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ПРЕДГОВОР НА ГЛАВНИОТ УРЕДНИК

Драги читатели,

Со особено задоволство ѝ го претставувам на научната и стручната јавност новиот број на Меѓународното списание за образование, истражување и обука (International Journal for Education, Research and Training – IJERT), Том 8, Број 1.

Овој број излегува во година која за нас има особено значење. Институтот за педагогија при Филозофскиот факултет во Скопје одбележува осумдесет години од своето постоење, додека нашето списание, основано во 2015 година, влегува во втората деценија од своето излегување. Изминатиот пат не беше едноставен: од списание кое во своите први години излегуваше двапати годишно и напоредно на македонски и на англиски јазик, преку преминот кон англискиот како јазик на меѓународната научна комуникација во 2017 година, до неговото обновување во 2025 година. Со тоа обновување, IJERT направи и значаен исчекор во својот издавачки формат – од 2025 година списанието излегува исклучиво во електронска форма, без печатена верзија, и е достапно преку официјалната OJS-платформа на Универзитетот „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ во Скопје (journals.ukim.mk). Со ова решение се вклопуваме во современите европски и светски трендови во научното издаваштво и значително ја зголемуваме видливоста, отвореноста и достапноста на списанието за меѓународната научна јавност.

Накратко ќе се задржам на она што читателите ќе го најдат во овој број. Дванаесетте труда, иако тематски разновидни, природно се групираат во неколку целини кои го отсликуваат целиот распон на современата педагошка наука.

Првата група трудови го става образованието во средиштето, како право и како општествена одговорност. Тука читателите најпрво се запознаваат со правото на образование на децата лишени од слобода во местата за притвор, преку преглед на меѓународните и националните стандарди и на состојбата во нашата земја. Во истата линија се движи и трудот за еколошката комуникација како педагошки конструкт во рамките на образованието за животната средина на Западен Балкан, кој комуникацијата ја разбира не само како пренесување информации, туку како трансформативен процес што поттикнува критичка рефлексивност и еколошко граѓанство.

Втората тематска група е посветена на лидерството, иновациите и квалитетот во образованието. Таа го опфаќа истражувањето за улогата на образовното лидерство во поттикнувањето на иновациите во раното детство во Косово, кое покажува како јасната визија, поддршката и соработката ги зајакнуваат мотивацијата и подготвеноста на наставниците да прифаќаат нови пристапи. Неа ја надополнува трудот за улогата и значењето на интелектуалното воспитание во ученичкиот дом, кој ги осветлува специфичните воспитни задачи на оваа установа во обликувањето на личноста на ученикот.

Третата група трудови ги отвора предизвиците на образованието во дигиталната ера и прашањата на научниот интегритет. Текстот „Екрани и соништа: образование во ерата на илузија“ критички го разгледува влијанието на дигиталната технологија, вештачката интелигенција и медиумската култура врз начинот на кој младите учат, мислат и ги градат своите идентитети, залагајќи се за нова образовна парадигма што ја усогласува технолошката иновација со хуманистичките вредности. Во иста насока на промислување на научната култура е и истражувањето за тоа во колкава мера студентите по психологија ги прифаќаат нормите на отворената наука, кое укажува на потребата од систематско воведување на концептите на отворената наука во наставата.

Четвртата група го поврзува образованието со неговиот општествен и економски

контекст. Таа ја содржи студијата на случај за економските прилагодувања на малите и средните претпријатија во контекст на пандемијата КОВИД-19 во Општина Крива Паланка, како и теорискиот труд за феноменолошките сличности меѓу социјалната педагогија и социјалните системи, кој на чисто теориско рамниште ги споредува претпоставките за растот на субјектот со животот на општествената група.

Петтата, историско-културолошка група трудови, на читателот му нуди продлабочен поглед наназад. Трудот за македонскиот јазик низ стандардизацијата и јазичната политика во едно мултиетничко општество ги анализира историските процеси на кодификацијата и современите предизвици на јазичната рамноправност. По него следуваат три историско-педагошки прилози: за политиките на Наполеон, воспитувањето на национализмот и изучувањето на археологијата на работ на Балканот; за влијанието на УНЕСКО врз образовните процеси во Југославија до 1974 година, засновано врз необјавени архивски материјали; и за анахроната модерност на Бел-Ланкастеровиот метод и неговата адаптација во османлиска Македонија.

Се надевам дека оваа разновидност на теми – од правото на образование и еколошката педагогија, преку лидерството, дигитализацијата и отворената наука, до историјата на образованието во овој регион – ќе го задржи Вашето внимание и ќе поттикне ново критичко промислување, како и желба да го споделите сопственото научно мислење преку објавување на свои трудови во нашето списание.

Како главен и одговорен уредник, изразувам искрена благодарност до сите членови на меѓународниот уреднички одбор, до техничкиот секретар на списанието и до авторите чии трудови го сочинуваат овој број. Особена благодарност упатувам до раководството на Филозофскиот факултет и до раководителот на Институтот за педагогија, чија поддршка претставува вреден поттик за натамошниот развој на списанието. Нивната посветеност и доверба се темелот врз кој IJERT продолжува да расте како меѓународен научен глас на Институтот за педагогија.

Со почит,
Главен и одговорен уредник
проф. д-р Борче Костов

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Dear readers,

It is with particular pleasure that I present to the scientific and professional public the new issue of the International Journal for Education, Research and Training (IJERT), Volume 8, Issue 1.

This issue appears in a year of special significance for us. The Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje is marking eighty years of its existence, while our journal, founded in 2015, enters the second decade of its publication. The road behind us has not been a simple one: from a journal that in its early years appeared twice a year and in parallel in Macedonian and English, through the transition to English as the language of international scholarly communication in 2017, to its renewal in 2025. With that renewal, IJERT also took an important step in its publishing format – since 2025 the journal has been published exclusively in electronic form, without a printed version, and is available through the official OJS platform of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (journals.ukim.mk). This solution aligns us with contemporary European and global trends in scholarly publishing and significantly increases the journal's visibility, openness, and accessibility to the international scientific community.

I will dwell briefly on what readers will find in this issue. The twelve papers, although thematically diverse, naturally cluster into several groups that reflect the full range of contemporary pedagogical science.

The first group of papers places education at the centre as a right and a social responsibility. Here readers are first introduced to the right to education of children deprived of liberty in places of detention, through an overview of the international and national standards and of the situation in our country. The paper on environmental communication as a pedagogical construct within environmental education in the Western Balkans moves along the same line, understanding communication not merely as the transmission of information, but as a transformative process that fosters critical reflection and ecological citizenship.

The second thematic group is devoted to leadership, innovation, and quality in education. It includes the study on the role of educational leadership in driving innovation in early childhood education in Kosovo, which shows how clear vision, support, and collaboration strengthen teachers' motivation and willingness to adopt new approaches. It is complemented by the paper on the role and significance of intellectual education in the student dormitory, which illuminates the specific educational tasks of this institution in shaping the student's personality.

The third group of papers opens up the challenges of education in the digital age and questions of scientific integrity. The text "Screens and Dreams: Education in the Age of Illusion" critically examines the influence of digital technology, artificial intelligence, and media culture on the way young people learn, think, and construct their identities, advocating a new educational paradigm that harmonizes technological innovation with humanistic values. Reflecting on scientific culture along the same lines is the study on the extent to which psychology students agree with the norms of open science, which points to the need for a systematic introduction of open science concepts into teaching.

The fourth group connects education with its social and economic context. It contains the case study on the economic adjustments of small and medium enterprises in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Municipality of Kriva Palanka, as well as the theoretical paper on the phenomenological similarities between social pedagogy and social systems, which, on a purely theoretical level, compares the preconditions for the growth of the subject with the life of the social group.

The fifth, historical and cultural group of papers offers the reader an in-depth look back. The paper on the Macedonian language through standardization and language policy in a multiethnic society analyses the historical processes of codification and the contemporary challenges of linguistic equality. It is followed by three historical-pedagogical contributions: on Napoleon's policies, the educating of nationalism, and the learning of archaeology on the edges of the Balkans; on the influence of UNESCO on educational processes in Yugoslavia up to 1974, based on unpublished archival material; and on the anachronistic modernity of the Bell-Lancaster method and its adaptation in Ottoman Macedonia.

I hope that this diversity of topics – from the right to education and environmental pedagogy, through leadership, digitalization, and open science, to the history of education in this region – will hold your attention and inspire fresh critical reflection, as well as the desire to share your own scholarly thought by publishing your work in our journal.

As Editor-in-Chief, I express my sincere gratitude to all the members of the international editorial board, to the technical secretary of the journal, and to the authors whose papers make up this issue. I extend my special thanks to the leadership of the Faculty of Philosophy and to the Head of the Institute of Pedagogy, whose support is a valuable encouragement for the further development of the journal. Their dedication and trust are the foundation upon which IJERT continues to grow as the international scholarly voice of the Institute of Pedagogy.

With due respect,

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Borce Kostov, PhD

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RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY IN PLACES OF DETENTION

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ABSTRACT:

One of the key elements in the process of resocialization for children deprived of liberty is the education. Unfortunately, this vulnerable category of persons deprived of liberty has been on the margins of the society not only in Macedonia¹, but worldwide. For the children deprived of liberty Manfred Novak once wrote “Deprivation of liberty means deprivation of rights, agency, visibility, opportunity and love. Depriving children of liberty is depriving them of their childhood” (Nowak, 2019)

This paper gives an overview of the international and national standards that deal with the right to education for children deprived of liberty, uncovering at the same time the situation with this category of persons deprived of liberty in Macedonia.

Key words: *human rights, education, resocialization, children deprived of liberty*

Introduction

“Education is a basic human right that works to raise men and women out of poverty, level inequalities and ensure sustainable development. Education is one of the most powerful tools in lifting excluded children and adults out of poverty and is a stepping stone to other fundamental human rights.” (United Nations Educational, n.d.)

Children deprived of liberty are “invisible and forgotten group in the society despite increasing evidence of being victims of further human rights violations” ((OHCHR), 2017). Many of them were victims or witnesses of domestic violence, or suffer from some mental, physical or developmental problems (Kitkanj, 2013).

That is why one of the key elements in the process of resocialization of children deprived of liberty is their education. This is of exceptional importance considering that a large percentage of children deprived of liberty lag behind in the educational process. In other words, the education they have acquired does not correspond to their real age, which is most often due to the conditions

¹ Although in 2018 the name of the country changed from the Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia, for the purposes of this paper the name Macedonia shall be used throughout the paper, except when citing relevant acts, books and other literature adopted, written after 2018.

in which they lived, but also the guardianship and care they had (Milutinovikj, 1976). Precisely for the sake of their preparation for an independent and purposeful life in freedom, it is of utmost significance for children deprived of their liberty to be offered an appropriate education that will not differ in any way from the regular educational process.

The right to education

The right to education is enshrined in several international documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a key human rights' act being among. Its article 26 emphasizes that *"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."* (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right to education for everyone (International Covenant on Economic, 1966), while as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966) not only that recognizes that right but also strives for the primary education to be compulsory and free for every child.

The European Convention on Human Rights in its Protocol 1, article 2 "Right to education", guarantees that *"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."* (ECHR, 1950)

The right to education for persons deprived of liberty

The right to education is specifically guaranteed for persons deprived of liberty or even more for children deprived of liberty. Thus, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules (The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, 2015) in its rule 104 provides for further education of all prisoners who are capable to profit from, hereby including even the religious education where possible. These rules secure compulsory education for illiterate and young prisoners, demanding special attention to that from the prison administration.

In respect to persons deprived of liberty, the European Prison Rules (European Prison Rules, 2006) guarantee that *"every prison shall seek to provide all prisoners with access to educational programmes which are as comprehensive as possible and which meet their individual needs while taking into account their aspirations"* These rules particularly emphasize that education is mandatory for illiterate convicts, but above all for children deprived of their liberty as an integral part of the general education system.

Having in mind the vulnerability of children, the deprivation of liberty of children should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time, thus the UN Convention on the rights of the child (UN Convention on the rights of the child, 1989) stipulates that *"no child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time."*

However, in those cases when the deprivation of liberty occurs, the right to education is among the key rights enshrined in several key documents. Namely, the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child (UN Convention on the rights of the child, 1989) in general recognizes the right of a child to education and envisages various safeguards so that that right is exercised to its fullest extent. Therefore, every state signatory of the Convention must provide every child, including those deprived of liberty, with education.

When children deprived of liberty are concerned, their right to education is guaranteed in the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules) (UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules), 1990). As a matter of fact, the Rules specify that the education offered in places of deprivation of liberty should match the needs and abilities of the child and should be designed so to prepare them for return to society. In that spirit, the article 38 clearly points that *“Every juvenile of compulsory school age has the right to education suited to his or her needs and abilities and designed to prepare him or her for return to society. Such education should be provided outside the detention facility in community schools wherever possible and, in any case, by qualified teachers through programmes integrated with the education system of the country so that, after release, juveniles may continue their education without difficulty. Special attention should be given by the administration of the detention facilities to the education of juveniles of foreign origin or with particular cultural or ethnic needs. Juveniles who are illiterate or have cognitive or learning difficulties should have the right to special education.”* The Rules also emphasize that *“juveniles above compulsory school age who wish to continue their education should be permitted and encouraged to do so, and every effort should be made to provide them with access to appropriate educational programmes.”* (UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules), 1990)

The Havana Rules clearly encourage education and easier re-integration of the children into the society after the period of imprisonment. For that purpose, these rules even guarantee that *“diplomas or educational certificates awarded to juveniles while in detention should not indicate in any way that the juvenile has been institutionalized.”*

The right to education in the Macedonian context

In terms of the right to education, the Macedonian legal system vouches the right to education with its Constitution. (Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, 1991) Namely, in its Article 44, the Macedonian Constitution clearly states that *“everyone has the right to education. Education is available to everyone under equal conditions. Primary education is compulsory and free of charge”*. The right to education is further regulated in the Law on Primary Education (Primary Education, 2019), so as in the Law on Secondary Education. (Secondary Education, 1995)

Compulsory education generally refers to two dimensions: first, school attendance for the purpose of receiving education over a fixed period of time (number of years); second, the specific curriculum determined by the state or other requirements introduced by the educational framework, such as the obligation to wear a school uniform. (Rabin.Y, 2014)

Article 15, paragraph 2, of the Law on Primary Education (Primary Education, 2019) further stipulates that *“primary education shall be organized and provided in health care institutions, penal and correctional institutions, as well as in home settings, in accordance with this law”*. While Article 53, paragraph 12 the Law instructs that *“when it is not possible to organize teaching by grade in classes for students in health care institutions, penal and correctional institutions or educational institutions, the nearest primary school shall organize individual or group educational work”*.

The educational process in the Macedonian penitentiary system has long been one of the biggest challenges (NPM, 2023) and this is all the more important when it comes to children in conflict with the law with imposed sanctions i.e. deprived of liberty.

As a matter of fact, the Law on the Execution of Sanctions (Execution of Sanctions, 2019), stipulates that *“in the institution for children, primary and secondary education is mandatory, and depending on the conditions and capabilities of the institution, other types of vocational training for children are also organized.”*

Hence, the compulsory and accessible education for children deprived of liberty remains a challenge. In neither of the two institutions for juveniles deprived of liberty in the country (Juvenile Prison Ohrid and Educational-Correctional Institution Tetovo) is there a regular educational process. Occasionally, when some donor organizations such as UNDP (Development Programme, n.d.), USAID (Agency for International Development, n.d.) had projects, classes were organized (Macedonian language, English language, mathematics), but regular educational process does not exist. The last cycle of such teaching ended in January 2023. (NPM, 2023)

The amendments to the Law on Primary Education (Primary Education, 2019) envisage that primary education in penitentiary-correctional and educational-correctional institutions should be implemented according to a curriculum and program for primary education for adults, which will be implemented by a primary school that has certification for adult learning.

The absence of an educational process in places of deprivation of liberty, especially when children are concerned, constitutes a disregard for the right to education guaranteed by international conventions, constitution and national laws and may constitute a factor that increases the risk of situations that could be classified not only as inhumane, but also humiliating. Namely, depriving a child of education by the system that has undertaken to protect and correct him, especially when considering that a larger percentage of child perpetrators of crimes and deprived of liberty are simultaneously victims, constitutes secondary victimization by the state, i.e. its institutions (Nikolij-Ristanovikj, 2019).

The lack of an educational process in the penitentiary institutions can be reflected in the feeling of self-esteem and the possibility for positive changes and progress. In absence of education and other productive activities, boredom, hopelessness and isolation occur. Thus, instead of bringing positive changes in the personality, violence may prevail since the lack of organized educational process directly affects the success of the resocialization and rehabilitation of a prisoner (Waldron, 2010).

The right to education is closely related to the right to appeal i.e. to submit a complaint. The inability to lodge a complaint or to get personally acquainted with the rights a person is entitled to, may provoke feelings of despair, hopelessness, and even fear, frustration, pain and humiliation.

The feeling of pain and humiliation is closely related to a situation that one may define as inhuman or degrading. Thus, if for “inhuman” is considered a treatment that does not satisfy the most basic human needs: the need for food, water, sleep, physiological needs, daylight and recreation, contact with other people, the “degrading” may be the one that provokes in a person the “feelings of fear, pain and inferiority” (Waldron, 2010). That feeling is solely individual, personal, just like the situation a person is in and it is closely related to the inherent dignity that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Convention on the rights of the child, 1989) talks about. According to Convention, the inherent dignity is the right to a dignified life and treatment as inseparable part of every human being, including children since it directly affects the quality of life.

The seriousness behind the lack of education for the children in places of deprivation of liberty, can be explicitly displayed with the judgment of the Supreme Court of North Macedonia issued in

February 2024 in favour to the submission of the European Roma Rights Centre. As a matter of fact, *“the collective complaint covering the period from 14 September 2015 to 4 March 2020, accused North Macedonia’s juvenile correction system of failing to provide equal access to education for children placed in the correctional centre (direct discrimination by status). As most of the affected children were Romani, this also amounted to indirect discrimination based on ethnicity, violating the children’s right to equality”*. ((ERRC), n.d.)

Conclusion

Securing education for juveniles deprived of liberty is not only a rehabilitative tool but a fundamental human right and a key element to a meaningful reintegration process. Lacking to provide education in places for deprivation of liberty serves to deepen the abyss of marginalization and recidivism. That is why the regular educational process for children deprived of liberty must be an imperative.

Providing professional and other creative, meaningful activities in such facilities will enable children with a safer and more productive future in freedom.

Having in mind all that, the relevant stakeholders should secure:

- Regular access to education in all detention institutions;
- Trained and with relevant skills equipped personnel who are at the same time child oriented;
- Continuation of the educational process in freedom;
- Inclusion of other services (support organizations, communities) to assist children after release.

To put an end to the neglect of the children deprived of liberty means not only investment in themselves but also in the society. Education means knowledge, awareness of yourself and the others around you. Having skills means having future and being productive. That is why it is so important to provoke that shift of the narrative from punishment to rehabilitation and improvement, discovering the potential in every child and equipping him with a second chance, a chance for productive future.

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ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL CONSTRUCT: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores environmental communication as a pedagogical construct within the evolving framework of environmental education in the Western Balkans. Positioned at the intersection of communication, pedagogy, and ecological awareness, the study argues that environmental communication transcends the mere transmission of information, and it operates as a transformative process that fosters critical reflection, participatory dialogue, and ecological citizenship. Drawing upon critical pedagogy, ecopedagogy, social constructivism, and agenda-setting theory, the paper offers a communication-cantered model of environmental education. This theoretical model emphasizes communication as both a method and a medium of learning that is enabling learners to co-create meaning, critically analyse environmental narratives, and engage in civic participation. Within the specific socio-political context of the Western Balkans, characterized by post-socialist transitions, weak environmental governance, and limited educational innovation, the study highlights the potential of communication-based pedagogy to strengthen environmental literacy, promote sustainability, and support democratic engagement. By viewing communication as the connective tissue linking environmental awareness, education, and literacy, the paper contributes a framework for rethinking environmental education as a socially transformative process responsive to regional ecological and cultural realities.

Key words: *environmental education. environmental communication, ecopedagogy, critical pedagogy, environmental awareness*

Introduction

The intersection of communication, education, and environmental awareness has become an increasingly important (Simanjuntak, 2023). As global ecological crises intensify the education systems are being called upon to respond not merely by transferring knowledge, but by fostering

transformative ecological consciousness (Rensburg & Janse, 1994). Within this context, environmental communication has emerged as a vital tool for shaping how individuals, communities, and societies perceive and act upon environmental issues. This research explores environmental communication as a pedagogical construct focusing on its application and potential within the Western Balkans.

The Western Balkans occupies a unique ecological and socio-political landscape. Decades of political transitions, post-socialist transformations, economic instability, and fragmented governance have influenced environmental management and awareness in complex ways. Despite significant natural resources and biodiversity, the region faces persistent environmental challenges. Environmental education in the Western Balkans, while increasingly recognized as essential, often struggles with limited institutional support, outdated pedagogical approaches, and insufficient integration of communication strategies that could engage learners more dynamically.

Environmental communication: from transmission to transformation

Environmental communication is traditionally and stereotypically defined as the study and practice of how individuals, groups and institutions transfer information about the environment and in the later years intensively focused on the sustainable development (Jurin et al., 2010; Hansen, 2011). Early approaches often focused only on the transmission of information, meaning how scientific facts and policies could be effectively communicated to the public (Burgess et al., 1998). This is done by using the environmental communication as a linking string in the theoretically established science communication triangle of: scientific community, the public and the media (O’Keeffe & Bain, 2018). However, more recent perspectives emphasize the transformative potential of communication. Cox and Depoe (2015) describe environmental communication as a symbolic process through which environmental meanings are socially constructed and contested. This view highlights that environmental discourse is not just neutral but can also be shaped by cultural narratives, power relations, and political agendas.

In pedagogical contexts, this shift from transmission to transformation aligns closely with critical pedagogy and social constructivism. Communication is not only a method for transferring knowledge but a manner for learners to negotiate meaning, engage in dialogue, and co-create understanding about the environment. Thus, environmental communication as pedagogy implies fostering critical reflection, dialogue, and participatory engagement (Comfort & Park, 2018). All these processes are much needed in the Western Balkan contexts as they are considered as socially endangered.

Critical Pedagogy and ecopedagogy

Critical pedagogy is emphasizing education as a process of emancipation, dialogue, and transformation (Chalaune, 2021). It challenges traditional hierarchical models of teaching that can reproduce social inequalities and instead promotes dialogical learning, where learners and educators co-create knowledge through reflection (McLaren, 2023). When put into environmental education context, this perspective becomes ecopedagogy, a study and movement that links ecological awareness with social justice and political activism (Kellner & Kneller, 2010). Ecopedagogy is not an education about ecology but an education through ecology, meaning that it is an education based on an ecological worldview (Hung, 2021). This study critiques the technocratic and depoliticized nature of mainstream environmental education, arguing for a pedagogy that cultivates ecological citizenship, critical consciousness, and collective action. Much of these values can be seen as deficits in the fragile democratic ecosystem of the Western Balkans.

Within the Western Balkans, where post-socialist societies grapple with environmental degradation, economic inequality, and weak civil institutions, ecopedagogy provides a valuable

theoretical, but also practical lenses. It positions environmental education as a means of empowerment, by enabling communities to question dominant narratives of development, challenge environmentally harmful practices, and envision alternative futures rooted in sustainability and equity.

Social constructivism and the role of dialogue

Social constructivism positions are that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction and cultural context (Adams, 2007). In environmental education, this means that understanding of ecological issues emerges through dialogue among learners, educators, and the broader community to the decision makers (Robottom, 2004). Communication then can become the medium through which environmental meanings are negotiated and discussed. This is particularly relevant in culturally diverse contexts like the Western Balkans, where environmental values are intertwined with identity, tradition, and collective memory (Brenner Music, 2025). Constructivist pedagogy emphasizes that learners bring prior experiences, beliefs, and cultural frames to the educational process (Richardson, 2003). Thus, communication strategies that are dialogic and participatory can facilitate deeper engagement and localized understandings of environmental issues. This can be used as a mediator between the cultures, communities and the issues. For instance, community storytelling, place-based narratives, and participatory media projects can all serve as communicative practices that foster environmental literacy.

Agenda-setting theory and environmental narratives

Agenda-setting theory is the concept that the media can influence the importance of topics by choosing which stories to cover and how prominently to feature them (McCombs et al., 2018). The more media coverage an issue receives, the more important the public perceives that issue to be (Duru, 2018). Environmental issues in the Western Balkans often receive limited or episodic media attention and have their own seasonality, typically during crises such as floods and forest fires in the warmer months and air pollution incidents during the winter. With this the public perception and policy responses tend to be reactive rather than initiative-taking. From a pedagogical perspective, understanding how media construct environmental agendas is essential for developing critical media literacy among learners. Integrating agenda-setting insights into environmental education encourages students to analyze how environmental narratives are framed, who constructs them, and whose voices are marginalized (Sumida, 2017). There are no clear examples of using agenda-setting construct in the context of environmental conservation in the Western Balkan region, outside of the episodic environmental campaign set on a specific communicational goal.

Environmental education, environmental literacy, and environmental awareness: interconnected dimensions of learning

A crucial component in understanding environmental communication as a pedagogical construct lies in clarifying the conceptual links between environmental education, environmental literacy, and environmental awareness. These dimensions, though often used interchangeably, represent distinct yet interrelated stages of cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with the environment. These three individual processes can be seen as a continuum of development. This can be defined as the transformative continuum of environmental learning: linking awareness, education, literacy, and communication. Environmental education serves as the formal and informal educational process through which individuals gain knowledge, values, and skills necessary to address environmental challenges (Hart & Nolan, 1999). It encompasses structured curricular efforts as well as community-

based initiatives that promote sustainability and stewardship (Srbinovski & Stanišić, 2020). In the Western Balkans, environmental education is still evolving, often constrained by limited institutional capacity but enriched by non-formal learning through NGOs and local activism. Environmental literacy, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which individuals understand ecological systems, recognize the interdependence between humans and nature, and apply this knowledge in decision-making and daily practices (Fang et al., 2022). The literacy is the outcome of effective environmental education, a state in which learners can interpret environmental information critically, evaluate media and policy messages, and engage in sustainable action (Moseley, 2000). Only by this development level, an environmental literacy has been achieved.

Environmental awareness represents the attitudinal and perceptual foundation of both education and literacy (Perron et al., 2006). It involves recognizing the significance of environmental issues, developing concern for ecological well-being, and internalizing values of sustainability (Ham et al., 2016). Awareness is often the first step toward deeper engagement; it can be fostered through exposure to environmental communication in media, community dialogue, and educational experiences that evoke emotional and ethical responses. The connection between these three constructs can be viewed as a developmental continuum. Environmental communication plays a mediating role across this continuum, where by the environmental communication can be seen as an enabler and supporter (Fig.1). Through dialogic and culturally relevant communication strategies, awareness is transformed into knowledge, and knowledge into action.

Therefore, it is essential to view the environmental communication as the connective tissue linking awareness, education, and literacy. This can have a significant impact on how the environmental issues are communicated, negotiated and dealt in the Western Balkan, where the connectivity between these three similar constructs is sociologically invisible.

