

PERIODICAL EVALUATION REPORT

“Nansen Dialogue Center - Integrated and Bilingual Education in Macedonia”

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July 2011

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Reasons for the evaluation

In May 2011, the Management of Nansen Dialogue Center has raised an initiative for implementing an external periodical evaluation of the Program for integrated bilingual education in Macedonia. Almost 3 years have passed since the moment the Program has started (01 September, 2008) up to now. In this period, the Program has evolved from a pilot phase into a phase of vertical and horizontal expanding, i.e. besides the implementation of the new model of integrated bilingual education in the primary school in the village Preljubiste (2008), the Program has started its implementation also in the secondary vocational school “Mosa Pijade” in Tetovo (2010), as well as in the public primary school “Marsal Tito” in Strumica (2010).

Until now, NDC has implemented one internal evaluation (realized by Danijela Galovic¹) in 2010 and one external evaluation (realized by Dr. Piotr Dutkiewicz²) in 2011. The purpose of both evaluations was to make an insight into the quality of implementation of the NDC Program and to give recommendations for its future developing and improving.

Since both evaluations have been implemented by evaluators from other countries, NDC has expressed a wish the Program to be evaluated also by a domestic evaluator, who is not only familiar with the educational matters that are being covered by the Program, but also lives in a setting where this Program is being realized.

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1.2. NDC Program

NDC transparently announces its presence on the educational scene in Republic of Macedonia on 01 September, 2008 with the opening of the first integrated bilingual primary school “Fridtjof Nansen” in the village Preljubiste, Jegunovce Municipality, as a satellite school within the Central primary school in Semsovo.

On 01 September, 2010 NDC has started to implement the Program in the first integrated secondary school (within SSOU “Mosa Pijade” – Tetovo), also in the village Preljubiste, Jegunovce Municipality.

Since 2010, the realization of an integrated bilingual teaching process in first grades at COU “Marsal Tito” (in Macedonian and Turkish language) has also started in Strumica Municipality.

Those are schools in which students who belong to different ethnic communities (Albanian and Macedonian in the village Preljubiste and Turkish and Macedonian in Strumica) are being integrated, i.e. the students study together and follow the teaching process (in their native language), in the same school building and in the same shift. The Program intends to promote integration of the students, but also integration of the teaching staff with different ethnic background.

Integral element of the NDC Program is also the integration of the parents of the involved students, with their active participation in the realization of the program activities. The purpose of the Program intended for the parents is:

- Promoting the cooperation and confidence of the parents towards the school and the teaching staff;
- Promoting an active role of the parents in the creation, realization and evaluation of the regular teaching activities, but also of the extracurricular activities;

- Encouraging the self-initiative of the parents, especially the mothers, as an important factor in the active monitoring of the overall children's development;
- Strengthening the cooperation relations between the parents with different ethnic, religious, cultural origin;
- Deepening the life skills of the parents and creating habits among them for continuous self-education;
- Encouraging the self-confidence of the parents, as well as a positive relation towards the other members of the group.

This Program, besides the active participation of the parents and realization of numerous joint activities, has the purpose of increasing the quality of parenthood, i.e. it contains an educational component for better parenthood.

The teaching process is organized in such way that the material from the extracurricular activities is put in correlation with the mandatory teaching material and represents its addition.

The bilingual component is the central column on which the program activities are based. After the end of the regular teaching activities (which are being performed in the native language of the students), extracurricular activities are being realized for all students on a class level. Teachers are being involved as a tandem in the creation of the extracurricular activities, which is at the same time a platform for the integration processes in the school. During the realization of the activities, the teachers speak in their native language; they do not translate simultaneously the questions, explanations, suggestions etc. but paraphrase them and this way, the students have an opportunity to follow the lectures in both languages.

