

INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Abstract. The paper investigated through which subjects intercultural education can best be applied in the primary school curriculum. Teachers' attitudes were investigated through 5 variables such as school cultural structure, gender, seniority, teacher's prior intercultural education and teacher's education degree. A 5 point Likert scale consisting of 6 items was used for data collection. This scale was applied to 217 primary school teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia. The ranking of subjects through which intercultural education is implemented was done through descriptive statistics. Differences in teachers' attitudes on subject ranking were tested through t-test and One Way ANOVA. The research results showed that teachers require another form of implementation of intercultural education ($M=3.55$) in addition to implementation through extracurricular activities ($M=3.46$). Teachers working in a multicultural school think that intercultural education should be implemented through an another form, while teachers working in a monocultural school think that intercultural education should be implemented in homeroom class. Teachers with "combined" intercultural education think that this education should be implemented through extracurricular activities, while teachers who have independently studied interculture think that intercultural education should be implemented through an another form.

Keywords: intercultural education; teacher; curriculum; subject

Introduction

Challenges for the future of the individual and society are reflected in the structure and quality of today's school, education system, education and teacher training. The common values of a united Europe, as well as the characteristics of modern society (democracy, individual, pluralism, openness, responsibility, identity, human resources...) are the starting points for structural changes in pedagogical theory and practice. The impact of the internationalization of education through the processes of preparing students for life and work in the international space, the strengthening of

language and intercultural competencies, significantly affects the internationalization of the curriculum. According to Banks (Banks 1993; Banks & Banks 2002) the pedagogy of equality, as the creation of fair and equal educational conditions for all, the reform of the curriculum, as a new understanding of “truth and knowledge”, education for social justice, as a struggle against discrimination, prejudice, racism, etc. – are also dimensions of intercultural education that enable, by changing the approach and flexibility of the contents, an effective response to the different requirements of the participants in education. In this regard, the intercultural curriculum is one of the basic premises for the implementation of intercultural education in teaching practice.

Dantow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) consider the creation of the curriculum as a co-construction process, ie a process of joint creation that develops through interaction in a specific social context, while Miljak (2005) from the aspect of productive curriculum creation emphasizes the importance of methodology of its co-construction and construction as a dynamic process that has its own philosophy (which implies goal, tasks and expectations), methodology (which implies action and participation), practice (which refers to the occurrence, participation and co-creation of all relevant participants) and result (which assumes a state of inner satisfaction and competence).

In structuring the modern national/school curriculum, the contents, programs, work methods and teacher actions should be articulated, which will not only refer to the acquisition of knowledge, but, observing the world from different philosophical angles and breadths, in direct contacts will suspend various social stereotypes, prejudices and stigmatization among people (Previšić 2004). Stol and Fink (2000) emphasize the need for a school-parent partnership in building a network that includes two-way communication, counseling, learning assistance at home, involvement of parents in decision-making, and collaboration with community. Thus, the intercultural curriculum presupposes the inclusion of the specifics of social and cultural minorities in all areas of school work (Resman 2006) which includes teaching content and extracurricular activities, establishing rules for guiding and protecting members of minority communities, as well as determining fundamental life values among students.

Intercultural education in the primary school curriculum

Intercultural education at its core has two main points: It is education which recognizes, respects and celebrates the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It “sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us. It is education, which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built” (Tormey 2005, 3). Intercultural education is for all children irrespective of their ethnicity and their age. Language and talk are identified as a fundamental component of intercultural education. Tormey (2005) claims that intercultural education happens

naturally through the “hidden curriculum” of the social and visual world within which the child lives. While it is possible and necessary to include intercultural ideas in the taught “formal curriculum”, the images and resources that surround the child are also crucial. In exploring the hidden curriculum it is important to note that “what is absent can be as important as what is present” (Tormey 2005, 4). The stages of curriculum construction according to Marsh (2009) would be: 1. need analysis (which depends on educational policy, parents, students, teachers and financial opportunities); 2. defining the intentions, goals and tasks; 3. methods selection (finding and organizing the contents); 4. result evaluation (formative and summative). Modern societies and their educational policies should take into account intercultural guidelines in constructing national and school curricula. A leading role in this should be played by pedagogues, teachers and school principals, which has not been the case so far.