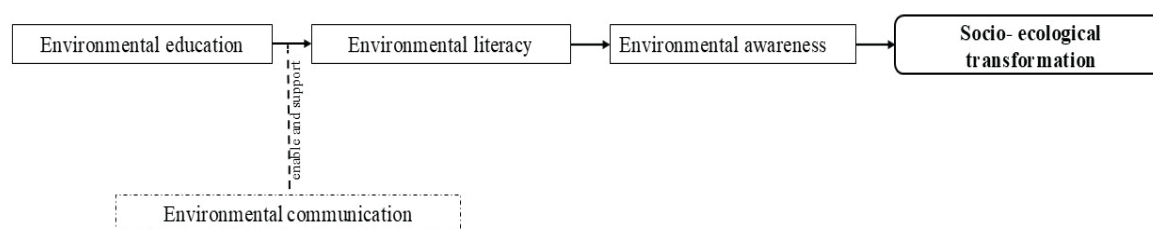


Figure 1. *The transformative continuum of environmental learning*

Contextualizing environmental challenges in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans region is known for its diverse natural environment, including significant, rare and unique ecosystems, and biodiversity hotspots (Miho et al., 2023; Vulovic, 2023). However, environmental degradation is widespread. Industrial pollution, poorly managed waste, deforestation, and water contamination remain serious issues (Knez et al., 2022). The legacy of socialist-era industrialization, coupled with weak environmental governance during the post-socialistic transitions, has resulted in fragmented or aged environmental policies and policy building capacities (Börzel & Fagan, 2015). Furthermore, limited economic resources and competing priorities and continuum of internal or international political crisis often overshadow ecological concerns or puts them very low on the national agendas (Maria, 2019).

Climate change poses additional risks, including rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of natural disasters (Vulević et al., 2021). Yet, public awareness and civic engagement in environmental protection remain inconsistent across the region or at least understudied.

Environmental education: institutional frameworks and limitations

Environmental education has been introduced into national curricula in most Western Balkan countries, often under subjects like biology, geography, or civic education. However, it remains largely knowledge-based rather than action-oriented. Although significantly understudy the data suggests that environmental topics are frequently taught with limited emphasis on critical thinking, dialogue, or participatory activities (Turnock, 2004; Hyseni Spahiu et al., 2014). Teacher training in environmental education is also uneven, and cross-curricular integration is limited.

One of the reasons can be the lack of pedagogical innovation. Traditional teacher-centered approaches persist, leaving little space for student voice or community engagement. Moreover, environmental communication is rarely considered a deliberate pedagogical component. Without communication-focused pedagogy, environmental education risks becoming abstract and disconnected from learners' experiences.

Media, civil society, and environmental discourse

Mass media and digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping the environmental discourse (Parlour, 1980). However, coverage often remains superficial, episodic, or politicized (Jankulovska, 2023;Bolevich, 2020). Investigative journalism and independent media outlets have exposed environmental scandals, but sustained media attention is rare due the amount of socio-economic issues that are competing with the environmental topics in the news daily.

From an educational standpoint, the current media landscape presents both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, the lack of consistent environmental reporting limits public learning, and on the other, the rise of digital activism and citizen media provides new spaces for participatory communication, especially among the youth, that share different communication sphere in comparison with the older generations. Integrating these real world communication practices into environmental education, through media analysis, citizen journalism projects, or community storytelling can cultivate critical ecological literacy and civic engagement among students.

Communication as a core pedagogical process

This section proposes a theoretical model in which environmental communication functions as a pedagogical construct. A structured, intentional process within environmental education that fosters learning through dialogue, participation, and reflection. In this model, communication is not just content delivery but is itself a central component of learning. The sole goal is for the communication to becomes the space where learners articulate experiences, question assumptions, and create opinions about the state of the environment.

Such a model recognizes that environmental problems are not just scientific, but also cultural, political, and ethical (Figure 2.)

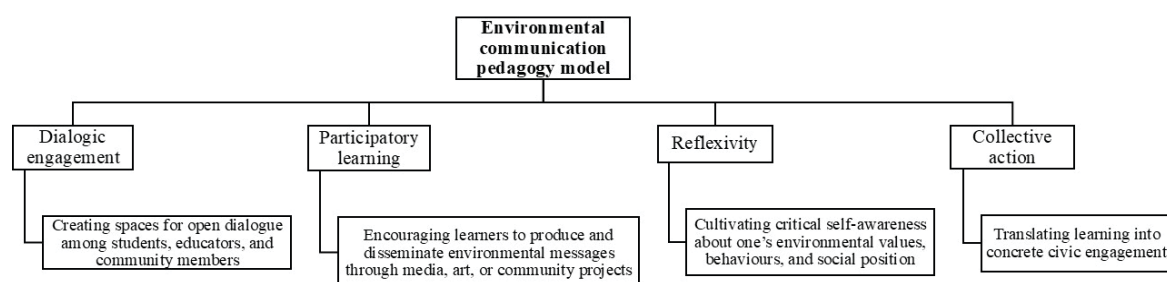


Figure 2. *Environmental communication pedagogy model*

Symbolic representations of nature

Symbolic representations (language, imagery, and metaphors) play a powerful role in shaping how people perceive nature by themselves. In the Western Balkans, where national identities are deeply intertwined with landscapes and animals (rivers, mountains, eagles, lions...), environmental communication can harness these cultural symbols to foster ecological attachment and stewardship (Arsovski, 2024). For instance, educational projects inspired by local folklore, traditional knowledge on nature, or cultural heritage can resonate more deeply with learners. For example, with the Macedonian folklore story of Slijan the Stork (orig. Siljan Shtrkot) the subject of bird migration, habitat fragmentation and biodiversity can be discussed beyond the original message of the story. Pedagogically, analyzing and producing environmental symbols encourages students to critically examine how nature is represented in media, politics, and everyday discourse.

Participatory and culturally responsive strategie

A culturally responsive environmental communication pedagogy in the Western Balkans must account for the local linguistic diversity, historical context, and socio-political sensitivities. Participatory communication strategies such as community mapping, participatory video, or citizen science are allowing the learners to co-produce environmental knowledge grounded in local realities and with a local context.

In multicultural communities, dialogic projects that bring together students from different ethnic or religious backgrounds to discuss shared environmental concerns can also serve as tools of reconciliation and solidarity. Communication thus becomes both pedagogical and social: it builds ecological understanding while fostering social cohesion.

Integrating media literacy and critical discours

Media literacy is a key dimension of this pedagogical model. In a region where media landscapes are often polarized, teaching students to critically analyze environmental news, advertisements, and political rhetoric is essential. Through critical discourse analysis, learners can explore how environmental issues are framed, whose interests are served, and what alternative narratives could

emerge. Educators can incorporate projects where students produce their own media content such as documentaries, podcasts, blogs and thereby transforming them from consumers of environmental information into active communicators.

Civic engagement and ecological citizenship

The goal of environmental communication pedagogy is to cultivate ecological citizenship. This can be defined as a sense of responsibility and participation in environmental governance. This is the personal involvement of the citizens into mitigating or adapting into the environmental issues. The communication can facilitate this by connecting personal experiences to collective action. When students engage in community dialogue, advocate for better local environmental policies, or collaborate with NGOs, they embody the principles of critical and ecopedagogical learning. In the Western Balkans, where civic participation remains uneven and often constrained by chronic political distrust, such communicative practices can strengthen democratic engagement. By positioning communication as both an educational and civic process, environmental education can contribute to broader socio-ecological transformation.

Conclusion

By integrating principles of critical pedagogy, ecopedagogy, social constructivism, and agenda-setting theory, the proposed framework identifies communication as a core pedagogical process that facilitates dialogue, reflection, and civic participation. These theoretical elaborations suggest that incorporating communicative and participatory strategies can strengthen environmental literacy, promote ecological citizenship, and enhance the responsiveness of education systems to regional socio-environmental contexts. In the Western Balkans, where ecological challenges are intricately linked to political and cultural transitions, a communication-centered environmental pedagogy offers a viable model for advancing socio-ecological transformation and sustainable development.

Future research should empirically examine how communication-based pedagogical models influence environmental learning outcomes across different educational levels and sociocultural contexts in the Western Balkans. Comparative studies across post-socialist regions could provide further insights into the adaptability of the proposed framework. Moreover, interdisciplinary research integrating media studies, environmental psychology, and educational sciences is needed to operationalize and evaluate the communicative processes that drive environmental awareness and literacy.

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN DRIVING INNOVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN KOSOVO

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the role of educational leadership in fostering innovation and improving the quality of early childhood education in Kosovo. It explores how school leaders influence teaching practices, strengthen teacher motivation, and shape professional culture in early learning environments. The central assumption is that effective leadership drives pedagogical improvement by empowering teachers and creating supportive, collaborative school climates.

A qualitative research design was used, based on semi-structured interviews with ten leaders from preschool and early primary institutions. The analysis showed that clear vision-building, emotional encouragement, constructive feedback, and collaborative practices significantly enhance teacher confidence and willingness to implement new teaching approaches. Leaders also stressed the importance of modeling innovative practice, promoting reflection, and building trusting relationships.

Despite these strengths, participants reported challenges such as limited resources, insufficient professional development, and policy barriers that restrict innovation. Nonetheless, committed leadership helped teachers remain motivated and professionally engaged. The study highlights the need for leadership training and improved policy support to strengthen innovation in early childhood settings. Overall, the findings provide insight into leadership practices that contribute to teacher empowerment and higher-quality learning environments in emerging education systems.

Keywords: *Educational leadership, early childhood education, teacher motivation, innovation, Kosovo.*

Introduction

Early childhood education is a crucial stage in human development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, socio-emotional growth, and essential cognitive skills. As global education systems increasingly emphasize creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital competence, early learning environments must move beyond traditional practices and offer space for exploration,

curiosity, and active engagement. Achieving this requires continuous teacher support, motivation, and opportunities for innovation.

In Kosovo, improvements in early childhood education depend strongly on the quality of leadership within institutions. School leaders shape the school's vision, guide teacher practices, and create climates that encourage collaboration and reflective learning. Limited resources, high workloads, and inconsistent professional development opportunities continue to challenge innovation, making leadership even more critical. This study explores how leaders in early childhood settings influence innovation, teacher motivation, and pedagogical practice, and identifies strategies that promote professional growth and a culture of lifelong learning.

Literature Review

A review of current research reveals that leadership is a central factor in fostering high-quality, innovative, and collaborative early childhood learning environments. For innovation to be effectively implemented in schools, strong leadership and clear guidance from the principal are essential. In such contexts, the principal must adopt an instructional leadership style. Instructional leadership positions the principal as a guide for teachers, students, and staff in establishing an effective organizational structure that supports high-quality teaching and learning. (Dat; T. V & Thach & Cam Tu, 2023).

For school to be successful, the principal has to balance the administrative tasks and instructional tasks. Finally, it is recommended that the principals need to be trained in school management and leadership in order to be competent as instructional leader along with suggestions for further empirical investigation (Southworth, 2002).

It is important to understand the significance of your role as a leader when using evidence and making decisions.

To illustrate this, let's use the Funnels of Influence model (a model for understanding the many influences which shape who we are and what we espouse, intend, enact and implicitly believe. It is a tool for researchers seeking to go beyond surface-level acceptance of espoused or enacted practice).

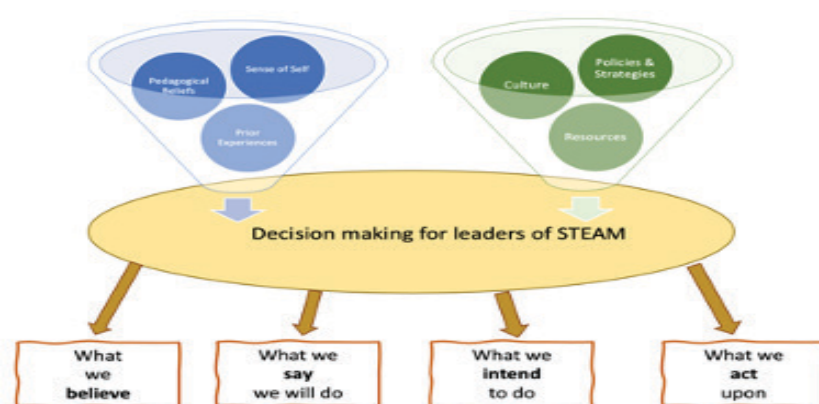


Figure 1. The Funnels of Influence (Aubrey-Smith, 2023)

These subtle differences make a huge impact on how we engage with evidence and decision-making because they create all kinds of preconceived ideas, assumptions, and biases about what will impact children's learning.

Here are five ways that strong educational leadership can make a huge impact on driving innovation (Jason, 2023):

- 1. Setting a vision**
- 2. Providing resources**
- 3. Fostering partnerships**
- 4. Supporting teachers**
- 5. Celebrating success**

Michelle explains that a focus on driving innovation in a school challenges leaders and teachers to think differently about pedagogical approaches, but leaders cannot assume that changes will happen easily or automatically. She explains that the introduction of collaborative professional learning experiences can help in making teachers feel more comfortable when implementing new ideas and structures into their classrooms (Michelle, 2020)

Methodology

The objective of this study is to examine how school leadership fosters innovation and improves teaching practices in early childhood education. The research aims to identify leadership strategies that motivate teachers, strengthen professional culture, and support the adoption of innovative approaches in preschool and early primary settings.

Research Questions

1. How do school leaders influence innovation and instructional practices?
2. What strategies do they use to motivate and support teachers?
3. How do leadership practices contribute to professional development?
4. What challenges and successes do leaders encounter?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed, using semi-structured interviews with school leaders working in early childhood and early primary institutions. The interview protocol explored leadership strategies, challenges, and professional culture. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework to identify key patterns in leadership practice. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was ensured.

This approach enabled an in-depth understanding of leadership behavior, decision-making, and support mechanisms that shape early childhood learning environments.

Research Problem

Early childhood education plays a foundational role in children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, making the quality of teaching and learning in this stage critically important. In Kosovo, ongoing educational reforms emphasize innovation, learner-centered approaches, and improved teaching quality in early childhood and early primary education. However, despite these reform efforts, many early childhood institutions continue to face challenges related to instructional quality, teacher motivation, and the consistent implementation of innovative teaching practices.

One of the key issues underlying these challenges is the limited empirical understanding of how educational leadership influences innovation and teaching improvement in early childhood settings. While leadership is widely recognized as a central factor in school effectiveness, research in Kosovo has largely focused on curriculum, policy, or teacher performance, with comparatively little attention given to leadership practices in early childhood education. As a result, there is insufficient evidence on how school leaders support teachers, shape professional culture, and respond to contextual constraints such as limited resources and policy demands.

This study addresses this gap by examining the role of educational leadership in fostering innovation and improving teaching quality in early childhood education in Kosovo. It seeks to understand how school leaders influence teacher motivation, promote collaborative professional practices, and create supportive learning environments that encourage pedagogical change. By focusing on leaders' perspectives and experiences, the study aims to contribute empirical insights that can inform leadership development, institutional practices, and policy initiatives in early childhood education.

Findings

The interviews with early childhood leaders revealed several key themes related to innovation and teaching improvement. Leaders emphasized the importance of vision-building, emotional encouragement, and a positive school climate in motivating teachers to adopt new instructional approaches. Collaboration—through peer mentoring, team planning, and shared reflection—was also identified as a central factor that strengthens professional growth. Although challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and policy constraints were frequently mentioned, leaders reported using partnerships, community support, and personal modeling of innovation to overcome these barriers. Overall, the findings show that strong, supportive leadership is crucial for shaping school culture and enabling innovation in early childhood education.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the central role of educational leadership in promoting innovation and improving teaching quality in early childhood education. Leaders emphasized vision-building, emotional support, and collaboration as key strategies for motivating teachers and encouraging the adoption of innovative instructional approaches. These findings are consistent with existing research on transformational leadership, which emphasizes shared vision, empowerment, and professional trust as drivers of school improvement.

A significant contribution of this study is the emphasis on emotional encouragement and relational leadership. Leaders reported that trust, recognition, and open communication were essential for fostering teacher confidence and willingness to experiment with new practices. This is particularly important in early childhood settings, where teaching requires creativity, reflection,

and responsiveness to young learners' needs. By creating a supportive professional climate, leaders reduced teachers' fear of failure and strengthened their engagement in continuous improvement.

The study also revealed that collaboration—through peer mentoring, shared planning, and reflective dialogue—plays a critical role in strengthening professional capacity. Such collaborative practices enabled teachers to learn from one another and to collectively address instructional challenges, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility for teaching quality.

Despite these positive leadership practices, participants identified persistent challenges, including limited resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and restrictive policy frameworks. However, leaders demonstrated adaptive strategies, such as modeling innovative practices, leveraging community support, and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships. These findings suggest that effective leadership can mitigate structural constraints and sustain innovation even in resource-limited contexts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that educational leadership is a key factor in fostering innovation and improving teaching quality in early childhood education in Kosovo. Leadership practices such as clear vision-setting, emotional support, collaborative professional structures, and the modeling of innovative teaching significantly influence teacher motivation, confidence, and professional engagement. These practices contribute to the creation of positive school cultures that support continuous improvement and learner-centered education.

Although early childhood leaders face ongoing challenges related to limited resources, professional development, and policy constraints, the findings show that committed and supportive leadership can sustain innovation and enhance teaching quality. This highlights the importance of investing in leadership development programs that strengthen leaders' pedagogical, relational, and strategic capacities.

The study concludes that strengthening institutional and policy support for early childhood leadership is essential for advancing high-quality, innovative, and inclusive early learning environments. Future efforts should focus on aligning leadership training, professional development, and policy frameworks to ensure sustainable improvement in early childhood education in Kosovo.

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EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A FOUNDATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

In the context of intensified globalization, migration processes, and increasing cultural diversity, the development of intercultural competence has emerged as one of the most significant objectives of contemporary education and upbringing. This paper examines educational development as a fundamental basis for fostering individuals capable of constructive communication, mutual respect, and active participation in multicultural communities. Through a theoretical analysis of multiculturalism, intercultural pedagogy, and contemporary educational practices, the study explores both the opportunities and challenges associated with the development of intercultural competencies in modern society.

Particular attention is devoted to the role of the family, school, and teacher as key agents in the process of educational socialization and the formation of value orientations that promote the acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. The paper argues that intercultural competence should not be understood merely as knowledge about other cultures, but as a complex system of attitudes, values, and skills that enable effective interaction in culturally diverse environments. Drawing upon comparative international experiences and recent research findings, the paper highlights the necessity of a systematic and long-term approach to multicultural education as a prerequisite for social cohesion, democratic culture, and sustainable societal development.

Keywords: *educational development, intercultural competence, multicultural society, multicultural education, intercultural pedagogy, social cohesion.*

Introduction

In the contemporary world, multiculturalism is not an exception but the rule. Globalization, migration and urbanization have created societies in which different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups coexist on a daily basis. In these conditions, the question of the educational development of the individual acquires new significance and a new pedagogical dimension. Education can no longer be merely the transmission of knowledge — it must be a space for forming individuals who will be able to function successfully in mosaic, plural communities.

The multiethnic character of society in the Republic of North Macedonia represents a significant contextual factor that fundamentally shapes educational policies and practices, thereby requiring a systematic approach to the development of intercultural understanding and social cohesion.

The aim of this paper is to examine the significance of educational development in multicultural conditions, to analyze the theoretical foundations of multicultural education, to investigate the roles of

different actors in the educational process — families, schools, the state — and to offer recommendations based on comparative and contemporary research findings. In this sense, the paper is structured into several thematic sections offering both a theoretical and practical perspective on multicultural education. Furthermore, the significance of multicultural education today extends beyond issues of cultural diversity and is closely linked to the need for building societies grounded in social cohesion, democratic values, and human rights. In an era characterized by increasing population mobility and intensive global communication, the ability to understand, respect, and engage constructively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds has become an essential competence of the contemporary citizen. Consequently, educational development within multicultural contexts represents not only an individual concern but also a broader societal priority, as it directly influences the quality of interpersonal relations and the stability of democratic communities.

From a pedagogical perspective, multicultural education is increasingly recognized as a process that transcends the boundaries of formal learning and enters the sphere of value formation and personal development. Its fundamental objective is to cultivate intercultural sensitivity, critical awareness, and social responsibility, enabling younger generations to participate actively in the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies. Therefore, examining educational development in conditions of multicultural living constitutes a valuable contribution to contemporary pedagogical discourse and to the advancement of educational practice in the twenty-first century.

In contemporary multicultural societies, intercultural competence has emerged as one of the key competencies required for active and responsible citizenship. It does not develop spontaneously but rather represents the outcome of a long-term educational process through which individuals gradually internalize the values of respect, tolerance, dialogue, and cooperation. In this regard, educational development constitutes a fundamental pedagogical category that enables the formation of individuals capable of critically understanding cultural differences and constructively participating in social life.

The importance of this issue is particularly evident in the context of rapid social transformation, global interconnectedness, and increasing cultural diversity. Consequently, contemporary education is expected not only to provide academic knowledge but also to create conditions for the development of intercultural sensitivity and democratic culture as essential prerequisites for sustainable social development.

Multiculturalism as a Challenge of Contemporary Society

Multiculturalism as a phenomenon and concept in contemporary pedagogical thought represents more than the simple acknowledgment of the existence of different cultures. It implies the active valuing, respecting and cultivating of diversity as a source of enrichment for society as a whole (Banks, 2004). Academic interest in this topic grew in parallel with the increase in global migrations, especially after World War II, and continued intensively in the last three decades.

In this context, multicultural education is increasingly understood as a dynamic and continuous process that requires ongoing reflection, adaptation, and critical examination of educational practices. This implies that curricula cannot remain culturally neutral but must reflect the actual social diversity and ensure the representation of multiple cultural narratives. In this way, education becomes a space for dialogue in which students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and intercultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of multicultural education presupposes systemic support for teachers through continuous professional development and institutional mechanisms that promote inclusive pedagogical practices. Only through the coordinated action of educational policies, schools, and teaching staff can a sustainable educational model be achieved—one that effectively responds to the challenges of

The essence of multicultural education, according to Banks (2004), lies in creating equal educational opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, social and cultural groups. The goal is not merely tolerance, but deep understanding and interaction among different groups. In this context, Drašković (2012) emphasizes that multiculturalism in education is a functional concept requiring concrete operationalization — not only a declarative acceptance of diversity, but also structural adaptation of educational content, methodologies and institutional practices.

The transformation of our society into an open democratic society must be grounded in a fundamental reform of the educational system. The modernization of teaching requires contemporary technology, appropriate spatial conditions, and above all — personnel prepared to face the challenges of a multi-ethnic environment. In this direction, Oljača (2007) emphasizes that multicultural education must not be a peripheral programmatic activity, but an integral value orientation of the entire educational system.

Relevant research shows that the approach to multicultural education in Western European countries differs significantly. Countries such as Canada and Sweden implemented systematic policies for inclusive education as early as the 1980s, with visible positive results in reducing prejudice and improving the school performance of minority students (OECD, 2023). In contrast, many countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the Balkan states, still face institutional challenges in implementing multicultural educational policies.

In the context of increased migrations within the European Union and beyond, multiculturalism also becomes a matter of social cohesion and security. Research by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2023) shows that countries that have invested in multicultural education demonstrate better indicators of social cohesion, fewer conflicts between ethnic groups and greater economic mobility for marginalized groups.

The Significance of Educational Development

Educational development represents the process of building the personality in its cognitive, emotional, moral, social and spiritual dimensions. It is not reduced to the acquisition of knowledge alone, but encompasses the formation of values, attitudes, habits and life orientations (Koprovski & Petrovski, 1999). In a multicultural environment, educational development acquires additional complexity — it must address the questions of identity, belonging, intercultural communication and the management of differences.

Moral values are not merely abstract concepts. They are closely connected to the moral qualities of the individual: kindness, tolerance, empathy, honesty, responsibility, justice and respect for others (Shirokih, 2007). Research shows that developing these values in children from early childhood creates the foundation for successful intercultural communication and for harmonious living in heterogeneous communities.

At the same time, changes in value systems in transitional societies particularly intensely affect adolescents, who are most vulnerable during periods of rapid social change. The educational process must recognize this and offer support for the building of a stable identity in young people — an identity that will be open to diversity rather than threatened by it.

A systematic literature review conducted by Agirdag, Huyst and Van Houtte (2012) for 25 European countries showed that the multicultural approach in education significantly improves the academic achievements of minority students, without negatively affecting the performance of majority population students. The findings indicate that inclusive education is mutually beneficial — it creates a better educational climate for all.

Particular importance in the educational process is given to the development of intercultural competence. According to Byram (2021), this competence encompasses: awareness of one's own cultural position, knowledge of other cultures, skills for intercultural interaction and critical awareness of social contexts. This framework provides concrete tools for teachers and educators in planning intercultural educational work. Educational development in multicultural settings cannot be reduced to the mere transmission of universal values; rather, it requires contextualization and continuous reflection in relation to specific cultural and societal conditions. Intercultural competence, as defined by Byram, is not simply a set of knowledge and skills but a critical framework that enables learners to understand and interrogate their own cultural assumptions. In this sense, the educational process becomes transformative — it not only shapes individual identity but also establishes a foundation for collective cultural interaction that strengthens social cohesion. Therefore, intercultural competence within the educational process constitutes a pivotal instrument for fostering societal sustainability. It not only enables learners to cultivate the capacity for dialogue across diverse cultural perspectives but also provides the conditions for critically reassessing their own value systems. When education is grounded in an intercultural framework, it becomes a process of reciprocal transformation: the individual is shaped through engagement with diversity, while the community acquires renewed cohesion by embracing pluralism as a fundamental value. This approach transcends the traditional dichotomy between majority and minority, establishing an educational environment in which differences are regarded as resources rather than obstacles.

The Family, School, and Teacher as Socialization Factors in a Multicultural Environment

➤ *The Family — the Foundation of Educational Development*

The family remains the primary factor of socialization and education. The values, attitudes and behaviors that a child acquires at home shape their relationship toward diversity even before they enter the formal educational system. Research by Verkuyten and Thijs (2013) shows that children whose parents express positive attitudes toward other cultures have significantly lower levels of prejudice and greater readiness for intercultural interaction.

In multicultural families or families with a migration background, the educational challenge is even greater. It is necessary to balance the maintenance of the native culture and identity with integration into the broader society. Institutions have an obligation to support such families through educational programs, counseling services and resources in multiple languages (UNICEF, 2022). Moreover, the family constitutes the primary social environment in which children develop their fundamental value orientations, sense of belonging, and perceptions of the “other.” The manner in which parents communicate about cultural, ethnic, and religious differences has a direct impact on the formation of children's intercultural sensitivity and social competence. Open family communication grounded in respect, dialogue, and acceptance of diversity creates favorable conditions for the development of tolerant and socially responsible individuals.

From a pedagogical perspective, the partnership between families and educational institutions represents a crucial factor in the successful implementation of multicultural education. When parents and schools share common values related to intercultural understanding and social inclusion, a coherent educational environment is established that positively influences the child's overall development. Such synergy contributes to the formation of citizens who are capable of critically understanding social differences while actively participating in the construction of cohesive and democratic communities.

