

HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

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Abstract

Having in mind that hidden curriculum refers to unwritten and very often to unintended lessons and values, its presence in the history textbooks in the primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia can be a source of generating prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory behavior based on ethnic, religious and cultural differences. A research project based on a content analysis of the history textbooks that are used in primary education in the Republic of Macedonia, indicates that contents in these textbooks may be a fruitful ground for developing this kind of negative-interaction models. It should be emphasized that the teachers are one of the two basic models that a child identifies with, and the way of their interpretation of this contents is not irrelevant in this case. This analysis covers the history textbooks in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish and includes visual and the textual contents.

Keywords: Hidden curriculum, history textbooks, content analysis, primary schools.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the many ways to transfer and adopt knowledge, values, principles and rules of religion and culture are the curricula contents. Of course, family is the first source from which a child is informed and introduced to the values of the religion. Moreover, children easily internalize the values through teaching in an organised and systematic way. The majority of these contents are based on science, but there is a strong possibility (depending on the personal traits of the teacher, and the selected textbook contents) for the students to adopt certain attitudes connected to their religion or the religion of others. Very easily and very often, prejudices and stereotypes related to different society groups are transferred through the hidden curriculum. The most common of them are gender differences that can be found in textbooks used even with the youngest students through textual and visual contents (gender determined toys: girls play with dolls, boys play with automobiles etc.). This predetermines the position, interests and maybe even future occupation of the sexes in society. Certainly, prejudices connected with different ethnic and religious groups in a community, which have a history of conflicts, misunderstandings and non-acceptance, can be especially dangerous. The transfer of such prejudices through the hidden curriculum may cause recognition of anything "different" as dangerous. In addition, it may create an atmosphere of fear and lead to segregation or so-called "burial in ethnic or religious trenches" and discrimination against certain groups in society.

Curriculum (curricula - Latin) refers to the flow or direction of learning in school or college [1] and it is considered to be a tool in the form of an elaboration, which serves to fill the time made available according to Musgrave [2]. It is a mechanism for separating the students in those who learn well, and those who do not [3]. Curriculum is considered to convey planned, formal, organized, deliberate, focused learning of contents in an educational institution in a certain time-frame. Specifically, the teaching programme and the curriculum set the work of the educational institution more precisely. The curriculum is the main school document through which the state determines the subjects that will be taught in a certain school, their order of appearance in classes and school years and number of teaching hours or lessons per week. Based on the curriculum, a schedule of lessons for the internal organization of the educational work in the school for every day is developed. The curriculum is a document in which the learning content has been planned for every school subject, and has been put forward by a teaching plan for a specific school type, or scope of the material (knowledge, skills and habits) that students should adopt during the lessons. The teaching programme determines the order of processing and depth of the material. That is why curriculum is considered to be concretization of the teaching plan.

But what happens when the curriculum promotes prejudices or stereotypes in a conscious or subconscious way? What happens when it creates cultural reproduction in schools and acts as a

conservator of the existing relations between different groups, and those existing relationships range from indifferent mutual acceptance to conflict situations? All of this is done with the help of the hidden curriculum. Meighan [4] calls it "the spirits of the ancestors" (architects, book writers) and language and thinking are their integral part. Often, despite a carefully selected text, intended primarily to develop reading skills among students, the text transfers messages of nationalism, racism, sexism and social bias. The ethnocentrism and racism in the curriculum and books (especially history books), as hidden aspects of the curriculum, are not left behind. In such cases, the majority's belief that the minority groups are always below average successful is quite evident.

Hidden curriculum is a term used to refer to those aspects of learning in school that are unofficial, unintended, or with unclear consequences from the learning and school organization [4]. Illich claims that school teaches much of what is not connected with the formal content of lessons. Illich calls it "passive consumption" or uncritical acceptance of the existing social order - by means of discipline. The hidden curriculum teaches children that their role in life is: to know their place and submissively accept that! [5].

