



ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

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Abstract

Preschool education is providing education for children before the start of compulsory (primary) education, mostly for children from 8 months till going to school. The purpose of preschool education is to help children to develop physically and intellectually, to develop their speaking skills and properly prepare for primary school. On the other hand, primary education is the first stage of compulsory education. The main goal of primary education is to achieve basic literacy and math skills for all pupils. Education of children with intellectual disability requires the need of special education system. Considering their limited abilities, the children with intellectual disability, need adapted system in accordance with their calendar, and mental age. Such a system implies a need for many specifics in the determination of educational activities, compiled by the needs of children with intellectual disabilities, and their interests. In Republic of Macedonia there are several government special schools in which the preschool education is also functioning. In Turkey, there is also an organized system of special education for children with intellectual disabilities. Each of them has a special trained staff, special programs and special organizational structure.

Keywords: Special preschool system, Special primary education, children with intellectual disabilities, Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Preschool education is an organized system of education children of preschool age, in order to gain additional skills needed for continuing education. The preschool education cover children from 7-8 months to 6 years of age, or after the prescribed period of maternity leave of the parent until going to first grade of primary education.

Primary education is the first stage of compulsory education, starts with registering the child in first grade in primary school. It is compulsory for all children from 6th to 15th year of life. The goal of primary education is aimed at the continuous development of pupil's intellectual, physical, moral and social plan in accordance with its abilities and interests.

Intellectual disability

World Health Organization (ICD -10, 1992) gives a definition of intellectual disability: *Intellectual disability is a condition of stopped and incomplete psychological development that is characterized with disorder of abilities that occur during the developmental period and which affect the general level of intelligence, such as cognitive, speech, motor and social skills.*

According to the level of disability in intellectual development these individuals are classified into four groups:

- people with mild intellectual disability;
- people with moderate intellectual disability;
- people with severe intellectual disability;
- people with profound intellectual disability.

In this classification, the World Health Organization lists the following:

- other intellectual disabilities;
- non-specific intellectual disability.

METHOD

Research **subject** is determining the differences in preschool and primary education and education for children with intellectual disabilities in Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Turkey. Our **main goal** is to identify specific differences in preschool and primary school educational systems in the Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Turkey.

Research questions:

- analysis of the organizational structure of pre-school and primary-school education in both countries,
- analysis of number of special preschool and school institutions,
- analysis of school educational plans and programs in both countries,
- analysis of the educational level of professional staff working with children with intellectual disabilities in Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Turkey.

FINDINGS

1. In terms of **organizational structure**, preschool education is a subsystem of the global educational system in Macedonia, whose basic activity is education for children from 8 months to starting school. With various programs for children from preschool age for each child should be provided favorable conditions for the overall development of its potentials.

In R. Macedonia, education of children with special educational needs is an integral part of the educational system and planned on identical or very similar definitions and general principles.

For pre-school education of children with special needs, within the special schools and special classes in regular schools, there are preparatory classes for children with: visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, chronic illness, autism. Organized by the National Coordinating Body for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Macedonia it was noted that: *Pre-school education of children with developmental problems and special educational needs should be organized and conducted primarily in regular pre-school institutions with other children, and for those with severe and multiple disabilities to organize special groups for daily care in regular pre-school institutions or in day care centers. Pre-school education should be compulsory and free of charge;*

In the Republic of Turkey pre-school education is optional, includes education of children from 3 to 5 years of age. The stay of children in these kindergartens can be half day or all day. Pre-school process is adapted to the level of child development and their individual characteristics; it is a rich stimulating environment that supports physical, mental, emotional and social development, leading to learning the cultural values and preparing children for primary education, with all that it's considered as part of the integrated educational process. In Republic of Turkey, pre-school institutions can be divided into private and government institutions. Private pre-school institutions can be opened only if they achieve all legal regulations and requirements designed for the person who intends to open the institution, including rules for staff to be employed and the physical condition of the building.

Primary education is part of the educational system in Republic of Macedonia, and its activity is regulated by the Law of primary education. The basic mission of the first educational level in the Republic of Macedonia is to raise, educate and guide. With the latest changes in statutory law, primary education is compulsory for all children from 6 to 15 years, it is lasting nine years and it's organized into three periods: from I to III grade, from IV to VI grade and VII to IX grade. Education activities in primary schools is in Macedonian language and Cyrillic alphabet, while for members of minority, the education activities are applied in the minorities language and alphabet in a manner determined by the Law on primary education. The Macedonian Constitution in Article 44 specified that primary education is compulsory and free of charge. Primary education is regulated by the Law of primary education. For pupils with special educational needs, depending on the type and level of their needs, it is organized special schools or classes in regular primary schools. In the Republic of Macedonia the principle of providing to children with special educational needs as much as possible to educate in regular school environment which is closer to their home, is accepted. So when it comes to children with mild intellectual disabilities then they are included in regular classes in primary schools, and in cases of children with severe disabilities, they are included in special schools or special classes in regular schools.