➤ *The School in the Function of Intercultural Education*

The school is the place where the theory of multicultural education is transformed into concrete pedagogical practice. It is an environment in which children from different linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds share textbooks, playgrounds and experiences. This makes the school an irreplaceable place for building intercultural competences.

Research by Sleeter (2018), based on analysis of 150 studies of multicultural education, showed that effective multicultural schooling involves: revised curricula incorporating the perspectives of different communities, teachers trained in intercultural pedagogy, institutional policies that actively prevent discrimination, and environments that promote critical thinking about issues of justice and diversity.

The comparative analysis of educational systems shows that there are three dominant models of multicultural education: the assimilationist model (which encourages minorities to adapt to the majority culture), the pluralist model (which recognizes and cultivates differences) and the intercultural model (which actively promotes dialogue and exchange between different groups). The Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2022) recommends the intercultural model as most effective for achieving both social cohesion and quality education for all.

In Republic of North Macedonia, the system of integrated education represents an important step toward creating conditions for the joint education of children from different ethnic communities. However, the implementation of this system still faces challenges — language barriers, segregation in some environments and insufficient training of teaching staff in multicultural pedagogy (Miskov & Nošpal, 2020). The school as an institution plays an irreplaceable role in transforming multicultural education from a theoretical framework into a practical reality. It is the arena where different models — assimilationist, pluralist, and intercultural — are articulated, and where their effects directly shape the educational development of students. Research confirms that the intercultural model is the most effective in creating an environment that not only acknowledges diversity but also transforms it into a resource for dialogue, critical thinking, and social cohesion. In the Macedonian context, despite progress through integrated education, there remains a pressing need for systemic support for teachers and institutions, as well as for overcoming linguistic and structural barriers. Only through such an approach can the school become a genuine laboratory for intercultural education and a driving force of democratic culture.

➤ *The Teacher as a Carrier of Educational and Intercultural Values*

The teacher is the key actor in the implementation of multicultural education. Their role is not merely the teaching of educational content, but also the modeling of intercultural attitudes and behaviors. Research by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, cited in Sleeter, 2018) shows that teachers who reflect on their own cultural assumptions and prejudices are significantly more effective in multicultural environments.

Contemporary pedagogical theory, especially the critical pedagogy inspired by Paulo Freire, encourages teachers to recognize and deconstruct the systems of inequality that influence the educational process. This means that multicultural education is not merely a didactic technique, but a deeply political and moral commitment (Freire, 2023 [1970]). In this context, the teacher emerges as a mediator among diverse cultural perspectives, fostering a school climate in which differences are not perceived as barriers but rather as valuable resources for learning and personal growth. Through the implementation of inclusive pedagogical strategies and reflective practice, teachers contribute to the development of empathy, mutual respect, and critical thinking among students. Such an approach facilitates the deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudices while encouraging constructive interaction among learners from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, teachers' competence in the field of intercultural education constitutes a crucial prerequisite for establishing a democratic and equitable educational environment. Educators who demonstrate intercultural sensitivity are better equipped to recognize students' diverse needs and to ensure equal access to educational opportunities. Consequently, the professional development of teachers in the domain of intercultural competencies should not be viewed as an additional qualification but rather as an essential component of contemporary pedagogical professionalism.

Theoretical Frameworks for Multicultural Education

The understanding of educational development in multicultural conditions draws on several key theoretical frameworks that offer different but complementary perspectives. Although these theoretical perspectives originate from different scholarly traditions, they are united by the assumption that education is a process of actively constructing relationships, meanings, and values within contexts of cultural diversity. A common feature of contemporary theories of multicultural education is the rejection of assimilationist models and the endorsement of principles such as equity, dialogue, and mutual recognition. In this regard, multicultural education extends beyond merely acquiring knowledge about different cultures; it involves the development of capacities for critical reflection, intercultural communication, and constructive engagement with cultural differences.

Furthermore, these theoretical frameworks emphasize the need for educational institutions to create environments in which diversity is recognized as a pedagogical asset and a valuable resource for learning. Such an approach contributes to the promotion of democratic culture, social justice, and active citizenship, all of which constitute central objectives of contemporary education. Consequently, the theoretical foundations of multicultural education should be understood not only as conceptual tools for interpreting cultural diversity but also as practical guidelines for designing inclusive and equitable educational policies and practices.

➤ *Intercultural Pedagogy*

Intercultural pedagogy developed as a response to the limitations of traditional multicultural education. It emphasizes the dynamism of intercultural encounters, rather than viewing cultures as static, closed systems. According to Fennes and Hapgood (1997, cited in Byram, 2021), intercultural learning is a transformative process — it does not merely inform, but changes the self-awareness and identity of participants.

➤ *Critical Pedagogy*

Critical pedagogy, particularly in its Freirean roots, places questions of power, justice and liberation at the center of the educational process. In a multicultural context, this means critically examining whose knowledge, whose stories and whose values are represented — or absent — in the educational system (Freire, 2023 [1970]).

➤ *The Socio-Constructivist Approach*

Socio-constructivism, based on the work of Vygotsky, emphasizes the significance of the social context in the learning process. The multicultural environment, in this context, is not an obstacle but a resource — the different perspectives, languages and experiences brought by different students create a richer 'zone of proximal development' for all (Vygotsky, 1986; Moll et al., 2023).

The three theoretical frameworks — intercultural pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and socio-constructivism — collectively emphasize the transformative nature of the educational process in multicultural contexts. Intercultural pedagogy highlights the dynamic character of cultural encounters and their potential to reshape identity; critical pedagogy foregrounds issues of power and justice within education; and socio-constructivism underscores the role of social context as a resource for learning. The synthesis of these perspectives allows education to be understood not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as the cultivation of critical awareness, intercultural competence, and social responsibility. In this way, multicultural education becomes the foundation for building a society that values diversity and transforms it into a driving force for democratic culture and social cohesion. The concluding insights into the significance of educational development in multicultural living conditions suggest that it must be conceived as a strategic process that transcends the traditional function of education. In such contexts, education is not merely a vehicle for cognitive advancement but a mechanism for cultivating critical awareness, moral responsibility, and intercultural competence.

Comparative Analysis: Experiences from Different Contexts

The comparative perspective in multicultural education offers valuable insights into which approaches work and under what conditions. In the following section we summarize the key findings from three different educational contexts.

Canada is considered a world leader in multicultural education. The official policy of multiculturalism established by the Multiculturalism Act (1988) and consistent funding of intercultural education programs resulted in a system that achieves excellent results in international assessments (PISA, TIMSS) regardless of students' ethnic or migration status (OECD, 2023). The key factor is the systemic approach — multiculturalism is not a program but a value framework for the entire educational system.

Finland, historically a relatively homogeneous country, has significantly increased immigration over the last two decades. Research (Nieto, 2022) shows that the Finnish educational system — with its emphasis on inclusion, flexible curricula and strong support for students with different linguistic backgrounds — successfully integrates migrant children without significantly reducing educational standards.

Germany employs a decentralized approach, with federal states exercising autonomy over educational policies. Gogolin (2011) emphasizes that linguistic integration through specialized programs and support is central. Although outcomes vary across regions, the system illustrates that language competence is fundamental to both academic achievement and social integration.

The Netherlands distinguishes itself through practices that actively involve parents and communities in the educational process. Driessen (2001) notes that schools promote transparency and intercultural interaction, resulting in high levels of linguistic competence and social cohesion.

Australia has developed national policies for equality and inclusion, with curricula reflecting cultural diversity. According to the Department of Education (2019), teachers receive specialized training in intercultural pedagogy, enabling stable academic outcomes and enhanced social cohesion.

In our country, strategies and pilot projects promoting multicultural education exist (Ministry of Education and Science, 2018), yet their implementation remains partial and often dependent on international support. Long-term institutional commitment, systemic curriculum revision, and continuous teacher training are required to ensure educational development that transforms diversity into a resource for social cohesion.

The comparison of these contexts points to several universal principles: successful multicultural

education requires political will, a systemic approach, investment in teaching staff and active community engagement. No single model can be directly transferred to another context without adaptation to local conditions and needs. These comparative insights underscore the necessity of perceiving multicultural education as a dynamic process rather than a static model. While Canada exemplifies an institutionalized approach grounded in legislative frameworks, and Finland illustrates adaptability in the face of new demographic realities, the common denominator lies in embedding multicultural values into the pedagogical logic itself. This implies that multiculturalism should not be treated as an ancillary program but as a foundational principle shaping teaching practices, educational policies, and school–community relations. The universal message is that each educational system must articulate its own version of multicultural inclusion, carefully tailored to its local historical, social, and political conditions.

The experiences of Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia demonstrate that multicultural education is most effective when institutionally supported and embedded within national policies. Canada exemplifies a systemic approach grounded in legislative frameworks, Finland illustrates adaptability to new demographic realities, Germany emphasizes linguistic integration, the Netherlands highlights parental involvement and transparency, while Australia focuses on national programs for equality and inclusion. In comparison, North Macedonia has formulated strategies and pilot projects, yet lacks long-term institutional commitment and systemic implementation. The conclusion is that successful multicultural education requires not only political will and financial investment but also sustained support for teachers, schools, and communities, in order to transform diversity into a resource for social cohesion. A comparative table overview is presented in the appendix of the paper.

Table 1. Comparative Overview

Country	Key Policies and Practices	Outcomes	Challenges
Canada	Multiculturalism Act (1988); systemic approach; consistent funding	High PISA and TIMSS results; equal opportunities for all students	Balancing national identity with cultural diversity
Finland	Flexible curricula; strong linguistic support; emphasis on inclusion	Successful integration	Rapid adaptation to new demographic realities
Germany	Decentralized system; linguistic integration through specialized programs	Variable outcomes across states; language as basis for integration	Regional disparities and unequal resources
Netherlands	Active parental involvement; transparency; intercultural interaction	High linguistic competence; social cohesion	Balancing individual and collective cultural rights
Australia	National equality policies; culturally diverse curricula; teacher training	Stable academic results; improved social cohesion	Managing extensive ethnic and cultural diversity
The Republic of North Macedonia	Strategies and pilot projects; integrated education	Partial implementation; reliance on international support	Language barriers; insufficient teacher training

Therefore, multicultural education should be understood as a long-term social and pedagogical process that requires coordinated action among all relevant stakeholders, including state institutions, educational establishments, teachers, families, and local communities. Its effectiveness depends not only on the formal adoption of policies and legislative frameworks but also on their consistent and sustainable implementation in everyday educational practice. In this regard, the development of intercultural competencies among students constitutes one of the central tasks of contemporary education, as it contributes to the formation of citizens capable of living and acting within culturally pluralistic societies.

Furthermore, the findings of this analysis indicate the need for continuous scholarly research on multicultural educational practices and their effects on students' educational and social development. Only through critical evaluation and the exchange of good practices can educational models be developed that adequately respond to the complexity of contemporary multicultural societies. Consequently, multicultural education should be regarded not merely as an educational necessity but also as a strategic investment in the construction of democratic, inclusive, and socially cohesive communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Multicultural living is an unavoidable reality of the contemporary world. Educational development in such conditions is not only possible — it is necessary for individuals and communities to be able to benefit from diversity rather than experiencing only its challenges.

Effective multicultural education implies an integrated, systemic approach that engages families, schools, institutions and the broader community. It requires reform of educational content, appropriate training of teaching staff, institutional commitment to inclusivity and active partnership with families and communities.

In the context of the our country, the paper proposes the following concrete recommendations:

- Systematic revision of curricula to incorporate the perspectives and contributions of all communities;
- Development of mandatory training programs for teaching staff in intercultural pedagogy;
- Support for joint activities between students from different ethnic communities through extracurricular programs, projects and exchanges;
- Strengthening collaboration between schools and families,
- Establishment of systematic research monitoring and evaluation of the effects of multicultural educational policies.

Educational development in conditions of multicultural living is not an end in itself. It is a means for building a society in which diversity is valued and shared — a society in which every child, regardless of their origin, can develop into a free, dignified and humane individual. educational development within multicultural living conditions constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for building democratic and inclusive societies. It is not merely an educational objective but a strategy for social transformation that turns diversity into a source of creativity, solidarity, and collective progress. Education grounded in intercultural principles enables young people to cultivate a stable identity that remains open to others, while communities strengthen their cohesion by embracing pluralism as a core value. In this way, multicultural education becomes a driving force for social harmony and long-term sustainability.

The analysis of the theoretical and practical dimensions of educational development in a multicultural society confirms that intercultural competence is the outcome of a systematic and continuous educational process. Its development requires the coordinated engagement of families, schools, teachers, and the broader community in order to create an environment in which cultural diversity is recognized as a value rather than a barrier.

Therefore, educational development should be regarded as a strategic resource for building democratic, inclusive, and socially cohesive societies. Only through sustained investment in intercultural education and the cultivation of values grounded in respect for human dignity and cultural diversity can future generations be prepared for responsible participation and engagement in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

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SCREENS AND DREAMS: EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ILLUSION

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the challenges, paradoxes, and transformations shaping contemporary education under the influence of digital technology, artificial intelligence, and dominant media culture. Rapid technological advancement has generated new cognitive and communicative patterns that profoundly affect how young people learn, think, and construct their identities. The paper employs a comparative theoretical analysis supported by relevant international and national research, complemented by professional insights grounded in the author's long-standing experience in the education sector. It examines shifts in value orientations, linguistic habits, and educational behaviours, with particular emphasis on the influence of social networks on attention, self-perception, and interpersonal relations.

Special attention is given to the widening generational gap between students immersed in digital environments and teachers originating largely from the analogue era, who often struggle to integrate digital tools into pedagogical practice. This gap is not only technological but also pedagogical and cultural, challenging the traditional role of the teacher as the principal authority and mediator of knowledge. The paper further investigates broader cultural implications, including shortened attention spans, the predominance of visual communication, and the culture of visibility and self-promotion that shape students' internal motivation, self-discipline, and cognitive development. In the Macedonian context, the study highlights the additional challenge of linguistic erosion and identity insecurity within a global climate of cultural uniformity. A central focus is placed on the integration of artificial intelligence in education—from its potential to support personalized learning to the risks of cognitive passivity and the erosion of independent critical thought. The paper ultimately argues for a new educational paradigm that harmonizes technological innovation with humanistic values, strengthens cultural and linguistic identity, and preserves the human dimension of learning.

Keywords: *digital education, artificial intelligence, generational gap, media culture, values, identity, Macedonian cultural identity*

Introduction

Education has always been more than an institution—it is a social contract, a cultural model, and a mirror of the era in which we live. Today, that mirror has transformed into a screen. Students, teachers, and parents inhabit a reality in which the boundaries between learning, entertainment, and consumer culture have become blurred. The classroom once defined by chalk and a blackboard has been replaced by one shaped by tablets and digital displays (Fullan, 2021). Yet, alongside technological advancement has come a decline in concentration, authenticity, and human connectedness. Contemporary education finds itself in a paradoxical state: the more information we possess, the less we engage in deep thinking; the more we communicate, the less we truly understand one another. Artificial intelligence, with its capacity to simulate human knowledge, raises a fundamental question: what remains genuinely human within the educational process?

Within this context, the aim of this paper is to analyse the transformations experienced by young people and educators in the digital age, to examine the linguistic and cultural implications of these changes, and to highlight the need for a new educational paradigm—one that balances technological.

Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative, analytical, and comparative research approach. The analysis includes a systematic review of relevant international literature (UNESCO, OECD, UNICEF, Microsoft, Han, Carr, Zuboff) as well as national sources related to the educational context of North Macedonia. A comparative method was used to identify similarities and differences between global trends and local educational challenges. Particular attention was devoted to the discursive analysis of digital culture, linguistic shifts, the generational gap, and the integration of artificial intelligence in education. Additionally, the paper incorporates the author's extensive professional experience as an educational specialist, providing an applied perspective and deeper insight into the practical challenges present within schools. This professional dimension enriches the analytical framework and complements the theoretical findings with real-world observations from the educational system, progress with spiritual development and cultural awareness.

From Books to Clicks: The Future of Learning and Youth

The shift from the book to the click represents one of the most profound cultural and cognitive revolutions in the history of education. The textbook is no longer the primary source of knowledge; today, knowledge is dispersed across thousands of digital fragments, accessible with a single tap on a screen. This technological advancement has created a new type of learner—visual, fast-paced, and impatient. At the same time, it has introduced significant challenges to students' concentration, critical thinking, and creativity. UNESCO (2023) reports that 68% of students in Europe learn through digital devices, yet only 27% of teachers feel adequately prepared to teach in digital environments. In North Macedonia, according to data from the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES, 2022), more than 80% of primary school students use the internet daily, while only 41% read books beyond the required curriculum. This imbalance has produced a new form of dependency—an informational, but not a cognitive one. In the past, students learned through reading, discussion, and reflection; today, they learn through “watching” and “scrolling.” As a result, learning is increasingly becoming a superficial process. As Carr (2010) notes, digital media

reshape the structure of human attention—"the mind that was once a deep ocean has become a stream of clicks" (Carr, 2010).

In the Macedonian context, this shift is evident within the teaching process itself. Teachers observe that students are increasingly unable to sustain attention for more than a few minutes. Additionally, the culture of "instant results" is pervasive—students expect immediate answers, solutions, or rewards. This trend, driven by the rapid dynamics of social media, suppresses the ability to practise patience and perseverance in learning.

Nevertheless, digital education also carries substantial potential. Online learning platforms, interactive applications, and virtual classrooms open opportunities for inclusivity, personalized learning, and global collaboration. Yet they also demand a new type of pedagogy—one based not on the transmission of knowledge but on mentorship and the cultivation of critical-thinking competencies. In the future, the central challenge in education will not be access to information, but the ability to interpret it. As the OECD (2024) emphasizes, the twenty-first-century school must teach young people to recognize truth in an era of misinformation and meaning in a time of excessive exposure.

Thus, the shift "from book to click" is not merely a technological transformation—it marks a transition from reflection to reaction, from depth to speed, and from human understanding to algorithmic logic. If education fails to preserve its humanistic core, we risk producing a generation that "knows everything" but "understands little."

Scroll and Soul: The Lost Art of Learning

In the age of scrolling, attention has become the rarest human currency. Children and young people today inhabit a reality of continuous visual stimulation, where a thought lasts no longer than a single TikTok clip. According to Microsoft (2022), the average attention span of young people has decreased from twelve to eight seconds. Teachers around the world report the same difficulty: it is increasingly challenging to retain the interest of students accustomed to fast, colourful, and fragmentary content.

This phenomenon has generated an entirely new cognitive model—young people no longer read to understand, but to recognize a visual signal. Instead of processing an idea, they "like" it; instead of engaging in discussion, they "share" it. As a result, learning is losing its spiritual and reflective dimension.

Loss of "Macedonian's" and Linguistic Identity

A particularly troubling phenomenon is the gradual erosion of linguistic authenticity, especially among young people in North Macedonia. Under the influence of digital culture and social media, Anglicisms, abbreviations, and slang constructions increasingly penetrate everyday speech and writing, altering the structure of the Macedonian language. A study conducted by the Institute for the Macedonian Language "Krste Misirkov" (2023) indicates that in the online written communication of secondary school students, more than 40% of the vocabulary used consists of foreign—mostly English—words. When words disappear, the concepts they carry disappear with them—when the word "respect" vanishes, its cultural weight diminishes; when "conversation" is replaced with chat, the depth of dialogue is lost. This is not merely a linguistic issue but a cultural one. Language is not simply a tool for communication but a vessel of identity. When young people replace Macedonian expressions with digital slang, they unconsciously distance themselves from the roots that define them (Hall, 1996). In many cases, young people cannot identify an appropriate

Macedonian equivalent because the Macedonian lexicon sounds to them “old-fashioned” or “too formal.” Such linguistic hybridity generates a generational divide not only in vocabulary but also in values. When words disappear, the concepts they carry disappear with them—when the word “respect” vanishes, its cultural weight diminishes; when “conversation” is replaced with chat, the depth of dialogue is lost. This is not merely a linguistic issue but a cultural one. Language is not simply a tool for communication but a vessel of identity. When young people replace Macedonian expressions with digital slang, they unconsciously distance themselves from the roots that define them.

Beyond linguistic transformation, media culture is reshaping the very aesthetics of values. Beyond linguistic transformation, media culture is reshaping the very aesthetics of values. While the offerings of social networks are global, the content consumed by young people is often superficial and commercialized. Youth in North Macedonia, like their peers worldwide, live under the pressure of “perfect images”—standards of beauty, success, and happiness constructed through illusion (Zuboff, 2019). Images of Dubai, travel, expensive cars, and “influencer lifestyles” create a psychological burden. Young people measure themselves against ideals that do not exist, resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction and insecurity. According to UNICEF (2023), 64% of young people in Southeast Europe report that social media causes anxiety, especially when comparing themselves to others.

Thus, “Scroll and Soul” is not merely a metaphor—it reflects a reality in which scrolling replaces inner depth. In this digital dynamic, the student becomes a consumer of information rather than a creator of knowledge, while the teacher becomes an observer rather than an educator. If in the past learning was a process of elevating the spirit, today it is reduced to the motion of a thumb over a screen. In this small, symbolic gesture lies the entire human drama of the twenty-first century—the struggle between speed and meaning, word and image, identity and illusion.

Brains and Trains: Teaching the Digital Generation

Teachers today stand on a metaphorical railway platform where the train of technology departed long ago, while many still hesitate to board. The global shift toward digital education has created an invisible yet profound generational gap between digital-native students and analogue-era teachers. OECD (2023) reports that in more than 60% of countries, teachers feel technologically unprepared to meet contemporary instructional demands.

In North Macedonia, although the Ministry of Education and Science has been working actively toward digitalizing the educational process since 2021, many teachers continue to experience fear and uncertainty toward technology. Some perceive digitalization as a threat to their professional role rather than an opportunity for its expansion. According to the Bureau for Development of Education (2022), 47% of teachers admit that they use digital tools only when they are obliged to do so. However, in the age of artificial intelligence—where knowledge is accessible within seconds—the teacher must transform into a mentor, guide, and ethical role model. The roots of the problem are not merely technical but also cultural. For decades, the educational system has shaped the figure of the teacher as the “sovereign of knowledge” rather than as a mediator between the student and information. However, in the age of artificial intelligence—where knowledge is accessible within seconds—the teacher must transform into a mentor, guide, and ethical role model.

In this regard, the central challenge is no longer how to transmit knowledge, but how to cultivate understanding. The teacher must redirect energy from lecturing to interaction, from assessment to inspiration. As Fullan (2021) argues, the successful teacher of the twenty-first century is not the one who knows the most, but the one who can spark curiosity.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Teaching

With the emergence of tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Copilot, education has acquired a new dimension. Students can now obtain answers, generate essays, or conduct research within seconds. Yet this raises serious pedagogical and ethical concerns. Is the student truly learning if the machine performs the thinking? Some experts warn that excessive reliance on artificial intelligence may lead to cognitive passivity—a condition in which young people cease to think critically because algorithms perform those tasks more efficiently. For this reason, the role of the teacher must not be reduced to technical support, but must remain a form of human guidance—teaching students how to think, not merely what to know. Within this context, teachers require sustained support through continuous training, collaboration, and mentorship. A change in school culture is essential—from fear of technology to partnership with it. Teachers and AI should function symbiotically: the machine as a tool, and the human as the source of meaning.

In North Macedonia, several pilot programmes by UNICEF and MoES (2024) are already oriented toward integrating digital competencies into curricula. However, without systematic support and motivation, such initiatives risk remaining only well-intentioned ideas. The digital generation does not seek perfect teachers, but authentic individuals who understand how the screen thinks, yet know how to speak to the human soul. The teacher of the future will not be the one who delivers lectures, but the one who listens, understands, and inspires students to think with their own hearts and in their own language.

Mind and Grind: Education in a Wired World

The contemporary student lives within a culture of comparison, where a person's value is measured by the number of likes, followers, and views they accumulate. The architecture of social media has created a new unit of measurement for success—visibility. If knowledge once constituted power, today visibility functions as currency. As Byung-Chul Han (2017) observes, the modern individual exists within a “performance society,” in which everyone must constantly display themselves, produce an image of who they are, and remain digitally present in order to be acknowledged.

This phenomenon alters the very nature of education. Rather than a process of personal development, education increasingly becomes a form of self-promotion. Students often choose what to learn based on how “useful” or “popular” it appears online, rather than according to its intrinsic intellectual value. Such a utilitarian orientation produces a generation that thinks in the grammar of trends rather than the grammar of ideas.

Education and the Cultural Void

In this digital epoch, a paradox emerges: young people have access to more knowledge than ever before, yet they experience a deeper sense of emptiness than previous generations. This emptiness is not intellectual but spiritual and cultural. Students learn how to navigate applications, but not how to experience art; they know how to search for information, but not how to formulate a meaningful question.

In the Macedonian context, this void is dual: alongside the global digital gap, there exists a crisis of identity. The erosion of Macedonian linguistic and cultural self-awareness—the blending of English slang with social-media norms, together with the marginalization of cultural heritage in favour of a “global style”—produces young people who are globally connected yet locally uprooted

(Institute for the Macedonian Language “Krste Misirkov,” 2023). This phenomenon also affects motivation for learning. Social networks promote a culture of the “perfect life”—appearance, wealth, travel, and luxury—while core human values such as empathy, solidarity, and critical thinking gradually fade. Youth are no longer shaping a personality; they are curating a profile. Ideals of beauty and success become external, visual, and quantifiable.

This phenomenon also affects motivation for learning. Teachers increasingly observe that students lack sustained interests, maintaining only momentary impulses. As UNICEF (2023) indicates, 58% of young people in Southeast Europe admit that they rarely finish what they begin, as they are easily diverted by new digital content.

Towards a New Paradigm of Education

Despite these challenges, the digital era offers the potential for a renewed humanism—an educational model that integrates technology with ethics, speed with depth, and algorithmic efficiency with moral awareness. Artificial intelligence may serve as a tool for the democratization of knowledge, but only if human beings retain their role as those who question, doubt, and feel. The education of the future must return to its essence: to form persons, not profiles; thinkers, not users. The teacher must become a guardian of values, and the student—a seeker of meaning. As Delors (1996) asserts, “learning to be” constitutes the highest form of education. Within the “wired” conditions of the modern world, where the human mind and machine interact continuously, the future of education will depend on our ability to preserve the human face of knowledge. Even the most intelligent machine cannot replace the simplest human kindness.

Conclusion

Education in the 21st century stands at a crossroads between technological advancement and a profound loss of human meaning. The digital revolution has democratized access to information, yet it has relativized wisdom. Young people grow up surrounded by screens, applications, and algorithms that shape their perception of reality, while teachers find it increasingly difficult to maintain their attention. This situation is not only a pedagogical challenge but also a cultural one. Education today should not fight against technology, but rather cultivate it in the service of humanity. Instead of viewing the screen as an enemy, we should treat it as a mirror—one that encourages us to look beneath the surface. The future of education cannot be measured through digital indicators but through human outcomes: empathy, respect, curiosity, and cultural awareness. The Macedonian language and Macedonian identity, in this sense, are not merely linguistic categories but spiritual foundations that safeguard identity in a global sea of uniformity. If we succeed in integrating knowledge, critical thinking, and digital competencies with an appreciation for language, tradition, and values, then education will truly become a journey—not only toward success, but toward the self. In an era when screens have become our constant companions and technology increasingly shapes how we learn, live, and connect, it is essential that we do not lose what makes us human. The greatest challenge of our time is therefore not only how to teach children to use technology, but how to teach them to remain human. Education must not become a mechanical exchange of information; it must remain a space where curiosity, character, empathy, and cultural awareness are cultivated. Our task—as teachers, researchers, parents, and students—is to guide technology so that it serves humanity, rather than the other way around. Education must once again become a journey inward, not a race toward the market. Only then will the “screen” cease to be a wall and become a window toward genuine human meaning. Let this be a reminder that the future is not created by technology, but by the people who know how to use it wisely. And it is precisely in this that our strength lies.

