

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERETHNIC INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN PS “SANDE SHTERJOSKI” KICEVO

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Conference Paper

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Abstract

In 2011, USAID in Macedonia began the implementation of the project for interethnic integration in education, PIIE. In a period of five years, the project develops a wide public sense on the benefits emerging from the integration education system in Macedonia for all citizens. PIIE aim is also to create a necessary political, social and economic environment in order for Macedonia to achieve a sustainable interethnic integration in schools and other educational institutions and finally the whole society. The main goal is improvement of interethnic communication and overcoming ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic differences.

PS “Sande Shterjoski” – Kicevo was chosen as a model school by PIIE based on school specifics. A team for interethnic integration in education was formed in the school and it was responsible for the planning, coordinating and evaluation of the joint activities with Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish and Roma pupils and teachers of the school. This paper is focused on curricular and extracurricular activities implemented in the frames of PIIE and offer data from the conducted research with pupils, teachers and parents of different ethnicities involved in the project activities. The paper also provides information related to institutionalization or maintenance of achieved positive aspects of PIIE activities.

Keywords: interethnic integration, joint activities, sections, institutionalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

From December 2011 to December 2015, USAID in Macedonia implemented the project for interethnic integration in education. With a budget of \$ 5,200,000, the project included all primary and secondary schools, including students, teachers, directors, members of school councils, parents and local communities. The main purpose of the project was to raise the awareness and provide training on diversity, technical assistance, incentives for school councils, directors, teachers and administrative officers to support interethnic integration in education. (<http://sq.pmio.mk/archive/usaidd-projekti-per-integrim-nderetnik-ne-arsim-pina/>, received on 20.09.2017)

The project contained four components:

1. Awareness campaign - The purpose of this component was to raise the awareness of the importance of interethnic integration and why it is crucial to Macedonia's future stability and its entry into the European Union. It builds public opinion on interethnic integration in education and its basic purpose to provide quality education to all children in Macedonia.

2. Capacity Building for School Managers and Teachers: - The purpose of this component was to provide teachers, school managers and school boards with the necessary skills to work in multiethnic environments, how to help prevent line divisions ethnic backgrounds in their schools and the creation of conditions for promotion of interethnic integration.

3. Model schools: - The purpose of this component was to provide holistic approaches and intensive interventions in selected schools. Model schools will provide examples of good practice and lessons learned and will contribute to a more substantial understanding of diverse approaches to interethnic integration.

4. Providing incentives for schools and communities: - The purpose of this component was to provide schools with opportunities for renovation as an incentive to be part of the interethnic activities. Assist these communities by improving their school infrastructure and teaching environment, including ensuring that these schools are also suitable for people with disabilities. This component was funded by the US Department of Defense / EUCOM (\$ 1.2 million from the overall budget of the project). (<http://sq.pmio.mk/archive/usaidd-projekti-per-integrim-nderetnik-ne-arsim-pina/>, received on 20.09.2017)

2. The empirical part of the paper

In the third component of the model schools, one of the four elementary schools at the state level was also the Primary school "Sande Shterjoski" - Kërçovë, a school with three classes of instruction: Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish, with about 1500 students and 120 teachers. Within the activities carried out at school were the following activities:

1. Activities for democratic participation of students - the purpose of which was to involve students in democratic decision-making procedures at school.
2. Multicultural workshops - which are conducted with separated students by age groups, ethnically and gender groups, balanced and implemented once a week according to certain schedules.
3. Different sections - research and journalism section, sport section, visits and excursions, events and parties.
4. Teachers' cooperation - these activities are aimed at professional assistance and the accompaniment of the teachers of all three language courses. Activities are carried out by organizing joint activities with the guidance of two responsible teachers from each language of instruction, and as products from these joint professional assets are joint thematic and annual planning of teachers, compilation and exchange of teaching materials, such as learning tests, various didactic materials and so on.
5. Collaboration with parents - these activities aimed at greater involvement of parents in school activities for interethnic integration in education, establishing sustainable parental cooperation for achieving the student's last effect - reducing prejudices and stereotypes. (Gulevska V. with coauthor, 2015, pp.123-137)

