requirements of the market (society) and includes awareness of student's interests, abilities and competencies. In Croatia, career guidance is also known as professional orientation and the importance of it is

unquestionable in the lower levels of education also, which is the focus of the empirical part of this paper. As part of the project Pedagogy of relationships in educational institutions in the (post) pandemic period (Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), a research was conducted to determine different criteria for choosing a profession and differentiate students interests, opportunities and potential. The goal of the research was approached from students' and teachers' perspectives. The methodological approach of the empirical part is quantitative-qualitative (mixed methods research). The student's perspective was examined through a questionnaire that contains questions of the student's perception of future career path. Qualitative methodology refers to interviews with teachers about professional orientation. The questionnaire and interviews followed after all participants read the didactic material „What will I be when I grow up?“ and after conducting pedagogical workshops designed for this research. The experiences of students and teachers in this research prompted further reflections on the potential and importance of early professional orientation as well as the challenges that arise from it. The student's interests should be followed with appropriate guidelines from the existing curriculum, but also with parental support, all so that professional orientation in the final grades is just a stamp on the entire process of professional orientation.

**Keywords:** Career guidance, Professional orientation, Interests

## Introduction

The process of career guidance helps the individual to know the requirements of the market (society) and includes awareness of student's interests, abilities and competencies. In Croatia, for career guidance it is used the term *professional orientation* and the importance of it is unquestionable in the lower levels of education as well. Most activities for career guidance are carried out in the 8th grade in the elementary school, possibly in 7th grade. This is also one of the shortcomings of it and it should have been applied much earlier in school age because the process of preparing for some future occupations begins in early childhood, i.e. from preschool age and does not end in 8th grade, but continues in a one's life for as long as one requires the process of career development/guidance (Strugar and Ćorak, 2016).

Perry and VanZandt (1999, as cited in Raković, 2015) distinguish two basic types of career guidance/development theories, namely structural and developmental theories. Structural theories of professional development are based on the understanding that the individual seeks to find an occupation most similar to his characteristics, abilities, values and interests. Developmental theories view the choice of occupation as a process that extends through different developmental stages in an individual's life. Accordingly, the choice of occupation is not a fateful decision, but part of a lifelong process. Furthermore, it is as important in the early stage of one's life as in one's adulthood. Among the developmental theories of career guidance/development, the most famous are Ginzberg's theory of career choice and Super's theory of career development. In the mid-20th century, Ginzberg was the first to view professional development as a process that spans various developmental stages in an individual's life. Pajević (1985, as cited in Raković, 2015) states that in Ginzberg's theory of career choice, there are three main periods of the career choice process – the period of fantasy, the period of “rehearsal” and the period of realism. The basic criteria for distinguishing these periods is the way in which the individual turns his needs and interests into the choice of occupation. The first period, the fantasy period, covers the age of 6 to 11 years and it is highlighted due to the needs of this paper. During this period, children's interests are focused on occupations in which there are elements of play and which are in accordance with their wishes. It is characteristic of this period that children choose their future jobs from their internal motives only.

Career guidance helps students to understand and to know self-understanding and self-direction. It helps in understanding one's strengths and limitations. Furthermore, it is needed for

academic and both society growth and for social and personal development of one's life (Roy, 2020). Career guidance is a process that is very important because the decisions about choice occupations or further education are very important in the life of an individual (Šverko, 2012). It can refer to students in the final grades of elementary or high school and in both cases greatly affects students. However, career guidance is important from an early age. In this paper, the emphasis is placed on 3rd grade elementary school students because there are many extracurricular activities, hobbies and electives in elementary school that shape decisions for high school. Counseling students on the choice of school is, first of all, the responsibility of the schools themselves, e.g. when students move to high schools or faculty or job market.

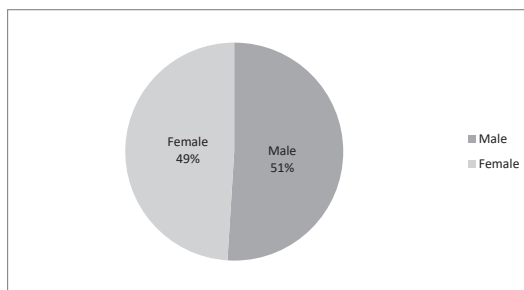
Career guidance is important in the Republic of Croatia and it is necessary that every educational institution enables its students to have a process of career guidance or as it is called in Croatia, *professional orientation* (Dubravac Šigir, 2011). Career guidance in elementary schools in Croatia often generally starts in the final grades (7th and 8th grade) and includes various workshops by pedagogue or psychologist and/or class teachers. It also includes education of students and parents on further educational opportunities and individual counseling for students. Elementary schools cooperate with employment services and other institutions, all with the aim of timely and valid information and career guidance of students. Elementary school often invites employees and high school students to present their school for interested students. Career guidance is often just mentioned in the beginning of one's education, from 1st to 4th grade of elementary school. Perin (2012) indicates that most activities related to career guidance are institutionalized and organized. However, the task of organized career guidance also represents the responsibility of the school because the school is the institution where the formal education starts and in which the foundations are laid for lifelong professional development.

## Method and Goal of the Research

The goal of the research was approached from students' and teachers' perspectives. The methodological approach of the empirical part is quantitative-qualitative (mixed methods research) because the phenomenon is better and more accurate if it is observed from different points of view (Mužić, 2004, as cited in Kušević, 2013). The participants in the research are 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from three elementary schools from Zagreb and Pula. A total of 132 students participated, 67 male and 65 female students (Graph 1).

### Graph 1

Participants (male and female students)



Given the findings of previous research similar or with the same topic, this paper will try to expand the knowledge of early career guidance in elementary school. A research was conducted to differentiate students' interests, opportunities and potential. The goal of the research was approached from students' perspectives. The methodological approach of the empirical part is

quantitative-qualitative. The student's perspective was examined through a questionnaire about student's perception of future occupation. The questionnaire followed after all participants read the didactic material "What will I be when I grow up?". The questionnaire is a reliable method that helps students to express their intuitive information (Mužić, 2004) that can help in major decisions regarding education and student well-fare. It contains nine questions about their interests, opportunities and potential. Furthermore, it examines with whom they talked the most about their future occupation, what are their hobbies and what they want to be when they grow up.

In order to achieve the goal of the research, the following hypotheses were set:

H<sub>1</sub>: Students show a positive direction of attitudes towards personal positive potential.

H<sub>2</sub>: The participants in the research can see the consistency of peer and personal assessment.

H<sub>3</sub>: The most frequent conversations about future occupation are with someone from the family.

H<sub>4</sub>: The alignment of students' hobbies and their choice of future potential occupation is visible.

Independent variable is the sex of the students.

Qualitative methodology refers to semi-structured interviews with six teachers about professional orientation. The research questions are:

Q<sub>1</sub>: What is the importance of early career guidance?

Q<sub>2</sub>: Are the students aware of their potential for future career development?

## Results and Discussion

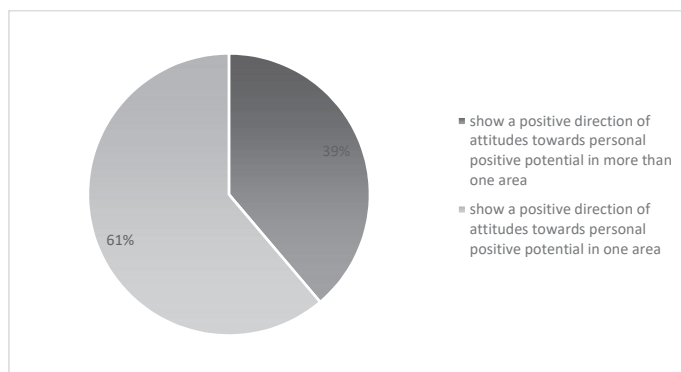
H<sub>1</sub>: Students show a positive direction of attitudes towards personal positive potential

All 132 students, 67 male students and all 65 female students, show a positive direction of attitudes towards personal positive potential by stating what they are good at. Every student recognizes their potential in at least one area (sports, art, ...), while some recognize it in more than one area. Out of a total of 67 male students, 41 students show a positive direction of attitudes towards personal positive potential in one area, while the other 26 male students recognize their potential in more than one area (Graph 2). On the other hand, out of a total of 65 female students, 26 of them show a positive direction of attitudes towards personal positive potential in one area, while the other 39 female students recognize their potential in more than one area (Graph 3).

Overall, all students show a positive direction of attitude towards personal positive potential, so the 1<sup>st</sup> hypotheses is confirmed.

### Graph 2

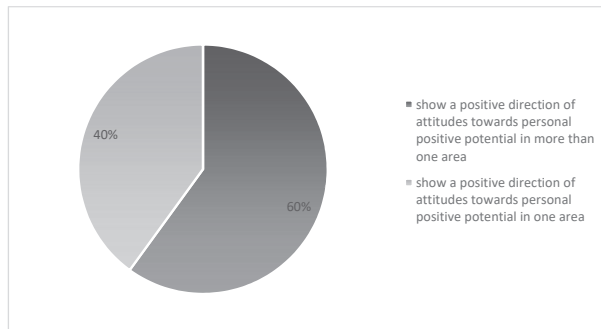
Male students recognizing their potential





### Graph 3

Female students recognizing their potential

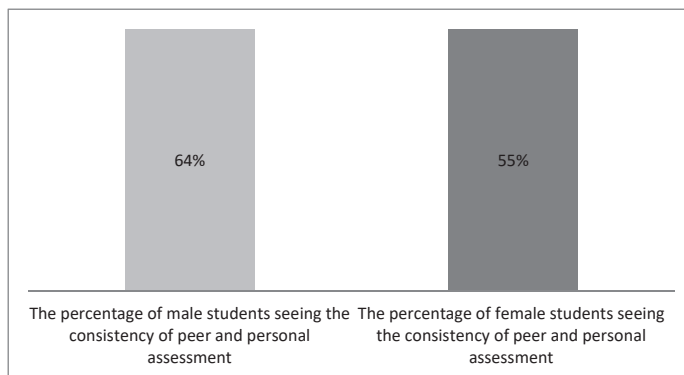


H<sub>2</sub>: The participants in the research can see the consistency of peer and personal assessment

Out of a total of 132 students, 79 of them see the consistency of peer and personal assessment by stating the potential in the same area or areas. Out of total 67 male students, 43 students see the consistency of peer and personal assessment and out of 65 female students, 36 of them see the consistency of peer and personal assessment (Graph 4). Overall, the second hypothesis is partially confirmed.

### Graph 4

The consistency of peer and personal assessment

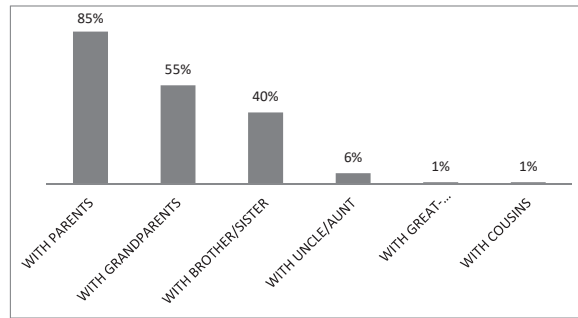


H<sub>3</sub>: The most frequent conversations about future occupation are with someone from the family

In this question, students could choose and/or write more than one answer. The results show that students talk about their future occupation mostly with members of their family. Specifically, out of a total of 67 male students, 57 of them talked to their parents about their future occupation. Of the 65 female students, 56 of them talked to their parents about their future occupation. Next, 37 male and 37 female students selected both grandparents when asked who they were talking to about future occupations. 27 male students and 29 female students discuss this topic with their brother and/or sister. In addition to the offered answers, students could choose if they talked to someone else about their future occupation and 4 male students wrote uncle/aunt, 1 male student wrote great-grandmother. 1 male and 2 female students also mentioned their cousins as someone with whom they talked about their future occupation (Graph 5 and Graph 6). All in all, this hypothesis is confirmed because students really did choose someone from their family as someone whom they talk to about future occupation, instead of choosing other ones like teachers, pedagogue and/or friends.

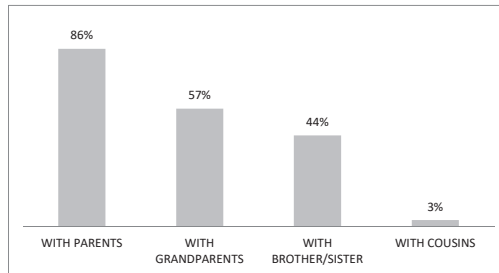
**Graph 5**

The most frequent conversations about future occupation for male students



**Graph 6**

The most frequent conversations about future occupation for female students

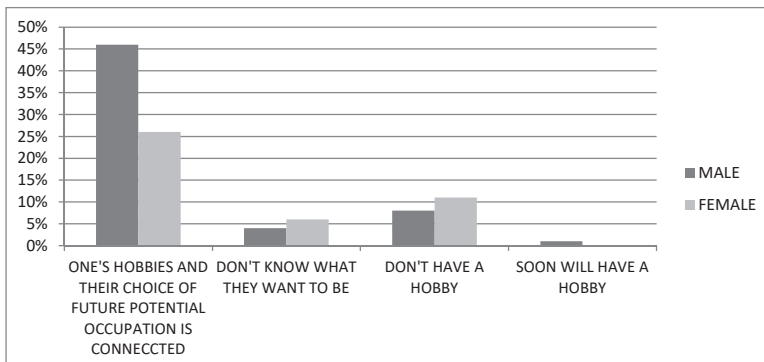


H4: The alignment of students' hobbies and their choice of future potential occupation is visible

Out of a total of 67 male students, 31 students show the alignment of one's hobbies and their choice of future potential occupation. 3 students do not know what they want to be when they grow up, 6 students do not have a hobby so it is not possible to determine the required and 1 student stated that he will soon have a hobby, so it is not possible to determine the compatibility of hobbies and future potential occupations either. Out of a total of 65 female students, 17 female students show the alignment of one's hobbies and their choice of future potential occupation. 4 students do not know what they want to be when they grow up, and 7 of them did not mention any hobby, so it is not possible to determine the required. Overall, the hypothesis is partially confirmed (Graph 7).

**Graph 7**

Matching of students' hobbies and future potential occupation



Regarding the research questions, the interviews showed the following results:

Q<sub>1</sub>: What is the importance of early career guidance?

According to the first teacher interviewed, children should recognize their potential from an early age and direct themselves in a certain direction according to the potential and tendencies of what they love, even though they are not yet profiled. The second one highlights the importance of early career development due to importance of seeing and realizing what are children's real abilities because now they are oriented only according to their desires that often are not corresponding to their real abilities. Next teacher points out that it is up to school to teach students to discover new worlds and then guide them with more detail towards higher education and future occupation. This teacher also points out that it is necessary to keep up with the everyday changes because there will also be new professions, so it is a complex process and it may happen that the needs for career guidance will be different. Interviews further show that career guidance is important due to recognizing students' interests so that it does not happen that parents live their dreams through their children (and neglect their real potential). The last teacher in the interview says that the early career guidance is important, but in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade in elementary school, not sooner. The reason for this is that the younger don't have so much focus on their real potential.

Q<sub>2</sub>: Are the students aware of their potential for future career development?

All six teachers say that there are students that are aware, and some that are not. They mostly struggle to decide just upon one area they are good at.

Overall, this paper shows different criteria for choosing a profession and differentiates students' interests, opportunities and potential. All students show a positive direction of attitude towards personal positive potential. Almost 60% of the students see the consistency of peer and personal assessment. Furthermore, students talk to someone from their family about future occupation, instead of ones like teachers, pedagogue and/or friends. The connection between their hobbies and future potential occupation partially exists. The teachers' statements about the students' recognition of potential coincide with the previously mentioned data and teachers do recognize the importance of early career guidance.

## **Conclusion**

The labor market has never been as competitive as it is today with the global market. In order for students to contribute to their society one day, it is important that they find their niche of action in accordance with their own possibilities and potentials. This research raises awareness of the importance of an early onset of career guidance. The hypotheses show that students talk and think about their potentials and future occupation. It is evident that students themselves are aware of their potentials and strengths, and the role of the school would be to help the student discover some potential that one may not be aware of. Interestingly, in most cases, family members are a source of information about potential future occupations, while certain knowledge and skills they need for these occupations are acquired mainly in schools. Given that the school, as a large consumer of the average student's time, has an educational role, it should take responsibility for providing support and guidance to students. Moreover, according to today's conditions for enrolment in secondary school, it is crucial to have good grades already in the fifth grade, so it is important to encourage career development even before that. One of the biggest objections to modern schooling is that it is not in line with the needs of society and it values knowledge that is not useful to the student for the future. The future of the student, as well as his future employment, should be the main area of interest of every school. In order to know how to stimulate the potential of an individual student, it is necessary to first recognize him, and then direct him. It is in this place that the idea of early career guidance builds its foundation.

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## THE TEACHER THROUGH THE PRISM OF EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY

**Abstract:** The role of the teacher today is changing diametrically, especially if viewed through the prism of effective pedagogy that includes a number of aspects such as understanding, comprehension, belief, ability to act, manage, achieve various long-term and short-term goals, strategies, techniques, design of the curriculum, but also taking care of inclusiveness, motivation, innovation, consistency, transparency and quality assurance, and the like.

The aim of the paper is to understand the interdependence of the teacher as a person and a professional with the assumptions for achieving effective realization of upbringing and education. The research is a combination of theoretical and practical basis, through the application of qualitative and quantitative approach and appropriate research techniques and instruments. The obtained results indicate the importance and connection of the professionalism and personality of the teacher with the assumptions, principles, elements and approaches of effective pedagogy, as well as the success and quality of the stated approach.

The conclusions, among other things, refer to certain important aspects that presuppose a responsible and conscientious approach of the teacher, but also of the students and other stakeholders in learning, teaching and education.

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Personality, Teacher, Effective pedagogy.

## Introduction

In various countries, a series of research related to the success and quality of education and the educational system have been carried out, taking into account various aspects (in accordance

with national needs and detecting strengths and weaknesses) of the educational system, in order to be able to legitimately intervene in improving them. At the center of various approaches to treating the issue of quality of education, there is always the teacher, as a professional but also as a person who advocates and is motivated to be good, efficient and quality in his work and actions. So, as Barber stated that when we talk about effective pedagogy, it is inevitable that “the quality of the educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007:13), that is, that “the best school systems are those that they have the best teachers” (ibid.).

Regarding effective pedagogy, there are a number of different points of view, partly due to different interpretations of the term pedagogy, partly due to different opinions about the aspects that are important for achieving quality in upbringing and education, as well as partly due to different approaches to the various aspects in which they are actually education “happens”. But in all previous researches and interpretations of the issue of effective pedagogy, a large number of authors, researchers in this direction, agree on one issue, and that is the role, performance, professionalism and quality of the teacher.

### **Certain Aspects of Effective Pedagogy and the Role of the Teacher**

According to previous researches, the term effective pedagogy means a series of aspects that actually affect the quality of teaching, learning, the climate and management of the classroom, the choice of innovative strategies, techniques, approaches to teaching, the way of valuing and evaluating, developing social relations in classroom, inclusion and transparency, developing higher level thinking and metacognition among students, involving the entire classroom in developing abilities for structured group work, individual activity and initiative.

In relation to the teacher, effective pedagogy is based on the development of teacher competencies as well as on the development of students in the school context (Coates & Pimlott-Wilson, 2019; Hetherington, & Wegerif, 2018), in that the beliefs and values held by the teacher they play a significant role not only for their own growth and development, but also in building relationships with others, primarily with students (James & Pollard, 2011). According to Gess-Newsome, Taylor, Carlson, Gardner, Wilson, & Stuhlsatz (2019) a teacher’s ability to change, innovate and reform his teaching is a significant part of having an effective pedagogy, as well as everything the teacher does in the classroom situation (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). Such a teacher, who is brave, self-efficient in choosing strategies, techniques in the teaching and learning process, managing the classroom, as well as in involving the students, contributes to the change and development of the students themselves, initiating cooperative learning and work, classroom discussions (Hafnidar, Harniati, Hailemaria, & Handrianto, 2021) and involving students in the learning and development process itself. A characteristic of effective pedagogy is the development of questions by the teacher about the effective strategy for the ongoing improvement of students (Rita & Handrianto, 2020; Taufiqurrochman, Muslimin, Rofiki, & Abah, 2020). Thus, effective pedagogy is connected with the development of value learning, that is, teaching based on values, as well as for the holistic achievements of the student (Zeng, 2020). Values are a significant element of effective pedagogy, because they actually represent the core of upbringing and education, which on the other hand transforms not only students and teachers, but also the wider community (Dierich & Hamsher, 2020).

Effective pedagogy includes the application of various and numerous strategies and techniques that contribute to quality upbringing and education, but there are no ready-made and unchanging instructions for the application of the same because there are no “magic bullets” in relation to strategies in the classroom (Muijs, 2010:23). While in relation to monitoring, assessment and evaluation according to effective pedagogy, “Achievement should be interpreted in terms of the power of effort, not the limits of abilities” (DfE, 2011:45). **Another important aspect of effective**

pedagogy is the inclusion of students “... in educational decision-making and serious listening to their stories of experiences as students [are] essential first steps in the development of education” (Niemi, Heikkinen & Kannas, 2012:139). Accordingly, “schools are likely to perform better if students are motivated to accept binding decisions and/or if they perceive that decisions are made fairly” (Gilljam, Esaïsson and Lindholm, 2012:75).

### Conducted Research

For a closer treatment of the mentioned pedagogical issues, a quantitative and qualitative research was conducted, using a research technique survey-scaler and semi-directive interview. The conducted research is with a sample of 180 teachers (survey-scaler) and 25 teachers (semi-directive interview) from elementary education, from five different cities, selected by random choice, from lower grade – classroom teaching and upper grade – subject teaching, from different cities, working experience and language of instruction (Macedonian and Albanian language of instruction). As a method of research is used descriptive method, through several approaches appropriate to the nature of the research. The purpose of the conducted research is to examine the opinions and attitudes of teachers about certain aspects of effective pedagogy translated into their educational and educational work.

### Results and Discussion

By applying the research technique questionnaire-scaler, the following aspects were investigated:

**Table 1**

Teachers from class and subject teaching

	Aspects	Teaching – classroom and subject teaching						Total
		Classroom teaching (lower grade)			Subject teaching (upper grade)			
		never	sometimes	always	never	sometimes	always	
1	<b>Independently chooses strategies and techniques</b>	2 1,1%	13 7,2%	69 38,3%	4 2,2%	63 35,0%	29 16,1%	180 100%
	$X^2=49,307$ ; st.sig 0,000							
2	<b>Care of communication</b>	0 0,0%	12 6,7%	72 40,0%	0 0,0%	53 29,4%	43 23,9%	180 100%
	$X^2=32,519$ ; st.sign.0,000							
3	<b>It encourages shared decision-making</b>	0 0,0%	31 17,2%	53 29,4%	7 3,9%	71 39,4%	18 10,0%	180 100%
	$X^2=39,315$ ; st.sign.0,000							

4	<b>Motivates students</b>	0 0,0%	7 3,9%	77 42,8%	0 0,0%	40 22,2%	56 31,1%	180 100%
	$X^2=25,801$ ; st.sign.0,000							
5	<b>Individual approach in assessment and evaluation</b>	16 8,9%	45 25,0%	23 12,8%	47 26,1%	40 22,2%	9 5,0%	180 100%
	$X^2=20,966$ ; st.sign.0,000							
6	<b>Inclusivity</b>	0 0,0%	4 2,2%	80 44,4%	2 1,1%	37 20,6	57 31,7%	180 100%
	$X^2= 31,763$ ; st.sign.0,000							
7	<b>Encourages cooperation between students</b>	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	84 46,7%	0 0,0%	36 20,0%	60 33,3%	180 100%
	$X^2= 39,375$ ; st.sign.0,000							
8	<b>Supports a positive climate</b>	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	84 46,7%	1 0,6%	42 23,3%	53 29,4%	180 100%
	$X^2= 49,434$ ; st.sign.0,000							

When observing the mentioned aspects of effective pedagogy through the prism of the teacher, we can conclude that for all investigated categories of aspects we have the emergence of statistically significant differences between teachers from lower grade- classroom teaching and subject teaching. Namely, out of a total of 180 teachers (of which 84 teachers from classroom teaching and 96 teachers from subject teaching), the teachers from lower grade-classroom teaching show to a greater extent beliefs and convictions in accordance with the principles and commitments of effective pedagogy. In relation to the researched aspects of independent selection of strategies and techniques for teaching and learning, as well as in relation to the individual approach to evaluating the achievements of students, we can also see the influence of gaining more self-confidence of teachers from lower grades – classroom teaching, as a result of a series of factors starting from the greater number and diversity of participation and follow-up of innovative professional trainings, as well as shared learning from each other within other colleagues and professionals. They are also in greater numbers involved in various trainings, reform efforts, innovative programs and the like, as well as because of the nature of working with students, in contrast. of subject teachers where such trainings, as well as the methods of pedagogical approach to their overall educational work, are characterized more by improving the program content than by the pedagogical components and aspects of the teacher's educational activity. Regarding the category of the selected sample, we do not have the appearance of statistically significant differences between the researched categories, which confirms the previous conclusions that the method of initial and other training of primary school teachers, as well as due to the nature of their work, have better quality and higher pedagogical performance that goes in favor of effective pedagogy.

In terms of the applied technique, a semi-directive interview, which was carried out with a total of 25 teachers (15 teachers from lower grade-classroom teaching and 10 teachers from subject teaching), the hypotheses were confirmed in relation to the familiarity of teachers from lower grade-classroom teaching with the understanding of the role of the teacher according to effective pedagogy, in contrast to subject teachers.

## Conclusion

So far, the commitment to the quality of education, including effective pedagogy, has moved in the direction of improving teaching, learning, applied strategies, techniques, approaches to teaching, taking care of the development of good relations in the classroom, development of cooperation, team spirit, creativity, taking equal account of each student individually, of individual needs, inclusiveness, then having good strategies for monitoring, valuing and evaluating, classroom management, resources of all kinds, socio-economic, cultural and other needs and demands of students and their parents and families, as well as taking into account the overall school and educational context. And all that is of special importance and has a special value. However, an important segment is represented by the teacher, his value system, beliefs and behavior. Namely, although there are various views regarding the influence and changing of the teacher's beliefs and behavior, whether due to changing the practices in the classroom and the school, or whether they are related and dependent on changing the beliefs, because they act as reasons for action, i.e. changing the behavior, however, the majority of authors agree that they are based on learning and that they develop in an interdependence that happens progressively, if the teacher is "open" to new knowledge, skills, abilities, acceptance of other perspectives, needs, etc. This is exactly what paves the way to achieving quality in education real life.

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## **SKOPJE MADRASAS IN THE OTTOMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (XV-XVI CENTURY)**

**Abstract:** With the arrival of the Ottomans in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the territory of today's Macedonian state, mektebs and madrasas were the most essential elements of the entire educational system in that period. The mektebs functioned as Ottoman primary schools connected to mosques and masjids where literacy courses were organized for Muslim children, spread across neighborhoods and populated areas with a larger Muslim population. With the emergence of waqf properties as a result of the consolidation of power through the formation of stable economic and trade relations, the functioning of madrasas, i.e., Ottoman high schools for the Muslim population, began.

The purpose of this paper is to present the educational structure of madrasas in Skopje in the XV-XVI century. Based on the archival documents, I will give a clear picture of the education in the madrasas, the founders of the most famous madrasas in Skopje, the curriculum and the studied subjects, as well as the fund of books in the madrasa's libraries, for the teaching and administrative staff and students, as well as for the buildings themselves as architecturally independent buildings or as part of waqf complexes.

**Keywords:** Education, Mekteb, Madrasa, Waqf, Library

### **Introduction**

Today's Macedonian state was considered as one of the most important regions in the Balkan lands of the Ottoman state, and in every region, especially in Skopje, as well as in Bitola, due to their strategic position, many religious, educational, social and economic institutions were built.

Evliya Celebi is one of the best sources that describes Skopje in a best way. According to his records, in the city there were 70 neighborhoods, 10060 houses, 45 mosques in which Friday worship was conducted, 120 masjids and mosques, madrasa, whose number is not mentioned only two of them are named, 9 darulkura, 70 mektebs-schools, 20 dervish lodges, 110 fountains, number of hamams-baths not specified, 7 karvansaray, 1 bedesten, 14-eyed bridge. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 246-247)

Madrasas, which were especially established to train officials/administrators, such as *kadi*, known as judges that in accordance of Islamic law were running on judicial cases and were the main part of the central administration possessing a certain degree of autonomy, (Jennings, 1979), *müderris* known as professor or religious scholar, (Boğaç, 2003: 26), and *müftü*, an expert who possesses a wide knowledge of Islamic legal theory and providing legal advice or nonbinding legal opinion-fetwa to Muslim population, (Swartz, 2009), were responsible in ensuring the spread of Ottoman justice and tolerance in Balkans. (Belge, 2005: 215)

Madrasas are foundation complexes constituting a complete education and training institution with dormitories to accommodate students, a library for their study, research and reading books, bathrooms for cleaning, a kitchen to provide food, etc. (Akyüz, 2010: 76)

The construction of a mosque and alongside it a madrasa had become a tradition in places conquered by the Ottomans, in the integral part of their policy of conquest. This tradition was in order to provide the needed religious, scientific and educational services for society and the state and train the administrative staff for the state administration. This tradition ensured a strong central administration in the state.

It is important to mention that the inclusion of madrasas as an official institution in the state system in the Ottoman state was during the period of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror.

## Method of Research

The method of content analysis will be used to accurately study and find the key answers to our research aim. The contents of archival documents as well as literature up to now published on the subject will be analyzed. So, by analyzing the qualitative characteristics of the contents, we will describe for a certain period of time in a certain place, with precision and objectivity, exactly how it was the educational system in Skopje Madrasas during the Ottoman Ruling. Moreover, this research will be presented in a narrative form through the processing and analysis of archival documents and historical literature poured into a form of a scientific paper.

## Results and Discussion

Education in the Ottoman State has been carried out in official institutions such as madrasas that were considered to be one of the foremost sources for science in general, and in unofficial institutions where informal education was conducted such as in mosques, libraries, lodges of wealthy people and state administrators as well as in tekke and zawiya. (İhsanoğlu, 1998: II:230)

The creation of the educational network of schools and madrasas in Ottoman Macedonia is closely related to the waqf institutions. Many madrasas were built in different cities of Macedonia throughout the Ottoman history. In the early Ottoman period, Isa Bey was one of the greatest Balkan feudal lords with vast movable and immovable property. From Isa Bey's waqfname we can understand how great was his wealth. Not only him but here I would like to mention as well as Ishak Bey and Mustafa Pasa people who founded madrasas following their names.

The madrasa architecture mainly could be within the scope of a complex building or built as independent buildings, but each having the basic structural elements dersane called as classrooms, student cells or rooms and masjids. Depending on financial resources they could also include garden, library, tomb, kitchen, pool, fountain, toilet, stairs, etc. in their structure. (Akgündüz, 1997:476)

Müderris and *muid* known as assistant, were the teaching members of madrasa and students were called as *talebe* who after graduation would become a clerk in a large mansion, kadi or muderris. (Imber, 2002:229) So that, after completion of the basic education the maktebs, students who wished to specialize in a particular field of study would follow muderrises well known in that area and get lessons and obtain a license, *icazetname*, from them. It was the muderris who was the fundamental element in the license, a document that would indicate the nature of the study completed and the pedigree of the muderrises-professors issuing the degree, though not in the name of the madrasa where the education had taken place. (Imber, 2002: 228), (Baltacı, 1976: 34), (İhsanoğlu, 1998: II:233) In other words, in the madrasa it was the professor which was in the forefront. So that, if the daily wage of the muderris was twenty – twenty five *akçe*, the madrasa was of a degree of *twenties*, the daily wage of thirty – thirty five *akçe* it was of a degree of

*thirties*, with daily wage of forty akçe, it was a degree of *forties*, daily wage of fifty akçe was a madrasa of a degree of *fifties* and madrasas in which mostly the Ottoman Sultans, prince mothers and princes as well as where sultan's daughters were educated, the daily wage of the muderris was of sixty akçe, so that this madrasa was with a degree of *sixties*, and it was the highest level of education in ottoman madrasa. (Uzunçarşılı, 1965: 11) The degree of the madrasa was determining the curricula of the madrasa. The courses taught in madrasahs could be divided into three groups. Juziyat, these are the lessons of mathematics, engineering, social subjects, the second group of ilm-i aliye, these are rhetoric, logic and Arabic sarf and nahwi, and the third group consists of tafsir, hadith and fiqh. (Parmaksızoğlu, 1966: 10) Large number of students were educated in this way in the madrasahs and under the instruction of famous scholars, came to constitute a new community of educated people in the Islamic world.

In the 15th century, four lessons a day, and in the 16th century, five lessons were taught in Ottoman madrasahs. In other sources, it is stated that the number of lessons per day could differ, and there were some with one or two lessons a day, as well as some others who do ten lessons. (Bilge, 1984: 22) Class divisions were made according to the books and courses taught, and the professors were assigned to the courses according to their grades. (Yaltkaya, 1940: 463-467)

There were 12 active madrasahs in Skopje in 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century recorded in archival documents and historical resources we have reached up to now. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 291) In this paper some will be only mentioned by their names and their archival documents where they appear, and some of them will only be shortly mentioned with some specific information. Whereas the main attention will be given to Isa Bey Madrasa which has been the only one in Skopje that continues its activities with the same name until today.

Meddah Baba Madrasa: There is no exact information about when Meddah Baba Madrasa for sure was built but it could be considered that it was built during the ruling of Pasha Yiğit, the conqueror of Skopje, so that this madrasa is accepted to be one of the oldest madrasahs in Skopje. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 247)

Important muderris names in the State archival documents who lectured in later period were Ataullah Efendi Kurtish, (Aruçi, 2002: 191), and Fettah Efendi Rauf. (Aruçi, 1995: 483-484)

Ishak Bey Madrasa: in vaqfnama which dates to 848/1444-45 it was stated that the Ishak Bey mosque was built in 842/1438-39, so was the madrasa as well. (Özer, 2006: 292) However, there is no trace of the madrasa today. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 258) Very famous professors i.e muderrises graduated from here.

Sultan Murad Madrasa: This madrasa was built when the mosque was built in the first half of the XV. Century. The madrasah was made of stone bricks. It is the only madrasah whose ruins have survived until today. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 258), (Kumbaracı-Bogoyeviç, 2008: 52)

Mustafa Pasha Madrasa: was built by Mustafa Pasha, who had a mosque, imarethane, madrasa and tomb in Skopje. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 263) The madrasa was built the same year when the mosque was also built. In Evliya Celebi's travel book this madrasa is mentioned as one of the most famous ones in Skopje. (Çelebi, 1315: V: 556)

Not only these but there are also other madrasahs to be mentioned as well, such as Atiye Binti Yaşar Bey Madrasa, (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 290) Hacı Hasan İbn-i Ali Madrasa, (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 290), Hacı İsmail Ağa Madrasa, (Özer, 2006: 291), Burmalı Madrasa (Süreyya, 1996: IV: 109), (Çelebi, 1315: V: 556), but I would like to give the main attention on Isa Bey Medresa.

Isa Bey Madrasa is one of the most famous places in Skopje mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's Travel Book. A record of the existence of the Isa-bey's medres was found in 1469 in the certification of his waqf i.e *vakifname*. It states that Isa-bey built a medresa with ten departments, and a tekke near it. His large estate was completed by: the Chifte Hammam and the shops near it; the nineteen shops in front of the hammam connected to his father Ishak-bey's bedesten, and the Kaplan Han with the shops around it, all these were built in order to support the madrasa.

Other important part of the educational system of madrasas were the libraries for which historians say that those libraries were also the first educational institutions in the Balkans. In every larger mosque in Macedonia, there was a library as well. The oldest waqf documents from the XV century, written about by Hasan Kalesi and Gliša Elezović, contain valuable information about the manuscripts that were kept in several libraries. (Kaleši, 1972), (Kaleši, 1962: No.4: 274), (Elezović, 1940).

Isa Bey Library was part of the madrasa founded by Isa-bey, after whom it is named. Same as the madrasa this library dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it is one of the libraries for which there are several texts so far written. More importantly to mention is about the book heritage which is an inseparable part of the religious life of Muslims, because until recent times, books or, more precisely, manuscripts were kept in special rooms that were located in the complex of mosques, tekke and madrasahs, the number of which in Macedonia, and especially in Skopje, is very high. (Kaleši, 1972: 196).

In the Isa Bey library, there was also an employee, more precisely, a librarian whose task was to take care of the books and he received two *akçe* a day. Isa Bey's vakifname is also the first document in the Balkans that mentions a librarian. (Elezovic, 1940: 140).

Moreover, Isa-bey gave all his books. It was a rich fund of manuscripts on various subjects. The book fund consisted of A total of 325 volumes and 218 books, making this medrese one of the richest libraries on the Balkans. Most of these books had religious nature, however some of the books were about astronomy, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, and so on.