Hence, the hidden curriculum teaches a characteristic behavior or viewpoints that are learned in school, but that cannot easily be found in the formal curriculum. Maybe those aspects will remain as they are - hidden, but it is likely (because of the concept of certain curricula, activation of the students' previous knowledge, the cultural variety they gain, and the viewpoints from the teachers) that those aspects will fulfil their goal, or convey what is hidden in them. The hidden curriculum is "a tacit constructor of prejudices" which, unfortunately, has been involved in education - for example, through transferring aspects of gender differences. The hidden curriculum that leads to emphasizing the differences among ethnic groups and religions is usually conveniently placed in the history books, native language and literature textbooks, in the school reading list and the books selected for class work.

When it comes to the distorted images and the way they are displayed, and the way in which they are passed on to younger generations, J. Slater [6] very bluntly uses the term "terribles simplificateurs" - concealed in politics, the media, the church and the popular mythology. He argues that history is "a subject that is a detector of nonsense", and it can give us "intellectual weapons" for defending democracy.

Robertson and Hall are discussing about tomorrow's model of education in the History as a school subject. This model would provide a solid foundation in avoiding the dangers of xenophobia and simplified narration by:

- 1 Starting to evaluate and explore local and regional histories,
- 2 Having the belief that they understand the role of imagination and construction of stories,
- 3 Promoting willingness to accept the complexity/disorder,
- 4 Encouraging skepticism about the finality of narratives, including that of "Europe",
- 5 Developing respect for others [7].

In reality, the call applies to everything that can end with the suffix "centric". It also applies to refusal of the principle to perceive only from one perspective. It means empowering students to read critically, between the lines and down to the very essence of things before they form an opinion or position about what is analyzed [8].

2 METHODOLOGY

In this study, an analysis of the content of history textbooks in the languages of the three ethnic groups in the Republic of Macedonia (Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language) was done. The main research question was whether there are dominant cultural or religious issues in the history textbooks that are used in the Republic of Macedonia in order to find out what the components of the hidden curriculum are, and how they may have influence on the students' beliefs and values. Therefore, this study aimed to determine:

- 1 The amount of data/titles/authors associated with specific culture/religion of one's ethnic/religious group (ethnocentrism level).
- 2 The amount of data/titles/authors associated with culture/religion of ethnic/religious groups that exist in the territory of the Republic Macedonia (level of cultural relativism).

- 3 The amount of data/titles/authors associated with culture/religion of ethnic/religious groups that don't exist in the territory of the Republic Macedonia, or they are in very small population percentage to be able to organize education in their own language.
- 4 Whether some ethnic/religious groups tend, not only to neglect the culture/religion of other ethnic/ religious groups, but also to use stereotypes and to show prejudices towards them.

Content analysis as a method was used for the purpose of quantifying the terms related to the research objectives and it was applied to the sample of History textbooks used by the three ethnic groups that obtain their education in the Republic of Macedonia in their native language: History in Macedonian language for the 5th [9], 6th [10], 7th [11], 8th [12] grade in primary school¹; History in Albanian language for the 5th [13], 6th [14], 7th [15], 8th [16] grade and History in Turkish language for the 5th [17], 6th [18], 7th [19], 8th [20] grade.

The analysis, classification, processing and interpretation of data were done, according to:

- The ethnic or national group mentioned in the text,
- The historical events that are represented in the texts, and whether these events indicate a cooperation or conflict among different groups in society,
- The cultural events that are represented in the texts, and therefore, the culture to whom they belong,
- The religion mentioned, or to which the text relates to.

This analysis is performed for textual and visual data as follows:

- According to ethnic or national origin of the authors of the paintings,
- The culture they belong to, and
- According to the religion that a visual message belongs to.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Analysis of the History textbooks used by Macedonian students

3.1.1 Analysis of the History textbooks used by Macedonian students regarding cultural issues

When it comes to history textbooks, there has always been a country that had tried to emphasize its heroism and suffering that had been experienced in a certain period of time. However, this kind of presentation of historical events can easily lead to alienation and a halt in relations between different groups in society. Moreover, the Balkan history abounds with constant ferments such as: wars, revolutions, uprisings, strained relations, agreements signings and divided territories, unprincipled coalitions, occupations, etc.

