The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

Needs assessment study - Republic of Macedonia

This activity is implemented with technical support from UNESCO Office in Venice within the United Nations Joint Programme to Enhance Inter-Ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration. The Programme is implemented by UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO with financial support from the Government of Spain under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F).
Intercultural education cannot be just a simple ‘add on’ to the regular curriculum. It needs to concern the learning environment as a whole, as well as other dimensions of educational processes, such as school life and decision making, teacher education and training, curricula, languages of instruction, teaching methods and student interactions, and learning materials. This can be done through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices. The development of inclusive curricula that contain learning about the languages, histories and cultures of non-dominant groups in society is one important example. The issue of language(s) of instruction and language teaching is another crucial element of effective Intercultural Education and has been described in the UNESCO Education Position Paper “Education in a Multilingual World”
Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

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The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

Introduction

Basic facts about the Republic of Macedonia

Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Intercultural Dialogue

Reforms in education

Intercultural Education in the Republic of Macedonia

Initiatives

SUCCESS STORIES

Extracurricular Activities for Children from Ethnically Mixed Schools

Nansen Dialogue Centre - Integrated and Bilingual Education in Macedonia

South East European University

The State University in Tetovo

The St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty Skopje

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

CONCLUSIONS

RECCOMENDATIONS
1. Background

The University Sts. Cyril and Methodius (UKIM)/ Faculty of Philosophy and the UNESCO Venice Office (Project Office in Skopje) hosted the international conference focused on “Creating Vision and Standards – the Role of Higher Education in Fostering Inter-cultural Dialogue and Understanding in a Multiethnic Society” on March 16-17, 2011 in Skopje.

One of the conclusions of the Conference was to Conduct and publish a need assessment study based on the conclusions from the Conference and other relevant research on the topic i.e.the needs and the role of the HEI’s in promotion of integrated education in the Republic of Macedonia. This study was conducted during September-November 2011 by interdisciplinary research team. The text of the needs assessment study follows after short presentation of the Conference findings and conclusions.

The conference and its theme are in the framework of the UN Joint Programme “Enhancing Inter-ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration” with the goal to promote cooperation and understanding and contribute to freedom and democracy, human dignity and solidarity through teaching and learning, research and service. Given the diversity of cultural communities in Macedonia which is mirrored in its educational institutions, the country serves as a microcosm for exploring issues of intercultural dialogue and understanding. The conference brought together higher educational leaders, scholars and students to discuss how higher education today contributes or could contribute to creating a culture of dialogue at the institutional, local, regional and international levels. The Conference explored and offered a forum for sharing ideas, examples of good practice as well as innovative ways by which higher education can foster dialogue and understanding in the context of diversity in a 21st Century society.

The reasons for co-organizing this conference are as follows:

- The issue of dialogue and understanding across cultures is a matter of institutional, local, regional and international importance.
- Higher education institutions are increasingly called upon to engage in fostering dialogue and understanding in all aspects of their mission.
- The continuous development of ‘global spaces and interconnections’ in all sectors – economic, social, political, health and environment-related - poses challenges that will only be met through dialogue and understanding among future leaders and citizens, most often graduates of higher education institutions worldwide. The issue of diversity, in part due to mobility

and internationalization in higher education, is becoming central for consideration when developing higher education curricula, pedagogical and teacher training and extracurricular activities for students with the aim of enhancing inter-cultural dialogue.

The Macedonian government, with the adoption of is Strategy for Integrated Education has opened the doors to progress in the direction of making educational institutions truly spaces where the fruits of diversity can be garnered to the benefit of all members of society. Higher
education has a crucial role to play in this process, as a generators of ideas and innovations, and as environments where teaching and teachers are shaped.

The Conference initiated debate on the role of higher education in the implementation of this Strategy and fostering inter-cultural dialogue and understanding in the education system and processes of the country. By involving multiple partners from public and private higher-education institutions, with local and international experts, the Conference aimed to also improve dialogue and cooperation amongst diverse education stakeholders, identifying common objectives, priorities and challenges for intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

The focus of the discussions were on recognizing one’s own roles and responsibilities and finding solutions to challenges in the process of fulfilling higher educations’ mission in a 21st Century multiethnic society like this one.

The report from the conference discussions is used as a basis for needs assessment analysis and identification of key priorities for action of the relevant institutions. Human rights being one of the issues this conference aims to tackle, this project will also contribute to the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Participants in the conference on the role of High Education in fostering Inter-Cultural Dialogue and Understanding in a Multiethnic and multicultural society have opened broad spectrum of issues and priorities related to educational policy in the Republic of Macedonia in general, and about the concept of integrated education in multicultural society in particular. It was emphasized that National strategy for development of education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015 (2004) and Strategy for Integrated Educations (2011) should be aware of short and long-term priorities and most appreciated/valuated goals of the multicultural society and its educational policy and system of education. The Conference recognized that the role of HEI in promoting of values of integrated education should be future develop and operationalised to fit local and national priorities. This conference identified integrative education as one of the most important concepts and component of the educational policy in multicultural society. As such it should support instruments for mobility both vertical and horizontal within the educational system but also to provide multicultural and interethnic communication and facilitate creation and adoption of common values system; to foster multicultural interaction and integration on different levels of education in the country.

The conference identified following conclusions as priorities for addressing the needs of multi-ethnic and multicultural society and education policy:

- The educational planning process in the country should reflect and rely on integrated nature of education based on more inclusive educational system; increased interaction among ethnic communities; foster confidence building, trust and tolerance; contribute to cohesive multiethnic communities and stable multiethnic coexistence;
- The Conference emphasized the need for creating standards for quality of education and more appropriate and efficient model for monitoring and evaluation of education policy.
- The new national concept of education should be based on the principles of unity, integration and understanding of different needs, while national education policy should reflect ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the society but in the same time to
promote unique and jointly acceptable values, principles, interethnic collaboration, social integration and unity;

- The national concept of integrated education should provide sustainable and efficient relations between important components of education policy: (1) to interrelate knowledge with skills, values and attitudes (2) to support concept of integrated school (3) to improve vocational education (4) to connect high education with work place needs (5) to develop more efficient alternative adult education (6) to improve possibilities for acquiring language skills (7) to foster instruments for developing efficient multiculturalism into educational system;
- The integrated education in the country should rely on local /national recourses, capacities and needs;
- The Government education policy should attract and reach multi-ethnic consensus trough addressing educational needs and objectives of integrated education;
- The educational policy should identify and address the needs for curriculum reform and to emphasize the potentials and the role of peace education on primary, secondary and high education level;
- To identify the needs for capacity building of teachers and school administration and improve knowledge and skills for multicultural communication;
- Support policy of research, monitoring and evaluation of the educational policy, processes and factors that influences and affects the effective implementation of the policy and the concept of integrated education;
- Enhance dialogue and cooperation with MoE and provide training for its administration for successful development, cooperation, coordination and implementation of educational policy and the concept of integrated education;
- Conduct and publish a need assessment study based on the conclusions from the Conference and other relevant research on the topic. To conduct needs assessment study on the needs and the role of the HEI’s in promotion of integrated education in the Republic of Macedonia. To estimate lessons learned and best practices of NGO sector as well as ones of HEI’s in development of integrated and multicultural education;
INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th century promoted and the beginning of the 21st century brought to the forefront a number of global challenges facing mankind and confronting each country with a serious test. The specific collided with the general, needs collided with possibilities, electiveness collided with obligatoriness, “I” collided with “WE”, and in a number of cases development collided with existentialism. For example, the development of computer technology and contemporary systems of information fundamentally changed the life we lead, and brought about a revolution in all aspects of man’s manifestation – the work, social, family and individual one. On the global scene, the curtain of isolationism and uniqueness was raised, and the show of political, economic and cultural convergence of people commenced. Global warming, energy crisis, poverty, globalisation processes and unemployment, political integrationist processes, transfer of cultural values and the need of healthy life put the issue of joint resolution of mankind’s problems on the pedestal of highest priorities of the peoples around the world.

In education, this requires assuming responsibility for achieving global policies governing this area. In this sense, states must assume responsibility for the realisation of the goals, principles and recommendations underpinning the international documents on development of education in Europe and the world. The Education for All (2000) Programme1, the UN Millennium Goals (2000)2, the Lisbon Agenda (1997 and 2001)3, Copenhagen (2002)4, the Lifelong Learning Memorandum (2000) of the European Commission5 and the Bologna Process documents represent a reference framework which contains most of the goals that the countries, and hence their education systems, are to strive towards in the coming period.

1 UNESCO (1990): World Conference on Education for All - Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March
2 UNDP (2000), Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - United Nations Millennium Declaration, Millennium Summit in New York, 6-8 September
These tendencies place countries ahead of a serious challenge, especially the less developed ones. The question of their involvement in the general global trends is not only a question of adaptation, but also of survival. Facing such challenges, countries are seeking for the best possible solutions in the area of education, in the hope that they will manage to establish such a system which will, on one hand, contribute to the creation of the future citizen of the world, whilst on the other, act as an agent in the general development of the country and assist in solving its internal political, economic and cultural problems.

The Republic of Macedonia, plagued by the processes of transition is trying to design its education system in accordance with contemporary international tendencies. These attempts are in constant collision with the external and internal challenges determining the system of education and shaping its future development directions.

In its efforts to resolve the country’s socio educational challenges and build a strong and functional, not only national but also a European “architecture”, the education system of the Republic of Macedonia is constantly facing the question: How should the education system be structured; what kinds of mechanisms should it have at its disposal and which goals should it strive towards, in order to prepare youth and adults for all the challenges and changes they face and will face in the course of their lives? Education today should realise two main goals: one founded on global values and serving developmental characteristic for the contemporary world (cooperation, compatibility, competitiveness, integration, etc.), one rooted in the national culture and values, serving the resolving of domestic problems and developmental directions. Education needs to seek fulfilment of its mission through the integration and harmonisation of the “I” – “WE” and “WE” – “OTHERS” relations. This must be achieved respecting the principles of solidarity and social justice and pursuing efficiency, adaptability and creativity.

**BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

The Republic of Macedonia is situated on the Balkan Peninsula stretching over a territory of 25,713 square kilometres. The last population census in 2002 and annual reports by the State Statistical Office and the sectoral ministries showed the following demographic indicators.⁶

**General population characteristics:**

- There are 2,022,547 citizens living in Macedonia. According to population estimates by the State Statistical Office, the country had a total population of 2,040,228 in 2006.

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• The average age of the population in 2006 was 36.2 years.
• The ethnic structure of the population in Macedonia is as follows: 64.2 percent Macedonians, 25.2 percent Albanians, 3.5 percent Turks, 2.7 percent Roma, 0.5 percent Vlachs, 1.8 percent Serbs, 0.8 percent Bosnians and 1.0 percent belonging to other ethnic groups.
• The population is concentrated in urban areas. Approximately 57.8 percent of the total population is concentrated in 34 urban areas, and 20.5 percent of the population lives in the city of Skopje. Many rural inhabited places have been totally depopulated, and a similar fate awaits further other rural towns and villages.

Population growth rates:
• The country is experiencing a decline in the rate of population growth. In 1990, the population growth rate was 9.7 percent. In 1994, the rate was 8.1 percent, and by 2006 the rate had declined to 1.8 percent.

Fertility rates:
• The total fertility rate (TFR) among women has also declined. In 1971, the TFR was 2.98 live born children per woman. The TFR was 2.45 in 1981 and 2.1 in 1994. By 2006, the TFR had declined to 1.5.
• The decline of the birth rate is due to the so-called tempo effect. In other words, postponement of marriage and childbearing to a later period in life has resulted in a lower birth rate. For example, the average age of mothers at the time of the birth of their first child increased from 23.5 years in 1994 to 25.3 in 2006. The overall average age at childbirth increased from 25.8 in 1994 to 26.8 years in 2004. There are indications that the postponement of marriage is due to the difficult economic and social circumstances in the country as well as to the increase in the number of women who give preference to their education and career.
• There are disparities in the birth rate according to the ethnicity of the mother. In this sense, there are two distinct groups: women with a high number of births (Roma, Bosnian and Albanian women) and women with a very low fertility rate (Serbian, Macedonian, Vlach and other ethnicities).
• The population growth in 2006 for different ethnic groups was as follows: Macedonians had a rate of 0.2 percent, Albanians 15.4 percent, Turks –0.1 percent, Roma 23.3 percent and “others” –4.0 percent.

Age structure of the population:
• The general mortality rate for the period from 1994 to 2006 increased from 8.0 to 9.1 deaths per thousand inhabitants.
• The number of children age birth to five years in 2006 was 117000, representing 5.75 percent of the total population.7

In the last decade, the number of newborn children has decreased. In 1989, there were 34,608 newborn babies while in 2002 there were 27,761 newborns.

In the period from 1994 to 2006, the proportion of the population in the 0–14 age group decreased from 33.2 to 19.2 percent. Population forecasts predict a further decline of the 0–14 age group to 17.4 percent in 2010, 15.5 percent in 2020 and 14.5 percent in 2030.

The proportion of the population aged 65 and over was 8.2 percent in 1991, 8.5 percent in 1994, 10.6 percent in 2002 and 11.2 percent in 2006. It is expected to be more than 14 percent in 2015.

According to the UN Human Poverty Index, 55.1 percent of the population faces some dimension of poverty.

In the period from 1945 to 1991, Macedonia was a constituent republic of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The people of Macedonia, on the 8th September 1991, decided through a referendum on separation from the Yugoslav federation, thus founding the sovereign and independent state it is today. In April 2001, the country signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union, and in 2005 it was awarded the status of country candidate for full membership. The Republic of Macedonia announced thus clearly its determination and aspirations for full membership in the EU, in NATO and in all global and European integrational processes. This is the highest priority of the Government, supported by all political parties and the entire society, and a political issue on which there is full consensus among all parties.