These are the global goals that the Program intends to achieve:

- Deepening the constructive cooperation relations between children from different ethnic background,
- Developing sense among the students for respecting the mutual differences,

- Overcoming the stereotypes and prejudices among the children, related to their ethnic and cultural origin,
- Encouraging a tolerant relation towards differences of social, ethnic and cultural character,
- Training the students for constructive resolution of the conflict situations in the group,
- Developing a positive emotional climate in the group with heterogeneous ethnic structure, in order to maintain a high index of group cohesion,
- Expanding the active vocabulary of the students with terms and cultural and social phrases from the non-mother tongue,
- Strengthening the interaction, cooperation and confidence between the teachers and the parents from both ethnic communities,
- Developing the talents and abilities of the children in accordance with their individual potentials,
- Supporting the curiosity and originality of the children, as well as their creative potentials,
- Developing the logical, flexible, divergent and critical thinking of the children.

In order to realize these goals in a better manner, NDC has created several Programs with offered material in the following areas: Math, Art, Drama, Environment, Education for peace, Traffic, Young researchers, Ethnic education. These Programs are being changed every year. The intention of NDC is that these Programs serve the performers and the participants as a direction and platform, based on which they will create the immediate realization in an easier fashion. The Programs are opened to all suggestions which will increase their quality.

1.3. The context in which the Program is being realized

In order to understand the Nansen model of integrated education, it is necessary to know the conditions in the country. Several ethnic groups live in Republic of Macedonia: the majority one – the Macedonian and the minority groups – the Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, Roma and Vlachs. It is obvious that in Republic of Macedonia, after all, like in the other Balkans countries, several cultures are co-existing and they have developed appropriate relations among them. The rights and obligations of the citizens are being regulated with the Constitution of Republic of Macedonia and the legal acts. The Constitution respects the rights of the ethnic groups in Republic of Macedonia, including the right to education. Minority rights are being guaranteed with Article 7 (paragraph 2 and 4), 8 (2 and 11) and Article 48. The Constitution guarantees a big number of rights related to education and use of language in municipalities where certain number of representatives of the national minorities live. Articles 44 and 48 are especially important, which refer to the right of the national minorities to express and maintain the culture and cultural identity.

In the field of education, the national minorities have all rights prescribed with the international documents for protection of minority rights. According to the educational sub-systems in Republic of Macedonia, the following features may be emphasized:

- In the primary education (9 years), the curricula and programs are being realized in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian language. These curricula and programs are identical by their contents, i.e. they do not differ from the curricula and programs in Macedonian, except that Macedonian language and literature is being represented in the curriculum with 2 classes of weekly fund.
- In the secondary education, the curricula and programs are being realized in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language. These curricula and programs are identical by their contents, i.e. they do not differ from the curricula and programs in Macedonian, except

that Macedonian language and literature is being represented in the curriculum with 2 classes of weekly fund.

- In the high education, the curricula and programs are being realized in Macedonian, Albanian and English language.

The education of the students is being realized in mixed and ethnically clean schools. Unfortunately, due to the ethnic conflict in 2001, the mixed schools are getting rare, whereas the ethnically clean schools are becoming more and more present. Regardless the substance monolith of the curricula, there is basis for their addition and it is regulated with the legal provision about the right of the schools to carry out part of the state curriculum with a local curriculum.

The analysis of the substance basis of the education and above all the analysis of the textbooks that are being used in the teaching, show that elements for intercultural education not only that don't exist, but on the contrary, the emphasis in education is being put on the cultural monism with a clear xenophobic manifestation, whose purpose is to favor the idea of cultural exclusivity. Seems like there is an absurd situation. By satisfying the right to education in the native language, for certain ethnic groups instead of contributing to the strengthening of interculturalism in the country, it has caused strengthening of the interethnic and cultural intolerance among the young people.

The following may be stated as reasons for the presence of ethnic and cultural intolerance among the young people, generated by the sphere of education:

- Creating parallel educational systems, with which the cultural distance has been also accompanied by the physical distance,

- The factographic representation of the traditional characteristics of other cultures in the textbooks and the lectures. They have been included for information only, but without the processes of understanding, valuing and respecting them.
- Lack of *school* and *extracurricular* activities, which will involve young people from different cultures,
- Weak competences of the teachers for realization of the intercultural education,
- The strong impact of the non-formal and informal educational influence (family, local community, church/mosque, media, political parties),
- Lack of clearly defined and nationally and locally adopted educational goals. The pointless realization of the process of upbringing and educational action is most often resulting with improvisation and experimenting, with a negative reflection on the final result of the action.