The duration of compulsory primary education in Turkey is eight years, for children aged between 6 and 14 years. The rate of schooling in primary education is 98% in 2010/2011 school year. Condition for accepting to primary school is the age -6 years (or 72 months), while the general rule is acceptance of pupils in schools that are closest to their homes. In public institutions the primary education is free of charge. According to parent's choice, children can go in private school, which depending on the schools themselves are charged. Teachers are individually responsible for every classroom in the lower grades, except for some subjects (e.g., physical education, music education, art education, foreign language), the number of subject teachers is increasing in grade IV and V, while from VI to VIII grade the classes are organized exclusively by subject teachers.

2. For the **number of preschool institutions** in Macedonia, the network includes 52 pre-school organizations with total 180 objects. In Macedonia in 2004 with pre-school education a total of 36 177 children under 7 years, or 20 517 in pre-school organizations and 15 660 in the nursery at the primary schools were included. This represents approximately 20.43% of the total number of children, 177 050 to the age of 6 years. Same academic year 2004/2005 the number of preschool institutions in Turkey is 16 016, of which 13 844 are government pre-schools, 567 private, 1186 institutions for social care of children and 419 others. In these institutions, the total number of children is 434 771 of which 20 089 children are included in institutions for social care.

In Turkey there are 8.5 million children aged 0-6 years, and 30% of them are children aged 5-6 years. The current rate of 8.9 percent in pre-school institutions aims to increase to 16 percent by the end of 2000. According to statistics from 2002, 1.25% of total population are persons with physical disabilities, 0.60% with visual disabilities, 0.37% with a hearing disability, 0.38% persons with speech disorders and 0.48% of total population in Turkey are people with intellectual disabilities, of which 0,42% are children from 0 to 9 years old.

In primary education, according to recent data from the State Institute of Statistics for the academic year 2010/2011, Macedonia has 990 primary schools with a total of 10 716 classes with 201 381 pupils. The same source has data for the special education system, where the number of special schools, including regular schools with special classes, estimated 44 with a total of 177 classes. For the same school year, the total number of pupils with special educational needs is the 1058.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Education of Republic of Turkey for school year 2010/2011, the number of government special schools for children with disabilities is 303, with a total of 19 177 pupils divided into 3493 classes. Of these, 138 government special schools are for children with mild intellectual disabilities, in these schools a total of 8327 pupils are included in 1301 class. In 53 governments special primary schools for children with moderate intellectual disability, this year the number of pupils was 3016, divided into a total of 673 classes. Schools for children with autism are separate from schools for children with intellectual disabilities. Primary education for children with autism is organized in 43 government special institutions, where the number of pupils is 1593, divided in 482 classes. Also, in Turkey there is a state special school for children with adaptation problems. This school has 10 classes and 52 pupils. As for the private system of primary education, the total number of private primary schools is 898, of which 118 schools are for children with special educational needs. In the academic 2010/2011god, 3431 pupil is included in some special private schools, all divided into 1522 classes.

3. **Areas for development** are included in most preschool education; mostly vary from country to country. However, these subjects are often present in both countries:

- Personal, social, emotional development,
- Communication, including sign language, speaking and listening,
- Knowledge and understanding of the world,
- Creative and aesthetic development,
- Educational software,
- Physical development,
- Physical health,

- Playing,
- Teamwork,
- Development of skills for self-help,
- Social skills,
- Scientific thinking,
- Creative Arts,
- Elementary literacy.

School plans and programs are universal for all regular primary schools, while special schools are having the same subjects, but with a modified program that is implemented according to pupils abilities. In the school programs in Republic of Macedonia, for pupils from I to IX grade, the following compulsory subjects are included:

- Macedonian language (for students from other communities in their native language-Albanian, Turkish or Serbian),
- Mathematics,
- English,
- Art Education,
- Music Education,
- Introduction to the environment,
- Technical Education,
- Informatics,
- Society,
- Geography,
- History,
- Civic Education,
- Nature,
- Natural Sciences,
- Natural sciences and technology,
- Biology,
- Physics,
- Chemistry,
- Physical and health education.

In addition to these compulsory subjects, students have the right to choose some electives according to their interests:

- Language and Culture of Vlachs,

- Language and culture of Roma people,
- Language and Culture of the Bosnians,
- Albanian language,
- Creativity,
- Work with computer,
- Introduction of religions,
- Ethics,
- Other elective subjects,
- School choir,
- School orchestra.

Also in all schools program, the classes for pupils with learning difficulties are provided, as well as additional classes and class community.

