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Macedonian Education at the Crossroads between Tradition, Culture and Foreign Experiences

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The paper presents reflections on aspects of traditional and modern, as seen through the prism of Macedonian education and changes that occur in this area. For a long time Macedonian education is strongly influenced by various design processes "imported" from outside. On the one hand globalization and on the other traditions and own culture.

The views in this regard we can classify them into three groups. In one of those "ad hoc" accept all changes imposed by the West, and the United States. In the other group are those ideas that change the look of selective or skeptical and conservative set. They are devotees of traditional and considered the aspect that "our system" is good and we do not need much to change except in terms of the content of programs and the like. Third are more moderate in their beliefs and think that they should make a blend between traditional and modern that is to keep what is good from the old system and to upgrade to modern foreign experience. Last reform changes of this type were happened in 2014. with the introduction of Cambridge programs in mathematics and science in primary school.

Crucial issue is the following. Are all "Imported" reforms are welcome to Macedonian education? What are the negative consequences of such a implementation? – In this paper, we will try to answer essential questions.

Background

With the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Macedonian independence in 1991. Began the process of major changes in all spheres of social life. The totality of the changes affected the field of education, its content, duration, and the organization and realization of teaching by promoting new forms, methods and techniques in order to meet the needs of students in the spirit of modern times., New subjects were introduced as well. Many projects were implemented in educational institutions starting

from the preschool and the most dominant ones were implemented in primary schools. The most popular projects were *Step by step*, *Active teaching*, *active learning* etc. The project introduced an innovative spirit and a new approach to the previously mentioned projects and contributed to the greater creativity of students and teachers.

Three types of understanding the changes

The process of globalization has further raised the need for integration of processes in many areas of social life, and the leader of this process is certainly education. The changes that occur in this area have a single goal: integration with the world's educational systems. However, in this field, has major flaws. Namely, we can classify the views in this regard into three groups.

On the one hand are those who "ad hoc" accept all changes imposed by Western European countries and the US. That is the biggest weakness of this kind of acceptance of change, or the penetration of modern education. In the other group are those ideas that changes selectively perceive or skeptical and conservative-minded. They are supporters of traditional aspects and considered that "our system" is good and does not need much to change except in terms of contents in the programs and the like. Third are more moderate in their beliefs and think they need to make a connection between traditional and modern so as to keep what is good from old system and to upgrade it into the modern.

Project failures

As we previously mentioned, in the late 1990-ies, many projects entered in educational institutions. And it wasn't so bad, especially when teachers express positive attitudes towards projects. Starting in 1998, primary schools in R. Macedonia started the project "Education for civil society" for all levels of our upbringing and education system.

As part of this projects predicted programs: Foundations of Democracy and We the people - Citizen Project, which is implemented through the Ministry of Education, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia (now Bureau for Educational Development) and partner institution Catholic Relief Services - CRS, as an international non - government humanitarian organization working in Macedonia since 1992. Both programs (Foundations of Democracy and We - the people - Citizen Project) were taken from the Center for Civic Education Kalabasa - California.

Here, briefly, what was the program "Basics of Democracy". In preschool and grade of primary education within the framework of the "Basics of Democracy" are worked out four concepts: responsibility, justice, authority and privacy. These were modern concepts, which had the task to enable a person to facilitate institution in social life, or in civil

society. The aim was to raising children to live in a democratic society, and to build positions in terms of self-discipline, moral responsibility, empathy, participation in public affairs, decision making and conflict resolution, both in public and in private life. (Seminar materials for teachers, 2000, pg. 32). And it was welcome, because our former education system very poorly covered and elaborated these contents. Beside that, the contents of the project for the Foundations of Democracy I, II, III and IV grade processed in many modern methodical-didactic way of realization, using brainstorm, a method of playing roles, simulations, problem solving, interaction, discussion and all through the appropriate methodical workshops. Students were put into a situation of observing, describing, comparing, thinking and self-important decision-making. In secondary education, however, was realized the program "Citizens for Democracy.

For the purposes of the educational process in 1999-2000 there were translated the textbook Fundamentals of democracy and handbook for teachers. I translate literally, without adapting the texts of our environment, our tradition and culture. Therefore, we have received content type: "Balongrad", "Righteous bears, goldfish Carolina." To clarify, the concept of authority is processed through the American story Balongrad where participants or residents lived in Balongrad.

The purpose was to learn that the authority, which is power, or who has authority and who is power. The concept of justice is processed through the American story "just bears." Individuals were two teddy bears families. It used the terms "mum Mechevska", "Dad Mechevski" etc. The aim was to show how teddy bears just cannot decide, but also to teach what is distributive, corrective and procedural justice, to distinguish what is just from unjust, and that through the life of teddy bears.

The concept of privacy is processed through the American story "goldfish Carolina, where the main character through the fish-Carolina, students had to learn what is what is privacy, from whom the fish like to hide your privacy, and was particularly interesting part of the story in which the conversation is the fish with the worm, with children often recorded that the fish can eat the worm, which is quite true (Popova-Koskarova, 2011).

