



CONCEPT FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Education emerges as a response to the multicultural challenges of the modern (contemporary) society. It is determined by the global migratory movements and the existing both multilingual and multicultural tradition in several countries in Europe and in the World. In order to respond to social needs and to serve as an instrument for social relations promotion that are increasingly being realized in a plural context, education in all its forms (formal, non-formal and informal) in children, youth and adults should develop the awareness for acceptance and respect for differences and capabilities for intercultural dialogue. Thus, they will be able to actively participate in building a common life and contribute to its improvement.

The values the concept of Intercultural Education is based upon is embedded in the International documents since the mid of last century¹, as well in most of subsequent declarations, reports and recommendations which provide guidance on the development of education in Europe and beyond². Some of these documents include Recommendations of the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner of National Minorities, in which is emphasized the role and importance of education in promoting the idea of equal rights and opportunities for every involved educational entity, and in the strengthening of trust between the different communities. *The Hague recommendations regarding educational rights of national minorities and explanations*³ are drafted as a broad framework that should provide the basis for development of official state education policies adapted to circumstances at local and regional level, in order to enable equal participation of different ethnic communities' representatives in all aspects of

¹UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe, 1950)

²Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989); Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (EU, 2000); Declaration by the European ministers of education on intercultural education in the new European context, 2003; UNESCO's "Guidelines on Intercultural Education"(2006); Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" (2008); Eurydice Network's "Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe" Report (2008); Council of Europe's "Policies and practices for teaching socio-cultural diversity - A framework of teacher competences for engaging with diversity" (2009)

³*The Hague Recommendations related to educational rights of minorities and explanations* (1996).The Hague: OSCE Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities

educational activities. The document *Guidelines from Ljubljana on integration of diverse societies*⁴also, offers recommendations for creating integrated educational policies as a basis for integration of society and for promotion of knowledge, mutual cooperation understanding between students from different communities. In the Guidelines is highlighted the need for the countries to develop integrated educational system which will be designed to provide equal access to educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, regardless their ethnic background. Such integrated education should also include education for all students related to the diversity of their society.

Key concepts related to the coexistence of representatives of different cultures are multiculturalism and interculturalism. *Multiculturalism* stresses out the cultural diversity in which priority is preservation of one's own cultural identity and acceptance of the other's and/or developing tolerance towards it. *Interculturalism*, however, is a dynamic process of building relations between different cultures and „sharing cultural expressions via dialogue and mutual respect⁵. Hence, interculturalism and implicates multiculturalism and it represents its upgrading and strengthening: parallel living side by side results in mutual interaction with each other and connection with one another.

Intercultural dimension of education is important particularly in multicultural communities, such as the Republic of Macedonia is, in which the coexistence of different cultures representatives have deep historical roots, whereas the inclusiveness and integration in education and are aimed at strengthening democratic capacities of the country. When performed in plural ethnic, linguistic, religious and socio-economic environment, education should be directed towards developing intercultural skills, values and attitudes of all participants in the educational process, enabling thus finding the optimum ratio between cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Considering the need for promotion of multiethnic and multicultural reality in the country, *The Conception for Intercultural Education of the Republic of Macedonia* provides

⁴*Guidelines from Ljubljana on integration of diverse societies* (2012). The Hague: OSCE Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities

⁵UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006). Paris:UNESCO, p. 17

room for reconsideration of education in strengthening communication, cooperation and understanding between members of different ethnic communities in educational institutions

Vision of the Conception for Intercultural Education of the Republic of Macedonia is to create educational environment in which intercultural relations and integration processes will be cultivated, and in which cultural diversities and their bridging will be promoted in a wider social multiethnic and multicultural context.

The Conception for Intercultural Education of the Republic of Macedonia, as a strategic and development document, in its foundation has a complex and long-term oriented **mission** to promote the constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights to equal education for all, by fostering their national and cultural identity, as well as to accept and respect the diversities through contents and activities that promote the intercultural dimension in the educational process.

In the course of intercultural dimension incorporation, in the Conception are taken into consideration all aspects of the educational work in preschools, primary and secondary schools in Macedonia, such as:

- Content for work;
- Teaching and learning forms, methods and techniques;
- textbooks, materials and other tools and aids for work;
- extracurricular activities;
- competence of educators, teachers, professional associates and school principals;
- the environment in educational institutions;
- the relations between the educational institutions and wider community.

The Conception which is being offered elaborates the mentioned areas so they can serve as a theoretical framework for developing operational plans for their implementation in educational institutions in the Republic of Macedonia.

1. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION CONTEXT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Republic of Macedonia is a multiethnic and multicultural society from the beginning of its existence, with a tradition of coexistence of multiple cultures in its territory which has been nurtured in the previous five decades period. The Macedonian educational system therefore, has always had the responsibility to meet the needs of its own social context and contribute to the continuous development of multidirectional relations between different ethnic groups, which jointly build the Macedonian society. The intercultural education is a contemporary response to the need for communication and cooperation in educational work between members of different ethnic communities living in Macedonia, and it appears to be a key tool in the process of initiation and support of building interactive and harmonious relations in the community.

1.1 Situation, needs, challenges

Education in the Republic of Macedonia is realized in multi-ethnic and mono-ethnic institutions. In the past decade there was a decrease in the number of students in schools where teaching process is conducted in several languages, due to enrolling and transfer of students in mono-ethnic schools.

Based on the data from the Ministry of Education and Science related to teaching languages of the students and teachers in primary and secondary schools in the academic year 2014/2015, it is evident that 19% of the overall number of primary schools in the country, have the status of schools with two languages, and 4.75% in three languages. Also, it should be emphasized that in 6.53% of the total number of primary schools, which have the status of school with two languages, there is a big difference in the number of students enrolled in both teaching languages, i.e., teaching one of the offered teaching languages is followed by a significantly smaller number of students (from two to twenty),

compared to nearly ten times the number of students who attend the education process in another language. It also should be taken into consideration the fact that although most of these schools bear the sign of multiethnic; they basically operate in several smaller regional schools, in which the educational process on school level is actually implemented in one language.

Schools with heterogeneous structure of students and the staff most often operate in separate spaces (in different school buildings), while the educational process is organized in monoethnic shifts as well as with parallel organizing and conducting the same or similar curricular and extracurricular activities in different languages. All this adversely affects the realization of daily, continuous contact between the participants in the educational process, their mutual understanding and cooperation.

Through multiple occurring conditions and phenomena, the separation in the educational system in the Republic of Macedonia is recognized, which negatively reflects on intercultural dialogue of all stakeholders in the educational process:

- Physical, cultural and lingual distancing between the educational subjects;
- Bias, prejudice and stereotypes are present throughout all the stages of the educational work;
- absence of curricular and extracurricular mechanisms for equal participation of all stakeholders in the educational process;
- absence of the intercultural dimension in the textbooks and other educational resources;
- insufficient development of educators' and teachers' competencies for intercultural education;
- separate and parallel development of initial education for future educators and teachers, without established mechanisms for intercultural cooperation;
- presence of inappropriate imagery in the pedagogical design of multicultural school environments;
- negative influence of the media, local community, family and political factors.

