

**EDUCATION AT THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN TRADITION
AND MODERNIZATION
(EXPERIENCES FROM THE R. OF MACEDONIA)**

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Abstract. *The present article deals with the importance of vision on the aspects of the traditional and the modern, seen through the prism of education and the changes that occur in that area. The paper presents some experiences from Macedonia gathered as part of the project Foundation of Democracy, which was implemented through the Ministry of Education, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia (now Bureau for Educational Development) and its partner institution Catholic Relief Services - CRS, as an international non - government humanitarian organization working in Macedonia since 1992. The aim was to raise children to live in a democratic society, and to build positions in terms of self-discipline, moral responsibility, empathy, participation in public affairs, decision making and conflict resolution, both in their public and in private lives. Changes in the educational process are inevitable. But also, it is necessary to consistently comply with the respective culture and tradition and make a substantial connection between what is traditional and what is modern. The traditional may not be completely neglected because of a wave called "modernization", or what is modern should be avoided due to the blind consistency everything traditional. One should always make essential connections that will bring greater prosperity and get results.*

Key words: *education, changes, tradition, modernization, civic education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, filled with many changes of different aspects; globalization on the one hand, nationalism and on the other, the economic crisis, the degradation of moral values, social transition and so on, has put education in such a position that it is torn between tradition and modernity.

Former schools with a traditional rigid structure, hierarchy in the relationship between the teacher and students with greater authority on the part of the teacher faced the challenges of the new (modern) times in the world of computer science, information and

communication technologies, new needs of the individual student and the general changes in family and society.

Changes or the spirit of the modern way of life are reflected in the structure of curricula by introducing new subjects, new content, and the like. But do the methods and forms of work consistently follow modern processes or do they remain stagnant in the traditional layout and conservatism. Certainly, conservatism is not so bad when it comes to the transmission of values, but when it comes to the explosion of knowledge and existing social and other essentials. Civilization changes bring new challenges to education as a sign of modern times. How much is education successful within that?

In this paper we will try to answer those questions.

The need for permanent change in society is inevitable and is caused by scientific and technical advancements, and nowadays the development of information and communication technology. In fact, education does not only "reflect" changes in that sphere, but also is an active cause of progressive change and a factor which affects the speed of those changes. Moreover, it is indisputable that communication and information technology, or what is also known as information technology is one area that makes connections between science and education. And that in turn gives large, very diverse and quite unusual opportunities for independent learning that are characteristic of modern times. Thus, there are numerous sources of "knowledge" in the role of "parallel" programs, or the so-called "Parallel schools", which literally bombard students with an avalanche of detailed information and knowledge, which in itself makes the paradoxical realization that school is not the only place to acquire knowledge and skills, i.e. the acquisition of competences.

THREE TYPES OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHANGES

The totality of the changes affect the field of education, its content, level, duration, and the organization and delivery of instruction using new methods and ways of addressing the needs of pupils in the spirit of modern times. Knowledge is increasingly confirmed as the development and manufacturing force that creates value, because the education of staff depends on the progress of technology and economic development. Moreover, the role of general education is particularly emphasized, which is not only a prerequisite for any professional degree, but also a significant factor for the successful adaptation in new areas of labor, better creativity, inventiveness and of course, greater productivity (Popova-Koskarova, 2003). The process of globalization has further raised the need for the integration of processes in many spheres of social life, and is certainly the leader in the educational system. Changes that occur in this area have a single goal -integration with the world's educational systems. However, in this field, there are major flaws. Namely, we can classify the views in this respect into three groups.

On the one hand we have those who accept all changes that are imposed by the West "ad hoc", and above the United States. And that is the biggest weakness of this way of accepting the change or the penetration of modern education.

In the other group we have the beliefs that change the selectively or skeptically minded and conservative. They are supporters of the traditional aspect and think that "our system is good" and we do not need many things to change, except in terms of content in the programs and the like.

