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PROMOTING INTEGRATION IDEAS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

Abstract: The intercultural education is most explicitly accomplished through textbook contents which encourage interaction, exchange, desegregation, interdependency and solidarity among people belonging to different cultural groups living in the same territory. The main goal of the research was to determine the quantity and quality of content that point to intercultural education in the textbooks used in elementary schools in the Republic of Uzbekistan, where the medium of teaching is in Uzbekistann. The analysis includes 44 textbooks. The research involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the late involved using deductive defining of categories. Nine categories, important for intercultural education were distinguished: identity, cooperation and friendship, respect, tolerance, cultural relativism, stereotype, prejudice, oppression and labeling. The results showed that the highest percent of contents promoting intercultural is found in textbooks for Civic education and History, while the lowest one in Nature and Geography. From the analyzed categories, identity is highly present, followed by cooperation, friendship and respect of the other. Themes regarding the categories such as: stereotype, prejudice, labeling and oppression are least represented and are not even mentioned as negative examples of behaviors which are not to be practiced. As a conclusion, we can say that it is very positive that depreciation and discrimination of other cultures, ethnicities or religious groups are not present. However, there is demand and need to enrich TEXTBOOKS and syllabuses with large number of contents concerning above mentioned positive categories, in order to PROMOTE one set of VALUES which are essential to build an intercultural society.

Keywords: intercultural education, primary education, textbooks analysis, Republic of Uzbekistan.

INTRODUCTION: Globalization, the process of European unification, migration, the increase of professional mobility in Europe, cultural exchange over the Internet and the continuous presence of different cultural lifestyles, do not only affect traditional concepts such as cultural and national identity, state or autonomy, but they also raise the question regarding cultural diversity in the modern society. Despite segregation and differences, the democratic model of approaching differences is one of the foundations of the right to having differences and equal participation of all entities within the society.

The colloquial language does not always show clearly the difference between the terms ―multiculture‖ and ―interculture‖, which refer to a mutual coexistence of entities from different ethnic backgrounds. Multiculture refers to a natural state of a diversified society i.e. a society that is multilingual, multiethnic, multiconfessional, etc. Such society shows a comparative dimension i.e. a parallel coexistence of different entities that are recognizable as such within the society (Birzea, C., 2004). A multicultural society includes cohabitation of several ethnic groups that maintain their cultural differences and express their specific cultural identities.

Within such society, the interaction among the groups is not of utmost importance. Being different or belonging to a different ethnic group is sometimes considered to be a negative trait and as such might be a reason for discrimination; minorities are treated in a passive way, and sometimes might not be recognized or respected (Gherga, E., 2007). On the other hand, interculture is a dynamic process that involves establishing and building relations among different ethnic School, 2005).

In addition, preparing textbooks and workbooks which will incorporate a higher number of topics and themes, clearly expressing the basic interculturality principles is of high and principal importance. Without a doubt, the choice of these textbooks and workbooks in terms of quality, content, illustrations and knowledge-transfer methods will have an enormous role in students‘ perceptions of the world and the society they live in.

Research demonstrates that words and illustrations in textbooks do not simply express certain ideas and facts, but are strongly influencing students‘ formation of opinions. For example, the manner of representing minority groups in a textbook (by words or illustrations) has an enormous influence on the formation of opinions and values for those minority groups (with the people who do not belong to those minority groups). If textbooks contain less negative examples and more positive examples with a clear purpose of building an intercultural/multicultural society and express the basic principles of interculturality, the conditions for forming positive opinions and behaviors towards the others are met.

Taking into account the current situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the purpose of this research was to analyze elementary school textbooks in order to see how much of the content relates to intercultural education. The main goal of the research is to determine the quantity and quality of content (themes, terms, illustrations, symbols, etc.) that point to intercultural education in the textbooks used in elementary schools in the Republic of Uzbekistan, where the medium of teaching is in Uzbekistann.

The research also involved these objectives: 1. to make a comparison between textbooks for different subjects in order to see how much of the content is related to interculture; 2. to do a detailed analysis of content related to interculture in textbooks used for the same subject, but for a different age group (different grades); 3. to make a comparison between different textbooks for the same subjects that are meant to be used for the same grade in order to see how much of the content is related to interculture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The research involved analyzing 44 textbooks used in elementary education, written according to the curricula from first to eight grades, as well as textbooks written in compliance with the new curriculum that involves a nine-grade elementary school education. Types of textbooks that were analysed involved textbooks that contain themes relating to understanding society and its structure, national and cultural identity, unders-tanding yourself and others, intercultural interaction and developing critical thinking skills regarding these issues.