The stated conditions are supported by empirical research findings implemented between 2009 to 2011 from NGOs and experts in the field, with support from MES and BED of the Republic of Macedonia. They provide a clear description of the current situation related to multiculturalism in the educational field and, on that basis, they provide recommendations to overcome the negative phenomena and processes in multiethnic schools. For example, *the study on multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relations in education*⁶ identifies the underlying causes of ethnic division in schools by analyzing the capacity of the education system to promote respect, tolerance and acceptance of others and by the perception of the level of communication between Macedonian and Albanian students, parents and teachers. The conclusion in terms of legislation at the national and at schools' level is that, it prohibits discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds, the use of the languages of the different ethnic communities in education is regulated, and there's a declarative promotion of the principles of mutual respect, tolerance, acceptance, but it fails to regulate the obligation to implement these values in the educational system, as there are mentioned no mechanisms to stimulate/sanction their respect/disrespect. In terms of the level of linguistic-ethnic divisions in schools, official statistics data in the last decade indicates a downward trend in terms of multiethnic compared to monoethnic schools. Hence, the model of parallelism and division in the educational system is more preferred compared to the integration model, and as most isolated are pointed Albanian students. In multi-ethnic schools are used different strategies for time or spatial distancing of students along ethnic lines, in order to prevent interethnic violence. Among Macedonian and Albanian students are present negative ethnic stereotypes and prejudices of the "other", which are more pronounced among the high school students. Teachers and parents contribute to interethnic intolerance so that they nurture stereotypes and sent a message to refrain from mutual communication in order to protect against the "others". Cooperation between Macedonian and Albanian teachers is more declarative and superficial, without real

⁶Petroska-Beska,V.Najchevsl, M. Kennig, N., Balazhi S. and Tomovska A. (2009). *Study on multiculturalism and interethnic relations in the education*. Skopje: The UNICEF Office.

interaction, while the communication between the municipality and the schools is formal and primarily of a financial nature, and very little in terms of multi-ethnic issues.

A recent study which reflects the situation in the multiethnic municipalities, in the educational context, is conducted before the commencement of pilot activities within the project *strengthening multiethnic cooperation in municipalities*.⁷ The aim of the research was to identify the situation regarding the multiethnic communication and integration in schools, the level of implementation of the contents of multicultural education initiatives in municipalities which are related to multiethnic education in schools. The findings were obtained by analyzing the perceptions of students, teachers, parents and principals at the schools examined, as well as representatives of municipalities and NGOs. Following conclusions resulted from the research:

- teachers feel they are only partially trained to use appropriate methods for multi-ethnic education, since most of them are not prepared to work in multicultural environments in the course of their studies, neither have attended additional training;
- extracurricular activities (sports, cultural, artistic, excursions) are jointly organized for members of various ethnic groups, but educational activities and work in different sections is arranged separately;
- some teachers and parents support the existence of so-called ethnic shifts;
- for almost half of the students when choosing friends is important that they are of the same religion and ethnicity;
- half of the teachers and 20% of parents have noticed concealed tensions between students based on ethnicity, but the number of declarations of visible tension is small;
- social distance of teaching staff towards members of other ethnic communities is quite large;

⁷Mickovsk G, Aleksova A. and Mickovska Raleva A. (2011).project *strengthening multiethnic cooperation in municipalities*.: *Report of the survey about the starting situation*: Macedonian centre for civic education.

- teachers are not very successful in choosing appropriate action in ethnically sensitive situations;
- considerable part of representatives of municipalities and NGOs show social distancing towards ethnic communities other than their;
- cooperation between NGOs, municipalities and schools is mostly formal, without any joint planning of activities.

Such situation motivated a large number of state and civic initiatives for change and improvement of educational policy and practice. At the state level there were changes in the legislation, there were adopted several strategic documents, development programs and measures aimed at not only to improve the situation in education, but also to strengthen the intercultural dialogue in the country. In terms of the civil initiative, in the recent decades were seen several project activities aimed at promoting inter-ethnic cooperation in Macedonia. Such projects are usually implemented by NGOs, in cooperation with relevant educational institutions, which opens up the issue of sustainability of the activities and their institutionalization. However, the analyses show that intercultural dimension of education is not being applied in an organized and structured manner, which would contribute to prevent parallelism in the educational system.

1.2 Legal framework

The multicultural reality in the Republic of Macedonia is regulated by the Constitution and several legal acts. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees the right to education of every individual under equal terms, which is the essence of the concept of intercultural education.

Besides the Constitution, there are several legal and other documents which are the basis for developing a new long-term strategy on intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia.

Great influence on the creation of educational policy and practice in Republic of Macedonia had the *National Program for Development of Education, 2005-2015*⁸. It clearly emphasized the importance of continuous interethnic and intercultural cooperation in the educational process in all levels, starting from pre-school age, in order to strengthen cohesion, tolerance, mutual respect and trust. By all means, in the preparation of future national program for development of education in the Republic of Macedonia in the next decade, should be incorporated recommendations and guidelines for implementation of intercultural education as a long-term strategic priority of our society.

Educational activity in preschool institutions is based on the *Law on Children Protection of 2013*⁹ and *the program for early learning and development from 2014*¹⁰. The program is based on principles that enable creating educational content which is intercultural by its character. They are:

- the principle equal opportunities and respect for diversity among children and the principle of multiculturalism;
- the principle of democracy;

⁸ *National Program for development of education 2005-2015*(2006).Skopje: MES.

⁹ *Law for protection of children*(2013). Official gazette of RM nr. 23

¹⁰ *Program for early learning and development* (2014).Official gazette of RM nr. 46

- the principle of dominance of the game and the principle of linking it with the reality of life;
- the principle of active learning and encouraging different ways of expression;
- the principle of compliance with adult features and principle of individualization;
- the principle of completeness and integrity;
- the principle of openness of the educational process;
- the principle of monitoring and encouraging children's development;
- the principle of approaching development as a process;
- the principle of critical assessment;
- the principle for continuous professional development of teachers.

These principles indicate that educational activities in pre-school institutions should promote and support diversity since the early age.

*The Law on Primary Education form 2008*¹¹, when defining the purpose of primary education (Article 3), stresses out the importance of developing mutual tolerance, cooperation, respect for diversity, fundamental freedoms and human rights, as well as developing awareness among students to belonging to the Republic of Macedonia and cultivating their own national and cultural identity. It is also pointed out that as priority goals of education are the education of common cultural and civilization values arising from traditions of the world, as well as developing pupils' awareness of their own personality and identity. The law stipulates that educational curriculum and work for members of the communities to be conducted in the language and alphabet of the communities, with the compulsory studying of the Macedonian language (Article 9).

¹¹ Law for Primary education (2008). *Official gazette of the Republic of Macedonia* 103.

Also, in the *Conception for nine-year primary education*¹² from 2007 are stressed out the principles of democracy, non-discrimination, respect for individual differences among students, as well as the principle of understanding others and to multiculturalism. It clearly emphasizes that schools should continuously respect these principles in order to develop the values of coexistence.

The Law on Secondary Education form 2002 (cleared text)¹³, likewise, promotes the prohibition of any form of discrimination (based on sex, race, color, national and social background, political and religious beliefs, property and social status) and provides education in Macedonian language, respectively in the language and alphabet of members of different communities. The law sanctions the application of textbooks whose content is not consistent with the Constitution and the legal provisions relating to human rights and freedoms, the rights of the communities and gender equality.

Macedonia is actively involved in the Decade of Inclusion of Roma 2005-2015 aimed to include the Roma population at all levels of the education system, prevention of dropping out of Roma pupils in the process of compulsory education and the improvement of their socio-economic status. In addition to this policy and are the Strategies for Roma in Macedonia from 2005 and from 2014-2020¹⁴, which promote the strengthening of the status of Roma and their integration in all social spheres.