Since its independence (in 1991), the Republic of Macedonia has been facing numerous problems and challenges which emanate from the economic and social situation. The macro-economic conditions inherited from the former state were unfavourable and expressed themselves in a negative GDP trend, an annual inflation rate of 600 percent, a high unemployment rate of 26 percent and a relatively sizeable internal and external financial debt. In such an environment, the state conducted several significant reforms, such as: privatisation and reorganisation of the companies and banks, changes in the important segments of the macro-economic policy (especially the fiscal and monetary policy), liberalisation of prices and liberalisation of the external trade exchange with foreign countries, introduction of VAT, decentralisation and selective transfer of the power from a central to a local level.

Despite these reform efforts, the macro-economic indicators of the Republic of Macedonia continued to be unfavourable because the economy suffered greatly due to the loss of its traditional markets, the economic embargoes and the armed conflict in 2001.
The greatest problem facing the country is its high unemployment. According to the Labour Force Survey (ILO definition), the official unemployment rate amounted in the year 2009 to 32.7%\textsuperscript{8}.

The activity rate amounted to 56.1% in 2009. The activity of the labour force is relatively low, i.e. it is lower than the average activity rate in the EU for 14.8%. The gender gap in the activity amounts to 26.4% for the same year, 2009. The activity rate of women is lower than that of men, primarily as a result of the traditional family role of women in society, especially of the women from certain ethnic communities, resulting in an employment rate of 29.1%, well below the employment rate of men (44.4%).\textsuperscript{9}

Unemployment is most pronounced among the youth at the age 15-24 comprising the labour force at this age (employed and unemployed seeking employment), with an unemployment rate of 56.6%. Of the total number of persons in the age group 15-24 in the country, 16.02% are employed, 19.08% are unemployed, whereas the rest 64.89% are inactive persons, i.e. persons who are not looking for a job or who are still in education.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8} State Statistical Office, Labour Market, Situation.  
\textsuperscript{9} State Statistical Office, Labour market, Situation.  
\textsuperscript{10} State Statistical Office, Labour market, Situation 03.03.2010
The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

Table 1. Population activity (15+)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity rate</th>
<th>Employment rate</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (15-64)</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: State Statistical Office

Table 2: Active population according to the level of education in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active population</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary or less</td>
<td>28.62</td>
<td>31.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year secondary</td>
<td>42.17</td>
<td>40.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Sec./Higher</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>15.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: State Statistical Office

The total number of unemployed consists mostly of persons with completed secondary vocational education of 4-year duration (38.82%) and persons with a low level of education, i.e. persons without any qualification (35.99%).

Unemployment is especially high in urban communities (65.75%)\(^{12}\), which is understandable given the fact that the economic crisis and the transition affected most strongly the large industrial facilities, which had accumulated the bulk of the active labour force and which were as a rule located in urban areas.

According to the length of unemployment, 56.15% of the unemployed have been waiting for employment for over 4 years. This percentage is the highest among persons with incomplete primary education (72.40%) and among persons with no education (61.16%).\(^{13}\)

Long–term unemployment is a serious problem in the Republic of Macedonia. It results in outdated competences i.e. decline of capacities for work. Long-term unemployment dominates within the overall unemployment with 79.72%, which is much higher than the average in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – 55.3% in 2002 and the EU average - 40.2%. What is most concerning is the fact that close to 30% of the unemployed have been waiting for a job for over 8 years. From the viewpoint of their competences for work and employment possibilities and opportunities, this fact is highly unfavourable.\(^{14}\)

As regards ethnic affiliation, the Macedonian ethnic group has the highest participation in the overall number of unemployed (62.49%) with the Albanian ethnic group following suit (24.83%), whereas the participation of the other ethnic groups is within the range of their percentage-wise participation in the overall population. The exception are the Roma, who participate in the number of unemployed with 5.27%, which is twice their ratio in the overall population (2.66%).\(^{15}\) The high unemployment rate of the Roma population is to a large extent due to their low educational level. With the measures undertaken by the Government and the NGO sector, especially the programmes for awarding scholarships and for mentoring of Roma students in secondary education, it is expected that this negative trend gradually improves.

The last Census of the population of the Republic of Macedonia carried out in 2002 and the annual reports of the State Statistical Office and the sectoral ministries\(^{16}\) point out to the following demographic indicators:

- There are 2,022,547 citizens living in the Republic of Macedonia, of which 1,015,377 are males (50.20%) and 1,007,170 are females (49.80%). According to the population

\(^{12}\) Source: EARM, Situation 8.01.2010.
\(^{13}\) Source: EARM, Situation 31.12.2009
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
estimates of the State Statistical Office, in 2006 the country had a total population of 2,040,228.

- The ethnic structure in Macedonia is as follows: 64.17% are Macedonians, 25.17% Albanians, 3.5% Turks, 2.66% Roma, 0.48% Vlachs, 1.78% Serbs, 0.84% Bosnians and 1.04% belong to other ethnic groups.

- Out of the 1762 inhabited places, only 34 are urban settlements and 57.8% of the total population are concentrated there, with 20.5% of the total population of the country living in the capital city of Skopje. 141 rural inhabited places have been totally depopulated and a similar fate awaits soon further 455 inhabited places.

- In the period from 1994 to 2006, the participation of the population in the age group 0-14 decreased from 33.2% to 19.2%, with a forecast for further continuation of the decline to 17.4% (2010), to 15.4 (2020) and to 14.4 (2030).

- The rate of population aged 65 and above was 8.15% in 1991, 8.5 in 1994%, 10.57% in 2002 and 11.2% in 2006. It is expected to rise to over 14% in 2015.

- Almost half of the population aged 15 and above (49.39%), have low level of education. Of them, 3.85% have no education, 10.77% have not completed primary education, and 34.77% have completed only primary education; 40.09% have completed secondary education, 3.24% have a post-secondary and 7.28% a university degree.
MULTICULTURALISM, INTERCULTURALISM, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The demographic and cultural composition of societies is rapidly changing as a result of greater mobility of peoples and persons. Ethno-centrism, racism and xenophobia constitute a serious threat to the life and well-being of many societies and to the dignity and worth of human beings. Governments and international organisations, notably the United Nations and the Council of Europe, have repeatedly stated in imperative terms that the speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a priority. In this framework the role of intercultural education is of crucial importance and should be promoted by all available means with the aim to fostering tolerance, understanding and respect among peoples, groups and individual persons.17

The concept of multiculturalism is linked to the last decades of the 20th century and is an important topic appearing in diverse scientific and political discussions and debates. In this period, certain authors interpret multiculturalism as element of political correctness18, as policy of recognition of civil rights and cultural identities19 and as a value of cultural diversity in general. Today, numerous scholars of multiculturalism face problems in defining and understanding it, which indicates that it is a complex, multilayer social phenomenon which is difficult to notionally, methodologically and theoretically frame and define.

No matter of the point if multiculturalism is related to the position and the supporters of the liberal theory multiculturalism and their arguments on differences and social cohesion20 or it is related to the arguments of conservatives criticisms of multiculturalism and their arguments about multiculturalism as a threat to national cohesion or it relates to other theoreticians that argues in favor of liberalism that will not overestimate the significance of cultural differences, one issue should be accepted as truism - multiculturalism accepted as a claim for legal recognition of the rights of ethnic, religious or cultural groups as opposed to multiculturalism understood as tolerance or cultural diversity21 has been adopted within most of the liberal-democratic societies. It is reality that should be taken into account while creating social, cultural and educational policy worldwide.

If we agree that multiculturalism denotes a concept of society in which a number of cultures coexist equitably in a given time and space, then interculturalism defines a concept or a cultural and educational policy that leads to the creation of a society, in which through the processes of interaction different cultures are intertwined. Interculturalism stimulates dialogue and strengthens the relations between and among these cultures and leads to the creation of a new cultural matrix or a so-called unity composed of diversity. This matrix

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17 Unesco (1999): The International Basis for Intercultural Education Including Anti-Racist and Human Rights Education - A selection of articles from relevant documents, adopted by the governments of member states of the United Nations, UNESCO, the Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Council of Europe, International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) in co-operation with UNESCO: International Bureau of Education (IBE) and the Council of Europe


should represent a sub-summarising creation which in itself accumulates the values and achievements of several cultures. For this reason precisely, the idea of interculturalism can be located at a local, regional, national/state and supranational/global level.

This post-modernist phenomenon that has emerged within the framework of the western ideological and theoretical thought thrives on the foundations of the cultural pluralism, manifesting itself as an antipode of the cultural assimilationism on one hand and of the cultural antagonism, on the other hand. It emerges as a negation of the cultural monotheism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

If this concept represents an equal status of minority and majority cultures and an opportunity for the lesser to equitably participate in the creation of the global cultural matrix, then the question arises whether there are realistic possibilities for this precondition to be fulfilled. The theoretical basis allows that, but the practice, at least so far, demonstrates it as a one-way process. Most frequently, in the practice, this process is realised in one way only and represents an interiorisation of the experiences and cultural values of the majority culture by the minority culture, whilst in the opposite direction, this process hardly exists.

In a vast number of cases, interculturalism manifests itself as cultural assimilation. In this context, cultural assimilation transcends national borders and manifests itself at a global level. If in one case it appears as an instrument of internal politics of certain states in the achievement of the goal of focused imposing of one’s own cultural pattern on immigrants and on minority cultures, as a precondition for preserving the state’s cultural identity and integrity, it can in another case manifest itself also on a global supranational level and operate as an instrument of foreign policy. Thus, in this constellation, there is a substantial fear by smaller nations, that they might, in the name of universality, lose their specificity, i.e. that in the name of the universal the individual cultural identity may be lost.

There are no small or big cultures, but small and weak, and big and mighty carriers of cultures. These processes of globalisation always favour their creators. The rules of the game are always dictated by the strong, whereas the weak have a choice of remaining isolated (which is practically impossible) or to accept those rules, which means an interiorisation of other cultural values and application of foreign mechanisms of interaction. Nowadays, thanks to the economic and political globalisation, cultural communication represents one of the preconditions for the achievement of existential communication and for the confirmation of one’s own place and role in the overall globalisation processes. Unfortunately, in a great number of cases, such processes can be characterised as cultural hegemony on the part of certain states. Interculturalism namely, represents self-criticism i.e. critical relationship towards one’s own culture as a necessary precondition for interaction with other cultures and an interiorisation of their experiences and cultural values.

The events in countries where ethnic and cultural conflicts occur are especially indicative. In these cases, the insistence on the application of the idea of interculturalism as one of the solutions of overcoming these conflicts is especially aggressive. Without intending to enter into a detailed sociological analysis of the correctness of these claims, we wish only to
stress the following: if cultural differences are the main reason for the occurrence of these conflicts, then this idea is well-founded, but if at the background of these conflict there are political or economic reasons, then the idea of interculturalism transforms itself into an instrument for further destabilisation of the country and loss of its national/state cultural identity. Problems of political and economic nature should be resolved above all with political and economic means. Culture is a mighty instrument for correction of failures in the development, and can contribute in overcoming of consequences of bad political decisions, but is also a powerful instrument for multiplication of negative developments in an environment of political manipulation. The politics of, on one hand, declarative advocacy for multiculturalism and the achievement of the idea of interculturalism, whilst on the other hand, favouring of cultural monism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, is a politics of destruction, not of creation. The victim of such a politics is not only the majority culture, but also the minority culture. The political, economic and spiritual defacing of the state and its cultural identity, transforms the state into an amorphous creation fertile for implementation of the cultural hegemony.

Unfortunately, although interculturalism and intercultural education feature prominently in international documents, weaknesses still persist in the practice as well as inconsistencies in their application. Many international documents, building upon the philosophy and the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, give further content to the common standards proclaimed in this Declaration and stress teaching and education as effective means to shape these standards into reality. It is unfortunate that most of these international texts are not sufficiently known and are largely ignored.22

According to UNESCO, the term multicultural describes the culturally diverse nature of human society. It not only refers to elements of ethnic or national culture, but also includes linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity.

Interculturality is a dynamic concept and refers to evolving relations between cultural groups. It has been defined as “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect.” Interculturality presupposes multiculturalism and results from ‘intercultural’ exchange and dialogue on the local, regional, national or international level.

In order to strengthen democracy, education systems need to take into account the multicultural character of society, and aim at actively contributing to peaceful coexistence and positive interaction between different cultural groups. There have traditionally been two approaches: multicultural education and Intercultural Education. Multicultural education uses learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance, or at least tolerance, of these cultures. Intercultural Education aims to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups.

22 Unesco (1999): The International Basis for Intercultural Education Including Anti-Racist and Human Rights Education - A selection of articles from relevant documents, adopted by the governments of member states of the United Nations, UNESCO, the Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Council of Europe, International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) in co-operation with UNESCO: International Bureau of Education (IBE) and the Council of Europe
If interculturalism is a concept or policy, then intercultural education represents one of the strongest instruments for the realisation of this concept. Theory treats this idea as a new educational architecture, in which processes of educational influence over young and old are implemented, which should facilitate introduction to other cultures, their understanding and respect, as well as building of mechanisms for communication, exchange and reciprocal supplementation in the processes of creation of cultural values.

However, in the practice, intercultural education is differently understood depending on the country where it is being implemented. Thus, intercultural education in some countries is taken to mean education that needs to aid students-immigrants and students from minority ethnic collectives interiorise the experiences and cultural values of the dominant majority culture, for their easier and more successful integration in the economic, political and cultural life. Most frequent forms of realisation of this education are special courses for adults or additional instruction for students. In some cases, there are specialised facilities for the organisation of this kind of intercultural education. It is evident that this politics brings about assimilation and segregation in education, and is diametrically opposed to the theoretic understanding of multicultural and/or intercultural education.