Bennett (Hollins 2008) imposes four tasks for theorists and practitioners: revision of the existing curriculum, realization of equitable pedagogy, development of intercultural competencies of future teachers and achieving a degree of social equality. On the other hand, Dufour and Curtis (2012) warn that one of the main disadvantages of today's curricula is that they are often directed by political and educational centers. In this sense, the school curriculum should also protect students so that students can influence the course of the learning process, and not instead the educational bureaucracy or the academic egoists do it. The curriculum, however, is not a “package of knowledge” to be carried away from school, but a way to know how to live with that treasure (Previšić 2010, 173). Materials and didactic resources should promote equality and should not contain elements of discrimination that could create a sense of superiority (Aguado & Del Olmo 2009). They should be built on the foundations of different systems of knowledge and experience of students, to incorporate their history, knowledge and technology, to introduce students to cultural heritage, to focus on the development of respect for cultural identity, language and values, to impart knowledge about society as a whole to minority groups, to strive for the elimination of prejudices¹⁾. Teachers should try to use materials in accordance with the proposals for respect for diversity (Aguado & Del Olmo 2009). It is useful to introduce lessons and activities about different dialects, taboos and other cultural elements²⁾.

The most common teaching resources are textbooks. First language textbooks should also have data on the country's minority ethnic groups (Helgason & Lässig 2009). Other textbooks, such as history, geography, and other social sciences, as well as science and mathematics, should contain the same. In all of them, on a certain level, intercultural topics from well-known scientists can be included. Research highlights cultural and geographical diversity in textbooks, including the need to highlight diversity not only among nations but also within nations. Helgason and Lässig (2009) emphasize that textbooks reflect the culture and social attitudes and can spread such attitudes. They argue that diversity in teaching should be visible not only through the attempt to include the opportunities of minority groups, but also through

the inclusion of a critical perspective and understanding of how history is presented and understood. Each teaching material used should be reviewed, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of the way the text is written or the presentation of the film or music being studied. Even without an open purpose, they can influence the way they think about others, thus contributing to interculturality or creating and promoting stereotypes. According to De Leo (2010) teachers can opt for two approaches: the intracultural approach to a culture that goes deep, with an emphasis on language, family, religion, laws, heritage, history, etc., and the intercultural approach, which covers only several components of different cultures. Also known is the cross-cultural approach which involves exploring and comparing one component across a range of cultures, multicultural learning that affirms multiple identities related to life in a plural context, globalization and the heritage of minority communities. Transcultural learning involves exploring the common values and common elements of different cultures, overcoming differences and uniting in a human community.

In language teaching activities, teachers should encourage a shift between the language of instruction and the other (minority, foreign, surrounding language), use multilingual aids, use partially common terminology, include training in democratic citizenship, include lessons related to communication and comparative analysis of language, to develop multilingual creativity, to talk about the great works of literature in their native language (Beacco et al. 2016). In history teaching, the intercultural perspective can help illustrate the similarities and differences between cultures and develop an understanding of cultural diversity, through historical facts and ways of developing different countries, which also provides an awareness of the factors that have brought us together or separated us (Helgason & Lässig 2009). These views on the application of interculture in schools do not necessarily apply only to the teaching of languages and history. In minority schools, in fact, there is a great possibility for the application of pluralism in all forms of teaching because the majority of students are sufficiently developed at least two languages to understand the content.³ also recommends that, where possible and as far as possible, the student's mother tongue should be used. Aguado and Del Olmo (2009) give an example of promoting multilingualism in school with the help of posters written in many different languages. For example in English and other languages used in the community. In minority schools and especially in those that have both a minority and a majority population, this is a prerequisite for the creation of multilingual and thus intercultural education. Huber (2012) in that direction emphasizes that topics from the intercultural context can be integrated in any subject. History, geography, social subjects, and language are easy to adapt, but other subjects, such as music, math, and science, must be adapted.

Methodology

The research aimed to investigate through which subjects intercultural education can best be applied in the primary school curriculum. Teachers' attitudes

were investigated through 5 variables such as school cultural structure, gender, seniority, teacher's prior intercultural education and teacher's education degree. A 5 point Likert scale consisting of 6 items was used for data collection. In the present study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.64. "In social sciences, the reliability coefficient of a scale is interpreted as $\alpha \geq 0.9$ excellent, $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ good, $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ acceptable, $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ poor, $\alpha < 0.5$ unacceptable" (Celik, & Iltar 2021, 256). In this context, the scale used for the current study is at an acceptable level. This scale was applied to 217 primary school teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia. The ranking of subjects through which intercultural education is implemented was done through descriptive statistics. Differences in teachers' attitudes on subject ranking were tested through t-test and One Way ANOVA.