In 2010 was drafted the first document that directly focuses on the issue of integrated education as a necessity of the Macedonian society. The document *Steps towards Integrated Education in the Republic of Macedonia*¹⁵, prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science with the support of the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities emphasized the need to overcome the ethnic alienation and encouraging interaction between all stakeholders in the educational process. The measures provided in this document are divided into five thematic groups:

¹² *Conception for nine-year education* (2007) Skopje: ME Sand BDE

¹³ Law for High School education (2002) (cleared text. *Official gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*

¹⁴ Strategies for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 and 2014-2020

¹⁵ Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia (2010) *Steps towards an Integrated education in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje: MES

- organizing joint curricular and extra-curricular activities at multiple levels (schools, municipalities or on the whole country level);
- increase mutual knowledge of the languages of the different ethnic communities;
- adaptation of the curricula and the textbooks;
- improvement of teachers' competences for integration in the education;
- de-politization of the education system by involving all stakeholders in management and direction of schools in a decentralized context.

Regardless the determined measures, the Strategy for integrated education failed to make any significant positive impact and change in the education system, in terms of improving the multiethnic reality of the country.

Based on existing legislation, the Conception for intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia as a future strategic state document offers planned, systematic and long-term tracing the different approaches for building successful and sustainable practices for intercultural education in the country.

1.3 Best practices and experiences

In recent decades, many local and international non-governmental organizations have contributed to the implementation of different approaches for promotion of intercultural relations among all stakeholders in the educational system in the country.

Among the first attempts that proved to be successful practices is the model *the Mosaic* from 1998 implemented in preschool education, and offers bilingual mutual education of children of different ethnicities, in the ages 3 to 6 years old. The primary objective of this project is to children socialize through daily socializing, learning about tolerance and respect for different cultures, since the earliest age, at the time the children have not yet formed prejudices and stereotypes. The Mosaic model promotes equal

treatment by involvement in groups of children with proportional number of two ethnic communities and their teachers, who use two languages in all activities. This approach, in a wider context, serves as a good basis for building interethnic tolerance and confidence in everyday relations between different ethnic communities, which are a key element in building a healthy Macedonian society.¹⁶

More preschool institutions in the country continuously implement the Mosaic model from the very beginning, while in 2012 the Mosaic groups were institutionalized as part of the educational system in the country.

In 2007, Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Skopje began the development of the *Nansen model for integrated education*, which was applied in the primary and secondary schools in areas with ethnically mixed population. This model is a result of the benefits and outcomes of the program for *Dialogue and reconciliation*, implemented in post-conflict areas starting from year 2005. It is the first educational model of this kind in the country, which starts to be continuously implemented in the primary education since 2008, and in 2010 its application has been extended to the secondary education, too.

The Nansen model for integrated education offers integrated bilingual extracurricular activities that allow cultivation of positive social-emotional climate in the group with heterogeneous ethnic composition as well as constructive team work, and work in pairs between students and teachers. Extracurricular activities are implemented after the regular hours, which are realized in students' mother tongue, and they represent a complement to the compulsory curricular contents. The groups of students of different ethnic backgrounds are led by tandem of teachers who perform simultaneously the instruction in their native language, for the specific group of students. Through a wide range of games and encouraging research activities, students develop positive feelings and views on the "other" culture and its values, enriching the elementary vocabulary of terms and cultural and social phrases from the spoken language of the other ethnic community and are enabled for coexistence. Approach to this kind of work is unobtrusive,

¹⁶ <http://mozaik-model.mk/index.php/mk/about-mk/summary>

with very few requirements for memorizing, so it releases the students from the "obligation" of compulsory learning. The teachers have the opportunity to foster a flexible and critical approach to the activities offered, to find their own ways of implementation that will be tailored to the specific working conditions, with the ability to independently choose 2-3 sections of the ones offered in the annual programs for extracurricular activities. They are created according to the model needs for all grades of nine-year primary education, as well as a three-year, respectively four-year secondary education. The program has a strong compensatory role and promotes not only integration of students but also teaching staff of different ethnic backgrounds, as well as the parents involved in the program activities¹⁷. In order to enable successful implementation of the Nansen model, in 2012 NDC and MES created a training center that continuously conducted several training programs for the educational staff, to strengthen their intercultural competencies, and promote and support the process of personal transformation, the spirit of the idea, the vision of intercultural education, and with the intention such transformation to be transmitted, reflected, and initiated in the work with the students, parents, other members of their schools.¹⁸

For the special achievements in the field of reconciliation and integrated education in 2011 NDC receives an international award.¹⁹

In 2011 started realization of the USAID four-year project on Interethnic Integration in Education aimed to creation of political, social and economic environment necessary for Macedonia to achieve sustainable interethnic integration in schools, other educational institutions and in society at large.

¹⁷ NMIE Website, "About the Nansen model". (<http://www.nmie.org/index.php/en/>).

¹⁸TCNMIE Website, "About us". (www.tcnmie.org).

¹⁹<http://www.maxvanderstoelaward.com/winners>

The focus of project activities are students, parents, teachers, administration and school board members in primary and secondary schools in the Republic Macedonia, involved in various activities of the multi-ethnic character, in cooperation with the Bureau for Development of Education and the Education Inspectorate, as well as with local communities and authorities²⁰

Teachers and students practice interethnic cooperation according to the annual programs, and included in the process are the school management, students' parents and the local community. Besides performing extracurricular activities, other forms of strengthening the multiethnic cooperation in schools and the local community are used, which provide an opportunity to create positive socio – emotional climate in class, learn about children's rights, mutual perception of ethnic, cultural and religious belonging, as well as learn about one's own culture and the culture of others.

The assessment of the progress and effectiveness of intervention within the four components, on which the project is based, indicates full achievement of goals in the schools, but with limited success in terms of raising awareness of the need for intercultural communication at the local community representatives.²¹

It can be concluded that despite the success of the projects while they are being implemented, however mechanisms for their sustainability are not provided yet, and wider effects of all undertaken activities are limited, so it is necessary multicultural integration in the education system to be conducted systematically, on institutional level, by using the experiences of the models that have proved to be effective.

²⁰IIEP Website, "About the Project". <http://pmio.mk/about-the-project/>

²¹Naskova, Z.et al.(2014). *Evaluation Report: Midterm evaluation of USAID/Macedonia's interethnic interaction in education project*. USAID.

2. PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND MISSION OF THE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Intercultural education is education for unity, solidarity, respect, mutual tolerance, assistance, trust and other universal human values. It is education that allows promoting of the *otherness* or to encourage all stakeholders in the educational process to recognize, respect and live in an environment which is has the mark of diversity. With interculturalism, the education system is transformed from a rigid, fragmented and closed in the interests of ethnic groups, in an open system that supports the dialogue between them. By embodying the diversities, such a system qualitatively enriches the contextual component and exceeds the danger of favoring cultural and physical exclusiveness, and to create physical distance between the young generations, who then quietly generate intolerance and segregation.

Intercultural education is not only the adoption of knowledge about the other, but primarily emphasizes the educational component that allows development, nurturing and improvement of life skills necessary for quality coexistence in the Macedonian society.

The platform of intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia represents the following global **principles**²²:

- Respect for the children and students cultural identity by providing quality education for all;
- acquiring knowledge and creation of attitudes and skills necessary for active participation in the social life;

²² UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006). Paris: UNESCO, pp.32-38.

- acquiring knowledge and creation of attitudes and skills that allow development of respect, understanding and solidarity between ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups as well as between the nations.

These principles represent a guideline when planning different approaches to achieving the integration processes in multicultural school environments, and need to be skillfully and subtly incorporated into educational practice in order to achieve the desired conditions.