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“REASONABLE” YET UNKNOWN: TO WHAT EXTENT PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS AGREE WITH OPEN SCIENCE NORMS?

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ABSTRACT:

Open science is emerging as a key paradigm for improving the credibility of scientific knowledge. The sustainability of open science, in turn, depends on the attitudes and practices of future researchers. This research aims to examine the awareness and understanding of psychology students about open science practices. The results show that the majority of students are not familiar with the concept of open science and preregistration, and those who are familiar with it most often equate it with open access to publications. Nevertheless, students express relative support for research scenarios that operationalize norms such as critical thinking, transparency and avoidance of questionable research practices, however they have relative reservations towards newer practices such as preregistration, registered reports, preprints and open data. The findings indicate the need for systematic introduction of open science concepts into teaching, through gradual and pedagogically designed integration, in order to develop transparent, responsible and replicable research practices among future psychologists.

Keywords: *open science, replication crisis, repository, preregistration, psychology students*

Introduction

In the past few decades, the global scientific and professional community in psychology has raised the issue of transparency and replicability of psychological research findings. The term ‘*replication crisis*’ describes the widespread difficulty and failure to reproduce the results of published studies in large-scale replication attempts (Pashler and Wagenmakers, 2012). This phenomenon is also called the ‘*reproducibility crisis*’, and in a more positive context, the ‘*credibility revolution*’ (Munafo et al., 2017; Vazire, 2018)

The attempts to replicate the findings of 100 experiments published in highly ranked psychology journals, according to the Open Science Collaboration report (2015), resulted in the replication of

* The authors contributed equally to the paper and share the position of first author.

less than half of the original findings. Several collaborative initiatives have reached the same or similar conclusions (Nosek et al., 2022). Some authors also pointed out undesirable practices, such as HARKing (hypothesizing after the results are known; Kerr, 1998) and p-hacking (manipulating data to achieve statistically significant results; Nelson et al., 2018; Simmons et al., 2011) that further raise concerns about the integrity of scientific research, undermining the validity of research findings and slowing scientific progress.

In response to this, the *Open Science* paradigm is increasingly being promoted worldwide. In a broader sense, open science is a movement that aims to promote and implement free and open access to scientific knowledge, data and results of scientific research, primarily those financed by public funds. In the 21. Century, one of the most frequently used and influential concepts in science is open science. It represents a new research culture based on the principles of transparency, accessibility and collaboration, in order to overcome the traditional model of closed and elitist knowledge production. Open science is defined as a group of practices aimed at strengthening scientific work by “opening” it to all stakeholders, with researchers sharing publications, data, protocols and analytical procedures (Mellor & Pajic, 2023). This concept encompasses various activities aimed at increasing the efficiency, transparency and reusability of scientific results (Smederevac et al., 2020), and is not a single practice, but a systemic orientation towards more inclusive, cumulative and trustworthy knowledge creation (Pennington, 2023). Its aim is to overcome the traditional model of closed and elitist knowledge production. In this sense, open science not only changes research practices, but also introduces a broader epistemological¹ and institutional transformation of the scientific system.

Open science is an umbrella term for a number of practices, however they can be implemented in the research process in different ways. In an attempt to provide a concise and pedagogically intelligible presentation of the most popular practices of open science, as well as the questionable research practices that need to be addressed through the application of open science, a table adapted from Pennington’s (2023) table is provided below.

Table 1. Open science descriptions

Concept/Practices	Description
Open science	Knowledge that is openly accessible, transparent, rigorous, can be reproduced and replicated; includes open access, preprinted materials, preregistration, registered reports and open materials, codes and data.
<i>Open science practices</i>	
Preprinting	A scientific paper electronically shared in a repository before formal publication.
Preregistration	Registration of the methodological design of the study, the hypotheses and the analysis plan before collecting data in a public repository.
Registered report	A publishing format with peer review of the methodological design prior to data collection and the manuscript after results.
Open materials	Making materials (questionnaires, stimulus and experimental draft scripts) publicly available to facilitate reproducibility of the findings.

¹ Epistemological transformation refers to changes in how scientific knowledge is created and valued, including changes in the criteria for scientific validity and quality.

Open code	Making codes for analysis/programming publicly available to ensure transparency and reproducibility of findings.
Open data	Making data publicly available, respecting ethical standards such as anonymity.
<i>Questionable scientific practices addressed through open science practices</i>	
HARKing	Hypothesizing after the results are known.
<i>p</i> -hacking	Data manipulation to achieve statistically significant results.

Note. Adapted from *A Student's Guide to Open Science: Using the Replication Crisis to Reform Psychology* (p. 57), by C. R. Pennington, 2023, McGraw-Hill Education.

In the attempt to 'list' the open science concepts it should be mentioned that open science practices should not be treated as an 'all or nothing' request. Quite the contrary, they can be adopted gradually, allowing researchers to selectively apply practices relevant for their work (Kathawalla et al., 2021). This flexible perspective is compared to the model of a 'buffet', where individuals can gradually build competence with practices over time (Bergmann, 2018).

The development of open science practices raises questions about operational practice, i.e. what are the attitudes of researchers towards open science and to what extent open science practices are being applied. One of the more recent, large-scale studies is an international study by Pennington et al. (2024) with a sample of over 3,000 researchers from 45 countries, which points to a discrepancy between declarative support for open science practices (e.g., open access, preprints, open data) and their adoption, indicating a relatively low application of practices such as preregistration, registered reports and replication with significant variations across disciplines, regions and among researchers at different career stages.

The focus of research to date has been more on the attitudes and practices of established researchers, and less on the awareness, attitudes and practices of students, although the sustainability of open science certainly depends on how well future researchers are acquainted with the ethos and principles of open science. Investigating the awareness of open science concepts among undergraduate students, some research (e.g., Clark et al., 2025) focuses on examining their subjective assessments on whether these concepts were covered in their formal education as an indicator of how much students "remember" or have adopted the concepts. The results indicate, among other things, that greater awareness of open science practices is associated with greater self-confidence in their statistical competences and with less support for questionable research practices. Krishna and Peter's (2018) study, on the other hand, found that attitudes toward questionable research practices were predictors of self-reported use of questionable research practices among students who were writing their bachelor's or master's thesis at the time or had such experience in the past two years. Not surprisingly, the students' perceptions of their mentors' attitudes also predicted their attitudes toward and use of questionable research practices.

It should be noted that most research examining students' awareness of open research practices and the extent to which questionable research practices are perceived as 'reasonable' or are implemented, comes from countries where open science is more or less integrated into the curricula of various higher education institutions, such as the United Kingdom (Clark et al., 2025) or Germany (Krishna & Peter, 2018).

On the other hand, there are also studies that do not necessarily assume that students are informed about the concepts of open science as part of their formal education and that examine students' 'naïve' beliefs about how open science practices seem 'reasonable' to them, as opposed

to practices that contradict them. When asked how a researcher should conduct research, first-year psychology students, who had no formal education in open science, in the study by Beaudry et al. (2024), on average, agreed more with scenarios that describe open science norms, compared to practices that contradict them. Greater support was noted for scenarios that operationalize norms of transparency, replicability, and avoidance of questionable research practices, with greater reservations about preprints and open data. The optimism that first-year psychology students ‘naively’ recognize the value of open science should, however, be contextualized by the fact that they come from countries (Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand) where, according to researchers, the discourse on open science is ‘ubiquitous’, and literacy about research methodology is developed before ‘entering’ higher education.

Raising the awareness of future researchers about open science practices should not be considered only from the perspective of the sustainability of science. The adoption of open science practices is not only good for science but has pedagogical value as well. Overviewing available literature, Pownall et al. (2022) indicate that training in open science principles in higher education impacts the students’ scientific literacy, increases their motivation to collaborate and engage in the scientific process, and shapes critical attitudes towards science. In the context of scientific literacy, the research by Parsons et al. (2022) shows that learning about the practice of preregistration helps students better understand statistical interpretation, while Blincoe and Buchert (2020) indicate that the same practice contributes to better recognition of questionable research practices. Similarly, Frank and Saxe (2012), who encourage students to replicate renowned research within a regular course on experimental research methodology, suggest that the frustration that arises from attempting to reconstruct “incompletely documented” methodologies can be a strong motivation to increase transparency and improve methodological documentation in one’s own research. Additionally, participation in teams practicing open science allows students to develop transferable skills, such as collaborative coding and shared knowledge production (Button et al., 2020), as well as to improve scientific communication, given that open science emphasizes the principle of transparency and democratization of knowledge (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020; Kathawalla et al., 2021).

Development of open science culture in North Macedonia

Open science as a concept is recognized to a certain extent in relevant strategic documents in the country (for a comprehensive overview see Dimitrovska, 2025). For example, the concept is recognized in the strategic goals of the National Programme for Scientific and Research Activity (2024), and the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius has developed and adopted a document on Open Science Policy (2022). On the other hand, the institutional infrastructure for the application of open science is still in a developmental phase (Cekic, 2025) and mainly focuses on the development of digital repositories and open access to domestic scientific publications. Although initiatives began in the early 2000s, their development has been slower compared to other countries in the region, while more significant institutional support has been provided only after 2020, with the adoption of regional open access policies. Pendse (2021), based on data from OpenDOAR², states that there are five digital repositories, most of which are linked to academic institutions, including university repositories such as the one at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje (repository.ukim.mk), as well as the National Digital Library (DLIB.mk). In terms of scientific journals, the number of open access journals is limited (around 14 indexed in DOAJ), indicating that the open science infrastructure is still being consolidated. Within

² OpenDOAR is a global, curated directory of open academic repositories, managed by the Nottingham University, which provides verified information about repositories which enable free access to science papers, theses and data.

social sciences and humanities, including at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, there are individual open access journals, but their international visibility and indexing vary. This indicates that, despite existing initiatives, further efforts are needed for standardization, increasing visibility and alignment with international principles such as FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable; Wilkinson et al., 2016).

The awareness of the scientific and academic community, according to the survey by Bliznakovski and Naumovska (2025), indicates that social science researchers recognize the value of open access, but practice it to a lesser extent in their research, mainly citing obstacles related to infrastructure and insufficient willingness to 'open', for example, datasets, or due to concerns about misuse.

On the other hand, attempts to develop an open science culture from the perspective of future researchers are still in their infancy. This motivated the implementation of the project *RISE-Open: Repository of Instruments and Support for Engagement in Open Science*, funded by UKIM (NIP. UKIM.24-25.16), which aimed to expand the range of opportunities, knowledge, and skills among psychology students and young researchers for gradual transition to Open Science practices. Workshops were held for preregistration of studies on the Open Science Framework platform, and in order to promote the principle of open access, the first Repository of Psychological Instruments in Macedonian language³, was developed as part of the project and presented through webinars and workshops. Through collaborative processes with the teaching staff and the mobilization of alumni from the Institute of Psychology, the foundations were laid for a sustainable academic network that promotes transparent, accountable, and replicable research.

These efforts were preceded by mapping the awareness and understanding of psychology students about open science practices, and this paper summarizes the survey results. The study is exploratory and examines the awareness about open science from the perspective of how much the descriptions of open science practices seem 'reasonable' to students as opposed to practices that contradict them. Given that the concept of open science is not yet widely accepted in the national academic discourse, we considered this approach of measuring 'their' beliefs justified.

Methodology

Sample

The survey included 238 undergraduate students (93% female) from all four years enrolled in the first cycle of psychology studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. Of these, 27.7% are first-year, 26.9% are second-year, 19.7% are third-year, and 25.6% are fourth-year students.

Process

All potential participants were contacted directly before the start of regular classes, and a QR code was shared with them that led to the questionnaire on the Google Forms platform. It took about ten minutes to respond to the questionnaire.

³ The repository is a publicly accessible base of psychological instruments developed by their authors under open license. It includes instruments that were originally developed in Macedonian or were translated and adapted into Macedonian. It was developed according to the FAIR principles of the Open Science Framework platform.

Instrument

The instrument used was originally developed by Beaudry et al. (2024) to measure beliefs about open science practices among prospective psychology students. It consists of ten statements that describe the so-called norms for open science practices, such as: critical thinking, preregistration, registered reports, avoiding p-hacking, avoiding HARKing, providing information for replication, preprints, open materials, open data, and open access. According to the authors, these practices were chosen as illustrative of the current understanding of open science from the perspective of psychological science. Additionally, naming the practices as normative refers to prescription. At the same time, the instrument also contains ten statements that describe the so-called counternorms, i.e., practices that are contrary to each of the described open science practices. Calling them counternorms can be a bit confusing, given that some counter-normative practices are still “operational practice” in psychological science.

In the original questionnaire, the norms and counternorms are “operationalized” as descriptions of the behaviours of a fictional researcher, who was named Jana in the Macedonian version of the questionnaire. For example, the statement for avoiding p-hacking reads: “Jana should publish the findings of all the analyses she has done,” while the counternorm reads: “Jana should do several different analyses and publish only the interesting findings.”

For each norm or counternorm statement, respondents were asked to express their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree.” The instrument does not envisage the calculation of a total score that would indicate the support for the norms for open science practices or counter-normative practices, given that the score for each statement is considered a measure of the ‘attitude’ towards the specific norm or counternorm. The instrument was translated using a simple, one-way translation method.

Additionally, the questionnaire included two questions on awareness: whether students have previously heard of open science and preregistration. For each affirmative answer, an additional open-ended question was posed, asking participants to briefly describe these concepts. The practice of preregistration was included in order to determine the level of awareness about it, as the survey preceded workshops on open science and preregistration.

Statistical analysis

Since the instrument does not envisage total scores that would indicate the support for open science practice norms or counternorms, descriptive indicators at sample level were calculated for each norm and counternorm item. To determine the relative ‘attachment’ of students to each norm compared to the corresponding counternorm, the differences between respective arithmetic means for the scale of each norm and the corresponding counternorm were tested using the *t*-test. This essentially replicated the analytical design of the study that informed the development of the instrument. This resulted in the application of ten tests, which can be considered a risk of Type I error. However, as in the original study, no correction for multiple tests was applied, which poses certain limitations on the obtained results.

The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS.

Results

Table 2 presents descriptive indicators and statistics for testing score differences for norms and counternorms. The highest average score is for the critical thinking norm, and the lowest for the preprint norm. At the same time, the highest average score is for the counternorm for registered reports, and the lowest for *p*-hacking.

Out of the ten *t*-tests, eight indicate statistically significant differences, five of which are in 'favour' of the norms for open science practices. The results indicate that students generally support traditional scientific norms, such as critical thinking, predefined hypotheses, and the sharing and transparency of methodology that enable replication. For example, they clearly prefer to critically evaluate research, even when it is published, rather than blindly trusting it. At the same time, they strongly support transparency in analyses and oppose the selective publication of results (so-called *p-hacking*) and hypothesizing after the results are known (*HARKing*).

On the other hand, the results show lack of familiarity with or skepticism towards recent open science practices, such as preregistration, registered reports, preprints, open data, and open materials. Students either do not show clear support for the norm (as with preregistration and open materials) or show greater support for the counter-normative position (as with registered reports, preprints, and open data).

Table 2. Descriptive indicators and comparison of norm and counternorm scores

	Norm		Counternorm		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Critical thinking	4.40	.856	2.18	1.137	21.347	< .001
Preregistration	3.64	1.195	3.62	1.435	.167	.868
Registered report	2.76	1.268	3.68	1.181	-7.714	< .001
p-hacking	3.77	1.222	2.08	1.161	14.048	< .001
HARKing	3.80	1.109	2.22	1.414	13.334	< .001
Information for replication	3.90	1.203	2.42	1.285	11.916	< .001
Preprints	2.55	1.208	3.68	1.285	-7.939	< .001
Open materials	3.23	1.374	3.12	1.335	.687	.493
Open data	2.96	1.368	3.55	1.326	-3.879	< .001
Open access	3.75	1.034	2.86	1.214	7.622	< .001

In the questions about general awareness, as many as 87.8% responded that they had never heard of open science. Of the 12.2% who were familiar with the concept, when asked what they understood by 'open science', most answered that it meant free access to scientific research, i.e., reports and publications ("Science available to the wider public, not locked behind a paywall"). Some of the participants mentioned free access to databases ("[...] a database that is free for all users, without the need to pay a fee for access or without the need for membership in an organization."). Only one participant emphasized that open science also encompasses the transparency of the research process for reproducing research ("Better access to knowledge, possibility for critical analysis of the research and participation in data collection, which is especially important in psychology, where reproducibility⁴ of results is a great challenge. It implies transparency, accessibility, and collaboration

⁴ This is an excerpt from the original respondent's response. It probably refers to the possibility for reproduction of results

in all phases of the scientific process.”). This suggests that very few students are familiar with the concept of open science, and those who are equate it with free access to publications and research reports, and to a lesser extent with open access to research datasets, which aligns with the local infrastructure. Not a single student mentioned open science practices related to preregistration and registration that would allow avoiding the phenomena of *p*-hacking and HARK-ing.

When asked whether they have heard of the practice of ‘preregistration’ of studies in psychology, as many as 91.2% responded that they were not familiar with the concept. On the other hand, of those 8.8% who answered affirmatively, most gave an answer in the sense of understanding the practice: “It is basically prepublishing a scientific research design and posing hypotheses before the research”; in other words, “The hypothesis and the research plan should be preregistered in order not to manipulate or change the hypothesis after obtaining the results.”

Discussion

Although the majority of psychology students are not familiar with the concept of open science, it can be said with some reservation, that they show preference for open science norms over counter-normative practices. Namely, students are, on average, more inclined to critically review published research than to uncritically rely on the authority of scientific journals. The students’ opinions indicate a relatively greater preference for the norms of pre-established hypotheses for confirmatory research, as well as transparency of methodology and analytical procedures, compared to counter-normative positions that would result in retroactive hypothesizing (HARKing), methodological non-transparency that would result in the inability to replicate, and selective reporting only of significant results (*p*-hacking). In addition, the students express a positive attitude towards publishing in open-access journals compared to journals that require readers to pay for access to scientific papers.

These results are consistent with the study by Beaudry et al. (2024) and are encouraging, in the sense that students assess the normative positions of open science for transparency and the democratization of scientific knowledge as ‘more reasonable’ than counter-normative positions. In this sense, future open science curricula should build upon on what students already consider to be (more) correct.

Students, however, show an ambivalent stance towards the norms of preregistration and open materials. In the context of the practice of preregistration, it is somewhat worrying that the counter-normative practice that was described alluded to both the potential risk of HARKing and the risk of *p*-hacking (“*Jana should decide which analyses are most appropriate for testing her hypotheses only after she has initially reviewed her data.*”). On the other hand, the preregistration norm is a practice that, according to their answers to the question about pre-registration awareness, the majority of students have not heard of; therefore, a certain reservation about this practice can be inferred. The ambivalent position towards open materials can be partly explained by the fact that the counternorm emphasized the need for ‘protection’ of research materials and measurement instruments (“*Jana should protect her research materials and measurement instruments, so that they are available only to her and her research team.*”). Considering that many psychological instruments, which are used in clinical contexts, explicitly prohibit dissemination which could result in their utilization by non-professionals, it is clear why this claim is attractive to students.

At sample level the students showed relatively greater agreement with the counter-norms for registered reports, preprints, and open data. The practice of registered reports, which involves submitting a study design for peer review in a journal before data collection, can be assumed to be relatively unknown to students, who are probably familiar with the counter-normative position as an

operational practice, i.e., submitting a report for peer review of a conducted study for publication. The same can probably be implied for the practice of preprints, which involves publishing a digital version of the report before it is accepted or published in a journal. Hence, the counternorm that can be said to be an operational practice seems ‘more correct’ (“Jana should not publish the draft research report online, before it has been officially peer reviewed and accepted for publication in a scientific journal.”). In the context of greater acceptance of the counternorm for open data as compared to the norm, it can be assumed that by accepting the counter-normative position, students express caution and concern for data protection (“The research database should be strictly protected, with access limited only to Jana and her research team.”). Considering these findings, future open science curricula should address existing dilemmas about methodological rigor and ethics by clearly elaborating how open science practices not only do not conflict with them but also enhance credibility, among other things.

Overall, the results indicate that students are inclined towards open science practices that explicitly emphasize epistemological rigor in the traditional sense, such as critical thinking, transparency of methods, and analytical practices, which is an encouraging finding. On the other hand, the results on beliefs and awareness also indicate they need to become familiar with open science concepts such as preregistration, registered reports, preprints, and openness of research materials and data, which does not compromise their ethical integrity when using them.

Unfortunately, this survey did not compare the attitudes and level of awareness of students from different study years or between students who took and students who did not take courses on research methodology. Therefore, future studies should provide a more differentiated insight into the understanding of open science among students who are already formally familiar with the basic concepts of research methodology in psychology.

The instrument for measuring students’ perceptions operationalizes some open science practices through relatively simple statements that describe specific behaviours of a fictional researcher. Each open science practice is operationalized through a single item that reduces the measurement of concepts on a scale for one statement, i.e., to the linguistic idiosyncrasy of that statement. The instrument, as developed, does not envisage a total score for normative open science practices (or for counter-normative practices), so no attempt was made to determine its internal structure or internal consistency. As in the original study from which this instrument was taken, no attempts were made to find appropriate measures for psychometric characteristics. In that sense, it might be more justified to consider this attempt as initial mapping, and not a measurement of attitudes, the validity and reliability of which, among other things, is clearly indicated. Additionally, the translation and adaptation of the instrument relied solely on one-way translation, and no cognitive testing or piloting was conducted, which can be considered a limitation.

Considering that the study was conducted on a convenience sample, the ambition to generalize the findings is certainly unjustified.

Despite its limitations, the finding that most students in the sample had not heard of open science is a clear indication that efforts to introduce open science practices should be intensified. Enthusiasm should certainly be structured through deliberation on pedagogical challenges. In their overview of published experiences, Verheyen and Heyman (2025) identify several challenges and possible solutions for integrating open science into undergraduate psychology studies. Namely, to avoid ‘overwhelming’ students with all open science practices at once, the authors suggest a gradual introduction through structured activities. For example, students can familiarize themselves with pre-existing preregistration forms or ‘practice’ replicating selected studies. The discourse of open science can be too ‘technical’ for students; therefore, it is recommended that instructors

carefully select sources that include a pedagogical approach. It is also desirable to integrate concepts across different courses, so that the introductory material is not necessarily tied solely to statistics courses, which can cause anxiety in some students (the so-called statistics anxiety). This will further distribute the ‘burden’ of integrating open science among different instructors, and it is additionally recommended that all instructors who would be mentors of bachelor theses to guide students to implement open science practices in the process, not as optional but as necessary to avoid so-called questionable research practices. Some practices may be perceived as ‘laborious’ by students; for example, preregistration may be seen as ‘extra’ work, but it can be explained that documenting the methodology in advance can save time when writing the report. Open science may not be ‘exciting’ for students; for example, replication is ‘repeating’, but students may be motivated to join international teams that replicate influential studies, and, based on their contributions, such participation may result in authorship. Students may refrain from practices that assume public sharing in the name of transparency, fearing they might make a mistake. Therefore, it is very important for instructors to promote ‘epistemological humility’ (Verheyen & Heyman, 2025) and discuss together with the students the mistakes of experienced scientists (e.g., errata, corrigenda, and other corrections) as well as to refer them to sources such as the *Journal of Trial & Error*, which publishes research that contextualizes ‘failed’ results and methodological errors. Perhaps most importantly, instructors need to model and embody the principles of open science, which presupposes inclusivity.

The implementation of such insights certainly requires significant institutional support and preparation, with the perspective that development is incremental.

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ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENTS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE STUDY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KRIVA PALANKA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the impact of crisis conditions on the development, resilience, and performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Municipality of Palanka, with specific emphasis on the challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent socioeconomic disruptions. SMEs represent the backbone of the local economy and a major driver of employment, innovation, and community stability; however, their limited financial capacity, organizational structure, and vulnerability to external shocks expose them to significant risks during crises. Grounded in contemporary theoretical insights and empirical research, this study aims to identify how SMEs in Palanka adapted their operations, which coping mechanisms proved effective, and what forms of institutional support were most relevant.

Using a mixed-method approach, the study integrates findings from international literature (Adian et al., 2020; Fairlie, 2020; Kuckertz et al., 2020), national regulatory frameworks, and primary data collected through questionnaires with local entrepreneurs. The results indicate that SMEs in Palanka experienced sharp declines in liquidity, reduced demand, supply chain interruptions, and organizational restructuring pressures. Despite these challenges, a substantial number of enterprises demonstrated adaptability through accelerated digitalization, product/service diversification, improved cost management, and workforce reorganization.

Findings also show that government measures were perceived as moderately helpful but insufficiently accessible or timely for many enterprises. Local-level institutions played a crucial role in information dissemination and administrative support but lacked the capacity for strategic, long-term interventions. The study concludes that sustainable SME development in crisis conditions requires a systemic model combining financial instruments, advisory support, digital capacity building, and stronger coordination between local and national policy makers. The insights provided can serve as evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs in the Municipality of Palanka and similar local contexts.

Keywords: *SMEs, crisis management, local economic development, COVID-19, resilience, entrepreneurship, Palanka*

Introduction

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent a fundamental pillar of contemporary economic systems, particularly in developing and transition economies such as the Republic of North Macedonia. Their contribution to employment, innovation, local economic development, and community stability is extensively recognized in global literature (Bakhtiari et al., 2020; Hisrich et al., 2013). In the Municipality of Palanka, SMEs constitute the dominant segment of the private sector and are essential for generating income, sustaining local competitiveness, and ensuring socioeconomic resilience. However, despite their developmental role, SMEs are inherently vulnerable to external shocks due to limited financial reserves, reduced access to credit, operational dependence on local markets, and often insufficient managerial and organizational capacities (Masiak et al., 2019).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented disruptions, intensifying already existing structural challenges. International studies report significant declines in liquidity, productivity, and demand among SMEs (Fairlie, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2020), while many struggled with supply chain interruptions, workforce availability, and rapid shifts in consumer behavior (Arriola et al., 2022). Similar tendencies were observed in North Macedonia, where SMEs faced operational restrictions, reduced revenues, and the urgent need for digital adaptation (Mojsoska-Blazhevski, 2021). These developments were particularly evident in smaller municipalities such as Palanka, where economic structures are less diversified and enterprises are more sensitive to market fluctuations.

In this context, understanding how SMEs in Palanka responded to crisis conditions becomes crucial for designing targeted support measures and enhancing local resilience. The present study explores the key challenges SMEs encountered, the strategies they adopted to maintain operations, and the perceived effectiveness of institutional and governmental assistance. Furthermore, the research aims to highlight the structural determinants influencing SME performance in crisis conditions, including financial constraints, human resource capacities, digital readiness, and entrepreneurial orientation.