1.4. Integrated education

If we agree that multiculturalism is a concept of a society in which several cultures equally coexist in a given time and space frame, then interculturalism will represent a concept or a cultural and educational policy, which leads to creating a society in which various cultures are connecting and interlacing **through the processes of interaction and integration**. Interculturalism is stimulating dialogue and strengthens the relations between those cultures and leads to creation of a new cultural matrix or so called unity created by diversities. This matrix should represent a subsuming creation, which accumulates the values and acquisitions of several cultures in it.

If interculturalism represents a concept or a policy, then the integrated education represents one of the strongest instruments for realization of this concept. The theoretical construct is treating this idea as a new educational architecture in which processes of upbringing and educational influences on the young people and adults are being implemented, which processes should enable getting to know the other cultures, their understanding and respecting, as well as building mechanisms for communication, exchange and mutual supplementing in the processes of creating cultural values.

2. EVALUATION DESIGN

For the needs of the evaluation, meetings / interviews have been realized: with the teachers who work according to the Nansen model for integrated education; with the students in secondary education; with the parents of the students in primary education. Besides the interviews, also participative monitoring has been applied in the evaluation, i.e. the evaluator has monitored several activities which have been realized by the teachers in the primary and secondary education.

The evaluation has included all groups of students, all teachers, part of the parents in the Primary school in Preljubiste, Primary school in Strumica and the secondary vocational school in Preljubiste.

The evaluation has been implemented in May and June, 2011.

2.1. Main evaluation questions

The evaluation has been mainly focused on the process of realization of the Program, i.e. subject of interest was the work of the teachers, the realization of the activities and the effects from the work. The evaluation was interested in getting answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent does the Nansen model for integrated education correspond with the state priorities?
2. What is the impact of the Nansen model on the teachers?
3. What is the impact of the Nansen model on the students?

3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Actuality of the Nansen model for integrated education?

Findings

In order to improve the situation, the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Macedonia in cooperation with OSCE High Commissioner for national minorities, have created a state Program for integrated education in 2010. From the aspect of NDC activities, it is important to mention that “promoting integration through joint extracurricular activities” of the students in the educational system has been planned as a second goal in the Program. This goal implies creation of programs for promoting and awarding the interethnic interaction within the extracurricular activities and creation of conditions and possibilities for multilingual communication and gatherings.

The Nansen model for integrated education completely communicates with such state efforts and is in practice realizing these commitments. It is hard to say that the initiative of NDC has had an influence on the decisions made by the Ministry, but the possibility remains that it could be promoted into a model, that the country will include in its development and operational programs.

NDC has undertaken a huge risk when it started with the Program. Including and integrating students from different ethnic background into joint extracurricular activities is a risky process itself, in a situation when disintegration processes rule in the educational sphere. Especially that it is a matter of voluntary activities. This is a risky process not only for the students and the parents, but also for the school. Most often, such efforts are being condemned and the students are risking to be named “betrayers” of their ethnicity by the ethnocentricity elements

in their surroundings. But despite this risk, NDC has managed to create extremely homogeneous groups, which have overcome such viewpoints. You can see that from the statements of part of the parents and students, who are clearly expressing their reservation and suspicion present at the beginning and their satisfaction now for being part of this Program.

Recommendations

NDC should think about strengthening the logistics capacities and connecting with the high education, especially the Teachers Faculties, as one of the ways for bigger affirmation of their model of integrated education. The cooperation with the local self-government (in charge for primary and secondary schools) goes without saying and it should represent a basic platform in the future implementation of the Program.

3.2. Impact of the Nansen model on the students

Findings

Didactic component: The Nansen model for integrated education represents in a way a model of transformative intercultural education. This model is transforming the students from passive spectators and information recipients from neutral or tendentious teachers into active participants in the process of learning. This is an approach based on recognition, understanding and overcoming the barriers that are causing the interethnic conflicts. The model is striving to develop a sense among the students about the other/different cultural identities and to situate its identity in that group of diversities. The Nansen model does not imply only a process of gaining knowledge about the other culture. As a matter of fact, this is learned in the regular curriculum and gives insignificant effects. The Nansen model goes a step further and

supplements the knowledge by gaining skills, so that the students can approach the other cultures. Ruining the myth about exclusivity of the own culture and its connecting with other cultures and values is the main basis on which the Nansen model is being realized. At the same time, the process of transformation, which arises from the transformation dialogue, should be the final effect from the work. It does not refer to the students only, but also to the teachers, parents and the school in general.

