



Multicultural competencies of pupils as a tool for social innovation in primary education

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Abstract

Multicultural education is a process in which individuals learn to adopt the ways of positively perceiving and evaluating cultural systems different from their own culture and acquire adequate methods of regulating their behavior concerning members of other cultures. In the educational reality, this means orientation towards racial, ethnic and religious tolerance, cultural pluralism, social belonging, empathic view of the world and the people in it, collaboration and cooperation, perception of otherness as challenges to knowing, understanding and overcoming prejudices and stereotypes. The above premises are complemented by empiry, which in the conditions of educational practice of multicultural education suggests that part of the positive changes in efficiency and perception of the educational process is the positive impact of multicultural education on the formation of the social climate in the classroom. The paper presents theoretical and methodological determinants and partial results (obtained by ante and in continuo measurements) of the currently conducted research, which aims to verify the effectiveness of multicultural games and activities to increase the quality of social climate perception in third grade of primary schools.

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Keywords: multicultural education, social climate, primary education, action research

1. Multiculturality in primary education

Education about multiculturalism should be implemented at every stage of school. It should also have a place in primary education. Although teachers are aware of the need to pay attention to this issue, it is not easy with the current overlarge curriculum. They often encounter a lack of literature in an effort to gain knowledge. Sometimes there is also a reluctance to pay attention to multicultural education. This stems from the idea that multicultural education requires a special amount of time at the expense of another curriculum. However, if the teacher correctly understands the essence of multicultural education, he or she will realize that multicultural education is included in all activities inside and outside the school, because it is unrealistic to implement multicultural education in only one or two subjects. Multicultural education can be implemented in a planned manner on the basis of set goals, but also involuntarily in conversation with pupils, in conflict resolution, etc. The subjects at the first stage of primary school provide enough space for the development of skills, attitudes and the formation of pupils' value orientation. These include subjects of a social and natural nature (fundamentals of civics and natural science, homeland studies, natural sciences) and subjects of an educational nature (art education, music education, physical education, literary education) [1].

1.1 Methodical recommendations for the implementation of multiculturalism in primary school education

To achieve the goals of multicultural education, research (heuristic) activity (using productive educational methods such as brainstorming, role-playing, situational and staging methods, multicultural games and activities), in which pupils themselves discover new knowledge and context is very good and popular among pupils. The pupil gets into the position of a researcher, an investigator, who has to teach something new to classmates and a teacher. Research activities bring pupils a lot of new, unknown. They penetrate the cultural world of their classmates. Such activities can be implemented in each year of primary school. The school is a place where pupils prepare for their



personal and professional lives. It is a place that supports their social and personal development. This development begins at the primary level of education, where the foundations of the pupil's value orientation, expression of respect for traditions, national symbols and universal morality are formed. These basics are very important and very important. They form an active attitude and internal motivation of pupils' care for a world other than the one in which they live. We agree with Klein's opinion [2], who states that multicultural education clearly has its place in schools because it:

- helps meet the goals of the human rights education,
- pupils appreciate the topicality of education which solves their problems,
- intercultural education helps teachers and pupils to find their way in themselves, in others and in society,
- the classroom climate is beginning to change positively.

The last of the mentioned levels (classroom climate) within the context of multicultural education at primary level inspired our current research efforts, the methodological determinants and partial results of which we present in the following content.

2. Methodological determinants of the research

Objective reality has various questions that cannot be answered immediately. The need to look for answers thus requires a focus of theoretical and pragmatic efforts on new knowledge. There may be several research questions, but by abstracting the main components and relationships, one can formulate one's own research problem [4].

Research problem:

What impact will the implementation of multicultural games and activities have on the level of social climate in primary school classes?

Research goals:

The primary goal of the research is to verify the effectiveness of the proposed games and activities with a multicultural context on the level of social relations and climate in the school classes of the Year 3 of primary school. Specific research objectives are as follows:

- Implement multicultural educational strategies in primary education.
- Design and implement games and activities aimed at the development of multicultural competences of pupils at primary level.
- Using exploratory (empirical) methods of action research to verify the impact of designed and implemented games and activities on the status and prospects of social interaction of pupils in the classroom.

Research tasks:

1. Design of multicultural games and activities for Year 3 of primary school pupils.
2. Implementation of ante measurement in the scope of the research sample.
3. Implementation of multicultural games and activities in the conditions of educational practice.
4. Implementation of in continuo measurements within the scope of the research sample.
5. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of partial measurement results and their interpretation.

Research hypotheses:

H1: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of the educational practice will significantly improve pupil satisfaction in the classroom.

H2: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of the educational practice will statistically and significantly reduce the level of conflicts in the classroom.

H3: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of the educational practice will significantly reduce pupils' competitiveness in the classroom.

2.1 Research methods

The selection of relevant research methods is important to ensure the research quality and the validity of its results. In research we use methods that can be divided into three groups:



1. *Literary methods*

This group of methods includes the study of professional literature (books, periodicals, electronic media, state educational program for primary education, textbooks and workbooks), making extracts, their processing and sorting.