Table 1 shows the relations between Macedonians and the groups that exist in its territory, and some of them are coming from neighbouring countries, as well as from various institutions (mostly international). These relationships are divided into two large groups on the basis of both: cooperation or conflict.

¹ Primary education in Macedonia was composed of 8 years compulsory education in the past, i.e. in the times of conducting this study.

Table 1: Relationship of Cooperation and Conflict of the Macedonians with Different Ethnic groups

State /Nation/ Ethnic group							Institutions, International Agreements, Relationships among more than two groups	Total
Type of relationships	Albania, Albanians	Turkey, Turkish people	Serbia, Serbians	Greece, Greeks	Bulgaria, Bulgarians	Roma people		
Processes of cooperation and understanding	DURING WARTIME OR CONFLICT SITUATIONS						DURING PEACETIME	/
	2	2	1	4	2	1	7	19
Conflicts, wars, uprisings, rebellions, terror, uncooperation	4	11	2	6	6	0	7	36

Hence, it is important to note that:

- The processes of cooperation and understanding are noticed with 34.5 % presence, and the processes that refer to conflicts, wars, insurrections, revolts, terror and non-cooperation – with 66.5 %, meaning that the latter are significantly more present than the first ones.
- Looking at the processes that describe the cooperation and understanding, which were recognized during no war at the time (or any other conflict), there have been only 7, while 12 cooperative processes have been recognized in wartime or conflict situations.
- The largest number of contexts that relate to conflict situations is noticed in the relations between Macedonians and Turks.
- The lowest number of contexts that relate to conflicts was recognized between Macedonians and Roma people.

When it comes to culture, texts and visual messages sent through the contents of history textbooks used by Macedonian students were analyzed.

Among the total of 99 analyzed titles that refer to culture in either implicit or explicit manner, it was determined that 39 of them relate to the period BC, ancient civilizations, medieval culture, 33 of them belong to the Macedonian culture, one - to Turkish, two – to Albanian, two – to Serbian and 12 - to other cultures. If we exclude the ancient and medieval titles referring to culture, and some of the states and territories that do not exist in the same political boundaries, the Macedonian culture is the most present with 37%. In addition, if we exclude "other" titles from the culture of communities/ ethnic groups/ nations that do not exist (or existed in a negligible percentage) in the territory of the Republic Macedonia, we will find out that only a few can be recognized as headlines that are related to the culture of Albanians and Serbs (both 2%) and Turks 1%.

As stated above, an analysis of visual messages that mostly consisted of photographs of cultural persons, artefacts and cultural institutions related with culture has been done, and only a small amount of the messages have been presented as paintings, prints, etc.

Of the total of 318 analyzed paintings, drawings, photographs of cultural figures, artefacts, images of cultural institutions, the findings point to the fact that Macedonian culture is the most representing culture (100 of units of analysis belong to the Macedonian culture, 16 – to the Turkish, 10 – to the Albanian, 4 – to the Serbian, and 188 - to other cultures). In addition, if we exclude other titles that refer to the culture of communities/ ethnic groups/ nations that do not exist (or existed in a negligible percentage) in the territory of the Republic Macedonia, the Macedonian culture dominates with 32%. Moreover, small number of the titles are recognized as headlines in relation to the culture of Turks 5%, 3% - of the Albanians and 1 –of the Serbs %.

3.1.2 Analysis of the History textbooks used by Macedonian students regarding religion

As it was the case with cultural issues, the religion was also analyzed in terms of cooperation and conflicts between different religions that exist in the territory of the Republic Macedonia, including conflicts coming from the denominations in the frames of one religion, and between national churches as well.