The Isa Bey Medresa has, since its establishment until today, stopped working several times, because the building of the Medresa has been ruined in the war and in other accidents. The first time when it stopped working was in 1689, when the Austrian general Piccolomini, (Инбаши, 2020: 88) with his army burned Skopje. Ruins of the walls of its building, after this destruction, were saved until the beginning of the Second World War. In 1932, on the initiative of the religious leaders and intellectuals from that period, Isa Beg Medresa was restored, so that in 1936 conditions were created to begin with regular work of the madrasa as well as its library. (ДАРСМ 01.0613.0102.0059/0599-0602). The opening of the madrasah and the library was signed by then Naib of the Islamic Religious Community, and archived on September 2, 1936, representatives of the madjlis were invited to attend the opening ceremony of these two inseparable institutions. (ДАРСМ 01.0613.0102.0008/195).

After the Second World War it stopped the activities again for a longer period, until 1979, when the Islamic Religious Community made a decision for it to be built again, so that in the academic year 1984/85 the educational process began. Now, on the basis of the needs, the Medresa is enlarged with several additional classes for girls that are located in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar as well as a class for boys in Stip.

It should be emphasized that the Medresa Isa bey in Skopje celebrates this year 553rd anniversary from its existence, and that this institution is one of the oldest on the Balkans Peninsula.

## Conclusion

The educational organization of madrasas within the borders of the Ottoman State during the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century was at a very good level. There were more than eighty madrasas founded in the territory of today's Macedonian state. The system of vaqfs especially demonstrates the seriousness of these educational organizations since it was providing a free education, accommodation, daily wages for Muslim children and was covering the expanses of madrasas. The degree of the madrasa was determining the curricula of the madrasa which was related to how much daily wage the muderris was getting. So that it was the muderris, i.e., professor in the forefront and in the certificate, it was indicated the nature of the study completed and the pedigree of the

muderrises-professors issuing the degree. Very important scholars were giving education in these madrasas which later were raising educated people able to serve as administrators at the highest level of state administration. Other important part of the educational system of madrasas were the libraries that are considered to be the first educational institutions in the Balkans. In every larger mosque in Macedonia, there was a library. Libraries were also present as a branch of most of the madrasas so that they were actively functioning to serve mainly to students and professors.

The main focus in this paper was given to Isa Bey Madrasa since this has been the only one in Skopje that continues its activities with the same name until today same as other two madrasas in Balkans, Gazi Husrev Beg Madrasa in Sarajevo and Alauddin Madrasa in Pristina.

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## **PSYCHOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS: DO STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY FACE FAILURES AND CHALLENGES?**

**Abstract:** Rapid economic and social development relies on technological innovations. In addition to technical knowledge, innovation requires critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and communication skills. The main challenge of education in STEM areas is to develop a complete set of skills. From a pedagogical point of view, the question of whether students receive support on how to face failures and challenges arises successfully. The purpose of this research is to assess and understand how students experience coping with failure in mastering subjects in the STEM context. The research included 109 respondents, undergraduate students of STEM programs. The results showed that the most common styles for dealing with stress are problem-solving by using direct action, emotional regulation, problem-solving by planning, information seeking, and self-blaming. The least commonly used styles for coping with stress were acceptance, helplessness, denial, and humor. The results indicate the need of developing skills to help students avoid or overcome inappropriate ways of coping with failures and challenges, such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, and dropout. Innovations in education will include encouraging and developing appropriate coping strategies so the STEM lectures and learning will become more effective, relevant, and enjoyable.

**Keywords:** Coping styles, Challenges, Failures, STEM context

### **Introduction**

The world is faced with an increasing number of challenges within the economic, political and environmental spheres, which imposes a need for creative and innovative solutions by future engineers. Providing sustainable and resilient resolutions is underlined by all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (National Academy of Engineering 2004; United Nations 2019a; according to Dyer, 2019). Leaders from the economy, industry, and politics agree that it is necessary to take the initiative to develop the appropriate competencies of students, and the cocoa future workforce by promoting deeper learning through problem-solving and collaboration skills (Alina, 2018). Scientific problems and challenges increase their complexity so that the new generations of scientists will have to face the failures and challenges for successfully conducting research. Innovative scientists have to be resilient problem solvers. The ability to iterate, solve problems and coordinate obstacles and failures are essential skills of experts, which are certainly related to mental health.

Psychological problems among students are an important general concern in society. The mental health of students is often defined as a crisis, and the need for counselling and treatments has increased (Wu, Yu & Wu, 2020). STEM students do not need more STEM content knowledge; instead, they need twenty-first-century skills to be able to communicate their ideas, understand corporate and personal ethics develop social skills and respect a culturally diverse team of peers (McGunagle, & Zizka, 2020). Discovering what are the specific coping mechanisms used by students in stim contexts when facing challenges and failures will allow a better understanding of why students behave in a certain way and will encourage taking actions to improve their well-being and achieve success in the future.

### **STEM Context**

Today, STEM studies are facing great challenges in the digital revolution where technology and science play a major role. STEM education has been lately conceptualized (Navarro-Espinosa,

et al., 2021) as an acronym for the discipline of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. STEM education produces scientists and engineers who continue the research and development that is central to the economic growth of any country. Likewise, individuals who will successfully graduate with undergraduate studies in the STEM context are expected to be technologically proficient workers who keep abreast of rapidly developing scientific and engineering innovations and scientifically literate voters and citizens who make intelligent decisions about public policy and who understand the world around them (APA, 2022).

### **Failure and Challenges**

Failure is the gap between the expected outcomes or the desired outcome and what is ultimately experienced (Cannon and Edmondson, 2005; according to Henry et. al., 2019). Failure is defined as the inability to achieve the requirements determined by the achievement context resulting in an unrealized goal (Henry et. al., 2019). Achievement contexts contain tasks to be performed, include an assessment of how tasks are performed according to, set standards or expectations aimed at achieving the goal, and certain competencies that are required to perform the task according to the appropriate standards (Cacciotti, 2015; according to Henry et. al., 2019). When the individual does not successfully complete the task they are considered to have experienced failure. A distinction is made between error and failure. Errors are defined as discrepancies between the current and the desired state, that is, deviation from the determined standard (Frese & Zapf, 1994; according to Tulis, Steuer & Dresel, 2016). In contrast, failure is missing the target by focusing on the consequences, and in general, it is more than a perceived discrepancy (Zhao & Olivera, 2006; according to Tulis, Steuer & Dresel, 2016). It is important to note that every error can be interpreted as a failure. Whether an error will be perceived as a failure depends on contextual factors, such as social norms and the personal characteristics of the learner (Tulis, Steuer & Dresel, 2016). Challenge is set as a context for achieving a certain goal with the possibility of certain failure (Henry et. al., 2019). Challenge in an academic context is defined as demanding high achievement (Braxton, 1993; according to St. Clair, & Hackett, 2012), as stimulating students to make every effort for superiority (Unks, 1979; according to St. Clair, K. L., & Hackett), and as encouraging students towards active learning, tests students' skills and knowledge to a certain level where there is a possibility of failure (Henry et. al., 2019).

### **Coping Styles**

Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage internal and external stressful situations (Folkman, & Moskowitz, 2004). There are numerous taxonomies of categorization of coping responses. In general, coping is divided into reactive coping, namely the reaction that occurs after the stressor, and proactive coping, which aims to neutralize stressors that will occur in the future (Algorani, & Gupta, 2022). Also, there are four major categories of coping according to Folkman & Moskowitz (2004). The problem-focused coping is a task-oriented coping style (Wu, Yu & Wu, 2020). It addresses the problem causing the distress. Examples of this style include active coping, planning, restraint coping, and suppression of competing activities. The emotion-focused coping aims to reduce the negative emotions associated with the problem. Examples of this style include positive reframing, acceptance, turning to religion, and humor. Meaning-focused coping is when an individual uses cognitive strategies to derive and manage the meaning of the situation and social coping or support seeking in which an individual reduces stress by seeking emotional or instrumental support from their community. Roskies, Louis-Guerin, and Fournier (1993) discussed six different coping strategies to reduce stress, such as emotional discharge, cognitive avoidance disengagement, cognitive redefinition, direct action, and direct action to improve future prospects.

Coping responses within STEM can also be considered adaptive or maladaptive. Responses are adaptive when they support both student well-being and furthering their STEM goals and maladaptive when they exacerbate threats to well-being and impede progress toward goals (Henry et. al., 2022). Research on undergraduate students in the STEM context and adaptability to facing setbacks and threats to their well-being is in its infancy.

Based on the research of Henry et. al. (2022) there is a coping style model, consisting of problem-solving, challenge engagement, challenge avoiding, support seeking, cognitive restructuring, humor, and self-blame. Facing the challenge or failure by turning to problem-solving, which includes recognizing and regulating emotions, trying to understand the causes of the problem, and finding a plan or strategy for action (Skinner et al., 2003) is a coping style. Challenge engagement covers activities that are oriented toward problem-solving, including recognizing and regulating emotions, finding out what are the causes of the problem, and determining a plan or strategy of action to improve the situation (Henry et. al., 2019). Cognitive restructuring is an effort to make reconstruction of a stressful experience or problem by focusing on its positive aspects and seeing it in a more positive light (Skinner et al., 2003). People try to use the social resources that are available as support in solving the problem and alleviating the stress or try to reduce the negative feelings that are associated with the problem (Skinner et al., 2003). There are attempts to avoid situations or contexts related to the problem, to actually deny the problem, or to run away from the problem which is characterized as escape or denial (Skinner et al., 2003). Disengagement is a set of activities to relieve the problem without exerting effort, while no effort is made to solve the problem and to initiate it in alternative activities that allow mental disconnection (Skinner et al., 2003). Challenge-avoiding means not becoming active in solving the problem, persistently denying that the stressor has occurred, and avoiding anything that might lead to the need to engage (Henry et. al., 2019). Self-blame is focused only on the negative aspects of the stressful situation, constant self-blame, constant fear, and thoughts that everything will be disastrous (Skinner et al., 2003).

Henry et. al. (2019) distinguished between adaptive academic coping as coping that enables students to maintain their well-being and successfully move toward high academic performance and maladaptive academic coping as coping that has the potential to disrupt student well-being and thereby prevent students from achieving high academic performance. Accordingly, problem-solving, support seeking, challenge engagement, and cognitive restructuring are defined as adaptive academic coping, while challenge avoiding, self-blame, and escape are defined as maladaptive academic coping.

Very little is known and researched about stressors in the university environment from a student perspective. Baik, Larcombe, and Brooker (2019) tried to find out what needs to be done to improve the well-being of students. According to the students' recommendations, seven categories were made: academic teachers and teaching practices; student services and support; environment, culture, and communication; course design; program administration; assessment; and student society activities. Based on the research findings, it is concluded that it is important to work toward encouraging a sense of inclusion and empowerment of students to improve their well-being.

Few studies have examined undergraduate students' mental state and coping mechanisms for failure. Some research has shown that older undergraduate students are more likely to use positive coping strategies than younger undergraduates. Female and medical students are more likely than male and non-medical students to adopt positive coping styles (Monteiro, Balogun, Oratile, 2014). Findings suggest that psychological education and health promotion programs aimed at strengthening psychological resilience in undergraduate students can help foster positive coping styles and improve mental health and psychological well-being in students (Wu, Yu & Wu, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to examine the coping mechanisms of facing failure among undergraduate students in a STEM context. From a pedagogical perspective, let's ask ourselves if



we are supporting all students to learn how to successfully thrive with failure and challenge? How are these skills developed in students in a STEM context?

## Participants

The study used a sample of 109 undergraduate STEM students enrolled in the online anonymized survey. Participants were invited to participate in this study in spring 2022. Majority of students identified as female 87 (79.82%), and 22 (20.18%) as male. 89% of the students were aged between 21 and 23 years. The distribution by degree course was as follows: 89 (81.7%) were studying at FINKI (Faculty of computer science and engineering), 11 (10.09%) were studying mathematics, physics, and chemistry at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and 9 (8.26%) participants studied psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, all of them at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University-Skopje in the Republic of North Macedonia.

## Instruments

STEM-COPE, Coping styles Instrument constructed by Henry, M.A., Shorter, S., Charkoudian, L.K. et al., (2022) was used in this survey. There was an initial explanatory passage about the understanding challenge and failure in the STEM context. Students responded to 23 survey items on a four-point Likert response scale including not at all, rarely, occasionally, and a lot. The psychometrics were acceptable, the Cronbach alpha was in a range from 0.69 to 0.89. After completing survey items students answered relevant demographic questions.

## Procedure

Before the beginning of the study, students were informed about the objectives of the study and were asked to participate through their students' email addresses. They were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. Also, they were told that answering the questionnaire was voluntary and there are no consequences. The questionnaire was administrated online without a time limit. The data analyses were made using the statistical program SPSS 26.

## Results

*Table 1*

Descriptive statistics of the adaptive coping styles and maladaptive coping styles among male and female undergraduate students of different ages

Adaptive coping	Gender	Age	Mean	SD	N
	Male	18-20	46.50	13.43	2
		21-23	43.89	5.67	19
		27+	40		1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>43,95</b>	<b>6.12</b>	<b>22</b>
	Female	18-20	43.50	7.58	6
		21-23	46.99	5.80	78
		24-26	47.33	8.62	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>46.76</b>	<b>5.99</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Maladaptive coping</b>	Male	18-20	20.50	3.53	2
		21-23	19.63	3.83	19

		27+	23.00		1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>19.86</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>22</b>
	Female	18-20	19.50	3.78	6
		21-23	19.89	3.98	78
		24-26	21.00	2.00	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>19.91</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>87</b>

According to the obtained data, males and females do not differ in terms of adaptive coping with academic challenges and failures. Among male students, the adaptive academic coping decreases over the years, in contrast to the female students of undergraduate studies in the STIM contexts, where there is an improvement in the adaptive coping with challenges and failures.

**Table 2**  
Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.911	522.156 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.089	522.156 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	10.238	522.156 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	10.238	522.156 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.000
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.000	.024 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.976
	Wilks' Lambda	1.000	.024 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.976
	Hotelling's Trace	.000	.024 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.976
	Roy's Largest Root	.000	.024 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.976
Age	Pillai's Trace	.019	.337	6.000	206.000	.917
	Wilks' Lambda	.981	.334 <sup>b</sup>	6.000	204.000	.919
	Hotelling's Trace	.020	.331	6.000	202.000	.920
	Roy's Largest Root	.014	.474 <sup>c</sup>	3.000	103.000	.701
Gender*Age	Pillai's Trace	.014	.744 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.478
	Wilks' Lambda	.986	.744 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.478
	Hotelling's Trace	.015	.744 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.478
	Roy's Largest Root	.015	.744 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	102.000	.478
a. Design: Intercept + v2 + v3 + v2 * v3						
b. Exact statistic						
c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.						

The investigation of the differences in terms of gender and age group in the use of adaptive academic coping and maladaptive academic coping among undergraduate students was performed using MANOVA. The results are presented in Table 3. No statistically significant difference was found between male and female students in the use of adaptive  $F(1, 102)=0.00, p=0.99$ . There

is no statistically significant difference between males and females using maladaptive academic coping. Also, no significant differences were found in relation to age groups for adaptive academic coping  $F(3,99)=0.35, p=0.79$  and maladaptive academic coping  $F(3, 99)=0.32, p=0.81$

**Table 3**  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Adaptive	235.511 <sup>a</sup>	5	47.102	1.283	.277
	Maladaptive	16.289 <sup>b</sup>	5	3.258	.212	.957
Intercept	Adaptive	26063.032	1	26063.032	709.912	.000
	Maladaptive	5674.711	1	5674.711	370.027	.000
Gender	Adaptive	.012	1	.012	.000	.986
	Maladaptive	.736	1	.736	.048	.827
Age	Adaptive	38.530	3	12.843	.350	.789
	Maladaptive	14.603	3	4.868	.317	.813
Gender*Age	Adaptive	50.699	1	50.699	1.381	.243
	Maladaptive	2.189	1	2.189	.143	.706
Error	Adaptive	3781.443	103	36.713		
	Maladaptive	1579.601	103	15.336		
Total	Adaptive	236597.000	109			
	Maladaptive	44757.000	109			
Corrected Total	Adaptive	4016.954	108			
	Maladaptive	1595.890	108			
a. R Squared = .059 (Adjusted R Squared = .013)						
b. R Squared = .010 (Adjusted R Squared = -.038)						

### Implications of the Results of the Study

The identification of the coping styles among undergraduate students in the STEM context will be useful for further policy-making toward redefining study programs and teaching procedures in higher education in a STEM context. Also, this study would be of great value to the academic staff to develop a framework for incorporating the development of coping styles and 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and information literacy in the STEM curriculum. Developing these skills among students in the STEM context will not only contribute to creating a well-prepared workforce for the future but will contribute to the development of life skills that will help them succeed.

Within universities, the programs are traditional and continue to teach the traditional curriculum in traditional ways at the cost of neglecting the knowledge and skills necessary for today's labor market and the market of the future (Bunshaf, et. al., 2013; McGunagle, & Zizka, 2020).

## Limitations of the Study and Ideas for Future Research

The sample of students was not randomly selected. They voluntarily participated in this survey. Self-selection of the participants to take part in the study may suggest biased results. Also, the number of participants should be higher and from many different disciplines. The study could be PROSIRI with qualitative research including interviews directly conducted with STEM students about their interpretation of the coping styles with challenges and failure, and STEM students to give directions about the gap in their skills in the real world.

## Discussion

There is a question of what to do considering undergraduate students in a steamy context, where failure is common but cool still expect quick success (Henry et. al., 2019). Based on the obtained data, it can be seen that students use more adaptive coping with academic challenges and failures, but the conclusion is reached that it is inappropriate to take the initiative to improve them. These results may be due to a desire to provide socially desirable responses and portray them in a better light. Above all, interventions in study programs are needed, to form and take interventions that will help undergraduate students in a supportive context to take on challenges and respond appropriately to failures. Of course, all this is necessary to keep students in the STEM fields and to develop into future successful scientists who will be properly adapted to their environment. Hence the inclusion of psychology as a subject in study programs in the STEM context is more than necessary. The psychological knowledge could develop educational techniques that facilitate students' mathematical and scientific learning and that help people address everyday problems by enhancing analytical skills, scientific literacy, and problem-solving strategies (APA, 2022). Psychology represents an interdisciplinary bridge that helps in the acquisition of STEM literacy by combining all dimensions of STEM as well as the ability of psychology to facilitate the process of mastering STEM programs (APA, 2022).

This paper provides a basis for encouraging further research on students and their well-being and highlights the need to take action on understanding the relationship between interpersonal factors and student success and well-being in a STEM context. It is necessary for STEM education that students will be able to transfer their knowledge across different disciplines and creatively solve problems in other contexts.

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## **PREPARING THE REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH INCLUSION OF ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Abstract:** With the transformation of the special schools into resource centers and the transfer of all students with disabilities to the regular primary schools, we come to a very important question; is our country ready for the whole process of inclusion of all students with disabilities?

The subject of this research is the determination of the preparedness of the educational system for implementation of inclusion for all students with disabilities in the regular primary schools in the Municipality of Resen. For this purpose, a research was conducted in all regular primary schools in the Municipality of Resen and it involved 129 teachers and professional associates.

The purpose of the research is to determine whether has been created a inclusive climate and inclusive policy for the inclusion of all students with disabilities in the educational process in the regular primary schools, as well as to determine whether the educational system is ready for inclusive education.

The research enabled us to see the overall state in which the regular primary schools are. The results of this research are that the regular primary schools in the Municipality of Resen are not prepared for the inclusion of all students with disabilities, and we still need to work on removing the architectural barriers and reinforce the capacities of the professional associates and train the teachers to work with students with special needs.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, Students with special needs, Preparedness for inclusion of all students with disabilities

## **Introduction**

Inclusive education represents flexible and individualized support for children and young people with special educational needs within the regular school (Ture Jonson, 1994).

Inclusion in education represents an opportunity for education reforms to direct their attention to creating schools that will meet the needs of all students and society as a whole, i.e., the focus of inclusion is the necessity of adapting schools to educational needs of the student (Bartolo, P., 2004).

According to Farrell, complete inclusion should mean that the included children are an active part of life in the regular school that they are valued as members of the school community and are observed as its integral members (Farrell, 2000).

The law for primary education provides making a special document – Concept for inclusive education, which should provide specific guidelines on how inclusive education will be implemented in practice in our social system. The concept proposes measures and strategies that should remove the barriers that hinder the implementation of inclusive education and its sustainability. (Concept for inclusive education, 2019).

According to the Primary Education Law of 2019, special schools are transformed into schools with a resource center, and special classes into learning support centers, with the purpose of ensuring quality education for all students with special educational needs (Concept for inclusive education, 2019).

With the inclusion of all the students with disabilities in the regular primary schools, it is necessary to make an analysis regarding the preparedness of the regular primary schools to implement the entire process of inclusion.

## **Research Methodology**

The subject of this research is the preparedness determination of the country and the educational system to implement inclusion for all students with disabilities in regular primary schools in Resen Municipality.

The purpose of the research is to determine whether a positive inclusive climate and inclusive policy has been created for the inclusion of all students with disabilities in the educational process in regular primary schools, as well as determining whether the educational system is ready for the implementation of inclusive education.

In this research, a total of five regular primary schools are covered, which are on the territory of the Municipality of Resen. The research was conducted on the inclusive school team and teachers in regular elementary schools. Teachers who are currently employed in the schools were included, and the principals of the schools were discussed regarding full inclusion and how prepared they are for that challenge. A total of 129 respondents were included in the research.

The method of descriptive analysis, method of concretization, comparison and the method of generalization were used for the research. The technique that was used in this research is a survey. A survey questionnaire was used as an instrument of this research. The survey questionnaire was composed of twenty-one closed type questions with two answers offered, i.e., the answers were yes or no, which were intended for teachers and professional services in regular primary schools. The research was conducted in the five regular elementary schools in the territory of the Municipality of Resen during the second half of the academic year 2020/2021, that is, in the month of May, 2021. Descriptive statistics were used for data processing, with which

the data were summarized, presented graphically and tabularly. The hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test, which determined the existence of a statistically significant difference between the variables.

## Hypotheses

### General Hypothesis

$X_0$  – It is assumed that regular elementary schools are not prepared to implement inclusion for all students with disabilities.

### Auxiliary Hypotheses

$X_1$  – It is assumed that a special educator and a rehabilitator are employed in regular primary schools.

$X_2$  - It is assumed that in regular elementary schools there are sufficient didactic means and visual materials and that teachers use them when working with students with disabilities

$X_3$  - It is assumed that assistive devices and assistive technology are used in regular elementary schools and that teachers with a higher level of education use them when working with students with disabilities.

$X_4$  – It is assumed that teachers with less work experience have not attended training for working with students with disabilities, so they are not sufficiently prepared to work with them.

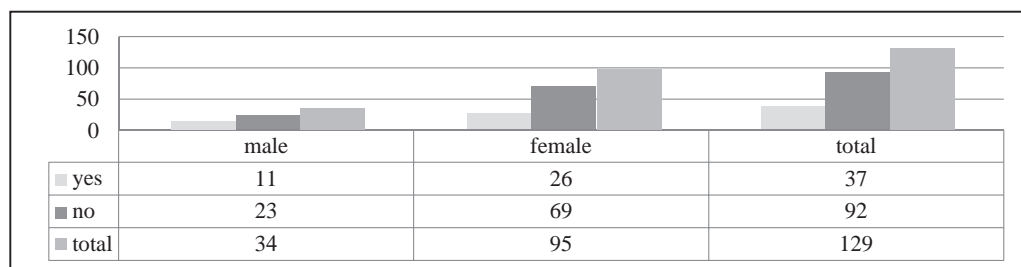
## Analysis of the Results

This is an analysis of only a part of the results that we processed in our research on the preparedness of the regular elementary schools for inclusion of all students with disabilities in the Municipality of Resen (Stefanovska D., Ajdinski G., 2022).

From Graph number 1, we can see that 92 respondents or 71% of the respondents answered that their school does not have a regularly employed special educator and rehabilitator, while only 37 respondents or 29% answered that a special educator and rehabilitator works in their school.

### Graph 1

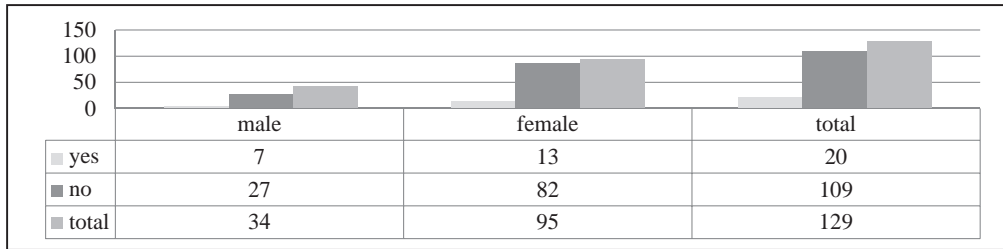
Do you have a regularly employed special educator and rehabilitator in your school?



According to the actual situation in the regular elementary schools in the Municipality of Resen, only one elementary school has a special educator and rehabilitator employed, who performs the service of a mobile special education teacher and visits all the regular elementary schools in the municipality.

**Graph 2**

Does your school have the visual aids and materials necessary to work with students with disabilities?



As we can see from Graph number 2 of the total number of respondents, 109 respondents or 84% answered that their school does not have visual aids and materials that are necessary when working with students with disabilities. Only 20 respondents or 16% answered that their school has visual aids and materials necessary to work with students with disabilities.

**Table 1**

The level of education of the respondents and the use of assistive devices and technology

The level of education of the respondents and the use of assistive devices and technology		Are assistive devices and assistive technology used?				Pearson Chi-Square	Df.	P	
		Yes		No					Total:
		N	%	N	%				
Level of education	H.P.S.	0	0%	3	3%	3	32.825	37	0.657
	H.S.	0	0%	7	5%	7			
	H.P.A.	0	0%	1	1%	1			
	P.A.	0	0%	1	1%	1			
	H.S.P.	0	0%	16	12%	16			
	VII <sup>1</sup>	10	7%	88	68%	98			
VII <sup>2</sup>	1	1%	2	2%	3				
<b>Total:</b>		11	8%	118	92%	129			

From Table 1, it can be noted that respondents with the highest level of education, respondents with completed postgraduate studies, included in this research do not use assistive technologies and aids when working with students with disabilities, they amount to 2% of the total number of respondents. Out of the total number of respondents, only 10 respondents or 8% who have completed higher education use assistive technology and assistive aids when working with students with disabilities. From the table we can notice that the level of education of the teachers is not related to the use of assistive technology and aids when working with students with disabilities, there is no statistically significant difference because  $p= 0.657$



**Table 2**

The work experience of the respondents and attended trainings for working with students with disabilities

The work experience of the respondents and attended trainings for working with students with disabilities		Have you attended training for working with students with disabilities?					Pearson Chi-Square	Df.	P
		Yes		No		Total:			
		N	%	N	%				
work experience of the respondents	4 months-10 years	22	17%	25	19%	47	35.894	37	0,568
	11 years- 21 years	12	9%	15	12%	24			
	22 years- 32 years	13	10%	14	11%	27			
	above 33 years	12	9%	16	12%	28			
<b>Total:</b>		59	45%	70	54%	129			

From Table 2, it can be noted that the majority of respondents have not attended training for working with students with disabilities. Of the respondents with less work experience, only 22 teachers have attended training for working with students with disabilities, while 25 teachers or 19% have not attended such training. Of the respondents who have work experience from 11 to 21 years, only 12 respondents have attended appropriate trainings, while 15 respondents have not attended training for working with students with special needs. Respondents who have work experience from 22 to 32 years, 14 respondents have not attended training, while 13 teachers have attended training. Respondents with the most work experience, starting with over 33 years of work experience, only 12 respondents attended trainings for working with students with disabilities, while 16 respondents did not attend this type of training. Regarding work experience and attendance at trainings for working with students with disabilities, we can see from the table that there is no statistically significant difference because  $p=0.568$

### Verification of Hypotheses

According to the hypotheses of this research, we can determine the following:

- **The first hypothesis** is rejected because the majority of the respondents, ie 71% answered that they do not have a regularly employed special educator and rehabilitator in their school. According to the actual situation, only one primary school in the Municipality of Resen has a special educator and a rehabilitator employed.
- **The second hypothesis** is rejected because the majority of respondents answered that their schools do not have didactic means and visual materials needed to work with students with disabilities.
- **The third hypothesis** is rejected because  $p=.657$ .
- **The fourth hypothesis** is confirmed because  $p=.568$ .
- **The general hypothesis** is confirmed based on the analysis of the questions from the conducted questionnaire.

The results of this research indicate a great need for investment in schools and training of teaching staff in order to improve the entire situation in regular elementary schools, which would

make it easier to implement the full process of inclusion and create a positive inclusive climate. It is necessary to overcome more barriers in the whole process of inclusion, starting from the architectural barriers to the social barriers that we face every day.

## **Research Conclusions**

In this research, a total of 129 respondents from regular elementary schools in the territory of the Municipality of Resen were included. In the research, a survey was conducted in order to see if regular elementary schools are ready to implement the inclusion of all students with disabilities.

According to the tasks and purpose of the questionnaire and based on the processing and analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the regular primary schools in Resen Municipality are not fully prepared to implement the process of inclusion of all children with disabilities. Regarding the infrastructure of the schools, the architectural barriers have not yet been overcome. From the conducted questionnaire, we can come to the conclusion that access ramps are installed only at the entrance of the school building, while the architectural barriers have not been resolved in the school building. In the regular elementary schools in the Municipality of Resen, there are no adapted toilets for students with special needs, there is no elevator for easier movement between the floors in the school building. Regarding the preparedness of teachers for the whole process of inclusion, according to the questionnaire that was carried out for this research, it can be concluded that teachers are not ready to work with students with disabilities because only a small part of them attended training for working with students with special educational needs, also in most schools there is no permanently employed special educator and rehabilitator who would help teachers throughout the entire work process. Regular primary schools in Resen Municipality do not have a sufficient number of visual aids and materials for working with students with special needs and do not have assistive technology and assistive aids.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations of this research are related to the detected deficiencies in the process of educational inclusion for people with special educational needs that were presented in the conclusion, thus:

- As in the architectural barriers in regular primary schools, it is recommended building access ramps at the entrance of the school building according to world standards that will be adequate and safe for use by students with special needs, building mobile elevators or procuring electric wheelchairs with tracks that are adapted for climbing stairs, adapting school toilets that are functional for use according to the needs of students with disabilities, leaving enough space for students with disabilities who use a wheelchair or other mobility aid, managing better and not having any obstacles in their movement, adapting the school gyms according to the needs of students with special needs, installing Braille signs, tactile paths and high-contrast yellow stripes, which would facilitate the movement and orientation of visually impaired students through the premises of the school building;
- With regard to the educational process in regular elementary schools, it is recommended that every elementary school has at least one special educator and rehabilitator (defectologist), to form a professional inclusive team that takes care of inclusive policies and practices at the level of the whole school. To make trainings for the teaching staff to work with students with disabilities, to acquire appropriate didactic materials and assistive technology for students with disabilities, to create textbooks and tests adapted to the needs of students with disabilities, to employ more educational assistants as well as personal assistants in schools, it is recommended to constantly cooperate with the families of students with

special educational needs and to organize campaigns and events to raise public awareness more often;

- Based on the analysis from the research done, it is necessary to return a combined model of inclusion, i.e., special schools should continue their educational activity and students with a higher degree of disability should continue their education in special schools (Change in the elementary education act of RSM).

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## PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER ORIENTATION OF STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Abstract:** The purpose of professional orientation is to help students decide to continue their education and focus on occupations that would best suit their interests and abilities and in which occupation they would most likely have a good fit. There must be no mistakes in the direction, because a poorly chosen occupation leaves very big consequences in the further life and work. Therefore, as part of the Annual Work Program of the school, a special program has been developed which summarizes the long-term experiences and work, as well as the knowledge and skills acquired through the implementation of international projects in the field of professional and career orientation of students in primary schools.

Also in the direction of this issue, meetings were held with high schools, students and the business community in our city. In this regard, we received support from the employment agency and of course we worked with a certain group of students, who were selected according to criteria prepared by the team for professional and career guidance of students. Then those students had the task to share their experience with their peers.

The result we got was a clear vision of what our students want to be in the future.

**Keywords:** Professional development of students, Program of Work, Change, Career guidance, Market place

## **Introduction**

The purpose of professional orientation is to help students decide to continue their education and focus on occupations that would best suit their interests and abilities and in which occupation they would most likely have a good fit. There must be no mistakes in the direction, because a poorly chosen occupation leaves very big consequences in the further life and work. Therefore, as part of the Annual Work Program of the school, a special program has been developed which summarizes the long-term experiences and work, as well as the knowledge and skills acquired through the implementation of international projects in the field of professional and career orientation of students in primary schools.

Also in the direction of this issue, meetings were held with high schools, students and the business community in our city. In this regard, we received support from the employment agency and of course we worked with a certain group of students, who were selected according to criteria prepared by the team for professional and career guidance of students. Then those students had the task to share their experience with their peers. The result we got was a clear vision of what our students want to be in the future. The job market is changing faster than ever, creating a need for collaboration between businesses as potential employers and schools. For this purpose, based on the needs that dictate currents in education, as well as experiences from working on projects, research and consultations with experts on professional and career guidance from other countries, we have created a model of professional and career guidance for students in primary schools. This model and way of working, which is innovative and composed of previous experiences and work in this field, can contribute to filling the gap between what skills and competencies are needed in the labor market and what skills and competencies are available to students after finishing school education. This way of working can contribute to students already in primary education to choose their future education (secondary school) based on their own experiences gained through theoretical and practical activities and processes during the educational process in primary school.

## **Professional and Career Orientation of Students in Primary School**

The model is based on the constant and appropriate support of students in professional and career guidance, which contributes to the acquisition of skills, competencies and knowledge that are needed for jobs that are current on the labor market. The implementation of the model in OOU “St. Kliment Ohridski”- Bitola has contributed benefits for both teachers and students in the direction of acquiring new knowledge about work tasks, thus contributing in a direct and indirect way to reducing the unemployment rate from the earliest years. Companies benefit by contacting students who could be recruited after they complete their secondary education and open up new opportunities to influence the content of career guidance schemes and preparatory vocational education.

### **Phases of the Model**

As stages of this way of organization and professional and career guidance of students, the authors point out:

1. Creating partnerships with businesses.
2. Creation of a Curriculum and Annual Plan that focuses on the development of skills and teaching of students for the current demand of the labor market.
3. Implementation of the Curriculum and Curriculum. It also includes trainings for students, teachers or representatives from local employment centers.

1. Creating partnerships with businesses. To start the whole process, the first thing primary schools need to do is to complement existing partnerships with local businesses with new partnerships, expanding the range of available professions/organizations. The first main objective is

to create local/regional networks of schools and businesses, secondly common and homogeneous curricula, moving from a local and regional to a European context. Businesses should regularly host a small group of learners for a few days for 'practical observation' or 'work skills observation'. Here students will receive a demonstration or be able to follow one or more employees on a regular working day. Businesses will receive guidance from the teachers in charge to ensure that their contribution is effective. This will be done through joint meetings and meetings before the start of the 'skills days'.

2. Creation of a Curriculum and Annual Plan that focuses on the development of skills and teaching of students for the current demand of the labor market.

After their creation, the Program and the Curriculum are adapted to the teaching subjects in class and subject teaching, appropriate to the age and abilities of the students.

3. Implementation of the Curriculum and Annual Plan. It also includes trainings for students, teachers or representatives from local employment centers. It is the job of the teachers to guide the students as they choose which businesses/branches they want to focus on. Teachers should focus on students' skills and competencies and their personal desires. teachers work in close contact with local project partners to ensure that their work is in line with the objectives of the program itself.

### **Curriculum for Professional and Career Orientation of Students**

The Curriculum covers all classes of primary education according to developmental periods. In each development period there are special goals, activities and results, from which the work program is derived. In the first period, grades I-III, professional guidance is implemented in the various subjects, through the presentation of the same, visits and lectures by parents who have different professions, as well as visits to various institutions and organizations and explanations of some of the jobs. The second period continues with visits, but now the professions are considered in more detail and an electronic catalog of professions is made, which the students create. While in the last period there is a survey of the students about their interests, research and observation of certain workplaces in cooperation with the local community.

Table 1 shows the Curriculum which has been supplemented and improved and applies to students from grades I-IX. It has been improved through research and work during the previous school years. As such, it is part of the school's Annual Work Program.

### **Annual Plan for Professional and Career Guidance of Students**

Table 2 represents the Work Plan that emerged from the Curriculum and is divided by months and classes where the activities are carried out by the team of teachers. The purpose of vocational and career guidance for students in primary schools is to help them decide to continue their education and to focus on the jobs that would best suit their interests and abilities. There must be no mistakes in the direction, because a poorly chosen school or workplace leaves very big consequences in the future life and work. It is precisely for this reason that this program was developed, in which the long-term experiences and work, as well as the knowledge and skills acquired through the implementation of international projects in the field of professional and career guidance of students in elementary schools, are sublimated.

