

THE PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE HOMEROOM TEACHER INTO THE NEW CONCEPT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract. The position, role and tasks of the homeroom teacher are defined in the Law on primary education, Regulation on the form and content of the pedagogy documentation and evidence in primary school; Regulation on assessment, upgrading, passing exams, acquiring certificates and pedagogical measures for the children in primary school.

The need of strengthening the educational role of the school resulted in introducing of odd class in 2007/2008 for the pupils of the second to fifth grade in nine years primary school aiming to influence the personal, emotional and social development of the pupils. The scope of this research relies on the class homeroom teacher and their tasks in the successful realization of the tasks in accordance with the contemporary requirements. In that context is the aim of already mentioned research: to determine the effects of introducing homeroom class in two cycles of nine-year education, as well as the effects of the realizing the contents of the educational program for life skills. The pedagogical function of the teacher will be examined through several important aspects: how successfully the teachers realize the pedagogical, the administrative and the organizational tasks; how much the contents of the life skills program are in function of solving the issues met by the pupils in first two cycles of the primary education; how capable and qualified are the teachers to realize the contents of this program.

Keywords: *Pedagogical function, Homeroom teacher, Homeroom class, Upbringing, Educational program.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the development of the new concept for implementation of nine-year primary education in Macedonia, the need arose not only for delivering new course of study and curriculum but also shaping all the other elements of primary education system and simultaneously the need for passing a new Law for primary education and taking further measures for organizational and qualitative improvements of primary education.

With the latest legal acts modification, the primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6 to 15. The primary education lasts for nine years and is organized in 3 cycles: I to III grade. IV to VI grade and VII do IX grade.

The concept of nine-year primary education (2007), as a novelty, promoted implementation of homeroom classroom session since II grade, unlike the previous educational concept when the homeroom was realized starting V grade (when pupils have a different teacher for each subject). Namely, since the school year 2008/2009, according to the new curriculum for nine-year primary education, it is planned the Home room to be realized with the pupils II to IX grade with one period per week or 36 periods per year. The Home room is realized by the class' homeroom teacher.

The homeroom teacher, during the Homeroom, accomplishes administrative, organizational and pedagogical tasks. *Administrative tasks* refer to recording pupil's absence, preparing quarterly reports on pupil's achievements and deportment, managing school registry and registration certificates, preparing and issuing certificates and report cards, making decisions, caring out pedagogical measures etc. *Organizational tasks* refer to organizing the curriculum and

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extra-curriculum activities, such as taking part in competitions, visits and excursions, forums, meetings etc. *Pedagogical tasks*, as most important ones, include pedagogical guidance of the class, answering educational problems, acknowledgements, awards, sanctions, as well as realization of debates themed "School" (formation of class' organized body, solving class' current problems, discipline, hygiene, conduct code, student health care, ecology...) and realization of *Life Skills*' curriculum. Namely, this is one of the novelties, and according to the new Law on Primary Education (2008) subjects about pupils' personal and social development should be elaborated on during Homeroom, all according to the curriculum approved by the Ministry of education and science and proposed by the Bureau. (According Act 29). For that purpose, a special curriculum has been made for Homeroom – named Life Skills (2008) and through its realization i.e. development of Life Skills, the educational ingredient of the general curriculum is being reinforced.

This curriculum aims to assist the personal, emotional and social development of the pupils, and by doing that to help the development of the psychosocial skills, enabling the pupils to successfully deal with everyday challenge. Psychosocial skills have important role in promoting pupils' health in general – providing their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Life Skills curriculum consists of 3 development periods, in order to leave room for flexible approach to the realization of the goals and to answer pupils' needs and current life situations. In each of the 3 periods, the same themes are being repeated (1. I: Personal development; 2. I and you: Interpersonal relations; 3. I and the others: Social relations; 4. I and health; Healthy living; 5. I and the environment: interacting with the environment), but different levels has been defined (from the level of identification, description, entitling, enumeration and comparison, to level of perception, forming opinion and taking a stand).

Defined goals of each Life Skills theme are presented globally and with consistent structure determined by the pupils' age, their ability to accept, understand or realize the aspects, the relations and personal experiences with everyday events. Development goals are different for each period, but not related to particular class, because the aim is to achieve the expected results at the end of the development period regardless of the class in which the teaching goals are realized.

For realization of the Life Skills curriculum goals, the knowledge, skills and points of view should be acquired and practiced foremost in school environment and on daily basis through the personal and collective experiences of the pupils using child orientated methodology, the child as interactive and participating individual in its living and studying habitat.

In first grade, the homeroom teacher realizes the Life Skills curriculum by integrating it into the curriculum of the rest of the subjects. In II and III grade, and in all grades in the next two cycles, IV to VI grade and VII to IX grade, the Life Skills curriculum is realized with one period per week (36 periods per year) - Homeroom.

For successful realization of a Life Skills curriculum, all teachers have completed training for preparation and implementation of the curriculum and adequate manuals have been made and distributed to each primary school. The training was realized by the Bureau of Education development advisors and professional associates from the Human Rights and Conflict Solving Centre.

