

Public and cultural activity and multicultural education

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Abstract

Existing different ethnical and multicultural community is the actual condition in every country from Balkan, even and Macedonia, the country with heterogeneous constitution.

In this text we are trying to present the school as educational institution through public and cultural school activity that contributes and promotes the conditions for developing multiculturalism, especially in relation with Roman culture, as one of the ethnical groups in Macedonia.

First we are trying to give theoretical frame where we presents real and objective picture of meaning of multicultural and multiethnic education, for multiethnic clime in our school, through relation between Macedonian and Romany (Gipsy) population in educational system, and find out how that affect on forming of preconditions for promotion of multicultural education through public and cultural activities in the school.

Also we present and results from research that shows how the school as educational institution provides and forms conditions for maintaining the Roma's cultural values and multicultural development, and to see how much school can contribute and create condition in which students can meet each other.

Today when Republic of Macedonia promotes positive aspect of multicultural and multiethnic living, when our country prepares to be part of Europe union, we must pay attention of status of roman population.

Although our country had made positive steps for improving the roman status, however we can notice that they are yet on the bottom of the poverty, they are illiterate, frequently out of educational system. Facts speak that roman poverty is very high compared to the other groups as accumulation of factors which banter in history, tradition and their permanent social exclusion.

Government following the policy drawn by the institutions of the European Union passed a National Strategy for Roma, which present an expression of the strong determination to reduce the gap between Roma and the majority population and promote a truly multicultural society.

Although Macedonia is trying to build standards for the protection of ethnic communities who live in it, however when it comes specifically Roma is evident lack of consistent government policy and coordination of efforts and resources. However in past period exist and were realized projects related to this population, but those efforts were partial and were not able to solve problems on a wider scope. At the moment when our country promotes quality of multicultural society and steps towards European integration, it is important to show the will and commitment to defining and implementing the strategic priorities that address the needs of Roma.

Teaching Roma's population effect on improving condition in every area of live, health, protecting human right. Because of insufficiency work qualification exists higher grade of unemployment on roman population.

All these factors are somehow reflected in their education, or their lack of motivation to continue their education and high dropout rate of students of Roma population from the regular school system. Therefore, on these students we should pay particular attention, especially the part of their involvement in public and cultural activities in school.

On the other side is the problem of how the school as an educational institution provides and creates opportunities for students of Roma nationality to introduce and promote their culture and tradition, as the school creates conditions for development of multiculturalism in terms of a multi-ethnic society as ours.

Multicultural and multiethnic education

Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process (Banks, 1997). As an idea, multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within a society and within the nation's classrooms. Multicultural education is a process because its goals are ideals that teachers and administrators should constantly strive to achieve.¹

Sonia Nieto (1996) defines multicultural education as antiracist basic education for all students that permeates all areas of schooling, characterized by a commitment to social justice and critical approaches to learning. Furthermore, multicultural education challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society. It accepts and affirms differences in race, ethnicity, religion, language, economics, sexual orientation, gender, and other differences that students, communities, and teachers encompass. It should permeate the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as interactions among teachers, students, and families in school and outside of it.²

¹ Banks A. J. (1981) *Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Inc.

² *Multicultural Education Connecting Theory to Practice*, Retrieved from:
<http://www.ncsall.net/?id=208>

Multicultural education seeks to actualize the idea of *e pluribus unum*, i.e. to create a society that recognizes and respects the cultures of its diverse peoples united within a framework of democratic values that are shared by all.³

Multicultural education is necessary in multicultural society, especially in society which must reconstruct their own educational institution, so every pupil in educational process no matter that it belongs to majority or minority of the population or to different ethnical community, will achieve knowledge, skills, habits and attitude which is necessary for efficient function in cultural and ethnic different environment. This education is not only for some ethnical groups, but this education should help every participant, independent of it is national belonging, to be informed for own country, to take care of them and to become active citizen in own ethnical environment.

Existence negative feelings and stereotypes are results of decreasing communication which easy can be abused for treating and including judgmental and negative attitude against members of another ethnic group. Experience shows that we easily can communicate with someone that we know, than with someone that we don't know. One another knowing are a key factor for appeasement negative feelings against members from another ethnic group, and for excluding ethnic stereotypes. Therefore in school, through teaching and outdoors activities (extra-curriculum activities) should imported multicultural contents which will help in excelling unknowing as precondition for caring and existing ethnical conflicts.