But in practice, intercultural education is interpreted relative to the country where it is implemented. Thus, intercultural education in the biggest and most powerful countries in the world is understood as education which should assist immigrant and minority students interiorise experiences and cultural values of the dominant majority culture, in order to facilitate their easier and more successful integration into the economic, political and cultural life. Most common forms of this kind of education are special courses for adults and additional lessons for students. In some cases, special facilities realise this kind of intercultural education. It is evident that this policy implies educational segregation, and is diametrically contradictory to the theoretical understanding of intercultural education.

These assimilation processes very often yield no result, and the social and cultural integration of minority groups is becoming more and more a reality. As a reaction to the enhanced assimilation policies, liberal integration policies developed in the 1970-ties and 1980-ties, that to a large extent respect the cultural differences of the immigrant population and/or minority groups. Although appearing under different names (multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, interculturalism, etc.), they all share a common basis, to a large extent declarative, that past cultural assimilation and majority domination needs to be replaced with the affirmation of cultural diversities. Within these liberal endeavours, the so-called intercultural/multicultural concepts of education have from the onset played a significant role.

Multicultural education is a progressive approach to transforming education and a contrast to discriminatory policies and practices in education. It is grounded in the ideals of social justice, educational equity, critical pedagogy and commitment to securing educational experiences helping all students reach their full potentials as learners and as socially aware and active individuals on a local, national and global level. Multicultural education
acknowledges the essentiality of schools for laying the foundations for transformation of society and eradication of injustice.\textsuperscript{24}

According to Gorski, the underlying goal of multicultural education is to affect social changes. Three strands of transformation are incorporated in the efforts to realise this goal:
1. the transformation of self,
2. the transformation educational facilities and of schooling, and
3. the transformation of society.

Despite differing conceptualisations of multicultural education, several shared ideals lay the foundation for its understanding:
- All students must have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential.
- Every student must be prepared to competently participate in an intercultural society.
- Teachers must be prepared to effectively facilitate learning for every individual student, regardless of their cultural similarities or differences.
- Schools must be active participants in ending oppression of all types, first by ending oppression within their own walls, then by producing socially and critically active and aware students.
- Education must become more fully student-centred and inclusive of students’ voices and experiences.
- Educators, activists, and others must take a more active role in the re-examination of all educational practices and of how they affect the learning of all students: assessment methods, pedagogies, school psychology and counselling practices, educational materials and textbooks, etc.

According to the National Association for Multicultural Education from Chicago, multicultural education is a philosophical built on the principles of liberty, justice, equity, equality and human dignity, as stated in the majority of international documents and declarations and national constitutions. It affirms the need for us to prepare students for their responsibilities in a mutually dependent world. It acknowledges the role the school can play in the development of attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms pluralism. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and in society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice.

Multicultural education is a process permeating all aspects of school practice, policy and organisation as means to ensuring the highest possible level of academic achievement for all students. It helps students develop a positive concept of self, providing them with knowledge of history, cultures and the contribution of the different groups. It prepares students to actively work towards structural equality in organisations and institutions, through providing them with knowledge and skills for redistribution of power and income among the different groups.

Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and their life stories and experiences should be placed at the centre of the teaching and learning processes. In

addition, teachers and students must analyse critically the oppression and power relations in their communities, in society and in the world.

For these goals to be achieved, multicultural education requires school staff that has received multicultural education, and is capable of including and accepting diversity. Multicultural education requires a complete reform of schools so that it can illuminate all aspects of the school community and organisation.

Acknowledging that equality and fairness are not the same, multicultural education endeavours to offer all students fair educational opportunities, whilst at the same time encouraging them to social critique in the interest of social fairness.

Unlike multicultural education, intercultural education is about developing an understanding of and valuing others and about understanding of and valuing self. It provides opportunities to gain an insight into one’s own knowledge, limits, doubts and attitudes by confronting, interacting and negotiating with other cultures. This requires developing an understanding of why we see the world in the way we do.

Intercultural education is not a subject or a project; rather it should be embedded within the curriculum and be a way of thinking and action. It aims to engage young people actively in the process of making sense of the world around them. It is important to shape one's practices to see beyond the stereotypical, the binary opposition, the simplification, the regularity and the expected, and look into the details, the discriminated interpretation, the personal and critical engagement, and the sensitiveness to the world’s many representations. Through the exploration of other cultural identities opportunities are provided to recognise points of similarity between cultures that may be hidden from view or not immediately apparent. The focus is on exploring where cultures meet and developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable interaction and negotiation between cultures. This process of coming to an understanding of others requires self-reflection and the confrontation and deconstruction of sometimes deeply embedded stereotypical views. It challenges both pupils and teachers to understand how views are constructed and to appreciate that views about oneself are constructed in relation to how we see others.

According to the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe (Council of Europe, ERICarts Institute 2008)25, Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of different perspectives and practices; to increase participation (or the freedom to make choices); to ensure equality; and to enhance creative processes.

From the point of view of the cultural sector, intercultural dialogue within a country involves public and private cultural/artistic initiatives which bring together individuals/groups from minority/migrant communities together with the majority population in order to enter into a multi-directional communication process. Such dialogue ideally takes place in a shared space where attempts are made to address unequal power relations between those

belonging to majority/minority groups. The aim of an intercultural exchange is transformative of all those participating and can result in, for example, the creation of new or hybrid cultural expressions/forms, new image constructions, changed behaviour patterns etc.

The European Union has developed a variety of programmes targeting directly or indirectly intercultural dialogue or intercultural learning. Programmes like Socrates (education-primary secondary, university and adult education or language education) Leonardo (vocational training) Culture 2000 etc include in their priorities or have as a consequence intercultural learning and dialogue. One of these programmes is the European Youth Programme.26

The UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education state that, in a world experiencing rapid change, and where cultural, political, economic and social upheaval challenges traditional ways of life, education has a major role to play in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Through programmes that encourage dialogue between students of different cultures, beliefs and religions, education can make an important and meaningful contribution to sustainable and tolerant societies.27

Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) 28:

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Intercultural education cannot be just a simple ‘add on’ to the regular curriculum. It needs to concern the learning environment as a whole, as well as other dimensions of educational processes, such as school life and decision making, teacher education and training, curricula, languages of instruction, teaching methods and student interactions, and learning materials. This can be done through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices. The development of inclusive curricula that contain learning about the languages, histories and cultures of non-dominant groups in society is one important example. The issue of language(s) of instruction and language teaching is another crucial element of effective Intercultural Education and has been described in the UNESCO Education Position Paper “Education in a Multilingual World”.29 The distinct aims of Intercultural Education can be summarised under the headings of ‘the four pillars of education’ as identified by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century. According to the conclusions of the Commission, education should be broadly based on the pillars of:

26 Challenge paper: Youth and intercultural dialogue in Europe (2000-2006), By Judith Neisse
28 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Art. 26.2,
29 UNESCO (2003): Education in a Multilingual World, Published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
1. **Learning to know**, by “combining sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in-depth on a small number of projects”\(^{30}\). The Commission further states that “a general education brings a person into contact with other languages and areas of knowledge, and... makes communication possible”\(^{31}\); these results of a general education represent some of the fundamental skills to be transmitted through intercultural education.

2. **Learning to do**, in order to “acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams.”\(^{32}\) In the national and international context, learning to do also includes the acquisition of necessary competencies that enable the individual to find a place in society.

3. **Learning to live together**, by “developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts – in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding... peace”\(^{33}\) and cultural diversity. In short, the learner needs to acquire knowledge, skills and values that contribute to a spirit of solidarity and co-operation among diverse individuals and groups in society.

4. **Learning to be**, “so as to better develop one’s personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that respect, education must not disregard any aspect of a person’s potential...”\(^{34}\) such as his or her cultural potential, and it must be based on the right to difference. These values strengthen a sense of identity and personal meaning for the learner, as well as benefiting their cognitive capacity.


\(^{31}\) Ibid, p. 87

\(^{32}\) Ibid, p. 97

\(^{33}\) Ibid

\(^{34}\) Ibid
The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

REFORMS IN EDUCATION

In line with its commitments, Republic of Macedonia needs to transform into a society in which education and training, culture and science represent a key factor for the well-being of its citizens and strengthening its economy. Hence, reforms in education need to ensure greater compatibility between national and EU and global standards, advancement of democracy and civil society, and development of a contemporary integrated market economy.\footnote{Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia (2005), National Programme for Development of Education 2005-2015, Skopje}

The Macedonian education reform is rooted in: the National Programme for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015, laws and bylaws governing the area of education, the Nine-year Primary Education Policy, the Compulsory Secondary Education Policy, national goal-oriented strategic documents on economic development, poverty alleviation, strengthening education for Roma, etc.

The primary goal of education policy of the Republic of Macedonia, enshrined in the National Programme for Development of Education 2005-2015, is to provide opportunities to all and to all age groups for acquiring a suitable educational level, and to ensure that all possess competences commensurate to the demands of society and the labour market.

In order to achieve this goal, education must be accessible to all, regardless of age, sex, religious and sexual orientation, ethnic affiliation, medical condition and social and financial status. In addition, education and training must fulfil all efficiency and effectiveness requirements in order to be in a position to provide all with sufficient general and vocational education.

Faced with a poor education structure of the population, of which almost half have only completed primary education at most, poor qualification structure of the employed and unemployed workforce and high drop-out rate in the course of schooling, the state has undertaken measures to increase the duration of compulsory education. These measures should facilitate improved education level of youth, with special emphasis on improving the quality of their general educational, vocational/work and social competences.

The increase in the duration of compulsory education should aid the establishment of a dynamic relation between education, the labour market and developments in society. The creation of preconditions for providing youth with qualifications should enable better start-up positions at the transition from schooling to work, retention of the job and active participation in the processes of democratic decision making.
The tertiary sector has since 2003 been in a continuous process of change, to the greatest extent caused by the endeavours of the state to implement the Bologna recommendations.

Similarly, efforts are being made in the area of adult education to find solutions that will strengthen this education system component.

The period of transition has been filled with a number of initiatives for changing the legislation in education, for decentralising education, for adopting developmental curricula, for strengthening the administrative and professional capacities of the state institutions, for establishing professional bodies, agencies and centres, for changing the structure and organisational set-up of the education system and educational institutions, etc. All this is a result of the efforts of the state to find optimal solutions that would enable the creation of a functional education system. It would be justified to call this period a period of education reforms. The extent to what these initiatives bore fruit is the subject of this report.

**INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Experience so far indicates that the idea of intercultural education draws its strength from the *Education for All Declaration*, based on the right to education and the right to diversity. Within the framework of these efforts, we can differentiate among: multicultural and multilingual education (in the practice it most frequently takes the shape of bi-cultural and bi-lingual education); education of the culturally different; civic education, education for cultural understanding, international education, education for peace and coexistence, etc.

What is the situation like with the intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia? To answer this question, we must take a look of the education system itself, and to detect the objectification of the idea of intercultural education, if it exists.

The Republic of Macedonia is populated by a large number of ethnic groups: the majority – Macedonian and the minority – the Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, Roma, and Vlach groups. It is evident that in the Republic of Macedonia, just like in the other Balkan countries, a number of cultures coexist, that have among themselves developed appropriate relations. The rights and obligations of the citizens are regulated with the Constitution of the RM and the laws. The Constitution respects the rights of the ethnic groups in the Republic of Macedonia, including the right to education. Minority rights are guaranteed through Article 7 (lines 2 and 4), Article 8 (lines 2 and 11) and Article 48. The Constitution guarantees a multitude of rights related to education and to the use of language in municipalities populated by a substantial number of the members of national minorities. Articles 44 and 48 are of special significance; they relate to the right of the national minorities to self-expression and maintenance of the culture and the cultural identity. Thus, conditions and institutional opportunities are constantly created for education, getting to know
each other, building and expressing one’s own cultural identity, as a basis for interaction with one’s own cultural group and with the other cultural groups in the country.

In the area of education, the national minorities enjoy all the rights prescribed by international covenants for the protection of rights of minorities. Taking a deeper look at the education subsystems in the Republic of Macedonia, following characteristics can be detected:

- In primary education (eight years duration), curricula and programmes in Albanian, Turkish and Serbian are also implemented. These curricula and programmes are same in content, i.e. they do not differ from the curricula and programmes in Macedonian, except that they contain additional 2 lessons per week of Macedonian language and literature. Differences exist in the textbooks used in some of the subjects, like mother tongue.
- In secondary general education (4 years duration), curricula and programmes in Albanian and Turkish are implemented. These curricula and programmes are same in content, i.e. they do not differ from the curricula and programmes in Macedonian, except that they contain additional 2 lessons per week of Macedonian language and literature. Differences exist in the textbooks used in some of the subjects.
- In secondary vocational education (three or four year duration) curricula and programmes are implemented in Albanian for the following profiles: machine engineering, electro-technical, agricultural, veterinary, traffic/transport, construction, economy-law, trade, medical, textile, catering-tourism, food processing and chemical-technological. These curricula and programmes are same in content, i.e. they do not differ from the curricula and programmes in Macedonian, except that they contain additional 2 lessons per week of Macedonian language and literature. Differences exist in the textbooks used in some of the subjects.
- In higher education, curricula and programmes in Albanian are implemented. The educational process is conducted in ethnically mixed or separate schools. Unfortunately, due to fragile interethnic relations with a recent history of an ethnic conflict in 2001, the number of mixed schools is declining in favour of the ethnically clean schools, which are more numerous anyway.