In order to successfully complete all of these activities, the school established a team for interethnic integration in education, a team that in cooperation with the school management jointly identified and defined the school priorities in drafting the action plan for realization of activities for interethnic integration in education at school level. This team together overcame all the challenges and barriers that came up during the four-year period as project activities were carried out and co-ordinated and evaluated these activities. (Gulevska V. with coauthor, 2015, p.144)

It is worth pointing out that in order to carry out the activities for interethnic integration in education, the school had as a criterion the success of organizing the joint realization of the activities based on the assumptions that derive from the hypothesis of Olport, according to which the following should be considered:

- Balanced participation on ethnic and gender basis;
- Leadership of the section by two teachers, from one of each language of instruction, parents can participate as well;
- Equal use of language, everyone has the right to speak in his or her language;
- Regular meetings are held 1-1.5 hours, once a week - at least during a semester; theme / activity is jointly chosen by students of all ethnic / linguistic communities represented in the school;
- Working in small groups ("mixed");
- Working in the atmosphere of cooperation (competition is possible only between "mixed" groups). (Gulevska V. with coauthor, 2015, p.133)

In order to have a clear picture of the success of the activities for interethnic integration in education, in this model school, we conducted a survey, which surveyed 140 students of the eighth and ninth grades, 120 teachers and 40 parents, while the data were quantitatively processed in the EXCEL program. The teacher questionnaire consists of a total of 54 questions, a questionnaire per student of 53 questions, and a questionnaire for parents of 53 questions. Answers to the questions given in the form of the Likert scale of 1-4, where 1 implies is not so, 2-is a little so, 3-is too much and 4-is entirely so, are given on both sides the left side defines the current state, while on the right side the desired state.

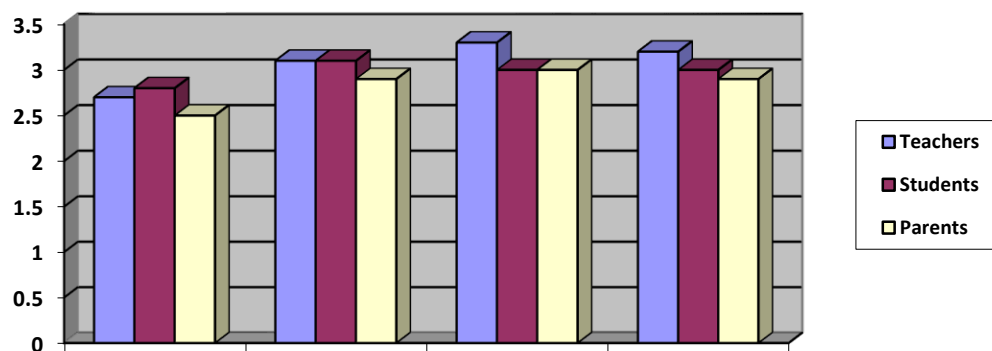


Figure 1. Current situation regarding the realization of activities for interethnic integration in education

In the first column, with the analysis of questions 1-17, the attitudes of teachers, students and parents regarding the current situation and joint activities of students in the school are presented in the second column by analyzing questions from 18-31 are presented attitudes of participating subjects regarding the joint activities of teachers, in the third column with analysis of questions from 32 to 44 are presented attitudes regarding the atmosphere in the school and its iconography, while in the fourth column with an analysis of questions from 45 to 54 shows the attitudes of teachers, students and parents about school co-operation with parents, municipality and other schools. From what we can observe, we can conclude that the attitudes of the three subjects participating in the research do not have any major difference. The educators highly value the atmosphere at school and its iconography, while they value in a lower scale the common student activities in the school. The students highly evaluate the joint activities of the teachers, while valuing in a lower scale their common school activities, which is consistent with the attitudes of the teachers and the parents, which also evaluate in a lower scale the joint activities of students in the school, while they highly evaluate common activities of teachers in the school.