Discussion of results

The scale for evaluating the forms for the implementation of intercultural education in the school consists of six claims.

Table 1. Descriptive parameters of implementation of intercultural education in primary school

Claim	N	M	SD
1. as a compulsory subject	217	2.30	.986
2. as an optional subject	217	2.78	1.060
3. in class	217	3.33	.985
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	217	3.12	1.146
5. through extracurricular activities	217	3.46	1.018
6. through an another form	217	3.55	1.182

The table above shows that the teachers achieved the highest arithmetic mean in the claim that interculture in primary school could be implemented "through an another form" ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.182$), then "through extracurricular activities" ($M=3.46$, $SD=1.018$), "in class" ($M=3.33$, $SD=.985$) and "interdisciplinary, across all subjects" ($M=3.12$, $SD=1.146$). Lower arithmetic mean teachers achieved in the claim that interculture in primary school could be conducted "as an optional subject" ($M=2.78$, $M=1,060$) and the lowest arithmetic mean achieved in the claim that interculture in primary school could be implemented "as compulsory subject" ($M=2.30$, $SD=.986$). On the other hand, most of the teachers or 57.1% completely or mainly agree that the interculture in the primary school could be implemented "through extracurricular activities", and 52.5% of the teachers think that it can be implemented "through an another form". Less than 50% of the teachers, ie 42.9% of them completely or mainly think that the interculture in the primary school could be implemented "in class" and a little more than one third or 36.4% think

that it could be implemented “interdisciplinary through all subjects”. A smaller number of respondents or 27.2% think that interculture could be implemented “as an optional subject” while only 14.2% of teachers completely or mainly think that interculture in primary school could be implemented “as a compulsory subject”. Such results suggest that teachers are aware that interculture is not a subject and point to the conclusion that more forms of intercultural implementation should be considered in schools.

In order to determine the differences in the attitudes of the teachers according to the cultural structure of the school in which they work in relation to the forms of implementation of the interculture in the primary school, a t-test was performed.

Table 2. Teachers’ views on implementation of intercultural education according to school structure

Claim	Mono-cultural school (N=154)		Multicultural school (N=63)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. as a compulsory subject	2.44	1.066	1.98	.660	3.120	.002*
2. as an optional subject	2.95	.999	2.37	1.097	3.833	.000*
3. in class	3.46	.984	3.00	.916	3.194	.002*
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	3.14	1.161	3.10	1.118	.239	.811
5. through extracurricular activities	3.23	1.045	4.02	.684	-5.522	.000*
6. through an another form	3.31	1.173	4.16	.971	-5.102	.000*

*p<0.05

The test results show a statistically significant difference between teachers in 5 out of 6 claims whereby teachers working in a multicultural school achieved a higher mean (M=4.02, SD=.684, p<.05; M=4.16, SD=.971, p<.05;) compared to teachers working in a monocultural school (M=3.23, SD=1.045, p<.05; M=3.31, SD=1.173, p<.05) in claiming that interculture in a primary school could be implemented “through extracurricular activities” and “through an another form”. Teachers working in a monocultural school achieved a statistically higher mean (M=2.44, SD= 1.066, p<.05; M=2.95, SD=.999, p<.05; M=3.46, SD=.984, p<.05) compared to teachers working in a multicultural school (M=1.98, SD=.660, p<.05; M=2.37, SD=1.097, p<.05; M=3.00, SD=.916, p<.05) in the claim that interculture in primary school could be implemented “as a compulsory subject”, “as an optional subject” and “in class”. These results suggest that teachers working in a multicultural school have more informations on forms intercultural education can be implemented and lead to the conclusion that these teachers possess a higher level of intercultural competence in this matter.

In order to determine the differences in the attitudes of the teachers according to the gender regarding the forms of implementation of intercultural education in primary school, a t-test was conducted.

