



**RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF THE NDC's PROGRAM FOR NMIE ON THE
PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND THEIR READINESS FOR
INNOVATIVE PRACTICES FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

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INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Model for Intercultural Education (NMIE) has been developed to design high quality educational policies and practices based on interculturalism, integration and interethnic cohesion. The application of this model enables the integration of students, parents and teachers from different ethnic communities through a modern approach to the implementation of educational practices, purposefully designed for the development of interculturalism. The program is implemented by the Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Skopje team and the NDC Training Centre, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

The Nansen Model for Intercultural Education in the Republic of North Macedonia corresponds to the multi-ethnic nature of the country. The Concept for Intercultural Education emphasizes the fact that about one fifth of the total number of primary schools in the country are schools with two languages of instruction, while about 5% are with three languages of instruction. Moreover, many of these schools show large difference between the proportions of enrolled students with different ethnic or religious backgrounds attending classes in different languages of instruction. Although multi-ethnic in composition, many of these schools operate in such a way that students and teachers from different ethnic communities do not interact with each other during the educational process: classes in different languages of instruction are held in different shifts, while many branch schools even hold classes in different languages in separate facilities. Apparently, such division poses a risk of spreading and reinforcing ethnic and religious prejudices and misunderstandings of the otherness and diversity, which directly challenges the possibilities of building an inclusive and cohesive society based on the interethnic dimension. Therefore, the most recent Law on Primary Education (2019) and the Education Strategy 2018-25 emphasize the importance of developing multicultural and intercultural education.

The Nansen Model for Intercultural Education advocates an educational approach whose essential feature is the integration of students and teachers of different ethnic backgrounds. Tandem teachers from different ethnicities implement bilingual extracurricular activities that are closely related to the regular curricula. Activities are

carried out with a group of students from different ethnic groups, allowing them to learn about cultures different from their own through an active approach. Working together, tandem teachers also serve as a model for cooperation to the students, showing mutual respect, constructive dialogue and effective exchange of ideas and experiences. Thus, with implementation of joint learning and activity, through direct constructive contacts and deeper acquaintance, students are expected to develop affirmative attitudes and respect for the *other* culture and its values. The NDC program for NMIE is implemented through annual programs, in which several types of school clubs in various areas are provided for each grade. These contents are related to the contents of the regular curricula, which additionally allows students to expand and deepen their knowledge and skills. Their implementation requires appropriate training of teachers for implementation of activities provided within the NMIE programs. However, given the great variety of different contexts and situations that teachers face in the implementation of activities, intercultural education also implies the competence to create innovative practices that advocate the intercultural education. During the period from 2008 to 2020, the NDC trainings included over 800 teachers who completed one of the three training modules, while more than 7000 students actively participated in 8256 different extracurricular activities.

Teacher training programs for implementation of NMIE have successively defined specific goals, for basic and advanced level of training¹. The goals of the NMIE trainings at the basic level (Module A) are:

- Training for independent organization and implementation of various intercultural upbringing and educational activities;
- Sensitization for respecting the differences in the school environment and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices of different character – social, ethnic, cultural, etc.;
- Promoting the importance of the individualized approach based on individual potentials and abilities of the students;

¹ Excerpt from the 2019-2020 Program, <https://ndc.org.mk/mk/programi/>

- Training of implementers for proper and successful application of the tandem and team work;
- Recognition of positive features and benefits of the play-way method in educational activities;
- Sensitization of implementers to encourage the children's curiosity, originality and students' creative potentials;
- Introduction to techniques for encouraging and developing logical, flexible, divergent and critical thinking of students;
- Strengthening the interaction, cooperation and trust between the teaching staff from different ethnic communities.

The goals of the NMIE advanced level training (Module B) are:

- Introduction to the concept and the idea of intercultural education and its specificities and characteristics;
- Sensitization for respect of diversity and otherness in a wider social environment;
- Supporting the constructive cooperation and interaction of the teaching staff, as well as between the educational institutions from different municipalities in RNM;
- Training for qualitative evaluation of the content component in the textbook literature;
- Learning about the positive examples and experiences for successful implementation of intercultural education;
- Developing the idea of intercultural education in the Macedonian social context;
- Developing standards for evaluation of various types of intercultural activities.

