



**Evaluation Report of the Nansen Model for Intercultural
Education in PS "Goce Delchev" Gostivar,
from the research carried out by Prof.Hana Saliu, PhD**

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REPORT

Multicultural societies are societies where different cultures and languages prevail, rich societies where there is always something new to learn and which offer a chance for development of both the society and every individual which is born, develops and lives in a multicultural environment. The diversity of cultures and languages is widespread in every part of the Republic of Macedonia. Starting from this fact, Nansen team has developed a model for intercultural education in order for the multiculturalism that is widespread in our country to be used for a positive development of young generations. The Nansen model for intercultural education has been working on development of its model for ten years now, and it has been expanded and implemented in many schools in the Republic of Macedonia with instructions in two or three languages.

Activities of the Nansen model for intercultural education implemented in model schools in Macedonia are realized as extracurricular activities. Within this project, a research was carried out in order to observe whether the activities of intercultural education were implemented according to the planned activities. During the observation, attention was paid to whether the goals of the Nansen model were implemented in practice. Some of these goals are: developing new skills; enriching and acquisition of new knowledge; building self-confidence and promoting communication; socialisation; dialogue; tolerance and overcoming of stereotypes and prejudices; problem solving; creativity; critical thinking. The research was carried out in the Primary School "Goce Delchev" in Gostivar after five years of implementation of the Nansen model for intercultural education. The main goal of the research is: *Assessment of the realization of extracurricular activities in line with the Nansen model for integrated education and according to the defined global goals.* For this purpose, the observation of 11 tandems that implement the extracurricular activities was realized in the Primary School "Goce Delchev" in Gostivar, which is the first school where the Nansen model started. Eight observations were conducted in class teaching and 3 in subject teaching. Observations were carried out for a period of 3 months, starting from October to December. During the observation process, attention was also paid to the fulfilment of global goals set by the Nansen model for intercultural education.

The observed activities were realized in the following school clubs: three Eco-clubs were realized with the grade 3 students, one of the clubs was on the topic "Meet Macedonia" which was realized with students from the second and third grade; activities within the Peace and tolerance club were realized in two tandems from the fourth grade; Little constructors club with the grade 4 students;

one Drama club was realized with second grade students; three tandems from the subject teaching had clubs with activities for socialisation of students through sports and music.

In our country, it is not common to pay attention to the environment where the teaching is carried out and where the development of the cognitive, emotional, social and personal aspects of our children is taking place, even though it is very important component from the psychological point of view. Most of the classrooms in our country are equipped only with the most necessary means (board, desks and chairs) and do not look like a place where a child can feel comfortable and relaxed and they generally do not allow development of creativity and critical thinking of students. Inadequate classroom equipment affects productivity, attention focusing and emotional aspects of students. Unlike most schools in our country, the classrooms at the Primary School "Goce Delchev" in Gostivar resemble classrooms in developed countries. They are equipped with various didactic tools that are necessary for education of children for the 21st century. These didactic means help teachers and students to create various works within various school subjects and topics that are later displayed on the classroom walls in both languages of instruction. Each tandem had placed its symbol at the classroom entrance, depending on the selected school club, and all students and tandem teachers were represented with their names. The classroom walls were decorated with the works of children from both classes in both languages. Tandem teachers cooperated within the regular classes and most of the works were on the same topic in both languages so that the children could learn words of the other language. Everyday exposure of children to these incentives leads to learning new information and new words without any additional effort.

School desks used for implementation of activities were arranged for group type of work. Thus, every observed class started with division of students into groups. The division was made either by picking tokens or papers of different colours or numbers written on them. The groups that had been together for a long time already had formed groups that were mixed both ethnically and by gender, and every student knew both the group and the place where they should sit and were well familiar with the peers with whom they are supposed to cooperate in each activity. It also contributed to more efficient time management and the groups were always mixed by ethnicity and gender, which was sometimes not the case with random distribution of students, since the small number of students. Depending on the activity provided for a certain school club, teacher tandems encouraged the teamwork. Activities were realized whether in group, in pairs or individually depending on the works that were to be created during that class.

