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THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA – IS (WAS) THERE BILINGUALISM IN IT? - A REVIEW Biljana IVANOVSKA (*) University "Goce Delčev", Skopje [R. MACEDONIA]

Abstract

My goal in the discussion below is to review the new ways of seeing the education system in the Republic of Macedonia in the twenty-first century global and European cultural diversity. First, I will briefly outline the history regarding the educational and cultural state in the Republic of Macedonia. Second, I will show that we have to admit that our cosmopolitan and global society needs a unifying discipline leading us to mutual understanding and inevitable dialogue. Therefore, we need the new way of seeing and understanding the world, which helps us to eradicate antipathy or racism, because Europe is moving towards multicultural society, which we do not understand properly yet. Hence, the dialogue arising from multiculturalism and its discourse is a chance to find the way out of our post-modern cultural labyrinth. Key words: education; minority; bilingualism; cultural diversity; Macedonian/Albanian language (*) PhD, Faculty of Philology, UGD, E-mail: biljanaivanovska2000@yahoo.com 47

1. Brief overview of bilingual education research
Like the study of bilingualism itself, bilingual education is an
interdisciplinary field drawing upon a wide range of theory and
research across different academic fields such as linguistics,
sociolinguistics, second - language acquisition, psychology,
anthropology, and education. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to
review this research fully. Much of it is covered in handbooks on
second - language acquisition (Bhatia and Ritchie 2009; Doughty
and Long 2005), applied linguistics (Davies

Briefly, however, research from these fields helps educators make informed decisions about important issues such as identifying students in need of bilingual education, placing students in the most appropriate program model, deciding which program models best serve a given student population, determining how long students should be in the programs, and assessing student progress in language and academic development.

This research also helps to inform classroom teachers in bilingual education as they make principled decisions in planning and delivering effective language and content - area lessons, in structuring the use of the two languages in the classrooms, in helping students adjust culturally and linguistically, in identifying their students' strengths and challenges, and in advocating for their 48

(The original text is missing here).1991.

3. The current situation

The Macedonian education system at present consists of preschool education, primary, secondary and higher education. The higher levels of education can be obtained at one of the five state universities in the Republic of Macedonia: "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University of Skopje, "St. Clement of Ohrid" University of Bitola, "Goce Delčev" University of Štip, State University of Tetovo and University for Information Science and Technology "St. Paul The Apostle" in Ohrid. There are a number of private university institutions, such as the European University in Skopje, Slavic

University in Sveti Nikole, the South East European University in Tetovo and many others.

Tetovo is considered the unofficial capital of the Albanian minority and the State University of Tetovo is located in the western city of that name. The university is funded by student tuition, contributions of ethnic Albanians in their diaspora, and a "voluntary tax" from national Albanians. At the beginning, the university administration demanded legal recognition of the university as a public institution, which normally met resistance from the Macedonian university scene. The university claims to enroll more than 8 000 students who are almost all Albanian, but who include a smattering of Turks and Roma. Some 360 teaching faculty, mostly Albanians, are listed on their rolls. However, it is stated by some authorities that many of the faculty have left Tetovo for Pristina, since the international community auspices will see to it that the university there is reopened. Others state that not more than 1000-2000 students are actually attending Tetovo at the present time (Van Fleet et. al. 2000).

Another Albanian University located also in Tetovo is the

private University - SEEU (South East European University, where official teaching languages are Macedonian, English, and Albanian). Although the van der Stoel proposal is designed to satisfy at least the most immediate needs of the ethnic Albanian community for university education in Albanian, it will add a new dimension to the debate over Tetovo University. The proposed new private institute will directly compete with Tetovo for Albanian students and for 53

position within the ethnic Albanian community. Although it is not likely that Tetovo University will simply disappear (at least in the short run), the debate about the status and faith of the university will likely become a predominantly intra-Albanian one. (Van Fleet et.al. 2000). In the capital of Macedonia - Skopje, at the Faculty of Philology, state University St. "Cyrill and Methodius", successfully exists a Department for Albanian language and literature and educates teachers and high school professors for Albanian language and literature for primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions and centers.

The two Universities in Tetovo (The State University and the SEEU) support the fact that the access mechanisms to higher education available to ethnic Albanians and other minorities are more than fair, and that actual practices on admissions provide substantial advantages to them.

Today, some 80 000 young people study in Macedonia. More than one third of every age set enters tertiary education, and the ratio is growing. Nevertheless, Macedonia is still below the international average, firstly owing to the relatively low ratio of pupils who obtained a high-school leaver's certificate and secondly because the number of students' enrolling at the Faculties in the past was limited, which was a result of the previous social system. Anyone wanting to study in Macedonia is now able to choose between 23 highereducation institutions (public and private) that are spread across the entire country. Be it in cities or in countryside (by the Lake Ohrid), traditional or highly modern, small in everything in a walking

4. Why is bilingualism important for my country?
Bilingualism is also creating new challenges for the Macedonian scientific and university community. The policymakers and universities have taken the initiative, with a series of reforms to adapt the university system to the new international standards. These innovations are in the process of fundamentally shaking up Macedonian academic world. Be it switch to staggered degrees such as Bachelor's and Master's degrees or the introduction of tuition fees and selection tests, be it the emergence of private facilities for academic training or the stronger strategic alliances between

universities and institutes outside the higher education system - it is safe to say that hardly a section of society is at present undergoing such major changes as is the education system.

The goal of the reforms is to strengthen research and teaching to better face the ever fiercer international competition and to reclaim 55

5. Conclusion and directions for future work

In the present paper I highlighted the importance of the bilingualism within Macedonian culture because it creates a unique cross-cultural understanding absolutely inevitable for our modern/postmodern society of cultural clashes, conflicts and misunderstandings. Our present society is a society of modern slavery and new ways of colonialism, and the bilingualism shows the way out of these current phenomena. If only it could eradicate antipathy and violence because the use of bilingualism is a 56

phenomenon arising from theory to action. Macedonia's higher
There continues to be a great need to conduct research and
document the effectiveness of various forms of bilingual education
and other forms of education for language minority students. We
must recognize that 'bilingual education is the only way to educate
children in the twenty - first century' (p. 5). As Garci'a explains:

"One of the biggest changes in the globalized community of the twenty - first century is the blurring of territory that was clearly demarcated by language and culture. Although many territories had

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