### **Conclusion**

This way of organizing the professional and career guidance of students leads to higher quality education in schools, which will improve the qualifications and competencies of students for work in various industries and organizations, thus enabling greater opportunities on the labor market. Communication between the involved teachers will open their view to this problem and create a greater sensitivity to the needs dictated by the labor market.

**Table 1**

CURRICULUM FOR PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE OF STUDENTS							
<p>Students should develop competencies for self-reflection, self-reliance, independence. The curriculum should enable students to know about the perspectives and opportunities offered by different jobs. Based on that, they make the right choice of high school and further studies. The curriculum gives them a complete picture of professional opportunities, to master the methods of scientific and to search for valid data on the Internet from the official pages of given institutions.</p>							
<p>What should students learn? How should they learn it? (methods?) Why should they learn it?</p>	<p>Students should develop competencies for self-reflection, self-reliance, independence. The curriculum should enable students to know about the perspectives and opportunities offered by different jobs. Based on that, they make the right choice of high school and further studies. The curriculum gives them a complete picture of professional opportunities, to master the methods of scientific and to search for valid data on the Internet from the official pages of given institutions.</p>						
<p><b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b></p> <p>GETTING TO KNOW DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS IN RN MACEDONIA AND EUROPE</p>	<p><b>COMPETENCES</b></p> <p>ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE FROM DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROFESSIONS RECOGNITION OF THE NECESSARY SKILLS FOR DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS</p>						
	<p><b>I PERIOD I-III GRADE</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>SPECIFIC AIMS</th> <th>ACTIVITIES</th> <th>RESULTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Creating a concept for implementing activities in cooperation with parents and the local community to present different professions.</td> <td>Students have lectures from people who work in different professions. During visits to various institutions and organizations, the students get to know the various workplaces.</td> <td>Creation of a class book covering all professions. Space is left in the book and it is replenished every year.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	SPECIFIC AIMS	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS	Creating a concept for implementing activities in cooperation with parents and the local community to present different professions.	Students have lectures from people who work in different professions. During visits to various institutions and organizations, the students get to know the various workplaces.	Creation of a class book covering all professions. Space is left in the book and it is replenished every year.
SPECIFIC AIMS	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS					
Creating a concept for implementing activities in cooperation with parents and the local community to present different professions.	Students have lectures from people who work in different professions. During visits to various institutions and organizations, the students get to know the various workplaces.	Creation of a class book covering all professions. Space is left in the book and it is replenished every year.					
<p><b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b></p>	<p><b>III PERIOD VII-IX GRADE</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>SPECIFIC AIMS</th> <th>ACTIVITIES</th> <th>RESULTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Increasing the level of cooperation with the local community. Creating a student's portfolio –I want to be. Setting the goals for creating an online catalog. Creating of an online catalog of future professions. Signing memorandums of cooperation with the local community and local businesses.</td> <td>Utilization of experiences and materials from the previous period. Ensuring support from the local community. Research future professions and how to make an online catalog. Research the needs of jobs needs in our country. Designing an online catalog.</td> <td>Efficiency in the professional and career guidance of students. Increased opportunities for hands-on exploration of professions and jobs. Catalog with future professions for the promotion of the professional and career guidance of students. Highlighting the school in the environment. Learning through research and work.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	SPECIFIC AIMS	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS	Increasing the level of cooperation with the local community. Creating a student's portfolio –I want to be. Setting the goals for creating an online catalog. Creating of an online catalog of future professions. Signing memorandums of cooperation with the local community and local businesses.	Utilization of experiences and materials from the previous period. Ensuring support from the local community. Research future professions and how to make an online catalog. Research the needs of jobs needs in our country. Designing an online catalog.	Efficiency in the professional and career guidance of students. Increased opportunities for hands-on exploration of professions and jobs. Catalog with future professions for the promotion of the professional and career guidance of students. Highlighting the school in the environment. Learning through research and work.
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<p><b>COMPETENCES</b></p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTATION</b></p> <p>The students spend several days with the employees of the organizations.</p>						
<p><b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b></p>	<p><b>RESULTS</b></p> <p>The expand knowledge about future professions.</p>						

<p><b>EXPLORING POSSIBLE CAREER AND PROFESSIONS IN RN MACEDONIA AND EUROPE</b></p> <p><b>WHAT IS MY PROFESSION</b></p>	<p><b>CONDUCTING A SURVEY ON FUTURE PROFESSIONS BY STUDENTS</b></p> <p><b>SUBLIMATION OF RESULTS</b></p> <p><b>EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES</b></p>	<p>Visiting different professions and talking with experts in the fields.</p> <p>Active involvement of students in the research of future professions.</p> <p>Students reveal their interests in relation to the profession. Social inclusion of all students equally.</p> <p>Implementing the chance in the school curriculum.</p> <p>Improving students' view of jobs.</p> <p>Innovation of students' work.</p>	<p>The curriculum becomes visible and practical.</p> <p>More time spent in organization and experts with different fields.</p> <p>Students become researchers.</p> <p>Students discover the possibilities of the profession.</p> <p>Improvement of the curriculum for the work of the school.</p> <p>Students become aware of different jobs.</p> <p>Active role of students in researching the possibilities for professional and career guidance.</p>	<p>The school becomes an innovative school in the field of career and professional guidance of students.</p> <p>Cooperation with the local community is improving in the direction of improving the career and professional guidance of students.</p> <p>Improving students' skills and knowledge regarding future professional and the choice of secondary schools.</p> <p>They become more and more aware of the opportunities offered by jobs and start to think differently.</p> <p>Activating the career corner.</p> <p>Professionals from the local community are part of the career corner.</p> <p>Students from VIII and IX grades become role models for their peers.</p>
<p><b>GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND TEACHING PREPARATION</b></p>				
<p><b>GENERAL OBJECTIVES</b></p>				
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 1 FAMILIARITY WITH DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS IN RN MACEDONIA AND EUROPE</b></p>				
<p>Gaining knowledge about future professions, studying and learning the characteristics and specifics.</p>				
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 2 RESEARCH POSSIBLE CAREERS AND PROFESSIONS IN RN MACEDONIA AND EUROPE</b></p>				
<p>Visiting the most popular workplaces, discovering the real situation in RN Macedonia, discovering career opportunities and discovering their interests according to their abilities.</p>				
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 3 WHAT IS MY PROFESSION</b></p>				
<p>Comparison of professions in RN Macedonia and Europe and equal teaching of all</p>				
<p><b>LESSON PREPARATION*</b></p>				
<p>-lectures by parents</p> <p>-role play implemented in teaching subjects</p> <p>-visits to various institutions and organizations</p>				
<p>-visits to institutions and organizations</p> <p>-lectures from parents</p> <p>-research on professions</p> <p>-creation of a catalog of professions</p>				
<p>-survey for students</p> <p>-their direction</p>				

\* The professional and career guidance of the students is carried out with the help of the team of the same name in the school and all activities are integrated in the various teaching subjects, while the visits, research and observations are part of the extracurricular activities and/or the work of the professional assets in the primary schools.

**Curriculum of Professional and Career guidance of students**

**Table 2**

Annual Plan for professional and career guidance of students

PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE OF STUDENTS						
SELF KNOWLEDGE						
Activities	Objectives	Carriers of the activities	Forms/methods of work	Resources	Expected results	Indicators
Realization of workshops	Expressing attitudes and thinking about different professions	Teachers of different subjects, team members	Presentation and debate	Presentations and materials about different professions	Acquiring attitudes and thinking about different professions among students	Statements from students
Job simulation	Expression of attitudes and thinking about different professions	Teachers of different subjects, team members	Simulations and discussions	Educational videos and different materials about the professions	Awareness of the work tasks of specific jobs	Completed lists, records of knowledge gained from the simulation
Research on professions	Highlighting the characteristics of different professions	Teachers of different subjects, team members	Research and survey method	Surveys	Independent research on professions	Surveys prepared and completed by students, research carried out, records of research conclusions
INFORMING AND SEARCHING ABOUT TYPES OF PROFESSIONS AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES						
Activities	Objectives	Carriers of the activities	Forms/methods of work	Resources	Expected results	Indicators
Making a student portfolio (my interests/ want to be/decided)	Highlighting students' interests	Students, teachers	List	Portfolios with completed lists for students	Students to know what they want and choose what they want to be in the future	Open portfolios for students
Selection of students for testing in cooperation with ESA	Forming a target group	Team for professional orientation	Group and individual work, discussions, conversations	Sheets with information about testing in cooperation with ESA	Selection of a group of students for testing	Number of students sent to ESA



Development of a protocol for a visit to a professional by the students	Highlighting the interests of the students realization of cooperation	Team for professional orientation, students	Group work, discussions and conversations	Materials and examples of work protocols	Protocols made by students	List of protocol, minutes of meetings with students
Drafting of a protocol by a professional	Highlighting the key things for the professions realization of cooperation	Team for professional orientation, professionals	Individual conversations	Materials and examples of work protocols	Protocols made by the professionals	List of protocol, minutes of meetings with the professionals
Dissemination of students from grade IX	Sharing of practices and experiences of older students with younger students	Professional orientation team, students	Presentation, discussion, asking questions and discussions	Presentations and materials made by students	Presented experiences and practices	Made presentations and materials by students, minutes of the savings
Survey "Where would you like to continue your education"	Creating a survey obtaining a list of schools	Team for professional orientation of students	Group work, discussion	Program of work and materials for professional orientation of students	Prepared survey	Completed surveys
Creation of lists of future professions according to students' interests	Identification of desired professions	Team for professional orientation of students, students	Group work, discussion	Data from surveys and discussions with students	Created list of future desired professions	Created list of future desired professions
Creation of an online catalog for future professions	Highlighting of desired professions with explanations and photos	Team for professional orientation of students, students	Group work, discussion	Data from surveys and discussions with students	Created online of future desired professions	Created online catalogue of future desired professions
<b>REAL CONTACTS/METINGS</b>						
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Carriers of the activities</b>	<b>Forms/ methods of work</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Expected results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Signing of joint cooperation agreements with companies and organizations from the local environment	Emphasizing cooperation with the local community	Team for professional orientation of students	Discussions and negotiations	Memoranda of cooperation	To find and sign the right professionals who will work with the students	Number of signed memorandums of cooperation

Interviews with professionals	Explanation of the professions	Team for professional orientation of students	Interviews and conversations	Interviews	Conducting more interviews with professionals and students in order to highlight the characteristics of the profession	Number of conducted interviews with professionals and students
Observation of workplaces	Understanding the specifics of the workplace	Student professional orientation team	Discussions and conversations	Protocols for workplace behavior	Realization of workplace observation and monitoring of the work of professionals during a working day	Number of students and workplace observations places, protocols for student behavior during workplace observation
Organizing open days-visiting secondary schools and presenting the desired professions	Promotion of different types of professions and directions by secondary schools	Vocational orientation team,	Director Presentations, discussions	Prepared presentations	Vocations were presented and students were introduced	Number of visits by of secondary schools and the number of students involved in the meetings, minutes and lists
<b>DECISION MAKING</b>						
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Carriers of the activities</b>	<b>Forms/methods of work</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Expected results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Completion of portfolios by students	Highlighting students' interests and inferences about their profession	Students, teachers	Discussions, conversations, debates, interviews, job observations	Portfolios with completed lists for students	Students to know what they want and choose what they want to be in the future	Completely filled student portfolios
Making a decision on enrolling in secondary school and choosing a profession	Enrollment of students in secondary schools	Students and the team for professional orientation of students	Conversations	Materials on professions and directions in secondary schools, documentation for enrollment	All students enrolled in secondary school	Lists of secondary schools for enrolled students from our school
Evaluation of the procedure and implemented activities	Addition to the program for the next year evaluation of work	Team for professional orientation of students	SWOT analysis	Prepared questionnaire for SWOT analysis	Filling out the questionnaire by teachers and students	Completed SWOT analysis (list)

It does not mean changing the Annual Programs, but their innovation and adaptation in certain teaching subjects, through the organization of activities in regular teaching and extracurricular subjects. The following are highlighted as benefits that teachers, students and all stakeholders will gain:

- improvement of motivation due to the introduction of quality competencies based on learning and teaching
- encouraging cooperation by creating a common point of interest that provides an opportunity to exchange experiences and work methods
- strengthening of self-confidence, self-esteem, competencies and valued for the labor market. Other aspects related to this way of working are the development of innovative and creative learning experiences; consistency between education provided in schools and student competencies expected by industry, and promotion of collaboration between schools and industry.

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## THE IMPACT OF INTELLIGENT LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to promote ideas for involving a wider use of intelligent e-learning systems in educational processes and highlight their benefits. We analyze the use of current most popular Learning Management Systems, in particular amplified due to the impact of Covid-19 global pandemic. We discuss on their advantages and disadvantages, accompanied by conclusions upon the topic. The main objective is to provide recommendations for overcoming the detected weaknesses in order to benefit the learning processes. We suggest a use of intelligent e-learning systems that include item response theory within. That would personalize the learning process deeper and adjust the content material to the students' personal abilities and their current level of knowledge. Such systems – when carefully created and designed, provide specific personalized student feedback and support the functional knowledge that students gain throughout the learning process. Additional outcome is the adaptation of the corresponding ideas for students with special needs, which would improve their integration into educational processes. The last conclusion is that intelligent e-learning systems can be used for multilevel purposes. The gathered data can be very useful for analyses on various parameters (common students' gaps in acquired knowledge, time management in mastering topics, etc.). All this would lead to curriculum improvements as well as proof oriented based education reforms.

**Keywords:** E-learning systems, Item response theory, Testing, Educational reforms

## E-learning Systems

Nowadays, the usage of e-learning software in educational processes increases exponentially worldwide, due to innovations in teaching caused by the rapid development of web technologies and also the influence that COVID-19 pandemic had made at all the levels of education on the globe. As a consequence, the mode of delivering education have been transformed revolutionary: the traditional concept of formal face-to-face teaching and learning is no more complete nor enough. E-learning systems are educational platforms that enable the use of technology and multimedia to deliver a learning experience electronically – usually through a network. The common technologies that facilitate the provision of courses online are broadly termed “Learning Management Systems” or “LMSs.” Learning management systems are web-based software platforms that provide an interactive online learning environment and automate the administration, organization, delivery, and reporting of educational content and learner outcomes (Tumbull et al, 2019). Originally, they have been developed and designed to facilitate the learning processes in higher education as licensed software like Blackboard and Canvas or an open source solution like Moodle. The open-source systems were initially used by universities and colleges, since they could easily download the source code, adapt it to their own needs, and build their own LMS solution, according to their environment and circumstances. The most popular open-source LMS that is used today globally is Moodle, with almost 100,000 registered sites in 229 countries (Tumbull et al, 2019), not counting the last couple of COVID 19 pandemic years, that had significantly increased the statistics above. Consequently, the usage of LMSs has widely expanded at all the levels of education, primary, high and higher, making them an essential tool for the success of any (online or on site) delivered course. They facilitate greatly learning activities allowing rapid creation and distribution of course content. The features of LMSs are numerous, starting from Course Management that enables timely relevant deliver course material to the students enrolled, including features for content management, delivery control and class scheduling. Furthermore, they include completely designed tools for Assessments, Tracking Progress, Gradebook, Communication Tools, Multimedia, etc.

Due to expansion of new technologies and also the need of evolving more student-focused teaching methods, the LMS of the near future is becoming more than a helpful administrative tool, having much more essential role than a facilitator in the learning process. In that light, our work is focused on we might say, the most critical function of LMSs, that is – assignments and testing, i.e. students’ feedback on the acquired knowledge. A standard LMS supports the collection and storage of various assessment tasks for students, accompanied by teachers’ grades and feedback for each student. Such tasks include assignments, tests, projects, etc., while the LMS provides to students with real-time information on their progress in a course along with relevant feedback usually generated by the teacher.

Upon our personal experience based on the usage of Moodle, and the research we have made on the assignment tasks in the testing part, we conclude that a common LMS supports various kinds of tests (mostly organized as quizzes), where the teacher can include different types of questions (multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, essay questions, etc.) The teacher chooses the topics included in each test, and also creates the grading and the scoring part, that can be made automatically (by linear scoring), and/or by the teacher, via the system. No matter the question or category level, each test can be set up to provide real-time feedback for the student upon his answer. The feedback output is usually given in the form correct/incorrect answer, providing to students the correct final answer, or as a personalized feedback that the teacher shall made by his own and assign it on the system. In our opinion, this kind of classical testing does not include a deeper personal feedback upon students’ ability in general. and moreover, does not indicate it interactively, in a continuous manner. Without minimizing the great impact of classical testing theory included in the LMSs assignment features, we might say that, even a high rated LMS is not

designed to be automatically personalized according to students' current level of knowledge and needs, nor to profoundly detect their common gaps.

In order to reach more specific goals on students' personal feedback and get more accurate information on students' level of understanding as well as on the time needed for mastering various topics within the curricula, we might consider the option to include a use of so called intelligent e-learning systems in the learning process. An amount of recent research in e-learning is related to the use of intelligent e-learning systems, which have the ability to automatically adjust to students' capabilities (Jando et al., 2017). For example, intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) are specialized e-learning systems that incorporate forms of adaptive learning, customized content, and/or personalized feedback, using factors such as: student's style, current level of knowledge and skills, emotional stage, etc. Such systems can generate personalized learning suggestions, tasks or help/feedback dynamically, based on the needs of each student, even without an intervention from a teacher. Most e-learning systems offer tutorials, videos, quizzes or tasks with automated grading, and contain useful information about the student's activity. This data can be collected, processed, analyzed, and visualized in order to help students, teachers or administrators to handle the learning process more effectively, or to trigger warnings in case of lack of activity or progress. In continuation, we mention some programs of this type, developed in Macedonia.

*MENDO* (Kostadinov et al., 2010). is an e-learning system (a kind of an ITS) which is used for teaching programming and organizing competitions in informatics. In Macedonia, the system has been used during the organization of all national competitions in informatics since 2010, as well as several (Junior) Balkan Olympiads in Informatics. As of 2022, the system has more than 16000 registered users who have submitted more than 530000 solutions (both during competitions, and in the learning processes) on 1000+ tasks. More than 40 specialized learning materials are available on the system, containing text, images, animations and interactive tools. In addition, the system contains several other modules, including a forum, wiki, user management section, and more. One of the main features of the system is its ability to automatically grade solutions and to offer appropriate feedback. In most cases, the system is able to catch common mistakes and to present them to the user. The system allows several modes of grading the output, including testing for exact matches, equality ( $2 = 2.000$ ), special/custom graders, interactivity, etc., and also executing custom tests where the users can provide their own input. The system is developed with Java, and currently runs on a Linux machine (note: previously, the system was running on Windows) – therefore, in practice, it supports both.

*Beaver/Bebras* (Kostadinov et al., 2015) is a popular international challenge which aims to promote Computer Science and computational thinking among school pupils from both primary and secondary schools. In Macedonia, a custom system is developed specifically for the Beaver challenge and it used to organize and participate in the event. During the Beaver week, students connect to the system by simply typing an url pointing to the website where the system is running, and by entering their name and a school code (obtained previously via their teachers). The system handles everything else, including presenting their tasks, grading, sending certificate to both schools, teachers and students, and more. The Macedonian system for organizing the Beaver event supports two languages (Macedonian and Albanian), as well as several different types of tasks. For several years, Macedonia was one of the top countries by number of participants (relative to the size of the population).

The *Hero app* (Kostadinov et al., 2018) is a software application that monitors, stores and visualizes data from other e-learning systems, and which is currently used by several organizers and contestants in Macedonia to prepare for competitions, as well as to monitor homework progress by several teachers that use the *MENDO* system with their students.

The aim of this paper is to promote the idea of considering an opportunity for creating intelligent e-learning system based on Item Response Theory (IRS) that would be gradually involved

in educational processes. We discuss its advantages not only for the testing part and the specified personal feedback included, but also for more interactive and individual class delivery, which combined with the teachers' presence, would imply higher level of students' engagement, attention and retention. Consequently, we can expect better performance in studying and understanding the material as well as applying the obtained knowledge. Moreover, the use of such kind of system would provide a profound insight into the possible gaps in students' knowledge, as well as an input for the estimated time needed for students to understand various topics and accordingly apply them, and thus gaining functional knowledge within the curricula provided.

### **Intelligent E-learning Systems Based on Item Response Theory**

Distinguishing between students on their abilities has always been a hard task. The most common method that we are all familiar with is the classical testing method. Unfortunately classical testing methods and measurement procedures have a number of shortcomings. For example, student characteristics and test characteristics cannot be separated. They can only be interpreted in the contexts within. In the classical test theory, ability is expressed by the true score, defining student's ability only in terms of a particular test. When the test is hard, the student will appear to have low ability; when the test is easy, the student will appear to have higher ability. The difficulty of a test item is defined as the proportion of students in a group who answer the item correctly. In other words, we might say that whether an item is hard or easy depends on the ability of the students being measured, and the ability of the students depends on whether the test items are hard or easy. Furthermore, it is difficult to compare students who take different tests, but this is actually true even if the students take the same tests. When the students are of different ability, their test scores contain different amounts of error. As example, consider a student who obtains a score of zero. This will tell us that the student's ability is low, but we have no information about exactly how low. Hence, this student can not be compared with another student who obtains a zero score on the same test. Moreover, consider two students who perform at the 50% level on two tests that differ substantially in difficulty. These students cannot be considered equivalent in ability.

In order to overcome the shortcomings above, an alternative more accurate test theory that would be more accurate, shall include:

- item characteristics that are not group-dependent,
- scores describing student proficiency that are not test-dependent.
- a model that is expressed at the item level rather than at the test level,
- a model that does not require strictly parallel tests for assessing reliability,
- a model that provides a measure of precision for each ability score.

A good solution might be a testing model based item response theory (IRT). This theory incorporates two basic principles:

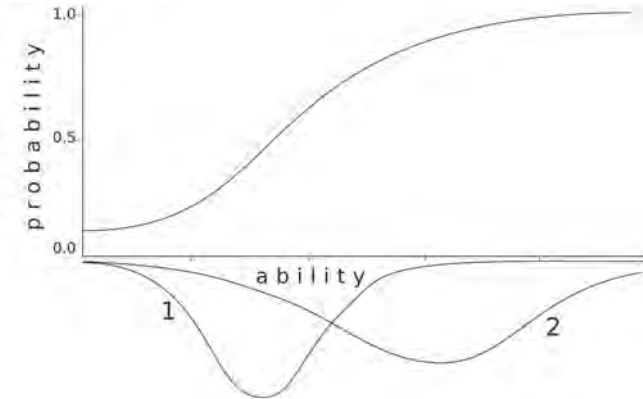
1. The performance of a student on a test item can be explained by a set of factors called abilities.

2. The relationship between students' item performance and the set of abilities underlying item performance can be described by a monotonically increasing function called an item characteristic function or item characteristic curve (ICC). This function specifies that as the level of the trait increases, the probability of a correct response to an item increases.

Figure 1 shows an ICC for the case when only one trait underlines performance on the item, together with distributions of ability for two groups of students. Observe that students with higher values on the trait have higher probabilities of answering the item correctly than do students with lower values on the trait, regardless of group membership.

The IRT model provides several desirable features: Student ability estimates are not test dependent, and item indices are not group-dependent. Ability estimates obtained from different sets of items will be the same, and item parameter estimates obtained in different groups of students

Figure 1



will be the same. In item response theory, item and ability parameters are said to be invariant. The property of invariance of item and ability parameters is obtained by incorporating information about the items into the ability-estimation process and by incorporating information about the students' abilities into the item-parameter-estimation process. The invariance of item parameters is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows distributions of ability for two groups of students (group 1 and group 2). Note that students of the same ability have the same probability of giving a correct response to the item, regardless of the group belonging. Since the probability of success for a student with given ability is determined by the item's parameters, the item parameters must also be the same for both groups. In addition, IRT model provides standard errors for individual ability estimates, rather than a single estimate of error for all students, as is the case in classical test theory.

An item characteristic function or item characteristic curve (ICC) is a mathematical expression that relates the probability of giving a correct response on an item to the ability measured by the test and the characteristics of the item. Technically, it is possible to construct an infinite number of IRT models, but only few models are useful. The three most popular uni-dimensional IRT models are the one, two, and three parameter logistic models. The one-parameter logistic model is one of the most widely used IRT models. Item characteristic curves for the one-parameter logistic model are given by the following equation

$$P_i(\sigma) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\sigma - b_i)}}$$

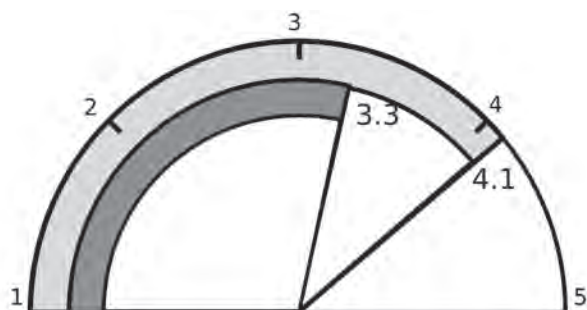
where:  $P_i(\sigma)$  is the probability that a randomly chosen student with ability  $\sigma$ , answers the item  $i$  correctly; and  $b_i$  is the item  $i$  difficulty parameter. The  $b_i$  parameter for an item is the point on the ability scale where the probability of a correct response is 0.5. This parameter is a location parameter, indicating the position of the ICC in relation to the ability scale. The greater the value of the parameter, the greater the ability that is required for a student to have a 50% chance of getting the item right; hence, the harder the item. Difficult items are located to the right or the higher end of the ability scale; easy items are located to the left or the lower end of the ability scale. When the ability values of a group are transformed to 0 and their standard deviation is 1, the values of  $b_i$  vary (typically) from about -2.0 to +2.0. Values of  $b_i$  near -2.0 correspond to items that are very easy, and values of  $b_i$  near 2.0 correspond to items that are very difficult. For deeper reading on IRT models, see (Hambleton et al., 1991).

It is important to note that the property of invariance of item and ability parameters is the cornerstone of IRT and its major distinction from classical test theory: The parameters that characterize an item do not depend on the ability distribution of the students and the parameter that characterizes a student does not depend on the set of test items. We believe that such kind of more

accurate and proper method of testing is needed in order to modify deeply the learning process and to improve students' engagement and performances. The use of an intelligent e-learning system based on IRT would be a good option.

We have postulated that an interactive learning platform which requires more activity and detention can improve students' ability. A week-long experiment was carried on a group of 236 students (Kostadinov and Stojmenovska, 2022). The experimental group consisted of 129 students – that were using a newly created e-learning system based on IRT. For more details see (Kostadinov and Stojmenovska, 2022). The control group consisted of 107 students – that were using standard web platform and classical testing methods. Both groups of students were offered a web application with tests and study materials (we have chosen them to be related to mathematics). The outcome is that students that have used the new system spent 31% more time studying. At the end of the survey, a real, regular math test was made to both groups. The experimental group showed better results than the control group, having around of 15% better score. A survey was made in order to find out whether the students would like to use the system with other subjects. The students were asked to give a mark from 1 to 5 indicating strong disagreement to strong agreement. The experimental interactive learning group scored 4.1 compared to the control group that scored 3.3 (Figure 2). The conclusion is that students are more willing to use the new interactive learning platform; They were paying much more attention to the new program and found the whole platform engaging and interesting.

*Figure 2*



Our next research step is to continue testing the system, upgrade it, amplify its usage, and consequently get accurate feedback. All this would be done in a continuous manner, slowly increasing the complexity and incorporating it gradually.

The main idea is to design a system that would allow students to improve their abilities as much as possible, and learn continuously through each testing process. Since a system based on IRT is a testing platform that can measure this improvements reliably, it can be integrated into a program, and thus we can accurately track the improvements of the students' ability at each step. In order to make the system up to date and inspiring for students, we are now considering an option to present some kind of regard at each step of students' way along the testing. One of the approaches would be to simulate a kind of a gaming process while testing. That would require from students to pass through various levels and then go further. All this might be accompanied with a reward obtained – once a student passes the corresponding level. Rewards can be of different kinds: Starting from students' favorite virtual character jumping out in a pop-up window and congratulating the completed level (for younger pupils), via some badge scoring or other multimedia rewards (for older pupils). Basically, we believe that any carefully designed reward system common for gaming, but paying a huge attention to be suitable for the learning process, could be simulated and/or implemented accordingly. This approach would create an additional interest



and motivation for students involved in all the stages of educational processes, since it stays in accordance with their current interests in the modern digital society they live in.

## **Results and Discussion**

Creating an intelligent e-learning system based on Item Response Theory (IRT) would personalize the learning process deeper and adjust the content material to students' personal abilities and current level of knowledge. These systems include assignments where each student gets questions (items) upon his current knowledge, accompanied by additional interactive instructions after answering. In particular, the use of such systems would lead to the following advantages in the learning process:

- Increased interactivity – instructions can be combined with interactive assessments in order to guide the student towards correct answers and thus continuously evaluate and improve his knowledge;
- Decreased chances for cheating the system and copying – the system might give a different question to each student depending on the previous answer, no matter the eventual matching in the answers;
- There are offered more personalization features for students – each completed level within a topic can benefit the student by earning virtual regard, a badge, or other multimedia reward close to his interests;
- Increased motivation and retention of students – they acquire more knowledge by their own rhythm (but still within a predicted deadline by the teacher);
- Assignment/test scoring does not have to be linear – it can be designed to depend on the particular answer the student has offered;
- The collected data from systems based on IRT provides a deep and accurate picture on the gap of knowledge at various levels within the curricula, and clearly leads to its improvement on different parameters (detects the real-time students' struggle and detention, points out an estimated time management for some topics, and much more).

Based on the experiment presented (Kostadinov and Stojmenovska, 2022), we already got an indication that students have showed improved attention and results of using interactive programs based on IRT. We propose to build on and amplify the idea further on, allowing students to develop their abilities to the upper limits, while learning continuously through each testing process. The IRT testing program can be integrated into platforms, and moreover, these modules can be integrated into a LMS, making its assignment feature much more advanced, interactive, reliable and accurate. A main disadvantage of the systems based on IRT is that the tests creation requires larger database of test items. (Thus could be solved with a team work on the system, for example). Also, as a disadvantage might be considered the fact that the system requires activity from a larger number of students in order to get more valid and accurate results. However, we believe that the common acceptance of these systems in learning processes combined with their wide usage in the future will make it overcome.

## **Conclusion**

Being education one of the main pillars in each society, it needs to be carefully designed and delivered, as well as accepted by pupils and students in the best possible manner. Besides excellent teachers and professors that is an imperative, the individual approach in the course delivery as well as getting the content closer to learners by using modern technologies and up to date media, can significantly facilitate learning processes at all the educational levels, and accordingly provide better learning outcomes. Intelligent e-learning systems can by no means replace the standard face-to-face teaching models, but they can successfully support them at various levels.

Classical teaching methods combined with a usage of an item response theory testing method included within an intelligent e-learning system would made significant impact on improving the educational processes. When carefully created and designed, the usage of such systems would increase students' motivation, provide specific personalized feedback and support the functional knowledge that all the students are gaining throughout the learning process. These systems might be even incorporated in platforms as LMS, or can be used in a separate mode. E-learning systems based on IRT are focused on the testing process at first look, however, they play a significant role in the course delivery as well – in a deductive individual manner, adjusting to the needs of each student. They can be designed by using various technologies, in a way to be utilized and modified depending within different contents, and thus the positive impact of their usage could have multilevel dimensions: Additional outcome is their possible adaptation for use by students with special needs, which would be a significant booster for their successful integration into educational processes. Furthermore, the gathered data can be very useful for deep analyses on various parameters (common students' gaps in acquired knowledge, time management in mastering topics, etc.). Such reliable outcomes would clearly lead to curriculum improvements and moreover, to proof based oriented education reforms.

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## INCLUSIVE CULTURE AS A PEDAGOGICAL DIMENSION OF SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

**Abstract:** Educational inclusion, understood as a philosophy, aims to promote access to education for all children, as well as strategies that should contribute to the promotion of an inclusive society. The paper, starting from emphasizing the importance of inclusive pedagogy” and the welfare of the child, points out the importance of inclusive culture as a key dimension in achieving

quality educational work and inclusive institutions. This dimension has its implications in creating a secure, stimulating community, in which everyone is respected and which is the foundation for the greatest achievements of all community members. It develops shared inclusive values, which are passed on to all new employees, children, parents, guardians and members of the local community. Since inclusive culture has visible and invisible elements as well as assumptions that we notice and those that we do not notice, it is an important factor in participation but also exclusion, discrimination and isolation of students. Therefore, the study and development of an inclusive culture of educational institutions presupposes scientific and professional answers and views on the importance of the inclusion of all children in the regular educational system. It is a process that is created, improved and developed every day in the life of the educational institutions, and those who are directly and indirectly participate in them contribute to its development.

**Keywords:** Educational inclusion, Inclusive culture, School, Preschool education

## Introduction

Current globalization changes that have affected all spheres of society certainly refer to changes in the definition of educational goals. The changes are reflected in the emphasis on education for democracy, cooperation, tolerance and respect for diversity (Kostović et al., 2011). Today, inclusion, as one of the key principles of a democratically oriented society, is an imperative. In this sense, inclusion is the answer to one of the biggest problems today, which is the exclusion of a large number of people from the economic, social, political and cultural life of the society in which they exist. The use of the term “inclusion” became particularly frequent with the development of the concept of “quality education for all”. Accordingly, some authors (Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback, 2000) define inclusion as a philosophy based on the understanding that everyone has equal rights and opportunities. Inclusive education refers to the practice of including all children – regardless of talent, difficulty, socio-economic background or origin – in a regular educational system where it is possible to respond to all their individual needs. In the direction of achieving a higher level of quality in the work of educational institutions, an important dimension is an inclusive culture (Booth&Anisow, 2002). The importance of studying the degree of formation of an inclusive culture determines not only the indisputable impact of education on the state of society’s culture, but also the need to study the cross-cultural specificity of educational institutions (Denisova et al., 2019). Inclusive culture presupposes a clearly defined socio-political inclusive orientation that implies inclusively set common value systems. These values are reflected in adopted documents, social action and education itself. By promoting inclusive values, the capacities of society and schools are strengthened for constructive changes that lead to the development of the entire society and schools towards an inclusive culture (Ivančić & Stančić, 2013). In the scientific discourse, the concept of inclusive culture is unequivocally connected with the tasks of developing an inclusive society and is attracting the attention of a large number of researchers.

## Right to Education and Inclusive Social Context

In the current development of human society, it is easy to see changes in the attitude of the majority towards different individuals or social groups, and primarily towards people with disabilities. What is encouraging, it seems, is that the final stage of a very long road is under way from harsh rejection, segregation, through integration to finally reach inclusion. Consideration of the issue of children’s rights, and therefore of children with developmental difficulties, became the subject of interest of the United Nations (UN) in the middle of the last century. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that everyone has the right to education, was adopted in 1948. This document was followed by a series of international declarations, conventions and plans that finally operationalized the basic principles of rights, including those of persons

with developmental disabilities. For understanding ideas about inclusive education, the most important UN document is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Hrnjica, 2007). The rights from this convention apply to all children without discrimination on any basis.

The first international document containing ideas about a radical change in the educational system and its orientation towards the child and his nature and needs is the World Declaration on Education for All (1990). The UN standard rules on equalizing educational opportunities for children with disabilities affirms equal rights to education for all children, and furthermore promotes education within an “integrative school environment” within the “regular school system”. In the implementation of the rules, it is necessary to change the school system, as well as the environment itself, to become acceptable and accessible to everyone, which will contribute to changing the role of teachers in the education process. The UN’s standard rules on equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities clearly show that the rights of people with disabilities should be realized through a policy of inclusion.

The Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) adopted by the World Conference on the Education of Children with Special Needs to Advance the Goals of Education for All clearly states that all children have unique educational needs and have the right to attend their local schools: they should be designed educational systems and implemented educational programs that would take into account the wide variety of these characteristics and needs; those who have special educational needs must have access to regular schools that should accept them in the educational process centered on the child and that can respond to these needs. After a very big and important step taken in Salamanca, the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action (2000) was adopted in Dakar, when the World Forum on Education was organized, where the key goals of “Education for All” were formulated. The most important goals are (UNESCO, 2000): to expand and improve the care of children and their education, especially for children from vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds; ensure that by 2015, all children enroll in primary school and receive quality free primary education; ensure equal satisfaction of the educational needs of all young people and adults. Numerous international documents emphasize the education of all children as a basic right, and quality education for all children as a priority area and protection from discrimination on any basis, i.e. respect and appreciation of diversity. The mentioned documents also emphasize the acceptance of the school and the environment that should remove barriers and obstacles so that the school is accessible to all children from vulnerable groups, a flexible school system and curriculum, an educational system that adapts to children and that should respect the different educational needs of all children for the sake of development inclusive society (Velišek-Braško, 2015). Teachers, who are the main bearers of that process, play a special and key role in the realization of the priority areas of international documents that promote inclusive education.

