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## **CURRICULA FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN R. MACEDONIA AND R. TURKEY**

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### **Abstract**

Special education system is designed to enable education of students with special educational needs. The curricula for children with disabilities are complex need in every education system. In this paper, we analysed the primary curricula for five categories of disabilities; intellectual disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability and autism; between two countries; Republic of Turkey and Republic of Macedonia. Our aim was to represent the curricula in the special education systems and understand the differences between these two countries. Our main research question is: What are the differences in curricula for children with special educational needs in R. Macedonia and R. Turkey. In order to be able to provide answer to this question, we had to set five associate questions linked with the type of disability and country. The results showed that R. Macedonia has 7 compulsory subjects that we can find in all special schools, while others are either adapted according to category of disability or available with another title. In Turkey, 16 subjects are the same for all special schools. This qualitative research has theoretical, modern, comparative and descriptive character. We used the method of descriptive and comparative analysis and our technique was Analysis of documentation on data received from relevant institutions. The collected data was analyzed according to the research questions, giving the appropriate conclusions and suggestions.

**Key words:** *Curricula, Programs, Students with special educational needs, Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Turkey.*

## Introduction

Special education is governed by federal law in many educational jurisdictions. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – IDEA (2004) in the US, special education is defined as *"specially designed education, at no cost to parents in order to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities."*

The primary education of children with special educational needs is component of the educational part of rehabilitation and a place where the child spends a large period of its development. Primary education mostly depends on starting on time and the success on the clinical part of rehabilitation and pre-school education of children with special educational needs. Based on the findings and opinion of an appropriate professional institution, the child begins the process of education in primary school and in various models (Savic Lj. and Ivanovic P., 1994). Children with special educational needs require extra support with daily activities. The support needed by these children is different depending on the nature of the task, the child's level of disability and their environment. While some children don't need any help while performing a particular task, others might need little help, and still others constantly need support for certain activities (Rosenberg M.S., Westling D.L., Leskey J Mc, 2013).

Curricula in R. Macedonia are universal in all regular primary schools, while in special primary schools most of the same items are presented, but with modified program implemented according to the student's abilities, and special adaptations depending on the type of disability. Education plan for nine years primary education for children with special educational needs in special primary schools and special classes in primary schools, was adopted by a decision based on Article 55 paragraph 1 of the Law on Organization and Operation of the State Administration (Official newspaper of Republic of Macedonia nb.58/2000 and 44/2002) Article 24, 26 and 28 of the Law on primary education.

In **Republic of Turkey**, the curricula is determined at national level by the Turkish Board of Education (Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu - MEB). In primary schools the subjects can be categorized into two groups: compulsory and elective subjects.

## Methods

The subject of our research is the curricula provided for students with special educational needs in special schools in Macedonia and Turkey. The research problem is contextual, because we gathered information for description of existing curricula in special primary education system in both countries. The main goal was to present all curricula being implemented in special primary schools and to see the differences between these two countries. By its character, the research is **qualitative** and: **theoretical** - as to the knowledge we came by way of analysis; **modern** - because we analyzed the current curricula and programs in special schools; **comparative** - because we analyzed the curricula by examining the differences and similarities in the two countries, **descriptive** - because we sought to qualitatively describe the current state of implementation of the curricula and programs in the special primary-education system in both countries.

Our main research question was: What are the differences in curricula for children with special educational needs in Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Turkey. To provide an

answer to this question, we had to ask five sub-questions linked with the category of disability and the state:

1. Which curricula are implemented for children with intellectual disabilities in Macedonia and Turkey?
2. What curricula are applied for visually impaired children from Macedonia and Turkey?
3. What curricula are organized for hearing impaired children in Macedonia and Turkey?
4. What curricula are implemented for children with physical disabilities from Macedonia and Turkey?
5. What curricula are organized for children with autism in Macedonia and Turkey?

Research **methods** we used for the purposes of our research were the method of descriptive analysis and the method of comparative analysis.

As a **technique**, we applied analysis of documentation of data obtained from relevant institutions. For the purpose of this research we used the next sample of documents for content analysis: Official documentation, School documentation and Data obtained from scientific literature and online resources.

## Results

The education plan from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade for students with "mental disabilities" (**intellectual disability**) in special primary schools in **Macedonia**, are including the following required subjects: Macedonian language, For students with different nationalities, their native languages- albanian, turkish or serbian; Mathematics; English language; Art education; Music education; Introduction to the environment; Technical education; Basis of social sciences; Basis of natural sciences; Physical and Health education.

Besides the obligatory subjects, the curricula include two mandatory programs: Life Skills and working with computer. This curriculum applies in special classes of primary schools; the classes are lasting 40 minutes. All compulsory subjects and programs are grouped by classes according to the number of planned hours.