Multicultural education helps to exceed unknown as precondition for existing and nursing ethnic conflicts. Knowing ethno-cultural and historical heritage on members from ethnical groups helps, not only to know characterize different country, but also to see and point of contact in cultural tradition. In that way can be satisfied and need for identity and security, needs for concert, not only in frame in ethnical group as smaller group in which it's belonging, but also in the global country as wider group of belonging.⁴

An important goal of multicultural education is to help students to acquire the knowledge and commitments needed to make reflective decisions to take personal, social, and civic action to promote democracy and democratic living. Opportunities for action help students to develop a sense of personal and civic efficiency, faith in their ability to make changes in the institutions in which they live, and situations to apply the knowledge they have learned (Banks, with Clegg, 1990).⁵

It's necessary all children to have knowledge for another culture, which will help for better knowledge to each other from different perspective. Teacher in multiethnic society must oppose to judgmental thinking and stereotypes that children accept from media, older people and society. Focusing only on ethnical holidays and heroes on minority group, students won't accumulate interdisciplinary

³ Multicultural Education: Goals and Dimensions, Retrieved from:
<http://depts.washington.edu/centerme/view.htm>

⁴ Петровска-Бешка, В (1995) Социолошка ревија, год.1, бр.1, Скопје

⁵ Multicultural Education: Goals and Dimensions, Retrieved from:
<http://depts.washington.edu/centerme/view.htm>

knowledge for separated ethnical group. Multiethnic curriculum should spread war away from classroom curriculum, including ethnical difference in school staff, attitude, learning material and strategy.

The matter of living together is complex problem which every multicultural and multiethnic society by placing a man as individual in the center of attention with basic human right and freedom, equity and social inclusive as principle for pre-eliminates frame for every discussion and decision, frame which is independent from cultural, race and religions people background.

Ethical community in Republic of Macedonia

In Republic of Macedonia exists different ethnical community which shows emphasize interest for carrying and preserving own cultural and historical heritage. But we are considered about that that primary mark in studying and affirming ethnical, cultural, historical heritage is avoiding or opposing to that what is „someone else, but not mine” or it belong „ours”, but not to „yours”. Everything what is produced in Macedonia through centuries by different culture and civilization it should not be denied, but caring, studding and felling as cultural property to all people.

Republic of Macedonia is multi-ethnic country. In Macedonia live many national groups, like: Macedonian, Albanian, Romans, Turkeyes, Serbs and Vlahos. All citizens in Macedonia are equal in front of law. Constitution and law in Macedonia offer care of all ethnical, cultural, language and religious entity from all minority groups.

Ethnic group possesses own autonomy cultural characteristic. Through the culture development conditions are created for exceed antagonism between ethnical community. Because of that it is necessary to know cultural characteristic which will enable their understanding and respecting.

Roma as ethnical group in Macedonia

Romans are one of ethnical group which exist in Macedonian society. Roman community shows interest for process of building National strategy for Roman integration in Republic of Macedonia.

Our country shows insignificantly efforts in creating condition for introduction widest publicity with culture, history and tradition of roman population, and when that is done it is always in wrong way, showing dark side of culture and life of roman population, and because of that is form space for negative stereotypes and appears as judgmental to the population.

Many times in past culture of roman population shows as powerful and successful represent of culture and way of living on roman population in this region. Roman culture can be considered as instrument for affirmation Roman

identity, and instrument for promotion interethnic communication and roman integration in society.

In institutional meaning exists cultural organization (folklore groups, music groups, theatres etc.) which permanently care about Roman culture. Especially we can mention musicians of Roman community which have high reputation in global proportion.

We can mention that roman culture not always is represent realistically, in the right way, but with connotation of intensive judgmental perception. Culture should be considered as factor for further emancipation of Roman group and it must be in harmony with the effort made by the educational system. Through culture Roman group can participate and be integrated in the Macedonian society.

Roman population don't participate in institution of public administration. Although completing primary school is obligation by Law, in reality that is not respected. It's taken that only 20% of roman child complete primary school continued own education in secondary school.

There are many reasons for lower stage of roman education:

- Very bad socio-economic condition in roman families;
- Big percent of children who didn't enroll in preschool education;
- Bad domestic conditions;
- No regular citizenship for many roman children;
- Many of them don't understand Macedonian language, and can't follow lecturing in schools;
- Many of them abandon elementary school, especially in fifth grade;
- Lower educational level on roman parents;
- Textbook and another school material are too expensive for roman families;
- As result of tradition, female child isn't stimulated to continue education;

Roma parents, as any another parents care about education of own children. Because they usually are discriminated by teachers and from other children, they think that they are not treated equally as other children in educational process. They don't visit parents meetings, because they don't feel welcome. Because poverty, they don't purchase educational material for their own children. They don't read daily newspaper, because many of them are illiterate. Children are not prepared for school, many of them didn't visit preschool institution, and many of them didn't used tools and books in school.

Results from research

Public and cultural school activity is special activity with task to presents results from work in front of community, and through that to disseminate influence to environment and to realize cooperation with parents, educational institution, and another factors connected to children education.