Having in mind the role of the intercultural education in building an intercultural and cohesive society, the need for activities that advocate and raise awareness of interculturalism and develop the intercultural competence of teachers and students is

emphasized. The Nansen Model for Intercultural Education is just such a program, and thus it is important to analyse its effects on the development of interculturalism in a school context.

Research goals

Starting from the goals of the program and trainings for NMIE, the basic assumption is that their implementation had a constructive effect on teachers' perceptions and attitudes about intercultural education and their readiness to apply innovative practices in the implementation of intercultural education. Thanks to the implementation of the intercultural educational activities, it can also be assumed that the NDC trainings for NMIE have advanced the development of the intercultural competences of students. The main goal of the research is to verify these assumptions.

The training effects on the targeted characteristics of teachers will be reviewed by comparing the responses of teachers without any training for NMIE and those with basic and advanced level of training. More specifically, the research goals are:

1. To examine the teachers' attitudes and perceptions of intercultural education
2. To examine how teachers evaluate the effects of NMIE training in promoting:
 - the intercultural school environment
 - the intercultural competence of students
3. To examine the readiness of teachers to create and introduce innovative practices for intercultural education.

Teachers' responses will be used to directly and indirectly investigate whether the following goals are achieved: interaction and respect for cultural diversity among students from different ethnic communities; whether the multilingual schools offer equal opportunities for quality education in all languages of instruction; whether the school iconography, i.e., the contents (illustrations and portraits, symbols, written messages) reflect the interculturalism; whether there are any obstacles to the development of intercultural education; whether the pandemic and online teaching

have a negative impact on the implementation of intercultural education. At the same time, the teachers' responses will provide outlines of the typical profiles of teachers with and without trainings for NMIE.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research framework

A brief review of the documents relevant to the NMIE program of NDC was followed by two focus group discussions with about 20 participants on intercultural practices in their daily school work. The purpose of these discussions was to make selection of relevant research topics and to define indicators, i.e., the questionnaire statements.

In the main part, teachers are given a questionnaire mainly based on the quantitative methodology, with three additional open-ended questions. The questionnaire is designed to indicate teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the intercultural education, the effects of NMIE trainings at the NDC Training Centre on the intercultural environment in school and intercultural competence among students, as well as teachers' readiness to adopt innovative intercultural educational practices. In the absence of any prior (base-line) data on teachers' readiness before the trainings, a post hock comparison was made between three groups of teachers: those without trainings, those with basic level of trainings and those with advanced level of trainings. This comparison makes it possible to simulate a comparison of teachers' attitudes before and after the trainings.

Designing the questionnaire statements starts from the notion of the intercultural education and the principles of intercultural education given in the Concept for Intercultural Education in RNM and the UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education.

Sample

The research sample consists of teachers from schools in which NDC implements the program for NMIE. According to its goals, the research included teachers with basic level of training for NMIE, teachers with advanced level of training for NMIE, and teachers without any trainings for NMIE. The questionnaire was distributed online through the Google Forms platform and answered by 259 teachers. The final sample consists of 226 teachers who fully answered the questionnaire and agreed to participate in the research: 69 teachers without training, 41 with basic level of training, and 116 with advanced level of training. The average age of teachers in the sample is 43.7 years, and the average length of service is 16.9 years. Tables 1 to 3 show the distribution of teachers in the sample by the type of school, subject, gender, ethnicity and language of instruction.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers by the type of school, type of teaching, and gender

Training	School: urban - rural		School: primary - secondary		Teaching: class - subject		Gender: female - male	
	rural	urban	primary	secondary	class	subject	female	male
No training	14	55	60	8	29	39	60	8
Basic level	5	35	35	6	25	15	38	3
Advanced level	30	86	99	17	60	55	99	17

Table 2. Distribution of teachers by the ethnicity

Training	Ethnicity							Total
	Mac.	Alb.	Tur.	Roma	Vlach	Serb.	Bosn.	

