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| <p>Working Conditions in Elementary Schools in the Relation Town – Village, as an Impacting Factor to Learning English</p> |  | <p>Linguistics</p> <p>Keywords: working conditions, learning English, inequality, government, urban-rural.</p> |
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Abstract

The intention of this work is to analyze reasons that cause stumbling in mastering English of pupils coming from certain regions of Skopje surrounding. To be able to reach the wanted conclusions, a much broader research than sticking to just English language as a subject was required. It took the necessary study of the entire elementary education management in Skopje and Republic of Macedonia, concentration on researching chance of differences in managing the elementary schools in the relation town – village. Thus the work as a whole may look more of a general work condition research than dealing with English. Yet, behind every finding of lack of working conditions, especially in the rural areas, the real concern is meant to be the learning/teaching English problem. Inequality of working conditions, among other matters, directly and indirectly brings about the certain knowledge level of English as a foreign language, by urban area students. The schools included in this work were some characteristic ones chosen from urban areas, within the town Skopje, as well as the counterpart ones from the rural areas, of villages in the surrounding areas. The work is compiled by selecting data at the spot of the study.

During the long carrier as a teacher of English I remarked a phenomenon that kept going on and on. Teaching at secondary schools, I noticed that students coming from rural areas of Skopje, were regularly in possession of a substandard knowledge of English in comparison to those coming from the town Skopje schools. Trailing this disproportional appearance sent me back to the core of the educational management of the entire elementary school system in Macedonia.

General inequality in relation Town - Village

There are considerable objective differences between town and village facilities. Numerous buildings and institutions that for town students are an everyday sight, for the village student they are an occasional event:

| Institution | Town | Village |
|--------------------|------|---------|
| Theater | YES | NO |
| Museum | YES | NO |
| Cinema | YES | NO |
| Library | YES | NO |
| Post office | YES | NO |
| Zoo | YES | NO |
| High school | YES | NO |
| University/faculty | YES | NO |
| Bank | YES | NO |
| Green bazaar | YES | NO |
| Urban busses | YES | NO |

Differences between town and village schools can be of a more diverse nature. We will distinguish some:

1. School competition within town. In towns, there is a larger number of schools and the competition between them raises the learning/teaching quality, while in villages there is merely one school with no competition.
2. Easier access to state competition. Town schools normally have an easier access to state competition, especially in Skopje as the capital city.
3. Whole day education. A number of schools have special paralels/ class sections for children of parents who both work, where pupils learn for the whole day.
4. Agricultural work. In villages there is more rural work as agriculture, so the village students are more occupied with work and with less time for studying.

Government Statement On Managing Education

The fact that "the crucial key to many important existential human nature and society lies in wisdom, knowledge and skills" makes us assume that the government invests equally in meeting the demands of modern school buildings, environment, infrastructure and all relevant mechanisms, wherever they are, whether in urban or rural areas.

"Macedonia takes measures to guarantee equal opportunity of education for every citizen regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity or religion. Government and Ministry of Education and Science undertake provision of equal conditions of access to any kind of education for every citizen and support for marginal groups and their educational mobilization"

But in practice the education is generalized and the importance of rural regions as a polygon with special needs is not emphasized. This leads to the conclusion that in reality they are being marginalized and thus this attitude to the management is not only ineffective to the reduction of disparities between rural and city school, but gives way to increasing diversity at the expense of rural regions.

What Interviews for Managing School-Funding Show (Interview with Directors)

The interviewed respondents in the village are unanimously of the opinion that the determination of the relevant government bodies is oriented in urban areas, while in urban areas are more opinions more diverse.

R = Reseracher, I = the interviewed

R: Does the government invest equally in urban schools and in rural area schools?

I5: "City school is pushed forward, while village school is just as if not yet forgotten"

I10: "No matter how much it is thought that the city school is financed more, the village school is financed even more and is considered a constant discussing concern"

I13: “There is no secret that the state works through political parties, while the main political parties’ polygon is the city, so there’s no wonder the power would invest in city schools without any hesitation because there is the main interest, the decisive vote of the citizen, for taking power”

I14: “The city is a metropolis of education where requirements are greater, but the government invests fair enough in rural areas. What is more, for stimulating the peripheral village teacher, there are extra funds allocated”

A director of the Ministry of Education:

“Since last year we started with a proportional investment in schools, which means, funding based on the number of students, so that the situation becomes such that Tetovo gets more funds than for example Monastery, which has not been the practice before”

What Data for the Level of Staff Education Say

Records collected reveal that all city schools have an open hall inside the school, which is appropriate for capital movement of students, holding events, performances, competitions, music and dance exercises, public appearances, etc., while village schools are mainly deprived of these privileges.