Since 2009, in the Republic of Serbia, the importance of the development of inclusion in the education system has been promoted at all levels, and important legal and strategic frameworks have been adopted. The Law on the Basics of the Education System in 2009 (Sl. Glasnik, br. 72/09) defined that all children have the right to basic education, regardless of individual differences. From the mentioned Law, the necessary rules that facilitate its implementation in practice arose – the Rulebook on detailed instructions for determining the right to an individual educational plan, as well as the Rulebook on additional educational, health and social support for children and students, which helped to regulate the areas of work that showed certain deficiencies in practice. The Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020 (Education Development Strategy, 2012) as an important strategic document that emphasizes raising the quality of education in the broadest sense. Specifically when it comes to inclusive education, according to this document it is understood that all children have the legal right to quality education and upbringing regardless of social, economic, health, regional, national, linguistic, ethnic, religious and other characteristics. However, despite the declarative and very well-founded normative, the

realization of the right to quality education is still not ensured for all students (Milošević&Maksimović, 2022). Quality education is related to the education and empowerment of teachers as key actors of all educational reforms. That is, to the extent that teachers are empowered, trained and sensitized for inclusion and acquire the necessary competencies, to that extent the goals defined in international and domestic documents will be achieved. The importance of the mentioned aspects is evidenced by a large number of researches both in the domestic and international public.

## **Interpretation of Terms Inclusive Education**

Although inclusion can be defined in different ways, depending on the context and the participants in the process, it represents a complex phenomenon that today has the status of a moral imperative in all educational institutions. Viewed in a broader sense, inclusion refers to the process that ensures that everyone, regardless of experience and life circumstances, can realize their potential (Mišković, 2013). Reducing inequality, increasing social cohesion, the balance between the rights and obligations of the individual are the basic determinants of an inclusive society. Placed in an educational context, inclusion is viewed in a narrower sense as one of the aspects of an inclusive society in which children participate and contribute, regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity or difficulty. The primary idea of an inclusive education system is to increase the availability of education to every child and at the same time create conditions for quality education in accordance with the needs and abilities of the child. Education that is based on the right and an approach to education that is focused on the child and his specific needs is called inclusive education in professional literature (Muškinja et al, 2011). In the literature, there is a wide range of different ways of defining inclusive education, so it is important to note that there is no consensus of authors and one generally accepted definition of inclusion. Numerous authors (Ilić, 2009) have approached the definition of inclusion in different ways, and in addition, its meaning has changed throughout history. Inclusion is characterized by a sense of belonging, but not physical closeness, which is what the earlier term “mainstreaming” was focused on. Inclusion means that children of different abilities learn, play and work together. Successful inclusion is reflected in the active involvement of all children, they have access to places to play and work, and they have options that they can choose for themselves. Inclusion is a process, not a place. One person cannot be responsible for the functioning of inclusion; it requires a group effort of the wider social community (Inclusion Resources for Early Childhood Professionals, 1997). Stubbs (2009) defines inclusive education as the opportunity for all children to access appropriate, relevant, accessible and effective education within their community. This education begins in the family home, and includes formal, informal and all forms of community education initiatives. For Rouse and Florian (1996), an inclusive school is an organization that addresses the problem of diversity with a shared mission that emphasizes learning for all students. Suzić (2008) states three approaches to defining inclusion: define inclusion as the most general concept and process; define inclusive upbringing and education, define inclusion as a humane process of including children with special needs in regular schools and overall social life. In the broadest sense of the word, inclusive education refers to the practice of including all students regardless of talent, difficulty, socio-economic background, or origin – to regular schools and classes where it is possible to respond to all their individual needs (Karagiannis, Stainback&Stainback, 2000). Inclusion is a term that expresses the willingness to educate every child as optimally as possible in a school or class. This means approaching child support services, not taking the child to such services. Inclusive education is aimed at ensuring access to appropriate, relevant, accessible and productive education for all children within their community (Oljača& Kostović, 2014).

Quality education for all children includes the successful education of children with developmental disabilities in the regular education system. This requires adapting kindergartens and schools to each individual, because the education system should be open to all children. Inclusive

education is the process of meeting the needs of the child in the educational process, that is, an educational system in which the focus is on adapting the school program, not the child. In this way, it is possible for people with developmental disabilities to participate equally in the life of the community, in order to foster tolerance in the wider social community, in which every person should be respected and accepted as a human being. Through inclusive education, in the broader sociological community, a philosophy of life is adopted based on the belief that all people have equal rights, regardless of individual differences, that is, inclusion is the acceptance of the fact that differences are a normal expression of human nature (Cerić, 2004). Inclusion must be seen as a constant search for better ways of responding to diversity and the modern paradigm of education.

## **Inclusive Culture**

Consistent application of the inclusion concept requires system change in terms of programs, methods, expectations and other factors. The implicit and explicit school curriculum can contribute to the development of this concept of an inclusive school, specifically the entire ethos of the school, teachers' attitudes and beliefs, culture, teaching methods and forms of work, etc. In the modern approach to the culture of education, an inclusive culture stands out, which, along with all other quality factors, implies respect for the diversity of all children in the educational system (Education for All). Education for all, which according to UNESCO (2004) belongs to the priority program of education, is aimed at all children and implies the importance of implementing inclusion in education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This equalizes the rights of all members of the social community to education, regardless of their national, religious, cultural, social or other diversity identity (Ivančić & Stančić, 2013).

The inclusive culture in this work mainly refers to the establishment of such a value system within the school community that leads to the acceptance and support of the so-called diversity. "inclusive values". This dimension leads to the creation of a safe, stimulating community, which accepts and cooperates, in which everyone is respected and which is the foundation for the highest achievements of all community members. The inclusive development of the school represents a continuous process whereby there are permanent changes in the organizational structure, teaching process and pedagogical approach and finally changes in the system of professional training of teachers (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Numerous researchers indicate that school culture is of great importance for achieving quality educational work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Through an inclusive culture, the teacher promotes individual differences and encourages democratic values, develops a sense of community, cultural fluency and mutual support among students (Smith & Barr, 2008). In addition to developing an inclusive climate and culture, the permanent training of teachers is also important for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The success of the implementation of inclusive education depends on the teacher's ability to recognize the personal and social importance of students who need additional support and take responsibility for the quality of the teaching process (Allday et al., 2013; Milošević & Maksimović, 2022).

Therefore, although very important, the quality of teachers' work is only one assumption for the development of inclusive school practice. Inclusive school practice can develop only if it is followed and supported by the development of inclusive policy and inclusive culture, which means that at the level of the school, the school system, but also the social system as a whole, a (re)orientation towards the values of inclusion is necessary (Ratković, Hebib & Šaljić, 2017). The school institution is complex and the quality of the practice of school work is conditioned by numerous factors that come from the features and way of acting and functioning of the institution itself, but also from the features and way of functioning of the school and social system as a whole. For this reason, in the description of the inclusive school, as well as in the analysis of the school's level of inclusiveness (assess whether and to what extent the school is inclusive), attention should be

focused on all dimensions of the inclusive school, and not only on the practice of school work. In the publication *Index for Inclusion*, three dimensions of an inclusive school are distinguished: inclusive policy, inclusive culture and inclusive practice (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The first two mentioned dimensions of an inclusive school can be seen as a framework for development and/or as prerequisites for the development of inclusive school practice.

School culture as a concept is derived from the concept of organizational culture, which refers to the features of the organization that shape the behavior and actions of individuals, ensure stability and order in the functioning of the organization, the commitment of the members of the organization to achieve the goals of its action and the productivity of the organization (Hebib & Žunić Pavlović, 2018). The components and elements of the school as an institution that make up the school culture can be observed at different levels: the first level consists of the elements of the school structure and the processes of school work and life that are visible and clearly manifested; the second level is the adopted common system of values and common beliefs related to the concept and strategy of school work; the third level refers to the perception, opinion and feelings of actors of school work, which represent the foundation of their actions and the values they adopt (Hebib, Antonijević & Ratković, 2019). Starting from the definition of the term school culture and inclusive school culture, we could define it more concretely by listing the following elements through which we can identify, monitor and analyze this phenomenon: the level of development of the common orientation of school employees towards inclusive education; the level of acceptance of the philosophy and basic values of inclusive education by school employees; the attitude of practitioners towards inclusive education; school climate, the atmosphere in which school work takes place; the quality and level of development of cooperative relations and teamwork in the school and between the school and the students' parents and the local community; level of achievement of participation of all actors of school work in teaching and school activities.

One of the most important ways to build a strong and supportive school network is communication: communicate effectively, communicate quickly and communicate often (Chen, 2019). Clear, open, honest and timely communication between school leaders and staff, staff and students, staff and family and between students is vital for a positive school climate. School leadership will need to invest efforts in communication channels and norms, including the use of digital platforms and applications for communication between parents and teachers. A school that welcomes input and dialogue ensures that everyone feels safe, included and has the opportunity to have their voice heard. Inclusive schools provide their staff, students and families with formal opportunities to give their feedback and suggestions, ensuring that it is heard and act on them.

Organizational culture is quite difficult to change. Obstacles in organizational changes that school systems face should be highlighted. Those factors include the failure of previous attempts at change, the lack of funding even for traditional educational needs, and the absence of leadership in the area of cultural competence. Community calls to action, skillful leadership, and community organizing are essential (Dessel, 2010).

## **The Role of the Teacher in the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Although inclusion has been at the center of international education policy for the last three decades and represents a key reform ambition, the process of inclusive education is accompanied by certain doubts, uncertainty and conflicting opinions. At the same time, there is strong support for the inclusion and achievement of the social goals of upbringing and education, with an extremely positive attitude of the participants in the educational activity. In addition, it is noted that the sensitization of teachers, as well as the development of professional skills, is the result of teaching in an inclusive environment (Begeny & Martens, 2007; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). On the other hand, the counter arguments of the opponents of inclusive education are that the regular education system is not adequately prepared for the implementation of inclusion and

that it is very difficult to achieve. Tension inevitably occurs within and between three levels of the system: at the macro level of the functioning of the educational system, at the level of the school as an organization, and at the level of the individual (Đermanov et al., 2012)

The creation of inclusive education systems, guided by international documents and conventions, brought new roles to teachers in regular schools. Given that teachers are recognized as key actors in inclusive educational practice, a better understanding of their perspective can provide information that is important for the quality of inclusive teaching. Therefore, countries that strive to improve the quality of educational inclusion in regular schools, while respecting their own social and cultural context, should investigate how teachers see different aspects of inclusive education, and also how they evaluate their own competencies for working in an inclusive school (Knežević Florić et al., 2018).

The effectiveness of inclusive education and the quality of inclusive practice are subject to continuous evaluation of a number of factors. The results of numerous empirical studies confirm the impact of the professional competence of teachers acquired during initial education, as well as their greater willingness to participate in professional development programs for work in inclusive classes at school. Today, teachers are faced with increasingly complex demands and expectations of all other actors in the education profession, parents of students, and the increased number of inclusive students. A particularly sensitive area of inclusive education is educational work in classes that include children with developmental disabilities and learning problems. Supporting the development and academic success of each child in most elementary schools becomes a challenge for teachers due to limited material, spatial and personnel resources, the number and multiple criteria according to which children are categorized as inclusive students, then, numerous reasons for not engaging pedagogical assistants, unplanned professional development of teachers. The attitudes of all actors in the educational process are important for the success of the inclusive process, and the attitudes of teachers are especially important, as they largely determine the success of inclusive practices in school (Avramidis et al., 2000; Hrnjica, 2007; Suzić, 2007). Along with the positive attitude of teachers, previous research confirms the thesis that teachers with concrete experience in implementing an inclusive program and formal competencies acquired through INSET programs expressed significantly more positive attitudes and readiness for further training. It certainly encourages further work on the development of teacher competencies, and at the same time justifies the efforts made so far. Consequently, special attention is paid to the sensitization and professional preparation of teachers to work in an inclusive school, since it is known from practice that the implementation, effects and sustainability of the idea of inclusion crucially depend on the acceptance of inclusion by teachers on the one hand, and inseparably on a properly designed program initial teacher education and then professional training programs (Avramidis et al., 2000; Vujačić, 2005; Subban & Sharma, 2006).

## **Discussion**

Just as the school is part of the wider society, the culture of the school will reflect those wider social values. The school, as a temporal culture in the sense that its members enter and leave at certain times of the day, and spatially limited or focused around school buildings and grounds, is an arena of negotiation and renegotiation of how these values, assumptions and beliefs are collectively articulated and demonstrated in practice. In this sense, the key to improving the inclusive nature of schools is to reflect on the core values of the school culture and collectively explore, negotiate and experiment with the expression of those values in the school.

Although the school organization is influenced by social structures, as an organization it has emergent properties of its own, and is capable of developing in response to its internal dynamics. School culture can change when ambiguities in practice and policy are resolved by confident,



forceful, persistent people who succeed in persuading themselves and others to adopt new practices that introduce change. Thus, it is possible for the staff to reconstruct the organization of the school to meet the needs of the students within it. This will require staff to communicate, problem solve and respect each other and their students. Teachers will have to move beyond the boundaries of traditional school organizations and practices.

This means a modern school requires a new approach to leadership and management with the introduction of changes and innovations in material, organizational, programmatic and personnel structures. The implementation of inclusion in education at the level of school practice becomes the daily task of all participants in the educational process at school. The basis of the school's inclusive culture lies in the acceptance and appreciation of diversity as an incentive in work. Inclusion does not mean equalizing all differences, but respecting the differences of individuals. The value of educational inclusion is enabling the acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits for life and work, in accordance with the individual capabilities of individuals, and the acquisition of competences for implementing inclusion at school becomes the basis for modern management of an educational institution.

Inclusive culture as a pedagogical dimension of successful educational inclusion leads to the creation of a safe, stimulating community, which accepts and cooperates, in which everyone is respected, which is the foundation for the highest achievements of all community members. It develops common inclusive values that are passed on to all new employees, students, parents and members of the school administration. The principles and values of an inclusive school culture guide decision-making on school policy and every moment of practice in classrooms, so that school development becomes a continuous process.

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### PARENTAL PROGRAMS FOR QUALITY CHILDHOOD

**Abstract:** Parenting has a different treatment then and now. In the past, people spontaneously prepared for parenthood. The model according to which they were brought up had a strong influence, which was difficult to change due to the strong cultural tradition. Today the situation has changed. The need for systematic support of parents by professionals is clearly stated. With

the reform pedagogical movements in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as with the more intensive development of pedagogical theory and practice, the first associations, the first counseling centers and the first schools for parents appeared, through which the parent programs are realized.

The research in this paper aims to determine whether parenting programs provide activities and program content that support and lead to quality parenting. In theory, but also in practice, there are a number of different parenting programs. Hence, the research will focus on two approaches in parenting programs, namely:

- Parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competencies;
- Parenting programs to change behavior patterns.

The expected result in this paper refers to the fact that parenting programs increase parental competence in the parental role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. The results and conclusions go in the direction of the effects of parenting programs in terms of developing attitudes, behavior, communication, perception, thought, parental emotion and the way it reflects on the quality of childhood.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Programs, Support, Quality, Childhood

## Introduction

Parenting is treated differently now compared to it used to be. The literature says that in the past people spontaneously prepared for parenthood. The model according to which they were brought up had a strong influence, which was difficult to change due to the strong cultural tradition. (Evans, 2006) Today the situation has changed. The need for systemic support of parents by professionals and experts is clearly discussed. With the reform pedagogical movements in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as with the increasingly intensive development of pedagogical theory and practice, the first associations, the first advisory centers and the first schools for parents appeared. Taking into account modern living conditions (Pećnik & Srato, 2010), especially the numerous challenges of different nature that parents face, it can be concluded that they set specific conditions in the organization of their own life and the daily life of their children. For this issue, it is particularly significant that the child is recognized as the bearer of human rights, the implementation of which is guaranteed by the state, while parenthood leaves privacy and enters the sphere of public policy. The multiplication of human roles in modern society, with changes in value systems, and the constant acceleration of lifestyle, significantly change the context of living and behavior of adults towards children, especially young children. (Јул & Јенсен, 2014). It is this position that imposed the need for an increased offer of childcare and early learning programs, promotion of the importance of early education and development for every child, but also a change in the structural approach to parenting. (Evans, 2006) The change in circumstances imposed a need to support the development of knowledge, attitudes and practices acquired through the personal experience of parents. (Rinaldi, 2006) This flow imposed a need to develop awareness in parental approach, actions, behaviors and relationships. Developing awareness also meant the personal desire and motivation of parents who wanted to learn and improve their knowledge, abilities and skills for parenting. We believe that these are pioneering steps in building awareness of parenthood, discovering parenthood and self-initiative in the need to develop the parental role. (Hanssen & Zimanyi, 2000) In that sense, in the developed systems, different sources and forms of parenting programs and support began to be developed. If in a certain period the advice for better parenting came from close people (relatives, friends), through new trends parents can refer to various printed, electronic and human resources within the institutions and organizations that deal with parenting in a formal or informal way.

Parental programs aim to provide activities from a wide range of program contents that provide support and lead to quality parenting. Namely, parenting support enables parents to be helped

in developing and using available psychological and material resources to help themselves and their children. An integral part of this support today is parent education through learning activities designed to promote positive parenting practices. (Zepeda, Varela & Morales, 2004) The main goal of all activities is to improve the well-being of children, for which it is especially important to take into account the needs of parents, as well as the context of society as a whole. Parenting programs can be organized in the form of workshops and counseling for parents within health and social institutions, the educational system (kindergartens, schools) and the non-governmental sector (daycare centers, playrooms, psychological counseling). During the implementation of parenting programs, professional support is provided by professionals in their field, such as: pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, educators, medical staff, educational assistants, but the parents themselves are also an important resource. Some parenting programs are universal and are intended for all parents, while others focus on the specific needs of certain categories of parents. Parenting programs can be implemented through work in groups, where the model of individual counseling is particularly important, it is rarely represented, but it exists as a form, namely home visits. All these forms can be combined with varying intensity for a shorter or longer period of time depending on the parenting program. Parenting programs can be made available in a less intensive way through brochures, newsletters, hotlines, television campaigns, billboards and websites. Modern parents are often able to solve their dilemmas about raising their children (Radley & Randolph, 2009) using information and communication technology, which has significantly changed the availability of content relevant to parents. In the literature, it is said that parents' motivation to increase the quality of their parenting can be observed on a continuum that begins with awareness of the need for additional information, and its translation into personal knowledge that will lead to a change in behavior in a positive direction. Parents' attitudes are closely related to their behavior because they shape parents' perception, opinion, emotional response, and motivation. Attitudes are considered as reactions or established ways of thinking about different aspects of parenting. Attitudes include knowledge and information gained through personal experience, education, or understanding of an issue or phenomenon, which are often intertwined with cultural beliefs based on shared experience. The relationship between parenting programs and behavioral changes in parenting practice remains an open and evolving question. (Zepeda, Varela & Morales, 2004) Certain studies show that those parents who show interest and acquire knowledge in the field of child development, compared to those who do not, have a better interaction with their children and thereby increase the likelihood that the acquired knowledge will be put into practice. Also, there are analyzes that say that parents who are familiar with the approaches and procedures that promote the health and safety of the child in practices pay more attention to the safety of children. Analyzes of the implementation of parenting programs show that they increase parents' knowledge of children's development and learning, improve parent-child communication and improve parenting skills for establishing positive discipline, which is associated with a reduced rate of child neglect and abuse. as well as with greater physical, cognitive and emotional progress of children. (Samuelson, 2010) This is exactly why parenting programs are important, because they lead to the development of attitudes, behavior, communication, perception, thought, emotion... reflecting on the quality of childhood.

## **Types of Parental Programs**

In theory, but also in practice, there are a number of different parenting programs. Parenting programs are generally divided into two approaches, depending on the goal being achieved. The first approach of parenting programs refers to activities aimed at improving parents' knowledge and skills. The second approach refers to parenting programs whose activities are aimed at acquiring new knowledge about parenting. In that direction, we distinguish:

- parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competencies (acquiring knowledge about child development, development of parents' self-awareness, self-understanding, understanding of their own attitudes and actions);
- parental programs to change the behavior model.

Both approaches are designed to increase parental competence and self-confidence in the parental role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. (Stričević, 2011)

The *parental program Children's House* (Kameno, 1982) was created as a result of the need for continuous cooperation between educational institutions in Great Britain and parents. Within this program, attempts were made to establish the concept of successful and positive upbringing, first of all, as a significant support for young parents. During the realization of this program, every educational procedure was planned in detail. Planning took place at the very beginning of the application of the educational procedure. It is particularly significant that the principle of evaluating the effects of the application was established in terms of coverage, influencing factors, interpersonal coordination and flexibility of approach. The significance of this parental program is the high level of cooperation between all important institutions and entities, which was not the case until then. This program offered an unconventional approach to physical conditions and sought to create an environment that would be pleasant for parents. These tendencies created conditions for parents to visit the Children's House more often as an institution and as a program that, undoubtedly, made a step forward in the development of the parental position in relation to children and childhood itself.

The *Bloomingtondale parenting program* puts the parent on a pedestal and tries to point out his irreplaceable role in the educational environment. Although this program was created way back in 1966, it is still relevant today. During the implementation of the program, parents whose children attended kindergarten were involved. Parents were treated as independent factors, they constantly received information about everything that needs to be achieved, they basically solved numerous challenges of an educational nature, they were put in a situation to make decisions about the so-called problem situations and often appeared in the role of the so-called assistant educators. One of the benefits of this program was the sharing of experiences between parents, a process that is of particular importance for any parenting program. The results of the application of this program were visible because to the greatest extent this program influenced a change in the behavior of many parents, increased knowledge about the importance of encouragement in child development, as well as the actions taken for the quality growth and development of each child.

The *Parental Intervention Program* was created in Great Britain in 1976. Through this program, vocabulary, numerical terms, familiarity with temporal and spatial relationships, as well as with colors and shapes are developed. For the purposes of this program, a research was conducted for a duration of 4 months, and parents of children of three and four years of age are the sample on which the research was carried out. Parents had the obligation to realize daily meetings in kindergarten. During the visit, they had the opportunity to carry out joint reading activities with their children. For the needs of this program, half-hour activities were created that the parents together with the children realized, but in home conditions in an attempt to create interaction and a stimulating environment. The obtained results of the research indicate the significant role that parents have towards children. The children showed significant progress in their development, as a result of the active involvement of parents in the life and development of the children.

The *Ypsilant Project* is different from the parenting programs mentioned so far, because everything happens in the home, as opposed to in kindergartens. From here we can notice that it is a different approach of a parenting program. This program included 35 children aged four years. All children from this group were exposed to some form of deprivation. The visits to the home took place during three months, with a duration of one and a half hours per week. The program referred to activities intended for the parent and the child in the area of manipulative activities,

role-playing, perceptual familiarization, classification and speech development. There were multi-level goals in this program.

But the key was the change in the upbringing style, as well as the enrichment of the speech between the parent and the child.

*The parenting program for safe children* was created in 2013 and is aimed at strengthening parenting skills and practices. The program is realized through partnership with organizations, professional agencies, as well as experts and professionals who carry out training within the framework of the program. The support from the community is of special importance for the program. By its design, the program is flexible so that it can be implemented by different institutions and organizations in the community, but also leaves the possibility of its integration into existing interventions and services intended for parents.

*The parenting program entitled "Appropriate Time for Parenting"* was developed in the USA in 2015 and is a significant and unique program that deals with mechanisms to support and encourage child development. Through this program, parents receive specific information about their child's development, supplemented with advice on ways and opportunities for support in the early years of child development and learning. The goal of this program is to lay the foundations for timely and quality information for parents as partners in the process of growth and development of children in the early period of their lives.

*The "Growing Together" program* began to develop in the Republic of Croatia during 2008/2009. This program was created as a part of the wider program of the UNICEF office in Zagreb, intended to support parenthood within the framework of the campaign "The first three are the most important". The "Growing Together" program represents the thematic content of a series of workshops that are implemented with parents of children up to the age of four. The purpose of this program is to enable the availability of information, knowledge, skills intended for parents in developing their parental role. During the workshops, a stimulating environment is created in which parents together with the workshop trainers and other parents exchange ideas on topics related to parenting. During the workshops, we talk about the ways in which parents live, the modern needs of children and parents, conditions are created for parents to get to know themselves better, parents are given the opportunity to get acquainted with some of the theoretical determinations of this program, mainly, aimed at building a positive relationship between the parents and the child.

Through developed mechanisms, in the course of this program, the values underlying one's own parenting are reexamined, the needs of children and parents are learned and the ways of satisfying them, communication skills are trained and answers to other questions that parents express interest in are sought.

## **Positive Parenting Program**

A positive approach to child development refers to encouraging children to develop self-confidence and independence, as a prerequisite for their responsibility. Then the positive approach refers to understanding, encouragement and constructive communication between parents and children, as important elements for a stimulating and supportive environment. Very often, in the context of the positive approach to children's development, positive discipline is also discussed, which is considered as the child's guidance towards achieving self-control. Discipline is about establishing a balance between the child's need for autonomy and the need for restrictions. Throughout the literature, there is a growing number of scientifically supported research that shows that those children who practice positive discipline manifest multiple positive effects on their development as a whole. Basics of positive discipline are: cooperation; responsibility and autonomy; tenderness and understanding; correct understanding of the rules; children's participation; freedom of action; healthy and successful development.

When we talk about positive discipline, it is significant to mention that demands are placed on the parent for empathy and structure. Empathy helps parents to understand the child, to respect his needs, to hear what he is trying to tell us, what need he wants to satisfy, how the child feels and what he is facing at a given moment. Structure allows parents to provide instructions and set necessary boundaries that help children learn how to meet their own needs. The positive approach to education, the pursuit of positive discipline of the child – these are important elements of the program for positive parenting. At the base of this program, in fact, is the understanding or vision of parenting that is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also on scientific knowledge in this field. These are scientific knowledge about the characteristics of the parental context that assume the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of the child for connection, competence and autonomy, and it refers to the personal parental involvement, creating structure, as well as supporting the child's autonomy.

These are insights into the quality of parental guidance, which is based on the equal dignity of parents and children, as well as the features of empathic interactions between parents and children. The positive parenting program, as an integral part of this concept, offers parents approaches, educational concepts and specific strategies that will help them develop their own skills and abilities for positive interaction with their children. In fact, it is a concept that helps parents in many ways, which has been working for more than 35 years and provides parents with support in their desire to develop a quality parental role for a quality childhood.

The harbinger of the launch of this program is Matthew Sandres, who, together with his colleagues from the University of Queensland, Australia, conducted an individual comprehensive preventive program and trainings for parents. (Sanders, 2008) This program aimed to create:

- positive thinking among parents;
- to meet the growing demands for parental assistance;
- to encourage parents to participate in positive parenting interventions;
- to increase awareness and reach positive parental interventions;
- to create messages in the media that are not alarming, disturbing or accusing parents;
- to help parents become more confident and self-confident in their parenting.

The Positive Parenting Program is also known as the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program. This program provides parents with simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior, and prevent problems from developing. The Triple P program has been applied in more than 25 countries across cultures, socioeconomic groups, and many different types of family structures.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of discovering parenting through understanding the parental context for quality childhood, which refers to different categories, approaches and styles of parenting. It is undoubtedly significant to accept the intentions of the so-called conscious parenting and the authoritative parenting style. Because the authoritative parenting style has developed authority in itself, but at the same time provides support. This style contains the advantages of all other styles and is therefore the most significant. Through this parenting style, children's needs can be understood, children can be asked questions, things can be explained, children can be included in the discussion and in the decision-making process. Authoritative parents almost always consider the parenting situational context, as a significant paradigm in modern approaches to parenting development. While, on the other hand, conscious parents constantly think about the degree of awareness of their actions, they constantly question how aware they are of the choice of their parenting concept and whether it is in the best interest of the child. Authoritative style and awareness of parenting are the first steps towards a positive parenting approach. If the model of positive parenting is based

on meeting the basic needs of the child through personal parental involvement, structure throughout the day, but also constant support of the child's growth and development, then we consciously celebrate the mistakes that children, as well as adults, make. This very moment is important, because parenting and childhood are dynamic and developmental situations in which there is no ideal approach. In today's conditions, it is very easy to get this information, especially due to the existence of numerous parenting programs with the possibility of choosing activities aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of parents, the so-called parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competences (acquiring knowledge about child development, developing parents' self-awareness, self-understanding, understanding their own attitudes and actions), but also the type of activities aimed at acquiring new knowledge about parenting and change of the behavior model. It is understood that both approaches are designed to increase parental competence and confidence in the parenting role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. Undoubtedly, it can be pointed out that the most popular is the program for positive parenting, which is received and accepted by the professional, as well as the general public. The implementation of these programs leads to the development of parental competencies that refer to knowledge, abilities and skills for quality parenting that ensures quality childhood. Relational competencies are particularly important, which aim to establish a mechanism for cooperation between parents and their involvement in kindergartens. A particularly significant body in this process is the Counseling Center for Parents and Children, which we believe will still develop in its full essence and application.

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## PERSONAL GROWTH AND DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY IN A MULTICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

**Abstract:** The scientific report presents ideas that rethink the social meanings of diversity, which nowadays provokes pedagogical interaction in the school institution. The need to support global education is revealed on the basis of a detailed analysis of the findings on the social role of the “student” and the main characteristics of the role inherent in the role. The global dimensions of modern societies are beginning to dominate, which necessitates a change in traditional pedagogical practice. The term “global education” gives rise to a discussion of the formation of knowledge, skills and attitudes based on cultural pluralism, interdependence and international economic competition. School age is the time when the individual accumulates knowledge about the world. The introduction of global education means that students understand the importance and complexity of globalization processes and build an identity for intercultural interaction and existence in an interdependent world. In its dynamic structure, identity is a phenomenon related to the peculiarities of values, way of life, regulation of relationships based on history, ethnology and cultural development. The implementation of a targeted educational policy for equal rights goes hand in hand with the idea of acquiring competencies for interconnection, consolidation and partnership in a multicultural environment. Promoting the philosophy of awareness

of the concept of “global education and identity” is a psychological and pedagogical model of cultural relativism.

**Keywords:** School age, Global education, Identity, Cultural relativism

## **Introduction**

“Becoming a person” happens in an environment where the need to unite with others and the world plays a leading role. Therefore, intercultural interactions are both an essential means of conceptualizing and an adequate response to the messages arising from social surrounding in the mind of the individual. Intercultural interactions form the basic characteristics of self-identity making them more coherent and flexible.

In terms of mental reflection, social communication during the school age pervades for a relatively short time span (from birth till the age of 18) the mind of the individual since young people find themselves in an environment other than family, where the actual socialization to the macro environment begins (Winnicott, 1999).

The transition to “school age” is associated with the psychosocial readiness of the individual.

Pedagogical practice abounds in cases when young people encounter difficulties in adapting to the intercultural environment and the standards of the school institution (Stoykov, 2004).

In modern pedagogical practice all these problems which have negative effect to the overall adaptation and integration of children from all ethnic and cultural groups in school, are analyzed as a result of the dynamics of the psychosocial climate. This determines the necessity of creating global education environment during the school years.

## **The Student as a Social Role and Personal Motivation for Intercultural Integration**

Starting school requires a certain amount of knowledge, skills and habits along with needs and interests that provide the surroundings necessary for a specific kind of psychological and personal growth.

This precisely is the beginning of the secondary socialization stage or the so-called institutionalization of personality – a lengthy process of acquiring educational qualifications and developing organizational behavior.

This stage is characterized with learning as mental activity having a priority over the other two types of activities (work and play). At the same time the processes of getting to know objective reality are also carried out with respect to taking hold of interpersonal space as a phenomenon that supports the process of inclusion and development of a sense of belonging to one’s own kind and the social world.

By laying the foundations of literacy, the psychic apparatus acquires more differentiated structures and is utilized mainly through functions of the conscious activity. In the course of their training the person expands their individual-practical scope of self-understanding and understanding of others (Antsiferova, 1991). Because of its structure and organization, the school institution gradually starts the development of young people’s social skills at orientation and behavioral response adequate to the social stratification of society and the context of the particular situation.

The full functioning of the individual during the school years is certainly refracted through the focus of the school as a social institution.

It is the structure of the school as an institution that forces and requires young people to accept and comply with the norms of social behavior:

- on the one hand – as a relevant expression of the adopted specific rules, norms and values;
- on the other hand – as an authentic expression of social control and sanctioning.

The daily organization of behavioral forms of interpersonal interaction in school is not reduced simply to the practical guidance and functioning of institutionally set communication and relationships between systems (student, classmates, teachers, principals, support staff) but acquires:

- order, discipline and efficiency in accordance with the institutionalized formal relations;
- predictability and an organized state in accordance with the system of relatively stable institutional norms, values and rules.

Global aspects are becoming dominant in contemporary societies, which requires a change in the traditional pedagogical practice. The term “global education” raises discussion on the formation of knowledge, skills and attitudes based on cultural pluralism, interdependence and international economic competition.

Without absolutism, the institutionalized personality of the pupil is the one that manages to integrate with the social context topics in general and to perform the social roles, according to an adequate or appropriate behavioral repertoire. Practical mastery of social behavior in the school institution is associated with assuming social roles and it predetermines the success of the individual in the broader social environment – as a citizen. Such an understanding affirms the importance of school age to the success of social adaptation and identifies it as the right time, when the awareness of globalization in the world and the skills of cultural relativism are formed. School age is the time when the individual accumulates knowledge about the world. Implementing global education means that pupils understand the meaning and the complexity of the processes of globalization and form their own identity for intercultural interaction and existence in an interdependent world. Furthermore, the conflict-free adjustment to the rules of the school itself, as a specific institutional model of social reality, is an indicator of normalcy regarding the acceptance of social order, and in fact is a criterion for social maturity of the individual.

In opposition to the concept of man as an autonomous entity, the Role theory (Charles Cooley and George. H. Mead) enters into polemics with the concept of the self as an integral part of the social order, i. e. – the social role is a specific determinant of human nature. P. Berger defines the role as “a typified response to a typified expectation” and stresses that “the role provides the pattern according to which the individual is to act in the particular situation” (Berger, 1996).

Thus, in the context of this study two major trends gain importance that define the socio-cultural development of the individual during the school age:

- obtaining personal uniqueness, so called individuality, on the one hand;
- and
- formation of sociability, i. e. – establishing a behavioral stereotype that supports the social integration of individuals in a multicultural environment, on the other.

Though ambivalent, the aggregate trends thus outlined result in Personality – a quality that differentiates substantially the human being from any other living creature.

As a main forum and condition for personal self-manifestation, self-expression and self-affirmation, the school is at the same time that indirect link in the process of socialization, which defines the statutory behavior of the person and lays the foundations of the motivation to master the patterns of polycultural behavior and active citizenship.

As an institution it is the school that is the scene on which the young person performs different social roles (a pupil, a friend, a leader, a member of an informal community, a member of the formal team, a performer, etc.), and acquires skills to maintain formal and informal relationships which stimulate the globalization process.

Being a pupil covers the dynamics of the establishment of a versatile identity of a particular person by revealing the effects or difficulties in integrating him/her to a particular institutional model.

Internalizing the role of the pupil in the individual consciousness represents a modelled image for the young man imposed by the duties of his/her current social functions. The balanced

behavioral and emotional dedication to the specific meanings of this role is a proof for a person's mental adequacy. Moreover, identifying with the role of the pupil is the first manifestation of the readiness to accept heteronomy in human life and the readiness for social orientation towards the established civil rights of living.

In this context, the study of the behavior of pupils has psychological grounds regarding the sociability skill of the person, i. e. – identifying with the role of the pupil must also be compliant with the imperativeness of the school as an institution.

It's important for the aspect of social pragmatics discussed here to clarify the procedure interpreting the achievement of harmony and integrity between the "inner world" and the institutionally established "external explication" of the social participation of the pupil in the life of the school as an institution. Thus, in the foreground, stands out the need to master a wide range of social skills through which the characteristics of the specific role content inherent in the organization at school are exteriorized.

Therefore, the daily life of the pupil validates the essential components (style, norms, ethics of relationships) of behavior at this age. In other words, it is through the aspect of adaptation to the institutional order at school that the person develops mechanisms to effectively organize their own behavior, relevant to current social and regulatory expectations and assessments. This is how the mechanism of the child's identifying with the specific social role (pupil) operates.

### **“Global Education” as a Doctrine for the Promotion of Cultural Relativism**

Implementing global education means that pupils understand the meaning and the complexity of the globalization processes and that they form identity of intercultural interaction and existence in an interdependent world.

In its dynamic structure, identity is a phenomenon associated with the peculiarities of values, lifestyle, and regulation of relationships, based on history, ethnology and cultural development.

Carrying out a targeted policy for global education is consistent with the idea of acquiring competences for interconnection, consolidation and partnership in intercultural environment.

Promotion of the concept of “Global Education – Personal Identity in the School Age” is an example of the philosophy of psycho-pedagogical model for cultural relativism.

