

MANAGEMENT, PLACE AND ROLE OF HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION IN MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Historical and geographical education occupy a key place in the educational system of Macedonia, because they contribute to the development of national consciousness, cultural heritage, respect for traditional values and understanding of global processes. History teaches students to understand the evolution of societies, appreciate Macedonian cultural wealth and develop critical thinking through the analysis of historical events and sources, while geography offers knowledge about natural resources, social and economic processes, as well as ecology, strengthening awareness of sustainable development.

However, these educational disciplines face challenges, such as the politicization of teaching content and the lack of practical activities. The improvement of teaching methods, the integration of modern technologies, the interdisciplinary approach and their elevation to the level of national subjects are necessary to promote their relevance and effectiveness.

In this paper, in addition to analyzing the current situation with these two related disciplines of national importance, it also highlights the importance of historical and geographical education and the possibilities for overcoming existing obstacles through a comparative analysis of the educational systems of the EU member states and the Balkans, as well as the key aspects of the management of these educational disciplines in order to improve their relevance and effectiveness.

Keywords : history, geography, education, management, Republic of North Macedonia.

JEL classification: I21, I28

Introduction

Historical and geographical education in Macedonia is crucial for the development of national identity, cultural awareness and understanding of global processes. Effective management includes curriculum development, teacher training, provision of resources and monitoring of contemporary educational trends.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, these disciplines are part of compulsory education, but their structure, methodology and focus differ significantly from those in the member states of the European Union.

The effective management of historical and geographical education is essential for the development of the educational system and the promotion of cultural, historical and geographical awareness. This paper explores the key aspects of the management of these educational disciplines in the Republic of North Macedonia throughout history,

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analyzes the challenges and offers recommendations for improving their relevance and effectiveness.

History and geography education in Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia have different approaches, which are shaped by their historical contexts, educational policies and cultural values. These three countries, which were once part of the former Yugoslavia, today have their own national systems, but also common elements. The comparative analysis can serve as a basis for identifying good practices and improving the Macedonian system in the democratic world.

Historical and geographical education in Macedonia - from the creation of the Macedonian state to today

The place of historical and geographical education in Macedonia - from the basis of the creation of the Macedonian state to an attempt to destroy them with the Concept for Basic Education from 2020/2021

The long-awaited liberation of Macedonia, as part of the anti-fascist coalition after the Second World War and its legal establishment as a state with the First Session of ASNOM in international frameworks, brought benefits that every statehood brings. One of the priorities of the Macedonian state after the war was the creation of a state legal system in which education had a significant place, which, especially in the conditions of the mostly uneducated or illiterate population, was a real state problem.

From the point of view of management, it can be said that illiteracy or insufficient education also meant the impossibility of placing people with minimal education in positions that required the same. We're making a distinction here between minimum education and adequate education, which means that when you don't have enough educated people, you move the ones you do have into places that were often unsuitable for them. This illustrates the dilemma faced by countries or societies with a shortage of highly educated personnel: the need to place people in positions that do not match their qualifications and abilities, which can lead to inefficiency and poor results. This is also the reason for the lack of staff in schools, because often educated teachers after the war were assigned to jobs that required such an education.

To solve the issues related to education, after the First session of ASNOM, a Temporary Curriculum Plan was immediately made and teacher education trainings were conducted. Somewhat later in 1946, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Macedonia created and issued the "Curriculum and Program for Primary Schools in Macedonia". The curriculum included 4 classes, in which the following subjects were taught: folk language, history, geography, natural science, arithmetic, drawing, singing, physical education and calligraphy (Curriculum and Program for Primary Schools in Macedonia, Ministry of Education, National Republic of Macedonia, 1946).

The teaching subjects that are listed became the basis of the educational system and we have them to this day, with a note that some of them appeared for the first time as national subjects of the Macedonian people. Such were the national language subjects, as the Macedonian language was named in the program, as well as history and geography, as the geography subject was named, which were part of the so-called national group of subjects and which in content and essence meant the formation of Macedonian statehood.

From the mentioned period after the Second World War until 2020, curriculums were followed, in which curriculums for the subjects of history and geography were always an essential part.

The curricula defined a different study of the subjects history and geography, in terms of the different number of years of study of the subjects in primary and secondary education, as well as the fund of classes with which they were studied, but one thing was common to the subjects: they were always an inseparable part of the Macedonian education system.

Namely, no one until 2020 made an attempt to destroy the subjects of history and geography and attempt to transfer into one teaching subject, in which contents from other teaching subjects were also added, but also inappropriate scattering of contents from the subjects in inappropriate classes, where the student neither by age nor by interests could learn the concepts and contents provided for in the new subject Social Sciences.