The practical experiences in schools so far in regard to the implementation of Homeroom, as well as the mandatory Life Skills curriculum for Homeroom, show that especially during this class each pupil's presence is equally felt. Apart from that, each student is encouraged to be free, independent and capable of successful integration in the community. This is the reason why the homeroom teacher has the greatest role in the development of the pupil into a modern persona.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of our research is in accordance with the above mentioned and aims towards a determination of the effects that the implementation of Homeroom has in the first two cycles of primary school, as well as the effects of the Life Skills curriculum realization. The pedagogical function of homeroom teachers is researched through few important aspects such as: how many teachers are capable for successful realization of Life Skills curriculum, the level of this success, how much this curriculum meets pupils' needs in regards to their personal, emotional and social development and how interesting and comprehensible this curriculum is for the pupils.

An analytical-descriptive method is used for the research and survey technique for data

collection, in order to analyze teachers' opinion and point of view regarding the problem. In March, 2012, survey has been conducted among 90 homeroom teachers who teach II to VI grade in five primary schools in Skopje. The survey was anonymous so that the teachers do not hesitate to express their opinion on the questions asked.

3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

At this point in the study, we present the findings of the survey conducted among the teachers.

Teachers' answers in relation to the question: whether they are satisfied with the implementation of Homeroom in the first two cycles of primary education, are specified in the following table.

Table 1. *Answers - number and percentage*

Answers	Homeroom teachers	
	f	%
Yes, completely	85	94,4
Partially	5	5,6
Not satisfied	0	0
Total	90	100,0

The results leads us to conclude that most of the teachers are satisfied with the implementation of Homeroom as 94,4% of them expressed complete satisfaction, 5,6% partial satisfaction and there was not even one unsatisfied teacher.

Regarding the question in the survey aiming to help us find out the homeroom teachers' opinion whether the Life Skills curriculum meets pupils' needs when it comes to their personal, emotional and social development, the teachers had 3 possible answers to choose from. The results are indicated in the following table.

Table 2. *Answers - number and percentage*

Answers	Homeroom teachers	
	f	%
Yes, completely	79	87,8
Partially	11	12,2
Not satisfied	0	0
Total	90	100,0

The data collected, analyzed and presented in the table above shows that the greatest percentage of teachers answered that the Life Skills curriculum meets pupils' needs regarding their personal, emotional and social development. The fact that not even one teacher has a negative opinion is also impressive.

To discover teachers' opinion on

whether the Life Skills curriculum realized in Homeroom is interesting and comprehensible for the pupils, three possible answers were offered.

The collected data is presented in the table below:

Table 3. *Answers - number and percentage*

Answers	Homeroom teachers	
	f	%
The curriculum is interesting and comprehensible	67	74,4
Parts of the curriculum are interesting and comprehensible	23	25,6
The curriculum is not interesting and comprehensible at all	0	0
Total	90	100,0

From the above table and the data presented can be noticed that 74,4% of teachers consider the curriculum interesting and comprehensible for the pupils, 25,6% think that some of the curriculum is interesting and comprehensible, and not even one of them thinks that the curriculum is not interesting and not comprehensible at all.

Also, important for the research was to discover which elaborated themes in Homeroom inspire pupils' interest the most. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 4. *Answers - number and percentage*

THEME	Homeroom teachers		
	f	%	Rank
I and the others	90	100,0	1
I and habitat	85	94,4	2
I and health	80	88,9	3
My personal development	53	58,9	4
Social relations	48	53,3	5

Data show that what pupils love to talk about the most is themselves, their friends, their habitat and health. They are least interested in social relations.

According to the Bureau of education development, almost every teacher attended a seminar for successful realization of the Life Skills curriculum and all of them have been trained. However, in relation to whether the seminars sufficiently trained the teachers for successful realization of the Life Skills curriculum, the teachers expressed the following opinions.

Table 5. *Answers - number and percentage*

Answers	Homeroom teachers	
	f	%
More than 20 periods	58	64,4
10 to 20 periods	23	25,6
10 periods the most	9	10,0

The above data shows us that even though the greatest percentage of teachers consider themselves sufficiently trained for curriculum realization, there are still a significant percentage of teachers (24,4%) who are in need of additional training.

Moreover, there was a question in the survey aimed to give us inside on the number of periods per academic year (out of 36 in total) during which the Life Skills curriculum had been realized. The final results are in the table bellow:

Table 6. *Answers - number and percentage*

Answers	Homeroom teachers	
	f	%
More than 20 periods	58	64,4
10 to 20 periods	23	25,6
10 periods the most	9	10,0

Despite the greatest percentage of teachers (75,6%) stating that attending seminars trained them for successful realization of Life Skills curriculum, the last table shows that when teachers asked about the number of Homerooms when this curriculum was implemented, it is obvious that considerable percentage of homeroom teachers did not realize the curriculum on more than 20 periods per year, even though they had been asked to do so. This indicates the need to discover the reasons leading to insufficient realization of the Life Skills curriculum during Homeroom.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the results from the survey conducted among the teachers, few general conclusions can be summed up: firstly, the Homeroom is necessary and well implemented because the teachers are satisfied with the introduction of the Homeroom during the first two cycles of primary education, secondly, the Life Skills curriculum meets the pupils' needs regarding their personal, emotional and social development, thirdly, the curriculum in question is interesting and comprehensible for the pupils, fourthly, the pupils find it most interesting to discuss the themes of: I and the others, I

and habitat and I and health, fifthly, the seminars aimed at training the teachers to plan and realize the Life Skills curriculum contribute greatly for the practical implementation of this curriculum during Homeroom and finally, there is still a significant number of homeroom teachers in need of additional training.

Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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