The practical relevance of this study lies in its potential to inform local policy development, strengthen institutional mechanisms, and support a more resilient SME sector capable of withstanding future uncertainties. With crises becoming more frequent—whether economic, health-related, or geopolitical—the ability of SMEs to adapt and transform represents a priority for sustainable local development.

Theoretical framework and literature review

The theoretical foundations for understanding the performance and resilience of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in crisis conditions draw from several interconnected fields: entrepreneurship theory, innovation studies, organizational resilience, and crisis management. Classical entrepreneurship literature emphasizes the role of opportunity recognition, resource mobilization, and innovation as core determinants of business success (Drucker, 1985; Timmons, 1990). In transition economies, these elements are further shaped by institutional uncertainties, underdeveloped capital markets, and fluctuating regulatory environments (Radas & Božić, 2009; Rammer et al., 2009). SMEs typically rely on flexible structures and informal networks, which enable agility but simultaneously expose them to financial and operational vulnerabilities (Hudson Smith et al., 2001).

SMEs in Crisis Conditions

Global research highlights that SMEs suffer disproportionately during crises due to liquidity shortages, reduced market diversification, and dependence on local supply chains (Bartik et al., 2020; Adian et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic magnified these challenges on an unprecedented scale. Studies show large declines in SME revenue and workforce availability, driven by lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and behavioral changes in consumers (Fairlie, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2020). European SMEs reported disruptions in supply chains, increasing operating costs, and intensified uncertainty (Juergensen et al., 2020). Similar patterns were identified across the Western Balkans, where SMEs struggled with delayed payments, collapsing demand, and rising financial pressure (Prašćević, 2020).

Institutional Support and Policy Response

The rapid introduction of government support packages was a defining feature of crisis management during the pandemic. International organizations emphasize that support measures should be timely, targeted, and easily accessible (Cirera et al., 2021). However, evidence indicates that many SMEs experienced administrative barriers, delays, and insufficient clarity regarding eligibility criteria (Bakhtiari et al., 2020). In North Macedonia, the most common support instruments included wage subsidies, soft loans, and tax deferrals (Mojsoska-Blazhevski, 2021). While useful in preventing immediate closures, these measures were often temporary and did not address long-term structural weaknesses such as digital gaps, limited innovation capacity, and outdated infrastructure (Блажеска Мојсовска, 2021).

Innovation, Digitalization, and Adaptability

Innovation plays a critical role in enabling firms to survive and grow under conditions of uncertainty (Almeida, 2004; Hisrich et al., 2013). The pandemic accelerated digital transformation, forcing SMEs to adopt online marketing, remote collaboration tools, electronic payments, and new delivery models (Franken et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Research shows that enterprises with pre-existing digital capacities were significantly more resilient than those entering the crisis without such tools (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Creativity and entrepreneurial flexibility emerged as key drivers of successful adaptation, especially in sectors reliant on face-to-face interactions such as hospitality, tourism, and retail (Thukral, 2021).

Human Capital and Organizational Culture

Human resource challenges intensified during the pandemic, as SMEs faced labor shortages, health risks, and increased psychological stress among employees (Brooks et al., 2020). Organizations with strong team cohesion and supportive leadership demonstrated higher resilience and faster recovery (Marques, 2008; Basefsky & Sweeney, 2006). Studies show that transparent communication, participatory decision-making, and trust-based work environments helped maintain employee motivation and productivity during prolonged uncertainty (Savić & Dobrijevic, 2022).

Relevance to the Municipality of Palanka

The theoretical insights align with the socioeconomic characteristics of SMEs in the Municipality of Palanka, where enterprises operate within a geographically limited market, depend

heavily on local demand, and frequently face shortages of skilled labor. Structural constraints such as outdated urban planning, weak infrastructure, and limited access to financial instruments further intensify vulnerabilities. These factors make Palanka an illustrative case for examining the interplay between crisis conditions, structural limitations, and entrepreneurial adaptability.

Methodology

The research applied a qualitative, exploratory design aimed at understanding the specific challenges, adaptive strategies, and development prospects of small and medium enterprises in the Municipality of Kriva Palanka during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the limited availability of detailed local-level datasets and the need to capture nuanced experiences of entrepreneurs, a case-study method was selected as the primary analytical approach. This methodological choice follows established recommendations for analyzing complex organizational phenomena in uncertain environments (Podolny & Hansen, 2020; Drucker, 1985), as well as international guidance indicating that qualitative firm-level evidence is essential for assessing crisis impacts on SMEs (Cirera et al., 2021; Arriola et al., 2022).

Research Design

The study was structured around the in-depth examination of **five SMEs** operating in different sectors of the local economy: retail (two firms), agro-processing (one firm), light manufacturing (one firm), and hospitality/tourism services (one firm). These firms were selected using purposive sampling with the goal of representing the dominant industries in the municipality, different ownership structures, and variations in firm size. This approach allowed for the identification of cross-cutting patterns while still preserving sector-specific characteristics.

Data Collection

Data were collected between March and June through semi-structured interviews with owners and managers, complemented by document review, financial records (where provided), and direct observation of business operations. Interview protocols focused on several thematic categories:

- (1) financial conditions and liquidity;
- (2) workforce availability and organizational structure;
- (3) supply chain disruptions;
- (4) digital adaptation and innovation capacity;
- (5) institutional support at municipal and national level; and
- (6) long-term strategic changes introduced due to the pandemic.

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled flexibility to probe deeper into sensitive issues such as personal stress, decision-making under uncertainty, and informal coping mechanisms—elements noted as critical for understanding SME resilience in the literature (Brooks et al., 2020; Savić & Dobrijevic, 2022).

Analytical Procedures

The collected data were coded thematically following an inductive approach. Initial codes were generated based on the interview transcripts and aligned with categories derived from the literature (e.g., liquidity, innovation, digitalization). Through iterative coding, the themes were refined into higher-order analytical constructs such as: **crisis responsiveness**, **organizational flexibility**, **resource resilience**, and **institutional dependency**. Cross-case synthesis was then used to identify similarities and differences between the five enterprises, enabling a more robust and generalizable interpretation of the findings, in line with methodological recommendations for multi-case qualitative research (Yin, 2018; Masiak et al., 2019).

Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity, triangulation was applied by comparing interview data with financial statements, internal documents, and public reports where available. Member checking was conducted with three of the participating firms, allowing respondents to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Reliability was strengthened through the use of a unified interview protocol and detailed documentation of the coding procedures. Although qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalizability, the study provides analytic generalizations consistent with observed patterns in international SME research (Juergensen et al., 2020; Adian et al., 2020).

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Identifiers such as personal names, firm names, and financial details were anonymized to protect confidentiality. The study followed principles of research ethics related to privacy, voluntary participation, and responsible data management.

Results and discussion

This section presents the findings from the in-depth case studies of five SMEs in the Municipality of Kriva Palanka and interprets these results in light of the relevant literature on SME resilience during crises.

Financial Performance and Liquidity Challenges

The analysis revealed that all participating SMEs experienced a significant reduction in revenues during the COVID-19 pandemic, with declines ranging from **25% to 60%** compared to pre-pandemic levels. Retail and hospitality businesses were particularly affected due to government-imposed restrictions on mobility and gatherings. Firms that had previously relied heavily on cash transactions reported acute liquidity problems, leading some to defer supplier payments or reduce inventory.

These findings align with previous research indicating that liquidity constraints are a primary challenge for SMEs in crisis periods (Beck & Demircuc-Kunt, 2006; Cirera et al., 2021). However, firms that maintained emergency cash reserves or had access to microcredit facilities managed to continue operations without resorting to layoffs, demonstrating a degree of financial resilience.

Workforce and Organizational Adaptation

The study found considerable variation in workforce management strategies. Two retail firms implemented part-time shifts and temporary layoffs, while the agro-processing firm maintained full employment by reorganizing production schedules and implementing rotating shifts. Notably, firms with stronger internal communication channels and more flexible organizational structures adapted more effectively.

This outcome supports the conceptual framework of organizational flexibility as a determinant of resilience (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). SMEs with hierarchical decision-making processes were slower to adjust, suggesting that decision-making agility is critical for coping with external shocks.

Digitalization and Innovation

A striking result was the rapid adoption of digital tools among three of the five SMEs. Retail firms leveraged social media platforms and mobile messaging for sales and customer engagement, while the hospitality firm introduced online booking and contactless payment systems. Although adoption varied in sophistication, all cases demonstrated a direct link between digital innovation and the ability to maintain operations.

These results corroborate the findings of Juergensen et al. (2020), who emphasize that digitalization significantly mitigates the negative impacts of crises on SMEs. Moreover, the data suggest that firms that invested in digital tools before the pandemic were better positioned to scale up these solutions, highlighting the importance of proactive technological adaptation.

Supply Chain Disruptions

Supply chain challenges were prominent across all sectors. Delays in deliveries and increased costs of raw materials affected both production and service delivery. SMEs that diversified suppliers, including sourcing from local markets, showed greater resilience than those dependent on single, centralized suppliers.

This observation aligns with studies on crisis-driven supply chain vulnerability (Ivanov, 2020). It underscores the need for SMEs to integrate supply chain risk management into their strategic planning, even in small local economies.

Institutional Support and Policy Implications

Although national support measures such as financial aid programs and tax deferrals were available, awareness and access varied among SMEs. Only two firms successfully accessed government assistance. Municipal support, including guidance on COVID-19 safety protocols, was recognized as valuable but limited in scope.

The results highlight the critical role of both local and national institutions in facilitating SME resilience. Consistent with Arriola et al. (2022), these findings suggest that targeted, accessible support mechanisms are essential for small firms facing systemic crises.

Strategic Lessons and Long-Term Adaptation

A key insight from the interviews was the development of long-term strategic adaptations. Several firms reported plans to continue integrating digital tools, diversify supply chains, and

develop contingency financial reserves. This demonstrates not only reactive but also proactive resilience, aligning with the adaptive capacity framework discussed in the literature (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003; Savić & Dobrijevic, 2022).

Overall, the results indicate that SME survival during crises depends on a combination of *financial preparedness, organizational flexibility, digital adoption, supply chain diversification, and supportive institutional frameworks*.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

This study investigated the resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Municipality of Kriva Palanka during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on financial performance, workforce management, digital adoption, supply chain disruptions, and institutional support. The findings indicate that SME survival and adaptability were largely determined by a combination of internal resources and external support mechanisms.

Specifically:

1. **Financial Preparedness:** SMEs with pre-existing cash reserves or access to microcredit were better able to withstand revenue declines, while firms dependent solely on day-to-day cash flows faced severe liquidity challenges.
2. **Organizational Flexibility:** Firms with adaptable management structures and effective internal communication were able to reallocate resources, reorganize work schedules, and maintain operational continuity.
3. **Digital Adoption:** Rapid integration of digital tools, including online sales, social media marketing, and contactless payments, emerged as a critical factor for business continuity.
4. **Supply Chain Diversification:** SMEs that maintained multiple supplier channels, especially local alternatives, were less vulnerable to disruptions.
5. **Institutional Support:** Government and municipal support played a role in mitigating negative impacts, but inconsistent access and limited awareness constrained its effectiveness.

The evidence underscores that resilience is not solely reactive but also proactive: SMEs that implemented strategic adaptations during the crisis are more likely to maintain competitiveness in the long term.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for SMEs, local authorities, and policymakers:

For SMEs:

- **Enhance Financial Resilience:** Establish contingency reserves and explore alternative funding sources, including microfinance and grants, to mitigate future shocks.

- **Invest in Digital Capabilities:** Prioritize digital platforms for marketing, sales, and operations to ensure flexibility and market reach.
- **Diversify Supply Chains:** Reduce dependency on single suppliers by developing multiple sourcing channels, including local options.
- **Develop Organizational Agility:** Encourage flexible decision-making and internal communication to enable rapid responses during crises.

For Local Authorities and Policymakers:

- **Increase Accessibility of Support Programs:** Improve awareness, simplify application processes, and tailor financial aid programs to the specific needs of SMEs.
- **Provide Training and Capacity Building:** Facilitate workshops on digital tools, crisis management, and supply chain optimization for small enterprises.
- **Encourage Networking and Collaboration:** Promote local SME networks to share best practices, pool resources, and strengthen community resilience.

Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into SME resilience in Kriva Palanka, further research is recommended to expand the scope and depth of understanding:

1. **Comparative Studies:** Examine resilience strategies of SMEs in other municipalities or regions to identify broader patterns and contextual differences.
2. **Longitudinal Analysis:** Track the long-term impact of COVID-19 adaptations on SME performance and growth.
3. **Sector-Specific Investigations:** Explore the unique challenges and strategies within particular industries, such as hospitality, retail, or manufacturing.
4. **Digital Transformation Metrics:** Assess the effectiveness of specific digital tools in improving SME resilience during crises.

In conclusion, the survival and growth of SMEs in Kriva Palanka depend on proactive strategic planning, organizational flexibility, digital adoption, and supportive institutional frameworks. By implementing the recommendations outlined, SMEs can enhance their capacity to navigate future crises while contributing to local economic development.

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT:

The pedagogical process, individually considered, contains approaches of self-realization, self-formation and self-perception. Several stages of self-realization will be implied in the course of theoretical-analytical considerations. In doing so, we will not dwell on its essence in detail. We will talk much more about the preparatory stages of the pedagogical process than about the purposeful empirical events. Therefore, self-realization will be shown in certain places in a rational existential way, but ultimately will sink into the understanding of the preparatory procedures. Self-perception is a kind of projector that displays various (theoretical, hermeneutical and empirical) events from the point of view of the entity in whose name they occur. Hence it is clear that it will also be in some way tacitly implied, in the meaningful contents of the events. We will present self-formation most exhaustively because it directly implies theoretical-analytical states independent of their scope. All these general drivers of the process will be articulated by the universal model of social pedagogy. Most importantly, we will compare the pedagogical prerequisites for the growth of the subject with the life of the social group that strives to become a system, in order to see how the universal model of social pedagogy fits into their framework. In doing so, we will apply a purely theoretical approach.

Keywords: *social pedagogy, social systems, epistemological self-projection, self-formation, immanent functions*

Instruction

Let us announce immediately: our aim is to face the challenge of a theoretical self-conceptualization of social pedagogy that stands on glass legs (Hämäläinen, 2015). Social pedagogy strives to shape the subject into a legal and dynamic factor from two sides. On the one hand, it encourages him to self-form in accordance with certain epistemological self-projections. On the other hand, the meaningful connections that he needs to create in order to maintain himself in a state of significant, or more euphemistically speaking, optimal factor in society, community and family, are a confirmation of his epistemological achievements and catalyze future aspirations. Epistemological self-projections are the subject's representations of himself that allow him to see himself as an educated entity that applies certain meanings. These representations not only help him build meaningful connections with other subjects and life factors, but also train him to properly shape and even suppress connections that encroach on his social and personal integrity. Meaningful connections, in turn, are complex interactive situations that strengthen and positively revalue the

subject's self-expression in the community. Thus, these coordinates in his life are spontaneous and intentional pedagogical means that allow self-formations to requalify. In this sense, self-formation is the way in which the subject acts as a consequence of the influence of epistemological self-projections and unpredictable meaningful connections and the state in which it finds itself qualitatively in different historical periods. More generally, self-formation is an attempt to reconcile "personal integrity with social integration" (Rothuizen and Harbo, 2017, p. 17), thereby stabilizing a field of permanent tension. In order for there to be predispositions for subjective social self-formation, subjects who need to be shaped and educated in accordance with social pedagogy need to possess three qualities:

- a) dignity as awareness of the integrative value of one's own being,
- b) subjective potential as compressed energy that can be flexibly redirected from one goal to another and channeled into epistemological initiatives that are most complementary to the subject's being; and
- c) resourcefulness, which represents all situations of complex interaction in which the subject articulates meaningful connections through the medium of acquired knowledge and experience.

Acting from a position of knowing things strengthens the identity of the subject who strives to become a social factor as much as material work. It is a way of communication that helps self-formations to express themselves in the best intelligible light because it shows the magnitude of epistemological self-projections and draws the best out of the challenge of meaningful connections. Therefore, education and the concrete demonstration of knowledge is equally important as technical self-display and the achievement of its utilitarian wonders.

Social systems set themselves a similar task through their own theory. They replace the subject with the group. The group is transformed in a systemic way, regardless of its capacity to fit into other larger structures. It is like the subject whose value position in society depends not so much on whether others will recognize its epistemological depth and whether they will discover how skillfully it articulates meaningful connections, but on its internal readiness and strong self-consciousness of authority that wins over social factors, even when they fear such a circumstance. Larger structures are for the group that develops its own system, what social circumstances are for the subject who wants to educate himself on the basis of the ratio between his personal strengths and the challenges that are imposed from the outside. In other words, most of the challenges of the group, which is a potential system, come from within rather than from without. In order to establish a meaningful relationship with the environment that will serve to maintain its autopoietic function, it must epistemologically contemplate all potential contacts and clashes with it. It must have some knowledge of the potential situations that allow its habitus to shine. Knowledge brings formal experience, and formal experience helps to cushion the first contacts with the objects that encourage the meaningful relationship, thus deformatizing the experience and making it partial because the subject cannot contemplate it completely the first time. In this sense, the group learns, follows, and applies the same pedagogical steps as the subject, with the difference that its self-projections and self-formations are collective. However, the summary challenges that the group faces, and which educate it to form its own system, have a different dimension, despite the fact that they presuppose approaches similar in spirit.

The dimension of pedagogical challenges inherent in groups, and even complex systems,

forms such an environment. The group initially exists in micro-circumstances. Micro-circumstances are events in which objects exist objectively, as they are given independently of the form of dynamic order that they implement and represent. The very form of dynamic existence is petrified and objectified in the circumstance that itself partially constitutes. All moments in the life of the group are identified with the independent perspective, no matter how significant and how intrusive they seem. On the other hand, micro-situations can be the same events, the form of which is taken into account, which means that the form itself is radicalized and acquires an exclusively intra-systemic validity, and even becomes a central moment in the life of a certain segment of the group, or of the entire group. These two “ecological” categories provoke the first impulses of unpreparedness before certainty, that is, before possible and obvious connections whose meaning they do not know. They alert that the group (in a similar sense, the subject too) should take pedagogical measures, which actually refers to epistemological self-projections and adaptive self-formations.

This threatening experience warns the group that it needs to develop self-referential self-awareness, that is, to create a precise picture of the state in which it finds itself at a given moment. Self-analyses and analyses of the situation that should bear epistemological fruit and give an account of the status and potential of the given connections, create a macro-level that elevates the group above the unpleasant experience and at the same time gives it empty directions for a way out of the problem. Knowing the potential of the given connections is different from knowing the objective parameters of the micro-situation, for example, the cause of the given conflict or cooperation. How the micro-situation will unfold depends on the interpretation of the connections and their operational predispositions. The objects that constitute the micro-situation together with the connections are only means by which the intentional connections come to light. The whole problem becomes pedagogical precisely because relations biasedly contextualize collective circumstances, distorting even cooperation with bias, whether the bias manifests itself as shared euphoria or as defiance of the wounded ego. Thus, they poorly instrumentalize behavior and draw into its problematic character all individual behaviors regardless of their involvement and “guilt”.

Universal principles of social pedagogy

Finally, both the group and the subject follow a social-pedagogical metalogic. They acquire the knowledge embodied in epistemological self-projections in order to use for the benefit of their social authority the meaningful connections that they create by entering into such a kind of self-formative relationship. The probability that the group or subject will not meet expectations is directly proportional to the quality of articulation of the connection and the self-projective predispositions. The impression that the group or subject will leave while dynamically synthesizing these features of the process that establishes their identity and their dignity reflects the degree of pedagogical maturity. Such a relationship between knowledge, probability and the uplifting power of connections as a product of the interaction of the participants that is constantly reproduced can be traced everywhere in the philosophy of Hume (2022). All these components of the process that arise from pedagogical “instructions”, “orientations” and “navigations” are values that directly influence behavior and shape it. The situation is pedagogical whenever behavior is guided by a previously given or anticipated scheme of life values and tries to reach, realize or imply them. However, a pedagogical process is not only pre-interactive training, but also the informal experience that arises from unexpected situations that shake and shake the implemented pedagogical perspectives. Accordingly, values can also be formatted if the pedagogical model recognizes the shortcomings through the imperfect and degrading interaction of the subject or group with other entities. In any case, the subject or group

that follows an approximately perfect pedagogical model establishes an interaction that is able to manipulate both types of communicative codes (Bernstajn, 1979): the limited code that receives only facts and is reduced to them, excluding itself from the field of interest, and the elaborate code that always puts egocentric self-consciousness at the center first and then connects it with highly sophisticated abstractions.

This universal scheme of relations by which the quality of educational approaches is measured, at first glance, seems to be radically self-referential. But self-referencing benefits this holistic understanding of the relationship between society and the immature entity, because, as Lyman himself (2001) argues, self-referencing erases the distinction between subject and object. Thus, self-referencing allows for a mutual and neutral pedagogical exchange to occur. As if it refers exclusively to the needs of the subject and the group and their social well-being, and rejects society and the idea that every interaction, communication and authority exists to nourish its homeostatic, that is, structural-functional organism. However, in the end, directly or indirectly, society and its well-mannered elements benefit equally from the self-elevation of the subject and the group that are grounded in social-pedagogical methods. The well-mannered elements receive various spiritual and material gifts from the collective consciousness of the self-referential society and inspire all those who will repeat their feat thanks to over-imitation, deliberate adoption of certain characteristics and selective learning of the deepest habits. The nosographic tape characterizes the way in which well-bred, and that is, in some way prominent individuals who set an example, manage to harmonize their identity with socio-pedagogical criteria. It is a tape on which their ups and downs that occur in accordance with the socio-pedagogical conditions of self-formation can be traced. This path to the recognizable peak or inserts that are themselves local pedagogical operations and heal certain social “cells”, turns into a trajectory-pattern that restitutes the norms of general rebirth. All this begins with the analysis of the circumstances in which the central part is occupied by the entity that should apply socio-pedagogical ideals to itself. In fact, this comprehensive analysis, which attempts to articulate the interaction between objective values and personal social behavior, is itself the most prominent pedagogical approach (Knight S., at al., 2014).

So, the subject and the group always have in mind both their own good and the good of society, which elevate their personalities, preserve their dignity, build their identity, develop resourcefulness, increase their objective potentials through communicative knowledge and absorb knowledge in pragmatic self-projections. The fact that self-analysis fits into the analysis of the overall social conditions in which they find themselves and with which they measure their progress and the effectiveness of pedagogical methods is not a strong indicator that their motives are not mercantile. However, behavior in appropriate situations that exceeds even legal expectations unequivocally reveals that values shape motives and that socio-pedagogical ideals govern the relationship between values and behavior. Often, self-sacrifice, commitment to life regardless of its form, for example, can destroy reputation only because of the spontaneous and mechanical non-acceptance of deformations and their appearance. Then, it is the value that directs behavior, even when such an act, prompted by the rules of upbringing, conflicts with the beliefs of society. Accordingly, the socio-pedagogical value system can be intimately and at the same time explicitly rigorous in various ways. It does not place personal upbringing above and at the expense of relations with society. It advocates that the acquired education that results from the universal social-pedagogical model should balance the active coexistence of the entity and society, and even introduce new values that will “quietly force” society to change its attitude towards life challenges and their understanding. The more society draws the entity into its organized life and binds it to its mechanisms, the more the entity can change the “self-consciousness” of society and its self-formative tendencies.

Social-pedagogical approach to the group-as-system and the subject

In every unity, the seeds of discord are already embedded, or, ultimately, thorny differences simmer at the bottom. One of our favorite methods for describing certain phenomena or differences is our preconscious mechanisms of orientation in the “operational” space. Both the social system (the group), and the subject (every individual who strives to secure a certain social recognition or is an unconsciously unobtrusive model), apply immanent functions in self-analysis, general analysis, and while formulating and creating specific social-pedagogical schemes of interaction with other entities or elements of society. Two immanent functions that apply to the group and the subject, but manifest themselves differently because they belong to different circumstances, are: prereflection, self-coordinated reflection and reflex response.

- 1) Pre-reflection is an attempt to encompass in a single whole all the anticipations inherent in the apparent object of interest, in order to amortize the interactive initiative.
- 2) Self-coordinated reflection is the way in which the mind organizes itself so that it can treat each of the anticipations separately and synthetically. This reinforces the aforementioned amortization.
- 3) Reflexive response is a standard procedure that allows the interactive (or communicative) entity to respond quickly to any challenge that at the given moment is extremely confusing, even blatantly dangerous and erodes its public dignity. This procedure must be transformed into a permanent habit, and even better into an immortal instinct that will demonstrate the stability of the one who acts in society.

Such preconscious models that encourage social-pedagogical action are indispensable, especially since the behavior of the immature entity is questioned in each individual situation (Úcar, 2013). It is difficult to fail to see why these immanent functions are directly related to social upbringing and its universal model and why they subsistently sharpen its manifestation. The coupling between immanent mechanisms seems to offer “an overly elegant understanding of a [personal] situation that is easily destabilised when information beyond its paradigmatic limits breaks through, producing uncomfortable knowledge” (Singleton et al., 2022, p. 76). But this is not so, their chain effect consolidates being on a purely individual-ontological level.

The group acquires knowledge, transforms it into epistemological self-projection, uses the epistemological self-projection to conceive connections or to manage already conceived connections, recapitulates formal and informal experiences, and tries to perform better after diagnosing itself and finding solutions to problems. In this, society and the elements of collective consciousness are not neutral challenges that go away as they come, but correlates that co-constitute the being of the group, as much as it co-constitutes them. The mutually conceived connection catalyzes and promotes their separate mechanisms that consist of identical subjective properties. The identical subjective properties of the two correlative participants are permeated through the conceived connection and are mutually transformed, thus creating two convergent ways of self-formation. This ends one phase of self-formation of the group, which will bring semi-consistent results, until the model adapts to all situations equally. The same pattern of universal social-pedagogical behavior is followed and practiced by the subject.

At first glance, the three immanent functions fit into the group just as they fit into the subject. But microscopically perceived, the subject is more interested in the relationship with the

individual other than in the situation in which he finds himself. The circumstance is not important to him as much as the approach of the individual other to him. For him, the macro level is not the conditions that encourage the individual other to behave as he does, but the total behavior in which characteristic elements can be recognized. These elements become guiding threads towards an appropriate response. In contrast to the subject, the group, since it is itself a collective body, is interested in how the entities of the environment with which it comes into contact are related. It initiates self-referential and interoperable processes by focusing on the micro-circumstances. Then, following the pattern of its own behavior, it seeks specific forms of interactive configuration in the external environment in order to be able to counter its intrusive, passive-aggressive or disinterested self-organization. In other words, it adds the microsituation to the microcircumstance, or considers the microcircumstance from the perspective of the microsituation. After analyzing this organically connected information, it will create a picture of the way it should behave itself. In doing so, it will consolidate the objective macrolevel. It will consolidate the objective macrolevel by nourishing it with diverse circumspective analyses; with self-analyses and general analyses.