The techniques for learning and teaching are customized to the age of the students and interactivity and group form of work are dominating. Conditions and possibilities are being created for individual presentation of the students, whereupon the weaknesses and strengths are understood as weaknesses and strengths of the group, not of the individual or of a representative of one or another ethnic group. Competition is an integral part of the organization of the process, at which the students are divided in ethnically mixed groups. It gives an opportunity for rivalry of individuals and members of smaller groups, not of representatives of ethnicities. A possibility for individual progress is being created, but also for developing the collective spirit, respecting the other and interiorizing the civil values. The sociograms which NDC employees have made among the students included in the Program, clearly show that individuals are in the center of the groups, not representatives of different ethnicities.

Inclusive component: The Nansen model also contains a strong inclusive component. This is specially noticed at the Turkish students (from Strumica) included in the Program. Namely, one of the biggest reasons for the premature abandoning of the education by the Turkish children was the language barrier. In Strumica, for example, the Turkish children study in Turkish language in the first degree of primary education. In order to be able to continue the education in the higher degrees of primary and in the secondary education, they must know the Macedonian language, since in their surroundings, teaching in the schools is being carried out only in this language. The evaluation has shown that when it comes to learning the Macedonian

language, the Turkish students who are involved in the Program are progressing and have a desire to continue learning the other language. If this tendency continues, it will have a strong impact on eliminating the educational exclusion of these students.

The NDC Program does not intend to teach the students to know and use another language. Its primary goal is to break the barriers for learning another language and to make a cultural dialogue through the language. From evaluation aspect and the actual environment the Program is being implemented in, this is one of the more significant results. This is also confirmed by the statements of the students from other ethnic background (Macedonian, Albanian). Their motivation for learning the “other” language is also increasing or as they like to say: “We are learning, so that we could cooperate and understand each other better”.

Inclusiveness, as a strong side of the Nansen model, comes to the fore also among the children with special needs. According to the statements of the teachers and the parents of these students, the progress of certain children with special needs has increased after they have been included in the NDC Program. The progress is obvious not only in the field of socialization, but also in learning. It is obvious that this model offers a possibility for transforming tolerance and respect not only towards the ethnic, but also towards the “other” in general.

Equipment and didactic material: The equipment of the classrooms is good, and the didactic material is appropriate to the age and the Program. The classrooms are additionally equipped with objects made by the students, which is a visual sign of the multiethnic character of the group. By strengthening this informal component from the process of learning and socializing, there is an indirect influence on the students.

Progress: The progress of the students is obvious. There is a strong satisfaction present from what they learn and do during the extracurricular activities. Especially the students from the

secondary education are expressing interest in working within the sections, where they can totally realize their interests. According to the statements of the teachers and the parents, the progress of the students in the regular curriculum is one of the reasons for their satisfaction with the NDC Program. The effects from the inclusiveness in the extracurricular activities also have an influence on the success of the students in the regular curriculum.

Goals of the activities: Generally, the goals are clear, understandable for the students; they are not too ambitious and are being realized with appropriate activities. At part of the observed activities, there was a tendency for overemphasizing the learning component, which may have a negative reflection on the realization of the main goals of the Program. The learning component should not be in function of supplementing or correcting the regular curriculum, but just a device that will help the development of the personal and social competencies of the students.

Gaining knowledge and skills: The process is being realized with understanding and does not require efforts for memorizing by the students. The work is being problem designated and is insisting on the critical relation of the students, with many examples by the teachers and the students. Studying is in communication with the real life, which is a source from which it extracts the arguments for developing the initiative and creativity of the students.