If we are aware that one of the forms of intercultural education is enshrined in the right to education in the respective mother tongue of the culturally diverse students, then we can conclude that the Republic of Macedonia, as reflected in the situation of its educational system, fully respects and implements the idea of intercultural education. But is it really so?

An analysis of the content basis of education, and above all of the textbooks in use, shows that elements of intercultural education are not only absent, but on the contrary, education favours cultural monism with a clear xenophobic manifestation, which has as its objective the preference of the idea of cultural exclusivity. This is a seemingly absurd situation. Through the satisfaction of the right to education in the
mother tongue for the national minorities, instead of contributing to the strengthening of interculturalism in the country, we have succeeded in strengthening the xenophobia, the interethnic and cultural intolerance among the youth, up to a level of fundamental self-understanding – fanaticism which destroys all possibilities for an ethical-existential communication. Does education generate this manifestation? What are the reasons for this?

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, multi-ethnicity is reflected in the education system in different ways, with the aim of providing children and youth with education in the mother tongue. That evidently contributed to the significant progress in the implementation of the language rights of the communities in the last decade. However, the concrete interpretation of the rights of the communities on the part of the country’s political factors did not bring about greater integration. On the contrary, the ethnic divide, especially among the smaller children increased, and the knowledge of the other groups became anecdotal. Although on a macro political level interethnic relations are constantly improving as a result of the institutional approach linked to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the insufficient integration on a personal level may be a long-term threat to the very cohesion of society. A more integrated approach in education will not only help avoid bad experiences, but will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the elements building the country’s multi-ethnic society and what is needed to make it more stable and coherent.\textsuperscript{36}

Following can be suggested as possible reasons for the increase of the ethnic and cultural intolerance among the youth, generated in the area of education:

- creation of parallel education systems, which added the issue of physical distance to the issue of cultural distance;
- factographical presentation of traditional elements of other cultures in the textbooks and in the teaching process; stress is placed only on cognitive acquisition, with absence of the processes of understanding, valuing and respect. Analyses of textbooks for primary and secondary education reveal that the prevailing contents and ways of their delivering in curricular and extra-curricular activities do not enable a satisfactory degree of mutual knowledge of traditional customs and values, way of life, gender relations, family relations, religion, everyday life, etc.\textsuperscript{37};
- absence of school and out-of-school activities which presuppose participation of young people from different cultures. In this area, there is almost no state intervention with the purpose of elimination of this anomaly. The main carriers of this type of cultural together-bringing predominantly come from the NGO community. In the recent past, numerous projects have been implemented, which have the objective of promoting cultural communication among members of different ethnic groups in the Republic of Macedonia. One needs to single out the


Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, which is especially active in this area.

- poor teacher competencies for teaching intercultural education. A large portion of teachers display teaching competencies focused only on realising a teaching programme of an encyclopaedic character. Unfortunately, teaching competencies for an integrated approach in the delivery of a teaching programme focused on realisation of a given educational output and which would presuppose a more liberal and creative teaching approach, are a rarity. This condition is to a large extend preconditioned by the rigidity of the normative acts and standards currently regulating education, and the character of the curricula and programmes that rarely contain objectives aimed at acquiring, promoting and developing intercultural values.

- strong influence of the non-formal and the in-formal educational influence (family, local community, church / mosque, media, political parties);

- absence of clearly defined and nationally and locally accepted goals of education. Purposeless conducting of the educational process most frequently results in improvising and experimenting, in negative reflection on the end result of the process / action. All the more, as education is an area which is oversensitive to such incorrectness, and the negative effects, only visible in the future, remain forever incorrigible. Thus, the use of education in the function of strengthening ethnocentric forces brings about extremely negative implications for the future.

- The political structures (as duty-bearers for the development of the country) do not confirm in their practice the declared goals that are inherent to the pedagogical regulations and in the education as a whole.

It is our opinion, that elimination of the last reason is crucial for conditions for true enlivening of the idea of intercultural education and a basic precondition for overcoming of all enumerated weaknesses in the education sphere.

**INITIATIVES**

In the period since gaining independence, many changes and amendments to the legislation and a number of strategic documents, developmental programmes and measures have been adopted, all of which had as their aim not only the improvement of the situation in education, but also the strengthening of the intercultural dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia.

At the beginning of 1997 the Draft Law on the Languages of Instruction at the St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje was adopted. The Law envisaged the possibility for the students of Albanian nationality to attend instruction in their own mother tongue. Despite the reactions of the general public, the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia adopted at the first continuation of its 58th session, held
on 30th January 1997 the Draft Law on the Languages of Instruction at the St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje\textsuperscript{38}.

In 2000, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities initiated the creation of a foundation of international donors to help the establishment of a new university in the Republic of Macedonia. Thus, 2000 saw the adoption of a new Law on Higher Education\textsuperscript{39}. This law introduced several new solutions in higher education, namely the introduction of the languages of the minority groups in higher education, the possibility for founding of universities without state funding and with the Albanian language as the main language of instruction, the creation of preconditions for founding of private higher education institutions and the establishment of professional bodies for accreditation and evaluation. Thus, as a direct result of this law, the South-East European University was founded in Tetovo, starting officially its operation in 2001.

In 2004, the Parliament adopted the Programme for Development of Primary Education, within the framework of the National Programme for Development of Education in the RM 2005-2015, which, among other things, defines the mission of primary education in the context of:
- development of a person that can assume individual, family and civil responsibility; development of culture of living, i.e. acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, attitudes and values necessary for the changing world of labour and social life; development of democracy and civil society; development of readiness for and awareness of the need for life-long learning,
- development of education that respects and develops individual needs, interests and affinities, that education that fosters the development of an independent, open, critical and democratic person with skills and competencies for action, and that strengthens the sense of belonging to the community; and
- education that encourages socialisation in the spirit of socially accepted values and ideals, and nurturing the spiritual, cultural and historical heritage.

The steps proposed for ensuring high quality education open for all adapted to individual and social needs require development and improvement of: syllabi and curricula, textbooks, teaching and learning, human resources, the role of the school boards and of civil society, as well as creation of a quality assurance system, inclusion of vulnerable groups, children with special educational needs and talented students and enhancement of efforts made to support them, and creation of opportunities for founding of private primary schools.

In 2004, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy adopted the Action Plan for Education within the framework of the Roma Inclusion Decade – Republic of Macedonia.\textsuperscript{40} The Action Plan places the emphasis on:

\textsuperscript{38} Shorthand minutes from the First continuation of the 58th session of the Parliament of the Republic of MAcedonia, held on 30th January 1997
\textsuperscript{39} Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 64/2000 from 3rd August 2000
- Increase in the rate of inclusion of Roma in all education tiers,
- Decrease in the drop-out rate of Roma students in all education tiers,
- Strengthening the capacities of the teaching staff and school support structures for recognising and managing conflict situations brought about by the insufficient level of sensitivity to cultural differences.

The Republic of Macedonia’s Strategy for Roma was adopted in 2005.\textsuperscript{41} The goal of the Strategy is to promote the empowerment and integration of Roma in the main social and economic development of the Republic of Macedonia by defining the main directions for the implementation of an elaborated multidimensional state policy, which will serve as a priority basis on which concrete projects are developed that address individual segments.

The main objectives of the National Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia are as follows:
- to realise full integration and participation of Roma in mainstream Macedonian society,
- to enable equal access to the existing social opportunities,
- to reduce poverty and social exclusion among Roma as the most marginalised group in the Republic,
- to achieve long-term development of the Roma community in every aspect,
- to improve, within a realistic framework, the average quality of life in the Republic through efforts of the state towards improvement of living conditions of Roma,
- to reduce disparities between the educational levels of Roma and the non-Roma population.

In 2005, at the initiative of the World Bank and the Open Society Macedonia Institute, the State signed the Declaration for joining the \textit{Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015} Initiative, through which it committed itself to devoting in the coming period due attention to achieving increased participation of the Roma in the social and economic life of the country, with special emphasis on their situation in education, employment, health and housing.

In 2006, within the framework of the realisation of the National Strategy and the National Action Plans for the Roma Inclusion Decade in the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy launched the implementation of the \textit{Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Kindergartens} with financial assistance from the Roma Education Fund (REF), the Ministry and UNICEF. The goal of the project is to improve and support the integration of Roma children in public kindergartens in the last year/the preparatory year prior to enrolment in primary education.

The new \textit{Law on Primary Education}\textsuperscript{42} was adopted in 2008, introducing changes to the tier of primary education, formulated in the context of the right of the child to

\textsuperscript{41} Strategy for Roma in the Republic of MAcedonia, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, January 2005
\textsuperscript{42} Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of MAcedonia No.103/08 from 19.08.2008
education and to protection from any kind of discrimination on grounds of gender, race, skin colour, national, social, political, religious, material or social affiliation. Compulsory nine-year primary education was reorganised into three educational periods, namely 1st-3rd, 4th-6th and 7th-9th grade. This law defines the goals of primary education, among which:
- information and expression in the mother tongue,
- education for mutual tolerance, cooperation, respect for differences, and basic human liberties and rights.

In 2010, the Guidelines for Prevention of and Protection from Discrimination in the Education System in the Republic of Macedonia was promoted by the Ministry of Education and Science, with support from the National Roma Centre from Kumanovo, within the Campaign for Roma Education, funded by the Roma Education Fund from Budapest.

The Guidelines are aimed at improving and strengthening the cooperation and coordination between all competent institutions and individuals participating in the education system in order to secure equal conditions and opportunities for quality education to all students regardless of their religious, ethnic or any other affiliation.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia concluded in 2010 that "despite the significant progress of the education system in the past decade in the area of mother tongue education, developments are taking a course that needs attention and correction, in order to avoid a greater ethnic divide, brought about by insufficient knowledge of the others, by decreasing interaction, all as a consequence of the serious lack of familiarity with the language".  

With joint efforts, and as follow-up measures to the recommendations by the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities (OSCE HCNM) from January 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science and OSCE developed the strategic document Steps towards Integrated Education in the Education System of the Republic of Macedonia, as an overarching government strategy towards an integrated education system. The goal was to introduce a clear and significant change to the general approach in the education system in accordance with the multiethnic reality in the country, as a step towards achievement of the strategic goals of the country, for which stability and internal cohesion are as crucial as are good interethnic relations. This policy reflects the Constitution and the legislation respectively resulting from the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The measures provided in this document are divided into five thematic groups. The first thematic group included integration through joint activities of students attending instruction in different languages, provides measures for introduction or

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44 Ibid
strengthening joint curricular and extracurricular activities on different levels: in the schools themselves and between different schools in the same municipality or from the entire country.

The second group of measures focuses on integration through increasing the mutual familiarity with each other’s languages among students and adults, increasing the communication between members of the different communities. One subgroup of measures is aimed at training teachers in the methodology of teaching the students’ second language, with emphasis on the language of the smaller ethnic communities.

The third group of measures proposes adaptation of the syllabus and curricula and the textbooks, with emphasis on history, geography and language textbooks, as well as improvement of the mechanisms for approval of and control over textbooks. The adaptation of the curricula from primary and secondary education aims at giving schools space to identify the needs of their respective environments, as well as to include the concept of education for tolerance and intercultural communication and understanding in all aspects of teaching. The introduction of the subject History of Religions is also planned, accompanied by measures ensuring that teachers are adequately trained to teach it.

The fourth group of measures is aimed at strengthening the qualification of teachers with competencies for integration. This requires pre-service training in interethnic issues, introduction of regular in-service training for teachers and school directors, and introduction of a system for external evaluation and monitoring of teachers’ abilities. It is also proposed that preschool education is involved in the implementation of these measures.

The fifth group of measures included the management of schools in a decentralised context. It proposes measures for strengthening the job security of teachers, for defining conditions for employment of deputy directors, of municipal inspectors and municipal education advisers, followed by defining of education responsibilities of the state institutions vis-à-vis those of the municipal authorities, thus strengthening the cooperation both at a national as well as on a local level. Additional measures are proposed for further depolitisation of the education system and for enhancement of the involvement of all stakeholders in the management of schools.

This document also highlights the need for introduction of a process of regular consultations between all stakeholders, which will function as a participative democratic corrective measure.
SUCCESS STORIES

In 1998, Catholic Relief Services Macedonia - CRS in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Physical Culture (as was called then) and the Pedagogical Institute (later named Bureau for Development of Education) initiated the implementation of the Civic Education Project, financially supported by USAID. Through education, as a long-term process of educating children and their parents on their respective roles and responsibilities in a democratic society, offering them skills and knowledge needed for them to effectuate their civil duties and enjoy their civil liberties, and to fully participate in the work and life of their respective communities. Through working with teachers, managers, parents and education authorities, but primarily through training of teachers and development of resource materials, the Foundations of Democracy programme was introduced for the children in the last year of preschool education. This programme introduced the children with to notions of authority, privacy, responsibility, justice, tolerance and cultural understanding.

In 1998, the NGO Search for Common Ground launched the Mosaic Project, a model of bilingual and multicultural preschool education in the public kindergartens. Through learning together in the two languages, Macedonian and Albanian or Turkish, in one group comprising representatives of different ethnic communities, the children:
- are socialised at an age when they still have not been exposed to and have accepted prejudice towards their co-students from another nationality,
- learn tolerance and respect of different cultures that live in Macedonia,
- acquire skills for solving problems and resolving conflicts,
- from the different ethnic communities collaborate and communicate with each other with the aim of building trust in their everyday dealings.