It seems that the subject and the group are aiming at the same target. In both cases, there are three dimensions with their specific constitutions that are synthesized into a whole with sublime environment. But there are shifts that cannot be reduced to the same objects. For example, the group begins with the circumstance, i.e. with the objective arrangement of objects. The subject begins with the individual other without worrying about his position. Also, the group anticipates the synthetic functions of the collective and self-organized objects in the external environment, tries to guess how they will behave or why they behave as they do. It is keenly interested in the collective situation. The subject, fixates on the behavior of the individual other, not in order to guess it. He perceives the type of behavior in advance, but in order to compare it a priori with his own possibilities and choices. In essence, there is no real macro level for him, except for the necessity to act here and now, and to pray that he will choose the appropriate reaction. Even if he changes the priorities of attention, even if he has miraculously sharpened holonomic senses, the subject will not be able to control the situation because it is greater than his salient capacities. The difference seems too small, theoretically it can even be corrected and changed, but in reality, the starting positions of the subject and the group are always paradoxically displaced. This displacement, and especially the phenomenology that hides behind it, are the main reason why immanent functions are considered in different ways.

Social systems as much as the members of society, the subjects, are educated through universal models that join concrete situations. Each model offers an approach that approaches self-identical circumstances from different sides, and reshapes them and themselves, through the connections that they mutually conceive and trace. Thus, the models adapt to impose themselves as machines for engineering circumstances. But there is no entity that can meet their criteria if it does not enter into situations that help it to apply the pedagogical model to become a better part of the collective consciousness. Events are always spontaneous, but they remain on the level of accidental existence, whenever the participant does not develop experience with them. A condition that allows the pedagogical entity to learn to deal with the situation and reshape itself at the same time is the immediate involvement in the process. Social pedagogy easily becomes an essential aspect of existential therapy. The first thing to keep in mind is the necessity of understanding pedagogical education, joint efforts and self-help as a comprehensive process, as a center in which all factors of personal growth are networked. Second, from a self-reflexive and self-stimulating point of view, perhaps more important than that, is for the pedagogical entity to nurture and develop immanent functions. They are connected to and progress through direct participation. Accordingly, here is how these functions manifest themselves in the life of the group and the subject.

In order to navigate the environment of micro-circumstances, micro-situations and the macro-level, the group needs to unite all the striking observations in pre-reflection and “squeeze” the necessary anticipations from them. Pre-reflection aims to establish a connection between the striking content and the anticipation, after which a certain precept should spontaneously emerge, that is, a certain pure cognition that will be transformed into meaning. But this is only half the way. After that, the group will need to isolate this pure cognition and process it on its own. The instrument that will make this possible is self-coordinated reflection. It organizes itself in order to be able to transform the anticipations that are equivalent to pure cognition and encapsulated in it into concrete contents. Such an approach should be transformed into a compulsive action. It should take the form of a reflex response whenever an opportunity arises which in turn will enable the group to develop self-formatively and to seize the chance to upbringing itself in the right spirit. According to this, the reflex response is not only an empirical act of proving one’s own value, but also a subsistence affect, which fits into the preconscious mechanisms of designing pedagogical self-formations. The group should not only perceive in this way all degrees of relationship with the external environment and its organization, but also graft this approach onto pedagogical initiatives and ideals. From whatever point of view we view the preconscious role of the immanent functions, they are fundamental orientations. Every orientation offers clear ideas for a way out of a given situation even when the basis of its endeavors are visible structures and their recognizable signs. More precisely, an orientation is an idea (Parsons, 2009) that post hoc organizes the significant elements of understanding. The immanent functions also work according to this principle.

Each level of relationship with the environment separately passes through the three procedures of the three immanent functions. Finally, the overall analytical picture of things, the systematic understanding of organically related information, will independently and again, pass through the sieve of the same functions. The subject must use the functions cyclically and stepwise, just like the group. But in doing so, he must introduce into their computational apparatus the dynamic structures that are appropriate to his pedagogical “pedigree” and constitute his self-formative challenges. The latter are composed of educational programs, epistemological self-projections that embody the programs, and connections that need to be conceived interactively. The immanent functions, this is obvious because in both cases they play the same “underground” role, are the locomotors of the pedagogical initiative understood as interactive and epistemological self-formatting; as self-improvement that uses social and educational circumstances as a catalyst; as a synthesis of conceptual values and the behavior that justifies and demonstrates them with its forms. Additionally, epistemological interest is distinct from the need to know things. It turns knowledge into a double of the desired identity because the deep essence of knowledge is reflected in the aspirations of the pedagogical entity.. Knowledge itself does not encourage the entity to claim any status, but the awareness of the depth of knowledge, which is the first sign of epistemological interest. This whole focus raises the first impulse for self-formation and constitutes all pedagogical endeavors.

Discussion

The theses we have put forward above show that the upbringing of any social entity depends on several key factors that are closely related to its self-perception. Life values, coordinated behavior, aspects of self-formation, epistemological self-projections that are educational correlates of self-perception, immanent functions that guide the preconscious intentions of the pedagogical entity. The intentions themselves have shaped some general goal. This general goal, for example,

the idea that one should be educated in some way or realize certain life values in order to preserve dignity, is an initial and roughly defined orientation. What makes it preconscious is that this idea-of-self is general. The pedagogical entity cannot put itself in a preconscious state if it does not first set itself a certain goal and if this goal does not manifest itself as a somehow represented initial orientation. Moreover, self-perception is greater than self-projections. At first glance, projections are purposive images of oneself, and perception is an objective tool that encompasses various contents in focus. But in this case, self-perception simultaneously articulates multiple contents, including epistemological self-projections, because the latter are only one part of the whole picture of self-formation, of transformation into a significant social subject. Hence, the process of self-formation, that is, pedagogical procedures, take place under the arm of a complex and catalytic infrastructure in the background.

Conclusion

Although we have covered many pedagogical qualities, the most significant are the immanent functions. They form the key pedagogical infrastructure. Once the hereditary processes begin to take place, they accelerate, improve and “perpetuate” self-formation and its ready-made manifestations. Life values transform all other elements of self-perception into qualitative categories, especially behavior, which is more related to self-formation than to self-perception. In this sense, self-formation is the way in which the pedagogical entity practically self-realizes itself, and self-perception is the way in which it defines and sees self-realization. Epistemological self-projections and all theoretically oriented qualities of the attempt to gain dignity, to develop resourcefulness and to open the field of objective potentials are properties of self-perception. Life values are maps of self-perceptive and self-formative actions, because they suggest contents on which the schemes of understanding and action (or observationally speaking, behavior) depend. Immanent functions are also divided into self-perceptive and self-formative. Pre-reflection is a passive-active apparatus. It serves to enable the production of understandings. Self-coordinated reflection must process understandings as much as it must process actions. It is a dynamic correlate of life values. The reflexive response relies on understandings, but at the same time, it is an engine that allows mature self-perception to show in concreto what self-formative qualities it has. The role and health of immanent functions can only be threatened by the psychotic character of hyperreflexivity, too much and too little experience with oneself (Sass, 2003). This perspective leaves room for new and fundamental insights. However, in this way, the circle of ritualistic pedagogical procedures is closed, which ground all concrete manifestations of the social entity.

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THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION IN THE STUDENT'S DORMITORY

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ABSTRACT:

In high school student dormitories are applied several program areas and contents of educational work including intellectual education as a significant segment in the work with dormitory students. The program areas from the field of intellectual education, which is realized by educators, is one of the most important elements of educational work, where the process of intellectual education has its own specifics. This is an upbringing that differs from school and family upbringing, considering the fact that students are far from their families, study in schools in another city and live in an educational institution like student dormitory. The dormitory through intellectual education, contributes to the formation of the student's personality in general, to the development of intellectual abilities, development of habits for intellectual work, building a creative thinking, concentration of attention, memory, motivation for learning, independent learning, intellectual creativity and self-education. Therefore, the role and significance of intellectual education and its influence on school success and behavior is of great importance and can be said to be a privilege for dormitory students. The dormitory provides different forms of learning such as group and frontal work, work in pairs, individual work, work with weaker students, work with talented students, unlike students who live in families with their parents who are not experts in this kind of intellectual help and support. In fact, this is where the conclusion of this paper comes from.

Keywords: *intellectual education, student dormitory, students*

Introduction

High school student dormitories are educational institutions in the field of student standards that are of special social interest and represent an integral part of secondary education. These types of institutions are an inseparable part of the overall system of upbringing and education in the Republic of North Macedonia.

They are intended for students of different ages and levels of education who, after completing primary education, need dormitory placement because they are studying outside their homes and families. Dormitories act as an educational factor and have specific goals and tasks that should be achieved and implemented during their work. Like all educational institutions, student dormitories carry out their educational work through a verified program for educational work that is carried out with the direct participation of the students - dormitory residents, educators and professional

associates, in cooperation with schools and the community. In this way, through appropriate program contents, the dormitories work on the overall physical - health, work, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, general cultural and social life and development of the students, using numerous and diverse methods, ways and means for educational work.

Education is a permanent process of formation (self-formation) of the personality which is most intense in childhood and youth, but practically never stops. Educational work in student dormitories gives particular importance to the educational component where intellectual education takes a significant place.

Purpose and tasks of intellectual education in working with boarding school students

Intellectual (mental) education represents the totality of those educational influences that primarily contribute to the intellectual development of the personality. Intellectual education in boarding schools with its specifics and program content plays a major role in working with boarding school students where each student is an individual person in his or her own right, with special characteristics, knowledge and prior knowledge. The process of self-education through which the educator guides the student is a higher level of learning that requires certain knowledge of the methods and factors (internal and external) of successful learning and includes certain work habits, motivation, learning conditions, mental and physical state of the organism, etc.

The general goals and tasks of intellectual-creative education in high school student dormitories arise from the need to set the mastery of school material as a priority task because a large number of students come to dormitories with poorly developed learning habits, with inadequate methods and procedures in learning, gaps in knowledge, and sometimes, in addition, with difficulties in the structure and dynamism of the personality (Frankovic, D. et al., 1973:46).

Intellectual education is achieved by applying various methods, procedures, means and forms of observation, practice and accustoming the students to perform intellectual-creative work.

According to the Plan and Program for educational activities in student dormitories, in order to achieve the set goal of intellectual education, the educator works on the following tasks:

- develops the motives for learning and the sense of deepening and expanding the appropriate education and culture;
- organizes and enables the student's readiness for self-education and expanding knowledge to adequately solve the problems in the intellectual sphere;
- works on students' adoption of knowledge, skills and habits;
- encourages students to work independently and appropriately use learning methods and procedures in mastering the teaching material;
- organizes students' learning at a certain time and place using various forms and means of work;
- organizes additional and supplementary learning depending on the student's needs with the possibility of engaging external collaborators in certain areas of science, organizes circles, clubs, etc. (Ministry of Education, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia, 1999:11).

In addition to the diversity of content in the field of intellectual education, one should not forget the fact that students are primarily working on developing habits for intellectual work.

- Students are introduced to the psychology of learning and its laws, the physiological rhythm of

work and fatigue, and are trained to use information correctly.

- The educator creates conditions for preparing for teaching. This means that students have a set time and space for learning, are introduced to the techniques of learning various content and planning activities during the day, week and month.
- Assistance is organized for students who are unable to master the material assigned in a school subject. This includes direct assistance from educators as well as organized work, i.e. assistance from better students to weaker ones in a particular subject.

The most important characteristics of a developed mind are: an active attitude towards reality (curiosity, ability to perceive the essence, skill in applying what is known, etc.); independence; systematicity (a sense of organization, arrangement of data and rationalization of mental work, discipline or precision of the mind, exactness, etc.); criticality (need for verification) and creativity. From this arise the basic principles of intellectual education that every educator and professional associate (pedagogue, psychologist) must know in order to successfully implement intellectual education.

Basic principles of intellectual education

The most important characteristics of a developed mind are: an active attitude towards reality (curiosity, ability to perceive the essence, skill in applying what is known, etc.); independence; systematicity (sense of organization, arrangement of data and rationalization of mental work, discipline or precision of the mind, exactness, etc.); criticality (need to check) and creativity. From here arise the basic principles of intellectual education that every educator and professional associate (pedagogue, psychologist) must know in order to successfully implement intellectual education.

Principle of Activity

According to this principle, the learner must be a subject, acquiring knowledge through their own mental activity, actively participating in that process, and not just being an object in intellectual education. It is especially important that the acquired knowledge is applied in practice, that knowledge grows into skills, and that each new realization encourages further learning, the acquisition of new knowledge.

Principle of Independence

The principle of independence is inextricably linked to the principle of activity and requires that students become as fully intellectually independent as possible. The effectiveness of learning is only evident when knowledge is acquired independently, through one's own intellectual effort. However, this does not mean that the learner should be left completely to their own devices. The intellectual independence of the student should be guided pedagogically, without hindering his initiative and intellectual independence.

Principle of Systematicity

The success of intellectual education also depends on whether it is guided by the principle of systematicity. This means whether the educator is able to help his students organize the acquired knowledge into appropriate systems so that they can orient themselves in the multitude of information. Knowledge has no meaning if that knowledge is disconnected, disorganized, unsystematized, if it is not known what belongs where and where and what should be sought. True knowledge is a system of scientific facts and generalizations, not a system of mutually isolated scientific elements and fragments.

Principle of Criticality

In educational activity, it must be borne in mind that only what is verified by practice can be considered true. It is especially important to allow students to freely express their opinions, debate and argue. Critical acquisition of knowledge means checking its truthfulness, preferably through practice by applying it where possible. Criticality also includes self-criticism.

Principle of Creativity

Intellectual education in students also fosters creativity, that is, a creative attitude towards what they perceive and learn. This means that it would be good for students to be able to deviate from established viewpoints, to systematize related knowledge in an original way, to discover new connections between certain unusual phenomena, to freely present and defend their original ideas, etc.

All of the above principles are closely interconnected, intertwined, conditioned, and dependent on each other, and educators respect them in the domain of intellectual education in their work with homeschooled students.

Survey Questionnaire

Among the homeschool students who are coming to the high school student dormitories for the first time, I wanted to investigate how much they know how to study and whether learning presents a difficulty for them. At the beginning of the school year, in September, I conducted a written questionnaire with open-ended questions, i.e. a non-standardized survey, without answers and alternatives, allowing students to express themselves freely. The first educational group, consisting of 30 first grade students from different high schools and coming from different places of residence, was surveyed.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 11 questions.

The questions and answers were as follows:

1. Has anyone ever taught you how to study?

– 100% of them said no.

2. Explain your way of studying?

They answered that they do not know if it is the right way of studying and stated:

- 20% study late at night until early morning;
- 20% study one to two days before the exam after many hours during the day;
- 10% study with music or looking at the phone;
- 10% study by heart;
- 40% study regularly, every day in several shorter time intervals.

3. Have you heard of methods and techniques for successful learning?

- 100% answered no.

4. Have you heard of factors or conditions for successful learning?

- 100% answered no.

5. Do you experience learning as a difficulty or as curiosity?

- 70% said they experience it as a difficulty.
- 30% said they learn out of curiosity.

6. Do you know what active and passive rest is after adopting some intellectual activity?

- 80% answered no
- 20% answered yes

7. When you study a certain topic from a textbook, do you research it through other sources and specify which ones?

- 70% answered no
- 30% answered yes (internet)

8. Do you need help with your studies?

- 80% answered yes
- 20% answered no

9. Do your parents help you at home with your knowledge of a subject?

If yes, please explain how.

- 90% answered no

- 10% answered yes (in writing homework)

10. Have you taken extra classes in a particular school subject and where?

- 60% answered no

- 40% answered yes (in private classes)

11. Would you like to learn more about successful learning?

- 100% answered yes and that they really need it.

Organization of learning in student dormitories

The building of a culture of learning for students in the dormitory, organized and planned, begins immediately after their arrival at the dormitory. Speaking of the learning process, the most important form of realization of intellectual education in dormitories is the learning of the material assigned in the school, which means deepening and applying the knowledge acquired in the school and caring for better educational and upbringing results. The learning of the subjects and the execution of the various homework assignments that arise from the teaching process are realized with a certain organization of the available time of the students according to the daily and weekly articulation of activities. The day is organized with pre-planned activities or a daily regimen that includes a time period for mandatory activities, i.e. learning of the teaching material. The specified time period for learning is combined with short breaks in order to maintain working capacity at a certain level as well as interest and motivation for learning. Regular learning at certain intervals gradually creates a habit among students of respecting the rhythm of working at a certain time, place and conditions. The educator organizes learning in the role of a mentor, animator and implementer and is available to students at any time for consultations, advice, clarification, guidance and other types of assistance. In this way, students repeat, confirm and check their knowledge, and at the same time acquire skills and habits for both learning and self-education. When it comes to repeating the material, new students are introduced to the methods, techniques and manner of memorization, what forgetting is and how to overcome it.

In the pedagogical and psychological literature, the term rationalization of learning is found, which implies methods and techniques of learning and other conditions that increase success in learning or, in short, guiding the student in the learning process. Through intellectual education, the educator guides students in the learning process by teaching them the methods and techniques of successful learning.

The student dormitory provides an appropriate space for various forms of learning such as group and frontal work, pair work, individual work, work with weaker students and work with talented students. The dormitory is home to students from various social backgrounds and educational organizations who bring with them a variety of work habits and learning styles. It is also taken into account that not all students progress at the same pace and rhythm in education and do not achieve equal success, which otherwise depends on their intellectual, emotional, motivational characteristics, etc. For these reasons, the dormitory strives to perceive these differences and eliminate them with the so-called compensatory education and training, which is organized with a smaller number of students, immediately after the need is determined by the educator. When we talk about intellectual education in the dormitory, we mean two types of learning activities: learning to fulfill school obligations and learning that satisfies the interests and affinities of students for expanding their knowledge. Organized learning has another feature, which consists in the uniqueness of the relationships that are built between educators and students, which differ from the relationships between teachers and students on the one hand and parents and children on the other. With these relationships between educators and students, mutual trust and respect are built.

When organizing learning, a stimulating environment and atmosphere for learning are created that encourages and mobilizes students to learn, as well as awakening curiosity and the desire to master the material given in school. The maximum flexibility of the forms and methods of work actually represents knowledge of the relationship between individual forms of work and the characteristics of the tasks that students perform, as well as knowledge of the individual characteristics of students. Learning in a group has its own advantages and special dynamics, it affects the emotional sphere of the student, creativity, because in the group there is debate, discussion, an exchange of opinions on certain problems and issues, which in turn activates mental functions such as thinking, memory, imagination, speech, etc.

When choosing the application of individual methods and forms in the learning process, several criteria decide:

- The nature of school obligations - learning new material, writing a written composition, analyzing readings, repeating scientific material;
- The specificity of the tasks such as the ability to write, solve problems, prove, apply knowledge in practice, etc.;
- The special work style of the student, the level of intellectual development, his formed habits, etc.

Rationalization of learning or guiding the student in the learning process

In pedagogical and psychological literature, the term rationalization of learning is encountered, which implies learning methods and techniques and other conditions that increase learning success

or, in short, guiding the student in the learning process. Through intellectual education, the educator guides students in the learning process by teaching them the methods and techniques of successful learning. Here we are mainly talking about two learning methods that are determined by this:

- whether it is better to study the material continuously for the entire time until the learning is completed or to distribute it into time units with longer or shorter time breaks between individual parts of the material and
- whether to study the material as a whole or to divide it into parts.

In the first case, time is important, and in the second case, the whole, or rather the parts of the material, are important. Thus, in the first case, it is a question of the method of distributed learning versus non-distributed learning, and in the second case, it is a question of the method of global and partitive learning, which will be briefly mentioned.

Spaced Learning

Spaced learning is a typical example of school learning where the same material is repeated at specific time intervals. In distributed learning, with each new learning of the same material, we see new connections and relationships not only between parts of that material but also between it and previous material, and between it and material from other areas. This gives the learned material a new meaning, a new sense. This way, the learned material is much more resistant to forgetting. Through a large number of experiments, it has been determined that distributed learning is more successful and rational than partitive learning, which is typical for studying before an exam. However, accumulated learning is not so useless and often leads to situations when some material must be learned quickly. Thus, learning by deadlines has its advantages. For example, the proximity of the exam deadline puts more pressure on the student and gives him a faster pace of work through psychological motivational force.

Global and partitive learning

Learning as a whole or learning with the whole method versus learning part by part of the material or learning with the part method (partitive), represent two types or two methods of learning in relation to the material being learned. Combinations of these two methods are also possible. In this area, classical experiments relate mostly to the learning of songs and certain motor actions. In learning songs, the whole or global method has proven to be more successful. Complex actions are learned more quickly when they are broken down, that is, when they are taught using the partitive method. However, the question is what amount of material will be taken as a whole, not only in terms of size but also in terms of the meaning and organization of the material. If a single idea, a single thought, runs through the material, it is advisable not to break the material up, but to also take into account the individual's learning ability, age, and training for learning using this method.

The global method has its own psychological advantages. The most important role is played by

the meaning that connects the parts to make them easier to retain and more resistant to forgetting. In addition to these internal relationships, the external connections that are established during learning also play a significant role. The partitive learning method is much more likely to create distorted connections that were formed during the learning of individual parts. For example, it is possible to establish connections between the end and beginning of one part, instead of between the end and beginning of the next part. An example of establishing such connections is learning a poem, verse by verse. For adults, learning by the whole method is more acceptable because it is more difficult, requires more effort, and is often more successful because of this. It is necessary to take into account how much effort children can put in, and accordingly, the units of material they learn should be of a smaller volume. For children, the partitive method is more acceptable, which leads to success and a sense of satisfaction more quickly. Learning through this method allows for more attention to be paid to the more difficult parts of the material, and the easier parts do not have to be repeated as much. The whole method is more natural and learning through it is a natural learning. Tradition, the transmission of experience, folklore, and other folk creations are taught globally and simultaneously.

Combined method

In cases where the material is very difficult and long, these two methods are combined. For example, first the first part is learned, then the second part is learned together with it, then the third part is added to it, etc. Or first one part is learned separately, then the second part is learned separately, then the first and second parts are connected, then the third part is learned which is added to the previously learned parts.

When combining the two methods, it is advisable to first read the entire material until it is understood, then divide it into larger units (rounded units of meaning) that will be studied separately, and finally move on to connecting all the units into one whole.

Active learning

Active learning is learning that involves performing the actions that need to be learned in order to perform them. This also applies to the acquisition of knowledge. In acquiring knowledge, active learning is achieved through listening, that is, through active participation during the learning process. Listening creates a process of self-examination that is achieved through attempts to constantly reproduce what is being learned before it is definitively learned. Experimental research has proven that the advantage of listening is greater if the learner spends more time listening than reading alone. Listening plays a greater role when learning more mechanical material with little or no meaning. But that doesn't mean that learning by heart is also mechanical learning. It plays a

greater role when you don't understand the meaning of what you're learning. Also, listening can be performed in the mind, without the presence of speech.

Advantages of listening:

- the student is active during the learning process;
- listening introduces the student to the more difficult and easier parts of the material;
- listening develops in the student an awareness of achievement;
- listening is an exercise in reproducing knowledge under certain conditions;
- listening prevents the student from getting bored with repeated readings;
- Reading without listening only creates in the student the illusion that he knows the material, when in fact he can only recognize it, and therefore listening is the best way to prevent such a phenomenon.

It is also advisable for the rationalization of learning that the material should be learned more than is necessary to know in a moment because forgetting is greatest soon after learning.

Work habits as a factor for successful learning

Work habits are acquired throughout life and they are an important factor for successful learning. To acquire them, conditions such as motivation and personal perseverance are necessary, which will further help to more successfully overcome many other learning difficulties. Hence, the best conditions will be achieved when learning turns into a habit. A student with working study habits makes a plan and respects the time allocated for studying, sticks to it without any particular strain, without any particular problems in concentration and in moving from one task to another. The acquired study habits have a great advantage precisely in that tasks are not postponed. On the other hand, someone who does not have good work habits takes a long time to start work and usually works inefficiently and irrationally.

Monitoring and evaluation of students' progress by educators

An important moment in the educational work with homeschooled students in terms of their intellectual development is the monitoring and evaluation of their progress. The success and behavior of students in the school is constantly monitored by the educator through direct insight into the performance of tasks, through conversations with students, class teachers, subject teachers, the school's pedagogical-psychological service, and when necessary, parents are also informed about a situation. The educator monitors the progress of students throughout the four trimesters or

classification periods, which he keeps records of in appropriate pedagogical documentation, while a personal file is also kept for each student separately. If he notices a significant decrease in the student's success and behavior, the educator immediately reacts to overcome that situation.

Conclusion

According to the above, it can be determined that intellectual education has a great importance and role in the development of the intellectual abilities of the student. With the stay of the students in the student dormitories, with the organized way of life and work, they gain intellectual knowledge and skills that they cannot obtain either in school or in the family. The student dormitories strives to reduce the differences in the level of education and general culture that have arisen from the social - family background of the students. After the end of the school year, the application of organized intellectual education shows solid results and exemplary behavior in school. From all the above, it is more than necessary, starting from preschool institutions, in preschool groups of children, to conduct training by experts, pedagogues and psychologists, on this issue, that is, pedagogical - psychological teams that will work with educators in kindergartens and with the parents of the children as preparation, assistance and support for the children before they start school. It would also be useful to conduct such trainings with teachers in primary schools as well as with the parents of the students. In the first grade, children encounter school and school obligations for the first time, for which they need help and support at home. In the upper school years, where subject teaching begins with more complex learning material for each individual subject, knowledge is also necessary to master the material. In secondary education, trainings on intellectual education could be conducted with students in the first grade and among teachers, since each subject is specific in itself, so that they could guide the students at the beginning of the school year in its better mastery.

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THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE THROUGH STANDARDIZATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN A MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the standardization and language policy of the Macedonian language within the multiethnic context of the Republic of North Macedonia. It analyzes the historical processes of the creation and codification of the Macedonian literary language, as well as the contemporary challenges it faces in conditions of increased multiculturalism, political sensitivity, and globalization. Special attention is devoted to the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Law on the Use of Languages (2019), which significantly transformed the institutional status of the Macedonian language and the languages of the communities. The study applies a qualitative analytical approach, combining historical-linguistic analysis, sociolinguistic theory, and the examination of legal and institutional documents. The findings indicate that contemporary language policy simultaneously promotes linguistic equality and poses challenges to the symbolic and functional centrality of the Macedonian standard language. The paper aims to offer a critical insight into the balance between linguistic equality and the preservation of the Macedonian standard as a cohesive element of the state.

Keywords: *Macedonian language, standardization, language policy, multiethnic society, identity.*

Introduction

Language is not merely a system of letters and words but a carrier of culture, tradition, and historical memory. It represents identity and collective continuity. The Macedonian language, as the official language of the state, has a specific trajectory of standardization and institutionalization that began in the mid-20th century and was closely linked to processes of national and cultural affirmation.

Blazhe Koneski (1967) emphasized that raising the cultural level of the people directly contributes to the development of the literary language as a fundamental instrument in the construction of national literature. He further argued that the standardization of the Macedonian literary language was not merely a linguistic act but a process of cultural emancipation and national constitution.

Following the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia as an independent state in 1991, language policy entered a new phase characterized by challenges related to multiethnicity, globalization, and technological change. The signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001 introduced a new model of linguistic equality, recognizing the official use of several community languages. This development raised complex questions regarding the relationship between linguistic equality, social cohesion, and the maintenance of a unified national language standard.