Also, the curriculum includes two optional programs, depending on the students interests: a school choir - from 2 to 5 classes per week (depending on the choirs development), respectively, from 72 to 180 classes per year and school orchestra - 2 to 4 classes per week (depending on the orchestra development), from 72 to 144 classes per year.

In the **Republic of Turkey**, again in the curricula provided for realization of education for students with **intellectual disabilities**, includes the following required subjects: Turkish language; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Introduction to the Sciences; Social Sciences; History of Turkish Revolution and the history of Kemal Ataturk; Foreign Language; Religion and Ethics; Art Education; Music Education; Games and physical activity; Skills for Social Adaptation; Physical education and sport; Technology and Design; Traffic Safety; Information technology and software; Directing and career planning; Human rights, citizenship and democracy.

Besides the required subjects, in the weekly program for working with children with mild intellectual disabilities several elective subjects are available, which is depending on the grade the children are visiting and according to their personal interests and parents choices, attending 2 to 6 times a week. Optional subjects from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade are not mandatory, but from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the student must choose items that will attend 6 classes a week. The list of elective subjects includes:



Table 1

Subjects		Elective subjects							
		grade							
		1st	2st	3st	4st	5th	6th	7th	8th
Religious and moral values	Reading the Koran					2	2	2	2
	The life of Prophet Muhammad					2	2	2	2
	Basic religious knowledge					2	2	2	2
Language nad expression	Reading skills		2*	2*	2*	2	2		
	Literacy skills and writing expressions					2	2	2	2
	Living languages and dialects					2	2	2	2
	Communication and presentation skills		2*	2*	2*			2	2
Foreign language	Langugaes accepted by the decision of the Council of Ministers					2	2	2	2
Science and Mathematics	Application of Science					2	2	2	2
	Application of Mathematics					2	2	2	2
	Science in Environment							2	2
	Information technology and software							2	2
Art and sport	Fine art (painting, traditional art, art with plastic etc.)		2*	2*	2*	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)
	Music		2*	2*	2*	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)
	Sport and physical activities		2*	2*	2*	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)
	Drama					2	2		
	Games for intelegence development					2	2	2	2
Social sciences	Culture of people						2	2	
	Media literacy							2	2
	Law and justice						2	2	
	Education about judgement							2	2
Skills for social adaptation			2*	2*	2*	2	2	2	2
Total hours for elective subjects						6	6	6	6
Слободни активности		4	2	2					
Total number of hours (including compulsory subjects)		30	30	30	30	35	35	35	35

The total number of classes is 26 to 30 per week, depending on which grade is the student. Classes are lasting 40 minutes.

The curriculum from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade for **visually impaired** students from **Macedonia** is including the following required subjects: Macedonian language; Mathematics; English language; Second Foreign Language; Art education; Music education; Introduction to the environment; Technical education; Informatics; Society; Geography; History; Civil education; Nature; Natural Science; Natural sciences and technology; Biology; Physics; Chemistry; Physical and Health Education

Besides the obligatory educational subjects, the curriculum also includes mandatory program for orientation and mobility. From elective subjects, according to the curriculum, children with visual impairments can choose between: Creativity, Introduction to Religions, Ethics and Other elective subjects.

Lessons are lasting 40 minutes. All compulsory subject and programs are grouped by classes according to the number of provided hours. The subjects from the elective programs, Introduction to Religion or Ethics, the student can choose in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, or can study in both grades. In Macedonia they make more efforts to individualize the education for visually impaired children, through development of medium-lasting individual education plans for each student.

The curriculum for all children with **visual impairments** in **Turkey**, includes two groups of subjects: compulsory and elective. Distributed according to the estimated number of

classes per week for a particular subject, the list of compulsory subjects is as follows: Turkish language; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Introduction to the Sciences; Social Sciences; History of Turkish Revolution and the history of Kemal Ataturk; Foreign Language; Religion and Ethics; Art Education; Music Education; Games and physical activity; Skills for Social Adaptation; Physical education and sport; Technology and Design; Traffic Safety; Information technology and software; Directing and career planning; Human rights, citizenship and democracy.

The total number of classes is 26 to 30 per week, depending on which grade is the child. Classes are lasting 40 minutes. In a weekly program for working with children with visual impairments, beside the compulsory subjects, there are few elective subjects that depend on which grade child learns, but also according to their personal interests and the choice of the parents, and they are held 2 to 6 times week. The optional subject from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade are not mandatory, but from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the student must choose subjects that will attend 6 classes per week: Religious and moral values, language and expression, foreign language, science and mathematics, art and sports, Social Sciences, Social adaptation skills.