The goals of intercultural education need in long-term and systematically to initiate changing and upgrading of educational practice in the Republic of Macedonia, through personal and institutional transformation as the basis for future changes. Global goals of intercultural education, underlying the Conception of intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia are:

- building educational policies and strategies for equal opportunities for all in the field of educational activity;
- guaranteeing the rights of every individual in the context of cultural diversity;
- promoting tolerance, mutual trust, respect, equality and non-discrimination in multicultural communities and environments;
- enabling social participation of every individual in intercultural community;
- cultivating dialogue among educational entities with different ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic background;
- realization of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

The global objectives of intercultural education its operationalization and immediate implementation base on the following **tasks**:

- undertaking intercultural integration initiatives that have educational character in accordance with the actual needs of multicultural schools;

- development of mechanisms and practices for unbiased and indiscriminate action in all segments of the educational process;
- providing conditions for implementation of multilingual and cultural diversity in preschool and school institutions;
- development of skills for open, direct and constructive communication and cooperation between educational entities;
- enabling all participants in the educational process for peaceful resolution and transformation of conflict situations;
- sensitizing the stakeholders in the educational sphere to recognize the sources of prejudice and stereotypes, and to design strategies to successfully overcome those prejudices and stereotypes;
- development of empathy for *the other* as a medium of different cultural, social, linguistic, religious symbols;
- encouraging and fostering critical thinking in educational work as a factor for achieving democratic and socially just societal environment;
- creation of safe and inclusive multicultural preschool and school environment;
- establishing various forms of intercultural cooperation between educational institutions and the local community.

The mentioned tasks will provide long-term tracing of specific guidelines for improving the everyday educational work in a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous social reality.

3. INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE EDUCATIONAL WORK

Intercultural dimension of the educational work relates to all of its structural components (goals, objectives, content, organization, methods and techniques, resources) and aims to encourage all stakeholders to better learn themselves and the others for realization of successful communication and cooperation. The creation of intercultural curriculum requires attention so that it's open, decentralized, democratic and inclusive²³. In the process of acquiring intercultural competencies, educational work should be based on the promotion of several key features: identity and belonging, similarities and differences, human rights and responsibilities, equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness, dialogue and peace.²⁴

The promotion of identity and belonging assumes recognition, acceptance and affirmation of the contribution and the specifics of each individual involved in the educational process. It should provide: a) developing a positive self-image in each individual, evaluation of personal identity as well as of the group which he/she belongs to; b) critical analysis of different views and attitudes; c) active listening and empathy toward those who are different, as well as support of positive changes in the community

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The promotion of similarities and differences is realized through contact with diversity and their introduction. It is a challenge for dialogue development aimed at

²³ Sablic, M. (2014). *Interculturalism in education*. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak

²⁴ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Guidelines for Intercultural Education (2006), Dublin, p.51-61

discovering each other's similarities, but at the same time, perception and acceptance of the diversity as a common cultural accomplishment.

The promotion of human rights and responsibilities should enable developing skills in each individual to accept the personal responsibility in building mechanisms and strategies for active protection of human rights school environment.

The promotion of equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness is intended to encourage the process of sensitization on gender, social, racial, religious, age, physical and mental differences, understood not as an obstacle but as an opportunity for personal growth of each individual within the intercultural environment.

The promotion of dialogue and peace puts the stress on developing skills for constructive, open dialogue as a prerequisite for positive social-emotional climate in multicultural educational institutions. Protégées since their early age develop skills for peace based on sharing, cooperation, responsibility and recognizing possible consequences of socially undesirable forms of behavior as well as positive resolution of potential conflicts.

4. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN REGULAR CLASSES

4.1. School Curriculum

Curricula, as a basic tool in the realization of educational work should reflect the global development tendencies of contemporary education: democracy, tolerance and interculturalism. Intercultural education is based on the existing educational principles and objectives which are defined in legal and other documents governing different subsystems of education and separate program documents arising from them. Curricula

should be broadly based and flexible so they can meet the needs of all students and schools in multiethnic environments.

In many of the existing curricula on which activities in primary and secondary schools in Macedonia are based upon, the multicultural dimension is present and it provides a good foundation for the development and advancement of intercultural educational practice. Multicultural contents are characteristic especially for the curricula in the nine-year elementary education, primarily, in terms of offered optional subjects that provide the possibility for students to learn the language and culture of most ethnic communities, to get familiar with the different religions, as well as with specific aspects of the multicultural reality in the country.

However, the offered subject contents are realized mainly at the level of acquiring basic knowledge about *the other* only, and the interest in studying languages of ethnic communities remains locked within their own ethnic group.

Multicultural sensitiveness is present in the curricula of many compulsory and optional subjects. This can particularly be seen in the definition of developmental, respectively the general and specific objectives. Yet, mostly, they do not produce specific content and activities that could make their realization and affirmation of interculturalism possible during the practical work in classes.

The inclusive approach contained in intercultural education implies inclusiveness in the planning and implementation of the curricula. It can be seen in the following aspects:

Integration of every child's diversity

Curricula should approach with respect to the diversity and understanding of every student in the classroom, thus making it possible to manifest their national, linguistic, religious and socio-cultural identity. Intercultural content start from the uniqueness of each child and put it in the social context: all should learn to live together and contribute to building a multicultural society.

Integrating intercultural content in all / more subjects

Intercultural education is not realized as a separate subject, but it assumes a transversal approach to the study of existing subjects. It involves planning and realization of content pertaining to different aspects of different cultures, which are incorporated into course programs as mandatory as well as the optional subjects. Thus, all students, regardless whether they're attending multi-ethnic or mono-ethnic schools obtain knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes and behaviors which sensitize them for the socio-cultural diversity in their environment, and to recognize and oppose prejudices and the discrimination in it.

Integration of "multi-ethnic" and multilingual teaching activities within separate subjects

In multilingual schools, especially those in which education process in implemented simultaneously in different classes in different language, it is very important to enable communication and collaboration between students and teachers from different ethnic communities. It is therefore necessary in the implementation of the curriculum in some compulsory and elective courses (for example, foreign languages, IT, civic education, physical education, education for life skills, our country, exploring the homeland, dances and folk dances), as well as during the realization of practical classes in

secondary education, to organize such classes in which will jointly participate students from different classrooms who attend education in different languages. These activities not only allow strengthening of intercultural dialogue among students, but also among their teachers who are referred to cooperation in the planning and implementation of activities, and at the same time enable the creation of a positive climate in the institution, and contribute to the advancement of relations between all the participants.

Strengthening of the language classes and stimulation of interest in learning the of the other's language

Attending the education in ones' mother tongue is one of the main accomplishments in the multicultural educational system in the RM. since constituting the educational and upbringing system in the middle of the last century. The teaching languages in primary and secondary schools in Macedonia are Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian language. The Macedonian language is mandatory for students of other ethnicities, with shorter duration (from 4th to 9th grade) and with smaller fund of classes (2, respectively 3 classes per week). At the same time, the quality of teaching in Macedonian language for students of other ethnic communities should be improved by hiring teachers with language skills that will contribute to stimulating and building a positive perception and interest in learning the Macedonian language.

In order to strengthen multiculturalism is also the opportunity incorporated in the curriculum for primary education to study, within the optional subjects (from third to ninth grade) in the language of the smaller ethnic communities in the country (Vlachs, Roma, Bosnians) however, this possibility only applies to students belonging to these communities. Of great importance is the possibility that students from sixth to ninth grade have, who attend classes in Macedonian, Turkish or Serbian language to choose the Albanian language as optional subject, but the same possibility should be granted for studying in the languages of other ethnic communities. Besides this, the selection of these

subjects should not oblige students to select an additional optional subject, as it is foreseen within the teaching program.²⁵

intercultural education presumes not only guarantee of the right for education in their mother tongue, but also learning the language of the other as a bridge for familiarizing, rapprochement and integration of the members of different ethnic communities in the educational and wider social environment. Therefore, in this list of optional subjects offered should be equally included languages of all ethnic communities which should be available to be studied by all students. Likewise as an opportunity should be offered within secondary education.