Table 3. Implementation of intercultural education according to gender

Claim	Female (N=158)		Male (N=59)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. as a compulsory subject	2.24	.987	2.47	.971	-1.561	.120
2. as an optional subject	2.97	1.025	2.29	1.001	4.378	.000*
3. in class	3.50	.908	2.86	1.042	4.404	.000*
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	3.22	1.171	2.86	1.042	2.058	.041*
5. through extracurricular activities	3.43	.960	3.53	1.165	-.611	.542
6. through an another form	3.47	1.110	3.78	1.340	-1.735	.084

*p<0.05

The test results show a statistically significant difference between the teachers in 3 out of 6 claims where the female teachers achieved a higher mean (M=2.97, SD= 1.025, p<.05; M=3.50, SD=.908, p<.05; M=3.22, SD=1.171, p<.05) compared to to male teachers (M=2.29, SD=1.001, p<.05; M=2.86, SD=1.042, p<.05; M=2.86, SD=1.042, p<.05) in the claim that interculture in primary school could be implemented "as an optional subject", "in class" and "interdisciplinary, across all subjects". These results lead to the conclusion that female teachers showed a higher level of intercultural competence in this scale that examines attitudes regarding the forms of implementation of intercultural education in school.

In order to determine the differences in the attitudes of the teachers according to seniority regarding the forms of implementation of the intercultural education in primary school, a t-test was conducted.

Table 4. Implementation of intercultural education and seniority

Claim	Under 20 years (N=152)		Over 20 years (N=65)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. as a compulsory subject	2.22	1.056	2.49	.773	-1.849	.066
2. as an optional subject	2.81	.926	2.72	1.329	.547	.585
3. in class	3.30	.982	3.40	.997	-.711	.478
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	3.08	1.188	3.23	1.042	-.894	.373
5. through extracurricular activities	3.27	1.079	3.89	.687	-4.290	.000*
6. through an another form	3.29	1.172	4.17	.961	-5.333	.000*

*p<0.05

The table above shows that teachers with more than 20 years of work experience achieved a higher mean than teachers with less than 20 years of work experience in 5 out of 6 claims, stating that interculture in primary school could be implemented “as compulsory subject”, “in class”, “interdisciplinary, through all subjects”, “through extracurricular activities” and “through an another form”. The test results show a statistically significant difference between teachers in 2 out of 6 claims where teachers with work experience over 20 years achieved a higher mean ($M=3.89$, $SD=.687$, $p<.05$; $M=4.17$, $SD=.961$, $p<.05$) than teachers with work experience under 20 years ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.079$, $p<.05$; $M=3.29$, $SD=1.172$, $p<.05$) in the claim that interculture in primary school could be implemented “through extracurricular activities” and “through an another form”. Such results suggest that teachers with more work experience have more information about the forms of implementation of intercultural education in school.

Differences in attitudes of the teachers according to education degree regarding the forms of implementation of the intercultural education in primary school were determined through One Way ANOVA.

Table 5. Implementation of intercultural education and teacher education degree

Claim	Bachelor (N=186)		Master (N=23)		PhD (N=8)		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
1. as a compulsory subject	2.39	.992	1.78	.736	1.88	.991	4.798	.009*
2. as an optional subject	2.83	1.077	2.57	1.037	2.38	.518	1.248	.289
3. in class	3.42	.951	2.39	.722	3.75	1.035	13.399	.000*
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	3.02	1.115	3.43	1.037	4.63	1.061	9.086	.000*
5. through extracurricular activities	3.44	.991	3.43	1.343	3.88	.354	.701	.497
6. through an another form	3.47	1.173	3.78	1.166	4.75	.707	5.154	.007*

* $p<.05$

The test results show statistically significant differences between teachers in 4 out of 6 claims where teachers with a bachelor degree ($M=2.39$, $SD=.992$, $p<.05$) believe that interculture in primary school could be implemented “as a compulsory subject”. While teachers with a doctorate ($M=3.88$, $p<.05$; $M=4.63$, $p<.05$; $M=4.75$, $p<.05$) consider that interculture in primary school could be conducted “through extracurricular activities”, “interdisciplinary, through all subjects” and “through an another form”. These results lead to the conclusion that teachers with a doctorate most accurately assessed that intercultural education could best be conducted interdisciplinary, through all subjects.

In order to check which groups of teachers the statistically significant difference shown by the ANOVA test refers to, the so-called Scheffe post-hoc test was performed.