In this context, language policy extends beyond norm codification and becomes deeply intertwined with issues of identity, political legitimacy, and social integration. The Macedonian language thus functions simultaneously as a means of communication, a symbol of statehood, and a marker of collective memory.

The central research questions of this paper are: (1) how contemporary language policy affects the status and function of the Macedonian standard language, and (2) whether the promotion of multilingualism fosters integration or contributes to linguistic segmentation. The aim of this study is to explore the contemporary challenges faced by the Macedonian language within the country's multiethnic reality, with particular emphasis on institutional language policy and its impact on linguistic practice and citizens' identity.

Theoretical Framework and Historical Context

The process of standardization of the Macedonian language began in 1945, when Macedonian was officially recognized as an equal literary language within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, the theoretical foundations of Macedonian linguistic identity were laid earlier. In *On Macedonian Matters* (1903), Krste Misirkov articulated the necessity of establishing a distinct Macedonian literary language based on central dialects and reflective of the cultural specificity of the Macedonian people.

Blazhe Koneski played a decisive role in the codification of the Macedonian standard language. He maintained that linguistic norms should emerge from the natural development of the vernacular and be grounded in scholarly analysis rather than political prescription (Koneski, 1981). His work in grammar, orthography, and lexicography laid the institutional foundations of the Macedonian standard.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language standardization is understood as a multidimensional process encompassing both corpus planning and status planning (Haugen, 1966; Cooper, 1989). While corpus planning involves the codification of linguistic norms, status planning refers to the allocation of social and political functions to a language. The Macedonian case illustrates a close interdependence between these two dimensions, as standardization was inseparable from nation-building and cultural emancipation.

Language does not exist in isolation but reflects broader social relations, power structures, and identity dynamics. In multiethnic societies, language policy must balance the preservation of the dominant standard language with the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity. In the Macedonian context, this balance has proven particularly sensitive, as language often becomes a focal point of political and ethnic debates. As Spasov (2021) observes, contemporary language policy in North Macedonia oscillates between the institutional reinforcement of the Macedonian language and its practical limitation through the expanded official use of other languages.

The Multiethnic Society and Language Policy in North Macedonia

Language policy in North Macedonia is deeply shaped by the country's ethnic composition and political history. According to the 2021 Census, the population is characterized by significant ethnic and linguistic diversity, including Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlachs, and other communities. This diversity represents both a cultural asset and a challenge for state language policy.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 introduced a new model of linguistic equality. According to its provisions, any language spoken by at least 20% of the population is granted official

status at the national level, while at the municipal level, languages spoken by at least 20% of the population become official within local administration.

As a result, the Albanian language gained extensive institutional presence, particularly in education, public administration, and official communication. While this model aims to promote inclusion and equality, scholars have noted that it may also lead to linguistic segmentation. Trpevska (2014) argues that the parallel use of languages in institutions often does not result in increased interethnic communication but rather reinforces separate linguistic spheres.

The Law on the Use of Languages (2019) further expanded the official use of Albanian throughout the entire territory of the state and across all state institutions. This legislative development intensified public and academic debates regarding the role of the Macedonian language as a unifying state symbol. The central dilemma concerns whether official language equality implies functional complementarity or symbolic competition between languages. As Spasov (2021) notes, the challenge lies not in the recognition of linguistic rights but in ensuring that such recognition does not undermine the integrative role of the Macedonian standard language.

Standardization and Language Practice as Contemporary Challenges

Beyond political and legal dimensions, contemporary challenges to the Macedonian language also arise from social and technological change. Digital communication has significantly influenced linguistic practices, particularly among younger generations. On social media and in online media, Macedonian is frequently used in hybrid forms characterized by Anglicisms, non-standard spelling, and transliteration.

According to Minova-Đurkova (2022), such practices weaken the authority of the standard language and blur the distinction between normative and informal usage. The dominance of speed and informality in digital discourse places additional pressure on educational and cultural institutions to promote linguistic awareness and digital literacy.

Education remains a crucial domain for preserving linguistic norms. Teaching Macedonian in multilingual environments often faces challenges related to insufficient resources, teacher training, and updated curricula. At the same time, internal variation and regionalisms continue to shape everyday language use. While variation is a natural linguistic phenomenon, maintaining a clear distinction between standard and non-standard forms is essential for the stability of the literary language.

Institutions such as the Institute for the Macedonian Language and the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts play a vital role in maintaining normative stability through research, publications, and public engagement. As Veljanoski (2000) emphasizes, standardization is not a completed process but a continuous interaction between linguistic practice and institutional regulation.

Conclusion

The development of the Macedonian language represents a complex process of cultural emancipation, national self-affirmation, and linguistic standardization. From Misirkov's early theoretical insights and Koneski's codification efforts to the contemporary reforms shaped by the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Macedonian language has evolved within changing political and social contexts.

Contemporary language policy demonstrates that linguistic issues cannot be separated from broader questions of identity, integration, and state cohesion. The Macedonian language today faces the dual challenge of preserving its standard form and symbolic centrality while functioning within an officially multilingual framework.

The key challenges for the future include:

1. Ensuring stable institutional support for the Macedonian standard language;
2. Developing linguistic awareness and digital literacy, particularly among younger generations;
3. Promoting intercultural dialogue rather than linguistic division;
4. Supporting continued research in sociolinguistics and language policy.

Language policy should be understood as a continuous and adaptive process rather than a one-time administrative measure. Only through balanced and inclusive policies can North Macedonia strengthen both linguistic equality and social cohesion in a genuinely multiethnic society.

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NAPOLEON'S POLICIES, EDUCATING NATIONALISM AND LEARNING ARCHAEOLOGY ON THE EDGES OF THE BALKANS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the influence of Napoleon's imperial policies on the emergence of the narratives of early nationalism and the development of archaeological interest and traditions in the Balkan peripheral regions. Through the dissemination of Napoleonic universalism and classical cultural revival, traditional medieval identities in the region were supplanted by new national narratives rooted in ancient “real” or “imagined” Mediterranean cultures or “civilizations”, created upon ancient ethnonyms, such as the Illyrians and Dacians. Archaeology emerged as a crucial ideological tool, legitimizing nationalist claims by linking modern Balkan peoples to classical antiquity, through ancient narratives and artifacts. The challenging of the Habsburg monarchy, including the creation of the Illyrian Provinces and the French intellectual influence, catalyzed early South Slavic and Romanian nation-building processes, fostering archaeological institutions and educational and cultural discourses that reinforced these identities. This study argues that Napoleonic cultural imperialism and its short-lived intervention on the edges of the Balkans inadvertently spurred archaeological nationalism, contributing to the construction and still rooted in modern ethnonational identities. By situating Balkan archaeological nationalism within broader European trends, the paper highlights the complex interplay between imperial politics, cultural heritage, and identity formation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southeastern Europe. Furthermore, it explores how competing nationalist agendas utilized archaeology not only to assert legitimacy but also to challenge imperial and neighboring powers, revealing the persistent role of archaeology as both a political and cultural instrument in the Balkans' volatile sociopolitical landscape. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of nationalism's material culture and the lasting legacy of Napoleonic influence in educating and shaping Southeast-European identities in the long nineteenth century and beyond.

Keywords: *Napoleonic imperialism, education, nationalism, archaeology, Balkan edges.*

Introduction

The early nineteenth century witnessed a wave of profound transformation across Europe, driven in large part by the expanding influence of Napoleonic France.

On the four sides of the world, under the onslaught of the new and intensified Gallo-roman universal imperialism, under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, new European nationalisms and identities were born, which, following the example of France, continued with the erasing of

pre-Renaissance European traditions and identities (Diaz-Andreu 2007, p.79). The older medieval traditions were rapidly replaced with identities, cultures, and symbols that resonated with the “glorious culture” of the ancient Mediterranean, that we frequently refer to as classical.

This process did not include only ideological change, but also massive institutional, professional and societal transformations. As part of the argumentations, legitimation, and competition within such a process, new scientific interests, fields, and perspectives were created. This included the development of the modern discipline of archaeology, and later on the invention of classical archaeology, as one of its most prominent subfields, which played a critical role in legitimizing and framing the emerging national narratives (Trigger 2006, p.61-67).

Commenting on the phases of transformation that European identities experienced from the period of the French Revolution, the prominent expert on “nation branding”, Wally Olins, noted that already in the period of Napoleon, “France was no longer large enough, and Europe itself was to be rebranded” (Olins 2002, p.242-243). Indeed, a brief look into the names of the new provinces and semi-dependent and dependent states that emerged from the policies of Napoleon’s Empire reveals the reemergence and reinterpretations of ancient identities, such as Belgians, Illyrians, Helvetians, Parthenopeans, or Romans.

In the east and southeast, the new universal monarchy, based on universal knowledge and pre-Christian traditions, France, clashed with the interests of the Vatican and the Holy Roman Empire. Napoleon stripped the Vatican of its power in Italy and dealt a final blow to pre-Renaissance traditions on the Apennine Peninsula, particularly diminishing the influence of the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire. A significant portion of Rome’s accumulated wealth was transferred to Paris, the “city of light and universal knowledge (rule)” (Dyson 2006, p.23-26), while Rome itself underwent archaeological projects led by artists, archaeologists, and urban planners to “purify” the city of newer layers of cultural heritage in favor of preserving authentic buildings from the ancient period (Diaz-Andreu 2007, pp.70, 72).

The consistency of Napoleonic cultural imperialism and political restructuring not only reshaped Europe’s geopolitical map, but also sowed the seeds for modern nationalism and the discipline of archaeology. While some aspects of these policies might be attributed to Napoleon’s ambitions, political and military needs, others were certainly part of the wider ideological and intellectual transformation in France and Europe. This new trend that in few decades transformed into *zeitgeist* of 19th century Europe and the world reached the edges of the Balkan peninsula in its early phases, during the short-live advances of Napoleon’s armies and cultural policies.

Methodological approach

This study employs a multidisciplinary historical research methodology to explore the intersections of Napoleon’s imperial policies, early nationalism, and the development of archaeology on the Balkan periphery. The research methodology integrates critical analysis of primary historical documents, including political decrees, official correspondences, and contemporary writings from the Napoleonic era, combined with secondary scholarly literature on nationalism, archaeology, and Balkan history. A historiographical approach is applied to trace the evolution of national identities influenced by Napoleonic cultural and political imperialism, focusing on the role of classical antiquity as a legitimizing framework. The study also incorporates comparative analysis of archaeological narratives and institutional developments in different Balkan regions to understand how archaeology was mobilized in nationalist projects.

Special emphasis is placed on the role of education and formal learning in disseminating

Napoleonic ideas, with a focus on how reforms in schooling and teacher training helped propagate new national identities and fostered archaeological knowledge. Napoleon's systematic modernization of education—including the establishment of centralized curricula, teacher training institutions, and secondary schooling—served as a vehicle for inculcating classical ideals and republican virtues. This facilitated the spread of archaeological interests as part of the broader cultural agenda to rebrand nations under the influence of universalist and Enlightenment principles. By critically engaging with theories on nationalism, colonialism, and cultural heritage, this methodology enables a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between imperial power, education, identity formation, and archaeological practice in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southeastern Europe.

Moving East with the Ancients

The rapid ideological and societal transformations moved east from France, approaching the Balkans through the centuries culturally dominant Apennine peninsula. From the period of the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte to that of Napoleon III, the “reformed” France had a crucial influence on the creation of the modern Italian national identity and statehood, both through the ideas of the Enlightenment and “archaeological excavation” of the “pure” ancient Rome (Diaz-Andreu 2007, pp.70, 72). It placed the classical antiquity even deeper in the consciousness of the 19th-century Italian elites, contrasting it against the influence of medieval church traditions and the Habsburgs (Diaz-Andreu 2007, pp.71-72). This was the novel French “software” educating the minds of future Italian revolutionaries and independence fighters, that were, later on, directly supported with military assistance from France.

At the same time, the transformation into a culturally and economically integrated empire, modeled after the classical (Macedonian and partly Roman) and earlier Middle-eastern empires, did not develop quickly enough in the more conservative Habsburg monarchy. With its religious heritage of the “Holy Roman Empire,” it slowly moved from medieval tribal and particularistic identities towards the classically (or rather Mediterraneanly) acculturated modernity. This allowed for a “cultural war” by Napoleonic France aimed at permanently undermining the unity of this political formation (Hutchinson 2005, p.77-78), whose roots and legitimacy still rested on the Carolingian 10th century. Napoleonic cultural assaults were focused on emphasizing and promoting ancient identities in the different regions of the Habsburg Empire. The policies of cultural particularization were implemented widely. In this regard, Napoleon Bonaparte's policies did not only encourage the “Italian national spirit,” but also, through a call for the Hungarians to rise for independence from Austria, and promotion of “anti-Russian feelings in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw,” France long-term disrupted the cohesion of these two rival empires (Black 2010, p.144).

These aims and set of policies towards once mighty Habsburgs, affected the Balkans most directly, at least from the north. During this period, autonomy was established for the so-called “Illyrian provinces”, a move that gave a serious impetus to the Illyrian movement and separatism among the South Slavic-speaking elites in the Habsburg monarchy (Blažević 2010). These policies placed new political and institutional emphases on the earlier post-Renaissance practices and Vatican traditions, and helped the prominence and stable presence of the Illyrian narrative. Thus, while the name Illyrians, itself, derived from the Roman province of Illyricum, without clear endonymic connotations in ancient historiography, it remained in long association with the distinct identity of the Balkan Slavs (White 2000, pp.143-144). Although later developments of the Serbian and Croatian national projects showed influences from German “cultural nationalism,” and some protagonists criticized the associations with ancient identities (Ćorović 2001, pp.324-331), the

“culture of the Illyrians” and archaeological artifacts and hypotheses related to it remained relevant up to the 21st century.

In Croatian cities under Habsburg rule, the first museums opened as early as the first half of the 19th century—in Split (1818), Zadar (1830), and Zagreb (1846)—and Illyrian ideas remained current and instrumental even in the creation of the later South Slavic political entity, Yugoslavia.

On the other hand, in the second half of the 19th century, as direct reaction to the emerging power of Illyrism (and later Pan-Slavism) this territorially and culturally undefined, but long-present “ancient identity” began to acquire disperse political connotations (Wilkes 1996, p.5).

In 1856, Austrian science and foreign policy, represented by the diplomat and scholar Johann von Hahn, for the first time argued against the previously monopolized right to the “Illyrian heritage,” artifacts, and narratives by the “Southern Slavs.” Hahn’s book, *Albanian Studies* (*Albanesische Studien*), convincingly presented yet another European people in the Balkans. The Albanians, who had often before been portrayed by Western authors in non-European unfavorable contexts, was also announced by Austrian diplomatic and intellectual reaction as a serious potential claimant of the fables and articulations of the “Illyrian myth” (Wilkes 1996, p.5).

Contrary to Austrian Balkan policies, emancipated Slavic-speaking elites, particularly in Croatia, did not abandon their archaeological, cultural, and political heritage by the end of the 19th century. In 1878 the Croatian Archaeological Society was founded, and in this period significant research and hypotheses on the continuity of “Illyrians” and “Slavs” in the Croatian-Bosnian regions were provided by one of the future “famous” figures of modern archaeology, Arthur Evans, who simultaneously became an important political lobbyist for the freedom of Balkan Slavs from extended Habsburg domination (Wilkes 1996, p.5).

The rootedness of the “Illyrian narratives” in the Balkan identities, has since shown important signs of resilience and continuity. In the twentieth century, the Illyrian myth gained significant interpretations in the attempts to build a Yugoslav identity or at least cohesion within the multi-national kingdom, as well as in the construction of the national identity of the new Albanian state. In this sense, archaeological studies, projects, and scholarly debates gained particular importance within Yugoslav scientific and cultural institutions, with the Illyrian question primarily addressed by the Center for Balkan Studies (*Centar za balkanoloska ispitivanja*) in Sarajevo, as well as the museums in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Skopje, and their professional journals such as Belgrade’s *Starinar*, Zagreb’s *Vjesnik*, and Sarajevo’s *Glasnik*. Further strengthening of unitarist tendencies came from the authoritative journal of the Yugoslav Archaeological Society, *Archaeologica Iugoslavica*, as well as the multilingual *Archaeological Preview* (Wilkes 1996, p.9).

Parallelly to this development in neighboring unitary Albania, the “Illyrian myth” escalated into Enver Hoxha’s Cultural Revolution, establishing a clear and unambiguous national myth in which the Illyrians were the unique and direct ancestors of the modern Albanians. It was in this particular context, that in 1972, the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha “established the Academy of Science of the People’s Republic of Albania and through this institution financed numerous excavations, conferences and archaeological, linguistic and historical publications on the Illyrians” (Gori 2012, pp.77-78).

Yet, the impact of the 19th century French “cultural war” with the Habsburgs was not limited to the western edges of the Balkan peninsula. Simultaneously with the promotion of the “Illyrian myth,” French ideas and influences from the period of Napoleonic military-political offensives also gave significant impetus to the creation of the modern Romanian identity, reimagined as a continuation and heritage of ancient Rome (Cărbuș 2004, pp.185-193; White 2000, pp.48-56). During the French administration in Rome, the prominent Moldavian intellectual and early archaeologist Gheorghe Asachi, inspired by Napoleonic administrative ideas for the formation

of a “Dacian Kingdom,” returned to his native Moldavia, where he exerted a strong influence on cultural, educational, and political processes. Asachi and a number of Moldavian, Wallachian, and Transylvanian intellectuals in the subsequent period built the modern Romanian identity based on the ancient fables of the Roman province of Dacia. In the following two centuries, affirming the Roman and Dacian identity of the modern nation became the primary goal of the Romanian national project (Cărbuș 2004, pp.185-193).

In this regard, early studies of archaeological monuments in Rome, such as Asachi’s research on Trajan’s Column and the Vatican libraries, later transferred to the northeastern Balkans in intensive archaeological research of the “Romano-Dacian” and “Dacian” culture of the Balkans, through which modern Romanian nationalists ideologically and territorially envisioned their state and national project. The Romanian national myth, in many respects, structurally resembles France’s “Gallic myth.” On the territory where older Eastern Mediterranean authors placed the Getae, in the Roman period appears a “barbarian tribe” which, according to romantic national narratives, was defeated by the Romans and, like the “Gallo-Celts,” was “ennobled” by Roman culture and marked the territory of modern Romania in antiquity, giving its name to the Roman province of Dacia.

Analyzing the role of archaeology in the construction of Romania as a nation-state, in the *Archaeological Review* from Cambridge, Cătălin Nicolae Popa and Russell Ó Ríagáin observe that “the Dacians gained the status of mythical ancestors of the Romanians, and the task of archaeology became providing material evidence that would demonstrate the strength of the Dacian nation” (Popa & Ó Ríagáin 2012, p.61).

Within these conceptual frameworks, the culture of this region was completely transformed, creating new ethnological characteristics of the “ancient Romanians.” As part of this process, the Slavic and Byzantine scripts were discarded in favor of the new Latin alphabet, and the modern Romanian language was “constructed” through the cleansing of “Slavic, Germanic, Hungarian, Greek (Byzantine), and ... Turkish words, phrases, and grammatical constructs” in exchange for newly accepted Latin and French contributions (White 2000, pp.119-125).

This land, whose history was linked to the constant migration of nomadic tribes from Asia to Europe and often during the Middle Ages called Pechenegia or Cumania (István Vásáry 2005, pp.7-8,27-33,58-59,136), built its modern identity on the “Daco-Roman myth” primarily supported by the presence of archaeological artifacts from the Roman Empire period.

Only in the second half of the twentieth century did the narrative of Romanian national archaeology discreetly change, placing the Dacians in a broader “cultural” context alongside Thracian tribes through the methods of cultural-historical archaeology. The idea behind this politically and nationally motivated narrative is to enable modern Romanians to reject the thesis of their civilization being solely the result of Romanization, but instead to seek a place for their ancestors, the Dacians, within the cultures that created the civilization of the Eastern Mediterranean, from which even the Romans themselves were civilized. These hypotheses, strongly supported by the Romanian communist leadership, “reached their peak ... in 1980, when the party ordered celebrations on the occasion of the 2050th anniversary of the founding of the first Romanian state, during the reign of the Dacian king Burebista” (Popa & Ó Ríagáin 2012, pp.61-63).

Conclusion

The enduring impact of Napoleonic imperialism on the Balkans illustrates how cultural and political forces can intertwine to reshape identities and nation-states. The Napoleonic era’s promotion of classical antiquity provided a powerful ideological resource that Balkan nationalisms

harnessed through archaeology to construct and legitimize their emerging identities. These processes were deeply embedded in the broader context of 19th and 20th-century nationalist struggles, state-building, and cultural revival across the region. Beyond mere academic interest, archaeology became a field of political contestation and nation-building, reflecting competing claims over heritage and belonging. At the same time, Napoleonic France's revolutionary ideas stimulated independence movements not only in the Balkans but also in Western Europe and Latin America, highlighting the global reach of these transformations. Therefore, placing these processes of early development of nationalism and archaeological interest on the edges of the Balkan peninsula in the wider, if not global context, provides a new universal frame for less bias, or at least culturally more neutral, analyses of these important phenomena. Ultimately, the Balkans' encounter with Napoleonic cultural imperialism reveals the complex interplay between empire, nationalism, and cultural memory that has shaped the modern Southeast European landscape.

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THE INFLUENCE OF UNESCO ON EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES IN YUGOSLAVIA UP TO 1974

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ABSTRACT:

The negative consequences of the Second World War were particularly evident in the sphere of education. Upbringing and instruction were not disrupted solely by the destructive effects of the war itself. The very structure and course of education came to be regarded as a contributing factor to the outbreak of the latest conflict in Europe. Thus, in addition to rebuilding the system, there arose a pressing need to reform education as such. The new international order, embodied in the establishment of the United Nations, sought to address these challenges through the creation of a specialized agency — the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** — whose mission was to reform education in the spirit of promoting peace and global understanding. Yugoslavia, as a socialist state undergoing profound transformations in its foreign policy, found in UNESCO a strong and reliable partner for the renewal and reorganization of its entire educational process in the aftermath of the war. The influence UNESCO exerted on education in Yugoslavia was substantial and will be examined in this study through three distinct phases. This article is based on **unpublished archival materials**, as well as **relevant scholarly literature and periodicals**, offering a new perspective on the dynamics between UNESCO and the Yugoslav educational system during the post-war decades.

Key words: *UNESCO, elementary education, textbook revision, scholarships, technical support, National Commission, non-alignment, regionalization vs. globalization.*

Introduction

The severe material damage to the educational infrastructure and the consequences of the bloody civil conflict elevated the educational process in communist Yugoslavia to one of the most important issues of state policy (Petranović, 1988). The initial period of reconstruction was characterized by a strong ideologization of education, adherence to the Soviet model, and the use of Soviet higher education institutions for the professional training of personnel necessary for independent functioning (Perišić, 2023). Although Yugoslavia was the first among the socialist bloc countries to express open tendencies toward normal cooperation with United Nations institutions—most notably reflected in the reception of food aid during the first post-war years—(Petranović,

1961) it nevertheless remained more reserved in its cooperation with international organizations in the field of education. The dramatic break in relations with the “Eastern Bloc” necessitated new methods for the training of personnel and for obtaining the assistance required to revitalize a system that had been deeply damaged and impoverished (Perišić, 2023). Following the liberation and the establishment of communist authority, and up until the rupture of relations with the Soviet bloc, Yugoslavia treated education as one of the key instruments in the construction of socialist social relations. Educational policies during this period were developed and supervised within the **Agitprop Department for Cultural Policy (Dimić, 1988)**, reflecting the ideological role assigned to schooling in shaping the new socialist citizen. The subsequent break with the Soviet bloc led to the emergence of a distinct **Yugoslav model of self-managed socialism**, which in turn required a comprehensive transformation of the educational system. During 1950, Yugoslavia underwent a significant cultural and political shift, reorienting itself toward the West and joining UNESCO. On **31 March 1950**, Yugoslavia became a **full member** of the organization and was granted a seat in UNESCO’s highest governing body — the **Executive Board** (Andonov, 2025).

Elementary school reform

A brief cooling of bilateral relations lasting about half a year occurred between Yugoslavia and UNESCO following the admission of **Spain** in **1951**. Yugoslavia, which had been compelled to revise its socialist model after the dispute with the Soviet Union and the subsequent intensification of its cooperation with the West, saw in this moment an opportunity to reaffirm its **communist consistency** by opposing **Francoist Spain’s** membership. The **Soviet Union**, notably, did not become a member of UNESCO until **four years after Yugoslavia**, which further motivated the Yugoslav authorities to present themselves as **leaders of the socialist bloc within the organization**. Although temporary, Yugoslavia withdrew from UNESCO’s **Executive Board** in protest. (Archive of Yugoslavia – AY, 318, 251, 1) Yet, only a few months later, Tito’s Yugoslavia received **substantial assistance from UNESCO** in reforming its **primary school system**, marking the beginning of a new and constructive phase in their cooperation (Todosijević, 2018).

The abandonment of the rigidly ideologized phase of education was necessary both as a means of distancing Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc and as a result of UNESCO’s growing influence — particularly during the 1950s, when educational reforms were being implemented and the organization was dominated by **Western capitalist countries**. During this decade, UNESCO carried out primary education reforms in **England, France, Sweden, and West Germany**, and even in the **Soviet Union**, beginning in **1958**, after successful activities had already been undertaken in Western Europe and **Yugoslavia** (Todosijević, 2018). The dominant influence of Western UNESCO experts in implementing Yugoslavia’s reform inevitably contributed to the **opening of Yugoslav socialism toward capitalist practices**. One of the first **institutional penetrations of capitalism** into Yugoslav socialism came precisely through the **school reform**. In **1951**, Yugoslavia adopted the **Law on National Schools**, transferring centralized administrative control to **local self-governments** and thus initiating the introduction of the **self-management model** into education (Program SKJ, 1958). However, serious deficiencies in both **qualified personnel** and **infrastructure** soon became evident. To address these issues, in **1953**, the **Commission for the Reform of General Education Schools** was established as a specialized body under the **Federal People’s Assembly of FNRJ**, marking the beginning of systematic institutional reform of the Yugoslav school system. Over a period of five years, UNESCO provided substantial assistance to Yugoslavia, beginning with the establishment of the Institutes for the Advancement of Education in Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade,

Sarajevo, and Skopje. During this phase, UNESCO experts maintained a continuous presence in the country, and once the Institutes were fully established, their staff members were granted three- to six-month scholarships to study in countries where educational reforms were in a more advanced stage. Through these experiences and the technical support provided via various donations, a vast body of knowledge entered the Yugoslav educational system (Todosijević, 2018). More than 50,000 professional publications and scientific works from Western countries were introduced into Yugoslav institutions, becoming accessible to local scholars and administrators alike. The reports of the Yugoslav scholarship holders, which were a mandatory requirement, represented an important source of information upon which the legislative proposal was based. By 1958, a legislative proposal was introduced to standardize primary education requirements across the entire territory of socialist Yugoslavia. In this way, UNESCO played a decisive role in the reform and modernization of the Yugoslav primary school system, ensuring its alignment with contemporary international standards and pedagogical trends (Perišić, 2023).