Only, the concept of responsibility is processed through a story that did not deviate much from our mentality, that can be said to correspond to our region, and that the text was dedicated to Martin and his responsibility as guardian of the zoo. All other texts were abstract content. It was texts of modern American environment, and not Macedonian. In many cases, acted abstract and illusions for our students, who often cannot be sufficiently understand the basic messages. Indeed, these texts were not close to our children and do not feel theirs, since there was sufficient connection between modern and traditional. It was the biggest disadvantage of the project in the beginning.

Two years later, in 2000 the Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia issued a textbook for the program basics of democracy by a Macedonian author. Seeing the weaknesses of American stories, created our articles on the

above concepts, and instead bears, fish, or balongradovi are represented real people, children, our streets, the neighborhood, from our families. They were closer to the students even more by the Macedonian stories are built and coexistence with the Albanian, Turkish and Roma ethnic community. Thus, whether the stories about family Petkovski where through the girl's Neda happenings and her brother, Jane, and their neighbors Eshref, Leila, Myra, Kole and Jana have taught students how to be fair, responsible, but at the same time how to protect and respect his and others' privacy and to know what it is that authority, and power. The goal was achieved, but now in a very understandable and closer way. (Vladova, 2000).

Reform absurdities

Starting from 2007, the Macedonian primary education lasts 9 years, rather than 8 as previously. Following the example of some European countries, it was decided to increase the level of primary education, reducing the age to start school. Instead of 7, now our children go to school on 6 years, and the youngest child can enroll in school has 5.8. months.

But, research shows that this age is inappropriate to start in school because many of the children show emotional immaturity and they are loaded with many classes since first grade. For example, of the total 143 respondents, (teachers) more than 78% answered that the age for starting school is inadequate, and only 22 responded positively. In the first period (from grade I to III) fund of lessons is from 20 to 22 hours a week. It`s too much for young children. English was introduced as a compulsory subject from grade I. (www.bro.gov.mk)

Starting from 2014/15 were introduced the so-called. adapted curricula in mathematics and natural sciences from Cambridge Examination Center. These curricula have nothing to do with the University of Cambridge. Those are the worst curricula have ever used in Macedonia education.

Spiral Curriculum - Students learn a certain subject, but later in the instruction back to the same topic again and taught at a higher level and in a different context. In this way, it allows students to consolidate and build knowledge which learned. Despite curricula translated textbooks are used in mathematics and science. Science introduced topics of chemistry, physics and biology, such as circuitry, or several types of rocks, etc., but completely neglected diaspora elements.

Large absurd is that textbooks Cambridge since first grade students are required to write, and according to the curriculum, they are still illiterate. Remarks refer to the translation of textbooks and workbooks, which is disastrous.

In Macedonian Culture is usually time after 12 to marks as 13, 14, 15, etc. up to 24 midnight. But, in Cambridge textbook, the content of mathematics 'measures', students are taught that after 12 time is marked

as 1 PM, 2 PM etc. or 14:15 is indicated as quarter past 2 They have learn about several types of rocks, but Macedonia is not a country rock. And many other such nonsense. For example, in the textbook Science of Cambridge, has a question for students in third grade. Which food create tartar? Dentists say that the cause of tartar is not food but not brushing your teeth. Also on the same topic it requires students to remember that tooth has many roots. The worst thing in this educational reform is full replication of some programs designed for other environments.

Educational reform had before. For example, back in 1958 with the passage of 7-year and 8-year elementary education, then changes in the curricula... But all those changes and reforms have been previously analyzed and many involving public view. For instance, reform in 1958 was preparing for 2 years and with full respect for expert opinion. Unlike earlier, Cambridge programs were not consulted experts nor teachers. They were introduced by Ministry of Education through the Education Bureau, which is a body of the Ministry of drafting curricula. Unfortunately, from the next school year Cambridge continues in secondary education, math, chemistry, biology.

Teachers are very unsatisfied with the application of Cambridge programs and textbooks. One survey that I personally did shows disappointing results from Cambridge program. The survey showed that out of 137 respondents (teachers) (83.94%) said that the contents of the Cambridge program is hardly conceivable and inappropriate to the age of the students. The remaining, smaller proportion of respondents (16.06%) think that the material presented by the new approach is interesting. DC conducted chi-square test was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 63,131$, $df = 1$, $p < 0,01$).

Conclusion

Changes in the educational process are inevitable But, as the most important note is necessary that curricula not undertaken directly from any developed European country or the United States, but adapted to our culture, tradition and environment.

Also, it is necessary to consistently comply with the respective culture and tradition and make a substantial connection between tradition and modern. The traditional may not be completely neglected because of a wave called "modernization", or modern should be avoided due to the tradition blind consistency. Always take essential connections that will bring greater prosperity and gets results. So, education reform should be carefully planned, in order to be a function of better quality education process. Otherwise, it will have no effect, but it will reduce the quality of education as it now is. The effect of Cambridge programs and textbooks today is: disgruntled teachers and parents and students confused.

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