No training	53	9	1	0	2	4	0	69
Basic level	22	10	5	0	1	0	1	41
Advanced level	72	39	2	0	0	1	2	116

Table 3. Distribution of teachers by the language of instruction

	Language of instruction			
Training	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Bosnian
No training	60	9	0	0
Basic level	27	12	1	1
Advanced level	74	39	2	3

Tables show higher representation of female teachers from urban primary schools. Most of the teachers are Macedonian or Albanian and they teach in Macedonian or Albanian language.

Instrument

The basic instrument is the questionnaire that was designed for the goals of this research. First, in order to obtain informed consent, respondents were introduced to the goals of the research and then asked to claim whether they agreed to participate, by choosing between the *yes* or *no* options. Only the responses from teachers who gave their consent were considered in the data processing.

The questionnaire is composed of four main parts:

1. Ten questions for examining the perception and attitudes towards the intercultural education, including examining the awareness of the importance of intercultural education,

2. Ten questions about teachers' self-evaluation of the effects of NDC's NMIE trainings on the development of intercultural education and intercultural environment in schools,

3. Thirteen questions about teachers' self-evaluation of their readiness to create and introduce innovative practices for intercultural education and development of intercultural competence of students,

4. Demographic data questions.

In addition, the questionnaire includes three open-ended questions in which teachers express their views and give suggestions on the necessary competencies that teachers should have to successfully implement the intercultural education, opinions on what is required to improve the readiness and competencies of teachers to initiate and implement innovative practices for intercultural education, as well as what are the main obstacles to the development of intercultural education in our country.

Finally, teachers answer two questions about the pandemic, in terms of whether the crisis and the fact that the teaching process took place online have affected the quality of intercultural education activities and the development of students' intercultural competence.

Except for demographic and open-ended questions, all other questions were answered by choosing one of the five offered answers, proportionally arranged on a scale from 1 to 5. For all questions, the higher score indicates a higher level of agreement with the statement/indicator about the perceptions and attitudes towards the intercultural education, or higher evaluation of the effects of the trainings for NMIE, or higher self-evaluation of the readiness to create and introduce innovative practices for intercultural education and development of intercultural competence of students.

Data processing

Gathering of teachers' responses was followed by the descriptive analysis, differential analysis with application of the *t*-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA), as

well as correlation analysis for data processing. The processing was carried out using the SPSS statistical data processing software package. Responses to all the questions were analysed individually. Additionally, group scores were formed in cases where several questions create a meaningful complex, and then further properly processed.

During the data analysis, the differences between the arithmetic means for different subgroups of the sample were tested, where the ratio of the number of respondents in subgroups meets the required minimum for a justified statistical analysis. This required minimum ratio of sub-samples is observed for teachers with different levels of training for NMIE, class and subject teachers, as well as teachers from Macedonian and Albanian ethnicity and those who teach in Macedonian and Albanian language. The analysis and discussion of results includes all the findings for cases with significant difference between the subgroups of teachers. The use of the term *significant difference* indicates that the observed *difference* is *statistically significant* in those cases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research results are organized in several sections, according to the main goals of the study. Results relating to teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the intercultural education are presented first, followed by the teachers' evaluations of the effects of the training program at the NDC Training Centre for the Nansen Model for Intercultural Education, as well as teachers' readiness to innovate intercultural practices in educational process. At the end of this chapter, predictive models for teachers' readiness for innovative practices are given, as well as typical profiles of teachers with different levels of training in terms of their attitudes and readiness for innovative intercultural practices in education.

Attitudes and perceptions of teachers on intercultural education

The teachers who participated in the research show quite affirmative and positive attitudes and perceptions of the intercultural education. Results in Table 4 show that teachers throughout the whole sample share overall average scores high above the mean value and close to the highest score (5) in terms of their views that joint school activities improve the intercultural relations between students and that the intercultural school environment enables a school to improve its educational outcomes. At the same time, their scores are very low regarding statements that are contrary to the commitments to intercultural education.