The implementation of the Creative Teaching and Learning Programme commenced in 2002, with financial support from USAID. Its goal was to improve the quality of educational services in primary, secondary and higher education through a comprehensive programme for training and development of teachers, including interactive teaching methodologies, application of ICT throughout the curriculum and education for social justice. The programme was implemented by the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia. As a result, the training for Active Teaching and for Achieving Critical Thinking through Reading and Writing received state accreditation, whereas two programmes (Debate and School Justice) became project activities that are delivered as part of the curricula. In the process, Education for Social Justice was expected to contribute to better understanding and managing prejudice and stereotypes, and achieving equality, justice, respect and dignity in the relation with others.

With financial support from the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia and Unicef and in cooperation with the MoES and the BDE, the implementation of the Life skills Project commenced in 2002. The goal of the project was improvement of the psycho-social and emotional competences, enabling children and youth to
develop their abilities to successfully manage demands, challenges and threats of everyday life, through the design and delivery of a cross-curricular programme for students from the age of 6 to 18 (throughout primary and secondary education), which teachers would use as a source of ideas, learning objectives and contents in the process of planning and realization of the teaching process, supplementing the official curriculum, which was heavily based on the cognitive aspect of education. In addition, training was carried out for the teaching, support and managerial staff of the schools in order to facilitate the implementation of the cross-curricular programme. Lifeskills focus on the development of positive behaviour and acquisition of generic and specific skills and competences for self-awareness and empathy, effective communication and interpersonal relations, for the adoption of reasoned and responsible decisions and resolving of problem situations, creative and critical thinking, and management of emotions and stressful situations. The project was expected to contribute, among other things, to the improvement of the civic culture and awareness and to the mental health, the promotion of the culture of peace, human rights, care for the environment and lifelong learning.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development of Education, Unicef renewed in 2006 support to the initiative for defining and creating a School Fit for Children, which promotes, among other things, peace, freedom, tolerance, dignity, equality and solidarity, physical and mental health and wellbeing. The approach envisaged ensuring that schools, by strengthening their capacities through continuing training and supervisory support, possess the following characteristics and dimensions: inclusiveness, effectiveness, health, safety and security, gender sensitivity, participation of students, parents and communities, and respect of children’s rights and multiculturalism. In order to aid the schools in achieving the Fit for Children standards, within the dimensions of effectiveness, health, safety and security, and multiculturalism, the approach towards education for lifeskills was revised, and instead of a cross-curricular approach to the socio-emotional and physical component of the work of a school, a lifeskills subject was introduced.

Како посебни проектни и институционализирани форми на објективизација на заложбите за зајакнување на мултикултурната и интеркултурната компонента во образовниот систем во Република може да се издвојат следниве:

1. Extracurricular Activities for Children from Ethnically Mixed Schools

Within the Programme for Promotion of Interethnic Relations, supported by the European Union and financed through the European Agency for Reconstruction, the implementation of the Project Extracurricular Activities for Children from Ethnically Mixed Schools commenced in 2004. 46 The Project attempted to develop a new participative methodology for extracurricular activities bringing together children of Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma ethnicity with the aim of bridging the divide between children and youth, as well as between school staff, through:

46 Ministry for Education and Science, Skopje, 2004
- supporting students in the development of their own projects focused on improvement of school life (in the areas of culture, tradition, art, sports, improvement of the school environment, etc.) and in their implementation, and
- organisation of children’s camps, where children from different town and different nationalities develop and improve their social competences and skills, socialise, exchange experiences and learn about each other.

The goal of the extracurricular activities in the schools with an ethnically mixed composition was the introduction of a novel approach to extracurricular activities in the primary and secondary schools with the aim of developing social abilities of students and teachers, combating stereotypes and strengthening capacities for active participation in the improvement of everyday life in schools and in the local communities. In addition, the Project brought together children, students, young professional and teachers from different ethnic groups filling meeting their needs for socialisation, play and acceptance in a supportive, conducive and agreeable environment.

The Project:
- developed inclusive approaches to improvement of school conditions for extracurricular activities;
- trained groups of young professionals for the organisation of extracurricular activities;
- created conducive environment for teachers to participate in extracurricular activities;
- established functional links and networks between schools and communities.

The Project recommended to the Ministry of Education and Science development of a national programme for extracurricular and out of school activities as part of the regular school life and of the regular obligations of teachers and students.

After the end of the Project, the activities initiated and implemented ceased to continue their realisation in the practice.

2. Nansen Dialogue Centre - Integrated and Bilingual Education in Macedonia

NDC announced its presence on the education scene of the Republic of Macedonia on 1st September 2008 with the opening of the first integrated bilingual (Macedonian/Albanian) primary school Fridjof Nansen in the village of Prelyubishtе, municipality Jegunovce, as a satellite school of the central primary school in Shemshovo. On 1st September 2010, NDC commenced with the realisation of its Programme in the first integrated bilingual secondary school (Macedonian/Albanian) also in the village of Prelyubishtе, municipality Jegunovce, as a satellite of a secondary school in Tetovo).
Also in 2010, the realisation of an integrated bilingual teaching process commenced in the first grades in a primary school in the municipality Strumica, with Macedonian and Roma children, in Macedonian and Turkish language, respectively.

In these schools, students members of different ethnic communities (Albanian and Macedonian in the village of Prelyubishte and Roma and Macedonian in Strumica) are integrated, i.e. the students attend school and follow the teaching process in their respective mother tongue, but in the same school building and in the same shift, which is not the case in other mixed schools or communities, where students either attend different schools or else different shifts in the same school. The Programme endeavours to promote the integration of students as well as integration of teaching staff of different ethnic origin.

An inherent element of the NDC Programme is also the integration of the parents of the participating students through their active involvement in the realisation of programme activities.

This Programme, in addition to actively involving parents and realisation of a number of joint activities, is also aiming at improving the quality of parenting, i.e. it contains an educational component for better parenting.

The teaching process e organised in such a way that the extracurricular contents are in correlation with the mandatory teaching contents from the curriculum and complement them.

The bilingual communication is the central pillar of the programme activities. After the end of the regular classes (where instruction is carried out in the mother tongue of the students), extracurricular activities are carried out for all participating students divided in grades. Teachers work in pairs on the design of the extracurricular contents, which is at the same time a platform for the integrative processes on a school level. In the course of the activities themselves, the participating teachers speak in their own mother tongue, whereby there is no simultaneous translation in the other language, but questions, explanations and suggestions are paraphrased, enabling all students to follow instruction in both languages.

The goals the Programme is striving towards are as follows:
- to develop constructive collaborative relations between children of different ethnic groups,
- to sensitise students towards respect for mutual differences,
- to overcome stereotypes and prejudice among children related to their ethnic and cultural origin,
- to encourage tolerance towards differences of social, ethnic, or cultural nature,
- to enable students for constructive resolution of conflicts in the group,
- to develop a positive emotional climate in a group with a mixed ethnic structure with the aim of maintaining a high index of group cohesion,
- to broaden the active vocabulary of students with terms and socio-cultural phrases from a language other than the mother tongue,
- to strengthen interaction, collaboration and trust between teachers and parents from the different ethnic communities,
- to develop the children’s talents and abilities in line with their individual potentials,
- to support and encourage children’s curiosity, originality and creative potentials,
- to develop logical, flexible, lateral and critical thinking among children.

In order to ensure that these goals are met, NDC developed a number of programmes offering contents in the areas of Mathematics, Performing and Visual Arts, Environment, Education for Peace, Traffic, Young Researchers, Ethics Education. The programmes change each year. It is NDC’s intention for these programmes to help implementers and participants as guidelines and platform on which to design the immediate realisation. The programmes are open for suggestion and proposals that would improve their quality.

The NDC model of integrated education is a transformative model of intercultural education. It transforms students from passive observers and recipients of information from neutral teachers into active partners in the learning process. This approach is based on recognising and understanding of and belief in cultural differences and overcoming of barriers which are the cause of interethnic conflicts. The model aims to develop among students a sense of other/different cultural identities and ability to place one’s own identity in this diverse group. The NDC model is not only a process of acquiring knowledge on the other culture. This is done in regular instruction and yields little effect. The NDC takes a further step, building on the knowledge with skills that enable students to approach other cultures. Putting an end to the myth of exclusivity of one’s own culture and linking it to other cultures and values is the foundation on which the NDC model rests. The process of transformation itself, resulting from the transformation dialogue, is the desired effect. This goes not only for the students, but also for the parents, the teachers and the school as a whole.

The teaching and learning techniques are adapted to the age of the students and are dominated by interactivity and collaborative work. There are opportunities for students’ individual presentations, and strengths and weaknesses as understood as strengths and weaknesses of the group and not of the individual and/or member of one or the other ethnic group. Competitiveness is a constituent part of the organisation of the process, with students working in ethnically mixed groups. This provides opportunities for rivalry between individuals and members of smaller groups but not between representatives of ethnicities. Similarly, opportunities are created for individual progress as well as for development of a collective spirit, for respect of the others and for interiorising civic values. The sociogrammes of participating students, made by NDC staff, clearly indicate that individuals are at the centre of the groups and not members of respective ethnicities.
3. South East European University

South East European University (SEEU) established in 2001 as a university project, which was initiated by the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, followed by the change in the Law of Higher Education\(^\text{47}\) in the Republic of Macedonia and supported by international donors. Since its foundation SEEU as reflected in the statue has been committed to pursue:
- excellence in teaching and research;
- be open to all on the basis of equity and merit regardless of ethnicity;
- actively seek co-operation with other universities, both in the Republic of Macedonia and in South East Europe as a whole;

and will have its main aims:
- to contribute to higher education in Albanian language;
- to promote inter-ethnic understanding;
- to ensure multilingual and multicultural approach to teaching and research; and
- to develop its teaching programme in a broad international and European perspective.

After ten years of its establishment SEEU has established a functional model in higher education while recognizing importance of intercultural dialogue and understanding in higher education system. Promoting of multilingual and multicultural approach in teaching and research has made the SEEU unique higher education institution in the Republic of Macedonia. SEEU through its language policy called “flexible use of languages” offers possibilities for students to get education in their mother tongue Albanian or Macedonian while learning the language of the other along with English language. Students of SEEU are required to take compulsory language courses other than their mother tongue, excluding English as defined in all study programs offered within the university. All undergraduate study programs offer study groups in Macedonian and Albanian, and most of the second cycle programs are offered under the same scheme. Diversity of student body is mainly reflected in the academic staff as well as administration and management. Flexible use of language policy and multilingualism of academic staff and administration proves to be a great strength in creating multicultural environment and promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. Based on student responses they benefit greatly from education that takes place in a multicultural setting. In the course of their university education, they learn more on characteristics of each other, through extracurricular activities share more on each other, and gradually develop ways on how to work together. By the time many of these students finish their studies and return to their communities, they will have developed skills and competencies in functioning in multicultural environment. Knowing the language of the other plays significant role in achieving intercultural dialogue that has direct influence on promoting inter-ethnic understanding in the case of Macedonia\(^\text{48}\).

\(^{47}\) The law passed in July 2000 authorizes use of Albanian language in “private” higher education institutions that is not directly funded by the state.

\(^{48}\) http://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/about/profile/history
The SEE-University composed of five academic units namely, Business Administration and Economics, Public Administration and Political Sciences, Law, Contemporary Sciences and Technologies, and Language Cultures and Communications along with two centers, Institute for Environment and Health and Language Center has over 8,000 students and around 1,800 graduates.

At the center of SEEU’s mission are the aims of excellence, equity, transparency and efficiency. The University strives for the highest quality in every faculty and department and sees quality improvement as both an individual and collective responsibility.

Quality assurance focuses on academic matters and teaching and learning and links closely with those services which directly support students, such as the Library, Student Services and Career Center. Quality management targets the effective development and monitoring of policies and procedures.

All study programs provided by SEEU are accredited by the Accreditation and Evaluation Board of the Republic of Macedonia and the quality of our curricula and assessment are regularly reviewed according to our institutional quality assurance procedures and through a cycle of external programme review using international specialists. Research and publications are increasing in number and scope. These important academic research activities are supported and monitored by the Research Office and Pro-Rector for Research.

The University seeks to support effective staff performance. For academic staff, this is done through procedures such as an annual Learning and Teaching Observation Scheme and the active consideration of students’ opinions from the Student Evaluation Survey. All staff is required to take part in the individual Staff Evaluation Process and all these processes are linked to an integrated Staff Development Procedure, offering internal and external opportunities for professional development and training.

The University welcomes and positively uses both national and international evaluation and quality accreditation for continuous improvement. We receive valuable evaluation and advice on a twice yearly basis from our external Quality Champion. We also actively refer to the latest developments and trends in higher education in Europe which are part of the Bologna Process. Also the University has been positively evaluated twice as part of European Universities Association (EUA) external institutional review program; and its administrative and management processes have been successfully validated according to International Standards for Organization (ISO 9001/2008)⁴⁹.

4. The State University in Tetovo

In February 2004, Parliament adopted the Law on the Establishment of the State University in Tetovo. The university was to consist of a Faculty of Maths and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Law and a Polytechnic Centre (as a higher vocational school).

Today, the University consists of the following 11 faculties: Faculty of Maths and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts (visual and performing arts), Faculty of Physical Culture, Faculty for Food Processing Technology and Nutrition, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences (pharmacy, general medicine, dental medicine and higher vocational education for nurses - infirmary) and Faculty for Business Administration in Kumanovo. An Institute of Ecology and Technology also operates within the University.

The State University in Tetovo endeavours in its operation to internationalise and affirm the traditional features and values of the Albanian and Macedonian people and of the Albanian and Macedonian language, literature and culture. The University has been open to all students on the basis of equality and merit, regardless of their ideological, political, ethnic, religious, cultural or social origin.