All of this will be an important contribution to realization of intercultural understanding and dialogue, but only if schools and the wider environment stimulate the interest for learning the language and culture of *the others* and develop the need for learning, first, the languages of the people of our closer surrounding, and then the world languages.

Affirmation of the tandem and team work of teachers in the planning and implementation of the curricula

Interculturalism means dialogue and exchange of ideas, experiences, knowledge and views. Therefore, one of the key factors for the successful creation and implementation of intercultural program content is enabling teachers who work in multiethnic environment to collaborate and effectively communicate with colleagues from other ethnic communities. It means they should have a developed sensitivity of their own culture, possess knowledge or at least manifest curiosity about the culture of others, but also skills to face the challenges deriving from the cultural differences and to find acceptable solutions for all. The need for tandem and team work of teachers is particularly evident in the organizing of joint activities of students from different ethnic groups, in which the cultural and linguistic gap between students and teachers is bypassed by

²⁵<http://www.bro.gov.mk/docs/nastavniplanovi/nastaven%20plan%20devetgodishno%202015-2016.pdf>

mutual engagement and investment of individual creativity and skills in achieving common goals.

Involving the parents and the local community in the implementation of the curricula

In multiethnic communities, parents and the local community have a great responsibility in creating intercultural and inclusive school environment. Educational institutions should initiate and offer various ways for active participation of parents and other community members in the educational work of the students, in accordance with their interests and expertise. For example, they can be directly involved in intercultural learning and extracurricular activities (guests in classes, volunteer assistance for school, as well as children from other ethnic groups, participation in school celebrations, open days, joint educational and creative workshops, organizing family visits, etc.) to provide assistance and support in the preparation and translation of educational materials, or to realize mutual cooperation as well as cooperation with the teachers in the planning and realization of visits, projects and activities that will be aimed at promoting multiculturalism in the classroom, the school and the local environment.

Ensuring greater openness of curricula

Existing curricula are closed type ones and there's hardly room for their adjustment, modification or supplement by the schools and of the local institutions. This significantly reduces the opportunities for achieving higher quality education, especially if it's implemented in a multicultural context in which exist higher expectations regarding the satisfaction of the needs and the students' characteristics and of the communities in which they are brought up and educated. Hence, in the creation of curricula it is necessary to allow greater freedom to schools and teachers in the selection, sequencing of studying and, of course, the realization of content, taking into account different interests, abilities, experiences and cultural characteristics of students as well as the specifics of the local context.

Connection of curricular and extracurricular activities

Interculturalism involves integrating of all contents and activities that are realized in an educational institutions (educational, extracurricular, hidden curriculum), as well as stimulating the intercultural exchange between institutions. Curricula contents are just one, though a very important aspect of school life and they should be put in the context of the events in school and the wider community. Thus, students can develop abilities to apply the intercultural ideas and internalize intercultural values in their own lives.

4.2. Teaching and learning forms, methods and techniques

Besides the curricular contents, the main components of the teaching process are the teaching methods and techniques, as well as the forms of working with students, because the effectiveness of learning depends largely on the ways in which the contents will be presented and knowledge and skills that will be acquired. The selection of appropriate teaching methods and techniques is particularly important in the realization of the content and activities of multicultural character because the level of the higher cognitive processes engagement is greater, as are critical thinking, and also attitudes are formed and changed and the emotional intelligence is being developed. Hence, it is recommended that teachers get familiarized with the contemporary trends in education and to be enabled to apply the contemporary methods of active learning. The active learning involves the student physically, cognitively and emotionally, and the manner in which the student adopts knowledge determines how much this knowledge will be useful and durable.

The recommended methods, techniques and forms of work that are applied in educational institutions should correspond with the general principles of intercultural

education. Furthermore, during their selection, the starting point ought to be the four basic methodological principles: participation, interaction (cooperation and joint action), reflection and anticipation. Depending on the goals determined, individual or collective forms of working should be chosen, a method of direct studying, learning by disclosure or debate, presentation of verbal or visual materials, activities in the classroom or visiting a certain institution.

For example, if the objective is to stimulate respect for the cultural identity of every child and adolescent, modern teaching methods with traditional forms can be integrated such as storytelling, reciting poetry works, performing songs and dramas that reflect the cultural heritage members of all communities living in the same space could be integrated. In this context is the recommendation of organizing visits to museums, archaeological sites, monuments where pupils and students will directly be familiarized with their personal history and cultural symbols as well as of the other ethnicities. In order to gain knowledge and to form attitudes and skills which are necessary for active civic participation in public life, it is imperative to promote an environment of active learning through the implementation of projects, which will demystify knowledge, based on textbooks and will encourage learning by discovery. In selecting topics for project activities should be taken care that they reflect both interdisciplinary and the intercultural dimension.

Of particular importance to intercultural education is application of *cooperative learning*. Through it, the different abilities, knowledge and point of views that students have are emphasized, thus contributing on building different views on certain phenomena, by which their complexity and multidimensionality is highlighted.

Through the tandem and group forms of work in classes, students develop self-confidence, sense of responsibility and social skills, such as cooperation, assistance, tolerance, active listening, eloquence in speaking. The common educational goal is that primarily brings children and adolescents together in teamwork, but additionally other benefits derive, such as *mutual dependence* (the perception that the success of the group depends on the individual success of each individual in it), *individual responsibility* (the

achievement of every individual is evaluated), *encouraging direct interaction* (members motivate and stimulate each other). The multicultural dimension in these forms of work is recognized by the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the groups as well, thus the social skills will be built not only for the members of their culture, but also to others, which in this way will be better acquainted.

The discussion also plays an essential role in intercultural education because it enables students to talk about their thoughts and feelings without the fear of insulting and hostile statements, and therefore it is imperative to create an atmosphere of trust. The verbal discussion can be enriched with music, artistic expression or physical performance, which is more pronounced at pre-school children and students at a younger age. With them, in the interest of intercultural education, more recreational activities, visual materials and visits outside the school should be practiced.

4.3 Textbooks and other educational tools and aids

Textbooks and teaching aids, as well as their proper selection in terms of quality, content and illustrations, have a major role in how students create their perception of the world or society in which they live. Researches show that the way *the others* are represented in a textbook affects the formation of opinions about those groups of other students. If the textbooks contain more positive examples, which are a clear determination for building a multicultural society and which on a wider scale express the basic principles of interculturalism, then there are real preconditions the students to form positive attitudes, opinions and behaviors in relation to *the others*.

*The Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education*²⁶, in the Republic of Macedonia it stipulates the obligation that the textbooks ought to be published in the language and script in which the lecture is being realized. According to *The Methodology*

²⁶*The Law on textbooks for primary and secondary education* (2008). Official gazette of RM nr.98

*for textbook evaluation*²⁷, prepared by the Bureau for Education Development, it is specified that the textbook should be free of phrases and expressions that manifest disrespecting opinions towards certain communities or personalities, on the contrary the contents and illustrations should transmit cultural values and encourage mutual cooperation and a sense of respect towards *the others*. In order to empirically verify the level of implementation of these recommendations in practice, a few years ago in our country two comprehensive analyzes of intercultural dimension in textbooks of primary education were conducted. Within *The Study for multiculturalism and interethnic relations in education*²⁸, the content and illustrations in more textbooks in Macedonian and Albanian language have been analyzed in order to identify the presence of different ethnic communities living in The Republic of Macedonia. General conclusion from the findings is that textbooks stimulate more ethnocentrism instead reflecting the multicultural reality of the country, which is shown by the absence or low representation of content, characters, pictures and authors that give an introduction to the culture and tradition of "the other" ethnic communities. Similar findings were obtained in the study *Intercultural Education in Macedonia: analysis of contents which imply interculturalism in textbooks for primary education in Macedonian language*²⁹). Contrary to the poor promotion of interculturalism, the study confirmed that there are no contents or iconography present in the textbooks that could mean discrimination or an disrespectful approach towards members of other ethnic communities.