Communication: Communication with and between the students is easy and dynamic. There are no visible barriers. The students are very comfortable with presentations in different languages by the teachers. Not for a moment there has been a delay noticed in the activities and the work due to the language barriers. The mutual communication of the students is dynamic, tolerant and is not burdened with intolerance. Most often, each student is communicating in his native language, although there is a translation provided in the other language in situations when certain joint activities need to be realized. The global finding is that

this communication is open, and there is obvious presence of curiosity and satisfaction among the students.

Recommendations

The educational component must not be a goal itself in the extracurricular activities and it should always be related to the global goals of the Program. The material that is being learned must also contain a “hidden” message, which is focused on development of the personal and social competences of the students, accepting the values of the other cultures, developing tolerance, conflict resolution etc.

Working on joint projects may bring an additional quality in the realization of the Program. It will enable “breaking” of the repetitiveness in the organization of the activities and will be a strong instrument for education and interaction between the students.

Study visits should be reinforced and focused more on the real surroundings. Visiting institutions, representative facilities and manifestations of various cultures may give a strong urge for mutual getting closer and understanding.

3.3. Impact of the Nansen model on the teachers

Findings

The teaching staff that is involved in the realization of the Nansen model for integrated education is characterized with strong motivation, dedication and readiness for changes. The additional training that NDC is implementing with the teachers brings results, primarily in the part of understanding the ethos of the Program, the organization of the activities and the approach towards the students.

The teachers cooperate well in the phase of preparation of the activities and in the phase of realization. Their cooperation is an excellent example for the students, how representatives of different ethnicities may cooperate between themselves. This moment is very important and should be strengthened, because it is one of the columns the success of the Program is based on.

It has been noticed that paraphrasing is not always present in the phases of realization of the activities. It does not have negative effects on the students, but is certainly exception from the Program. A reason for this is that part of the teachers does not know the language of the “others”, as well as the insufficient preparedness for correct use of paraphrasing in the work. NDC has problems retaining the teachers because of their leaving. Part of them has been transferred in the regular curriculum, so NDC is forced to solve the problems “hurriedly”, training new teachers. This has a negative influence on the continuity of the work, primarily on the “synchronization” of the teachers’ tandem.

Planning of the activities: Planning is bilingual and implemented according to the frame that is being used in the regular curriculum. When it comes to the goals, it has been noticed that

teachers are putting the accent of the activities on the process of gaining new knowledge, whereas they are marginalizing the development of the personal and social competences. This is not obvious in the part of realization; however, in the part of planning of the activities, the teachers need to revise their role.

The strict adherence to the material provided by NDC may help them on a short run, but it is a work according to “recipes” and it could “emphasize” their initiative. Their preparedness for own design of the material and the activities is problematic.

Organization of the activities: The organization of the activities is clearly articulated, with representation of several forms of teaching and learning. Sometimes, you could notice a bigger domination of the teachers on the account of the activities of the students. If this is understandable for the younger aged students, it is then unacceptable for the students in the secondary education.

Characteristics: All teachers involved in the Program are characterized with an open, cooperative, unobtrusive and pleasant relation with the students. They are all kind, dynamic and motivated, and accepted by all students.

Recommendations

The training of the teachers for correct use of paraphrasing during the work with the students must be strengthened. This training should also cover the matter of independent development of programs by the teachers.

4. Conclusion

The Nansen model for integrated education shows quality and produces positive effects on the students, but also on the teachers and schools. The model is original for the environment in which it is being realized and represents an initiative which totally communicates with the state priorities in education.

The new organization of the extracurricular activities has been accepted by the teachers, students and parents. A proof about the quality of this model is its expansion in Strumica, which has been realized under the initiative of the Mayor of Strumica. The general satisfaction among all stakeholders says enough that the Nansen model has achieved its goal.

In the realization of the activities, certain weaknesses have been noticed, which do not have an impact on the final result, but could increase the quality of the work with their elimination. Mainly, this refers to the work of the teachers, especially their competences for independent development of programs and correct use of paraphrasing during the work with the students.

The Nansen model has a strong impact on strengthening the personal and social competences of the students, on building skills and viewpoints among them about tolerance, mutual cooperation and understanding.