MULTICULTURAL AND INTERCULTURAL RAISING AND EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN OF PRESCHOOL AGE IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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(Original scientific paper)

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Abstract
In the paper, the attention is dedicated to the study of the modules of multicultural-integrated upbringing and education in the kindergartens in the Republic of Macedonia, and the benefits for the children, tutors and parents as a very important prerequisite for the promotion on multiculturalism and intercultural upbringing and education for the children of preschool age in one of the first multicultural communities – kindergarten. Actually, apart from the family, the kindergarten is the first environment which a child is faced with, where foundations are being formed for understanding and acceptance of cultural and religious differences, as well as reciprocal respect for members of different communities, and it has a strong influence on the foundation of the model of behavior.

Keywords: Multicultural, intercultural, children, preschool age.

Introduction
Republic of Macedonia, as one of the numerous multicultural countries in the world, today progressively faces with the preparation of the young for life and self-realization in a multicultural society. In that process, the preschool upbringing and education is a period where the basics for further upbringing and education on younger generations have lots of responsibilities and an important role in a society.

Multicultural upbringing and education through the process of learning of other cultural endeavors allows acceptance or tolerance of other cultures. However, intercultural education is a process that first requires us to know ourselves and our own culture before we can understand other cultures. Intercultural upbringing and education for preschool children allows the children, even from the youngest age, to understand the diversity in the world and to be open to the idea that people naturally developed different lifestyles, customs, traditions and values. Actually, the intercultural upbringing and education provides encouragement for the children, enabling them to stand up against discrimination and injustice through acceptance, esteem and support of the diversity in all spheres of human life and activities.

In the efforts of the Republic of Macedonia to respond to the needs of the modern multicultural society, based on more international documents and recommendations from the European Union, in recent years, significant reforms have been made within the pre-school upbringing and education in agreement with the national interest of the country, as well as in the context of long-term political and social constellations. In that way, the multicultural character of the country, as it is defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, is in compliance with the Law on child protection as well as in the government strategic documents, for example the National strategy for educational development of 2005-2015 with accompanying documents, Conception for ten years basic upbringing and education made by the Development Bureau for education, Strategy for integrated education in the Republic of Macedonia, Standards for early learning and development for children from 0 to 6 years, Program for early learning and development, these are some of the documents in which the application and compliance with the principles, as well respecting the differences, is foreseen and recommended. Multicultural upbringing and education for the children of pre-school age is introduced in the National program for Early learning and development.
Models of multicultural upbringing and education in the kindergartens in the Republic of Macedonia

In this short order of modules of multicultural-integrated upbringing and education in the kindergartens of the Republic of Macedonia, we will only stick to the most dominant models and designed activities, which are being applied at this moment; and they represent domestic examples which show cases of positive changes in the view and behavior towards diversities among children, tutors and parents.

Mosaic model of multicultural-integrated upbringing and education

The mosaic-model is the first and for now the only model of multicultural-integrated education for children of pre-school age in the Republic of Macedonia. The model begins with its realization from 1998, first as a project, today as a regular program, which is conducted in ten multi ethnic municipalities, in four languages, in the public state kindergartens of this country. The model allows the children from their youngest age (three to six years) to play and communicate with each other and with children from other ethnical societies, through realization of the objectives of the National program and through everyday upbringing – educational activities which are implemented through different games and educational social activities for children in kindergarten allow them to develop respect and tolerance towards their own language and culture, as well as towards other languages and cultures in our country.

The main characteristics of this model are:
- Bilingual and multicultural approach to working with the children – with the children in one educational group there would be two tutors (one for each ethical society)
- Mixed age groups – children from 3 to 6 years old:
- Integrated approach in the educational work and realization in the educational activities with the children during the day in two languages, which makes this model of multicultural education unique and attractive for the children, as well for the parents.

The effects of the multi-year practical application of the Mosaic model for the upbringing-educational work are conditional and systemic changes. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia in 2011 took drastic measures for the institutionalization, and since then the exact same remains as an integral part of the official subsystem for the pre-age upbringing and education in Republic of Macedonia.

The Mosaic-model for integrated, multicultural education in his regular practice is realized today by the National program for working with children from the pre-age education (Program for early learning and development), formed by the Bureau for the development of education, and taken by the Minister of Labor and social politics in 2013.

Project Partnership for reconciliation through early children development and education in Europe

In December 2013, the realization for the pilot project “Partnership for reconciliation through early child development and education in Europe” had been launched in 8 kindergartens in Macedonia as part of the program PRECEDE. In these kindergartens two manuals, called “Respecting the differences” and “International manual for working with children with conflict and post-conflict areas”, were launched to serve as guides for changing the views and approach to inclusion in subjects connected with the differences in the children’s every day activities in the pre-educational upbringing and education. The sponsor of this project is the European Union, and the importer of this project in Republic of Macedonia is The first child embassy in the Megjashi world, which was accountable for the implementation of the working version for the upbringing-educational methodology on the pilot project as well for the training for the upbringing-educational staff in the kindergarten. On December 2014, this pilot project was being realized in 11 kindergartens overall.

Project Respect for diversity and multiculturalism in the early child development

With the support from the UNICEF office in Skopje, in 10 kindergartens of 10 municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia, in 2014/2015 began the realization for the project Respect for differences and multiculturalism in the early child development. The project provides the children with support, allowing them to gain respect for differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, origin, and disabilities. Based on the positive developments in the communities in which these pilot-activities were implemented, from 2015/2016, the activities for the attainment of respect for diversities began to be realized in all kindergartens in the Republic of Macedonia. The expected results among the children from the implementation of the activities of the project are as follows: development for self-respect and self-confidence among children;
children become willing to accept the differences between different people; they can tell which actions are hurtful to others, and are able to understand the consequences from those actions; children learn how to react when they are exposed to stereotypes, prejudgments and discrimination.

Summary – The benefits from the Multicultural-Interactive upbringing and education for the children, the tutors and the parents

The perennial change from the Mosaic model on the multicultural-integrated upbringing and education for children in the pre-school age in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the implementation on the project activities „Partnership for reconciliation throughout the early child development and education in Europe” and „Respect for diversity and multiculturalism in the early development among children”, enables an insight on a series of benefits for the children, the tutors and the parents, which are as follows:

- Strengthening the sensitivity for their own and the cultures of others;
- Developing awareness of inclusiveness;
- Understanding and respecting diversity in children and adults;
- Developing skills for creative problem solutions by reviewing the same thing from different perspectives with a goal to come to a common solution;
- Reducing stereotypes and prejudgments through direct contact and interaction with different individuals;
- Developing and nourishing basic ethical values: love, peace, truth, non-violence and good behavior etc.
- Deepening of the knowledge, skills and competencies among the tutors for respecting the differences and for their positive promotion in the daily activities with the children and the parents.
- Deepening of the knowledge and understanding of the differences which we encounter in the Macedonian society, and the way these differences are recognized and interpreted.

References

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