To overcome the mentioned weaknesses in the preparation of textbooks, undertaking the following measures is recommended:

- to perform adjustment of textbooks, especially those of the mother tongue, foreign languages, history, geography, civic education, by incorporating contents

²⁷ *Conception for drafting a textbook and the methodology for student's evaluation* (2010). Skopje: Bureau for Education development-RM

²⁸ Petroska-Beshka and co. (2009). Study of multiculturalism and interethnic relations in education. Skopje. UNICEF Office

²⁹ Davcev, V. and Achkovska Leskovska, E. (2009). *Intercultural education- the Republic of Macedonia: analysis of the contents that imply interculturalism in the primary and secondary education textbooks in Macedonian language*. Skopje:FOOM.

that reflect the multiethnic character of the Macedonian society. It will contribute to the development of civil and national identity of all ethnic communities in the country, instead fostering ethnocentrism.

- to put in operation the criteria for evaluation of textbooks in terms of multiculturalism and tighten the control mechanisms for checking the contents of textbooks that are published.
- international best practices should serve as an example for representing the multi-ethnic character of the Macedonian society through textbooks and the educational tools.
- to consider the possibility of a regional approach to educational textbooks through bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, taking into account the already existing initiatives.

Apart from the textbooks, it is recommended to use other resources as well that will help the teachers in the immediate implementation of the integration processes in schools. For example, in choosing reading-books should be taken into consideration involvement of authors, members of all ethnic communities living in these areas, as well as process themes that will have a stimulating effect on establishing intercultural dialogue and overcoming, stereotypes, prejudice, oppression and labeling. In this respect, beneficial are also the information that can be obtained on the web sites due to their availability and the possibility to be used in classes of schools equipped with information technology. Furthermore, the use of carefully selected video materials and films is recommended according to the age of children and adolescents, which could serve as basis for discussing topics relevant to intercultural education. The advantage of these materials is that they maintain motivation and concentration, promote social instead dominant verbal learning and provide long-lasting remembering of the content and the messages that are sent.

5. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The various extracurricular activities in schools, besides their primary goal of developing the abilities and interests of students, have an important role in enriching the quality of intercultural school life. Above all, they should be a reflection of the universal human values in respect to supporting the intercultural dialogue, cooperation and coexistence. At the same time they promote socialization and enable students for successful collaboration, as well as independent research and discovery.

Schools should support the existence of different student clubs and sections within which can be realized contents including various fields such as: art, film, photography, music, theater, graphics and design, education for peace, sport, urban culture, civil education, science and technology and so on. For efficient implementation of extracurricular activities it is necessary they are continuously maintained with a regular pace and successiveness of the planned activities and in correlation with educational content. Thus, they will contribute in improving the quality of the regular education process, but also in building an active and positive attitude towards learning among students.

In designing the program frames of the extracurricular contents, emphasis should be focused on activities related to the intercultural and/or bilingual character, for the promotion of the diversity of the ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, gender and socio-economic character.

The global objectives of extracurricular activities with intercultural character are oriented towards:

- strengthening cooperation between educational subjects from different ethnic background,

- sensitization of respect and tolerance towards diversity of social, ethnic, cultural character,
- building strategies to overcome stereotypes and prejudice in schools,
- development of positive emotional climate in groups with heterogeneous structure,
- supporting the interest in “the other’s” language,
- strengthening the of interaction, cooperation and trust between the school and families,
- respect for the principle of democracy in the identification and education of potentially natural students.

The realization of states goals will contribute for:

- a successful implementation of tandem and team work in the intercultural extracurricular activities;
- adopting a vocabulary with basic socio-cultural phrases in several languages;
- raising self-confidence and positive self-image as part of a/the team;
- constructive resolution of conflict situations in the group;
- recognition and practicing acceptable, responsible and tolerant behavior in the local community.

In order to achieve the determined goals and expected results it is necessary to undertake initiatives on institutional level that will enable a systematic approach in supporting the intercultural dimension of extracurricular activities. Thus, it is preferable to apply the positive experiences from projects implemented so far in the chosen multi-ethnic schools in the Republic of Macedonia.

Devising the programs framework for the implementation of intercultural extracurricular activities should include the following guidelines and recommendations:

- in the monoethnic schools to ensure support for the realization of contents that promote universal human values and allow familiarization with different cultures, traditions, customs, languages etc;
- in multiethnic, multilingual schools focus ought to be put on improving bilingual, tandem planning, organizing and conducting extracurricular and school project activities, in which students from different ethnic groups with different speaking backgrounds will equally be included;
- long-term school project activities and the researching character to be used for networking of multilingual student and teacher teams on local and regional levels which would collaborate via distance learning;
- to develop intercultural competencies of the teaching staff;
- schools to evolve into local intercultural educational centers which would be opened for the students and their parents. It should provide support for the positive perception of differences in the school and local surroundings and represent a useful tool for transforming the educational institutions in the spirit of intercultural values and principles.

6. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES FOR EDUCATORS, TEACHERS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES AND PRINCIPALS

Teaching staff has a responsible role in creating an environment that enables every individual in the institution to feel safe and accepted regardless of how culturally similar or different from the others one is. Hence, the competencies to achieve intercultural dialogue that should be owned by staff in the educational institutions are very important. Taking into account the impact they have on modeling the behavior of children and young individuals with whom they work, they have to constantly review their methods and behaviors and advance the educational practices.

Intercultural competencies are the ability to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable establishing successful interaction with members of other cultures. Pursuant to this commitment, intercultural competencies include three important dimensions that are interrelated: cognitive, affective and communication (behavioral).

The cognitive dimension involves knowledge of history, geography, languages, literature, music etc., as representatives of different cultures, enabling broad, multicultural worldview. The adoption of knowledge about the *other* is the first step in acquiring intercultural competencies, but this activity is constantly upgraded with new insights regarding members of the hitherto unfamiliar cultures. The cognitive dimension also includes the ability for detecting differences of a cultural identity, values, lifestyle and world view among the members of different communities.

The affective dimension refers to the self-respect and respect for the cultural identity of *the other*, sensitivity and empathy for persons with different cultural backgrounds, and recognition of sources of stereotypes and prejudices and their rejection.

The behavioral dimension consists of communication skills with members of different cultures, employing knowledge for their cultural marks, but at the same time learning from the interactions with them.

Intercultural competences of educators, teachers, professional associates and principals are achieved on the basis of knowing their own, but also the culture of the others, that is possession of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. Both aspects are necessary for successful incorporation of the intercultural dimension in the educational process.

Intercultural competence includes the following categories:

- *Personal and interpersonal competencies* pertaining to developing self-awareness, self-esteem, self-worth, determination, commitment, control of emotions, flexibility, readiness for active listening, successful and effective communication, individual and team work, conflict resolution, temporal organization of activities etc.
- *Cross-curricular competencies* which include planning, programming, integration of teaching with extracurricular activities, effective use of IT-communication technology in the field of integrated education, survey etc.
- *Cognitive and creative abilities and skills* that enable problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, innovation, originality, divergent thinking, etc.