In 2020, the Bureau for Education Development and the Ministry of Education and Science presented the idea of establishing a new subject called Social Sciences, the components of which were contents from history and geography. All the ambiguity surrounding this subject, in which it is not clear how these two sciences became "social", was supplemented by the way of working in the very implementation of teaching and in the management of the educational process, things that no one knew how to explain, but he was waiting for the moment when the very state of chaos was supposed to give birth to a solution.

The solution after discussions and protests in 2020 and 2021 was renaming the subject to History and Society and a way of teaching contrary to all logic and contrary to the management of teaching staff in schools. The solution of the contents taught by the teachers in the primary education in the sixth grade according to this concept, they appointed the history teacher as a teacher from September to February, when the geography teacher performed for several months, so that at the end of the year the teaching was continued by a third teacher.

It is important to say that at the time of one teacher's teaching, the other was employed, but his work tasks were a real enigma to everyone. In this way, with the creation of such a subject, the question was raised whether an attempt is being made to destroy the teaching subjects of history and geography and abolish them for the first time in the history of Macedonian education, that is, seventy-five years since their introduction into the educational system.

Although formally the initiatives in that conception had some positive aspects, in practice they did not bring the desired results, on the contrary, they led to problems in the educational system when serious criticisms and challenges appeared during their implementation.

The bad side of the concept can be seen in several aspects, such as: insufficient communication (<https://a1on.mk/>) with all stakeholders, unrealistic implementation of digitization, unclear goals and expectations, insufficient technical and infrastructure readiness, no or very little focus on the development of skills relevant to the labor market, inconsistency of teaching materials that are inappropriate for the age and contrary to scientific truths, or in a word reforms related to political interests and interests of other

countries and mostly to the detriment of historical and geographical education (<https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija>).

Such an attempt to destroy them with the Basic Education Concept of 2020/2021 was partially thwarted in 2024 when corrections were made in the title of the subjects, but not in the way of their study with contents scattered from the 4th to the 9th grade.

In order to be able to achieve a successful modernization of the education system, greater efforts are needed in cooperation with all interested parties and greater flexibility in adapting policies.

An analysis of historical and geographical education with the countries of the Balkans and the EU

Geographical school education in the countries studied is part of the subject area of natural sciences and society sciences. For example: the school subject Geography is to „Social sciences” - Bosnia and Herzegovina; „Society and environment” - Albania; „Social sciences and civic education, religion” - Bulgaria; „Man and society” - Romania; „Natural sciences” - Greece; „Natural area” - Croatia; „Natural-mathematics, Language-Arts and Social-humanistic” - Macedonia and others (Dermendzhieva, Draganova, *Comparative analysis of the geography education in the balkan countries*, 31.)

Historical and geographical education in Macedonia is key to the development of national identity, cultural awareness and understanding of global processes. Effective management includes curriculum development, teacher training, provision of resources and monitoring of contemporary educational trends. In the Republic of North Macedonia, these disciplines are part of compulsory education, but their structure, methodology and focus differ significantly from those in the member states of the European Union.

Focu s	In Macedonia	In the European Union (EU)
Curricula	Limited integration of current global topics such as climate change and migration.	Multiple programs combining national and European history as well as global issues such as climate change and migration.
Teaching methods	A traditional approach with theoretical teaching prevails.	A combination of theory and interactive methods, such as debates, field teaching and the use of digital tools.

Integration of technologies	Limited use of digital resources and platforms.	Extensive use of digital tools, virtual tours, geographic information systems (GIS) and e-learning.
Teacher training	Limited opportunities for professional development and access to modern teaching methods.	Regular training programs, including international cooperation and teacher participation in EU projects such as Erasmus+.
Ecology and sustainable development	Underrepresented as a topic in geography education.	Sustainable development and climate change are an integral part of geography curricula.
An interdisciplinary approach	An interdisciplinary approach that combines historical and geographical topics is rarely applied.	Frequent integration of different disciplines through joint projects and research.
Student participation	Limited opportunities for active involvement through projects or research.	Students are actively involved in projects, research and simulations to solve real problems.
Ecology and sustainable development	Underrepresented as a topic in geography education.	Sustainable development and climate change are an integral part of geography curricula.

If an analysis of historical and geographical education in Macedonia is done with Croatia and Slovenia as countries of the former SFRY and today EU member states, it will be seen that the key differences and similarities with Croatia and Slovenia are that in:

- all three countries national history and geography play a significant role,

- geography still retains its role as a subject for understanding natural and cultural phenomena,
- Croatia and Slovenia pay more attention to global topics and the European dimension in education,
- Slovenia has more advanced teaching methods and the integration of modern technologies, while Macedonia still relies on the traditional approach, Slovenia and Croatia have better developed programs for field teaching and professional development of teachers.