Table 4. Attitudes and perceptions of teachers on intercultural education

Indicator	Average response
Joint school activities greatly improve intercultural relations between students in the school	4.45
Creating an intercultural environment in a school enables the school to improve its educational outcomes	4.43
I believe it is better for students from different ethnic or religious communities to attend classes in different and separate shifts or facilities*	1.63
Teaching students about the cultures of other ethnic or religious communities will only incite tensions in the classroom*	1.52

* Questions are evaluated inversely, i.e., a lower value indicates disagreement of teachers with the statements.

The examination of differences between the teachers' sub-samples showed that teachers with basic or advanced level training for NMIE share a significantly more affirmative views than teachers without training, regarding the following indicators: "joint school activities improve the intercultural relations between students" ($F = 6.24, p < .01$), and "creating an intercultural environment in a school enables the school to improve its educational outcomes" ($F = 11.9, p < .01$).

There is a difference in some indicators between the teachers from Albanian and Macedonian ethnic community. Teachers from the Albanian ethnic community are slightly stronger assured that "creating an intercultural environment in a school allows the school to improve its educational outcomes", compared to teachers from Macedonian ethnicity ($t = -2.12, p < .05$), but at the same time, they agree to a higher extent that "teaching students about the cultures of other ethnic or religious communities will only incite tensions in the classroom" ($t = 3.70, p < .001$). As expected, similar differences are found among teachers in Macedonian and Albanian languages of instruction, given that these subgroups are mostly composed of those teachers.

When asked whether the contents and activities for intercultural education should be incorporated in the regular classes or they should remain as part of the extracurricular activities only, 154 teachers (68.5% of the whole sample) believe that the contents and activities for intercultural education should be incorporated in regular classes, unlike 71 teachers (31.5%) who believe that those should be part of extracurricular activities only. However, the data presented in Table 5 show that the factor of training largely affects those attitudes. Namely, a significantly larger share of teachers without training believe that intercultural education should be part of extracurricular activities only.

Table 5. Cross-tabular distribution of teachers in relation to their attitudes towards the question where the intercultural activities should be represented

Level of training	In regular classes	In extracurricular activities	Total
1	38	31	69
2	30	11	41
3	86	29	115
Total	154	71	225

Teachers highly evaluate the opportunities to develop an intercultural environment in their school (with an average score 4.39). In addition, the testing of differences between the groups reveals a significant difference in these perceptions between the teachers without a training and those with advanced level of training for NMIE ($F = 3.38, p < .05$). Paradoxically, unlike the attitudes towards their own schools, teachers are doubtful that the intercultural education can be substantially revived in our country (with a low score 1.96).

Then, teachers believe that there are no significant obstacles to the development of intercultural education in their schools, nor that there is a lack of will among teachers from their own or other ethnic communities to develop the intercultural education. The analysis also showed that there are no differences in responses to these indicators between teachers with different levels of training. No significant difference was found between the teachers from class and subject teaching in any of indicators.

Teachers' self-evaluations of the effects of the training program for the Nansen Model for Intercultural Education

This section includes findings of teachers' self-evaluations of the effects of the trainings for NMIE at the NDC Training Centre on their intercultural work. The main focus is placed on the effects of the trainings on the intercultural school environment and the development of intercultural competence of students.

The findings for evaluation of teachers on the effects of the trainings *on the intercultural environment* in the school are shown in Table 6. The table presents the average answer for the whole sample of teachers in relation to various indicators. Teachers' responses range from 1 to 5, with score 1 referring to the response that trainings for NMIE do not contribute to any change or improvement, while score 5 indicates significant improvement.

Table 6.

Indicator: since the school has taken part in the Nansen intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced...	Average response
the advancement of the intercultural environment in the school	3.81
children from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities to enjoy equal opportunities for quality education	3.91
the iconography, i.e., the representation of illustrations, symbols, written messages and portraits reflects the interculturalism	3.94
the iconography, i.e., the representation of illustrations and portraits, symbols and written messages is an important feature of the school	3.92
the enhanced cooperation between teachers from different ethnic, linguistic or religious communities in ethnically mixed schools	4.23

The table shows moderately high scores regarding the effects of the training on: improving the intercultural environment and iconography in the school, opportunities for quality education of students regardless of their origin, and cooperation of teachers from different communities. The effects of the trainings on the cooperation between teachers from different ethnic, linguistic or religious communities in ethnically mixed schools are evaluated with highest scores. This is especially encouraging considering that the advancement of interculturalism in a school largely depends on the enthusiasm of teachers and their cooperation.