Reforms in Higher Education and International Understanding

The exceptionally successful implementation of the primary education reform served as an incentive for both UNESCO and Yugoslavia to intensify their cooperation. What further contributed to this closer collaboration were two major developments: the ongoing process of **decolonization**, in which Yugoslavia played an active role through the **Non-Aligned Movement**, and the country's efforts to **reconcile with the Soviet bloc**, a process that often included the **revision of school textbooks**. Additionally, in 1956, UNESCO launched its long-term program "**Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values**." Within this framework, Yugoslavia occupied an exceptionally favorable position, both geographically and politically, as a mediator between the two worlds (Andonov, 2025). Reflecting this unique status, the official UNESCO magazine *The Courier* described Yugoslavia as a "**kaleidoscope of cultures**" (*The UNESCO Courier* 1980).

During the 1960s, UNESCO continued to provide extensive assistance to Yugoslavia. Yugoslav scholars received a large number of **specialized fellowships** for professional development in various scientific fields. Equally significant was the **technical assistance**, including the **equipping of university laboratories**,¹ as well as **regular scholarships** that allowed Yugoslav experts to become acquainted with the educational systems of other countries. These fellowships covered both the **social and humanistic disciplines** and the **natural sciences**, thereby contributing to the overall modernization of Yugoslav higher education. Furthermore, with the support of experienced members of the **Commission for the Reform of General Education**, such as **Miloš Žanko**, Yugoslavia actively influenced the **formation of educational systems in newly independent states in Asia and Africa** (Andonov, 2025). UNESCO also played a major role in the **reconstruction of Skopje following the 1963 earthquake**, contributing to the construction of **four schools**, the establishment of the **Seismological Institute**, and several other educational and scientific initiatives that symbolized international solidarity and cooperation. (Andonov, 2023).

Following the successful implementation of the primary education reforms, UNESCO initiated a broader policy of transforming the educational narrative and promoting international

¹ In 1960 the Technical Faculties in Skopje and Sarajevo received funds amounting to 11,500 dollars, which could be used for laboratory equipment. The faculty deans submitted a list of various instruments that had been procured from the United States, Norway, and Sweden. The Faculty of Mining in Tuzla also ordered equipment valued at 1,988 dollars. (AY, 318, 247, 1–7).

understanding. To establish and disseminate this policy, UNESCO organized four major seminars — in Paris (1956), Tokyo (1958), Wellington (1960), and Goslar (1962). The seminars focused on identifying and correcting various forms of distortion in educational materials, including intentional errors with propagandistic aims, unconscious mistakes, prejudices, tendentious presentation of facts, derogatory terminology, and general tendencies of cultural or national superiority. The objective was to expose and address these elements, leading to the creation of textbooks that fostered international understanding, critical thinking, and balanced discussion of controversial issues (Stojanović, 2024). During the 1960s, a series of regional meetings of UNESCO national commissions from several Balkan countries took place, where these issues were openly discussed. The Socialist Republic of Slovenia had already, by March 1962, aligned the narrative within its educational programs with UNESCO's recommendations with Austria and Italy (AY, 319, 51, 74). The question of textbook narratives was also raised in discussions with Bulgaria, where the Yugoslav side emphasized that the republican educational authorities were responsible for independently designing curricula. (AY, 319, 51, 7). This position effectively redirected Bulgaria to engage in dialogue directly with Socialist Macedonia, highlighting Yugoslavia's decentralized educational structure and its commitment to UNESCO's principles of intercultural dialogue (Andonov, 2025).

In addition to assisting with the establishment of the primary education system and Yugoslavia's inclusion in global efforts to improve school narratives aimed at building world peace, the focus eventually shifted toward the **advancement of higher education**. From the very beginning of its existence, socialist Yugoslavia suffered from a serious shortage of highly educated professionals, and one of the main ways in which UNESCO exerted its influence was through the **granting of scholarships** to Yugoslav specialists, as mentioned earlier in this study. The key impact of UNESCO on the field of higher education emerged **toward the end of the 1960s**, when cooperation between the organization and Yugoslavia reached a new level of institutional and academic engagement. In 1967, from November 20 to 25, a **conference of European Ministers of Education** was held in **Vienna**, organized by **UNESCO**. This event also carried broader **political significance** in the context of the **Cold War**, as it marked a diplomatic success for UNESCO in bringing together representatives from **28 countries**. Among the European states, only **East Germany, Portugal, and Albania** did not attend the conference (AY, 319, 53, 69). The Yugoslav delegation was diverse but included several prominent intellectuals and was led by the Secretary for Education and Science, Vukašin Mićunović.² The conference focused on issues concerning university teaching, access to education in relation to social, cultural, and economic conditions, and the broader question of how higher education could meet developmental needs. Each participating country was required to prepare an analytical report addressing several key aspects: the organization of higher education within the national system, admission policies and criteria for student enrollment, and the process of democratizing higher education through practical measures aimed at ensuring equal access. The analyses also examined the socio-cultural and economic background of students, the composition of the student body in relation to national development priorities, and the inclusion and role of foreign students within their respective institutions (AY, 319, 53, 110). In presenting his report, Secretary Mićunović highlighted the statistics on Yugoslav students, noting that during the 1964/65 academic year there were 170,499 students enrolled at universities throughout Yugoslavia. Mićunović added that 53,553 of these students were women and emphasized the significant increase in student numbers compared to 1945, when there had been only 25,339 students (AY, 319, 53,

² In addition to Mićunović, the delegation included Ksente Bogojev, Branimir Janković (Rector of the University of Niš), Roan Modic (Rector of the University of Ljubljana), Aleksandar Trumić, Ksenija Gačinović, Momčilo Peleš, Marija Filipović, and Jakov Sirotković (Rector of the University of Zagreb). (AY, 319, 53, 116.)

189). Yugoslavia ranked fifth in Europe in terms of the number of students per 100,000 inhabitants. The comparative figures were as follows: the USSR had 1,594 students per 100,000 people, the People's Republic of Bulgaria 1,229, the Netherlands 1,229, Czechoslovakia 1,015, Yugoslavia 947, Finland 908, Belgium 893, Sweden 876, France 850, the United Kingdom 572, Italy 586, and West Germany 469 students per 100,000 inhabitants (Politika, 23.11.1967, 1). Mićunović concluded his report by expressing gratitude to UNESCO for organizing the conference, which brought together 140 delegates from 28 countries, and by emphasizing the organization's role in Yugoslavia's success in achieving a high rate of university enrollment. He also highlighted the need for effective inter-European cooperation in the field of higher education.

Another event organized by UNESCO that contributed to higher education reforms was the **International Conference on Educational Planning**, held in **Paris from August 6 to 14, 1968**. The conference brought together **300 delegates from 85 countries**. The Yugoslav delegation was led by **Hasan Hadžiomerović**, a professor at the Faculty of Economics in Sarajevo.³ The main objective of the conference was to prepare four key reports outlining UNESCO's guiding principles on the following topics: **strategies in higher education, innovations in educational development, management within the education sector**, and the **financial aspects of educational planning** (AY, 319, 51, 426).

In 1969, UNESCO organized a new conference at the Institute of Education in Hamburg, focusing on the professional development of university lecturers (AY, 319, 51, 650). The following year, in 1970, UNESCO strengthened its activities in the field of higher education by hosting a meeting of European university rectors in Bucharest, where Yugoslavia was represented by the rectors of the Universities of Belgrade and Zagreb. (AY, 319, 52, 807). All these international conferences and symposia had a significant impact on the development of education in Yugoslavia, as UNESCO, particularly during the late 1960s and 1970s, was regarded by the country as an important instrument for consolidating its non-aligned foreign policy.

Conclusion

The inconsistent foreign policy of Yugoslavia placed UNESCO among the country's top priorities on the international agenda. At the same time, Yugoslavia proved to be a compatible partner for UNESCO, particularly in facilitating the organization's entry into newly established states. This is evidenced by the two official visits to Yugoslavia by UNESCO's Directors-General, René Maheu in 1969 (Borba, 22.5.1969, 1) and Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow in 1974 (Borba, 6.12.1974, 1). The role that UNESCO played in shaping the Yugoslav educational system was substantial. In the absence of a lasting strategic alliance with either political bloc, Yugoslavia—through its commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement, in which it sought to maintain cultural leadership—became even more closely aligned with UNESCO's mission. The education of a large number of professionals through UNESCO programs, along with Yugoslavia's active participation in the agency's educational initiatives, allowed UNESCO to exert significant influence over the Yugoslav educational system. A series of high-level political conferences and symposia further strengthened Yugoslavia's ties with UNESCO. This process unfolded in three main phases: first, the reform of the primary education system during the 1950s; second, Yugoslavia's involvement in implementing

³ Other members of the delegation included Nada Novosel, Deputy Secretary for Education and Science of the Socialist Republic of Croatia; Branko Đorđević, Assistant Director of the Federal Institute for Economic Planning; Božo Marenić, a member of the Yugoslav Institute for Economic Research; and Vidojka Kozak from the Republican Institute for Economic Planning of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. (AY, 319, 51, 419).

UNESCO's recommendations on eliminating negative tendencies in textbooks, a role in which it was given prominence as a Balkan country not aligned with either of the two major blocs; and third, Yugoslavia's participation in UNESCO's activities related to higher education and the development of global information networks. Even after the complete decentralization of the Yugoslav educational system following the constitutional changes of 1974, UNESCO continued to exert a strong influence on schooling and to provide technical and educational assistance across all six Yugoslav republics (Šuvar, 1977).

In overall the internal integration of Yugoslavia into the UNESCO system was determined by foreign policy circumstances and the global trends in international relations following the Second World War. In the subsequent period, particularly during the anti-colonial wave and the affirmation of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia and UNESCO established mutually deepened and stable relations. The influence of UNESCO proved to be particularly significant in supporting Yugoslav educational reforms and the process of modernization of higher education.

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ANACHRONISTIC MODERNITY: THE BELL-LANCASTER METHOD AND ITS ADAPTATION IN OTTOMAN MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the Bell-Lancaster method, also known as the monitorial or mutual system, and its adaptation in Ottoman Macedonia during the nineteenth century. First developed in Britain by Andrew Bell and later popularized by Joseph Lancaster, the method addressed the challenge of mass education with limited resources: a single teacher, assisted by student-monitors, could manage the instruction of hundreds of pupils. Its promise of economy and reach made it a global phenomenon, praised as modern and progressive. Yet the system's reliance on silence, surveillance, and public discipline revealed its deeper role as a mechanism of regulation, producing conformity rather than independent thought. The paper situates this method within Reinhart Koselleck's notion of *Sattelzeit*, the modern process of educationalisation, and Michel Foucault's analysis of discipline. As a product of the *Sattelzeit*, it reflected the conviction that education could shape society toward progress. Viewed through educationalisation, it functioned as social therapy, targeting poverty, morality, and civic order. Foucault's perspective highlights its operation as an apparatus of surveillance. In Ottoman Macedonia, introduced in Bitola in the 1830s and later in Thessaloniki and Ohrid. The method was celebrated as a sign of European modernity but adapted to local conditions, from rural improvisations to girls' moral training. Its paradox lies in being locally embraced just as Europe abandoned it.

Keywords: *Bell-Lancaster method, Ottoman Macedonia, monitorial system, educational modernity, anachronism, Tanzimat reforms, disciplinary practices*

Introduction

The history of education is filled with paradoxes. Methods that promise to democratize knowledge often create new forms of discipline; utopian visions of social transformation end in rigid practices; and models conceived as universal solutions are adapted to local contexts, taking on entirely different meanings. The Bell-Lancaster method, also known as the monitorial or mutual system, is a prime example of this. At its core, it was a practical response to the problem of mass literacy in the first half of the 19th century: one teacher, with the help of student-monitors, could teach hundreds of children simultaneously. This organizational logic promised economy, efficiency, and wide reach. But beneath the surface of practicality lay a complex web of ideological and political implications.

This paper aims to critically re-examine the Bell-Lancaster method from two perspectives. The first is historical: how did this system of mutual education emerge and spread in Europe, and how was it applied in Ottoman Macedonia - a space where education was closely linked to ethnic, confessional, and political dynamics? The second is theoretical: how can the method be understood through the concepts of educationalisation (education as a form of social therapy) and discipline (Foucault's notion of managing bodies and minds in an institutional context)?

The analysis is not limited to historical facts. It traces the specific practices of Bell-Lancaster schools but also connects them to the broader horizons of modernity. The case of Ottoman Macedonia is particularly important, as it reveals the method's limits and possibilities: how a European educational innovation took root in an imperial and multi-ethnic context, where the school was not just a place of learning but also an arena of identity conflicts and social mobilization.

Given this, the Bell-Lancaster method cannot be viewed merely as a pedagogical technique. It is a product of a specific modern logic that simultaneously promises progress and establishes discipline. To understand its appeal and its contradictions, a theoretical framework is necessary to explain the logic of its emergence, mass application, and local adaptations.

Theoretical Framework

Reinhart Koselleck's concept of the *Sattelzeit* (roughly 1750–1850) is pivotal for understanding the Bell-Lancaster method. This period functioned as a hinge between the “old world” and modernity, when the fundamental meanings of political and social concepts shifted dramatically.¹ Before this era, history was largely perceived as a collection of repetitive events, a chronicle of the past. During the *Sattelzeit*, however, the very concept of history changed. It was no longer cyclical but became a singular, forward-moving process directed toward an anticipated future. This temporal reconfiguration fueled the belief in progress and social improvement (Koselleck, 2004: 22).

The Bell-Lancaster method was a direct manifestation of this new worldview. It was not simply a classroom innovation but an attempt to manage the new historical time. Its promise of “mass literacy” and “social reform” reflected the conviction that society could be actively shaped for a better future. Andrew Bell first outlined the approach in 1797, but it was Joseph Lancaster who transformed it into a practical and exportable model, making it a global phenomenon.² Fully inspired

¹ ‘Sattelzeit’ is a crucial element of the concept of modern history. Sattelzeit (saddle period) imagines the temporal shift between two epochs as a dale or pass found between mountain ranges. This metaphor is used to depict the phase of transition between premodern and modern times and dates the fundamental transformation of Europe between roughly 1750 and 1850. This shifted the boundary between ‘old Europe’ and Modernity from its established place in 1500 to the decades around 1800. The term Sattelzeit was initially coined by Reinhart Koselleck, who casually mentioned it in his introduction to the seven-volume Encyclopaedia ‘Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe’ (Historical Core Concepts), which first began publication in 1972. (Brunner et al., 1972).

² In 1789, Andrew Bell, a chaplain (a lower-ranking priest in the Church of England) in Madras, India, founded a school for the illegitimate, out-of-wedlock children of European soldiers with the aim of “rescuing” them from the “corrupting” influence of their Indian mothers and turning them into “useful” members of (European) society. By introducing into local Indian schools a system, method, and order, he “invented” a new way of organising his own school (Tschurennev, 2008: 247). After returning to London in 1796, Bell submitted a report on the school's work in Madras to the directors of the East India Company and introduced his new “Experiment in Education” to the governments of Bengal and Bombay. The Experiment - first published as a 40-page booklet - provided an analysis of the instructions, methods, and experiments Bell applied during his teaching experience in Madras (Bell, 1807: 47).

and guided by Bell's ideas, Lancaster began applying, developing, and refining several of these "new" instructions in his own school. In the first edition of *Improvements in Education*, he openly stated that it was his duty to acknowledge being entirely indebted to Bell's ideas and that, "by appropriating some useful suggestions," he had successfully managed a school of over 300 children (Salmon, 1904: 23).

Unlike his contemporaries, Lancaster adopted an unusual method of promotion, which attracted nearly a thousand children in less than a year. As he famously quipped, "They came to me for education like flocks of sheep" (Browning, 1921: 54). In his own words, "Anyone who wishes to send their children may do so freely; those who don't want free education may pay for it, if it suits them" (Browning, 192: 53).

By 1805, Lancaster had developed not only a new kind of teacher but also a new method of teaching and school management. The rapid growth in pupil numbers and public interest, especially from prominent figures in Britain, underscored the appeal of his model (Salmon, 1932: 7).

This ambition resonates with what scholars have called *educationalisation*: the modern belief that broad social problems - poverty, crime, health, morality - could be solved through educational intervention.³ The Bell-Lancaster system epitomized this trend. It was never only about teaching reading and writing. Its design embodied a wider social therapy: punctuality, discipline, and hierarchical order were cultivated to produce not only literate but also obedient, productive subjects for the industrial economy and the modern state.

The mechanics of the method made this clear. The system rested on three pillars: monitors who mediated between teacher and students, a teaching "machinery" of repetition, and strict discipline. One teacher could supervise hundreds, but the real work was done by monitors relaying lessons to smaller groups.⁴ Tools such as reading cards, slates, and oral drills reduced costs, making the system economically efficient. A method worth trying, because from an economic aspect it did not require large material resources.

Yet this very rationality carried disciplinary implications. Michel Foucault's framework of modern power helps illuminate them. For Foucault, power does not only repress but also produces subjects through surveillance and normalization.⁵ The Bell-Lancaster classroom exemplified this: monitors formed a web of hierarchical observation where each pupil was both learner and object of control. The teacher's elevated platform created a panoptic gaze, while silence functioned as a pedagogical tool of bodily discipline. As Tasevski notes, "*In schools that practiced the Bell-Lancaster method, speaking*

³ The concept of educationalisation highlights how education has increasingly been burdened with solving moral, social, and political problems. Depaepe & Smeyers (2008: 380) argue that schooling has come to function as a form of social therapy, with education assigned the role of addressing wide-ranging societal issues. Tröhler (2011: 56) further explains that educationalisation is embedded in the modernist belief in progress, positioning schools as agents for shaping society's future. This view is echoed in a volume edited by Smeyers & Depaepe (2008: 1-2), which explores how education has been tasked with resolving problems including citizenship, public health, crime prevention, and democratic participation.

⁴ The terminology itself marks a point of divergence between Bell and Lancaster. While Lancaster referred to these individuals as "monitors," Bell preferred the terms "assistants" or "tutors." As Bell clarified, "An assistant to the teacher, or tutor as I call or term him - or monitor, as he (Lancaster) calls him" (Bell, 1807: 7). This distinction reflects not only a difference in vocabulary, but also in educational philosophy and the role assigned to pupils within the instructional system.

⁵ Foucault (1977: 197) conceptualized disciplinary societies as institutions that used surveillance and normalization to train individuals to conform to social norms. Schools, hospitals, prisons, and military barracks exemplify such structures, with hierarchies, routines, and observation mechanisms designed to produce compliant subjects. Through repeated discipline, individuals internalize the logic of control, regulating their own behavior even without direct authority.

was considered a transgression... the most common punishment was wearing a wooden padlock around the neck, for public shame" (Tasevski, 2021: 31-32). Such punishments reinforced conformity, turning deviation into a public spectacle of correction.

This tension - between efficiency and intellectual depth, mass access and mechanical uniformity - is precisely what makes the method paradigmatic for the contradictions of modern education. Critics argued that the Bell-Lancaster method produced conformity rather than genuine education, as monitors could instruct but not cultivate independent thinking (Tasevski, 2021: 127). Thomas Bernard described the system as resembling the division of industrial labor, noting that "the principles in schools and factories are the same ... Dr. Bell's great monitorial system represents the division of industrial labor applied to intellectual purposes" (Mesquita, 2012: 662). In a similar vein, Samuel Taylor Coleridge criticized it as a mechanical model, calling it "an incomparable machine - a vast moral steam engine" (Rose, 2004: 103).

The Educational Context in Ottoman Macedonia: Tradition and Reforms

To understand the emergence and acceptance of the Bell-Lancaster method in Ottoman Macedonia, it is necessary to analyze the broader educational context in which it was introduced. The 19th century was a time of gradual modernization of the Ottoman Empire, but also of strong cultural competition among the non-Muslim communities in the European part of the empire. As a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional environment, Ottoman Macedonia was a specific place where tradition and reform constantly clashed.

In the first half of the 19th century, schools in Ottoman Macedonia were largely religious institutions. Among the Muslim population, Quranic schools (mektebs) and madrasas dominated, where instruction was conducted in classical Arabic - a language incomprehensible to the majority of students. Among the Christian population, church-monastery schools prevailed, where teaching was based on reading psalters, catechism, and religious texts, most often in Old Church Slavonic or Greek, which again was not the everyday language of the students. A characteristic of these schools was their limited reach and strictly religious nature. Knowledge was reserved for a small number of students, and the main goal was the preservation of confessional tradition, not widespread literacy (Tasevski, 2021: 154-158).

The situation began to change with the Tanzimat Reforms. The "Noble Edict" of 1839 and the "Hatt-ı Hümayun" of 1856 enabled non-Muslim communities to open their own schools and participate more broadly in the educational process. These reforms transformed education in Ottoman Macedonia: they not only strengthened the autonomy of local communities but also created a space for cultural competition among them. This marked the beginning of a "school explosion," in which Greek, Bulgarian, Vlach, and Serbian communities established their own schools, striving to ensure cultural and national dominance. As Cicek (2010: 227) notes, "the educational reforms undertaken by the Ottoman governments during the 19th century laid the foundations, not of Ottoman national education, but of the separate national education of the Turks and of each of the non-Muslim minorities".

The reforms also had a broader symbolic function. They signified a transition from a strictly confessional to a semi-public and semi-municipal character of education. In these conditions, the Bell-Lancaster method gained additional appeal: it fit the logic of rapidly and cheaply organizing new schools, which increasingly functioned as arenas of cultural legitimization.

The local elites - the so-called "chorbadzhii"- played a key role in this process. As Gančev Eničerev (1904: 10-11) recalls, during meetings of the local notables in Prilep, "all eyes were turned to me, and the elders began negotiating the price of my teaching for the year," showing that these community leaders were the main financiers of the municipal schools. Education thus developed as a private-municipal initiative rather than a centralized state policy. The system operated on a *laissez-faire* principle: the state rarely intervened, and everything depended on the will and means of the

local community.

For this reason, the quality of education varied from town to town and from village to village. Where the *chorbadzhii* invested more funds, schools had better conditions, more students, and more educated teachers. This “local-elite” model of education had a dual effect. On one hand, it limited the possibility of a unified system, as schools depended on local resources and interests. On the other hand, precisely this space of autonomy allowed communities to experiment with new teaching methods, including the Bell–Lancaster method. Because the method promised mass reach at minimal cost, the *chorbadzhii* saw it as a rational investment - an opportunity to create the impression of a “modern” school that encompassed all children with little money.

Adaptation of the Bell-Lancaster Method in Ottoman Macedonia

The adaptation of the Bell–Lancaster method in Ottoman Macedonia was less a faithful transfer than a historically situated translation of “modern” schooling under severe material and linguistic constraints: its appeal was primarily economic - “one book served for six hundred” and “one teacher sufficed for the whole school” (Lancaster, 1805: 52) - which made organizational scalability possible where secular print in a comprehensible Slavic vernacular and qualified staff were scarce; even in Britain the ceiling was basic literacy, memorized Scripture, and elementary arithmetic, so in Macedonia it was unrealistic to expect that brief exposure could produce instructors able both to implant the method and to teach beyond a religious matrix .

In Macedonian historiography, the very concept of “secular education” is vaguely defined. Instead of signifying a genuine break with religious dogma, it is often equated with the introduction of the monitorial method and vernacular language in schools. Authors such as Kantardzhiev (1965: 55, 1970: 126, 2002: 144) reproduce this conflation, which has produced the paradox that clergymen - such as Neofit Rilski or other teachers-turned-churchmen - are presented as the primary agents of “secular” instruction. This paper argues that such interpretations rest on a conceptual slippage: what historiography labels as ‘secular’ education was in fact a hybrid form that preserved confessional content while adopting organizational and linguistic markers of modernity. By disentangling this conflation, the study contributes to clarifying how ‘secular’ was understood and practiced in Ottoman Macedonia.

Read through Koselleck’s conceptual history, this reflects a *Sattelzeit*-type hinge: “secular” did not mean the establishment of a fully secularized curriculum but rather a semantic shift where vernacularization and mutual instruction became markers of modernity without a full epistemic rupture.

Read through Foucault, however, the picture is different: the very micro-techniques of the Bell–Lancaster method - elevated platforms, enforced silence, and public shaming- inscribed discipline that internalized oversight and rendered mass instruction governable (Foucault, 1977: 197). What appeared in historiography as “secular progress” was, in practice, both an incomplete conceptual shift and an intensification of disciplinary power within the school.

Micro-history confirms both possibilities and limits: in Štip, the primary narrative identifies Pavle Zlatanov, who learned the method later - likely during Nikola Tondžorov’s tenure in Kyustendil - returned with Bulgarian charts, attempted partial implementation, and after his death the school reverted to mnemonic monastic practice, an oscillation typical of adaptation without stable textual and staffing bases (Ivanov, 1906: 360–367; Vasiljević, 1928: 84). Without a state textbook regime, teachers assembled curricula from diverse centers; in Prilep, Gančev Eničerev tailored Russian–Bulgarian manuals and Učitel to local needs and even composed a drawing-based geography, while

linguistic misfit spurred Mačukovski's call for a Bulgarian grammar on a Macedonian dialectal basis - clear signs of conceptual work around "language," "grammar," and "school" (Eničerev, 1904: 19–20; Mačukovski, 1872: 4).

Parallel Greek mutual schools followed similar organizational logics but provided superficial outcomes, encouraging a shift toward gymnasia and progymnasia in the 1870s (Chassiotis, 1881: 371–373). In this light, the Macedonian adaptation exemplified educationalisation's double bind - broad social expectations placed on inexpensive, disciplinary organization (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008: 380; Tröhler, 2011: 56) and made legible the contemporary critiques that likened monitorial schooling to a division-of-labor factory and a "vast moral steam engine," efficient yet flattening (Mesquita, 2012: 662; Rose, 2004: 103).

Conclusion

The case of the Bell–Lancaster method in Ottoman Macedonia illustrates how global pedagogical innovations were refracted through local social, linguistic, and political conditions. Designed in Britain as a universal solution to the challenge of mass literacy, the system became in Macedonia less a program of intellectual emancipation than an improvised strategy for schooling in an environment marked by material scarcity, vernacular fragmentation, and confessional rivalries. Its economic logic - offering mass instruction with minimal resources - made it attractive to local elites who sought visible signs of modernity without incurring high costs.

This adaptation, however, carried a particular ambiguity. Clergy emerged as agents of "secular" instruction, not because schools were liberated from religious frameworks, but because the monitorial method and the use of the vernacular were themselves taken as signs of enlightenment. Teachers like Pavle Zlatanov and Gančev Eničerev improvised with manuals, disciplinary techniques, and hybrid curricula, producing fragile and reversible outcomes that oscillated between modernity and monastic tradition. The disciplinary micro-practices of silence, surveillance, and shame made schools orderly but also underscored their function as institutions of regulation rather than spaces of critical learning.

From a broader perspective, the Macedonian experience exposes the limits of educational universalism. The Bell–Lancaster method did not arrive as a coherent transfer but as a translation shaped by structural scarcity and identity politics. Its legacy lay less in measurable literacy outcomes than in the symbolic capital it conferred: proof that communities were aligned with European modernity. As such, it stands as a historical reminder of the paradoxes of modern education, where progress and discipline, democratization and control, became inseparably entwined.

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