The sample that was analysed involved: 15 textbooks used in Uzbekistann language and literature subject, 3 reading manuals (in Uzbekistann), 1 grammar book (for Uzbekistann language), 3 textbooks for the subject My environment/society, 3 textbooks for Learning about the environment/society, 1 textbook about the society, 1 textbook about natural sciences, 3 textbooks about civil society and culture, 6 geography textbooks and 7 history textbooks. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The qualitative analysis was based on deductive defining of categories (Кениг, Н., 2008).

Taking the terms multiculture and interculture as a basis of this research, 9 categories for analysis were identified. The purpose of this method was to examine explicit or implicit presence of these terms. This was done by reading the texts and analyzing the illustrations in each textbook.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: Considering that displaying all results from analysis of the textbooks by frequencies and percentages exceeds the limits of this report, we will focus only on the general findings regarding the main objectives of the study. First, based on the analysis, the highest percentage of themes that involve interculture was found in the textbooks related to the subject Civil society and culture (62.67%) and History (57.39%). The lowest percentage was found in the textbooks related to Natural science (0%) and Geography (3.82%). Regarding the categories that were analyzed, the highest percentage relates to the category IDENTITY, which means that the national identity i.e. the identity of ethnic Uzbekistanns is the one that the textbooks pay the most attention to.

Some textbooks have made the effort to promote the identity of other ethnicities that live in the Republic of Uzbekistan, especially with regard to the ethnic Albanians (this is especially true for the History textbooks for 7th and 8th grade). In general, most textbooks lack themes that promote social interaction among members of different cultures and ethnicities explicitly. There are themes that refer to COOPERATION, SOCIALISING, HELP AND RESPECT towards other people, but the illustrations and the words used in the textbooks do not show that these people belong to different ethnic or religious groups. Only

a small number of themes explicitly point to the need for coexistence, equality, tolerance and respect no matter what the differences are.

Hence, it can be concluded that the textbooks imply multiculture more rather than interculture. Themes such as STEREOTYPE, PREJUDICE, LABELING and OPPRESSION are themes with the least percentage in the textbooks. One of the good aspects of the textbooks is the fact that the textbooks do not contain disrespect and discrimination of different cultures, ethnicities or religious groups. However, it would be advisable if the textbooks were to have themes that deal with such negative social aspects which are part of a society that involves coexistence of different ethnicities so that students can recognize them and refrain from them.

The comparison among textbooks that are used for the same subject, but in a different grade shows improvement when it comes to quantity and quality of themes that promote interculture in these subjects: My environment/society, Introduction to Society, Society and History. The comparison among different textbooks used for the same subject and the same grade shows that some textbook writers paid attention to including themes that promote interculture. This can especially be seen in some textbooks used in the old curriculum (8-grade system of elementary education) as opposed to some textbooks used in the new curriculum (9-grade system of elementary education). The more recent textbooks contain more themes that relate to intercultural education. One of the positive aspects of these textbooks is the fact that writers included different practical tasks especially with younger students at lower levels in order to see how much they have understood from direct teaching and theory. In order to improve the quality of implementing intercultural education, teachers should follow contemporary good practices and guidelines that suggest exemplars for classroom activities to support the development of intercultural awareness and competence (Салимовска, С., at al., 2007).

Furthermore, it is necessary during the process of textbook writing to pay more attention to incorporate conceptually and contextually clear themes so that students can have

a clear concept and form the values that constitute the basic needs of an intercultural society. When selecting themes for textbooks, it is necessary to make sure to have balance between themes that emphasize the national and personal identity on one hand, and those that promote interaction among members of different cultures without stereotypes, labeling and prejudice on the other hand. The content of textbooks and manuals needs to reflect the reality of the society we live in. It also needs to promote building interculture within the subject these textbooks are used for. The illustrations in all textbooks, especially in those used with younger students, need to show anthropological features or the traditional dress of different ethnic groups that live in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

It is very important to pay attention to questions and examples that illustrate interculture, especially during practical tasks. In order to achieve this, the textbooks need to involve activities and tasks that allow students to understand graduallythe culture code of the society they live in so that they can grow and develop into autonomous individuals that will have faith in an intercultural society.

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