Is the SUT a success story? With the organisational set up, it meets the requirements for it to become a hub of the intercultural dialogue in higher education. However, the institutional political turmoil and the frequent turnover of the university management structure, as well as the ongoing need for improvement of the quality of the teaching staff, shifted SUT’s focus away from its basic mission. It is to be hoped that in the coming period it will be able to take its place in higher education in Macedonian and wider, and affirm itself as a catalyst for multiethnic coexistence.

5. The St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty Skopje

In 1961, the Higher Pedagogical School was transformed, in line with the needs and amendments to the then pertinent Law on Higher Education Institution, into a Pedagogical Academy, training teachers for lower and upper primary education. In the period between its original founding in 1947 and 1995, this institution provided two-year pre-service training for 13,000 future teachers with instruction in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language. In 1995, in its stead, the St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty was founded in 1995, with the aim of providing four-year pre-service training to future teachers.

Today, the St. Clement of Ohrid Pedagogical Faculty offers three study programmes according to the European Credit Transfer System (obtaining of a total of 240 credits in the course of 8 semesters), namely:

1. Preschool Education;
2. Lower primary Education;
3. Librarianship.

The languages of instruction in the first two study programmes are Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish, whereas instruction the third study programme is carried out only in Macedonian.

Starting from the study year 2010/2011, second cycle studies (postgraduate studies) are also offered with Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish as languages of instruction.

In order to strengthen the intercultural approach, the Faculty offers certain elective subjects aimed specifically at this goal, namely in the study programmes for Preschool and Primary Education, namely Religious Systems (3 lessons per week in semester 2) and Multicultural Education (3 lessons per week in semester 4). Similarly, through a number of contents and curricula, the ethnic and cultural the specificities of the members of the Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish ethnic groups are presented.

All study programmes and curricula are designed and adopted jointly, meaning that only the language of instruction differs.

**Practical instruction** is organised throughout the study programmes in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language, starting from the third semester until the end of the study course in three different forms, namely:

- **Pedagogical practice**, (2 lessons per week in semester 3 and 4, totalling 60 lessons throughout the study course);
- **Pedagogical internship** (45 lessons in semester 8);
- **School-based demonstration and observation of lessons** (210 lessons throughout the study course).

The entire facility of the Pedagogical Faculty is used by all students and staff in line with the lesson schedule and emerging needs, which is line with the need for coexistence and interaction. Teaching and other activities are carried out simultaneously in all languages of instruction, without any divisions of space and time.

The facilities and services of the administration and other offices, the library, student association, etc. are used by all students, staff and other parties at any time during proscribed office hours. All teaching and non-teaching staff participate in the work of various bodies management bodies (Teaching & Research Council, Faculty Board, etc.), pursuant to rulebooks and bylaws governing higher education in the Republic of Macedonia.
6. Interuniversity Joint Program in International relations: Conflict Resolution; Diplomacy and Human Rights

The joint Program for Interdisciplinary MA Studies in International Relations is part of a TEMPUS project, with three Universities in the Republic of Macedonia as participants: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje (UKIM), the Southeast European University (SEEU) and the State University of Tetovo (SUT). The grant holder of this TEMPUS project is the University of Goteborg, Sweden. The other EU partners are: the University College Dublin, Ireland and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. The project will last from January 2009 to January 2012. The Faculty of Philosophy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University will lead the specialization in Conflict Resolution Studies and the Faculty of Law at the Southeast European University will lead the specialization in Diplomacy and International Relations Studies. The faculty of Law at the State University of Tetovo, is leading the specialization in Human Rights.

The overall aim is to create highly qualified vocational experts in the Republic of Macedonia and the wider region; thus creating basis for renewal of the already existing resources and making them renown in the country, the EU and worldwide. For the accomplishment of this goal, the institutions have a strategy for development of the joint study program:

- Creation and realization of teaching plan and program that will outstand with their quality and will guarantee for the training of highly qualified vocational experts, prepared do take active participation in the society;
- Strengthening the cooperation among the three Universities in the Republic of Macedonia and their connection with the academic institutions worldwide;
- Creation of conditions for lifetime education- mobility and innovation of the work in applied and developmental projects.

The Joint Program for Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies in International Relations is conceptualized as to enable the candidates mobility in the sense of collecting ECTS points in others higher education institutions in this country and abroad, as well as flexibility in forming the modules (through taking elective subjects, under the recommendation of a supervisor). This program is also designed to enable a candidate the optimal conditions for creating of high-quality MA thesis in one of these narrower fields of expertise: the Conflict Resolution Studies, the Diplomacy and International Relations Studies and the Human Rights Studies.

Description of the Study Program

The study program for the MA studies in international relations will be conducted as 2 (two)-year study program, with four semesters 120 ECTS and as one-year study program, with two semesters and 60 ECTS. The program is structured into 30 ECTS per semester. The two year study program of 120 ECTS has nine subjects- six mandatory and three electives. The student must complete successfully the compulsory seminar, before starting with preparation of the MA thesis. The one-year study program of 60 ECTS has five subjects- three mandatory and two electives. The student must also complete successfully the compulsory seminar, before starting with preparation of the MA thesis. The medium of instruction of these graduate studies will be English.
The goals of the study program
The main goal of the Study Program in International relations (SPIR) is to offer advanced knowledge in the field of international relations. This program will also train students with basics of scientific research and thus make them eligible for employment in the international and national institutions.
SPIR is designed for higher officials and experts from various institutions from this country and the wider region, for diplomats, members of international organizations and NGO employees.
The general skills that the candidates will acquire via this program will be useful in different fields, such as: developmental cooperation, conflict resolution, diplomacy, humanitarian work and developmental aid; in the programs for development of cultural diversity and integration, as well as environmental analysis and planning.
General competencies:
In this program, special emphasis will be on independent methods of work, critical opinion and the ability for conflict resolution. After finishing the Program, the students will be able to:
- Identify independently and to discuss the key problems and research questions in the field of international relations;
- Identify independently and to discuss the key problems and research questions in the field of security;
- To have critical approach to the international system and its influence on international peace and security;
- Conceptualize theoretically and to demonstrate empirically the correlation between the security paradigms and the conflict resolution, the diplomacy, the intercultural communication and human rights;
- Synthesize the given fields of expertise logically;
- Identify, plan and implement research tasks in the field of international relations in a given timeframe;
- Apply advanced knowledge in the research methods and procedures in the field of international;
- Give an oral and written presentation of research results in front of different auditorium, in national and international context;

The first year call (2010/2011) has resulted in more than 70 applications. The Collegium/Board accepted 46 applications of which 30 are tuition free. The first research proposals are mainly dealing with impact of ethnicity or identity on peace, security or conflict issues. Language of instruction is English. Each University is issuing MA diploma (UKIM in Conflict resolution, SEEU in Diplomacy and SUT in Human rights). Second generation of students was enrolled in academic 2011/12.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES
The internal transformation processes and the planetary globalisation processes have made a strong impact on the redesigning of the overall structure of society, giving rise to the need for national and international cooperation and compatibility
of systems, and thus also to the innovation of the role and structure of higher education, as a significant factor in achieving that compatibility.

The need for a strategic approach to the transformation of higher education is a consequence not only of the changes on a national level, but also of the external, i.e. global and general influence factors shaping higher education in other countries.

On 19th September 2003, the Republic of Macedonia became a full member of the European family of countries committed to following and implementing the Bologna Process recommendations and common pledge for creation of a single European Area of Higher Education.

When the state assumed obligations from the Bologna Process, higher education became faced with new challenges for its further transformation. In addition to efforts for improving the quality and efficiency of the studies, higher education is also confronted with the obligations for its own structural, organisational and curricular designing, which would make it transparent, competitive, compatible and recognisable on the European market of HE services.

The initiatives for creation of a common European Area of Higher Education forced the higher education institutions to re-examine themselves, and gave them additional impetus for investing efforts on their way towards active membership in the family of European universities and obtaining the status of respectable providers of educational services on the broad European academic market.

In the past, higher education faced the need for:

- structural adaptation of the tertiary education system to the Bologna Process;
- harmonisation of legislation with the principles and recommendations of the Bologna Process;
- harmonisation of requirements and standards of higher education;
- creation of an efficient system of scholarships that would facilitate enhanced education mobility of students and teachers;
- promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance through development of comparable criteria and methodology;
- strengthening the system for external evaluation of the quality in higher education;
- defining of and strict adherence to the standards for founding and accreditation of private higher education facilities;
- development of an efficient system for financing higher education and allocation of funds;
- improvement of strategic and managerial capacities;
- development of scientific and technological strategies;
- transparent financing of science research;
- establishment of a data base of national innovations systems in higher education.
To this end, the government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Programme for the Development of Higher Education for the period 2006-2010. It was important to ensure that the overall transformation of higher education would be completed in the given period, in order to ensure a dynamics compatible to the changes in the European countries and its active involvement in the European Area of Higher Education.

2003 saw the adoption of the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Higher Education\(^{50}\), obligating universities to introduce the ECTS and design their study programmes and subject curricula according to the principles of the Bologna Process. However, the conditions under which the changes were made were characterised by pronounced slowness and lack of coordination. The Law on Higher Education and the internal documents adopted by the universities and higher education institutions did not provide for clear instructions for reforming higher education. Thus, the majority of faculties individually approached the transformation of the study and subject curricula. The attempt to implement those Bologna Process principles pertaining to changes in the structure of higher education institutions, primarily the duration of undergraduate and postgraduate studies, initiated huge debates and reactions in the university community.

Higher education institutions made interventions in their structure in line with the provisions of the Law. It turned out that the three-year undergraduate studies model was difficult to accept. The majority of faculties stuck to the previous duration of the studies of 4 and in some cases 5 years, and only a small part introduced study programmes of 3-year duration. The present lack of coordination in the transformation of study programmes brought about cases when a single profile, can be acquired at different faculties through study programmes with different duration namely both in three or in four years.

In 2008 a new Law on higher education was adopted.\(^{51}\) This law made the effort to approximate higher education to the Bologna recommendations. Its goal was to create preconditions for the transformation of the decentralised into integrated universities. The part governing teaching contains provisions regulating transformation of the studies and the study programmes according to the ECTS. It also regulated the management (introduction of a university board, modification of the role of the university management and strengthening the competence of the Senate and especially of the Chancellor). Significant changes were introduced in the procedures for election and re-election of teaching staff. Unfortunately, this law lacked the courage to introduce changes also in the area of financing and in changing the status of the Accreditation Board and the Agency for Evaluation towards their professionalisation and distancing from the possible influences of the state authorities and institutions. All in all, the law strengthened the influence of the state in higher education. This influence has continued to grow in the following period, through frequent amendments to the law and introduction of provisions.

\(^{50}\) Official Gazette of the RM No. 49 from 25 July 2003  
\(^{51}\) Official Gazette of the RM No. 35 from 14.03.2008
highlighting the control and penal role of the state. This trend reached its pinnacle with the adoption of the new Law on State Servants transforming the status of the staff of higher education institutions into state servants.

The Law also introduced new rules in student organisation, introducing a *Student Parliament*, organised on the basis of delegation system, on a university level, whose members are elected by the students’ organisations of the university units, i.e. faculties.

In the same period, the *Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Higher Education* was adopted.\(^{52}\) The amendments eliminated the title of associates at the university and introduced clinical teaching in higher education. In an environment of shortage of teaching and assisting personnel, the universities faced an additional challenge – loosing associates. This measure sparked a reaction by the universities and mobilisation of the staff with associate status towards completing their master’s and doctoral studies.

One of the more significant reforms in higher education was the introduction of Albanian as a language of instruction in higher education. At the beginning of 1997, the Ministry of Education adopted a *Bill on Languages of Instruction at the Pedagogical Faculty St. Clement of Ohrid - Skopje*. This Bill sparked a wave of discontent among some of the academic and political stakeholders. The Bill introduced the possibility for students from the Albanian minority to receive instruction in their mother tongue. This initiative received its full implementation through the *Law on Higher Education from 2000*\(^{53,54}\). Significant features of this Law are the introduction of minority languages in higher education, of the possibility for establishment of private higher education institutions and of the establishment of professional bodies for accreditation and evaluation. This Law enabled the establishment of the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo.

As regards the strengthening of the state capacities in the area of higher education, we need to mention that in 2000 the Higher Education Accreditation Board and the Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education in the Republic of Macedonia were set up. These two bodies were supposed to “bring order” into higher education, i.e. to instigate external mechanisms for assessment of the degree of fulfilment of the necessary preconditions and quality for founding and operation of higher education institutions, and for ongoing evaluation of the quality of higher education in the country. Since its establishment, until 2010, the Evaluation Agency failed to fulfil its role as stipulated in the provisions, while the work of the Accreditation Board has frequently received criticism. Until today, it did not manage to establish itself as an independent body and is to a large degree dependent on the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2010, these two bodies were merged, operating as an Accreditation and Evaluation Board, under strong influence of the state.

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52 Official Gazette of the RM No. 103/08 from 19.08.2008
53 Official Gazette of the RM No. 64/2000 from 3 August 2000
54 Official Gazette of the RM No. 64/2000 from 3 August 2000
Today, five state universities operate in the Republic of Macedonia with 57 faculties, as well as six private universities with 42 faculties and over 50 study programmes dispersed outside of the university centres. In addition to the older universities (the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and the St. Clement of Ohrid University in Bitola), starting in 2001 the number of state funded universities increased for three new ones. In 2000, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities initiated the creation of a foundation of international donors which would help the establishment of a new university in the Republic of Macedonia. Following the adoption of the Law on Higher Education by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, which allows for the founding of universities without state funding and with Albanian as main language of instruction, the detailed planning commenced towards the end of 2000. The construction started in March 2001 and six months later the South East European University (SEEU) opened its doors to 900 students. By October 2002, the number of students had gone up to 2250, with 3700 students attending the SEEU in October 2003. 2004 saw the opening of the State University in Tetovo, with the Goce Delchev University founded in Shtip in 2007 and the St. Paul the Apostle University for Information Technologies established in Ohrid in 2009.