According to the Bureau for Development of Education of the **Republic of Macedonia** in the curriculum for students with **hearing impairments** in special primary schools, the following required subjects are provided: Macedonian language; Mathematics; English language; Art education; Musical stimulations and rhythmic exercises; Introduction to the environment; Technical education; Informatics; Society; Geography; History; Civil education; Nature; Natural Science; Natural sciences and technology; Biology; Physics; Chemistry; Physical and Health Education.

Besides the obligatory subjects, the curriculum includes two mandatory programs: Communication and Working with computer, while from the elective subjects, the hearing impaired children can choose between: Creativity, Introduction to Religions, Ethics and Other elective subjects. Classes are lasting 40 minutes. All compulsory subjects and programs are grouped by grades according to the number of provided classes. From the election programs, subjects Introduction to religion or ethics, the student can choose in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, or can study in both grades.

The compulsory subjects in the curriculum for **hearing impaired** children in **Turkey**, covers: Turkish language; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Introduction to the Sciences; Social Sciences; History of Turkish Revolution and the history of Kemal Ataturk; Foreign Language; Religion and Ethics; Art Education; Music Education; Games and physical activity; Skills for Social Adaptation; Physical education and sport; Technology and Design; Traffic Safety; Information technology and software; Directing and career planning; Human rights, citizenship and democracy.

The weekly number of classes is 26 to 30 depending on the class in which the child learns. Classes are lasting 40 minutes.

Optional subjects from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade are not mandatory, but from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the student must choose subjects that will follow 6 classes a week. Elective subject from the curriculum does not differ from other special schools: Religious and moral values, Language and Expression, Foreign Language, Mathematics and Science, Arts and Sports, Social Sciences. Since the Bureau for Education Development of **Republic of Macedonia** hasn't announced special curriculum for students with **physical disabilities** in special institutions, it remains to assume that for these students they apply the same curriculum as government schools, which includes the following compulsory subjects: Macedonian language; Mathematics; English language; Second Foreign Language; Art education; Music education; Technical education;

Informatics; Society; Geography; History; Civil education; Nature; Natural Science; Natural sciences and technology; Biology; Physics; Chemistry; Physical and Health Education.

Besides the compulsory education subjects, the program provides the following elective subjects: Language and Culture of Vlachs, language and culture of Romans, Language and Culture of Bosnians, Creativity, Computing, Religions ethics, Introduction to religions, Classic Culture in European civilization and Other elective subjects.

The curriculum for all children with "**orthopedic disorders**" in Turkey includes two groups of subjects: compulsory and elective.

The total number of classes is 26 to 30 per week, depending on the grade or the child's age. Classes are lasting 40 minutes. Compulsory subjects include: Turkish language; Mathematics;

Natural Sciences; Introduction to the Sciences; Social Sciences; History of Turkish Revolution and the history of Kemal Ataturk; Foreign Language; Religion and Ethics; Art Education; Music Education; Games and physical activity; Skills for Social Adaptation; Physical education and sport; Technology and Design; Traffic Safety; Information technology and software; Directing and career planning; Human rights, citizenship and democracy.

The elective subjects are 2 to 6 times a week and again from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade they are not mandatory, and from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students are selecting subjects to follow 6 classes a week. Elective subjects of the program designed for children with physical disability are: Religious and moral values, Language and Expression, Foreign Language, Mathematics and Science, Arts and Sports, Social Sciences.

Interestingly, the Bureau of Education of the **Republic of Macedonia** has prepared a curriculum for children with **autism**, although there are not enough centers for autism in this country. According to the curriculum, the compulsory subjects for students with autism from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in special schools are: Macedonian language, For students with different nationalities, their native languages- albanian, turkish or serbian; Mathematics; English language; Art education; Music education; Introduction to the environment; Technical education; Basis of social sciences; Basis of natural sciences; Physical and Health education.

Total number for compulsory subjects is 19 to 24 classes per week, depending on the class where the children with autism are included. It also has provided two compulsory programs: Life Skills and Computing. This curriculum applies in special classes of primary schools and the lessons are lasting 40 minutes.

Centers for **Autism in Turkey** are having two available types of education; one type is an abbreviated program with classes 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and a second type divided into two phases (kademe). Centers for guiding and monitoring in coordination with the parents and according to the assessment of the possibilities and capabilities of the child are deciding what type of education is appropriate for the child.

*The first type:* According to the weekly curriculum for children with severe and moderate intellectual disabilities and for children with autism, the compulsory subjects are: Skills for Social Adaptation; Natural Sciences; Language and speech development; Reading and writing; Mathematics; Physical education; Art Education; Music education; Education on nutrition; Religion and Ethics; Traffic and first aid education; Leading / Social Activities.