When it comes to relations between Christianity and Islam, as conflicts, antagonisms, and even as terrorizing of one religion over another, the relationship is 6:1 in favour of the negative kind of communication (table 2). Only one collaboration of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Muslim community in Bosnia (in occupational conditions) has been observed in order to stand against the political decisions of the Austro-Hungarian rule. It can be concluded that this type of cooperation is positioned distantly in the past.

Table 2: Relationships of Cooperation and Conflict Between Different Religions

Religion/ National churches	Christianity/ Islam	National orthodox churches	Othodox/ Catholic	Orthodox/ Protestant	Others
Type of relationships					
Cooperation, Understanding	1	/	/	/	
Conflicts, mis- understandings, terror	6	GOC vs MOC 4 SOC vs MOC 2	2	1	1

Legend: GOC=Greek Orthodox Church; MOC=Macedonian Orthodox Church; SOC=Serbian Orthodox Church

The conflicts, disagreements and terror listed in 5 out of 6 cases belong to the age of the Ottoman Empire and refer to:

- Colonization and Islamization of the Orthodox population,
- Selling Orthodox population as slaves,
- Introduction of "dzhizie" - tax for freedom of expressing the Christian faith,
- Conversion of the church Hagia Sophia into a mosque,
- Conversion of "St. Panteleimon" church into a mosque.

The last case refers to the expulsion of 40,000 Macedonian Muslims from Greece after the Civil War.

In the analysis of the national orthodox churches' relations, not even one case of collaboration has been evidenced. However, there were 4 cases regarding the Greek Orthodox Church and 2 regarding the Serbian Orthodox Church, and both churches were striving for:

- Abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric or it's prevention of existence,
- Propaganda through the clergy,
- Propaganda through the church/school communities,
- Proclamation of Dimitar Miladinov as a Russian spy and his imprisonment in Constantinople.

Speaking about the relations between the Orthodox and Catholic Christian churches, we can say that there have been two cases of conflict and opposition. The first case is the division resulting in the East and West church in 1054, and the second, more recent case, is regarding the turbulent period of The Balkan Wars and The World War One. During these wars, there was strong propaganda by the Roman Catholic Church in Macedonia, and pressure for converting the believers into Catholicism.

Regarding the relations between the Orthodox and the Protestant Christian Church, the case is similar with the relations with the Catholic Church, and in the turbulent period of The Balkan Wars and The World War One. During these wars, there was strong propaganda by the Protestant Church in Macedonia, and pressure for converting the believers to Protestantism.

As it was the case with culture, religion was also subject to analysis of the textual and visual messages conveyed through history textbooks in Macedonian language.

From the total of 31 analyzed titles referring to certain religion, 13 of them are related to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 6 – to the Islamic, 1 – to the Judaist, and 11 titles refer to other religions. The latter group contains religions from the earliest human communities, polytheistic religions, and 3 titles are referring to the Bogomils and Catharenes as separate religious communities. Put in percentages, the content regarding Christianity, as well as the Macedonian Orthodox Church is the most present which comprises 42%, the Islamic content comprises 19%, and the least present content is the one related to Judaism which comprises only 1%.

From the total of 96 analyzed pictures, drawings, religious objects photographs, museum artifacts, icons, frescos, images of symbols etc., 64 are related to Christian, 6 – to Islamic, 1 to Judaistic, and 25 - to other religions. The latter group contains religions from the earliest human communities, polytheistic religions, and 4 pictures represent the Bogomils and the Cathars as separate religious communities. Similar to the textual content, the visual content consists of 67% Christian representations as the most present. The Islamic content comprises 6%, while the least present content is repeatedly – Judaism with 1%.