Furnished cabinets, is a weak point all throughout Macedonia. Anyway, the village school possessions are either outdated tools or the schools are almost bare of equipment in cabinets. Classrooms in the city are bigger.

Most of the city's schools have at least a makeshift kitchen. The village school is currently excluded from this opportunity.

Possession of the hall for physical education represents the most emphasized difference. All city schools have halls for physical education, while no school in the village has one. Another obvious problem is that the adequately qualified personnel tend to leave village and get employed in the city, especially teachers of English. Then, in a number of village schools, English is either the second foreign language or it does not figure as a subject at all, but French is taught instead. Table illustrates the state of the school center with suburban schools in the municipality of Saraj.

| Educational level | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------|------------|
| Superior education | 136 | 35% |
| High education | 159 | 37% |
| Secondary education | 64 | 16% |
| Inadequate education | 46 | 12% |

Table: The level of education in primary schools in the municipality of Saraj

The table shows that the amount of adequately educated employees is prevailing, but research confirmed that if teachers of English existed, they would often be only with higher education or even worse, not of the corresponding qualification.

Records about the success show that the village school students are up referring the percentage of excellent students, but obviously a dilemma remains: Is this realistic?

With no intention to include prejudice or generalizations, we would expose a practical situation. For example, it would happen that a whole class, consisting of students of Skopje environment appeared to be with excellent success from elementary schools, and yet, in practice it proved that the skills of a number of them, clashed with the proclaimed excellent success. And the problem was not only English as mere isolated issue.

However, at one segment at least, the justice is satisfied. To some extent, village schools also possess computer cabinets, which by all means, greatly contributes to learning English. This is the only satisfaction that brings attitudes and efforts of all the factors for the modernization of education in R. Macedonia together.

What Data for the Working Conditions Show

The table below is a research of comparing working conditions in eight town and eight village schools. It was checked if the schools possess cabinets for teachers, school lobby, cabinet equipment, kitchen, sports hall, computer cabinet, and English literature.

| Teach.cabin | Lobby | Cab.equipm | kitchen | Sports hall | Comput.cab | Engl.Literat |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Urban-rural | Urban-rural | urban-rural | urban-rural | urban-rural | urban-rural | urban-rural |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-litt | yes-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-litt | litt-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-no | yes-no | yes-no | yes-litt | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-litt | yes-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-litt | litt-litt | yes-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-litt | yes-litt | litt-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-litt | yes-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |
| yes-no | yes-no | yes-lit | yes-no | yes-no | yes-yes | yes-no |

Undoubtedly village school has undergone miraculous metamorphosis compared to the image of the former ages. Nevertheless, as we see from the data, the differences in working conditions between village and city schools in some cases appear in almost diametric dimensions: yes – no.

What attracts our attention in the table above is that English Literature in village libraries is missing altogether, while the town libraries all possess it to a greater or lesser amount. That being the reason of the research, we come to an understanding that village students are not offered the equal and fair conditions as the town students to use readers as facilitators for learning English.

All this brings us to the conclusion that an urgent framing of all educational structures inside and abroad is required so as to mitigate the unpleasant situation of many village schools, ranging from the highest organs of government to regional, municipal organizations, individuals parents, and students themselves, to change in a positive direction, advancement, from improvement to storage and maintaining the inventory.

With help from foreign organizations and governments, the situation is changing in favor of primary schools, but it has its weaknesses:

1. Dependence, the formation of the belief that there should always be expected that someone else will take care of the maintenance of schools in our country.
2. Not infrequently for own promotional purposes, managerial bodies in spite of having been helped in achieving success, claim the success achieved as their own. Therefore, we should cultivate the belief that there can be no real progress achieved without the awareness that the real advancement of the educational process as well as the overcoming of educational and regional differences can be best accomplished if we rely mostly on our own strengths.

Besides other objective obstacles, there is lack of motivation in villages, of both teachers and students. They feel inferior to their city counterparts. So, I think the idea of a temporary exchange of students and teachers in relation city village would not be bad. An appropriate way for a certain period should be found, say one week a year, to practice learning/teaching rural-urban interexchange. This would contribute not only in attitude approach and removal of at least the inferior feeling in subjective terms, but also in improving the English language proficiency of students in the village, which was the aim of this paper

Conclusions

1. Most village schools don't have English as a subject.
2. Teachers of English tend to find better jobs elsewhere.
3. Not all teachers of English are of a superior education level.
4. Sometimes inadequate personnel teach English.
5. General substandard working conditions in villages.

Recommendations

1. Urge government to make English a standard school subject in villages.
2. Motivate qualified teachers of English to teach in village schools.
3. Furnish village libraries with at least English kids' illustrated simplified version books.

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