The “Global Education” doctrine provides time and space to acquire the respective skills of behavioral reflexivity and stylistic variation of personality regarding the rights and obligations of the pupil, respectively the citizen. Cultural relativism education provides opportunities to stimulate awareness of interculturality and adoption of behavior for exercising the rights of the European citizen in the context of cross-cultural contacts established in school environment. Growth towards motivation for active citizenship is of particular importance for the young man's personality based on the demand for recognition, inherent to the period.

The social communication taking place in the school institution reveals the existence of a proportional correlation between the degree of rejection of the sociocultural standards (school norms) of social behavior on the one hand and on the other – the risk of destabilizing the formal and informal status of the pupil's personality. A similar trend raises concern among researchers and practitioners of developmental psychology during school age, with a view of the progressive deepening of these negatives in later age stages to the extent of asociality. In this sense, the need for non-formal inclusion of pupils in the education for cultural relativism is a necessity and an extremely powerful factor in overcoming that trend.

Promoting the global education philosophy aims to meet the commitments inherent in modern sets of social roles, formed in the historical context of intercultural development of society. In their role of a mediator between pupils and the environment, the teacher for global education

is an active social subject, who not only stimulates young people's self-awareness in outlining the boundaries between "appropriate-inappropriate", "acceptable-unacceptable" as a pattern of behavior, but he/she also trains skills in socially acceptable behavior, according to the adopted institutional order and relationships with the others as equal partners.

### **“Cultural Relativism” and Modeling of Self-identity in an Educational Environment**

It is a well known fact that achieving social sustainability in understanding the surrounding world and the relationships in it is a complex, complicated (and sometimes fruitless) process (Selye, 1997).

Human subjectivity based on his/her activity, is often a cause of imbalance in the experiences of the individual and acquires the functions of an intense irritant when subjective expectations do not correspond to the objective reality (Kennerly, 1997). In the individual consciousness such an irritant is identified as a problem.

It is in such times of uncertainty, tension and anxiety that the young person has a need for adequate educational support. Placed in an educational situation every pupil retains their function as an active participant.

Preparing young people for successful adaptation to the contemporary intercultural realities is associated with the partnership between the member countries of the European Union. To support globalization processes means that opportunities for social civic activity shall be provided to the young that reflect their own peculiarities, the need to understand themselves, their individual situation and problems.

The uniqueness of the educational interaction in the context of promoting global education philosophy is expressed in the provision of transpersonal space in which the pupils shall have conditions for self-analysis and recognition of the need for change, according to the skills of intercultural integration.

The inclusion of pupils in cultural relativism education offers each pupil the opportunity to explore, and on this basis, to reassess their current life situation by discovering new meanings in it, that help to redefine his/her own role, i. e. – to “find “ their selves in a new way (Shulman, 1997).

Understanding the learner's personality in the context of the “global education” concept, changes his status from subject of interaction to subject of change.

Such an interpretation of the learner's role helps to set an accurate objective and to determine the final outcome of promoting the cultural relativism education.

Hence it can be summarized that the support of the globalization process during the school years should be directed both to the inner world and the outer reality of the pupil. Only through searching for their mutual consistency, the characteristics of the particular situation can become “visible” and possible alternatives for intercultural identity and self-realization can be formulated. It is an important fact that the changes taking place in the learner's personality in the process of their integration in cross-cultural environment always correspond to the logic “from the inside to the outside” i. e. – from understanding to behavior.

Implementing a targeted policy for global education is consistent with the idea of acquiring competences for interconnection, consolidation and partnership in a multicultural environment.

Variability of the applied models in support of the globalization process during the school age is reciprocal to the paradigms of personality and its development that are principally established in the socio-psychological theory and practice. Within the respective working model the teacher in cultural relativism education shall interpret the life situation of the learners and on this ground they formulate hypotheses about the learners' thoughts, feelings, experiences and attitudes. This allows to determine the participants' level of psychosocial development and to choose the

adequate approach to the expansion of personal identity in the direction of intercultural identity and practices of active citizenship.

The main focus of cultural relativism education is on becoming aware of the circumstances hindering the individual self-realization and promoting non-discriminatory behavior when making an autonomous choice of effective solutions in order to secure the smooth implementation of the integration process in the social environment – including schools.

Promoting cultural relativism education as a conceptual model to support the globalization process in the educational institution is determined by the above development priorities throughout the school age. The global education philosophy as a psychological and pedagogical model of cultural relativism is defined in terms of the individual needs and the dynamics of the learners' development. At the same time, the concept of educational interaction is always preconditioned by working with the personality structural levels at the school age stage.

### **Development of Intercultural Sensitivity by Working with the Structural Levels of the Self**

Direct observations on the psychosocial development during childhood have found that due to their complexity, irreversibility and intensity, formation of the basic stages of personality development has always been a complicated psychological process (Stamatov, 2000).

At this point of the identity development, the components of personality are in a state of diffusion and competing for dominance. The above described inner psychological functioning is a reason to experience frustration that finds expression in extreme emotional states and behavioral responses (varying from apathy through encapsulation and passive obedience – to frustration, hostility and anger-aggressive tendencies of reactions). Therefore, the deliberate and concentrated psychosocial and educational work with the individual components of personality, including pro-cultural identity is an appropriate mechanism for effective support of intercultural sensitivity throughout the school years.

Depending on the degree of expression of cultural centrism in representatives of the minority and the majority, deficits in the following structural levels of the Self are possible (Kozhuhar, 1994):

1. Level of 'hedonism' – the main motive and purpose of the subject is to receive pleasure at all cost, which means neglecting their own identity and allowing full assimilation by the majority.
2. Level of 'frustration' – the main motive is fear for the self, which implies either assimilation or increased hostility towards the Others that are different from the me.
3. Level of 'domination' – the main motive is the desire to dominate which is a prerequisite for interpersonal interaction based on oppressing the Others who are different.
4. Level of 'isolation' – the main motive is the fear of loneliness, of being rejected by the world, which implies interpersonal interaction based on inner oppression, i. e. – when representatives of social minorities assume that they are "second hand" people.
5. Level of 'ethnic identity' – the main motive is the inability of self-determination and identity.

This results in the following two effects:

- the representatives of the ethnic minorities minimize the values of their ethnic identity and mythologize the characteristics of the majority;
  - the representatives of the ethnic minorities "turn away from" the values of their ethnic identity and get guided by the cultural similarities of the dominant social group or population.
6. Level of 'prosociality' – the main motive is development of a humanistic orientation and altruism, which is a prerequisite for social integration with the different others or for the application of cultural relativism to the ethnic identity of the person I face.

The levels of the structure of the Self presented above trace along the path of personal growth and change with regards to the understanding of one's own identity during the school years. They are both connected to each other and penetrate into each other. As seen in the model described, the changes of personality at the stage of the school age express the meaningful aspects of the dynamics of development in the following direction:

- from egocentrism to individuation and integration;
- from the acceptance of myself to acceptance of the others.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The presented analytical and interpretive analysis draws in a justified manner the following significant generalizations:

1. The school age period is the most important stage in life in view of establishing personal identity.
2. The adolescent person goes through a series of physical, emotional and social changes that determine the degree of applying cultural relativism towards the people different from them.
3. In principle, the processes of social integration start earlier in age (in the family), but they also continue later in life – during the school years (at school and within a wider social environment).
4. Along with the physical changes, psychological and cognitive transformations and development of the other areas related to personal identity, the events experienced during school age have a long-lasting impact and can sometimes have traumatic effects on humans.

School age can be a difficult and confusing stage of differentiation of personal identity, but more importantly, this is the time when the individual becomes aware of his/her own resources, i. e. – for each adolescent, there exist conditions for developing a sense of responsibility to life and skills to manage it.

The professionals from the school institutions who accompany the young people along their way of self-realization in life should know and understand the above interrelated changes in the awareness of the Self-identity and the different development areas, because young people's transition from school age to adult life is filled with critical situations and challenges.

Successful development throughout the school years requires awareness of the need for intercultural integration with the social environment/the others and in this sense, development of polycultural identity attitude and formation of active citizenship self-awareness.

Undoubtedly, expanding personal autonomy and self-organization, penetration into the rules and norms of public life during the school age period is positioned within the framework of interaction between the adolescent and the social environment. This process does not exclude failures and declines. Therefore, in times of crisis and destabilization of the Self, it is the school – being the referent social environment that should develop and offer effective mechanisms in support (both psychological and pedagogical) of the globalization process. In terms of their format such support mechanisms should be specified according to the specifics of the personal identity and aimed at updating and maintaining the motivation of the fundamental meanings of existence and patterns of self-realization.

In this context, overcoming the difficulties and the negative experiences from the clash with the socio-cultural differences during the school age period requires psychological and pedagogical work with the young people, that is:

- based on the acceptance of the person as a whole;

- aimed at self-discovery of the inner resources and encouraging their use in everyday life.

Given that every young person at certain times and in certain areas of development has experienced setbacks due to incoherency of the Self, this paper emphasizes the need to provide targeted psychological and pedagogical support of the globalization process in the school age period.

The importance of promoting the philosophy of global education as the educational policy for formation of cultural relativism identity has the following core projections:

- support for adequate polycultural integration;
- effective establishment of inner psychological state;
- creating conditions for equal access and symmetrical social interactions, regardless of the cultural differences;
- identification of one's own needs, aspirations and intentions and implementation of life situation tasks.

It is necessary to promote the philosophy of global education as a conceptual model of educational policy for development of cultural relativism skills in the school age period in order to reflect the interconnected changes in various areas of pupils' development regardless of their social and personal identity.

The participation of young people in educational activities for raising awareness of the concept of cultural relativism is a guarantee for overcoming critical situations in the school age stage and for opening of vital perspective towards growth and maturity in the context of polycultural perspective of individual development.

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## LEARNING TO LEARN (WISDOM): INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO PHILOSOPHY

**Abstract:** The aim of this text is to illustrate some of the features of the Introduction to philosophy course at the Institute for philosophy. In the hope that the way to wisdom can be illuminated through teaching, the Introduction to philosophy course's objectives center around the inauguration and elaboration of philosophical concepts and categories, the promotion of critical thinking, and the improvement of oral and written expression in the students (who are in their first semester of the first year of the degree).



Some of the key roles and functions of the teacher are overviewed, mainly against the backdrop of introducing philosophy to first-year students. The duality of seriousness and silliness is emphasized as an important characteristic in teachers, as is the complexity (on many levels) of covering vast areas of philosophical material in one intense semester's work, constantly aware of the discrepancies in the students' previous philosophical education.

The text shows the process, the challenges, and the outcomes of teaching, the criteria for selecting, framing, and communicating the main philosophical problems and categories through the structured reading of philosophical texts, and offers some main pointers applicable to the students starting their degrees. The need for a proper balance between maintaining a solid comprehensive introductory philosophical conceptual basis, while leaving sufficient room for flexibility in adapting the material in light of the particular groups' intellectual needs is highlighted.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Introduction, Course, Teacher, Goals

## **Introduction**

It is frequently said that wisdom is acquired by teaching others. The origin of the quote is often attributed to Solomon Ibn Gabriol's thought that the first step in the acquisition of wisdom is silence, the second – listening, the third – memory (remembering), the fourth – practice, and the fifth – teaching others. If attaining wisdom is possible through the teaching of others, then teaching the acquirement of wisdom (if possible), or the love for wisdom, i.e. philosophy, is self-referential and meta-imposed on the teacher. In teaching philosophy, the guidance expected from the practice of pedagogy is abundantly clear, not only in respect to the students, but also to oneself. The teacher leads the students towards knowledge about wisdom, and hopefully, the striving for wisdom itself, while attaining better, deeper insights into the meaning and importance of wisdom. This view is perhaps rather limiting, illustrating pedagogy as guidance from-to (which is not wrong, given the etymology of the term). However, since neither the “from” nor the “to” are clear (what is the starting point of the students? How do we use any previous knowledge on the topics? What are the particular objectives of each phase of the introduction to philosophy? How realistic are the didactic goals of the course? How can we make sure the envisaged tasks have been successfully fulfilled? etc.) the view is far from narrow.

This text is not a scientific paper in pedagogy, but rather a summary of experience, of practice; a brief overview of the main points regarding the (somewhat) daunting, but wonderful task of introducing first-year students to philosophy. The completion of this formidable task and the fruits of one's labor can be assessed throughout the following years of study, which is easily achievable, given the structure of the degree in philosophy, where one teacher covers two or more courses, available in different years. The idea of this text is to outline the role and the functions of the teacher, especially of Introduction to philosophy, to show some of the main features of the course as offered at the Institute for philosophy, and to offer some mini-guidelines for the students enrolled at the Institute, pursuing their degrees in philosophy, thus learning the love of wisdom.

## **The Point of the Course Introduction to Philosophy**

The first question that arises about introducing students to philosophy is “how?” (not counting here the all-pervasive, underlying philosophical “why?”). The students should get acquainted with how philosophy can be defined, what it represents, and how important it is. They should understand the didactic goals of the course, so that they know what is to be reasonably expected from all parties involved; and how to best dedicate themselves to the fruitful study of philosophical disciplines, categories, principles, mechanisms and all other necessary features of the curriculum. The students should also gain a clear grasp of their starting position, in order to plan out the ways in which they can most efficiently and most thoroughly understand and learn the principles

and mechanisms of the study of (the love of) wisdom, which includes the basic principles of a general theory of rationality, and the key points in developing a general metaphysical sensibility.

All this needs to be accomplished in the circumstances at hand, which is an almost insurmountable discrepancy between the previous preparation of the students (the accent on “almost”, otherwise we would be doomed to fail from the point de départ). Some students have a solid basis of philosophy, having taken multiple courses from the philosophical corpus (Philosophy as an obligatory, complemented with Philosophy as an elective course, Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics) for secondary education (high-school), and/or have read philosophy, have been exposed to philosophical concepts, are aware of the intricacies and complexity of the material. Some students have never had a philosophy class in their lives, and know virtually nothing about philosophy, except that they want to pursue a degree in it. While some students have experience in reading philosophical works (often in a foreign language), some struggle with their reading with understanding skills, the ability to follow a structured argument, and have absolutely no practice in critical thinking, argumentation, and engaged discussion with peers. The task of the teachers at the Institute who teach in the first year is not only to introduce the students to philosophy and whichever courses they cover, but to also try and remedy years of educational neglect, by actively teaching the less prepared students reading with understanding, critical thinking, basics of logical arguments, exercises of styles, academic writing skills, and openness for diversity. This should be done by also making sure it does not affect the potential for achievement and faster improvement of the better prepared students. Introducing the students to philosophy, therefore, is not merely showing what philosophy is and how to start to “do philosophy”, it is also guidance in all relevant directions, and on all levels, in getting the students to a point where learning to learn is not only a prelude, an overture, a daunting necessary precondition, but an integral part, and one of the main goals of the course Introduction to philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

The students ought to read philosophical texts, ponder philosophical questions, and understand that there are never any final answers, and that the essence of philosophy is mostly in how one arrives to new (and new) questions. This cannot be done without knowing the basics, like, for example, the sources of philosophical thinking, the cosmology of the pre-Socratics, Aristotle’s ethics, empiricism’s positions on knowledge, rationalism’s theories on the innate notions and the preestablished harmony, the ideas of freedom and engagement, etc.

It is important to stress, as early as possible in the duration of the course that it is highly unlikely that we will discover what the meaning of life is, and that no one expects one self-content person doing philosophy to convey to the others that they have solved the conundrum of life, universe, and everything. Instead, what will be tackled, perused, formulated, reiterated, analyzed, revisited, is how to talk about being, about ontological questions; about goodness, beauty, knowledge and truth; how to approach the discourse on God, (im)mortality, infinity, omnipotence, freedom and self-deliberation; how to underline the importance of the understanding of values, moral actions, social relations and dimensions; and all other major themes and problems pertaining to the fields of the philosophical disciplines. The most crucial task is to properly outline, and offer the tools to achieve, a theoretical core – a proper knowledge of the material, which will, immediately

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<sup>55</sup> Learning to learn applies to situations where people acquire some abilities required to effectively learn within the circumstances in which they are placed, and towards the objectives that they have outlined as successful outcomes of the process. Self-understanding and self-awareness are needed both from the educator (teacher or instructor) and from the students who are learning (to learn).

<sup>On</sup> the question whether learning about learning itself and improving learning skills is as desirable an outcome as the learning of something (x and y) about something (z), and on the principles, generalizations, and challenges of the concept of learning to learn, see Smith, 1983. This text is not on the topic of learning (how to) learn in general, so this line of inquiry is not pursued on this occasion. Useful points critiquing the concept of learning to learn, beginning with the claim that we are born to learn, as well as the confusion between capacities and abilities, in Winch, 2008.

and long term, serve as a starting point and a baseline for the students' philosophical endeavors (in their other courses, and generally).

## The Role of the Teacher

The first idea for this presentation (and the subsequent text) was to show the role of teachers in our folklore, a research opportunity inspired by the wide-ranging survey on the hypothesis that folktales can offer an insight into teaching in higher education (Sturm & Nelson, 2017), and with that, on the possibilities to learn (wisdom included) the practice of virtue. With that in mind, the corpus of Macedonian folktales collected by Marko Cepenkov (Цепенков, 1989) was analyzed, through the Aarne-Thompson motif classification index, and through content-analysis. Unfortunately, in no relevant place can a coherent story about a teacher be located; there are no stories featuring someone teaching someone something, or someone gaining knowledge on something (excluding here the elements with religious teachings, which also feature as parts of longer narratives, and not as tales in their own merit). Although it was not initially expected to find any formalized teaching process in the preserved folktale tradition, the lack of stories (motifs, notions, characters etc.) about teachers or educators, and pupils or apprentices, in less formal capacities, was surprising.

In their research, Sturm and Nelson analyze thirty-nine tales on teachers and teaching, from twenty-nine different countries, using motif-indexes, and quantitative content analysis, in order to discover topics which would be relevant for the contemporary education process. The teachers in the stories are most often outside of any formal education, and they use different methods to convey certain wisdom (this might be directly, before some moral or social decision-making, or indirectly, and in a post-error capacity, to make a point about some failing of the moral agents in question). The teachers in the tales analyzed use mainly a constructivist approach to teaching (learning by models, or through experience), they differ in their levels of wisdom or virtue shown, and face the problems of power and authority which the teacher has (or ought to have) over his/her pupils, the authors find (Sturm & Nelson, 2017). The depictions of teachers and teaching can be noticed reflected in other cultural milieux, especially considering the paradigm of the teacher as an inspiration, almost saint-like, as opposed to the insulting stereotype of teachers as incompetent (or) bullies.<sup>56</sup> From the massive amount of data available from the analysis, the authors conclude that, generally speaking, better teachers are those open for collaboration, in contrast to those rooted in positions of dominance; and those who facilitate a learning process guided mainly by the pupils, as opposed to those who only transfer or disseminate knowledge (Ibid.).

The most fascinating finding (out of the abundance) from this research, applicable to the course Introduction to philosophy, and thus, this occasion, is the mutually dependent nature of being wise and being silly. These topics are quite frequent in the folktale tradition, as illustrated by the classified motifs in the Thompson index (the wise and the fool opposition). This might seem contra-intuitive: the wise person surely must be as far as possible from the foolish person on the intelligence spectrum, and this is often true, as the paradigms of a purely wise or purely foolish person exist. But an interesting fact, extremely relevant to the study of wisdom, is that the

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<sup>56</sup> A broad survey on media representation of teachers across different countries, in Alhamdan et al., 2014. The paper analyzes the relevant sources on teachers' work and media studies, revealing the construction of four categories of teacher identity: the caring practitioner; the transparent (un)professional; the role-model (moral and social); and the transformative intellectual.

<sup>0n</sup> the self-perception of teachers, implicitly or explicitly, through the metaphors: gardeners nurturing their students; clay-shaping potters; mechanics working on engines (without intelligence); business managers; stage directors or orchestra and choir conductors, see Efron & Joseph, 1994. On the metaphors about teachers as soldiers, shepherds, keepers of faith, and even saints, perpetuated by cultural texts of our time, see Carter, 2009.

teachers are often depicted as both wise and foolish (or silly). Or rather, the wisdom of the good teacher consists in their ability to act silly. One of the stories mentioned in Sturm and Nelson, which is quite famous in this corner of the world, is the story about Nasraddin Hodja and the ass.

In this story, the teacher faces a difficulty: he hesitates whether to lead his students through the village with them walking in front of him, which would be disrespectful to his figure as a teacher, or with him preceding his students, thus turning his back to them, which would be disrespectful to them as students. He solves this by mounting his donkey backwards, while riding in front of the pupils. Although this behavior seems strange and rather silly, it perfectly solves the problem: a teacher should be both in front of his/her pupils, as that is a place suited for the teacher, and also behind them, which means that he/she will never turn his/her back on them, which is a main responsibility, or a duty, of the teacher. He achieves wisdom by allowing for silliness.<sup>57</sup>

The silly behavior, humor, and play have a large role in contemporary education (Banas et al., 2011). If applied properly, and not aggressively, they can be a key part of the educational experience, for they facilitate joy, which breaks the intellectual tension building up with complex materials. Of course, humor cannot fully break the tension of the existentially intricate situations of the introduction to philosophy – humor, for example, fails in the problems of boundary situations of loss, pain, mortality, the very randomness and necessity of existence, or in matters of the suffering of innocents, of wickedness and forgiveness, of profound evil and loss, and many others, in which it would be insulting and plainly wrong to try and “lighten up the mood”.

One of the definitions of man is “homo ridens”. Man capable of laughter (of humor, not necessarily joy in this sense), homo ridens, and homo metaphysicus are by no means mutually exclusive homospeciations, or incompatible features in a teacher, on the contrary. A teacher must also have the preparedness to experience (and show) levels of sincerity and vulnerability (Albritton, 1994). To demonstrate that he/she can be deeply involved in the active philosophical speculation on key matters is a large part of the role of the teacher who should be introducing students to philosophy. In this respect, the teacher who is guiding the students towards the ways of wisdom, is him/herself actively striving for wisdom.

## The Features of the Course Introduction to Philosophy

Anyone is capable of doing philosophy. An important point for the course to bring across is, nevertheless, that at university, we are supposed to channel the capability to philosophize, to arm it with the necessary categorial apparatus, plenish it with a multitude of references from the different philosophical disciplines and the millennia of accumulated (converging and diverging) positions, ideas, systems. How does a philosopher (or a person trying to become a philosopher) differ from friends discussing the meaning of life in front of the grocery shop, or over drinks, in a relaxed conversation and quotidian banter? It is not that one is sillier or more substantial than the other. The one studying philosophy will not automatically become smarter, and perhaps it is

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<sup>57</sup> Another story, very well known and joyfully retold in our education process is the one about Nasraddin Hodja and the congregation, applicable to the collaborative aspect of learning, where students are encouraged to help each other with the material (and afterwards discuss their experience, their achievements and problems with the teacher). Namely, in this story Nasraddin Hodja invites the entire congregation (it varies whether the mosque or the village), and asks the people whether they know why he has called them there. They respond negatively, and he leaves, without saying anything, with the explanation that he does not want to waste time with clueless people. He calls them again the next day, and asks them whether they now know why they have been convoked there. This time the people answer with a resounding “yes”. Nasraddin Hodja leaves again, saying that, since they know why they are there, he should not waste his time by telling them. Thwarted again, the people decide to diversify their answers, so when he calls them for a third time, half of them say “yes” and half say “no”. Nasraddin Hodja leaves, saying that since some of the people do know why they have all been called, the ones who know should simply tell the ones who do not know, thus leaving them flabbergasted, and in want of answers once more. (Hikmet, 1962).

good to be aware that while he/she is indubitably well equipped to properly do philosophy, one should remain humble in one's expectations, and maintain (or first develop and then maintain) the ability to not take oneself too seriously.

Teaching has always been a performance (similar to the cultic telling of myths, which would add some sacred weight, or a trace of some lingering sacredness; or to the singing of teaching ballads), but formal teaching is bound by the syllabus – some predetermined optimal content, with the intention to achieve some educational goals. Teaching should not serve to entertain, of course, or to merely inform, but it should nurture the abilities in the students to think critically, make causal connections, understand and associate abstract entities, correctly use notions and categories, respectfully communicate with others, and many more.

For years, if possible,<sup>58</sup> the course Introduction to philosophy<sup>59</sup> kicks off with a list of philosophical questions (for example “is it always necessary to tell the truth?”, “what is time?”, “who decides what is beautiful?” etc.), and the students (divided in pairs) are asked to choose a few questions that spike their interest, and discuss them. Then, each student explains not their own stance, but that of their collocutors. The other students who disagree with some of the stances, or notice problems with the argumentation, are encouraged to start a dialogue. This is done in order to showcase the many problems of philosophy, which will be part of their studies, as well as the many ways in which discussions will be held. Afterwards, each student is asked to define what philosophy is, and to remember the answer, to be revisited at the end of the course, in order to determine whether, and to what extent, changes have been made to their ideas about what philosophy is.

As determined in the course syllabus (for the current five-year accreditation), the main didactic goals of the course are to introduce students to the foundational philosophical-categorical apparatus, and provide the students with some baseline knowledge on the main philosophical issues and the ways in which they get approached.<sup>60</sup> The students are expected to get acquainted with the different philosophical disciplines; to develop analytico-synthetic thinking abilities, applicable to the problems of metaphysics, theory of knowledge, ethics, aesthetics, anthropology and other disciplines; to recognize their curiosity about the world; to learn the possible approaches to man; to overview (and evaluate) value-systems and different positions with context-awareness etc. The most important general goal is to enable the students to successfully follow the curricula of the other courses, having achieved a satisfactory basis for their further philosophical studies. The methods are: monologue, dialogue (including pair-share techniques), text analysis, Socratic inquiry, engaged listening, autonomous research, and others.

In the available one hundred and fifty hours for the course (including here the almost hundred hours of lectures and seminars per semester, as well as the students' work on presentations, papers, and their learning of the material by reading the selected texts, summarizing the main

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<sup>58</sup> This practice was not in place in the online format of the course during the pandemic.

<sup>59</sup> An abridged syllabus is available, in Macedonian and in English language, on the website of the Faculty of philosophy <http://zfz.ukim.edu.mk/%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%82-%d0%bf%d1%80-1-2-2-2/>.

<sup>60</sup> The goals have not varied much, despite the course having been restructured, as per the general guidelines for program accreditation: from a two-semester course with four hours of classes per week, into a one-semester course with six hours of classes per week; and the changes in the teachers conceiving and teaching it (prof. Lj. Cuculovski covered the course before retiring nine years ago). The objectives of teaching philosophy remain relatively unaltered, despite cutting the number of classes – if anything, the diminishing allotted time calls for more focused, more succinct and efficient work, to ensure that the students are getting as much access to the topics of the course as their past colleagues. The number of classes per week (and per semester) is inversely proportional to the number of hours of autonomous study, which, on the one hand, encourages students to work on their own, thus developing their research skills, their focus and creativity, but on the other hand deprives them of some of the hands-on informed and engaged intervention by their teachers, available in class.

topics, points and arguments, having discussions, revision work within peer groups etc.), the main topics of the course are the following. The definition of philosophy (the sources of philosophy; the question “philosophy or philosophies?”; the philosophical disciplines with their subjects, main themes, and importance; the relation between philosophy and other sciences or intellectual endeavors), and the points and objectives of philosophical thinking. The basic problems in ontology (the basic ontological categories and questions; an overview of the ways to approach the problem of being; the relations between Being and beings, and different typologies of beings; substance, hyle; time; space; determinism vs. indeterminism, etc.). The nature of the world (types of materialism and of idealism; key points and characteristics of different systems). The basic problems of gnoseology (the sources, possibilities, and limits of human knowledge). Morals, ethics, values and norms (the basic ethical categories; the question about the universality of morals; definitions of values; different approaches to values; intentionalism vs. consequentialism, deontology, Kantian duties, utilitarianism, etc.). The basic notions in aesthetics and several theories of art. The man and the world (basic questions in philosophical anthropology, essentialist and nonessentialist approaches to man); homospeciations; forms of alienation; the issues with freedom etc.

The initial steps in the course comprise the acquaintance of the students with the topic of philosophy, or rather – since it is not one single topic – the main topics of its disciplines. The most common initial approach is the apophatic one – determining what philosophy is not, and what philosophy does not do, in order to arrive at affirmative formulations, placing philosophy at the basis of human knowledge, at the core of any intellectual invention. “Why philosophy at all?” is a question that is being answered through the overview of the categories of ontology, theory of knowledge, ethics, aesthetics, anthropology, philosophy of law, of language, of politics, etc., and revisited at several junctions in the duration of the course. This is done through the perusing of special parts of philosophical works and a broad discussion.

The fragments of works chosen as most representative of, or most helpful in, certain topics or issues, make the corpus of the assigned reading. These are fragments, or parts of texts, from ancient to contemporary sources. The lack of translations in Macedonian has been challenging, but the situation has been vastly improved in the last decade(s), although still allowing for a more extensive improvement. The reading corpus must contain some core texts, but its content varies depending on the preferences of the group of students. This does not mean that the group dictates the essence of the syllabus, but rather that a greater interest in some problem results in an increased attention to the text covering that problem (for example, if during the seminars’ presentations of the reading and the discussions a special enthusiasm on the problem of being in pre-Socratic philosophy is noticed, instead of working on fragments from three schools/philosophers, fragments of five schools/philosophers will be perused; if Descartes’ *Meditations* peak the students’ curiosity, the number of time-slots allotted to the first and part of the second *Meditation* will be increased). This is simple, but requires a careful attention to the students’ levels of engagement, as well as an open communication, wherein the students are able and free to voice their opinions and preferences, thereby contributing to the directions they want to take and the objectives they want to reach.

The approaches and responses to the chosen (fragments of) works are combined: dominance, negotiation, and opposition (see the proposed ways in Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). Dominance means taking the information as it is presented (for instance, Parmenides’ fragments read x, and on this level, this is it). Without this level, however, one cannot move forward. In the way, or response, of negotiation, parts of the text are being discussed, and some interpretations offered by later philosophers (contemporaries, or from millennia later) are taken into consideration. In the manner of oppositional reading, having built up on the layers of the previous two ways, or approaches (and thus, levels of knowledge), the text is read critically, the contents are

being evaluated and questioned, attempting to achieve not only a coherent transeunt (through the covered external interpretations), but also an immanent critique. The flow of text analysis goes through several stages, each providing the students with additional layers of knowledge (vaguely inspired by Bloom's taxonomy). The steps are the following questions and areas to be analyzed and answered.

What does the text (fragment) convey?

How does it fit into its context (period, school, system, worldview)?

How does it compare to the things we have covered before (converges, diverges, coincides, corresponds partially)?

Does it bring some other associations to mind?

An important step is to revisit the text after everything planned has been covered, and ask the following.

What new conclusions can be reached?

Did the new material shed more light on the problem?

Did it complicate matters?

Did the new material obfuscate the meaning of the first/previous text(s)?

Did the new material contradict the previous conclusions? If so, in what ways?

This is a matter of practice, thanks to the openness to questions and more new questions, all the available relevant positions, and the awareness of one's intellectual freedom and responsibility. The building and solidification of this foundation is the only way to move onto the other courses from the philosophy curriculum, and to other life situations.

The underlying points that the students should understand (and, to be consistent, possibly try to reevaluate and critique) are that:

Practice does not make perfect, but will render them more eloquent and quick-thinking;

They will not magically discover the meaning of life, universe, and everything;

But will constantly discuss the essential issues and matters of life, universe and everything;

There is no "answer", but some things are answers;

They are welcome to think that the world is meaningless, which does not allow them to refuse to work diligently, since they are there of their own volition and by merit, also because philosophy makes sense, even when the world does not (and often exactly because the world does not, and in this case, simply because we are in this course to intentionally do philosophy).

## Conclusion

Circling back to the initial musings – wisdom (or, to be less presumptuous, the learning of the love of wisdom) is acquired through silence, listening, memorizing, practice, and teaching. It is possible through the awareness that one should not take oneself too seriously, and the conviction (or, at least, the hope) that philosophy makes sense, even if (and sometimes especially because) the world does not. The underlying precondition of the feasibility of the course is that philosophy can be learned, that wisdom can be pursued (if not reached). Introduction to philosophy is merely the first step.

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## THE DIDACTIC GOALS OF THE PHILOSOPHY COURSES IN THE MACEDONIAN HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to illustrate the main objectives and goals of the Philosophy courses (obligatory and elective) in the Macedonian high school system, and to determine whether, and to what extent, they align with the contents of the courses syllabi. At a first glance it might seem that the objectives stated in the course programs are unattainable and over-stretched, but a further analysis shows their diversity, applicability, and usefulness for the overall student improvement. These objectives, being directed towards the development of critical thinking, moral deliberation, pluriperspective flexibility, and awareness for the contexts in which people function, are crucial in this age, and necessary for the formation of young adults capable of determining causal relations, of orienting in multiple sources of information and sets of circumstances, and staying in tune with the moral needs of their communities.

The text shows the main didactic goals of the Philosophy courses in the Macedonian high school curriculum in light of the courses' contents, and in the greater framework of the Philosophy courses from several countries from this region (Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bulgaria).



Attention is paid to the ways in which the goals reflect the contents of the courses, and the contemporary needs for a solid education rooted in context-awareness, critical thinking, and empathy. The comparison between several courses' goals will show that while the objectives of the philosophy education seem complex and multifaceted (as is philosophy itself), their achievement (even partial) is pivotal in the formation of young adults capable of not only understanding the values with which they live, but of working on ways to improve their own, and the circumstances of their communities.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Courses, Goals, Didactical, Curriculum

## Introduction

The aim of the paper is to illustrate the main didactic goals of the Philosophy courses (obligatory and elective) in the Macedonian high school system, as well as to analyze whether, and to what extent, they correspond to the contents of the courses syllabi. The idea of the present mini-research was to review the proposed official objectives and goals of the existing syllabi for the course curricula of the philosophical corpus (philosophy, logic, ethics, aesthetics), as they were presented in the University project by the Institute for philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje in 2019 (“Theoretical and practical update of the syllabi for the philosophical subjects (philosophy, ethics, logic, aesthetics) for high-schools”) (Донев et al., 2019), and revisited for this occasion, without taking into consideration any possible changes made to the programs in the countries of the region in the meantime. One of the issues that arise is the rate of feasibility of all these goals, having in mind the contents of the courses. The problem concerning the estimation of such a possible attainment of the envisaged goals (or lack thereof) is the (non)durability of the follow-up of their range and reach. Such research, however, would have a focus diverging from that which the Institute for philosophy had taken as a topic for research for the project. Therefore, the research is aimed at overviewing the proposed didactic goals and discussing their attainability.<sup>61</sup>

## The Didactic Goals of the Obligatory and the Elective Course Philosophy

The goals of the course Philosophy should be dominantly oriented towards the level of knowledge that needs to be attained, pertaining to the history of philosophy, since the content of the obligatory course Philosophy is an overview of the history of Western philosophy. (Наставна програма по Филозофија, 2002). Still, the majority of the expectations, or the goals, are directed towards the development of critical thinking and argumentation, which could later help in the development of society, and in the attainment of specific abilities and skills. The general goals of the course Philosophy could be divided into four groups: *Knowledge*, *Critical thinking and argumentation*, *Development of the individual and of the society*, and *Development of skills*.

From the aspect of *knowledge* (certain amount of knowledge that needs to be obtained in the field), the following goals can be presented. From the pupils it is expected to gain knowledge about the philosophical thought and the aspects of philosophical research. Also, it is expected to gain knowledge about the development of the human thought, the connections (temporal and causal) during this development, as well as about the world and the worldviews in the development of our civilization, which include the philosophical understanding and experiencing of the world. Furthermore, this entails the achievement of an understanding of the intellectual striving of people through history, and the directions of the particular philosophical and scientific discoveries. The obligatory course Philosophy follows a historical (chronological) approach in the

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<sup>61</sup> For the perception of this issue among the high-school teachers of philosophical courses, participants in the empirical research during the work on the project, please refer to Донев et al. 2019.

teaching of philosophy, which means that these proposed goals of understanding of the development of Western thought, the paradigmatic shifts in the worldviews, and the key points in the development of the civilization could be realistically expected.

The elective course Philosophy (Наставна програма по филозофија – изборен предмет за IV година, 2003) follows a problem-oriented approach to philosophy, and in this sense, it is expected to introduce the pupils in the structure, contents, topics, and methods of philosophical thinking, facilitate the understanding of the problems of philosophy, its methods of thinking, and its significance for human knowledge. From this course it is also expected to develop in the pupils the ability to understand the intellectual aspirations of people through history, and the objectives of the particular philosophical and scientific discoveries. According to these didactic expectations, and, as it might be expected from a course designed to broaden and deepen the knowledge of the pupils particularly interested in the matter, the accent is on the principles, methods, and mechanisms of philosophical thinking, and the grasp of the importance of the problems of philosophy in a broader context.