A total of 26 to 30 classes per week is planned for children with autism. In the same curriculum lists all elective subjects provided for autistic children, we can notice that children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade there isn't any elective subject, while for students who attend classes from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there is 3 elective classes a week, and for each choice student decides whether all three classes will be from one subject or the student will attend 2 or 3 different subjects a week. The planned

elective subjects are: Arts and Sports (art, music, sports and physical activities, drama, performing arts, folk dances, photographing) Crafts (hand weaving techniques for hand knitting, handicrafts, embroidery, simple made jewelry, making patterns, ceramics), Agriculture and livestock (growing garden plants, ornamental plants, breeding pets), Technology and design.

*The second type* of education is intended for children who have a severe form of autism. This part of the teaching process is not conducted by grades, it's divided in two phases, each child can go to the next stage only after finishing the first stage. Curriculum covered in this type of education of students with autism includes the following areas: Achieving skills for Social Integration, Teaching life sciences, Language and speech development, Teaching Reading and Writing, Mathematics, Physical Education, Art Education, Music Education, Teaching education about food, Religion and ethics, Traffic and first aid.

## Discussion

In Macedonia there are seven compulsory subjects that can be found in all special schools: Macedonian Language, Mathematics, English, Art Education, Introduction to the Environment, Technical Education and Physical and Health Education. Others are either adapted according to category of disability and available under another name, or cannot be found in the program for working with children with intellectual disabilities and autism, and therefore do not match in the "subjects included in all categories." The program for visually impaired, hearing impaired and physical impaired children is mostly the same.

In Republic of Turkey 16 subjects are the same for all special schools: Turkish Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Introduction to the Sciences, Social Sciences, History of Turkish Revolution and the history of Kemal Ataturk, Foreign Language, Religion and Ethics, Art Education, Music Education, Social adaptation skills, Technology and design, Traffic Safety, Information technology and Software, Guidance and career planning, Human rights, citizenship and democracy. The other subjects of physical education for children with special educational needs are the same in all schools except in schools for visually impaired children where in addition to the basic name of the subject, the acquisition of skills for performing independent movements is added, as an activity appropriate for the specific needs of visually impaired children. For the elective subjects we noticed a big difference between these two countries. In Macedonia can often be seen several elective subjects in each curriculum, but most frequently used is the school choir and school orchestra, then: Our homeland, Environmental Education, Researching our homeland, Dances and folk dances, Projects of music or art, Technical education, Informatics Projects, Optional sports, Health promotion, Classical culture in European civilization, Living skills and Computing.

In Turkey, however, elective subjects include a number of activities from different areas that are not much different in the programs of schools divided by category of disability. So most common subjects are: Religious and moral values (reading of the Koran, the life of Prophet Muhammad, Basic religious knowledge) Language and expression (reading skills, literacy and skills for written expression, living languages and dialects, communication and presentation skills), Foreign language, Science and mathematics (application of science, the application of mathematics, the environment science, information technology and software), Arts and sports (art, music, sports and physical activities, drama, games for intelligence development), Social Sciences (culture of the people, media literacy, law and justice, education for reasoning) Skills for social adaptation.

Despite the fact that Turkey has a larger selection of subjects according to the wishes and abilities of students, compared to Republic of Macedonia, *we can also notice that the number of classes provided for elective subjects per week is less in Macedonia (2 to 5 classes per week), compared to Turkey (6 classes per week).*

### **Conclusion**

Analyzing the curricula in both countries, we came to conclusion that there are *subjects that can be found in both programs*, such as language, mathematics, foreign language, art, music education, physical education, social sciences, history, informatics and natural science ... but there are also items that cannot be found in both programs such as religion and ethics, skills for social adaptation, technology and design, guidance and career planning, etc.

In Macedonia there are seven compulsory subjects that can be found in all special schools, the others are either adapted to the type of disability or available under another name, so we can notice up to 13 different subjects from one special school to another. In Turkey, however, 16 subjects are the same in all schools, and 2-3 subjects differ only in name and activities adaptation.

*Differences were noted in the analysis of planned elective subjects*, where all subjects differ not only in content but also in number, in Turkey there are more opportunities for monitoring the teaching on subjects of personal interest for the child. The curriculums in centers for autism require special analysis, because the two types of programs for education in accordance with the capabilities of children with autism show that this category of disability requires a completely different system of education and treatment which undoubtedly cannot be realized in special schools with a program that includes realization of education through educational subjects, especially not for children with more severe autism.

### **Proposed measures**

By analyzing curricula, we believe that the educational system in Republic of Macedonia needs more freedom for students with special educational needs. Through a growing number of elective subjects will allow students with special educational needs, monitoring of the teaching process with a greater number of subjects that are of personal interest to them, which will fully express their creative abilities.

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