2. *Exploratory methods of quantitative research*

Quasi-experiment

Quasi-experiment is the most widely used exploratory action research method, in which the effectiveness of an experimental intervention (X) is assessed by comparing the results of the dependent variable before the experimental intervention (O₁) and after the experimental intervention (O₂) in one group of persons (with symbolic marking O₁ X O₂) [4].

In accordance with the set goals and verification of the hypothesis, we used, as a measuring tool, the questionnaire *Naša trieda [My Class Inventory* (Fraser, Fischer, 1986; revid. Lašek , Mareš , 1990)]. It is a standardized sociometric tool focused on data collection in five segments:

- class satisfaction – pupils' relationship to their class, level of satisfaction,
- class conflicts – complications in pupils' relationships in the classroom, degree of tension and disputes,
- competition in the class – competitive relationships between pupils, level of effort to excel, experience of school failure,
- difficulty of learning – experiencing the demands of the school on pupils,
- class cohesion – friendly and hostile relations between pupils, degree of class cohesion.

3. *Statistical methods*

In the research, we used a nonparametric *Wilcoxon paired test* (p < 0,05) as a tool for evaluation, which serves to verify hypotheses about the level agreement in two sets, from which paired (dependent) selections were created. We also used the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov Goodness-of-Fit Test* (K-S test) to gain knowledge of the normality of the data distribution needed for subsequent hypothesis verification and based on sample size.

We use IBM SPSS Statistics (No. 19) for statistical data processing.

However, the facts themselves, their registration and quantitative processing do not yet mean the exactness of the research. There is a need for quantitative data processing to be organically linked to their qualitative analysis. Thus, we also use theoretical research methods (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparison, generalization).

2.2 **Research sample**

The objectification of the research plans determined the location of the research sample in the area of Central and Eastern Slovakia, while the basic set represents the area of Prešov and Žilina municipalities. Using a deliberate available selection (convenient sample), from the basic set, we created a sample, which, in the context of the implementation of the quasi-experiment, consists of seven Year 3-school classes (137 pupils in total) at five primary schools. The quasi-experiment has been, in a defined research sample, carried out continuously during the current school year (2021/2022).

3. **Partial quantitative and qualitative analysis of the research results (ante vs. in continuo measurement)**

H1: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of educational practice will significantly improve pupil satisfaction in the classroom.

Tab 1. Wilcoxon paired test
Class satisfaction

	Class Satisfaction
From	-1,453
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,146

Source: own processing

Tab 2. Ranks
Class satisfaction

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Class satisfaction (ante) - Negative Ranks	52	50,46	2624,00
Class satisfaction (in continuo) - Positive Ranks	59	60,88	3592,00
Ties	26		
Total	137		

Source: own processing



Based on the results in the Tables 1 and 2, we can state that there is no statistically significant difference in class satisfaction due to the implementation of multicultural activities. **Hypothesis 1 was therefore not confirmed in the comparison of ante and in continuo measurements.**

H2: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of educational practice will statistically and significantly reduce the level of conflicts in the class.

Tab. 3 Wilcoxon paired test
Class conflicts

	Conflicts in the class
From	-5,520
Asymph . Sig . (2-tailed)	,000

Source: own processing

Tab. 4 Ranks
Class conflicts

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Class conflicts (ante)	Negative Ranks	88	59.16	5206.00
	Positive Ranks	26	51.88	1349.00
Class conflicts (in continuo)	Ties	23		
	Total	137		

Source: own processing

Based on the results in the Tables 3 and 4, we can state that in the rate of conflicts in the classes of the research sample, there is a statistically significant difference due to the implementation of multicultural activities, such that pupils achieved, within the ante and in continuo measurement, statistically significant lower scores of conflicts in the class than before the implementation of multicultural activities. **Hypothesis 2 was thus confirmed, in comparison with ante and in continuo measurements.**

H3: We assume that the implementation of multicultural activities in the conditions of educational practice will significantly reduce competitiveness of pupils in the class.

Tab. 5 Wilcoxon paired test
Competitiveness in the class

	Competitiveness in the class
From	-7,844
Asymph . Sig . (2-tailed)	,000

Source: own processing

Tab. 6 Ranks
Competitiveness in the class

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Competitiveness in the class (ante)	Negative Ranks	105	66.62	6995.50
	Positive Ranks	19	39.71	754.50
Competitiveness in the class (in continuo)	Ties	13		
	Total	137		

Source: own processing

Based on the results in the Tables 5 and 6, we can state that there is a statistically significant difference in the rate of competition in the classes of the research sample due to the implementation of multicultural activities, such that pupils achieved, within the ante and in continuo measurement, statistically significant lower competition scores in the class than before the implementation of activities. **Hypothesis 3 was thus confirmed, in comparison with ante and in continuo measurements.**

4. Conclusion

For multicultural education to be truly effective, it cannot simply be just talking and a "preaching" on the need for intercultural understanding. It will only be effective if it provides pupils with an experience of cultural diversity, if it allows them to meet the views and attitudes of members of different cultures. It should therefore be found not only in the innovated curricula of school subjects as a separate or cross-cutting issue, but also as an effort to understand and respect the growing cultural diversity in the teaching materials with which pupils work, as well as in the climate and atmosphere of the class and school.



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