If you analyze the countries of the Balkans, you will see that all the countries of the region have a strong focus on national history and geography, limited use of modern technologies in teaching. In Greece there is a stronger emphasis on global themes and the use of interdisciplinary approaches, while in Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia they focus on historical events that are significant for national identity, but have a greater integration of digital resources.

And finally, Geography helps us to understand the complexity and interconnections of the world in which we live, as it not only explores natural processes but also analyzes how human activities shape and transform our environment and society (Johnston, Sidaway, 1945) , while "history is the teacher of life", a Latin expression used by the Roman philosopher and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero.

**HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION IN MACEDONIA
- FROM THE CREATION OF THE MACEDONIAN STATE TO TODAY**

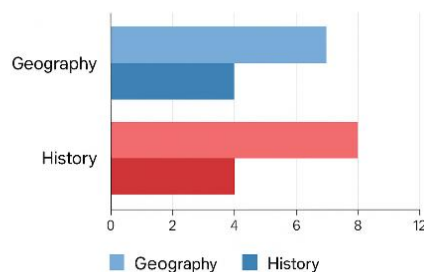


Chart 1. Historical and geographical education in Macedonia

Conclusion

In the modern world, education plays a central role in preparing students for the challenges of the future. For the education system to be effective and relevant, it needs to include and integrate national, European and global aspects in a way that suits the context and the needs of the students. The balance between these three aspects is key to the development of an educational model and is key to the creation of an educational

model that will respond to the modern needs of students and prepare them not only for local, but also for global challenges.

Although Macedonia has a strong foundation for history and geography education, the application of good practices from EU countries, especially Croatia and Slovenia, can significantly modernize the education system and improve its quality. With the approach to the European Union and globalization, the European dimension in education is becoming more and more present. This aspect includes learning about the history of Europe, its institutions, cultural diversity and the common values that unite European peoples. The European context helps the student to understand his country as part of the wider context of Europe, with an emphasis on integration, European standards and political processes.

The national component of education refers to learning about the history, culture, language and traditions of a country. These aspects are important for building national consciousness and identity among young generations. These topics help in understanding the historical and cultural heritage, which is essential for maintaining the national spirit and integrity. For Macedonia, as for other Balkan countries, national aspects are particularly important in the context of the complex history and relations with the neighbors. These themes shape the view of the future and the building of stable institutions and democratic values.

Creating an educational model that integrates national, European and global aspects is key to preparing students for the modern world. To achieve a balance between all these aspects, it is important to incorporate a methodology that combines: an interdisciplinary approach, project-based teaching and flexible curricula.

Globalization and the peripheral issues it brings, such as climate change, migration, global health and technology, require educational systems to adapt and prepare students for active participation in the global world. This entails including global topics in the curricula and encouraging students to think globally.

For Macedonia, as well as for all countries in the region, this represents a basis for creating educated systems that will be competitive and contribute to more integrated and responsible societies.

Problems with historical and geographic education can be overcome by effective management that includes these key aspects:

1. Curriculum development
2. Provision of resources
3. Integration of practical activities
4. Support for teachers
5. Integration of technologies
6. Focus on global topics
7. Interdisciplinarity
8. The establishment of regular trainings and programs for the exchange of experiences
9. Application of good practices from the EU
10. Evaluation and adaptation
11. Reforms of teaching faculties

Historical and geographical education in Macedonia play an essential role in the development of individual and collective consciousness, as well as in the preparation of students for active participation in society. History forms identity and nurtures cultural and historical memory, while geography provides an understanding of space and natural resources necessary for sustainable development.

Despite their importance, challenges such as the lack of practical teaching and the need to modernize approaches require immediate intervention. The integration of innovative methods, digital tools and interdisciplinary activities can significantly improve the level of interest and understanding among students.

For the future of these educational fields, it is crucial to foster critical thinking, cultural dialogue and environmental awareness, providing educated citizens with a clear perception of their place in local, national and global contexts.

Applying these recommendations will contribute to higher quality education, greater interest among students and a better understanding of the role of history and geography in their personal and professional development. Also, the application of these recommendations and investment in the modernization of the educational system in Macedonia as the main task of the Ministry of Education will contribute to raising the quality of the entire educational process and bringing it closer to European standards.

Managing historical and geographical education in Macedonia requires a systemic approach that will address challenges and provide conditions for quality education.

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