From the viewpoint of social cohesion, the last period was characterised by pronounced ethnic tensions. In parallel to the economic crisis, the processes of interethnic intolerance and weakening of the integrative mechanisms took place in the country. The old dogmas were under constant attack from the new viewpoints on freedom of expression, nurturing of cultural values and the right to self-promotion. The forces advocating restoration of the integrative and cohesive mechanisms faced grave challenges. One of these forces, a very significant one, was education, especially higher education. It found itself at a crossroads: should it pursue old dogmas or should it transform itself and grow into a strong national integrative element. It chose the latter.

II. Needs Assessment

For the needs of the study, a survey was carried out at two universities in the Republic of Macedonia (the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, and the South East European University in Tetovo). A total of 20 university Professors from different ethnic backgrounds (8 Macedonians and 12 Albanians) and 73 students (31 Macedonian and 42 Albanian) were included.

The research incorporated a questionnaire, which had the aim of exploring the views and opinions of the teachers and students regarding several intercultural values and competencies in the university surrounding, such as: policy and governance, environment, curriculum, syllabus materials, learning processes, teachers and students. Students and teachers from the Pedagogical Faculty at the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University, students of the second cycle of studies (Tempus Program for Conflict Resolution) and students and teachers from the SEE University were included. It is important to mention that, concerning the research
sample, the final results should be viewed merely as an indicator and not as the factual situation of the country. To get to that however, a more comprehensive and deeper research should be carried out.

**Teachers**

The analysis showed that there is a high level of acceptance of the importance of universities in broadening and strengthening the intercultural dialogue in the country. More than 80% of the teachers think that the role of the universities with regard to this issue is important. Some teachers (12.74%) are still reserved and consider universities to contribute very little or not contribute at all to the strengthening of the intercultural dialogue in the country. There is no significant statistical difference between the opinions and views of the teachers of Macedonian and Albanian ethnic background. Although the sample is not representative, the existence of such views illustrates the need for carrying out more profound and comprehensive research of this phenomenon and determining the reasons for the appearance of such views.

Concerning the wanted values and competencies that are important for intercultural dialogue, the teachers dominantly chose the categories very important and quite important. It is interesting to note that less important values are considered to be Sympathy, empathy, care and worry for others, reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, harmony, non-violence, dialogue, mutual trust, truth, courage, devotion, love. This direction is more expressed in the Albanian teachers, while it appears to a lesser extent in the Macedonian teachers. No matter the differences, the mere existence worries because it refers to fundamental humanistic values that make up the basis for building civil values, which the existence of the intercultural dialogue is founded upon, such as: mutual respect; tolerance; acceptance and understanding; peace and harmony; respecting the differences; respecting human dignity and the individual value of all people; receptiveness and acceptance of different views and ways of thinking; sympathy; empathy; care and worry for others; equality; justice; inclusion; solidarity; cooperation; devotion to the collective well-being, protection and strengthening of the cultural identity; language and heritage of the minorities; and responsible local, national and global citizenry; togetherness; mutual connection, etc. It is indicative that there is no large difference in the answers depending on the ethnic background.

It can only be assumed that it regards yet another expression of the crisis of humanistic values in today's predeterministic, and to a great degree, pragmatistic reality. In this research it is difficult to answer whether the acceptance of the values that directly refer to the intercultural dialogue are expressed through "a perceived need" for normal civil coexistence and existence or whether they are part of the interiorized values of the teachers. This is why this indication might be an inspiration for a more profound future research.
The largest difference in views is concentrated on the acceptance of the categories: governing of the language of the majority and governing of the language of the minority.

For the Albanian teachers, regarding the governing of the language of the majority and the governing of the language of the minority, it is determined that both categories are important. In short, the teachers of Albanian ethnic background consider the governing of the language of the majority to be equal in importance with the language of the minority, i.e. they think of them as equally important values and skills for the development of intercultural dialogue. Regarding the Macedonian teachers, there is a partial difference because 18.6% of them stated that the governing of the language of the minority isn't important, while the rest (81.4%) considered that it is important or quite important.

All the teachers in general believe that they have competencies to strengthen the intercultural dialogue. In that context, they think highly of their competencies, such as: ...I am able to appreciate and respect the culture of the others and the contribution that they give to society; ...I am able to express and realize my rights and freedom and to respect those of the others; ...I am a responsible, productive citizen, able to contribute to society; ...I am tolerant, compassionate, show understanding and care for others; ...I behave equally towards others, with respect and dignity; ...I think critically, I object against injustice and I am able to participate in a logical debate; ...I am able to live and work in harmony with people of other cultures; ...I am able to behave in ways that are culturally-appropriate and sensitive towards members of other cultures.

Such answers aren't surprising at all, taking into consideration the fact that this is university staff, who as the foundation of their work have the need to acquire such competencies. The research illustrated that a larger part of the Macedonian teachers and part of the Albanian teachers often use these competencies in their standard work. This occurrence is dominant in those teachers who work in ethnically mixed environments, while it is not as much dominant in those cases of teachers who work in less ethnically mixed environments.

The only reservations that exist are in terms of their competencies for conflict resolution and reaching a mutually useful solution to a dispute in culturally different contexts. With regard to the fact that the issue is about competence that requires additional training on the part of the teachers, these views are a reflection of the need for professional improvement of the university professors in this domain and it highlights their initial education as a place for implementing such competences.

In terms of the proposed characteristics that teachers use in their work, and which are thought to be important for building the competencies of the students for strengthening the intercultural dialogue, such are:
The teacher facilitates and leads, and represents a model that demonstrates the values of intercultural understanding through their behavior and consistent actions.

The teacher applies suitable and exemplary details as learning opportunities.

The teacher provides a whole spectrum of culturally appropriate learning opportunities adapted to the different learning styles and preferences.

The teacher includes the knowledge and experiences of the students, and connects to their interests and cultural or religious background.

There is respect in the relations between the members of the faculty community.

The teachers must possess and demonstrate the ability to lead and instigate development of values and changes in their views and the students' views.

The teachers must possess and demonstrate the ability to be a model for the values of intercultural understanding in their relations and the educational practice.

The teachers must have completed a formal training in the field of interethnic dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.

The teachers must possess skills from the field of methodologies of teaching and learning, which integrate content, skills and values of intercultural understanding.

The teachers are able and ready to think about their educational practice, and to explore, to always improve their approach to methods that they apply in the building of skills for intercultural understanding.

The teachers should participate in activities/projects aimed towards intercultural education and peaceful coexistence.

The teachers should be aware of the key international instruments and instruments for the protection of human rights relevant to intercultural understanding, and be able to understand how those principles are applicable to the local context.

The teachers have practical knowledge from the field of conflict resolution and mediation strategies, thus transferring these skills to the students.

The teachers exercise introspection; they are aware of their own values, views and prejudices towards other people; and they are ready to instigate themselves to change them, if need arises.

The teachers are open to adapting, enhancing and expanding their knowledge of the field of pedagogical approaches that are appropriate for education of intercultural understanding.

More than 80% of the teachers of Macedonian ethnic background and more than 90% of the teachers of Albanian ethnic background believe they are important or quite important. Only a small portion of the teachers surveyed think that they are important up to a certain level.

The differences that exist, especially in Macedonian teachers, refer to the requirements of the following type:
- The teachers must have completed a formal training in the field of interethnic dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.
- The teaching staff must include representatives of cultural/ethnic minorities.
- The teachers must be knowledgeable of the language of the other/s.

Part of the teachers express negative views concerning the mentioned requirements. With regard to the clearly expressed lack of competencies for peaceful conflict resolution, it is worrying that there is lack of willingness in part of the teachers for acquiring them.

In terms of the other two requirements, the negative position of the teachers can be brought to close correlation with the environment in which they work and the problems that they are faced with. It is obvious that lack of the need determines this position. Working in ethnically clean environments can have a strong determining influence on building the teachers' views regarding the mentioned requirements. It is still difficult to come to more precise conclusions, with regard to the sample that was covered with the research. On the other hand, it is pleasing to know that all the teachers have positive views on the need for implementing the competencies for intercultural dialogue in their work.

There is no large statistic difference regarding the wanted characteristics of the educational institutions that are important for building competencies for strengthening the intercultural dialogue among the answers of the teachers surveyed of Macedonian and Albanian ethnic background.

**Policy and Governance**

- The institution takes a holistic approach that integrates the principles and values for intercultural understanding throughout the work and life of the institution.
- Organizational policies, guidelines, rules and decision-making processes are in place to ensure effective learning and skills building.
- Fair and equitable policies and rules are in place to address ethnicity-based discrimination, bullying or harassment, or hostility.
- Cooperation and partnership with the community and surrounding local culture foster current harmonious relations, and a role model for the future life and work of students.
- Diverse cultures/ethnic groups are adequately represented among governing and consultative bodies.

**Environment**

- The values of intercultural understanding are part of the ethos and code of conduct of the institution.
- The learning environment is safe, supportive, respectful, enjoyable, equitable and inclusive.
- The learning environment is active, participatory, democratic and empowering.

**Curriculum**
The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

- Intercultural understanding and skills building is integrated throughout the curriculum.
- Mandatory curriculum modules or subjects address the acquisition of principles and practices of intercultural dialogue.
- Elective curriculum modules or subjects address the acquisition of principles and practices of intercultural dialogue.

Materials
- Teaching and learning materials reflect the underpinning principles of competence building for intercultural dialogue.
- Teaching and learning materials are prepared with due care for eliminating any semblance of intolerance, bias, or prejudice that might contribute to creating or expanding an intercultural divide.
- Materials must include definitions of interethnic dialogue and follow-up exercises.

Learning Process
- Learning encourages curiosity, creative and careful thinking, critical reflection, questioning, discussion, dialogue and collaborative action.
- Learning ensures acquisition of critical thinking skills to question injustice, intolerance and prejudice.

Students
- Students develop positive communication and negotiation skills while working collaboratively with a diverse range of fellow students.
- Students must communicate with peers from other ethnic groups to develop skills for interethnic dialogue.
- All students experience a sense of belonging and feel valued and included in the group.

In the total (of all the characteristics) the teachers of Macedonian and Albanian ethnic background most often highly graded the following characteristics, considering them closely important for the development of the intercultural dialogue.

In terms of the need for changes in institutions of higher education divided in the categories: Policy and governance; Environment; Teachers; Curriculum; Materials; Learning process and Students, there is a high level of coordination in order for the students to better develop their competencies for intercultural dialogue among the answers of the teachers surveyed of both ethnic backgrounds. The learning materials, learning process and curriculum appear as dominant fields of changes. It
is important to note that even in the field of teachers there is a reasonable need for changes.

**Students**

The student body views and understands the meaning of the universities for strengthening the intercultural dialogue in the country. Analysis has shown that for a larger part of the students of Macedonian ethnic background there is a high consciousness of the contribution that the universities give for strengthening of the intercultural dialogue. The views of the larger part of the students of Albanian ethnic background are the same, even though there is a small number of students who declared "I don't know" regarding this question.

In terms of the wanted values and competencies that are important for the intercultural dialogue, the students largely chose the categories *very important* and *quite important*. Only a small part of both ethnic groups generally had negative opinions about the mentioned values and competencies. It can be freely stated that there is a tendency or disinterest that negatively values the following: *Peace and Harmony; Respecting the human dignity and individual value of all people; Equality, justice, righteousness, inclusion; Responsible local, national and global citizenry, togetherness, mutual connection, etc.* These are values that are part of contemporary life and it is indicative that young people have these negative attitudes towards these values.

Part of the students of both ethnicities think that they possess competencies for strengthening the intercultural dialogue, while the largest part of them show insecurity but in a positive way, and they have chosen the option *most probably* possessing competencies for strengthening the intercultural dialogue. Even in this case, a small part of the students chose the option *I don't know or no*.

The largest number of students consider that they possess competencies for strengthening the intercultural dialogue:

- ... I am able to appreciate and respect the culture of the others and the contribution that they give to society.
- ... I am able to express and realize my rights and freedom and to respect those of the others.
- ... I am a responsible, productive citizen, able to contribute to society.
- ... I am tolerant, compassionate, show understanding and care for others
... I behave equally towards others, with respect and dignity.
... I am able to behave in ways that are culturally-appropriate and sensitive towards members of other cultures.
The differences appear only in the degree of development of the competencies. Almost half of the students think that they wholly work with the mentioned competencies, while the other half think that they have developed them to a large degree or partially. Considering that part of the research sample is composed of students in the second cycle of studies, who in their program have content and activities for the development of a larger number of the mentioned competencies, the fact that the larger part of the students stated they have those competencies is not surprising.

For a small part of the group, a certain reserve in terms of the competencies was noticed:
... I think critically, I object against injustice and I am able to participate in a logical debate.
... I am able to resolve conflicts and to come to a mutually useful solution to a dispute in culturally different contexts.
... I am able to live and work in harmony with people of other cultures.
It is interesting to note that in terms of these competencies there is no difference concerning the ethnic background of the students.

Regarding the question of the location of acquiring these mentioned competencies the largest part of the Macedonian students declared that to a large degree they developed them during their studies, while a small part of them declared it had been partially. As opposed to them, the percentage of Albanian students who stated that they developed these competencies partially during their studies, is higher. In that direction, in terms of the importance of embedding the competencies of intercultural dialogue in the work of the institutions of higher education, more than 90% of the students consider that there is a need for such.

Concerning the wanted characteristics that the educational institutions should possess, and are significant for the building of competencies for strengthening the intercultural dialogue, there is a high degree of agreement among the students' views and opinions.