From the aspect of the goals from the group *Critical thinking and argumentation*, the expectations of the obligatory course Philosophy are to: enable the pupils to conduct autonomous, creative thinking; to develop their individual critical and axiological disposition; and to facilitate in the pupils the development of the capabilities to conduct a free dialogue based on rational, substantiated arguments. Considering the overwhelming abundance of topics in the course material, ranging over all the main periods of the Western history of philosophy, it is unclear how these goals could be attained, especially the development of autonomous critical thought. The elective course Philosophy strives to enable the pupils to discuss philosophical (and other) issues using suitable arguments, which is more realistic, considering that the focus of the course is aimed at the understanding of the basic principles of critical and creative thinking.

The goals directed towards the *development of the person and of the society* in Philosophy (obligatory course), are concerned with the pupils getting acquainted with the postulates of human freedom, and the principles of cultural and intellectual development of human society. Also, the pupils are expected to cultivate an understanding about the foundational questions about man, the society, and the world; to discern and explain the significance of humanistic axiological principles, etc. A part of these goals might be reached by transposing the facts from the history of philosophy into a contemporary context. In this sense, a contextualization of the axiological principles, the importance of responsibility, tolerance and an open democratic consciousness can be reached, but this must be attained only through the personally motivated intervention on the part of the teachers, since the material (the whole of the historical periods included in the program) does not entail such goals. Part of these goals are also nearly identical with those of the elective course Ethics (for second and third year of high school).

The course Philosophy (elective) expects the pupils to be directed towards (at least) a part of these goals, especially in the domain of attaining an awareness for the achievements of humanity, and the power of philosophical thinking in resolving the life problems of people; the development of the sense of responsibility, self-confidence, and the feelings of certainty and spiritual stability; as well as tolerance and an open civic consciousness. Actually, the goals seem identical to the ones of the obligatory course, which is expected from their complementary nature. Considering that there are no centralized official directions for the course, nor a textbook (and/or reader) covering the material, it is even more striking that the attainment of the goals is left to the personal involvement of the course teachers. This leads to an uneven achievement of the objectives and goals, and to discrepancies in the attainment of the full potential of the value of the course, and most importantly, of the pupils' abilities.

The goals dedicated to the *development of skills* are specific to the area, therefore, both courses, and in a major part the course Logic, expect the students to acquire the skills to: analyze,

synthesize, abstract, and classify; to form accurate conclusions; to identify and carry a substantiated tolerant discourse. These goals are quite similar to those in the group of development of critical thinking, which is to be expected.

The goals of the high school course Philosophy in the Republic of Serbia (Предметни програм Филозофија и Логика, s.a.), which are dominantly directed towards the attainment of knowledge, gravitate around the methodological structure of the scientific and the philosophical thinking; the connection of the personal thought-experiences with some characteristically philosophical problems, thanks to the overview of different philosophical stances; the understanding of the historical context and the developmental dimensions in the formation of the philosophical worldviews; as well as the intertwining of cultural and intellectual traditions in the origin and the creation of the scientific theories and the spiritual works of the Western civilization. In the area of critical thinking and argumentation, some attention is paid to the elements and principles of valid conclusion-formation, and algorithmic problem-solving; and the grasp of the structure of the cognitive capabilities (the thought-language relation, for example, and the intricacies of communication); the improvement of autonomous and critical judgement through the interpretation of philosophical texts and the reconstruction of philosophical arguments.

The expected goals directed towards the development of the person and of society are manifold. Some of them include: the attainment of awareness for the need to actively shape one's own life, by responsibly participating in the public life of the human and democratic society; learning to distinguish between factual and value judgements, in facing ethical dilemmas and societal challenges. Some of these goals coincide with, or can be placed in, the group of development of skills. Some other expected skills from the pupils are to improve their verbal expression, and participate in open respectful discussions.

From the course Philosophy in Montenegro (Predmetni program Filozofija, 2014), it is expected to introduce pupils in the flows of philosophical thinking and facilitate the capabilities to connect different experiences (in science, arts, religion, etc.). Pupils are also expected to develop critical thinking about the basic questions about the world. These are similar to the goals pertaining to the other groups: to learn to apply the basic philosophical notions to the problems of man, society, nature, and spirituality. The other goals could easily be paraphrases of the previously mentioned Macedonian and Serbian ones.

The goals aiming for the attainment of knowledge in the course Philosophy in the Republic of Croatia (Nacionalni kurikulum nastavnoga predmeta Filozofija – prijedlog nakon javne rasprave, 2017), are to introduce the pupils in the philosophical ways of thinking; and to facilitate some reflection on the content of the other subjects, ones that cannot be fully examined using the methods of those same disciplines. Some of the other goals, versions of which have not thus far been mentioned in the overview of the courses, and keeping in mind that the Croatian curriculum places the utmost importance on the place and roles of the individual as an active participant in society, are: the attainment of knowledge and values necessary for the development of aware, responsible citizens who think, act, and create (the individuality and uniqueness of each pupil as an equal member of society); the development of reflexivity, in order to improve autonomous moral action; the formation of integrity and respect for others; the encouragement of the love of freedom, of truth, of the protection of life; and the insistence on the dignity of each human person. These goals in the Croatian system, present in each philosophical course, match the content of the material. To expand on the role of the individual in societal life in the Macedonian system would mean to substantially change the course content.

Some of the goals that have not been previously formulated as such, from the Bulgarian Philosophy courses (Учебна програма по Философия – VIII, XIX, X, XI, XII клас, 2016) in several years of study (and considering the complexity of the high school curriculum), are the understanding of, and distinction between, the historical and the contemporary norms (moral, legal, religious,

political); the understanding of the basic concepts and theories of social philosophy and the philosophy of law; gaining a grasp on the historical origin and importance of religion as a cultural phenomenon, the features of the world religions and of the orthodox tradition in particular; the argumentation of one's personal preferences in art, and the proper use of aesthetical categories; the capability to rationalize one own's experiences with the help of philosophical and psychological concepts and theories; the development of empathy and trust in the community through collaboration and active communication; the encouragement of suitable conduct in the sphere of scientific knowledge, especially in the natural and formal sciences. The Philosophy courses in the several years of high school are also aiming to enable the pupils to analyze philosophical texts, express their own points of view, as well as to write essays, participate in discussions, perform case-analysis, and to practice project conception and completion, conflict resolution and management, and public speaking.

### **The Didactic Goals of the Course Logic**

The goals of the course Logic (Наставна програма по Логика, изборен предмет за IV година, 2003) from the group *development of abilities and skills*, as it was previously mentioned, almost coincide with those of both Philosophy courses, with a focus on the proficient operation with abstract entities, and, very importantly, the development of the apparatus necessary for the attainment, organization and (re)evaluation of the many individual facts received from other courses and materials.

From the aspect of the attainment of *knowledge*, the goals of the course Logic are directed towards the acquaintance of the pupils with the essence of logical notions, principles and methods; the character and structure of the scientific method and scientific systems; and the new tendencies in communication, based on the information technologies (which includes a certain level of interdisciplinarity absent from the Macedonian high-school curricula). The course Logic aims at the development of a logical sensibility in pupils, which would help not only in the more successful learning of the material from other courses, but also the general intellectual preparedness of the pupils.

The course Logic in Serbia (Предметни програм Филозофија и Логика, s.a.) and the course Logic in Montenegro (Predmetni program Logika, s.a.) are aimed at enabling the pupils to learn the elements and principles of valid thinking; to learn to recognize and avoid the typical logical fallacies; to grasp the structure of knowledge, as well as the methodical structure of the scientific and the philosophical research principles. Like in the Macedonian system, special attention is paid to the development of the capabilities to transfer the knowledge from different areas, and use the skills for a process of permanent learning. The course Logic in Republic of Croatia (Nacionalni kurikulum nastavnoga predmeta Logika – prijedlog nakon javne rasprave, 2017) generally has the same goals, but it is worth mentioning that it promotes creative thinking; the development of auto reflexivity; and the awareness for the criteria shared by all people, which are universally acknowledged as the basis for the culture of togetherness; and – like in all other courses in the Croatian system – the importance of the development of responsible, active citizens. There are almost no goals in the course Logic in the Bulgarian systems (Учебна програма по Психологија и логика – IX клас, задължителна подготовка, 2017) that were not already mentioned: the accent is yet again on the importance of clear, accurate, critical thinking, but some differences can be spotted in the goals directed towards understanding diversity as a constitutive element of the world, and problem-solving in the face of diversity.

### **The Didactic Goals of the Course Ethics**

The goals of the course Ethics (Наставна програма по Етика за II година, 2003) are in the context of acquisition of permanent knowledge applicable to the moral problems in life. The didactic goals of the course Ethics as an elective in second and third year of high school (Наставна

програма по Етика – избран предмет за III година, 2003) are directed towards introducing the pupils to the importance of the evaluation of the moral in life, and the role of ethics in the sustaining and the improvement of mankind. Considering that the material does not include complicated overviews of the history of ethics, but rather universally important topics like: Ethics and morals, Man, Life and morals, Love, Work ethics, Political ethics (in the second year); and Introduction to ethics, The value of life, Elements of ethics, Ethics and religion, Ethical priorities, Bioethics, Social and political ethics etc. (in the third year), a clear complementarity can be seen between that which is and that which ought to be, or rather, between the manner in which the course is structured and the expectations from it.

The goals in Montenegro (Predmetni program Etika, s.a.) do not focus on the theoretical knowledge in some broad range, but rather focus on the acquirement of skills useful for a competent decision-making in the moral matters in life, and the application of the moral character. In Croatia (Nacionalni kurikulum nastavnoga predmeta Etika – Prijedlog nakon javne rasprave, 2017), the goals of the course Ethics are accomplished through two domains: moral and ethical thinking, and moral and ethical acting. Some of them include, apart from the development of creative thinking, rational acting, and the protection of human rights, the contextualization of moral thinking through examples from myths, legends, folktales and examples from ordinary, quotidian life; the building, sustaining, and improving of the communities; and the awareness for the importance of moral acting within such communities. Much attention, apart from the civic engagement of man, is paid to the universality of moral issues and decisions, and the needs for multidisciplinary in understanding the complexities of man and of society.

The course Ethics and law (general education) in Bulgaria (Учебна програма по Етика и право – X клас, задължителна подготовка, 2017) aims at enabling the pupils to act justly and warmly towards themselves, the others, and the world, as free, autonomous persons and citizens. The three modules of the course Ethics and law (vocational education), Applied ethics, Social and political philosophy, and Law and ethics in the information society, have additional practical goals, as well as some of the already mentioned. Some of them are: to gain some knowledge of the practical importance of deontology; to apply the knowledge of ethics in the realm of professional relations; and, especially relevant for the contemporary world, to grasp the importance of bioethics and medical ethics. Furthermore, it is expected that the pupils develop their legal and political culture in the philosophical speculation of the issues of justice, liberty, human rights, ownership, legality, democracy etc. The pupils are expected to know about, and analyze and synthesize positions on, the topics of taxes and state management; political subjects and political life; the law of the European union; the protection of minority rights, and other current issues; as well as to understand the information society as society for all; grasp the legalities of the use and misuse of the internet; the legal aspects of intellectual property and copyright claims; and the basics of economics.

## **The Didactic Goals of the Course Aesthetics**

From the teaching of the course Aesthetics (for musical secondary education) (Наставна програма по Естетика, средно музичко образование, 2007) it is expected to enable the pupils to acquire knowledge about the meaning, essence, and the principles of art; about the history of the aesthetical ideas and values; about the essence and the division of the arts, as well as their characteristics; about the work of art and the role of the artist in the creation of the artworks. Furthermore, it is expected that the pupils learn how to distinguish between genres of art; as well as how the tastes, styles, and artistic experiences in people originate and develop. Next, it is expected from the pupils to ponder the possibilities to evaluate, critique, and accept the work of art; to understand the distinct features of the classical and the modern; and to understand art as an important dimension of the person, as a manner of communication, and as a way to relate to the

other spheres of societal life. The pupils are also expected to understand the process of creation of art, from the inspiration of the artist to the completion of the piece; to form their own position towards the different arts, and to form aesthetic values, feelings and experiences; to develop their own creativity, and to tolerate the ideas and stances of others. Given that for this course there are absolutely no official textbooks or centralized materials and methods of study, it cannot be expected that these goals are achieved, especially since the vast majority of them are interdisciplinary and need a wider contextualization. Although some of the courses in the philosophical corpus present in the high school curricula of the countries in the region do include topics pertaining to the area of aesthetics, Macedonia is the only country that offers it as a separate course, which means that a brief comparative overview is not possible.

## Conclusion

It might be concluded that a certain part of the didactic goals of the courses of the philosophical corpus are attainable, and with that, extraordinarily applicable and useful for the overall improvement of the pupils, both in their knowledge gained from the four courses analyzed (on the basic topics of the history of philosophy; the logical categorial apparatus; the morals, ethics, values and civic consciousness; the perception of the artwork and beauty, and other fundamental themes), and for the development of a general metaphysical sensibility, and of various capabilities for creative, critical, autonomous thinking, substantiated argumentation, tolerant communication, and an awareness for their own worth and the responsibilities to their communities and to the world.

In order for these designed goals to be attainable (or as attainable as possible), following our analysis of the course curricula from Macedonia and the countries in the region, as well as the precious empirical insight gained from the project (a seminar with high school teachers, surveys, focus-groups), some conclusions were reached. The main problems, and, with that, the main issues to remedy are: a new, topical and contextually suitable textbook/reader is needed for the course Philosophy (obligatory), and a textbook (which would also be “new” in a sense, since there have not been any) for the course Philosophy (elective). For the course Ethics, an awareness needs to be raised that, due to its importance and practical applicability, certain changes should be implemented so that it can be offered to all the years of high school; it could also profit from a wider selection of textbooks available, in touch with the contemporary ethical problems. The course Aesthetics should have textbooks/readers (as there are none). There are some other modifications which could be favorable to the attainment of the goals, but also to the general status of the courses (cf. Донеv et al, 2019).

Although in the empirical research within the University project of the Institute for philosophy, the participants in the one-day seminar, teachers in high schools from across the country, evaluated which goals are best achieved in which courses, there was no empirical survey on the perception of (a sample of) the pupils about the plausibility and feasibility of the goals. Such a survey would not have been focused on the main objectives of the project, which was the status and the upgrade of the course syllabi of the philosophical corpus. A survey on the pupils would have to include a longitudinal follow-up, and the possibility to compare the acquired skills (especially those most typical for the aims of the philosophical education – critical thinking, autonomous analysis, understanding and application of values etc.) of the pupils before and after the courses, compared to a control group, and also after an allotted time-period. This was not one of the goals of the Institute’s project, nor of the present paper.

The courses’ goals from the Macedonian philosophical corpus largely correspond to those from the countries of the region. The greatest differences can be spotted in the Philosophy and Ethics courses in the Croatian system, and in the Philosophy courses in the Bulgarian system, wherein the goals are not only much broader, more thorough, wide-encompassing, far-reaching, and properly contextualized, they are also more attainable, resulting from their correspondence

to the courses' contents, and the number of classes available, far greater than those in the Macedonian high-school system (and those of the other analyzed countries). This could serve as a useful pointer for the further restriction of our high-school system: allowing for more classes in the courses from the philosophical corpus, with the improvements previously mentioned, would allow for a greater attainability of the didactic goals, and thus, an improvement in the pupils' philosophical education. The simple general point of the analysis of the didactic goals of the philosophical courses' syllabi is that we need **more** philosophy in our lives, not less, and a great place to start is precisely in the high school curricula.

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## **USE OF LITERARY CONTENTS IN TEACHING IN MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE**

**Abstract:** Literary works with different formats such as literary contents in the textbooks and reading works are used in the teaching in Macedonian language, which are provided by the curriculum for the teaching subject Macedonian language. Due to the importance of this process, it receives the status of a special program area, which is represented in all classes of the nine-year primary education.

Sequences from the reading works in the program area Literature are studied as smaller literary forms: fables, fairy tales, folk tales, short stories and dramatic texts, which are implemented in the textbooks in Macedonian language.

The purpose of the research is content and structural analysis of the curricula and literary contents in the textbooks in Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary education.

According to the obtained results, in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language, various genders, types and genres of the literary contents from domestic and foreign authors are used in almost equal proportion.

Literary contents are complicated in the second educational cycle, and the complexity of the didactic apparatus does not follow this trend. It is necessary to complicate the requirements and tasks related to the literary content in the second educational cycle. However, there is a need for strengthening and building consistent didactic support for the analysis of literary content in the form of manuals and worksheets for students.

The conclusion for the need for more comprehensive research to examine the quality of the program setting of the program areas, re-examination of the offered literary contents, encouraging students' interest in reading literary contents included in the textbooks; the possibilities for actualizing the representation of reading on a daily basis, in general in the teaching and extracurricular time is imposed.

**Keywords:** Literary contents, Textbooks, Curricula, Reading

### **Introduction**

Using literary works in teaching is a complex and multi – layered process. It primarily arises from the specificity of the literary work, but also from the didactic procedures needed for the effective discovery of artistic values. As for them, they should at the same time be appropriate to the possibilities and needs of the students, for whom the literary works are intended.

There are several ways or possibilities for using literary works in teaching. In addition to the fact that literary works are used in the teaching of the Macedonian language, as literary content in Macedonian language textbooks or as reading works in the same teaching subject, in our country there are studies that show that literary works can be used very successfully in other teaching subjects as well, subjects that significantly influence the improvement of the socio-emotional atmosphere in teaching, i.e. successfully motivate students for teaching work, awaken positive emotional feelings and improve interaction in the class.

Use of literary works is regulated by the annual global plan for the Macedonian language subject, for each grade separately. They are located in the program areas: Listening and Speaking,



Literature and Reading, Literature and Reading works, for the implementation of which the largest number of teaching hours is planned. All of this indicates the importance of these program areas and the importance of literature, that is, “reading”, without which the use of them would not be possible.

“The reading” is in the basis of the process of using literary works. Namely, students must have mastered the skill of reading in order to be able to use literary content. The development of reading skills is a long process and reading is “improved” by reading, and literary contents appear as means and contents for practicing reading.

## **The Influence of Literary Works on Child Development**

According to Dimova (2011, 17), reading contributes to cognitive, social and emotional unloading, where the reader at some point escapes from everyday life for a certain period, dives into the fictional world without borders, observes problems and desires of fictional characters, enters a stage of development that is already passed or, seeing the fate of others, he can forget his own difficulties.

The literary work intended for students is specific and different from the work intended for adults in several aspects. Precisely because of that, this work represents a kind of literary phenomenon, because its role is very significant in the life of the child and the development of his personality.

The book and its literary power has a great influence on the child’s speech development. Through it, the child defines the world unknown to him and gets an initial perception of the world through the artistic-aesthetic language of the author. That is why the literary thought of the author should flow harmoniously and the action of the fable should move in the literary work. The art of the word is a key to discover what the author wants to convey. It develops the child’s speech by enriching his vocabulary. The more the child reads, the more he gets to know new words, unknown to him, which he needs to use further when expressing himself.

All these numerous themes and motifs found in literary works for children confirm how specific they are, especially for the child’s development and creativity.

Apart from the characters of children and adults, mythological creatures, magical and fantastic objects and other imagined characters that enrich children’s imagination are also found as literary characters.

The literary work represents an open window to the world through which the child gets to know it. Through it, it is taught, advised, upgraded and educated.

Literary texts can be a topic of conversation between family members, friends, scientists, as well as between students and teachers. In order for a dialogue related to a literary work to succeed, pragmatic abilities of the participants in the dialogue are necessary, which means the basic abilities of communication, of effective and cognitive communication, then of tolerating other people’s opinions, of hearing and involving other participants in the dialogue and finally about the appropriate style of conversation.

“Literature enables the building of national, political, social, ecological, ethical norms and provides an occasion for a conversation about aesthetic issues.” (Dimova, 2011, 17). Part of the literature for children and young people was deliberately written that way, in order to build and to develop their aesthetic taste. For some of the young people, talking about literature is part of the group identity. That is, if any of them would like to be part of a group, they should have read certain literary works that the group supports.

Finally, the social significance of literature lies in the special aesthetic taste that appears in situations of collective reception (theatre, cinema, recital, etc.).

The cultural significance of literature lies in its contribution to the system of symbols with the help of which larger communities create their identity. Literature as part of the cultural consciousness of a larger group becomes the place in which it is decided what will be remembered.

Through the written word, many events from the past can be presented, explained, captured and conveyed with great intensity, which in themselves, translated into literary content, influence the formation of the reader's attitudes. This component is closely correlated with aesthetics, that is, with the development of aesthetic feelings and values, which is one of the basic literary elements in a literary work.

The book as a literary work represents a source of knowledge, but in a specific way. It does not refer only to pedagogically structured and didactically "modeled" literature, which is intended for a certain readership. Thus pedagogically shaped literature undertakes this special task, which is completely independent of its authors or publishers. Like other arts, literature is a mean of expression that possesses the characteristics of selection of communication and self-interpretation of those who "consume" it. When approaching a discussion, through which an analysis of the read content is made, of course the experiences of the specific target reader group should be taken into account, and their cultural and sociological environment is also inevitable. Literature structured this way, as a means of communication, influences the creation of collective identity.

It follows from all this that students can only get acquainted with its content by reading the literary work, and then express their thoughts, attitudes, value the actions of the characters and put themselves in dramatic roles.

## **The Emotional Value of Literary Works**

The development of the positive emotions of the students in teaching has its own psychological justification i.e. it is of great importance for the complete development of the personality and for the realization of a series of crucial tasks of teaching. This is evidenced by the latest psychological findings, according to which there is a close connection between emotions and cognitive processes in the learning process. In that sense, in contrast to numerous theories of the past, which are characterized by the distinction and opposition of intellect and emotions – whereby the basic function of human existence is reduced to cognition, regardless of whether it originates from the subject or is reached through the senses, and emotions are given completely marginal importance. More recent psychological research shows that there is a close connection between the intellectual and emotional components of learning. Explaining the psychological nature of thought processes, Rubinstein (1950, 54) points out that "the role of emotions in thought can be different. Emotion can sometimes divert thought from the right path, but, in principle, it would be incorrect on that basis to assign only a negative role to emotions as disorganizers of thought, and to place their interference in thought processes in the field of pathology. The presence of emotions gives an opinion more tension, passion and sharpness. Thought sharpened by feeling **permeates** deeper into its object than objective indifferent and indifferent thought" and vice versa, because: "sometimes, changes in the cognitive sphere affect changes in the affective sphere. When students are given the information, the intention is to change their attitudes as well." (Rakić, 1976).

"While sensations tell us about the objects themselves, about their properties and peculiarities, emotions tell us what states they cause in us." (Tofović-Kamilova, 1994, 47) Taking into account the ability of emotions to transfer i.e. taking into account the emotional component of attitudes, which are complex habits, graduated and polarized affects in relation to an experienced object, in their development and construction (based on learning), man always tends towards things that are pleasant and that satisfy us. If teaching is often the cause of negative emotions, in students it can lead to the building of a system of negative attitudes, not only towards it, towards the fulfillment of school tasks and towards the school, but also towards the wider social environment, whose representative it is, to the elders, to the superiors, towards those who achieve better results in learning and who fit more successfully into the teaching courses.

On the other hand, a large number of difficulties that arise during the creation of optimal conditions for the development and use of positive emotions among students arise from the insufficient

elaboration and specification of teaching tasks, which usually determine only the final effects of using positive emotions, and not the ways and the models of teaching work, which can be considered as the most appropriate.

## **The Literary Work in the Context of the Development of Language Skills**

The student's learning process begins with initial reading and writing. At the same time, the principle of moderation in teaching, as well as the physiological-psychological basis of reading and writing should be taken into account.

Reading is one of the most important activity of a person living in the modern world. According to Tomevska-Ilievska (2020, 115), a large number of printed materials, of various kinds, are sources of information. But reading a certain type of texts with an artistic character can develop a special pleasure, conveying the emotions of the author. Through reading, educational improvement is also possible, in the broadest sense of the word. Undoubtedly, this activity represents one of the basic means of learning. Therefore, a good reader should master the reading technique well and read quickly and efficiently. Reading is an activity that in formal educational conditions can be called developing a culture of reading.

It is a broader task, which is accomplished through the entire educational process, and the second task refers to the activities within the teaching of the mother tongue. However, these two activities are not mutually exclusive. The main goal of the educational measures in relation to reading is the adoption of certain habits and skills for fast reading, the ability to fully understand and experience and independently serve the book. The set of these skills forms the character of the "developed reader".

According to Petkovska (2008, 74) Seen from the perspective of pedagogical psychology, the reading is the main means of learning for human. During his life, he gets most of his knowledge thanks to reading. The movement of the eyes, the number of fixations and regressions are not the cause, but are the consequence of understanding the meaning of what is read.

Since at the beginning of reading the emphasis is mainly on the technique of reading as a goal, and what is read serves as a means, the words, sentences and texts that are read should be short and easy to understand, close to the child's experience. Readability and understanding are greater if sentences are shorter, because reading long sentences requires more complex mental work. Later, after the reading technique is mastered, reading will become a means of acquiring knowledge, and text analysis will become the goal of the lesson. The fact that reading is an analytical-synthetic process should be taken into account, therefore, in initial reading and writing, the analytical-synthetic method should be used, which best corresponds to the nature of our language. By applying this method, the student acquires knowledge about the form of language expression, and by combining the letters in the word and by understanding the meaning of the word in the sentence, he is gradually able to understand the meaning of what is read. Reading is the discovery of thoughts through the written word. It represents an understanding of the relationship between the word being read, speech and thought.

A significant problem in improving reading is the decreasing interest of students in reading literary content. According to some research, students have very poor reading and comprehension skills. For that reason, there is a need to examine the didactic competences of teachers for the optimal use of literary content in teaching and the didactic approach to literary content.

Modern teaching tends to the simultaneous development of three components, namely: the student must first learn to read correctly; to read with understanding and in reading to brings emotions.

The teacher has a great role on the students in encouraging the motivation to read, giving directions for reading (books, daily press and information available on the Internet), as well as for developing love and interest for the book.

## Research Methodology

The subject of the research is the use of literary content in the teaching of the Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary upbringing and education (from the first to the sixth grade).

The purpose of the research is a content and structural analysis of the literary content in the teaching of the Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of the nine-year primary upbringing and education.

The research of the problem related to the literary contents and their use in teaching requires this research to have an evaluative character, because it assesses the educational status of the literary contents in the teaching of the Macedonian language. This research also has a descriptive character, since the evaluation was made on the basis of certain conditions investigated through qualitative analyses, while quantification is also used for certain research parameters. So, this research has an evaluative-descriptive and qualitative-quantitative character. The research is contemporary, because it studies contemporary issues.

General hypothesis: It is assumed that there is a need to change the content and structural arrangement of the literary content in the Macedonian language textbooks from the first to the sixth grade.

Task 1: to examine the program and content representation of literary content in the program area Reading, literature and reading in the textbooks of the Macedonian language subject in the first two educational cycles of primary education.

Technique 1: content analysis of Macedonian language curricula from the first to the sixth grade.

Sample 1: curricula for the subject Macedonian language from the first to the sixth grade.

**Table 1**

Overview of lessons by program areas for the Macedonian language subject

Program area	Number of teaching hours by program areas					
	first grade	second grade	third grade	fourth grade	fifth grade	sixth grade
Listening and speaking	80	0	0	0	0	0
Literature	60	0	0	0	0	0
Expression and creation	26	36	36	30	30	34
Media culture	20	10	10	10	10	10
Preparation for beginning reading and writing	30	0	0	0	0	0
Beginning reading and writing	0	70	70	0	0	0
Language	0	20	20	70	70	50
Reading, literature and reading	0	80	80	70	70	50
Total number of teaching hours	216	216	216	180	180	144

According to the results of Table 1, it can be concluded that there is a reduction in the number of teaching hours provided for the subject Macedonian language, since in the first educational cycle (from first to third grade) the annual number of teaching hours is 216 teaching hours; in the fourth and fifth grades it is 180 teaching hours, and in the sixth grade it decreases to 144 teaching hours.

The literary contents that are represented in the textbooks for the Macedonian language subject in the first two educational cycles of basic education correspond to the program objectives of the corresponding program areas.

Task 2: to examine the representation of genders, types and genres of literary content in textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education.

Technique 2: content analysis of the literary content in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles.

Instrument 2: checklist for analyzing literary content.

Sample 2: all 14 textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education (literary content).

**Table 2**

Presentation of literary contents in Macedonian language textbooks – first educational cycle

grade		first	second	third	in total	fourth	fifth	sixth	in total
number of textbooks		3	3	3	9	3	1	1	5
literary contents	poetic	36	72	103	211	143	40	41	224
	prose	81	190	212	483	99	23	25	147
In total		117	262	315	694	242	63	66	371

According to the data from Table 2, it can be concluded that in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education, a variety of genders, types and genres of literary content are used. Also, there is a need for a more teaching hours due to the length and scope of the literary content in the textbooks for the fifth and sixth grade, as well as due to the more extensive didactic equipment.

Task 3: to examine the didactic equipment for the use of literary content in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education.

Technique 3: content analysis of the literary content in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language.

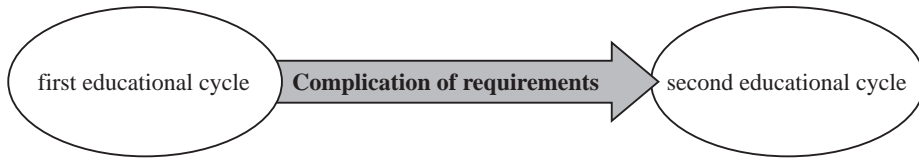
Instrument 3: checklist for the analysis of literary content.

Sample 3: all 14 textbooks for the Macedonian language subject in the first two educational cycles of primary education (literary content).

According to the research and the content analysis of the textbooks, it is concluded that the didactic equipment that is represented in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first and second educational cycle have the following functions: facilitating the work of teachers and providing guidelines for designing the methodical approach in analyzing and experiencing literary content. They occur in the form of: questions, school assignments, creative tasks and homework assignments.

**Figure 1**

Flow of the represented didactic equipment in the Macedonian language textbooks from the first to the sixth grade



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The systematized results point to the conclusion that the problem of the research is a significant pedagogical issue, which awakes the interest of the researcher, but also of the teaching “audience”. However, if the research problem is deeper, with a tendency to turn into a new research paper, where the central target group would be precisely the ultimate “consumers”, i.e. the examination of the attitudes of the most important – students, in relation to the use of literary works in teaching. On the other hand, they certainly cannot be treated in isolation from their environment (interest, peers, multimedia availability and family), it can be assumed that the data that will be obtained would represent a significant “input” in the process of updating this pedagogical problem. The research can be rounded off with a wider scope, during which the examination of the didactic competences of the teachers can be deepened, then the micro-method models in function of the same goal, etc. However, such extensive research would exceed the scope of a master’s thesis.

Regarding the literary works, the following ultimate knowledge was obtained from the smaller format represented in the Macedonian language textbooks (the literary contents):

According to the obtained results, the second special hypothesis is confirmed, according to which, in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education, various genders, types and genres of literary content by domestic and foreign authors are used in almost equal proportions.

During the analysis of the literary contents represented in the textbooks, it was observed that the complexity of the same (volume, number and type of literary elements) becomes more complicated in the second educational cycle of primary education. At the same time, the complexity of the didactic equipment does not follow this trend. It is necessary to complicate the requirements and tasks related to more complex literary contents in the second educational cycle.

Regarding the representation of folk art in the Macedonian language textbooks from the first to the third grade, it can be ascertained that there is minimal representation in relation to artistic literary types. Drama texts are also poorly represented, only 25 in all 9 textbooks or 3.60%. It is necessary to reconsider the possibility of increasing such literary contents in Macedonian language textbooks.

As a recommendation from the research, the need for further development of the didactic support in the processing of literary content in the second educational cycle is noted. With this, it can be concluded that the literary contents represented in the textbooks for the teaching subject Macedonian language in the first two educational cycles of primary education are always accompanied by appropriate didactic support for their use in teaching (third special hypothesis).

The conclusions indicate that teachers have educational needs in the form of professional literature, which will be followed by appropriate didactic equipment, differentiated.

In the end, as a significant output from this research, and considering the data obtained from the part of the research, which is “bound” with the literary content, the reading works and the immediate implementers – the teachers, the finding of the need for more comprehensive research to examine the quality of the program layout of the program areas that are in close correlation with

the researched problem, re-examination of the reading works offered, regardless of whether they have the status of mandatory or optional; encouraging students' interest in reading literary works and the literary contents included in the textbooks; the possibilities for actualizing the representation of reading on a daily level, in general during teaching and extracurricular time; the availability of reading works; encouraging the successive approach to reading works, i.e. to read the work first, and then to visualize it, using other multimedia sources.

The research set up in this way is expected to make a contribution to pedagogical theory and practice for the advancement of the didactic treatment of literary works in the teaching of the Macedonian language in primary education. And of course, this research problem should encourage future research that will focus on other aspects of this pedagogical problem, which are basically numerous and open very important questions in the sphere of contemporary pedagogy.

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## **DIDACTIC-METHODICAL DESIGN OF TEACHING MATERIALS FOR THE PROGRAM AREAS INITIAL READING AND WRITING AND LANGUAGE**

**Abstract:** Teaching Macedonian language, composed of knowledge in the field of grammar and spelling, can be an important prerequisite for the language culture of each individual.

Without the basic knowledge on which the Macedonian literary language is built, no one can speak of literacy in the broader sense of the word, through which the teaching of the Macedonian language is based.

In order for students to master the goals provided by the curricula for teaching Macedonian language, through the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language from I to III grade, an appropriate classification of materials is needed based on which students will be able to master grammar and spelling rules and tasks, as well as practice the already acquired knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the curricula, as well as appropriate didactic-methodical design of modern teaching materials that will help teachers to realize the teaching of Macedonian language, and students to more easily master the curriculum.

The aim of this paper is aimed at analyzing the program setup of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language and methodical-didactic design of modern teaching materials, all in order to improve the teaching of Macedonian language.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Design, Curricula, Teaching materials

## **Introduction**

Initial writing becomes automated over time, losing the “charm of beautifully drawn lines”. The incorrect use of lowercase and uppercase letters, omitting letters in polysyllabic words, using dialect words, writing fused words, writing the sounds “b” and “p”, i.e. incorrect use of voiced and voiceless consonants, the use of punctuation marks are one of the most common mistakes that elementary school students make in dictations and written assignments. The teachers say that the level of literacy is a concern, equally in the departmental teaching and in the subject teaching. The teaching of the Macedonian language should be given special treatment in our school system, all with the aim of teaching students the correct use of letters, words, sentences, texts to improve their handwriting, as well as their knowledge related to grammar and the spelling. The learning process at school begins with mastering the technique of reading and writing. That process is perfected over time, with more or less organized exercise, until a high degree of automation is achieved. Success in teaching the Macedonian language, as well as success in school in general, depends on how the student has mastered reading and writing and how he understands what he has read. If the student masters the skills of reading and writing in a better quality, he will be more involved in the general system of communication. Human’s innate need for knowledge, creativity and the need to realize his personality depend entirely on reading and writing. The book is an irreplaceable necessity in the life of the modern human. Not being able to read and write means being far from the spiritual well-being that the written or printed word enables, being intellectually, socially, culturally and technologically handicapped.

So, from the very need of man for his literacy, comes the need to learn and improve the writing technique, i.e. the Cyrillic script, with which the person himself will be able to get to know the beauties of the written word, and at the same time to improve himself. In schools in our country, there is a need for methodical-didactic design of teaching materials within the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language.

## **Macedonian Language Teaching and Its Meaning**

The multifaceted importance of speech in human life has conditioned the teaching of the Macedonian language in primary education and upbringing to receive a primary place.

The meaning of a teaching subject and its participation in the formation of the student’s personality can be considered from several aspects. Individual authors have defined those approaches differently. According to the student’s behavior in the teaching process, some authors have formulated those approaches as separate areas. According to Bloom’s taxonomy, with which he

more closely determines educational requirements related to the level of knowledge, skills and habits, and as achievements expected from the student, there are three such areas:

- **cognitive area** – it determines “educational goals related to the reproduction or recognition of knowledge, as well as the development of intellectual abilities and skills.” In other words, this area covers the intellectual (educational) sphere, “which is seen in the growth of knowledge and skills, as well as the development of abilities”.
- **affective area** – in this area are included “goals in which changes of interests and attitudes in behavior are described”, with a special emphasis that “internal feelings are as important as external manifestations”.
- **manipulative (educational) area** – in this area “the tasks and problems that the student should solve, if he has accepted or developed a certain type of behavior” are listed in this area, that is, “the ability of the student to apply those tasks and problems in new situations”. In order to be able to prove that the student can successfully apply his knowledge, “it proves that he will use it correctly in a situation where the paths and methods of solving are not determined”.

## Culture of Written Expression

Written expression, together with the culture of oral expression, represents a significant subject area of the language, the teaching of the Macedonian language, which has the task of equipping the student with his knowledge, thoughts and feelings, his attitudes and thoughts according to the coefficient and every life matter, etc. express logically and grammatically correct in writing. The task of the school is to enable him to express himself easily, intelligibly and beautifully, and then to express himself in a rich, varied and stylish way, as well as to be able to write in the most diverse forms.

Oral expression exercises are a preparation for written expression, after mastering one type of spoken expression, immediately following the mastering of the written expression of that type.