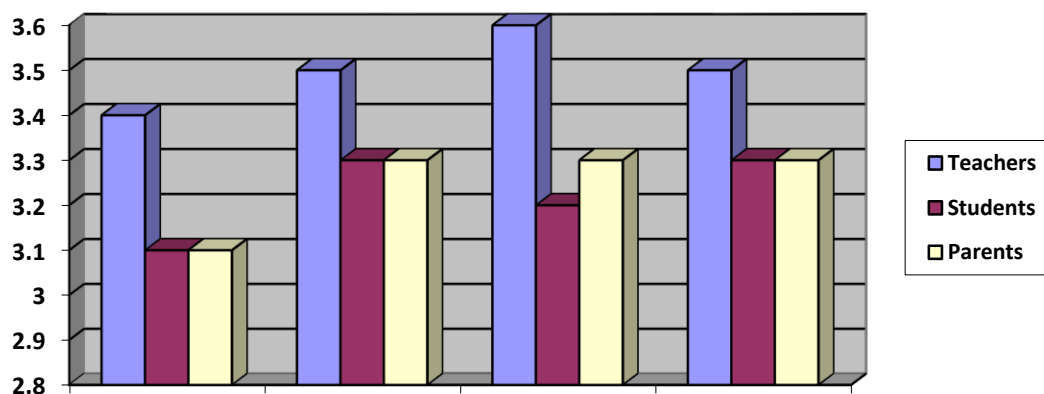


Figure 2. The desired situation regarding the realization of activities for interethnic integration in education

Regarding the desired situation, the attitudes of students and parents, as well as teachers, are lower in the joint activities of students in the school, which means that there are still stereotypes and prejudices regarding the readiness for joint realization of these activities. In this respect, are carried out more extracurricular activities, compared to those for which the main barrier is the lack of knowledge of the language by the students. As in the current situation, the teachers above appreciate the atmosphere and iconography in the school, which suggests that there are preconditions in school, because there is a positive climate for realization of activities for interethnic integration in education. Students in terms of the above-mentioned situation evaluate the joint activities of teachers as well as school co-operation with parents, other municipalities and other schools, which argue that school priorities in the future should be oriented in these directions as well. Parents' attitudes are almost identical to those of students, as well as teachers' joint activities and co-operation with parents, municipalities and other schools, as well as the atmosphere and iconography of the schools.

As far as teachers are concerned in the field of joint student activities, they above all appreciate the democratic participation of students within the classroom during the election of the class leadership, as well as the participation of the students in the manifestations on the occasion of joint parties with the organization of the joint program, while lower evaluate the common manifestation of the half prom night at the same place and time by the students of the different languages of instruction, as well as the realization of the common classes within the regular lesson. In the field of joint activities among the teachers, the education teachers highly evaluate their attendance at joint meetings within teachers' council, while evaluate in lower scale the participation in national or religious holidays. In the field of school atmosphere and iconography, the teachers highly evaluate the work of the school principal who cares for and protects the interests of all teachers and students regardless of their ethnic background, as well as equal conditions for learning while school students evaluate in a lower scale the fact that there are ethnic conflicts in schools and that the school does not encourage students to undertake various activities that allow them to freely express their opinion of things that concern them, petitions, initiatives, proposals, etc. without being humiliated or punished for it. Regarding the field of school co-operation with parents, municipality and other schools, teachers estimate highly the fact that the school has a joint parent council composed of parents of all language learners dealing with issues of student interest, regardless of their ethnic or language background, while lower estimates the participation of parents of different ethnic communities in joint activities of students in the school, for example through work on projects / sections, the realization of shares, in the preparation and realization of performances / feasts or other events.