When presenting this data, the following points need to be emphasized:

- The polytheistic religions are represented at a basic level by clarifying the term polytheism, myth storytelling, as well as by mentioning the names of their supreme deities and several more important deities.
- The most common religious beliefs are represented in combination with certain cultural and political timelines.
- The titles referring to a certain religion are focused on the basic beliefs, by naming or making short description of their founders, Holy books, sacred locations and objects, religious art, as well as a short description of their value system.
- It is often the case, when connecting religious and political content, to covertly transfer messages that damage the relaxed relations between religions today.
- It is expected that teachers will be engaged in avoiding the negative effects of these messages thanks to their good will and competences.

3.2 Analysis of the History textbooks in Albanian/ Turkish language used by Albanian/ Turkish students

3.2.1 Analysis of the History textbooks in Albanian/ Turkish language used by Albanian/ Turkish students regarding cultural issues

Upon analyzing content from the History textbooks in Albanian and Turkish language, it is evident that the contents are translated from Macedonian into these two languages.

Considering the fact that the content referring to Turkish people is less present than the content referring to Albanian people, the table 3 presents the processes of conflict and/or cooperation of the Albanian people with other ethnic groups/nations. When it comes to the conflict/cooperation processes of the Turkish people with other ethnic groups/nations, the content is mainly a repetition of the content in table 1.

Table 3 indicates that:

- The processes of collaboration and understanding are mainly recognizable in the period after the triumph over Nazism, WW2 and the formation of SFR Yugoslavia (which practiced spreading of brotherhood and unity), and are connected with all ethnic groups (then referred to as nations and nationalities).
- The processes of opposition and conflict are in the period of the Ottoman occupation, and the period of WW2 in which Albania collaborated with Italy.
- In this case also, the processes of collaboration are fewer than the conflict/opposition processes with a ratio of 10:16.

Table 3: Cooperation and conflicts of the Albanians/Turks with other ethnic groups

Country/nation/ethnic group				Institutions International Agreements Relations between more than two groups	Total
Type of relations	Macedonia Macedonians	Turkey Turks	Serbia Serbians		
Processes of cooperation and understanding	Albanians Macedonians 3	Albanians Turks 2	Albanians Serbians 3	2	10
Conflicts/wars/ uprisings/mutinies/ terror/noncooperation	Albanians Macedonians 2	Albanians Turks 6 Macedonians Turks 8	/	/	16

Following the pattern of the case with the History textbooks in Macedonian language, an analysis of the textual and visual content in the textbooks has been done. The following conclusions arose.

When it comes to content in textual form regarding culture, these are the results:

- From a total of 86 analyzed contents regarding culture, 13 are attributed to the earliest human cultures, the cultures BC, ancient cultures and medieval cultures; 32 attributed to Macedonian culture, 13 are from Albanian culture, 1 from the Turkish/Roma culture, 2 from the Serbian/Aromanian culture, and 18 from other cultures.
- The Macedonian culture is the most present one with 37%, and the least represented culture are the Turkish and the Roma people with 1%.
- These textbooks also contain cultural issues that were impossible to distinguish and associate with the cultures mentioned above, and they refer to the Balkan as a territory, comprising 5%.

Regarding visual data on cultural issues placed in the History textbooks in Albanian/Turkish language (elementary level), these are the results:

- From a total of 461 analyzed visual contents on different cultural representations, 145 are associated with the Macedonian culture, 69 - with Albanian, 22 - with Serbian, 12 - with Turkish, 4 from Aromanian people, 1 from Roma and 208 from other cultures.
- If the visual contents of other cultures (cultures that are not located in the Balkans, cultures not closely connected with our research, or insignificantly present) are disregarded, the Macedonian cultural content is the most present again – 31%, and the least present is Turkish content – 1%. In addition, Roma people cultural issues – with less than 1%.

3.2.2 Analysis of the History textbooks in Albanian/ Turkish language used by Albanian/ Turkish students regarding religious issues

As it was the case with the History textbooks in Macedonian language, the History textbooks in Albanian/Turkish contain titles and visual content connected with other religions.