The members of the third group are moderate in their beliefs and think that you need to make a connection between the traditional and the modern so as to keep what is good from the old system and to upgrade it into the modern.

For all of these aspects, we will bring individual knowledge and attitudes, which themselves will be sufficient to explain the education that stands at the intersection between the modern and the traditional. Also, it is our goal to identify the strengths, not only the weaknesses.

2.1. "Ad hoc" acceptance of the changes on the example of the foundations of democracy

In the late 90s in the R. of Macedonia there was a tendency for the invasive acceptance of changes in the system of education offered by the Western European countries and the United States. Many projects were implemented in educational institutions starting from pre-school and the most dominant ones were implemented in primary schools. At that time the most popular projects were "Step by Step", "Active teaching, interactive learning, and others. The theoretical foundations of the project were built based on the Montessori theory and Dewey, where the emphasis was placed on the active position of the student in teaching, learning through experience, which led to a clear change in the position of the teacher and educator. The project had the primary aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process. Several positive effects were achieved, especially when teachers expressed positive views on the mentioned projects.

The projects introduced an innovative spirit and a new approach to the previously monotonous educational process in schools, and contributed to the greater creativity of students and teachers. Classrooms now had a different character, with the activities and independent work of the students coming into the foreground, and the teacher given the role of the host and organizer of activities, not just a distributor of knowledge.

However, in this context, we will make a comparison with another project of civic education.

Namely, starting in 1998, primary schools in the R. of Macedonia started the project "Education for civil society" (Civic education) for all the levels of our education system.

As part of this project's predicted programs: Foundation of Democracy and We the people - Citizen Project, which were implemented through the Ministry of Education, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia (now the Bureau for Educational Development) and partner institution Catholic Relief Services - CRS, as an international non-government humanitarian organization working in Macedonia since 1992. Both programs (Foundations of Democracy and We - the people - Citizen Project) were taken from the Center for Civic Education Calabasas - California.

Here, briefly, is what the "Foundation of Democracy" program was about:

In preschool and elementary school within the framework of the "Foundation of Democracy" four concepts were at work: responsibility, justice, authority and privacy. These were modern concepts, which had the task to enable a person to participate in social life, or in civil society. The aim was to raise children to live in a democratic society, and to build positions in terms of self-discipline, moral responsibility, empathy, participation in public affairs, decision making and conflict resolution, both in public and in private life. (Seminar materials for teachers, 2000, pg. 32)

And it was welcome, because our former education system covered and elaborated on these contents very poorly. In addition to that, the contents of the project for the Foundations of Democracy were processed in the first four grades in many modern methodical-didactic ways of realization, using brainstorming, role-playing, simulations, problem solving, interaction, discussion and all through the appropriate methodical workshops. Students were put into a situation of observing, describing, comparing, thinking and self-important decision-making. In secondary education, however, the program "Citizens for Democracy" was realized.

For the purposes of the educational process in 1999, the textbook Foundation of Democracy was translated as well as a and handbook for teachers. It was translated literally, without adapting the texts to suit our environment, our tradition and culture. Therefore, we have received contents of the type: "Balongrad", "Righteous bears", "Goldfish Carolina."

To clarify, the concept of authority is processed through the American story Balongrad where the participants or residents lived in Balongrad. The goal was to learn about authority, or power, or who has authority and who is power.

But, it was not very clear to our children. They did not understand the essentials of the story at all. All the other texts had abstract contents.

The concept of justice is processed through the American story "Just Bears." The main characters were two teddy bear families. It used the terms "mum Mechevska", "Dad Mechevski" etc. The aim was to show how teddy bears just cannot decide on something, but also to teach what is distributive, corrective and procedural justice, to distinguish what is just from what is not, and all that through the life of teddy bears.

The concept of privacy is processed through the American story "Goldfish Carolina", where the main character is the fish-Carolina, through whom the students had to learn what privacy is, from whom the fish like to hide. A particularly interesting part of the story was the one which included the conversation between the fish with the worm, to which the children often responded that the fish can eat the worm, which is quite true.