After the division into groups, every class continued with a creative and productive game prepared by teachers, allowing students an opportunity to express themselves and have fun, creating a pleasant, yet competitive and motivating atmosphere among the groups of students, because the games were designed so there is only one winner at the end of the game; it all motivated them to continue with the following activities. These games helped teachers to introduce students into a topic in a spontaneous and entertaining way. Games that were selected for the beginning of the class were in accordance with the main topic, such as Memory game, Drawing animals from a drum, Association, Warm - Cold, Jigsaw, etc. These initial games did not serve just for fun, but for practicing and improving the memory and gaining new information on various topics. During the games, each student was involved in the game and gave the greatest effort to win.

Teachers who worked as a tandem in implementation of these activities were well coordinated and complemented each other during their activities. The classes were realized in both languages so that one teacher began to explain in one language, and then the other teacher continued to explain the same information in the other language. Teachers in all tandems were always smiling, friendly, cooperative, trying to respond to the demands of each student, whether their own or colleague's student, making an impression of individual approach to each student during these activities, trying to activate all students and assisting in task solving and were active and motivating throughout the class. This attitude of the teachers was also positively reflected in the behaviour and attitude of students. All observed tandem teachers in all classes have prepared a daily agenda of activities that were implemented during the classes.

Some of the classes continued with a discussion on the planned topic in order to spontaneously come to the items that were supposed to be created during the class. Some of the classes continued with videos about the topic or music pieces and sounds depending on the items that were to be created as an activity. Nowadays, children are very prone to use the technology and enjoy it more than learning. This fact during these classes was used in a very productive and instructive manner. Most of the tandems used the Internet and computer to provide students with additional information for realization of activities that made children realize that the Internet can and should be used for learning. Most of the tandems played music about the subject matter (e.g., music of the Vikings or various folk instruments). When it was not possible to present the topic with music, the classical music was played. This contributed to the classroom being filled with a pleasant, relaxing and motivating atmosphere. By using these tools, students are encouraged to memorize information in both auditory and visual manner, as a more effective method of learning than a passive receiving of information provided by

the teacher, as it is the case in regular classes. These were not typical classes, with teacher talking about a particular topic while the students listen to them, but the teachers rather served in stimulating and directing the activities.

These lessons, besides the visual and auditory stimulation of students, were aimed to develop new manual skills of students such as cutting, gluing and drawing. After developing a discussion on a certain topic, all the observed classes (except the classes where children meet each other for the first time) continued with asking questions about items that were to be created by the groups during that class. All students had equal chance to express their opinion and to answer the questions. After the students were introduced into the main topic of the lesson, each group in most tandems was randomly provided with various materials prepared by the teachers that were chosen for the daily topic. Each group had the task of producing one item (sometimes as a group, sometimes in a pair, sometimes individually). Created items corresponded with the topic and were constituent parts of the same topic or comparison between the right and the wrong (one tandem within the Eco-club created a clean river and a polluted river for the children to see the difference). The comparison of created items and the identification of items belonging to and describing the topic, develops students' ability to synthesize, analyze, classify, evaluate and compare, as skills that contribute to the development of critical thinking.

In most activities, students were encouraged and motivated by the teachers not only to try to complete the current assignment, but also to make the final item look nice, which contributes to the development of the sense of aesthetics among students. All created works were exhibited in the classroom, so that the atmosphere in the room became incentive, encouraging and representative. Students who had completed their works were motivated to help other students (teachers did not have to guide students who worked together for a long time to help their friends, they did it by themselves.) They freely went to other groups, watched them work, and offered their assistance if needed.

After creation of items that were planned as a particular class activity, each group of students presented the creation. After the presentation, the group was motivated by an applause from the whole class and praised by the teachers. Students felt appreciated, creative, capable and important, which was evident in their non-verbal communication. After the presentation of the works, each of the observed classes continued with the final game with participation of all the students. Students were in a very good mood and active, so they often asked to play the game once more. Sometimes the games encouraged a competitive spirit among the students, because at the end of the game one winner was announced on a group level, or awards were given within a single tandem, depending on the group's accomplishments.

Upon finalization of activities, all the students jointly arranged and cleaned the working space. They put the working materials in their places and cleaned the room together, helping each other, which suggested that during these classes students were learning how to respect the others, keep the common classroom and teaching materials in proper condition and develop habits and responsibility for keeping the common working environment nice and clean.