Development of intercultural competences should be a continuous and a long-term process, which would be organized via several successive levels of training that would allow them to be acquired and upgraded. The most optimal would be if the trainings are organized and structured within an independent intercultural training center for educators, teachers, professional associates and representatives of school

administrations. The theoretical and practical training would be conducted in two / trilingual environment over a longer period of time and it would be directed to:

- understanding the concept of civil society and practicing of universal human values regardless of differences;
- introducing the cultural values and traditions of members of ethnic communities living in the same geographical area;
- recognition of ethnic and religious stereotypes and prejudices among themselves and others in order to build mechanisms to overcome them in the school practice;
- use unbiased working materials and teaching techniques which provide promotion of integration rather than division along ethnic, linguistic, religious and other grounds;
- stimulating skills for working with heterogeneous groups of students in terms of language and ethnicity;
- team building skills of educators / teachers with different ethnic backgrounds within a common curriculum and extracurricular activities, and in terms of the realization of other professional commitments.

7. INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The strengthening of intercultural dialogue is positively influenced by several factors relating to the environment and spatial management in educational institutions. They should represent a stimulating environment in which diversity will be positively introduced and promoted. One of the priority tasks therefore, of each educational institution should be supporting initiatives for designing intercultural classrooms, which will primarily reflect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and gender diversity, both in local and in a global context. They will provide support to any educational entity in the creation of a positive self-image and reinforce the positive perception for diversity in the immediate environment.

Pre-school and school environment should be easily adjustable and follow intercultural actualities of local, national and global nature. They should contain a multitude of positive, encouraging and stimulating messages, motto, photos, illustrations, applications, etc., which will be displayed throughout the entire area of the facility and promote different languages, cultural values and symbols.

In the educational process children and students should have access in a wide selection of didactic tools, aids and audio - visual resources that reflect the characteristics and values of different cultures and traditions.

The space in classrooms and recreation rooms should be an additional support to the team and tandem work of students, teachers and parents, as well as cooperation among them. It should have a multifunctional character, in fact they should meet the needs of compulsory education process, and the various initiatives to promote intercultural dialogue. The classroom is organized as a small open center for learning, socializing and creativity, while interaction, the positive atmosphere and socio - emotional climate is strengthened by organizing more corners of flexible nature (e.g. .

for creating, reading, playing, conflict resolution, relaxation, birthday corner and so on), which will be continuously opened to any kind of differences.

In order to prevent improper use of iconography school in spatial management particular attention should be paid to the selection of:

- illustrations and symbols that would be representative of individuals and groups of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and from different age, gender and social groups, and which will be equally presented through the school premises;

- illustrative sources that will build a positive image of people with special needs, as well as members and active participants of intercultural environment;

- written messages, information, announcements and statements that should reflect the linguistic diversity and stimulate the interest in discovering and introduction of more languages.

The proper designing of the entire school area is of utmost importance because it gives the first and most impressive message to all subjects who are directly and indirect involved in the educational work, such as parents, wider families of students, collaborators of the local environment etc.

8. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Building inclusive and intercultural educational environment is not a matter for only the main actors in the educational process, educators / teachers and children / students, but it's a common shared responsibility of all members of the community.

Parents from different ethnic communities are a key partner to schools, and promoters of the concept of intercultural education as well. Primarily, they should affect the process of forming opinions among their children in the spirit of interculturalism, then together with schools enhance their capacities for intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the local community. Schools are expected to initiate cooperation with parents that are focused on achieving the following objectives:

- creation of a safe and stimulating intercultural school environment;
- sensitizing in respect to the values and principles of intercultural education;
- strengthening cooperation amongst parents with different ethnic, religious, linguistic and social backgrounds through a form of team work;
- building strategies to successfully overcome the sources of stereotypes and prejudice in multicultural school and local environments;
- advancing cooperation and trust between parents and the school and the teaching team;

Stated objectives can become operational through various activities that would be conducted in groups of heterogeneous ethnic composition and bilingual groups organized by the school teams:

- joint parental meetings and appointment;
- counseling for parents ;
- joint actions and school project activities with parents;

- participation in the council of parents in the development of intercultural school policies and plans;
- preparation of bilingual / trilingual information material for parents (brochures, catalogs and manuals).

These forms of cooperation will have a positive impact on parents in terms of :

- strengthening the sense of trust and developing an active and participatory attitude towards the shaping of school environment;
- building a positive image of the school;
- overcoming stereotypes and prejudices towards certain aspects of school functioning or to specific school subjects;
- raising the level of awareness for a variety of innovative advances of the school;
- perfecting skills for achieving a partnership with the school in preparing students from different backgrounds for a life in an environment with a symbol of diversity.

Apart from the parents, an important role in promoting cultural diversity in multi-ethnic schools have local municipal authorities, which are supposed to create and develop strategies to support cultural diversity in multi-ethnic schools. In the maintaining and strengthening the multicultural status of schools, they should implement close cooperation to maintain the multiethnic structure and balance of students in order to prevent drop-outs in the number of students and to prevent the tendency for transition from multi-ethnic to mono-ethnic structure of students and employees within them.

The strengthening of the status in multi-ethnic schools, the local community level, would allow promotion of their cooperation with the institutions of public cultural, educational and sport character, with the local media, etc ., in order to achieve greater visibility of these schools, as well as their performance in educational activities on a local level. It would be desirable municipal authorities themselves, in their development and

strategic plans, to put emphasis on the implementation of joint multilingual activities - formal and informal by their character, which will be open for all members of the local community. This will overcome the bias along ethnic lines, which leads to parallelism in implementation of activities in many spheres of public life.

The visibility of multi-ethnic schools will be strengthened if they get additional financial incentives from local and national level. This will ensure continuous and systematic implementation of the concept of intercultural education as a long-term national priority.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

Intercultural education should be one of the priorities to education policy in the Republic of Macedonia which will be constantly supported and upgraded. Its systematic application should be taken into consideration as multiple linked aspects which should be well thought, planned and realized:

In the past few years a number of international financial donors supported initiatives and projects of non-governmental which partially worked in the field of integrated and inter-ethnic education. All good initiatives, projects and practices have been facing the problem of continuous sustainability. The general weak financial power of municipalities and schools does not allow continuity and support for the development of this type of education. The Ministry of Education and Science must have an annual budget intended for supporting intercultural education that will increase from year to year.

The Conception of intercultural education is a good basis for development of a several year strategic plan, developed action plans and later operational plans. In the preparation of the strategic plan besides relevant institutions are to be involved and give special priority to non-governmental organizations that have several years of experience and represent good practices and experiences in Macedonia, as well as international

organizations and schools with experience (e.g. Council for integrated education in Northern Ireland). The approach in the creation of the strategic plan to be in compliance with the financial opportunities that can be provided by MES and potential donors.

The main focus of the strategic plan should be in accordance with the structural components of this Concept, respectively, the intercultural education should be incorporated in:

1. Regular teaching process (The Curricula; Teaching and learning forms, methods and techniques; Textbooks and other teaching tools and aids)
2. Extracurricular activities;
3. Competences of educators, teachers, professional associates and school principals
4. Environment in educational institutions
5. Relations of the educational institutions with the wider community.

For an effective coordination and implementation of the strategic, operational and action plans forming a professional team is inevitable. In accordance with the legislation there are several possibilities and solutions:

- The Government may establish a Centre for Intercultural Education;
- The Minister of Education and Science could establish an integrated education sector, or
- Through tender procedures, MoES can choose another legal entity which in close cooperation with the relevant institutions, organizations and/or experts who will coordinate implementation and activities³⁰

³⁰ Such is the The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education - NICIE

During the initial phase of implementation of the strategic plan, the multiethnic schools should not be obliged to realize all the foreseen activities, i.e. the implementation of joint activities with students in ethnically mixed groups. Rather it should initially be done systematically and selectively with a number of selected schools (classrooms) who will implement the intercultural concept in an extended period of time according to the working conditions.