In Turkey, the School program is set on a national level by the Turkish Board of Education. In primary schools the subjects can be categorized into two groups:

1. Compulsory subjects:

- Turkish,
- Mathematics,
- Life Science,
- Science and Technology,
- Social Science,
- History of Turkey and History of Kemal Ataturk,
- Foreign Language,
- Religion and Ethics,
- Visual Arts,
- Music,
- Physical Education,
- Technology and Design,
- Traffic Safety,
- Guidance / Social Activities.

2. Elective subjects:

- Second Foreign Language,
- Art Activities,
- Sporting Events,
- Thinking Training ,
- Folk Culture,
- Media Literacy,
- Information Technology,

- Chess,
- Citizenship and Democracy Education,
- Agriculture.

Textbooks are chosen by the Turkish Board of Education. Teachers have no freedom in the choice of textbooks.

4. There are differences in the **training of personnel** who work with children with intellectual disabilities in both countries.

In the past, in Republic of Macedonia the staff working with children with disabilities was educated at the Institute of Pedagogy, until 1993, when the Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation was opened in the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. Today, at this Institute the 4-year degree studies in Special Education are available, also Masters Degree and from 2011 the doctoral studies, too.

Characteristic of undergraduate studies in Macedonia is that covers all categories of disability, while professional advancement by category of disability is provided during the post-graduate studies. The plan and program for future special educators includes many subjects that represent a unique combination of medical, pedagogical, sociological and psychological sciences:

I. First semester

1. Special Education and Rehabilitation
2. Physiology and Functional Anatomy
3. Neuropsychology
4. Optional subjects: Psychology, Pedagogy, Anthropology, Philosophy.

II. Second semester

1. Early Intervention and Education of children with damaged sight
2. Early Intervention and Rehabilitation of children with damaged hearing
3. Human Genetics
4. Optional subjects: Reeducation of Psychomotorics, Sociology, Defense science, Development Psychology.

III. Third semester

1. Early Intervention and Education of children with Physical disabilities
2. Early Intervention and Education of children with Mental disabilities
3. Psychology of disabled persons
4. Optional subjects: Medical basics of disabilities, Pre-school pedagogy, Aesthetics, Sociology of Health and Illness.

IV. Fourth semester

1. Evaluation of Psychomotor Development
 2. Logopedics
 3. Educational work in Dormitories
 4. Optional subjects: Social care, Mental health in a Community, Ethics, Pedagogical Psychology.
- V. Fifth semester
1. Didactic of working with pupils with mild Intellectual disability
 2. Methodology
 3. Optional subjects: Sign language, Juvenal Delinquency, Family Therapy, Didactics, Didactic of class work in primary schools, Linguistics, Andragogy.
- VI. Sixth semester
1. Didactic of working with persons with damaged hearing
 2. Prevention and Re-socialization
 3. Optional subject: Occupational therapy, Didactic of Logopedic work, Children and Youth Psychopathology, History of everyday life, Braille system, Human rights, Cultural Anthropology.
- VII. Seventh semester
1. Didactic of working with persons with severe and combined disability
 2. Didactic of working with persons with damaged sight
 3. Optional subject: Peripathology, Social work with family of disabled person, Audiology, Kinesitherapy, Logics, Neurolinguistics, Statistics.
- VIII. Eight semester
1. Didactic of working with Physically disabled people
 2. Professional Orientation and Training
 3. Optional subjects: Economy of Education, Sociology of Culture, Pluralism in Social Care Services, Techniques of Scientific work, Social Psychology.

In R. Turkey, until 1983, staff who worked with children with development disabilities was educated in the level of courses. After 1983, staff begins to educate in higher education institutions. Today, Turkey has 10 undergraduate programs for special educators divided by different categories of disability. Also at these universities, masters and doctoral degree in special education are organized.

Characteristic of Turkish education system for special educators is the direction to pedagogy or training of teachers. We will review the program plan provided for students studying in the "Education of children with intellectual disability" group.

- I. First Semester
 1. Fundamentals of Information Technology
 2. Introduction to Teacher Training
 3. Health Science and First Aid
 4. Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution I
 5. Turkish I: Writing Skills
 6. Special Education
- II. Second Semester
 1. Music
 2. Educational Research and Report Writing
 3. Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution II
 4. Turkish II: Speaking Skills
 5. Introduction: Mentally Handicapped Children
 6. Changing Attitudes Towards the Handicapped
 7. Individual Differences and Psychological Approaches
 8. Foreign Language Courses
- III. Third semester
 1. Human Development and Learning
 2. Developing Individualized Education Programs and Evaluation
 3. Education of the Mentally Handicapped
 4. Language Development and Communication
 5. Educational and Behavioral Assessment
 6. Integration and Special Education Support Services
 7. Elective Courses
- IV. Forth Semester
 1. Teaching Music to Mentally Handicapped
 2. Early Childhood Education for the Mentally Handicapped
 3. Teaching Communication Skills to the Mentally Handicapped
 4. Teaching Concepts and Skills to the Mentally Handicapped
 5. Behavior Management
 6. Elective Courses
- V. Fifth semester
 1. Use of Technology and Materials Development
 2. Teaching Reading and Writing to the Mentally Handicapped
 3. Teaching Science to the Mentally Handicapped
 4. Teaching Mathematics to the Mentally Handicapped