The contents of the students’ exercises for written expression that will be applied in the teaching can be different. These are usually contents of students’ everyday life and work, their experience, interests, experiences, their desires, etc., everything that can serve as content for oral expression, can also serve for written expression, and vice versa.

A basic condition for success in written expression is that the content to be written about is well known to the students and arouses their curiosity and interest. Only in this way will it be possible to activate the opinion and imagination of the students. (Delcheva-Dizdarevic, 2003)

The application of the contents for expression should be written so that they correspond to the mental development of the students. For written compositions, the contents of the processed literary texts, the characteristics of the characters from the read literary works can be selected.

All that, in the end, should have a good effect on the cultivation of written expression among students.

Success in written expression largely depends on the correct choice and clear formulation of the topic the students will write about.

With the good choice and the specific formulation of the topic, in fact, a relationship is established between the student and the content, encouraging him to think and to express himself beautifully in writing.

To check whether the content of the topic is known to each of them, it is often practiced to prepare the content beforehand as a speaking exercise. In doing so, what is not clear should be well clarified, and students should be used to using nice words and expressions. Such a procedure, in fact, is both a good preparation and a kind of guarantee for the success of the written exercise.

In 2003, Delcheva-Dizdarevic said that “in addition to the correct choice, the wording of the topic itself is very important. It should not be too broad and indefinite. Such formulations do not

encourage the student to think, even less to a beautiful written expression.” With such formulations, students usually move away from the topic and write anything and everything. The wording of the topic must not be too narrow.

As a result of the topics formulated in this way, a poor written composition is usually obtained. An insufficiently or poorly understood topic can lead the student away from the basic content and give an answer to a completely different topic.

A well-formulated topic for practicing written expression is clearly and precisely determined, allows the student to imagine the content, delve into it, as well as arouse interest and desire in him to write on that topic. Only in this way will his written language expression be richer and more beautiful.

In order to get a good written composition, before starting to write a plan should be made, which will serve as a roadmap for the students to follow in writing the written composition. This activity will help to find the components, data and facts that will enter the content of the written composition and their logical connection and shaping into one linguistic unit, arranged in chronological order.

A plan for writing a specific topic can be compiled by the students themselves. It is a good way for the student to gradually become independent and train himself for independent work.

### **Types of Written Exercises**

Starting from the complexity of the written works, from their purpose and from the production of the performance, the written exercises in primary education should be the most diverse. Therefore, in the pedagogical literature, they are classified in different ways. According to some authors, they are usually divided into two basic groups:

- **written exercises** – they have the task of improving those components of literacy without which there can be no good written expression, as well as eliminating the difficulties and obstacles that complicate the work in developing written expression.
  - **written compositions** – they are freer in form and richer in content.
- Other authors, on the other hand, divide the written works in primary education into:
- **reproducible** – are those that serve, mainly, to practice the already learned knowledge, even though they are not exclusively about pure reproduction.
  - **productive** – they are those in which the student freely expresses his thoughts, feelings, experiences independently, in his own way and with his own vocabulary.

**Rewriting** is the simplest type of written exercise and aims to develop above all the mechanical habits of correct writing. In fact, it is the initial stage in introducing students to written expression.

It starts with copying letters and words, then short sentences, and later entire shorter texts. Apart from perfecting the writing technique, rewriting also contributes to the development of children’s attention, the sense of accuracy, neatness and discipline in work, as well as the sense of beautiful aesthetic writing.

Rewriting should start from the very beginning of literacy, starting with (re)writing the newly learned letter to teach students how to write correctly and beautifully; then words are copied to understand the grouping of letters as a whole – the word; sentences are also transcribed, through which, in addition to perfecting the writing technique; it is gradually getting into understanding the construction of the sentence in the Macedonian language and adopting some grammatical and spelling norms.

After that, **creative rewriting** or **rewriting with assignments** is approached. For example: rewriting sentences by filling in omitted words, rewriting text expressed in words and pictures, where pictures are replaced by words, rewriting handwritten typewritten text, rewriting text in which mistakes are hidden, correcting mistakes, etc. With these exercises, the foundations of readability and beautiful handwriting are laid, which will later acquire individual characteristics.

**Dictation** in lower grades is a difficult task for students. Therefore, the use of dictations in teaching should be approached very carefully. During dictation, the student perceives the text as an acoustic representation. While writing, the student is focused on remembering the text, must pay attention to the dictation, keep the thought to himself and pay attention to the writing.

The complexity of all these activities can burden the student by provoking a certain resistance to the dictates of distraction and fatigue. Therefore, when dictation is used, the following should be taken into account: the sentences that are dictated must be clear, simple and understandable; the sentences should be exemplary for the student's age; the speed of dictation should be in accordance with the speed of natural speaking; correct choice of the text for the text, which would correspond to the purpose and requirements of the dictation; first the whole text is read and then it is dictated; after the dictation, the teacher reads the entire text again, so that the students can check what was written; preferably, the dictation should take place through whole sentences; not to dictate to students when they are tired; to be motivated for dictation and to prepare for such a thing. (Nikolovska & Nikolovski, 1983)

Dictation can be a major component in assessing knowledge and changing grammar and spelling norms. Because it involves listening to the spoken text. The pronunciation of the text by the teacher should be clear, understandable, loud, with correct voice articulations.

Bearing in mind that the teacher knows his students best, it is possible to sometimes investigate how much this can exceed the previously stated and set goals. In accordance with that, the teacher can ask for greater requirements at the lower level of education, and at the higher level, use texts appropriate for the lower levels.

It is best to find a suitable text saturated with a linguistic phenomenon or linguistic phenomena that we want to check, that is, practice. However, the saturation of the text with the necessary linguistic phenomenon is not enough for us to use the text in a dictation exercise. It is especially important that the selected text be a linguistic and stylistic model, comprehensible to the students, communicatively transitional, current, one can say alive, interesting, as well as educationally and culturally valuable. Some changes to an author's text are also allowed, all in order to be in function of the necessary linguistic term that is in the center of our attention. Dictation should be started when the children have mastered more than half of the letters, but some methodologists believe that it should be done when they have learned all the letters. Dictation should start with writing sentences that are simpler, containing no more than 2 to 3 words. (Lekic, 1991)

## **Importance of Teaching Grammar and Spelling**

The teaching of grammar and spelling, as a special area of the teaching of the Macedonian language, is of particular importance not only for the teaching of the Macedonian language, but also for teaching in general.

The system of knowledge of grammar and spelling is a significant prerequisite for the language culture of each individual. Without the basic knowledge on which the Macedonian literary language is built, one cannot speak of literacy in the broader sense of the word, as, in fact, it is attempted to be achieved through the teaching of the Macedonian language.

Grammar and spelling will play their role only if the rules are put at the service of spoken and written expression, that is, if they serve for the growth of general culture and for a more reliable practical mastery of the literary language.

Spelling is an indivisible part of grammar, although in the teaching process it sometimes happens that grammar rules are studied in separate lessons from spelling rules. That connection is best seen during the realization itself in the teaching practice.

Reading will not be logical and expressive if the meaning of each word and sentence is not understood. That, in turn, depends on whether the punctuation marks are placed correctly. When

writing, it does not matter whether the capital letter is used correctly, and thus the adequate understanding of the word or the sentence can be called into question.

The study of grammar and spelling should not be separated from other subject areas of Macedonian language teaching: reading, writing, spoken and written expression, etc. Namely, reading will not be logical and expressive if the meaning of each word and sentence is not understood. That, in turn, depends on whether the punctuation marks are placed correctly. When writing, it does not matter whether the capital letter is used correctly, and thus the adequate understanding of the word or the sentence can be called into question. (Delceva-Dizdarevic, 2003)

In order for students to adopt the norms of our literary language and successfully apply them in everyday spoken and written communication, the material should be well chosen on the basis of which the students will learn the grammar and spelling rules or practice the knowledge they have already acquired. For this purpose, various sources can serve: a speech situation, a certain text, a written task of the students, a spelling mistake, etc., provided that they are adapted to the intellectual capabilities of the students. The choice of the content with which the students will understand the linguistic phenomenon or the spelling rule to be adopted will depend on the teacher's skill.

## Research Methodology

The **subject** of this research is the methodical-didactic structure of the teaching materials that the students use within the teaching of the Macedonian language, according to the programs in the areas Initial reading and writing and Writing Language.

The **purpose** of the research is aimed at analyzing the program layout of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language and methodical-didactic design of modern teaching materials for the teaching of the Macedonian language.

The study of the problem is carried out with **empirical** research of a **descriptive** and **explorative** character.

The research of the problem related to the methodical-didactic placement of the teaching materials according to the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language in grade school education and their use in teaching, conditions this research to have an **empirical character**, with characteristics of descriptive and explicative research. This research is empirical, because it examines the attitudes and opinions of a certain number of teachers of the Macedonian language who teach in the first, second and third grades. Research by its nature has **quantitative** and **qualitative** characteristics. The research will also have features of **action research**, because according to the analysis of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language and the obtained attitudes and educational needs of the teachers, modern methodical-didactic structured teaching materials will be designed.

Tasks that will be applied in the research are:

1. to make a content analysis of the Macedonian language curricula and programs for I, II and III grades, in relation to the program layout of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language;
2. to examine the educational needs of teachers for the preparation and use of methodological-didactic teaching materials in the teaching of the Macedonian language – the program areas Beginning reading and writing and Language (first, second and third grades);
3. to examine the attitudes and educational needs of teachers in relation to the existing school resources necessary for methodical-didactic design of modern teaching materials in the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language (first, second and third grades);
4. to design modern methodical-didactic teaching materials for the implementation of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language (first, second and third grades).

A **general hypothesis** will be used in the research: There is a need to modernize the process of methodical-didactic design of teaching materials and to deepen the target compatibility of the program areas Initial reading and writing and Language, necessary for the realization of teaching in I, II and III grades.

The research will be dominated by the **descriptive method** with all its modalities: **analyzing, comparing and generalizing**.

To obtain relevant data, surveying of teachers and analysis of pedagogical documentation will be used as techniques in the research, through a survey questionnaire and a record list as instruments for obtaining reliable data for the research.

Several samples will be included in the research, namely: a sample of municipalities in which the research will be carried out, a sample of primary schools, a sample of primary school teachers and a sample of curricula and programs for grades I, II and III.

## Conclusion

Since the research is still ongoing, there are no adequate data that can express the attitudes and opinions of teachers about their educational needs in schools.

After conducting the research, the views and opinions of the teachers will be examined and thus the hypotheses from the research will be confirmed or rejected.

Based on the answers that will be received from the survey questionnaire as well as from the analysis of the curricula for the planned program areas and departments, the needs of the teachers will be perceived and will help us in the future to design modern methodical-didactic structured teaching materials, which they will help the teachers and facilitate their work during the lessons, by having modern teaching materials that they can apply during the lessons and receive feedback on the prior knowledge as well as the acquired knowledge of the students.

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## **SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS**

**Abstract:** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder, which affects the way a person communicates with and relates to other people and the world around them. About 1.55% of the general pupil body receive additional supports because they have been diagnosed with an ASD. The focus is on the needs of pupils with ASD and how they can be supported to achieve their potential. ASD is a spectrum condition, so some pupils with ASD require little support in school and are relatively independent in their learning.

The **aim** of the study is to shown kind of interventions, which can be effective for some pupils with ASD.

**Results:** there are numerous different approaches such as: antecedent-based interventions, behavioral packages, cognitive behavioral intervention, comprehensive pre-school or early interventions/programmes, discrete trial teaching, early intensive behavioral interventions, exercise, extinction, functional behavior assessment, functional communication training, joint attention, language training, modelling, multi-component socials interventions, naturalistic intervention or naturalistic teaching strategies, parent-implemented interventions, Picture Exchange Communication System, pivotal response training, schedules, social narratives, social skills training, social communication training, technology-aided instruction and intervention, visual support, structured play groups, and many others.

**Conclusions:** classrooms are social environments that rely heavily on being able to interact, socialize and communicate with others effectively. The challenges that pupils with ASD face with regards to communication skills and socializing can intensify their feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. This can lead to a decrease in academic performance. Working with any of these methods can improve outcomes they can achieve.

**Keywords:** Autism spectrum disorder, Pupils, Support, School, Classroom

### **Introduction**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder, which affects the way a person communicates with and relates to other people and the world around them. ASD is the name for a range of similar conditions including autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome and pervasive developmental disorder – not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) (APA, 2013). About 1.55% of the general pupil body receive additional supports because they have been diagnosed with an ASD (Brugha et al., 2013). ASD can affect children and young people with any level of intellectual ability, from those who are profoundly learning disabled, to those with average or high intelligence. Having ASD doesn't necessarily imply learning difficulties. Some children and young people have learning difficulties and require high levels of support, whilst others such as those with Asperger syndrome or 'high-functioning autism' are very academically able. Some children may also have additional specific learning difficulties. It is very common for children and young people with ASD to have sensory issues, alongside impairments in social imagination, and a narrow repetitive pattern of interests and activities. These challenges can cause higher than average levels of stress, anxiety and depression. The focus is on the needs of pupils with ASD and how they can be supported to achieve their potential. ASD is a spectrum condition, so some pupils with ASD require little support in school and are relatively independent in their learning.



Macedonian education available in schools for pupils with ASD – particularly in primary – has improved remarkably in recent years. The system recognizes that many schools, primary post-primary and special, have embraced open and inclusive policies for educating this cohort of students. It is disappointing therefore that some mainstream schools have restrictive practices which effectively exclude students with ASD – even from special classes – unless they are able to follow academic programmes and be included in mainstream classes for at least a part of the week. Despite the growth and corresponding improvement in supports and educational provision for students with ASD, the availability of appropriate mainstream and special placements continues to be problematic in certain areas of the country, particularly for those with more complex learning and/or behavioral difficulties. It can be found confusion in the system about the purpose and role of special classes for students with ASD, with some schools appearing to believe that the classes are resourced only to cater for the more able students with ASD. We are concerned that some students may be inappropriately placed or retained in mainstream or special classes when they might be more appropriately placed in a different setting.

Majoko (2017) argues that the description of characteristics associated with ASD is challenging, given the many individual differences amongst learners with ASD. Not all learners with ASD can be described as experiencing identical challenges. However, some common challenges that may be experienced by learners with ASD have been described in the literature. Such challenges include difficulties in interacting with others, verbal and non-verbal communication challenges, a prevalence of repetitive behavior and difficulties processing sensory input (Majoko 2017; Park, Chitiyo & Choi 2010).

The **aim** of this review article is to shown type of interventions, which can be effective for some pupils with ASD.

## NCSE's 7 Principles

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in USA supports an inclusive education system that enables children and young adults to achieve their potential.

**Principle 1:** Students, irrespective of the severity of ASD and/or cognitive ability, are welcome and able to enroll in their local schools.

**Principle 2:** Students with ASD have an individualized assessment, which informs teaching and learning and forms one part of an ongoing and cyclical process of assessment, intervention and review of outcomes.

**Principle 3:** Access to education and care is available on an equitable and consistent basis to students with ASD.

**Principle 4:** Students with ASD have access to a wide-ranging curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to their needs.

**Principle 5:** Students with ASD have access to available educational schemes and supports on the basis of their needs rather than disability category.

**Principle 6:** Available resources are used to maximum effect to drive improved outcomes for students with ASD and State services work together to achieve this.

**Principle 7:** Parents' role as the child's natural and primary educators is respected (NCSE, 2015).

Bond et al. (2016) identified eleven different types of interventions. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and a specific intervention may span two or three categories of focus. The categories just provide a way of grouping similar types of interventions and approaches together. Within each category, there are numerous different approaches. In the table 1, examples of interventions are provided.

**Table 1**

Examples of interventions explored within this document, categorized by focus

<b>Intervention focus</b>	<b>Type of Intervention</b>
Joint attention	Play-based/turn-taking intervention
Social interventions	Peer-mediated instruction and intervention
Social Skills Training	
Modelling	
Prompting	
Reinforcement	
Pivotal response learning	
Play based interventions	Structured play groups
Challenging / interfering behavior	Behavioral interventions
Self-management	
Naturalistic interventions	
Antecedent-based interventions	
Differential reinforcement of alternative, incompatible or other behavior	
Social narratives	
Discrete trial teaching	
Parent-implemented intervention behaviors	
Exercise	
Adaptive / self-help	Visual support
Technology aided instruction and interventions	
Communication interventions	Milieu (social environment) teaching
Incidental teaching	
Picture exchange communication system	
Video modelling	
Language training	
Task analysis	
Pre-academic / academic skills	Direct instruction
Comprehensive interventions	
Multi-sensory interventions	
Cognitive	Cognitive behavioral interventions

## Who Can Put the Interventions into Practice?

The evidence indicates that a wide range of people can effectively put these interventions into practice. The implementers in the majority of the interventions reviewed were teachers and other educators (such as teaching assistants). Other implementers were children and young people without ASD, parents and carers, and children and young people with ASD. Implementers may require training in the specific techniques of the interventions to deliver them effectively.

## Outcomes

The types of outcomes that might be achieved, and the extent of the outcomes, are likely to vary depending on the severity of ASD, the type of intervention implemented, the age of the child or young person, and other factors that might affect a child or young person's learning. The interventions were designed to improve children and young people's skills and behaviors. In most cases the interventions focused on either developing social skills (communication skills, or the reduction of challenging or disruptive behavior) or academic attainment (for example, abilities in reading and maths). A few of the interventions focused on improving school readiness, the wellbeing of children and young people, vocational skills and improving their play and interaction with peers. The evidence indicates that the interventions did, in some cases, lead to positive outcomes for children and young people with ASD. The outcomes identified, starting with those most frequently occurring, centered around:

- **Improved attainment and academic performance** – for example, increased readiness for school, improved test results, or improved vocational skills.
- **Improved social skills and communication** – with peers, teachers and/or others.
- **Improved behavior** – for example, reduced challenging or interfering behaviors, improved behavior during play, increased self-regulation, increased adaptive or self-help behaviors, and improved joint attention (positive attention in an activity by two or more people).
- **Improved wellbeing** – for example, improved mental health. Peer mentoring for students with ASD has been shown to increase levels of self-esteem, increase social satisfaction and decrease levels of bullying experienced by students (Bradley, 2016).

## Other Points to Consider When Designing and Providing Support Packages

There are several things to be considered when designing and implementing support for children and young people with ASD. Some key considerations are presented below, but there may be other factors affecting the specific child or setting that should be considered.

### Severity of ASD and Effectiveness

Most studies do not address whether the effectiveness of an intervention depends on the severity of ASD, and acknowledge the need for further research in this area.

### Age and Effectiveness

There is a gap in the evidence base regarding the effectiveness of interventions targeted at older young people (over 16s) diagnosed with ASD, and whether the effectiveness of interventions differs with age. Only five of the studies reviewed focus on participants aged 14 and over 29. With this limited evidence base, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of different interventions for children and young people of differing ages.

## **Setting Type and Effectiveness**

Most of the studies found interventions could be flexibly adapted and implemented effectively in a variety of settings. There was no evidence that setting type had a particular impact on the effectiveness of an intervention. However, it is important to consider where a particular approach will be implemented when planning interventions.

## **Intervention Length and Effectiveness**

It is important that each intervention is implemented for long enough to achieve positive outcomes. However, there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that the length or duration of an intervention had a significant impact on the effectiveness of that intervention.

## **Other Considerations**

Other key considerations that need to be thought about when planning or delivering support for young learners with ASD include:

- Whether or not a specific intervention or approach is available within the locality. For example, not all of the interventions and approaches outlined in this document are available in every country or local authority area. It may be worth checking what is available via the local authority.
- Any ethical implications or concerns associated with the particular intervention or approach.
- Practical implications associated with its implementation. For example, is there sufficient space available to implement the approach? Does an approach require peace and quiet, or few distractions? What resources are required (e.g. visual display equipment, toys, Lego etc.)?
- The capacity (time) and capability (skills and experience) of those implementing the intervention. What might be feasible and realistic? What else does the intervention have to align with? Is any training or support needed?

## **Crisis Intervention**

It is important to realize that challenging and/or violent behavior is not necessarily linked to special educational needs but is a broad, societal issue. While challenging behavior can be associated with a diagnosis of ASD, it is inappropriate to consider that all students with ASD present with it. Only a minority of students who may or may not have special educational needs demonstrate serious, challenging or violent behaviors in school settings. Schools have a duty of care to all their students and staff. Their management of challenging (and sometimes violent behavior) must be consistent with a student's right to be treated with dignity and to be free of abuse. Schools should make every effort to prevent the need for the use of restraint and seclusion. School policies in this area should form part of overall policy on the positive management of behavior which emphasizes the importance of having: preventative strategies in place to avoid the emergence of challenging behavior; good staff/student relationships to promote positive student behaviors; and early intervention to manage challenging behavior if/when it arises. It is clear that some schools feel let down by the educational and health systems. They consider they are being asked to educate a small number of students who at times can exhibit extremely challenging and sometimes violent behaviors towards both themselves and others, without access to sufficient, necessary clinical and therapeutic advice and guidance. The reality is that staff members, including teachers and SNAs, are currently being injured in schools. While such incidents are few, they are nevertheless serious when they arise. Views expressed on this issue were perhaps the most forceful, divisive and emotional heard during our consultation process. They

ranged from: under no circumstances should separate rooms be used in schools for the management of behavior to the absolute need for separate, lockable rooms for the safety of the student, other students and staff.

The literature is clear that many students with ASD can need time and space to self-regulate their behavior and to avoid sensory overload. In our view, the only legitimate rationale for use of seclusion and/or restraint is in an emergency situation to prevent injury or harm to the student concerned or to other students or staff members. Even then, as schools are not approved centers under the Mental Health Act, great care should be taken not to break this law in their use.

## **Supports for Families of Children with ASD**

ASD is a lifelong condition and parents and families play an important role in the life of a child with ASD. We recognize that parents can face additional emotional, practical and financial stresses in supporting their child and that they require ongoing information on services available. We understand the importance of adopting a child centered approach within the family context, in supporting parents and families and in equipping them with the relevant knowledge and understanding of the ongoing impact an ASD diagnosis may have on their lives. We should be aware of how important respite services can be in providing a break for parents and families and indeed for the children with ASD themselves. We believe these services have the potential to contribute enormously to making family life sustainable for all members and need to be equitably available based on the needs of their child. It is for this reason that we believe parents should not be obliged to bring their children to and from respite to school, as this can seriously erode their time for respite. Positive impact of parent education were identified, including reductions in stress and anxiety, improved coping, improved parent-child interaction and communication, improved understanding of ASD, efficacy and confidence and improved parental quality of life (Preece and Trajkovski, 2017).

## **Conclusions**

Classrooms are social environments that rely heavily on being able to interact, socialize and communicate with others effectively. The challenges that pupils with ASD face with regards to communication skills and socializing can intensify their feelings of stress, anxiety and depression.

This can lead to a decrease in academic performance. Working with any of these methods can improve outcomes they can achieve. Having ASD doesn't necessarily imply learning difficulties.

Some children and young people have learning difficulties and require high levels of support, whilst others such as those with Asperger syndrome or 'high-functioning autism' are very academically able. Some children may also have additional specific learning difficulties. Continued sharing of experiences and the ongoing development of collective pedagogic strategies that support the learning of all, including the learning of those with ASD, is of greater value than ongoing debates on which educational settings are most appropriate. The focus on placements and arguments for and against special school placements can be counterproductive. Focusing on where learners should be educated detracts from considerations on how best to support learning for diverse groups of learners. The end goal for inclusive education is an inclusive society, one in which opportunities are open to all people.

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## THE OPINION OF THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THE CONTENT OF THE AUTISM TRAINING: THE A-CLASS PROJECT

**Abstract:** Autism in the classroom is hard for teachers to deal with, especially as many children on the spectrum have accompanying challenging behavior. Giving accurate information about autism and behavior to teachers and teaching them to adapt their curriculum using good autism practice has been shown necessary to be effective in improving children's education. However, in some parts of Europe, such education is extremely limited or non-existent.

The aim of this article is to present initial research of the multinational project funded by Erasmus + program that has been developed to establish teacher education training program in six European countries based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) method.

**Methodology:** To ensure that the training is relevant and appropriate a survey was created out in Autumn 2020 to identify the areas of training that they felt most important. A total of 223 respondents from seven countries took part in the survey: Denmark, Italy, Spain, Macedonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, and Croatia. Data were evaluated with descriptive approach.

**Results:** Most of the respondents (60.4%) did not receive any training in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) during university studies and more than half of the respondents (53.1%) have never heard of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

**Conclusion:** Teachers agreed that they need additional education. There was no wide difference between countries regarding the content that they felt important to be included in the training curriculum. Six procedures were suggested for training: Behavior management strategies, Functions of behavior, Using reinforcement in the classroom, Extinction, Token economies and Group contingencies.

**Keywords:** Autism, ABA, Behavior

## Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a disorder that affects every individual to a different degree. It can be termed as a lifelong complex developmental disorder, which is characterized by a triad of qualitative impairments in social communication, social interaction and social imagination (Wing & Gould, 1979). In addition to these impairments, ASD people often struggle with sensory hyper- or hypo- sensitivity to visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive, gustatory and olfactory stimuli (McAlister, 2010). Epidemiological studies estimate that 1 in 59 births is likely to include a child with characteristics of the autism spectrum in the near future (Schendel & Thorsteinsson, 2018). Although nearly half (44%) of students with ASD fall in the typical range or above on cognitive ability, many of them are placed in mainstream classrooms (Bolourian, Stavropoulos, & Blacher, 2019). Autism in the classroom is hard for teachers to deal with, especially as many children on the spectrum have accompanying learning disabilities or other conditions such as ADHD, pathological demand avoidance (PDA), epilepsy, and/or learning difficulties (www.autism.org.uk, n.d.). Professionals support that it takes hard work to help a child with autism get the most out of the classroom experience. It also takes a good dose of structure and the understanding that every child with ASD is unique, which means each child has different styles of learning (www.webmd.com, n.d.). Existing trainings for school teachers provide little knowledge considered necessary to understand the behaviors of students with ASD (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008). In fact, many teachers report a lack of training or readiness to teach students with ASD (Laarhoven, 2010). Although children with autism stand a greater chance of doing better in the mainstream classroom (McAlister & Solan, 2017), many schools are unprepared to accommodate them, as evidenced by the number of legal disputes with families of students with ASD (Bolourian, Stavropoulos, & Blacher, 2019). Consequently, the need to prepare mainstream teachers in evidence-based approaches and practices to enhance the academic and social learning opportunities for these children is imperative. Interventions that are based on applied behavior analysis (ABA) are significantly related to best outcomes and are widely considered best practice (Keenan, Dillenburger, Röttgers, Dounavi, & all., 2015).

“The “A” class: integrating and supporting students with autism in the mainstream classroom” project has a target group of primary school teachers and the following objectives:

- Design, test and publish an innovative educational package (curriculum, handbook, activity book for teachers, classroom management/ reinforcement software for children, infographics, and an e-Learning platform) on evidence-based teaching approaches (based on ABA) for primary school teachers that will guide and support their teaching of children with autism integrated in the mainstream classroom.

- To provide quality training to primary school teachers on how to utilize the innovative educational package in the mainstream classroom to understand, assess and manage behaviors of children with autism and create individualized behavior support plans to prevent and/or de-escalate their challenging behaviors.

The project results are directly linked to intellectual outputs and activities carried out within the project implementation period. Partners from Denmark, Spain, Czech Republic, Italy, Croatia, Cyprus, and The Republic of North Macedonia, will work together to achieve the following results:

1. The “A” Class Educational Package including a Curriculum (IO1) and Handbook (IO2) for primary school teachers, an activity book for teachers (IO3), classroom management/ reinforcement software for children with autism (IO4), and Infographics (IO5), all interconnected.
2. An e-learning platform
3. A set of two e-Learning courses
4. 35 trained (C1) Trainers
5. 35 trained primary school teachers
6. Seven multiplier events (6 multiplier events and 1 Final Conference) to promote the project, its intellectual outputs, and its outcomes.

## Method

The aim of this article is to present initial research of the multinational project funded by an Erasmus + program that has been developed to establish teacher education training programs in six European countries based on ABA methodology. To ensure that the training is relevant and appropriate a survey was conducted in Autumn 2020 to identify the areas of training that they felt most important. A total of 223 respondents from seven countries took part in the survey: Denmark, Italy, Spain, Macedonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, and Croatia. Data were evaluated descriptively. Due to the needs of the project, descriptive statistics were processed and presented in percentages with ranks through tables and graphs. Relationships between variables were presented with crosstab and significant differences between variables were presented through Pearson's coefficient, with values less than 0.05 considered significant differences.

**Table 1**

Number of participants by country

Country	Total
Macedonia	33
Spain	30
Italy	35
Croatia	34
Denmark	30
Cyprus	31
Czech Republic	30
Total	223

Target groups of the survey were school teachers, trainers, and special education teachers. All respondents took the survey voluntarily and anonymously online. The fieldwork was completed with help of a semi-structured online questionnaire, self-completed by respondents.

**Table 2**

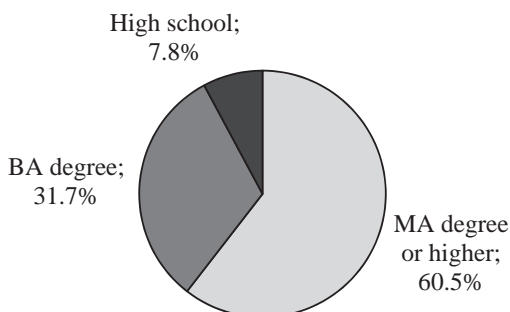
Number of participants by profession

Which job title matches your role best?		Frequency	Percent
<b>Trainer</b>	Trainer	23	10.3 %
<b>Teacher</b>	Main teacher in the classroom	74	33.2 %
	Assistant teacher (for the class/for one child)	15	6.8 %
	Subject teacher	40	18.0 %
<b>Special education teacher</b>	Special education teacher in a special school	14	6.2 %
	Special education teacher in a special unit	12	5.3 %
	Special education teacher in mainstream school	17	7.7 %
<b>Other</b>	Professional team at school	5	2.4 %
	Speech therapist	1	0.4 %
	Other	22	9.6 %
<b>Total</b>		223	100 %



Most of the respondents held a BA degree or higher (92.2%). The educational structure of the respondents is presented in Graph 1.

**Graph 1**  
Level of education

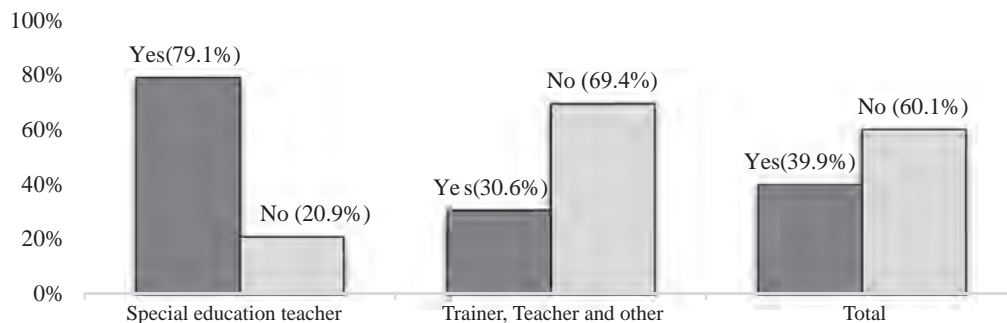


## Results and Discussion

Most of the respondents (60.4%) did not receive any training in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) during university studies. If we take into consideration trainers, teachers, and other participants independently from special educators, less than one-third (30.6%) of them have received some training regarding ASD. The same results were found in an article that reported ASD-EAST research results, about Polish teachers, where authors mentioned that there was a strong need for special training in the field of autism. Especially, they mentioned that there are significant differences in teachers' perceptions on autism, in reference to the school setting in which they work (Kossevaska, Preece, Lisak, Troshanska, & all, 2019). We found similar results in our research, where more than half of the respondents (54.2%) attended some training in ASD outside university studies (table 3). As expected, professionals that visited more trainings are trained or educated in the special education field (see Graph 2).

**Graph 2**  
ASD training attendance

**Did you receive any training in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) during university studies?**



More than half of the respondents (54.2%) attended some training in ASD outside university studies. Considering the cross tabulation below it can be noted that there is certain interest in trainings regarding ASD outside university studies among all target groups. Because children

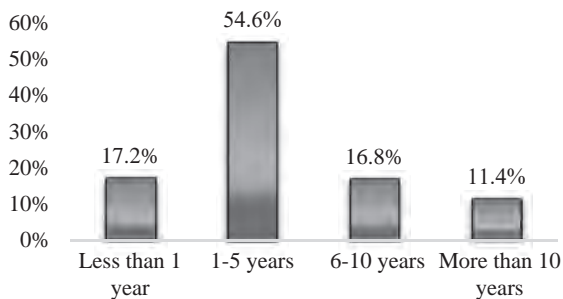
with autism are more likely to be part of the mainstream classroom, these results demonstrate that teachers recognize their need to be trained for specific strategies in the field of ASD. These results can be seen in other studies that present training needs for Eastern-European teachers (Preece, et al., 2019).

**Table 3**  
ASD training attendance outside university

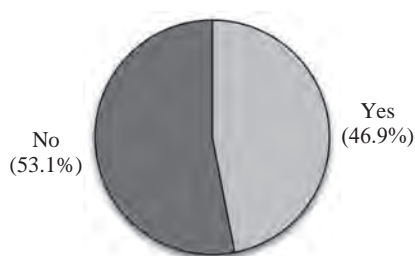
	D2. Level of education			Total	D3. Which job title matches your role best				Total
	MA degree or higher	BA degree	High school		Train-er	Teach-er	Special edu-cation teacher	Other	
<b>N</b>	135	71	17	223	23	129	43	28	223
<b>sig.</b>	0.095				0.003				
<b>Yes</b>	57.0%	55.7%	29.4%	54.2%	65.2%	43.4%	72.1%	64.3%	54.2%
<b>No</b>	43.0%	44.3%	70.6%	45.8%	34.8%	56.6%	27.9%	35.7%	45.8%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (69.6%) have practical experience in working with children with ASD, half of them 1 to 5 years (Graph 3) and more than half of the respondents (53.1%) have never heard of ABA (Graph 4). These results show us that popularity of ABA is low, and the awareness of ABA is lowest among the teacher’s group where almost three-quarters of respondents (72.3%) have never heard of ABA. This data is understandable, as a large number of them attended university without studying a subject related to autism (Troshanska, et al., 2019).

**Graph 3**  
Years of experience



**Graph 4**  
ABA Awareness



In total, 18.8% of the respondents have attended ABA training. Of them, 8.1% attended such training both during and outside the university studies, 4.5% attended during the university studies only, and 10.8% attended ABA training outside the university only.

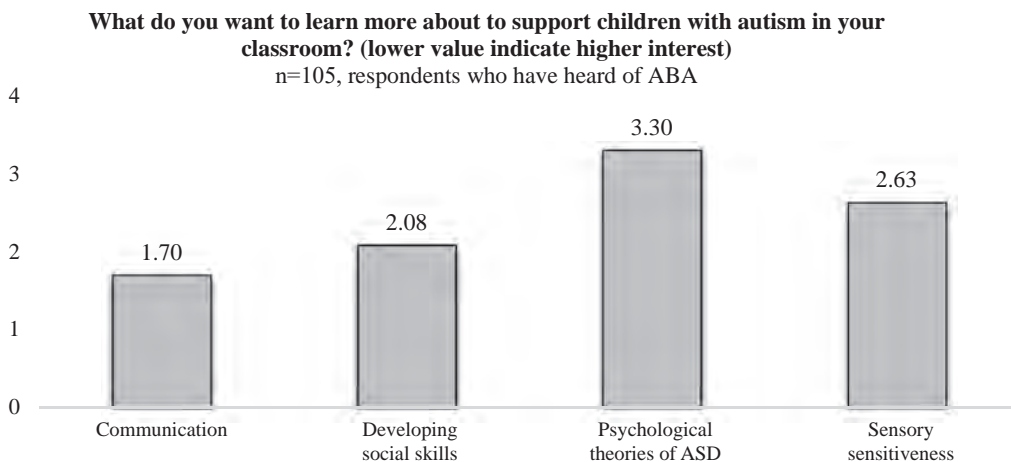
When asked about their confidence in the ability to execute specific ABA procedures and tactics, on average one-third of respondents who have heard of ABA feel very confident in performing those procedures and tactics, and about half of them on average feel somewhat confident. Lowest confidence in executing can be noted in the following procedures and tactics: “Group contingencies (specific procedures to increase and decrease group behavior)” 32.8% and “extinction (specific procedures for no longer paying attention or reinforcing certain behavior)” “In most of the

European countries there are small number of certified Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) experts that can supervise the correct implementation of services based on ABA. Due to the fact that they have no one to consult regarding the application of methodological procedures, a large part of the professionals who claim to use ABA strategies have a low level of self-confidence.