In the field of joint student activities, the students above consider that they are involved in sections, workshops or other regular activities that enable them to become familiar with the similarities and differences between their culture and tradition and the culture and tradition of students of other ethnic backgrounds in school, as well as democratic participation in the choice of the class community, while lower evaluate that they attend classes in several regular classes on common classes. In the field of joint teacher activities, the students above consider that teachers of a language of instruction do not speak and do not allow students to speak negatively to learners and teachers of the other language, as well as teachers of all language teaching behave the same way as all students in the school and are equally alike to all, regardless of the language of instruction and ethnicity of the students, while lower estimate that the teachers carry out activities in mixed ethnic / language teams with mixed ethnic / linguistic groups in order to encourage students for real cooperation. In the field of school atmosphere and iconography, the students above consider that the school director in his decisions takes into account the interests of all teachers and students, regardless of their ethnicity and language of instruction, and the physical conditions for learning, classrooms, teaching aids are the same for all children, regardless of the language of instruction, while lower estimates that there are no threats, provocations, insults, or graphs written with negative content to members of different ethnic groups implies that they are still present. In the field of school co-operation with parents, municipality and other schools, the students above consider that the school actively cooperates with the municipality in joint projects / activities involving teachers and students from all the languages of instruction, while lower evaluate that the parents the various ethnic communities represented in the school participate in the activities of the students, through project / section work, the realization of the actions, the preparation and realization of performances / festivals or other events.

As far as parents are concerned, in the area of joint student activities, they above all consider that sections, projects and actions are organized in the school, which are shared by students learning in different languages of instruction, while they have lower estimates (disapprove) for the fact that language learner's different classes celebrate together the night of the half prom, in the same place and time. In the field of joint activities among teachers, parents above value what teachers of a language do not allow their students to speak negative things for students and teachers of another language and react when this happens, and that teachers of all the languages of instruction participate jointly in problem solving in schools, no matter what ethnic community is dealing with the problem, while disapproving what the teachers carry out activities in mixed ethnic / language teams with mixed ethnic / linguistic groups in order to encourage students to cooperate effectively, as well as to the fact that teachers use different means of learning to promote student participation in school life and community in a way that encourages learners to think independently and make conclusions and take action to make changes in their lives in school and in the community. In the field of school atmosphere and iconography, parents above evaluate what the school director in his decisions takes into account the interests of all teachers and students, regardless of their ethnicity and language of instruction, as well as physical conditions for the realization of lessons are the same for all children, regardless of the language of instruction, while lower estimate the fact that at school there are threats, provocations, offenses or graphs written with negative content to members of different ethnic groups, and there are still physical conflicts in ethnic base. In the field of co-operation with parents, municipality and other schools, parents above evaluate that the school encourages and supports students in activities that help the community and

students actively participate in them, as well as information given in time about the issues that are of their interest, while lower estimated is the fact that parents of different ethnic communities represented in the school participate jointly in student activities, through work on projects / sections, on the realization of shares, in the preparation and realization of performances / holidays or other events.

3. Recommendations

Taking into account the results of the research, the data obtained from the analysis of survey questionnaires conducted with teachers, pupils and parents of the Sande Shterjoski, Kërçovë gives the following recommendations:

1. To continue the activities for interethnic integration in education, taking into account the fact that USAID in Macedonia has begun the implementation of the new four-year project called Interethnic Integration of Youth in Education, which will enable the maintenance of the activities so far.
2. The school intends to improve the joint activities with the students, as well as the inclusion of all students in these activities, and to prepare strategies for motivating the teachers of the activities, as well as students participating in the activities.
3. To support activities for democratic decision-making and students' participation in them, to give students ideas and make decisions for the realization of joint activities.
4. Develop a greater co-operation strategy with parents, which will be at the level of partnership and will not be imposed by the school, but parents' initiatives will also be freely expressed, whereby it would lead the role of the activity.
5. To stimulate mediation among peers in resolving conflicts of ethnic character in school, and to prepare a school strategy for preventing violence in school.

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