**Policy and governance**
- The institution takes a holistic approach that integrates the principles and values for intercultural understanding throughout the work and life of the institution.
- Organizational policies, guidelines, rules and decision-making processes are in place to ensure effective learning and skills-building.
- Fair and equitable policies and rules are in place to address ethnicity-based discrimination, bullying or harassment, or hostility.
- Cooperation and partnership with the community and surrounding local culture foster current harmonious relations, and a role model for the future life and work of students.
- Diverse cultures/ethnic groups are adequately represented among governing and consultative bodies.

**Environment**
The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

- The values of intercultural understanding are part of the ethos and code of conduct of the institution.
- The learning environment is safe, supportive, respectful, enjoyable, equitable and inclusive.
- The learning environment is active, participatory, democratic and empowering.

Teachers
- The teacher is a facilitator, guide and role model who demonstrates the values of intercultural understanding through behaviour and consistent action.
- The teacher uses appropriate and conducive moments as valuable learning opportunities.
- The teacher provides a wide range of culturally appropriate learning experiences adapted to diverse learning styles and preferences.
- The teacher involves the students’ knowledge and experience, and builds on their interests and cultural or religious background.
- Respectful relationships are maintained across the faculty community.
- Teaching staff must include members of cultural/ethnic minorities.
- Teachers must possess and demonstrate the ability to guide and facilitate values development and attitudinal change in themselves and in students.
- Teachers must possess and demonstrate the ability to model values for intercultural understanding in all of their relationships and in their teaching practice.
- Teachers must have completed formal training in interethnic dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.
- Teachers must have good command of the language of the other(s).
- Teachers must possess skills in teaching and learning methodologies that integrate the content, skills and values for intercultural understanding.
- Teachers are able and ready to engage in reflective practice and research, to continually improve approaches and practices in skills-building for intercultural understanding.
- Teachers need to participate in activities/projects aimed at intercultural education and peaceful coexistence.
- Teachers are aware of the key international and human rights instruments relevant to intercultural understanding and understand how the principles apply to local contexts.
- Teachers possess practical understanding of conflict resolution and mediation strategies, and impart these skills to students.
- Teachers are introspective, they are aware of their own values, attitudes and prejudices towards other people, and are willing to challenge themselves to change them, if necessary.
- Teachers are willing to adapt, enhance and broaden their existing knowledge of pedagogical approaches suited to education for intercultural understanding.

Curriculum
The Role of High Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in Multicultural Society

- Intercultural understanding and skills-building is integrated throughout the curriculum.
- Mandatory curriculum modules or subjects address the acquisition of principles and practices of intercultural dialogue.
- Elective curriculum modules or subjects address the acquisition of principles and practices of intercultural dialogue.

Materials
- Teaching and learning materials reflect the underpinning principles of competence building for intercultural dialogue.
- Teaching and learning materials are prepared with due care for eliminating any semblance of intolerance, bias, prejudice that might contribute to creating or widening an intercultural divide.
- Materials must include definitions of interethnic dialogue and follow-up exercises.

Learning process
- Learning encourages curiosity, creative and caring thinking, critical reflection, questioning, discussion, dialogue and collaborative action.
- Learning ensures acquisition of critical thinking skills to question injustice, intolerance and prejudice.

Students
- Students develop positive communication and negotiation skills while working collaboratively with a diverse range of fellow students.
- Students must communicate with peers from other ethnic groups to develop skills for interethnic dialogue.
- All students experience a sense of belonging and feel valued and included in the group.

A small part of the Albanian students (12.6%) are reserved in terms of the importance regarding policy and governance, for: Righteous and equal policies and rules are being applied for handling discrimination, mistreatment or hostility because of nationality; - The cooperation and partner relations with the community and local culture instigate harmonious relationships and a model for behaving in the future job and life of students; and - The different cultural/ethnic groups are appropriately represented in the executive and consultative bodies.

A small part of the Macedonian students (6.2%) are reserved in terms of the field students, referring to the characteristic: The students must communicate with colleagues from other ethnic groups in order for them to develop skills for interethnic dialogue.

In terms of the views and opinions of the students for the needed changes in their institutions of higher education for strengthening the competencies of intercultural dialogue, there is a large degree of difference in their opinions. The largest part of
them are concentrated in the area of moderate changes, while the areas that are most covered for change are the same ones that the teachers indicated, i.e. the learning processes and learning materials. In students there is a need for change in the area of policy and governance in the institutions as well as in the areas of teachers and students. A very small number of students chose that there was no need for change (7.3%).

- The research demonstrated that a large part of the states, statements and recommendations shared at several meetings and discussions in the recent period have been confirmed in this case as well. The center point of the needs is placed on the teaching, learning processes, training of the teachers and the need for joint teaching and extra-curricular activities that will be put in the function of strengthening the intercultural dialogue. Namely, the process itself of learning the culture of the others, the values of the others and being introduced to them through letters and pictures is not enough unless the process of action is involved. The recorded lack of competencies for peaceful conflict resolution in teachers and a larger number of students should gradually free the area of aquisition of the competencies for conflict prevention. In that sense, research, joint projects and presentations can show to be a good means for overcoming the separation and strengthening the understanding and coexistence.

- Freeing the education from the ballast of ideologies and populistic "stories" should open up space for the questions that refer to the existence, culture of living, individual development and European perspective. The civil option as opposed to the isolationism and xenophobia should dominate in the educational process.

- The university can contribute much for strengthening the cultural dialogue, but it cannot correct all the omissions made in the lower educational levels and the extra-curricular life. Strengthening the intercultural dialogue is not just a question of the universities but also of the wider community and family. The measures should be comprehensive and all-purpose in order to achieve the wanted result.

CONCLUSIONS

It would be good if we did not have to face intensive turmoil and transformations in the socio-political, economic, employment and cultural sphere. In such a case, we could truly devote ourselves to the individual and his/her uninhibited development, to the development of his/her individual cultural identity, as defined in a multicultural environment and placed in the global national and supranational

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This part will also present the recommendations brought at other meetings, and which come as a result of this research. The aim is to give them additional strength and to stress the universal effort that is being done to strengthen the intercultural dialogue in the country.
context. However, reality is very different and one must be aware at all times of the tendencies emerging in all spheres of the human and societal manifestations, especially of the compatibility of the values acquired through the educational processes and of the values that dominate in society and are acquired through informal education. For example, if we were to discuss “tolerance” as a virtue / value, we have to ask ourselves, which honesty is real, the one declared in the classroom or the one everybody encounters in the cruel fight for profit? Which cultural behavioural patterns are true and inherent to human nature, those delivered in school, i.e. arbitrarily declared, those that exist in reality (at a religious, ethnic, local, regional, national and supranational level) or those that young people spontaneously build (differing in gender, age, status and educational levels) to the degree of a “counter-culture”? A country that cannot verify in practice the declared principles as incorporated in the goals of education cannot expect satisfactory results from the same education. If the current processes that signal other changes are not taken into account, it could happen that education shapes a person who despite remarkable professional qualities is handicapped in their culture and values and thus socially maladjusted, and in some cases even destructive.

The specific objectives and tasks of education must be geared towards promotion and development of the individual characteristics of the personality through the processes of getting to know, understand and respect other cultures, at national and international level, with the purpose of development of the individuality, his/her interests, attitudes and motives. This process needs to be raised to a level of self-educational activities, so that the individual is in a position to situate him/herself in the world of a narrow and wider social and working environment.

The future of intercultural education in the Republic of Macedonia, in the environment of the current position of education and the relations that exist in the country is highly uncertain. We may, even, need to question the mere use of the term intercultural education. Couldn’t we instead talk about THE CULTURE OF LIVING as a superordinate term that in itself unites all forms of preparation for: family, citizenship, peace, coexistence, cultural interaction and integration and mutual contribution for the overall development. Educational curricula and programmes should facilitate, among other, the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are basic to the establishment of a culture of living. This presupposes inclusion of contents and activities that represent a reflection as well as a product of the influence of the local and international globalisation processes. An important place should be allocated to the tendencies for bringing peoples closer to each other on a cultural level. In that case, we could speak of stressing the similarities and not the differences in the cultural features of the various groups, as a common matrix of the culture of living and as a precondition for a mutual contribution in the cultural and economic development at a national and international level. Only in this way can peace, freedom, coexistence and the progressive ethical-existential communication find their realistic foundation.

1. The role of HE is seen by the participants within political, social and economical processes in the society. In this sense, the most participants realise the influence
that these processes will have on the HE reform and underline the need for making a closer connection between the goals of HE in fostering intercultural dialogue and development of supporting instruments (policies, strategies) that:
- on one hand, provide multiply opportunities for interaction between ethnic communities and,
- at the same time, create some “pressure” on the national level (for example, through the sets of standards to HE, economic instruments, incorporating a new value system into the functioning of the society, etc.) that stimulate HE institutions, as well as other stakeholders, to implement the educational reform more actively.

2. It is very important that the participants, while acknowledging the positive practices within their institutions (mixed campuses, availability of courses in several languages, extra-curricular activities, etc.) realise the limitations of these approaches within the concept of Integrated Education and raise the issues of redefining the national concept of HE, which is more broad, inclusive, and humanistic, and addresses the needs of the whole society, rather than over-concentrating on accommodating the needs of separate ethnic groups.  

- The research demonstrated that a large part of the states, statements and recommendations shared at several meetings and discussions in the recent period have been confirmed in this case as well. The center point of the needs is placed on the teaching, learning processes, training of the teachers and the need for joint teaching and extra-curricular activities that will be put in the function of strengthening the intercultural dialogue. Namely, the process itself of learning the culture of the others, the values of the others and being introduced to them through letters and pictures is not enough unless the process of action is involved. The recorded lack of competencies for peaceful conflict resolution in teachers and a larger number of students should gradually free the area of acquisition of the competencies for conflict prevention. In that sense, research, joint projects and presentations can show to be a good means for overcoming the separation and strengthening the understanding and coexistence.

- the content of education has to be changed; it is critical that curriculum reform promotes the development of skills, values and behaviours that allow students to participate more actively in the society and that are coherent with the notions of democratic and cohesive society; 

- teaching practices have to be changed; in order to address the diverse needs of students, also from different ethnic communities, teaching has to become more student-centred; at the moment, the most staff do not feel comfortable with the mixed student campuses and classrooms and also teaching about inter-cultural relations, since it requires rethinking the whole

56 Creating vision and standards - the Role of Higher Education in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding in a Multiethnic Society*, Skopje, FYR Macedonia, 16-17 March 2011, Evaluative feedback of the panel discussions

57 This part will also present the recommendations brought at other meetings, and which come as a result of this research. The aim is to give them additional strength and to stress the universal effort that is being done to strengthen the intercultural dialogue in the country.

58 Ibid
approach to learning, which allows seeing the perspective of “others” from their own point of view, but not through the textbook or lecture; 59

- achieving the goal of bringing the students from different ethnic communities to study together still creates a problem for the HE institutions; although some courses are attended by Albanian and Macedonian students, it is done through the means of the third language (i.e. English), while other courses are provided only in Macedonian or Albanian;
- defining a new concept of HE (or vision) creates a challenge that has to be addressed on the national level; the lack of clear definition what the quality of education is within the integrated education framework prevents from the development of the appropriate standards and requirements in higher education; moreover, it may jeopardise the process of implementation of the national strategy, since the quality criteria for the HE are not defined;
- while the participants have an understanding what may be the possible role of HE in implementation of the national strategy on Integrated Education, the mechanisms of participation and implementation (goals, who and how?) are not clear; there are expectations that the approach to the reform has to be top-down and the HE institutions should be given some guidelines or “push” by the Ministry of Education; there is a lack of interaction between the Ministry and HE institutions about the implementation of the Strategy. In overall, there seem to be confusion about the implementation process and distribution of roles.

- Freeing the education from the ballast of ideologies and populistic "stories" should open up space for the questions that refer to the existence, culture of living, individual development and European perspective. The civil option as opposed to the isolationism and xenophobia should dominate in the educational process.
- The university can contribute much for strengthening the cultural dialogue, but it cannot correct all the omissions made in the lower educational levels and the extra-curricular life. Strengthening the intercultural dialogue is not just a question of the universities but also of the wider community and family. The measures should be comprehensive and all-purpose in order to achieve the wanted result.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

59 Ibid
1. Although there are several capacity development needs that should be addressed on the HE institutions level (such as curriculum reform, teaching and learning, languages, organisation processes, leadership, etc.), most urgent seem to be the need to engage all stakeholders into the professional dialogue about the national strategy on Integrated Education and their roles in its implementation. Since there is already a working group in the Ministry, it may be recommended whether to strengthen that by involving into the planning the representatives of main stakeholders (ministry, local governments, HE, schools, NGOs, etc.) or create an inter-institutional steering committee, which will oversee the implementation of strategy and will also assume the role of communicating the goals, objectives and approaches to the targets groups and also collect the feedback.

2. The next step for the ministry working group together with the representatives of stakeholders (or a newly established steering committee) may be the elaboration (since it exists, perhaps, revision?) of the detailed implementation plan, which specifically defines the roles of all stakeholders in the implementation of the goals and objectives, sets steps and interim targets (outputs and outcomes) in the implementation, cooperation and monitoring mechanisms, and puts it in the timeframe.

3. The Ministry should take a more proactive approach in communicating the Strategy to various groups of stakeholders and target groups in the language they understand to make sure that they are aware not just of the broad goals and the objectives, but also how they are translated into the specific outcomes on various levels of education (kindergarten, school, higher education, etc.). In addition, the raising awareness campaign should address the instruments of implementation, for example, multilingual education, curriculum reform, new pedagogy, etc. in order to develop understanding and more positive attitude to the reform.