Regarding relations of cooperation or opposition and conflict between the different religions that existed or still exist in Macedonia, the following was concluded:

- The fact that during the Ottoman Empire occupation, there was a colonization and islamization of the Balkans including Albania (which at the time was mainly Christian), can be taken as an example of opposition.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, conceived after its independence in 1991, can be taken as an example of interreligious cooperation. The Constitution declares the existence of religious freedom on the territory of Macedonia.

Upon analyzing textual and visual content regarding religion, the following results emerged:

- From a total of 37 analyzed contents regarding different religions, it was concluded that 9 were associated with the old and polytheistic religions, 10 - with Christianity, 9 - with the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 2 - with Islam with additional 3 - with the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia, 1 - with Catholicism, and 3 contents were related to the Bogomils.
- The Christian contents are most present with a total of 54% (Christianity in general - 27%, Catholicism – 3% and MOC – 24%), Islam consists of 14% in total (Islam in general – 6% and IRC in Macedonia – 8%).
- Along with the old, polytheistic religions comprising 24%, there are contents regarding the Bogomils, and comprising 8%.

Regarding visual data on religion, these are the results:

- From a total of 110 analyzed visual contents, 43 are associated with Christianity along with 28 from the MOC, 10 are associated with Islam, 3 - with the Bogomils and 26 are refer to other religions, and the majority of them are consisted of images of gods in polytheistic religions.
- The Christian contents are the most present ones with a total of 64% (Christianity in general – 39%, and MOC – 25%). In addition, Islam takes the second place with 9%.
- The contents regarding Bogomils comprise 3%.
- Other religions comprise 24% (mostly old, polytheistic religions, as well as religions from the Far East).

4 CONCLUSION

In the light of the contents that convey these covert messages to the students in elementary education, it can be concluded that in a history concentrated on facts and rejection of emotion, the following should be taken into account:

- The existence of an open possibility for an unilateral politicization of history.
- It is rarely emphasized that all wars end with negotiations, thus evidencing that there was no war that ended on the battlefield – they were all ended in institutions, and that fact may be the key to avoidance of making wars.
- It is rarely practiced presenting a historic event from several angles for the purpose of teaching the students that it is preferable to research as many resources as possible, because one source can be insufficient or biased.
- The political, economic or imperialistic dimension of the conflict and the cognitive trap avoidance (in which the people's ideas are identified with the ideas of a country, political group, and oligarchy, extremist political or religious party) are rarely emphasized.
- There are no good possibilities for discussions on the subject whether there is a point from which the past can be left behind and a common future (in which good values remain and the hatred, accusation and the dark conflicted past are left behind) can be built up.

A simple and mechanical counting of the facts cited in these textbooks can lead to asking undesirable questions and creating negative viewpoints for certain ethnic groups. Moreover, it is often forgotten that students belonging to ethnic groups which had conflicts or opposition in the past, are now in the same classes, and in the same classroom.

It is unavoidable to note that the interpretation and the process of avoiding traps that can lead to negative attitudes and stereotypes are totally up to the teacher. Hence, we will not be surprised by the cases in which novice teachers or teachers with no consciousness about the sensitivity of the cultural and religious issues, unexpectedly open the door to non-tolerance and misunderstanding.

If it is compulsory to work on a text describing a historic event that consists of violence between nations, it is up to the teacher whether s/he will emphasize the current situation (ex. the Ottoman Occupation is a historic event, but today Turkey is a great friend and supporter of the R. of Macedonia) and welcomes many ways of solving the problems (if they are not already solved), to ask the students for different solutions to the problems, or whether violence is really necessary etc.

Hidden curriculum conveyed by the History textbooks has impact on the children's perception of the world, on the relations between different nations, i.e. – between two people that originate from

different countries, and on the development of the humanity in the near future as well. It is an issue that deserves to be addressed more often by the educators and academicians, since its importance for the world peace and wellbeing. Therefore, it is necessary to make step forward and to start capturing such unintended messages in textbooks and to create friendlier learning environments in order to improve the education for the envisioned future with mutual respect, understanding and tolerance.

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