The concept of responsibility was processed through a story that did not deviate much from our mentality, that can be said to correspond to our region, and that the text was about Martin and his responsibility as a guardian of the zoo.

Conclusion: All the other texts were abstract in content. They were texts from the modern American environment, and not the Macedonian one. In many cases, they were abstract to our students, who often could not sufficiently understand the basic messages. Indeed, these texts were not close to our children and did not feel like they were theirs, since there was a sufficient connection between the modern and the traditional. It was the biggest disadvantage of the project in the beginning.

PROGRAM ADAPTATION – THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MODERN AND THE TRADITIONAL

Two years later, in 2000, the Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia issued a textbook for the program basics of democracy by a Macedonian author. Seeing the weaknesses of the American stories, he created different stories based on the above mentioned concepts, and instead of bears, fish, or balongrads we find represented real people, children, our streets, neighborhoods, our families. These concepts were made closer to the students by the Macedonian stories, into which the coexistence with Albanian, Turkish and Roma ethnic

community was integrated. Thus, the stories about the Petkovski family where through what happened to the girl Neda and her brother, Jane, and their neighbors Eshref, Leila, Myra, Kole and Jana, have taught students how to be fair, responsible, but at the same time to protect and respect their own and others' privacy and to know what authority is, and what power is. The goal was achieved, but now in a very understandable and closer way (Vladova, 2000).

Children understand what authority is more easily, understand the power of authority of their parents, the traffic, the policemen, teachers. Justice was elaborated on by the developments in the classroom, and the concept of privacy, through the "Mystery of Neda." Responsibility was developed through family commitments and responsibilities of the Petkovski family (Vladova, 2000).

Our aim was to show that modernization in education should not be accepted ad hoc, but through very carefully adapted texts which are close to our territory, with our developments. These texts have a greater educational value than the simple reproduction of other contents that are remote and incomprehensible for our children.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION:

Changes in the educational process are inevitable. But also, it is necessary to consistently comply with the respective culture and tradition and make a substantial connection between the traditional and the modern. The traditional should not be completely neglected because of a wave of the so-called "modernization", nor should the modern be avoided due to the traditional. Always make essential connections that will bring greater prosperity and get results.

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OBRAZOVANJE NA RASKRSNICI IZMEĐU TRADICIONALNOG I MODERNOG

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Ovaj rad bavi se važnom ulogom aspekata tradicionalnog i modernog, koja je sagledavana kroz prizmu obrazovanja i promena koje se javljaju u toj oblasti.

Rad predstavlja neke od iskustva iz Makedonije koji su prikupljeni kao deo projekta Osnovi za demokratiju Foundation of Democracy, koji je primenjivan uz pomoć Ministarstva za obrazovanje i Pedagoški institute Makedonije (sada Odelenje za razvoj obrazovanja) i partnerske katoličke

institucije za pomoć (Catholic Relief Services – CRS), međunarodne nevladine organizacije koje je u Makedoniji aktivna od 1992. Cilj je bio da se podignu deca da žive u demokratskom društvu, i da se razvijaju u pogledu discipline, moralne odgovornosti, empatije, učesća u javnim aktivnostima, donošenju odluka i u javnom i privatnom životu.

Promene u sistemu obrazovanja su neminovne. Ali je takođe neophodno da se dosledno izvode u skladu sa kulturama i tradicijama u kojima se dešavaju i da se uspostavi veza između onoga što je tradicionalno i onoga što je modern. Ono što je tradicionalno se ne mora u potpunosti isključiti usled talasa "moderizacije" kao što se ono što je modern ne bi trebalo izbegavati usled neke tendencije tradicionalnog da se pridržava poznatog. Trebalo bi da se prave suštinske veze koje će dovesti do napretka i do rezultata.

Ključne reči: obrazovanje, promene, tradicija, modernizacija, građansko obrazovanje.