5. Preparing Integration Programs
6. Elective Courses
- VI. Sixth semester
 1. Classroom Management
 2. Teaching Turkish to the Mentally Handicapped
 3. Teaching Social Sciences and Social Studies to the Mentally Handicapped
 4. Teaching Games and Physical Education to the Mentally Handicapped
 5. Teaching Art to the Mentally Handicapped
 6. Teaching Self-Care Skills to the Mentally Handicapped
- VII. Seventh semester
 1. Teaching Experience I (Field Base Experiences)
 2. Preparing and Implementing Assessment Tools for Students with Mental Handicap
 3. Developing Measurement Materials to Determine the Performance Level
 4. Training and Guiding Parents of the Mentally Handicapped Children.
- VIII. Eight semester
 1. Practicum Teaching Experience II (Field Base Experiences)
 2. Developing Lesson Plans for the Trainable Mentally Handicapped
 3. Developing Instructional Materials for the Mentally Handicap
 4. School Programming and Education Settings for the Mentally Handicapped Children
 5. Placing and Monitoring Trainable Mentally Handicapped Children

DISCUSSION

In the **organizational structure** of pre-school educational system between these two countries, we can't see a big difference. In Macedonia, and Turkey pre-school education is optional and the special educational system is organized within existing government institutions. The only difference that we can notice is the better organization of private pre-school institutions in Republic of Turkey. Primary educational process, in Macedonia last nine years, while in Turkey the children are included in the same process 8 years. In both countries, primary education is compulsory and free. While in Macedonia there is not a private primary school in Turkey that number is growing. As for the special educational system we can observe that in both countries there are several special schools divided according to the type and level of pupil's disability. Both countries participate in the process of inclusion, including a number of children with special educational needs in regular schools.

The **number** of preschool institutions in both countries is enough. Surprising is the number of children which are less involved in pre-school institutions in Turkey. While the rate, relative to the total number of children in Macedonia, is 20, 43%, in Turkey the percentage of children in pre-school institutions is only 8.9%. Also, the number of special educational institutions for some categories of

disability in both countries is enough. What is entirely absent in Macedonia are centers for children with autism, which Turkey has a total of 43 with total of 1593 pupils. For now, the Macedonian children with autism are educated within special schools for children with intellectual disabilities. Also, there aren't private special schools in Macedonia. However, the total number of special schools, including special classes in regular schools is 44, a number that compared with the total population is quite appropriate for comparison with the number of special schools in R.Turkey-303 public and 118 private.

We didn't notice a difference in **subjects** planned for development of preschool aged children. These themes are mostly present in pre-school institutions in both countries. Although there is a big difference in the name of the subjects planned for primary schools, but areas covered in the two countries are quite similar. Notable for all school programs is the possibility to select subjects based on pupil's interest. What shows as a need for the special education system is specially organized subjects. In Macedonia, and Turkey the same subjects are included in special schools, and for children in the process of inclusion, modified by teachers themselves.

The process of **educating staff** is very different in these two countries. While the future special educators in Macedonia are educated to work with all categories of disabilities, students in Turkey are divided by category that they decided to work with in the future. Also, subjects provided for students in Turkey are mainly pedagogical, which means that the future staff is prepared strictly for educational work with people with special educational needs. In Macedonia, despite the pedagogical subjects, the students are preparing for proper psychological, sociological and medical work with children with special educational needs. With that, despite in the special education system, they can work in counseling centers, protected work places for people with disabilities, dormitories for children with disabilities, rehabilitation institutes, maternity hospitals, developmental counseling, day care centers, etc. These personnel equally participate in the process of detection, record, diagnostics, prognostic, categorization, treatment and monitoring of children with disabilities in all centers for mental health.

CONCLUSION

In the analysis we pointed the differences between Macedonia and Turkey, for the special educational system. We can conclude that there is a need of changes and additions in both countries. First, there is a need of organizing private special-education system in Macedonia and urgent need of autism centers, as well as schools for children with behavioral problems. In both countries there is a need for greater inclusion of children in pre-school institutions, and better organized process of inclusion for children with disabilities in primary schools. Also, special programs for children with special needs,

created according to their abilities, are needed. For the education of staff, it is better to make changes for future special educators in Turkey by including more subjects from other areas, which primarily will teach them about the medical condition of children with disabilities and their psychological needs, and will expand their employment opportunities for more positions in future.

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