For successful implementation of the strategic plan, it is necessary to ensure follow-up mechanisms, progress evaluation and evaluation of results. For that goal, a body should be established that will ensure the monitoring and implementation in accordance to the initial established criteria and quality indicators, according to the set dynamics. At the same time, the body will be responsible for periodic evaluations of the achieved goals and the quality, in order to identify the eventual weaknesses and to provide recommendations for their overcoming.

ANEX 1

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF THE CONCEPTION FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

The vision of this Conception for Intercultural Education of the Republic of Macedonia is creating an educational and upbringing ambiance which will foster intercultural relations and integration processes and will promote cultural diversity as well as wider social bridging in the multiethnic and multicultural context.

The Conception for Intercultural Education of the Republic of Macedonia as a strategic development document has a complex and long-term oriented **mission** on its basis- to promote the constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights to equal education for all, fostering their national and cultural identity, acceptance and respect for diversity through contents and activities that promote intercultural dimension in the educational and upbringing process.

For the practical implementation of this strategic document, the Ministry of Education and Science takes concrete measures on:

1. Curricula, teaching programs and textbooks
2. Competences for Intercultural Education of the teaching cadre
3. Extracurricular activities
4. Ambiance (Ethos) in educational institutions
5. Relationships of educational institutions with the wider community

Implementation period

The timeframe for implementation of the Conception for intercultural education is five years starting from 2016 to 2021. Evaluation of the success of the concept and implementation plan will be carried out for three and five years from commencement of implementation. Revising and upgrading the Conception will be made in 2021.

1. CURRICULA, TEACHING PROGRAMS AND TEXTBOOKS

Objective: Intercultural content improvement and upgrading of curricula, teaching programs and textbooks

Expected results:	Indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Analyzed, revised, modified and upgraded curricula, teaching programs and textbooks for primary and secondary education with the goal of changing the contents that promote ethnocentrism, stereotypes, prejudices, and upgrading them with intercultural content- Drafted guidelines and recommendations on carrying out joint intercultural teaching content (primary and secondary education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number of teams formed for the analysis and revision of curricula, teaching content and textbooks for primary and secondary education;- Created protocols for conducting qualitative and content analysis of curricula and teaching content for primary and secondary education- The number and qualitative content analysis of existing curricula and textbooks for all mandatory and optional subjects for primary and secondary education;- Created recommendations and guidelines for developing curricula and textbooks for the new elective courses in primary and secondary education- Creation of a methodology for the development and selection of intercultural didactic resources- Number of revised, modified and upgraded curricula and issued new textbooks for all compulsory and elective subjects for elementary and secondary education- Drafted recommendations and guidelines for carrying out joint intercultural educational content

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establishing teams for analysis and revision of curricula, teaching programs and textbooks for primary and secondary education; -Creating protocols and conducting qualitative content analysis of curricula, teaching programs and textbooks for primary and secondary education -Drafting and qualitative content analysis of existing curricula for all compulsory subjects in primary and secondary education; -Qualitative and content analysis of the existing curricula of all elective courses for primary and secondary education; -Revising, modifying and upgrading the curricula for all compulsory subjects in primary and secondary education; - Revising, modifying and upgrading the curricula of all elective courses for primary and secondary education; -Creating recommendations and guidelines for curriculum development for the new elective courses in primary and secondary education -Creating a list of recommendations and guidelines for revising textbooks for primary and secondary education; -Creating a methodology for the development and selection of intercultural didactic resources; -Creating guidelines and recommendations on carrying out joint intercultural content in regular teaching process in primary and secondary education -Publishing of new textbooks 	<p>Resources:</p> <p>Sector for intercultural education, external experts, BDE, Pedagogical service...</p>
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2. COMPETENCES FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION OF THE TEACHING CADRE

Objective: Improving the competences for intercultural education of educators, teachers, professional associates and principals.

Expected result: -skilled educational cadre for direct planning, organization, implementation and evaluation of educational content with intercultural character; -Trained representatives of school administrations in the management level and transformation of multi-ethnic schools in intercultural school environments	Indicators: -Number of trained teachers according to the training programs for intercultural education; -Number of trained representatives of schools administrations (principals and assistant principals); -number of trained representatives of the professional services; -Number of created training programs for intercultural education for several categories of educational subjects
Activities: -Drafting and implementation of the program (theoretical and practical) training on intercultural education for teachers. -Drafting and implementation of the program (theoretical and practical) training on intercultural education for the representatives of professional services; -Drafting and implementation of the program (theoretical and practical) training for intercultural education for associates of preschool and school administrations	Resources: Sector for intercultural education and training center or provider (good practice)

3. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Objective: Implementation of the extracurricular activities of intercultural character

<p>Expected RESULTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Drafted curricula's, teaching programs and didactic resources for the implementation of intercultural extracurricular activities -Realization of intercultural extracurricular activities in primary and secondary education 	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of created Annual programs for extracurricular activities for primary and secondary education; -Number of implemented additional activities of intercultural character; -Number of schools, students, teachers and parents involved in the extracurricular activities; -Number of created Practicums for implementers of extracurricular activities; -Number of created didactic packages for implementers of extracurricular activities; -Developed protocol for planning, implementation and evaluation of additional activities of intercultural character;
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Drafting of programs for primary and secondary education for activities of extracurricular character; -Drafting of didactic packages for teachers, professional services to support the implementation (manuals, workshops, audio - visual resources, professional literature etc.). -Development of protocols for successful planning, implementation and evaluation of intercultural extracurricular activities 	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sector for intercultural education -Organization- best practices from Macedonia and abroad - Selected schools -Trained teacher tandems

4. AMBIANCE (ETHOS) IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Objective: Creating an intercultural, effective and multifunctional school setting

Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improved infrastructural conditions in schools;- Intercultural designing of school space- according to the principles and standards of intercultural education;-Enabling multifunctional classrooms adapted for regular teaching process and extracurricular activities;-encouraging and pleasant school ambience that reflects cultural diversity	Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Number of renovated, redesigned and equipped classrooms in primary and secondary schools;-Number of redesigned space on school level facility and school yard
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Development of standards and principles of intercultural pedagogical design and setting in primary and secondary schools;-Refurbishment of classrooms and school premises;-Equipping of classrooms, cabinets and school premises	Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Sector for intercultural education- Organization of good practice/s-Local self-government,-Local business community

5. RELATIONSHIPS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Objective: sensitizing and informing the wider community on intercultural education

<p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acquainted, informed broader community with the concept of intercultural education and intercultural activities of educational institutions; -Actively engaged wider community in supporting and implementing the activities of intercultural educational institutions; -Acquainted and actively involved parents, school partners, in the implementation of activities of intercultural character; -Established professional link to educational institutions with local and national media; -Institutionalized cooperation of educational institutions with the local business community; -Created websites and promotional materials in support to the educational institutions in promoting the Conception of intercultural education. 	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of workshops and other activities for/ with the parents -Drafted positive policies of local self-government in terms of intercultural education and its implementation in educational institutions -Number of donations to the schools received by the local business community -Number of developed and active web pages -Number of issued brochures, flyers, posters, newsletters and other advertising material, -Coverage of the activities of educational institutions by the media
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creating an Annual program of cooperation with parents, -Organizing of workshops and other activities with parents, -Development of positive policies by local self-government in order to support intercultural education, -Establishing cooperation between the local business community and educational institutions, 	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sector for intercultural education -Organization of good practice/s -Local self-government, -Local business community, -Local and national media -Parents

<p>-Informing and briefing the media about the activities of educational institutions in the field of intercultural education</p> <p>-Development of schools websites,</p> <p>-Creating promotional materials (brochures, flyers, posters, etc.).</p>	
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