Although the classes were time limited, due to the pleasant emotional and motivating atmosphere that prevailed during these activities, each class was continued and lasted longer at the request of the students. Students did not show any tiredness or boredom during extracurricular activities. They were active and followed everything that was going on during the class with full attention. This is not common for the children of that age, since the children from 8 to 9 years of age are usually able to keep attention for about 30-40 minutes, while during these classes the children were concentrated longer than the anticipated time (up to 50-55 min.) This was also due to the way the classes were organized. All of the observed classes started with an introductory game, continued with discussion and practical work, and ended with playing the game again. This all contributed for children not to feel stressed or anxious, which in turn led to positive emotions among them (to like and wish to attend these classes) as well as to learn new information and skills without any compulsion. The implemented activities encouraged creative thinking in children, while some of the observed school classes including questions that demanded deeper and analytical thinking encouraged the development of critical thinking among students.

In order to successfully complete the tasks, students had to work as a team in all tandems, and thus teamwork, cooperation and mutual assistance of students was encouraged. Group work of students developed a group cohesion and sense of belonging, importance and responsibility.

In most of the observed classes, teachers tried to pay attention to each student in order to provide everyone with an opportunity to express themselves and express their opinions, without the fear of being ashamed or being subject to prejudice, and this was clearly evident by a pleasant atmosphere in the class and the ability of each student to express them self, which contributed to the development of greater self-esteem and self-respect among the students. In addition, students were free to ask questions at any time if something was unclear or if they wanted to gain some new information about the topic. Teachers in all tandems were open, polite and patient, and answered all questions asked by students kindly and with a mild voice. This attitude and manner of teachers' behaviour encourages the development of enhanced student-teacher communication, development of students' self-esteem, and serves as an incentive for free expression, reducing the fear of making

mistakes or being ashamed, overcoming the shyness of introvert students, their opening up and socialisation.

Teachers who had greater experience with these activities and who had been involved in the project for a longer time were more likely to associate information that the children learn during these classes with the information they have learned in regular classes, which means that these extracurricular activities also help students in learning information during regular classes. Students gave feedback at the end of most classes, which is a sort of encouragement for the students that helps to make conclusions and evaluate the class. This contributes to the development of critical thinking among students, which was also encouraged by motivating students to ask questions on certain topics that were processed during the school clubs.

In more recent tandems, students communicated either nonverbally or in English, while in the previous tandems, students already knew some words to verbally communicate with each other. This points to yet another benefit from participation in these activities. Children learn one language that they encounter in everyday life, so it can contribute to better and enhanced communication between them. Language learning affects the development of thinking. Many words and notions in one language are not used in some other language, so the language learning widens the range and the way of thinking of children.

Three of the observed tandem groups were from the subject teaching. These tandems were new and have recently started to practice extracurricular activities with students, so the activities they developed were introductory. Teachers who participated in tandems were highly motivated to work and this was also reflected in students. Teachers were well prepared for the activities, well coordinated between themselves and successfully implemented the envisaged daily activities plan. Since students have never participated in this kind of activity, they followed the exact instructions of their teachers, and were much more calmer and more limited in their behaviour compared to students in subject teaching, who used to move freely around the classroom, ask questions and express their opinions. Observation of the work of initial tandem groups gained an insight into the contribution of extracurricular activities organized by the Nansen Dialogue Centre. Tandem groups that participated in these extracurricular activities for a longer time showed greater spontaneity, more positive emotional climate and greater communication between students (although sometimes nonverbal), so the students were more open to question, discuss and communicate with teachers and their peers.

During the research, we held a short interview with teachers to see in more detail the benefits of these extracurricular activities. During the interviews, almost all the teachers said they were very

satisfied with the work and that they enjoyed these classes, but they also emphasized the fact that the preparation of these classes requires greater effort. Tandem teachers shared the lesson preparation responsibilities, so that they were completely concentrated and effective during the implementation of activities. They said that the seminars at the Nansen Centre gave them ideas and helped them to carry out the regular teaching activities, so they all stated that they would gladly attend other seminars and workshops. One of the benefits of this project, according to the teachers, was that not only did the children get closer and got to know more about each other, but the teachers themselves got closer and started to contact even more often in private life. In one class, there were children who initially did not attend these activities, but after some time their parents expressed the desire and interest for their children to participate in such activities. Teachers confirmed the parents' availability to offer any kind of assistance required for implementation of activities within some classes. All of this suggests the positive influence of the Nansen model for intercultural education and that this model should be extended and implemented in other multicultural schools in our country.

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