Knowing importance of culture and tradition for society developing, including Macedonia as country with different ethnic group and their culture, we decide to explore if school as educational institution through public and cultural school activity provides and creates conditions for caring Roman cultural value and developing multiculturalism, and if school provides and creates conditions for one another knowledge.

We noticed fact that, although Roman has guarantee right for education and equal treatment in educational system, they are discriminated in opportunity to care and provide own culture and tradition and strengthen their cultural identity about their participation in public and cultural activity.

Primary goal of this exploration is to discover how through public and cultural school activity in multiethnic and multicultural school is possible to implement multiculturalism, especially to Roman culture and tradition.

Public and cultural school activity usually is realized through section that existed in school. We analyses annual school program and discover that contents of public and cultural school activity do not make a chance to develop multiculturalism, because all holydays and culture manifestation in school are performed on the occasion of history of Macedonian people or holidays accepted in global frame (New year's, 8 March, Child weed, week of the book etc.)

From the work and activity in all school section we can conclude that none of this content don't give opportunity to know culture tradition, habits of another ethnic group because they are oriented in treating global human value. Also, teacher interview shows that the same teacher do not make efforts for promoting multicultural content, they do not suggest themes and contents which will help children from different ethnic group to know each other better.

Because of that we can conclude that activity realized through public and cultural school activity do not give chance for promoting and caring Romans culture and tradition, and that we confirm with question from teacher interview when they in big percent answered that culture activity in their school do not give a chance for knowing Romans culture and tradition.

Research shows that this activity does not include multicultural content, nor gives chance for knowing Romans habits, their holidays and customs, folklore, songs, dance, way of live through some theatre show etc. And for one multicultural and multiethnic society as ours in time when we prepare to be part of Europe, this question must be carefully considered.

If in content, realized through this activity we import more multicultural content, like learning the way on how Roma's celebrate their own holydays, bringing own traditional costume in school, presenting Roma's dance and songs, and in that way this pupils will come closer to the other pupils in school, and in the same time school will show that care for this students, for their culture and tradition, will be nearer to Roma's families, parents will find out meaning the education for own children, they will participate in educational system, seldom will visit school, collaborate whit teachers and pedagogical service in school.

Contrary of receiving results from research, that children participation in this activity didn't depend from their school success, but from pupils wish and affinity, teacher emphasis that in this section usually participate pupils with better school success, and from school documentation we can see that Roma's pupils are not part of this group due to the lower success in school. Children that achieve better school success, are motivated and stimulated from teachers to care and develop own affinity through this activity. Although they, declarative point out that they motivated this children to participate in this activity, practice don't function in that way.

Teachers have special relationship to this child. They have hidden negative attitude against Roma's pupils, because this pupils frequently don't visit school, straggle in educational material behind regular pupils, they are naughty on class, because of absence of the class they can follow current teaching in the class, teacher must additionally explain, many of them don't speak fluently Macedonian, and from that reason and teacher don't make efforts to include this pupils in public and cultural school activity, and frequently they sit in back bench.

Regarding assessment attitude Macedonian pupils against Roma pupils we conclude that this pupils don't know enough Roma's culture and tradition (56.94%), despite Roma's population which says that 62.31% of them know Macedonian customs and tradition, which indicate that through this activity frequently is learned about culture and historical past of Macedonian people. Confirmation is the fact that teachers answered that Macedonian pupils don't know cultural customs and tradition of Roma's population (60.71%).

Regarding the desire to assemble with pupils from other ethnical group, Macedonian pupils answered that they don't want to associate with pupils from another ethnical group, diverse to them, Roma's pupils answered that they want to assemble with pupils from another ethnical group.

So we can conclude that insufficiency of multicultural content in public and cultural school activity leads to unknowing the pupils from both ethnic groups, and there is no condition to change that.

For that purpose it's necessary to make changes in school plane and program. Essential theme, like history, geography, society, literature should include lection from ethnical diversity. (Example, in History to implement content for Roma's culture and tradition)

Actually, course, direction of our history can't be presented in the right way without inclusive treatment of ethnical diversity. Similar to that is the government course to include contents related to citizen's responsibility, minority right and freedom and legally affects the application on this value in specific situation.

We must give special attention on textbooks and curriculum dimension. Socialization and involvement must be implemented in teaching content and textbook. In this context education for human right must have started since preschool education, through primary to secondary and high education.

If primary goal of multicultural education is transformation, that will happen when children will receive chance to participate in impartial education, when they are informed for existing injustice, inequity, and when they can participate in changing own society. It's unreal to expect from teacher directly to reject dominant directed curriculum through that focused on deciding and social actions.

Effectively implementing multicultural education can take time, energy and large content of work, but through that pupils will see themselves in curriculum, their voice will be heard and evaluate in classroom. Pupils will feel as they are part of educational process, they will learn and achieve high expectation, and they will start to believe that they belong there.

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