Table 6. Post Hoc – Multiple Comparisons according to education degree

Multiple Comparisons			
Dependent Variable: Implementation of interculture in primary school			
Scheffe			
(I) Structure of respondents by education degree	(J) Structure of respondents by education degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Bachelor degree	Master	.19733	.340
	PhD	-.44579	.128
Master	Bachelor degree	-.19733	.340
	PhD	-.64312*	.037
PhD	Bachelor degree	.44579	.128
	Master	.64312*	.037

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Scheffe test showed a statistically significant difference between teachers with a master's degree and teachers with a doctorate ($MD = -.64312$, $p < .05$) where the test shows a negative result or lower mean of teachers with a master's degree compared to teachers with a doctorate. The results of the ANOVA and Scheffe post-hoc test show that the evaluation of the best forms for conducting intercultural education in school is related to the level of education of teachers, ie teachers with higher education degree assess more precisely what are the best forms for implementing intercultural education in school.

Differences in teachers' attitudes according to prior intercultural education regarding the forms of implementation of the intercultural education in primary school were determined through One Way ANOVA.

Table 7. Implementation of intercultural education according to teacher's prior intercultural education

Claim	1 (N=61)		2 (N=33)		3 (N=29)		4 (N=51)		5 (N=43)		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
1. as a compulsory subject	2.77	1.055	2.36	.859	2.69	1.072	1.71	.642	2.05	.815	12.017	.000*
2. as an optional subject	2.95	.740	2.61	1.321	3.00	.756	2.14	1.040	3.30	1.059	9.522	.000*
3. in class	3.31	1.119	3.73	.911	3.00	.535	3.10	1.100	3.53	.797	3.483	.009*
4. interdisciplinary, across all subjects	3.13	.903	3.24	1.521	2.62	1.049	2.88	1.160	3.65	.973	4.619	.001*
5. through extracurricular activities	3.16	1.019	3.73	.911	3.24	1.300	3.43	1.100	3.84	.531	3.874	.005*
6. through an another form	3.48	1.120	4.09	1.011	3.10	1.372	3.41	1.299	3.72	.959	3.365	.011*

* $p < 0.05$

Note: 1 – basic education for work in a multicultural school; 2 – additional training for work in a multicultural classroom; 3 – you have studied interculturality on your own; 4 – combined; 5 – none of the above.

The test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents in all 6 claims. We performed the Scheffe post-hoc test to check which groups of teachers the statistically significant difference refers to.

Table 8. Post Hoc Test – Multiple Comparisons according to prior intercultural education

Multiple Comparisons			
Dependent Variable: Implementation of intercultural education in primary school			
Scheffe			
(I) Structure of respondents according to prior intercultural education	(J) Structure of respondents according to prior intercultural education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
basic education for working in a multicultural school	Combined	.35610 [*]	.036
additional training for work in multicultural classroom	Combined	.51515 [*]	.004
Combined	none of the above	-.57106 [*]	.000
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.			

Multiple comparisons show that teachers with “basic education for work in a multicultural school” have a statistically significant difference with teachers with “combined” prior intercultural education where teachers with “basic education for work in a multicultural school” achieved a higher mean than teachers with “Combined” prior intercultural education ($MD=.35610$, $p<.05$) in this scale. Furthermore, teachers with “additional training for working in a multicultural classroom” achieved a higher mean than teachers with “combined” previous intercultural education ($MD=.51515$, $p<.05$). Finally, teachers with “combined” prior intercultural education achieved a lower mean than teachers with “none of the above”, ie without any prior intercultural education ($MD=-.57106$, $p<.05$). Such results lead to the conclusion that prior intercultural education influences the teachers’ attitudes on evaluation of the forms of implementation of the intercultural education in school and that the teachers who had some prior intercultural education have more information about these forms.

Conclusion

The research results show that most of the teachers agree that intercultural education in primary school could be implemented through extracurricular activities, but they think that there is an another form of implementation. The most important conclusion is that teachers do not think that intercultural education

can be implemented as a compulsory subject. Teachers working in multicultural schools have more information on the forms through which intercultural education can best be implemented. This suggests that they have a higher level of intercultural competence than teachers working in mono-cultural schools. Female teachers showed a higher level of intercultural competence regarding the forms of implementation of intercultural education while senior teachers have more information about these forms. Teachers with higher education degree and teachers with prior intercultural education assess more properly what are the best forms for implementing intercultural education in school. The research results suggest that schools should become more multicultural, teachers should do a master or doctorate and teachers need training in the field of intercultural education.

NOTES

1. UNESCO, 2006. *Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, Education Sector, Paris: UNESCO
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. UNESCO, 2006. *Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, Education Sector, Paris: UNESCO.

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