Majority of respondents (about 80% on average) who have heard of ABA want to learn more about every offered procedure/ tactic and rankings regarding what respondents want to learn more about to support children with autism in their classroom indicated that they are most interested in “communication” and “developing social skills” (Graph 5).

**Graph 5**

Interest in learning



There was an option “other” in the previous question and the answers are given below:

- Specific ways to deal with challenging behavior
- Sexuality of people with ASD, prevention of bullying within a group
- Sexuality and ways of educating students with PSA on expressing sexual needs.
- Promote psychological well-being in ASD
- Predict avoidance of unpleasant behaviors
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- How to establish better collaboration between children or young people
- Emotional difficulties of students with autism
- Emotional control in students with ASD
- Educational curriculum for school inclusion
- Dealing with tantrums and challenging behavior
- Communication with parents

**Conclusion**

Teachers have agreed that they need additional education in the field of ASD especially about strategies on how to handle challenging behavior. There was no broad difference among countries regarding the content that they felt important to be included in the training curriculum. According to their answers, six procedures were suggested for training: behavior management strategies, functions of behavior, using reinforcement in the classroom, extinction, token economies and group contingencies. Due to Article 24, of the United Nation Convention recommendation (United Nations, 2022), high numbers of children with ASD, are currently in mainstream schools. Our

research has shown that more than half of the respondents (60.4%) did not receive any training for autism, and more than half received their education about autism outside of their university studies. Also, we can conclude that teachers, special education teachers and other professionals that work in schools want to learn more about how to support children with autism in their classroom mostly about “communication” and “developing social skills”. That’s why we suggest that all universities that train teachers and other professionals that work with students with ASD should incorporate subjects on these topics in their curriculum. Also, for practicing ABA we need more local support is needed to help professionals with implementing ABA strategies in the classroom.

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## **THE IMPACT OF THE TELEVISION SHOWS ON THE CULTURE OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION**

**Abstract:** The culture of communicating television hosts in television shows from Macedonian production can have an impact on the culture of communicating students from primary and secondary education. Therefore, television hosts on television shows, as agents of socialization of the young population, can contribute to the formation of the culture of communication and thereby bear responsibility for the quality, type and nature of the information they transmit to the air. Continuous development and development of technology, as well as changes in audience tastes, impose a need for constant improvement and upgrading of the knowledge of television hosts, especially in terms of their communication culture, both in terms of verbal in terms of non-verbal speech. In this regard, the success of the mission of television hosts should be expected to emerge from fulfilling moral and normative obligations in the process of creating quality television shows. The choice of emissions should contribute to the proper psycho-physical development of students. Quality show is the product of the artist's skill, and reflects the audience's viewership and positive grades. The results of the research conducted have shown that the culture of communicating among television shows has an impact on students' communication culture.

**Keywords:** Television shows, Television hosts, Culture, Communication, Students

### **Introduction**

Today the media is an important part of human every day. Television is part of the electronic media and is a whole of speech, sound and image. It is a medium that has enormous power with its influence. The TV is one of the favorite items in the inventory in homes, but also the most exploited one. Not only adults, but also students who spend a long time in front of that magic box that opens the windows to the unknown. Television can affect children educationally, constructively but it can also have destructive influence. What the impact will be like it depends on what emissions are broadcasted on television channels and how much attention is paid to the communication culture.

Television shows are an integral part of the television program. The communication culture applied in television shows has an impact on the formation of human personality, and above all in the development of students, so the type and quality of television shows that are constantly displayed on television are of great importance.

Many debates argue whether watching television shows is a waste of time; whether they produce (negative or positive) influence on students; Do different program content have an impact on behavior in everyday life and so on.

It is unjustified to skip the positive role of programs in the educational sphere, in the expansion of students' horizons, in the adoption of the world's hand, bringing countries (as they say) from the first and third world. The channels are often mentioned as a positive example: "Discovery", "National Geography", "Animal Planet", thanks to which a person can see things that are otherwise difficult or almost unavailable through the mirror on television.

Television shows can have a positive impact on students because they:

- give the opportunity to view educational programs;
- give the opportunity to get acquainted with different civilizations and cultures;

- give students entertainment opportunities;
- contribute to accelerating the learning process contributing to development of the imagination;
- successfully promote family values;
- stimulate students to think.

Different television shows can have a different impact on students:

- Educational shows can affect socialization in students of younger age, as well as learning skills;
- Documentary shows can develop a critical opinion of society and the world;
- Culture programs can open the world of music and art to students, as well as enable them to watch movies that may not be available to them in the video, covering different cultures, etc.

All of the above positive impacts can be had if there is a good editorial policy and program scheme created by professionals educated for their development.

For students as viewers, it is most important to produce shows that meet their emotional requirements and tastes, to conform to their objective and subjective opportunities, which are largely determined by age, excellent qualities, from affinities, aspirations, cultural and social environment, from experience, and especially from the emotional, intellectual and social maturity of each individual.

Continuous care for students in all fields, and even through television as the most powerful medium, with a good and quality program, not only enriches emotional life through positive experiences, but also has a multiple positive impact on them.

Unfortunately, most of the shows are dominated by dark topics, murder, wars, fires, terrorism, political and economic crises, crime, explicit scenes with pornographic content, vulgar speech, etc. All this negatively reflects on students as emotional subjects and their development in positive individuals.

Editorial policy is the most important factor to decide whether to accept or reject the disputable content in television shows that are badly affecting the developing students.

Many psychological research has confirmed that violence shown in television shows has a negative impact on student development. The three biggest effects of seeing violence are:

- students can become less susceptible to the pain and suffering of others;
- can become frightened by the world around them;
- contribute to aggressive behavior towards others.

Friedrich Nietzsche's attitude is that "culture is the unity of artistic styles in all life manifestations of one nation." (Mints, 1988) With this, communication is one of the links in the cultural and artistic and expressive lifestyle.

Culture is perhaps the widest of all the terms used in the historical social sciences. This term covers a very large range of meanings, which probably makes it so complex.

Culture represents everything that is in common within a group, and at the same time, it is assumed, is not common (or at least not quite) outside of it.

Culture consists of two components: traditional norms, beliefs, values and behaviors on the one side and an individual on the other that actively affects changes in cultural traditions and with its interaction becomes a basic driver in changing traditional elements of culture. It can be concluded that culture is a set of material and spiritual values that are influenced by traditional frameworks and modern changes that form the acceptable behavior of members of a society.

The characteristic way of behavior of the individual is not of cultural value if it is not part of the group's customs and behaviors. Social norms of behavior represent the rules of conduct in a culture.

Culture is abstract and manifests itself in behavior and results of human behavior.

General culture is a complex sphere that reflects the ways and experiences of the spiritual development of all areas of life, and thus in the political area, which is of great importance for

collective existence and selection of paths and goals of the common development of nations and other social groups. It covers the values, beliefs, attitudes of symbols, inclinations and patterns of conduct in terms of politics and political issues as well as those issues related to the general conditions of common life in a society and the choice of direction and objectives of overall social development.

But not the behavior itself, nor the material results of that behavior, but the culture also contains specific values characteristic of an epoch or a particular social group and community and is one of the most precious benefits of mankind.

We know that the time we live in is a time of unprecedented epochal dynamics where we are witnessing an objective planetary process that is the result of the Technological Information Revolution. The fact is that in the past 30 years, under the influence of globalizing factors, the understandings and definitions of many economic, political, social and cultural axioms have completely changed.

Globalization is the occurrence of interdependence, indicating that our lives are more influenced by the events and decisions that are made away from us, at another end of the world. The central feature of globalization is that geographical distance is less important and that territorial boundaries (those between states – nations) also lose meaning. Does this mean that local and national are subordinate to global?

The phenomenon of globalization as well as its rapid progress has its implications in culture as well.

Cultural globalization as a process began and practically and scientifically concerned it as a phenomenon. Globalization fears the loss of cultural identity under the influence of certain superior media, and there is a danger that the whole world will become a single media culture, a world in which we will all see the same thing, we will dress similarly, we will use the same phrases as and the danger of losing one's own identity.

Globalization of media culture contributes to the negative impact of the culture of communicating in the young population by distortion of the Macedonian literary language and the insertion of impurities from foreign languages that apply to speech expressions thinking they are "cool".

Communication is a notion that signifies a process of exchanging comprehensive experience (information and reporting, ideas, attitudes, beliefs) between individuals and groups. Every communication is conditioned by the nature of the subject, age, profession, education, linguistic culture, sex, culture and political order.

One of the basic traits of man that differs from the zoological world is the ability to communicate.

Harold Laswell sees communication as a process of permanent information exchange, i.e.: The sense of communication is contained in the exchange of messages, the functions of which are warning, advice, information, conviction, opinion and enjoyment. (Mattelart, 2003)

Communicating also means the fullness of the relationship between members of society, and that relationship comes to three cases: in psychosocial, material and mass communication.

For communication there is a required sender and recipient of the message. During history there is a development of mass communication funds – the media (lat. Medium = environment, center) that allow distance communication. The media has a role in conveying the message between the sender and the message recipient.

What attracts special attention in communication and has a key role in forming human opinion on others is:

- language (use of literary language or dialect);
- Proper pronunciation of words;
- Speech flaws;

- Talking from the heart;
- Energy – with which the message delivered (tense or relaxing);
- body language (what position is the body and parts of the body of the information supplier);
- How the supplier holds the message;
- placement and reliability;
- rhythm and rhyme;
- Understanding and clarity;
- Agenda (plan for what should be transferred);
- External phenomenon – appearance/clothing and dress (style, color, suitability for the situation).

The communication process is followed by numerous and varied difficulties, obstacles and deviations of cultural and functional character. (Campbell, 1985) They all adversely affect the efficiency of the communication process. That is why they are named in the literature as barriers to efficient communication. The barrier to effective communication is any factor that impedes the exchange of information between the sender and the recipient. Barriers in effective communication hinder the recipient from understanding the intended meaning of the sender's message.

Due to their negative impact on communication efficiency, numerous authors have paid attention to the emerging forms, content and impact of communication barriers to communication results.

A factor that affects communication is the phenomenon of “filters” or in other words everyone has their own perception of the world that is formed according to culture, upbringing, values, beliefs, society, etc. Because people differ from each other, their filters differ. The filters usually remain and do not change easily. The filter is strengthened in order to justify the actions and decisions that are made.

Speech is a mean of communication, a mean of personal expression and a form of behavior. The skill of speech depends on the success of the communication and the size of the satisfaction that speech provides.

The speech served by some hosts of television shows abounds in distortion of unwanted words, which can be seen from the current researches and literature, most debates and shows by experts in that field, research done to support that attitude, which is part of the methodology for confirming the hypothetical framework of this paper.

Literary spoken language can hardly be recognized in a speech practiced by most journalists in shows. It is only important to say a more sophisticated form of word than to understand or define the purpose for which it is pronounced.

Speech language is a significant image of society. It is a mean of thinking, belief, knowledge and practical action and behavior. Changes in society are also linked to changes in language – the vocabulary, grammar and meaning of words are changed. Language is an indicator of territorial and cultural status, social interaction, and value orientation of the individual and social group. Of particular importance is the interactive function of language for survival and development of the national community.

Today in the Macedonian language, during official and general use, mostly through the means of wide communion, words are mixed – alien, which we have accepted and have taken from the past in everyday speech. Since we did not have our own independent Macedonian state in the distant past, nor did the Macedonian Language Protection Authority exist, there was no law on the use of the Macedonian language as it is today.

The spoken side of the language is initially depicted in a family that has accepted non-Macedonian words and expressions, continues in the school where one hour of Macedonian is overshadowed by the incorrect speaking of teachers from other teaching subjects. The speech anomaly continues to throw its sheath through the media, including television, which is the still most influential factor in the distinction of Macedonian speech.



Perhaps as a consequence of the race of television houses after popularity and increasing the repertoire of television shows, and with the expansion of the circle of translators, the rigor of language criteria has decreased. The stage dialogue of average literary, theater, film ie. A media level cannot even be imagined without a language filter, without the necessary transposition and sublimation in a more or less consolidated speech.

A factor that affects communication is the phenomenon of “filters” or in other words everyone has their own perception of the world that is formed according to culture, upbringing, values, beliefs, society, etc. Because people differ from each other, their filters differ. The filters usually remain and do not change easily. The filter is strengthened in order to justify the actions and decisions that are made.

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The irresponsible behaviors of the place and function of the pure language of the media scene could easily be corrected and completely removed from practice, if only a little more enhanced the criticality of the audience not only to acting directorial qualities, but also to its linguistic side.

As a possession of such self-confidence and self-confidence of the “media phela” (people from the media), a distorted Macedonian language is gradually created, which will lose the literary literal, as the accent of the emphasis is, with the linguistic mix. Without the well-expressed and plastic transmitted literary word that is necessary language communication are not possible true artistic achievements on the television scene.

Today, with endless disorders of the judicial norms, we find no Macedonian syntactic order, a completely non-Macedonian way of accent, absence of speech, accent units, disrupts the rhythm and melodic of the Macedonian sentence, so as an end result is a speech that is only seemingly composed of Macedonian words, but with non-Macedonian melody.

No one is probably wondering what problem teachers and school teachers face to teach their students to speak their native literary language properly, when they listen to television as (not).” (Milcin, 2000) “On 27.10.2011, a debate was held at the Institute for Macedonian Language. At the meeting, entitled “Macedonian Language and the Funds of Public Information” within the year of the Macedonian language, with the participation of professors from the Faculty of Philology “Blaze Koneski”, writers, linguists, students.

An unnatural word, unpredicted translations, uncontrolled downloading words from English are some of the dozen examples that linguists have cited as the most common language disorders in electronic and print media.

Most of the linguists pointed out that mistakes and disorders in the language are happening because the media today does not respect the status and opinion of the lecturers, and that some public media and do not engage proofreaders at all. (Makarijoska & Trenevski)

The purpose of upbringing, viewed throughout history, is primarily man. In the deepest, historical essence, upbringing means shaping human behavior and training for accepting social norms and rules. The upbringing as the widest category in itself is implementing education and teaching.

The upbringing “Learn to Learn” is the main reason why this process is complex and long lasting. It begins with the first steps of the child and lasts until his final mental and physical maturation. This nature of upbringing creates a complex system, which covers many Flats: the level of emotions (because something is experienced), a level of cognitive processes (learning process), level of action (something is done, is achieved, and created) and motivation.

Education, as part of life expectancy, has grown into the process of permanent development of human personality, knowledge and truths, development and stimulation of abilities and active learning.

Since birth, man is not only genetic but also sin genetically programmed. He is a “child of the conversation”, guided by the need to communicate with the environment. It is in the basic need of man to be verbally and non-verbally receiving environmental messages.

Children’s educational process begins at the earliest age at home and parents, and then continues to the school where the child becomes a student and spends almost half of their time. However, an important factor in the process is the television that draws his attention to his program.

The student enriches his experiences acquired in the family under the influence of a socio-cultural environment in which he moves and communicates. As moral, cultural and other values get a mark in the middle, the same strong stamp is carried by emotions. Student relationships with other age categories, in addition to personal, have a social character.

We can feel that the future of this society, among other things, depends on our ability to master information and communications and learn to read the media critically.

The need to introduce the concept of media literacy in the education system of modern societies is inevitable. Awareness of the necessity in the educational process for students about the proper consumption of television broadcasts in Macedonia is constantly growing which is a good start.

Media education aims to convey students the knowledge and skills to use and interpret the media and media messages in everyday life, i.e. to develop media literacy.

Media literacy involves a framework for accession, analyzing, evaluating and creating media messages in various forms.

Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of the media in society, as well as essential skills for research and self-expression of citizens in democracy.

In the modern world it is as important as the so-called “traditional” literacy – to know how to write and read. Through media literacy he acquires both critical understanding and creative/active participation in the media sphere. It should be noted that media education involves learning the media, not media learning.

A great participation in the educational process of the students in terms of how and how to view and accept the things presented on television there is and the parent.

One way to protect students from an inappropriate program at the time they are in front of TV’s is the need for our more often socializing with them, talking with them about the actualities, the real world, suggesting that life is neither a film nor a series, a clarification on the role of television as well as its positive and negative impacts.

Students from primary and secondary education are prone to rapid acceptance and learning, so the process of influencing them takes place very quickly. It does not matter whether they see shows that respect basic human rights, customary, moral and ethical norms, emissions, which pay attention to the culture of communication through the use of appropriate expressions, words, language, speech, etc.

Research done 2011 the results shown in the paper “Impact of Culture on Communication in Television Shows from Macedonian Production on the Culture of Communication of Students from Primary and Secondary Schools in the Republic of Macedonia” (V’chkova, 2012) confirmed the general hypothesis that “the culture of communication with hosts and hosts in Television shows from Macedonian production have an impact on the culture of communication with primary and secondary education students in Macedonia.”

In a survey of 175 respondents from different ethnic and social backgrounds, 55% (97) answered that the culture of communication in television shows has an impact on students, 26% that no and 19% do not know. When asked if the culture of communication in television shows has an impact on their friends 72, 6% answered that there is and 27.4% that there is not.

Therefore, our task as parents, pedagogues and citizens of Macedonia is to get acquainted with the real situation of the influence of television on primary and secondary education students, as well as finding a way to improve the situation with the proper use of the Macedonian language and media culture of Communication.

## Conclusion

Television as the most powerful medium has a major impact on the overall development of children, especially students, from their earliest age to their maturation. That is why there are numerous studies conducted by communists around the world about the great influence of television on school aged children, and many of them set the dilemma of the positive or negative impact of television.

From the research conducted by the Broadcasting Council, it can be concluded that programs intended for students are very little represented. The absence of an appropriate program is reimbursed by overproduction of low-budget programs with uniform content, without paying attention to the student as a subject that goes through an emotional and social development period and which with an appropriate program should encourage a positive culture of behavior and communication.

Television hosts that do not respect the standards and regulations can be observed on television. From the analysis of the shows, some television hosts do not nurture the Macedonian literary language, which can be seen from the show they lead to dialect or use foreign words – internationalism.

Very often it can happen on television to broadcast a show on a term that is inappropriate for a certain age of viewers.

The influence of television on students is felt in their cognitive and intellectual development, creativity and imagination, acquisition of verbal abilities, acquiring reading skills, social and emotional development, sensory development, visual and hearing senses, childhood sense of astonishment and in general on their health.

For students as viewers, it is most important to produce programs for which they meet their emotional requirements and flavors, as well as to comply with their objective and subjective opportunities, which are largely determined by age, affinities, aspirations, cultural and cultural and The educational environment in the social environment, from experience, and especially the emotional, intellectual, and social maturity of every individual.

No matter how educational – the educational process of the required level for the functioning of the overall social system, for its maintenance and raising it is the impact of the culture of communicating on television shows. The results of the research conducted show that the culture of communicating in television shows has an impact on the culture of communicating students from primary and secondary education. This shows that media education of students in primary and secondary education is inevitable.

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**VELKOVA-MANOVSKA Klauđija**

## **THE NECESSITY OF IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

**Abstract:** We live in a present time in which we face great challenges on a daily basis. Therefore, to respond to these huge challenges and overcome them, it is necessary to find solutions that completely support brand new and more sustainable ways of living. It is an unquestionable fact that children around the globe are also exposed to such issues. For this reason, there appears a need for introducing Education for Sustainable Development starting from the early years. This kind of education equips students with knowledge, skills, values and behaviors, which help them in making informed and reasonable decisions to solve current and upcoming obstacles.

In this paper, the necessity of Education for Sustainable Development implementation in all systems of education (including early childhood education) is emphasized, which can be achieved by: supporting ESD, promoting sustainable development in formal, non-formal and informal education, developing the competencies of the professional staff, providing appropriate tools and educational materials, and promoting research and cooperation. During the research on this matter, besides the analysis of pedagogical documentation, ESD declarations and early learning curricula, the views and understandings of head teachers, teachers, students and parents will be examined. The international initiatives and programs that fulfil the idea of sustainability, may certainly confirm that the empirical application of Education for Sustainable Development is a promising mission. Through the principles mentioned in the Early Learning and Development Program in our country, the author sees the connection, as well as the possibility, for implementing ESD in the kindergartens and centers for early childhood development in the Republic of North Macedonia.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, Education for Sustainable Development, Early childhood, Global goals

### **Introduction**

Sustainable development has been defined since 1987 as: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNESCO, 2012).

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, a UN Conference on Environment and Development was held. At this conference, the Education for Sustainable Development was formally established. The ESD establishment became the basis for adopting future declarations and documents, such as Agenda 21, which is an all-embracing plan of actions to be taken at global, national and local level by UN agencies, governments and leading organizations and networks in order to reduce the human impact on the environment.

Chapter 36 is included in the plan, which refers to the importance of education, training, and public awareness in achieving the goals and activities stated in Agenda 21. The three aspects from this chapter can also be observed through the four general goals towards which the Education for Sustainable Development should be directed:

- To promote and improve the quality of education – the goal is to refocus lifelong learning by acquiring the knowledge, skills and values that people need to improve their quality of life.
- To reorient the curricula – from preschool to university level, education must be redesigned and reformulated to be the bearer of the knowledge, thinking patterns and values needed to build a sustainable world.
- Raise public awareness of the concept of sustainable development – this will enable the development of enlightened, active and responsible citizenship at the local, national and international levels.
- Train the workforce – continuing technical and vocational education of directors and workers (especially those in trade and industry), which will be enriched in order to enable people to adopt sustainable methods of production and consumption.

Within the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, certain tasks and goals have been set to be fulfilled when applying this kind of education. The ESD inclusion and development in formal education systems within all relevant subjects in both formal and non-formal education, is the key to providing future generations with knowledge ‘of’ and skills ‘for’ sustainable development. Through Education for Sustainable Development, people will become more competent and self-confident, they will use the opportunities to act in order to ensure a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and will also respect social values, gender equality and cultural diversity (UN, 2005). The tasks of this Strategy that assist in fulfilling the main goal, are the following:

- Ensure that policy, regulatory and operational frameworks support ESD;
- Promote sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- Equip educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching;
- Ensure that adequate tools and materials for ESD are accessible;
- Promote research on and development of ESD;
- Strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels within the UNECE region.

Due to the reason I have already mentioned the tasks of ESD Strategy, there comes a necessity to connect them to the five priority areas that are argued in the global framework for implementing ESD from 2020 to 2030, entitled ‘Education for Sustainable Development 2030’. These five priority areas are linked to the Strategy’s tasks because they are also oriented towards advancing policies, transforming learning environments, building the capacities of educators, empowering and mobilizing youth and accelerating action at the local level (UNESCO, 2015).

## **Connection between Education for Sustainable Development and Early Education**

In many countries around the world, early childhood learning and development has been raised to the level of a national priority, which receives as same treatment as other subsystems of education (Durchevska-Georgieva, G. and Ajrulai, A., 2018). Apart from the role of parents and family’s environment, the organized educational work in the early childhood education is also significant.

Namely, when one thinks of organized work, one must mention the three functions of pre-school development and education: pedagogical, social and economic. The pedagogical function offers children the opportunity to develop, play and learn in a safe environment. Through this function, parents’ knowledge and skills are improved regarding family upbringing, and the safe

learning environment is provided for the children. The social function is related to the equal and equitable opportunities that should be enjoyed by all children, in order to achieve greater social integration and cohesion. Preschool education and upbringing helps in children's adaptation to school, reduces the dropout of children in further degrees of education and gives better results at school. Finally, through the economic function, parents are given the opportunity to return to work and/or continue their education. The investment in early childhood development contributes to the improvement of the educational and socio-economic status of each individual (Durchevska-Georgieva, G. and Ajrulai, A., 2018).

The World Organization for Early Childhood Education argues that the process of implementing sustainable development can, and should, start from the early years, as children are seen as active agents in their own lives, capable of engaging in more complex environmental and social challenges (OMEP, 2010). In this context, the famous educator Maria Montessori says in her book: 'The human personality forms itself by itself, like the embryo, and the child becomes the creator of the man, the father of the man' (Montessori, M. 2021), which makes it possible to understand the importance of early childhood development in the growth of one's personality.

The link between Education for Sustainable Development and early childhood can also be recognized through ESD special recommendations that cover early childhood period. The recommendations are the following: to enable access for all to the process of lifelong learning, respect gender, learn for change, form networks, arenas and partnerships in practice, enable professional development that will strengthen this type of education in all sectors, introduce Education for Sustainable Development in early childhood programmes, practice sustainable development and encourage new research (Davies, J., Samuelsson, P.I., Engdahl, I. & Blatchford, S.J., 2008).

How much children learn from the society and environment in which they live and act is shown by the representatives of the two dominant schools, Geneva (Piaget) and Moscow (Vygotsky). They have had a huge impact on the modern understanding of the cognitive development of preschool children, because Piaget's knowledge regarding learning and development of children indicates the active role of the child in the process of acquiring knowledge in the constant interaction with his social and physical environment (Damovska, L., 2019). Similarly, Vygotsky investigated the influence of cultural-historical factors on the development of children's mind, opinion and speech, with a focus on how culture affects the child (Damovska, L., 2019).

The Australian professor and researcher, Julie Davies, believes that children are the ones who are most vulnerable in terms of the impact caused by the unsustainable living (Davies, J., 2010). According to her, the situation should not remain like this, because early childhood education can be the right opportunity for building and developing abilities in children that will turn them into active and informed citizens for the present and the future, who will be able to contribute to healthy and sustainable ways of existing (Davies, J., 2010). Adults often accept the fact that the attitudes and values children acquire toward books and reading, numeracy, social interactions, and issues of gender and race, are formed early; thinking that parents and teachers play a key role within that process. But when it comes to the attitudes and values that children acquire towards the environment, that fact is often ignored by adults (Davies, J., 1998).

How important early development of the child's mind and brain is, can be noticed in the book published by the University of Harvard "The Science of Early Childhood Development", where the most basic concepts of early child development are mentioned.

1. Child development is a foundation for community development and economic development.
2. Brains are built over time.
3. The interactive influences of genes and experience literally shape the architecture of the developing brain.
4. Both brain architecture and developing abilities are built "from the bottom up".

5. Cognitive, emotional, and social capabilities are inextricably intertwined.
6. Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with persistent effects on the nervous system (Harvard University, 2007).

In terms of philosophy and educational practices, there is an overlap between environmental education and early childhood education (Davies, J., 1998). Early childhood focuses on equitable, democratic and inclusive ways of people interacting between each other, building trusting relationships that affirm, nurture and support negotiation rather than dominance, which in turn is important for establishing sustainable social justice.

In early childhood, children's outdoor play and learning have a historical value. Don't we remember how much we wanted to spend the whole day outside on the street, with the kids from the whole neighborhood? Outdoor play is significant because children go through direct experiences by playing with natural materials and learn through those new experiences (Davies, J., 1998). Hence, rethinking outdoor play and advocating for green spaces are some of the challenges that this area faces with in early childhood age (Davies, J., 1998).

What environmental education and early childhood education have in common is the idea of wholeness and the holistic way of looking at the world. Both fields present the integrated curriculum approach as the central one, with practical and relevant experiences for learners, thus preserve a strong commitment to democratic practice. Another common feature of both types of education is that supportive living and learning environments in both environmental education and early childhood education are oriented towards the importance of learning as a set of behaviors, values, skills and content (Davies, J., 1998). There are three ways proposed for the continued development of education for sustainability into early education and all three are related to the whole center approach, systems thinking and action research (Davies, J., 2010).

## **ESD and Sustainable Development Goals**

At the Sustainable Development Summit, UN member countries adopted an agenda for sustainable development with 17 goals incorporated, which generally refer to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, environmental and social. This agenda contains commitments for building a different future for the people and the entire planet, which will be implemented through sustainable development. Also, it represents the first agreement that establishes a universal, all-embracing plan for action.

Within the goals, the three dimensions of sustainability are balanced in areas like poverty, inequality, food security, health, education, sustainable consumption and production, population growth, employment, infrastructure, sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, gender equality, peaceful and inclusive society, access to justice and responsible institutions, etc. For the aim of successfully accomplishing these goals, all resources are expected to be included (local, national, international), together with both public and private.

According to OMEP, sustainability can be practiced through all pillars of SD by appropriate actions. In terms of economic sustainability, certain activities are carried out that are related to sustainable consumption, ethics in production, resource sharing, poverty, social entrepreneurship, waste and its impact on the environment, fulfillment of basic needs (clean water, health, education and home), efficient devices, energy conservation, transportation, and intangible valuation. In terms of social and cultural sustainability, attention is paid to social participation and dialogue, respect for difference (opposing inequality), sense of justice and fairness, diversity, intergenerational knowledge, empathy and compassion, stories about people's daily lives, peace, and cessation of conflicts. Finally, in terms of environmental sustainability, the activities are aimed at gaining experiences in nature, developing critical thinking skills, acquiring knowledge

of the local area, understanding the way people are connected to nature as well as to the past, present and future of the environment, preserving biodiversity, making informed decisions about the present and the future, etc.

These practices are locally adaptable, and therefore the challenges that arise in relation to these topics can be overcome by the societies in which people live. As a country, we can agree that we are also facing alike problems in Macedonia, seen from a different perspective.

In the book “Sustainable development begins with education” (UNESCO, 2014), one can identify the connection of each global goal to Education for Sustainable Development and how it can contribute to the fulfillment of each goal individually. Within the fourth goal, there are seven targets and three means of implementation targets.

Targets are associated with free and quality primary and secondary education for all, as well as with quality early childhood development, accessibility to technical, professional and tertiary education for all, higher education, establishment of appropriate skills (technical and professional), employment, decent jobs, entrepreneurship, elimination of gender differences in education, equal access to all levels of education (especially for vulnerable citizens and people with disabilities), promotion of skills required for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyle, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace, non-violence and cultural diversity. The means of implementation targets are related to constructing and/or improving the school facilities in order to be adapted to the needs and demands of children, building a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment, increasing the number of scholarships for enrollment in higher education institutions, vocational and technical training for information and communications technology, engineering, increasing the supply of qualified teachers and international cooperation for teacher training.

As we note, the fourth global goal is related to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting opportunities for lifelong learning. That’s why, through this goal, everyone is expected to have access to basic quality education. The aim of the fourth goal is to improve the school equipment too, increase the number of training and professional opportunities for people, and grow the number of trained teachers capable of providing a safe and secure learning environment. The guidelines regarding this goal are explained in more detail:

- By 2030, Goal 4 intends to provide early childhood, primary and secondary education for all.
- For adults, the goal is improvements to technical, vocational and job skills education, including university.
- Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access for vulnerable populations.
- Ensure all youth and a substantial amount of adults achieve literacy and numeracy.
- Promote global citizenship topics in all subjects including sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality and peace through education.
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are safe, inclusive, non-violent and effective learning environments.
- Increase the number of qualified teachers through training and education investment.

To ensure inclusive and equal quality education and promote lifelong learning, learning goals have been set, which students should adopt in all three developmental domains. Those goals are aimed at understanding the role of education and lifelong learning, understanding the value of education, raising awareness of the importance of quality education, encouraging others to use educational opportunities, implementing quality education, ESD and similar approaches at all levels, promoting gender equality, and similar (UNESCO, 2017).

The right to education is protected within the International Law, in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. The article states that everyone has a right to



education and that ‘Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.’

The opportunity to learn about the world around us brings freedom, empowerment and understanding. Education “unlocks” the potential in reaching other sustainable development goals. When people have access to quality education, they can break the cycle of poverty, learn about sustainable living, make wise choices, and educate themselves and others about important issues.

Education has the potential to significantly improve the well-being of women and girls. Access to education can help girls and women increase incomes, reduce wage gaps and promote economic independence. When women are educated and have extra income, these increased resources benefit not only their families, but also the communities to which they belong.

Environmental education can help individuals acquire needed skills to make changes in policies and practices within their community. It is also important to organize lectures about sustainability matters such as environmental protection, human rights, gender equality, peace and global citizenship, in order to encourage people in taking action so to improve their present and future (Council for International Cooperation, 2018, pp. 4.1-4.11).

## **Practices of Sustainable Development in Early Childhood**

Norway is a country that is recognized for its long history of education that practices sustainable development. More recently, the revised plan for early childhood education has officially inserted the section of mandatory sustainable development as one of the core values that should be acquired by children in the early years. Sustainable development is understood as multidimensional (socially, environmentally and economically), and the revised framework pays great notice to intergenerational equity, democracy, diversity and social justice (Hindmarch, T. & Boyd, D., 2021).

Recent policy revisions in Sweden build on a long history of educators working with children and recognizing them as active stakeholders in solving issues related to the environmental, political, economic and social aspects of sustainability. The revised curriculum perceives sustainable development as a fundamental value. Three new sustainability-aligned curriculum goals have been introduced, which highlight children as important agents of change towards a sustainable future. (Hindmarch, T. & Boyd, D., 2021).

In New Zealand, under the Education Council’s Code and Standards, all teachers devote themselves to promoting and protecting the principles of human rights, sustainability and social justice, and they encourage students to become active participants in community life and engage with issues important for the well-being of society. This professional responsibility is anticipated not only at the level of formal education, but also at the level of professional development. The social dimensions of sustainability and active democratic citizenship lie at the heart of the revised Early Childhood Curriculum – Te Whariki. (Hindmarch, T. & Boyd, D., 2021).

Japanese educators have a strong tradition of practicing nature-based activities in the delivery of preschool services. Further research in Japanese kindergartens and country’s interpretations of Swedish forest programs could promote early childhood sustainability education in Japan. In the revision of its national curriculum in 2017, Japan included the goal – creating a sustainable society, offering opportunities for wider capacity building for Early Childhood Sustainability Education (Hindmarch, T. & Boyd, D., 2021).

## **The Necessity of Implementing ED in Early Childhood**

As emphasized in the Early Learning and Development Program of our country, early childhood is *a time* of tremendous physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and language development of the child. The holistic approach that is significant for ESD, is also included in the Early Learning and Development Program, intended to be implemented through both theory and practice.

Educators are obliged to create conditions so that children can learn through play, interaction, participation in discovery learning processes and problem-solving situations, while developing their motor, language, cognitive and socio-emotional skills.

If we continue to analyze this program, we can really notice many similarities between the principles set in it, and the values, skills, knowledge and behaviors to be achieved through Education for Sustainable Development. Here, I would mention the principle of equal opportunities and respect for differences and the principle of multiculturalism, which explains that all children must not be discriminated in any way, but on the contrary, all should be included in the education system.

The principle of active learning is extremely important, because it is related to the environment where children learn, and in which, in accordance with their emotional and physical needs, children develop curiosity, discover diverse ways of expressing themselves and bring solutions and answers.

One of the characteristics of today's education is its adaptation to the learner's individual needs, interests and opportunities. This idea is stressed in the fifth principle of the Early Learning and Development Program.

Furthermore, the principle of completeness is also significant, which speaks of contents that cover all aspects of child's personality development through the holistic approach, considering the fact that the child gets to know the world as a whole.

When discussing Education for Sustainable Development, the active participation of parents and community in which the child lives and learns is often mentioned, and therefore, the principle of openness of the educational process is quite similar to this aspect of ESD.

The principle of continuous professional development of the educator is an element that is substantial in ensuring quality in early education, which links to the principle of constant evaluation of the educational process (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The process of defining sustainable development became the initial motivation for the creation of the global goals that would help in meeting the needs of current generations, without compromising the needs of future generations. The installation of these goals was aimed at improving quality education, reorienting existing learning programs, raising awareness about the concept of sustainable development and training teachers and educators. The global goals were subject to certain changes over time, so that in 2019 a discussion was raised towards acting in the direction of five priority areas: advancing policies, transforming learning environments, building the capacities of educators, strengthening and mobilizing youth and accelerating action at the local level.

Research shows that children do feel today's challenges, even if it appears that they are not affected by them. Studies of early childhood development speak to the fact that early childhood development is based on certain concepts that explain that children are the foundation of community development. Also, their brains are formed over time, through genetic and experiential influences which contribute to make cognitive, emotional and developmental abilities inseparable.

The process of embedding sustainable development in education should start from the early years, in order to offer children an opportunity to become drivers of change in the surrounding in which they live. The challenges that are set before this type of education would be overcome when play in pre-school centers and kindergartens is redirected from an indoor to an outdoor space, when there are enough green areas occupied within centers and kindergartens, when additional educators' training is delivered, and when teachers' networking is opened up.

Sustainable Development Goals address all three pillars of sustainability. Sustainability in pre-school centers and kindergartens can be practiced through appropriate practices. The connection between each of the seventeen goals to ESD sends us the message that education is of a

crucial significance for goals' achievement and establishment of sustainability. The fourth goal related to the delivery of quality education for all, contains learning goals that are expected to be acquired by the learners.

From the revised programs in several countries such as Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and Japan, it can be noted that sustainable development is already introduced in the curricula as a value that children should nurture from the early start. Children are considered to be important drivers in creating changes that lead to a sustainable future.

Finally, analyzing the Early Learning and Development Program in Macedonia, one can understand the connection between its principles and the values, skills and knowledge that are at the roots of Education for Sustainable Development. This relation increases the possibilities for practical implementation of this type of education in our education system, emphasizing one of the main features of ESD, which is, adaptation of this education to the local conditions and opportunities.

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