The evaluation of the effects of trainings for NMIE is even more evident after examining the differences between the sub samples of teachers. Table 7 shows the average responses of teachers with different levels of trainings for NMIE, suggesting that all indicators show a tendency of more positive evaluations of the effects of trainings as the level of training is higher.

Table 7. Average teachers' evaluations of the effects of the trainings for NMIE on interculturalism in schools, by the level of training

Average response of teachers

Indicator: since the school has taken part in the Nansen intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced...	no training	basic level	advanced level
the advancement of the intercultural environment in the school	3.36	3.61	4.16
children from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities to enjoy equal opportunities for quality education	3.54	3.73	4.20
the school iconography reflects the interculturalism	3.59	3.85	4.18
the iconography is an important feature of the school	3.57	4.07	4.09
the enhanced cooperation between teachers from different ethnic, linguistic or religious communities in ethnically mixed schools	3.87	4.20	4.46

Analysis of variance between groups shows significant differences between teachers with different levels of training². Table 8 lists all the significant differences between the sub groups of teachers. It shows that the teachers with advanced level of training significantly higher evaluated the effects of the trainings for NMIE in terms of all indicators – when compared to the teachers who did not take part in trainings. In addition, scores of teachers with basic level of training are significantly higher regarding the iconography as an important feature of schools, compared to teachers without training; while scores of teachers with advanced level of training (compared to teachers with basic level only) are significantly higher regarding that trainings have affected the advancement of intercultural school environment, and that children from different ethnic, linguistic, religious communities enjoy equal opportunities for quality education³.

Table 8. Significant differences in the teachers’ evaluations of the interculturalism in the school, by the level of training for NMIE

² The value of the statistic *F* for each of the statements treated as dependent variables in the ANOVA test is statistically significant. The value ranges from 9.13 to 16.10 with a significance level of .01.

³ The statistical indicators for these tests are presented in detail in Appendix 1.

		Different training levels		
Indicator: since the school has taken part in the Nansen intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced...		1	2	3
the advancement of the intercultural environment in the school	1			✓
	2			✓
children from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities to enjoy equal opportunities for quality education	1			✓
	2			✓
the iconography (the representation of illustrations, symbols, written messages and portraits) reflects the interculturalism	1			✓
	2			
the iconography (illustrations and portraits, symbols and written messages) is an important feature of the school	1		✓	✓
	2			
the enhanced cooperation between teachers from different ethnic, linguistic or religious communities in ethnically mixed schools	1			✓
	2			

Legend:

- 1 – Teachers without a training for NMIE;
- 2 – Teachers with basic level of training for NMIE;
- 3 – Teachers with advanced level of training for NMIE;

At the same time, the fact that such views are shared by all teachers, regardless of their ethnicity or type of teaching they provide, is particularly optimistic for the development of intercultural education. Namely, for all these indicators there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities (or those who teach in different languages of instruction), nor between class or subject teachers.

After that, teachers were asked to evaluate the effects of trainings for NMIE on the development of intercultural competence of students in their own schools. Teachers' evaluations are shown in Table 9, with the average answers to the question to what

extent they agree with the statement, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates that they strongly disagree, and 5 indicates that they strongly agree with the statement).

Table 9. Teachers' evaluations of the effects of trainings for NMIE on the development of the intercultural competence of students

Indicator: since the school has taken part in the Nansen intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced students to...	Average response
deepen their knowledge about the culture of other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities in their environment	3.83
have significantly greater respect and understanding for the cultural features of students from other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities	3.86
be better able to deal with new and unfamiliar situations arising from an intercultural context	3.81
communicate and collaborate in a more constructive manner with students from other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities	3.85

The table shows that teachers from the total sample somewhat agree (with a score approaching 4) with the statements that make up the intercultural competence of students. In other words, they somewhat believe that since the school has taken part in the NMIE program, students have gained greater knowledge and respect for the "other" culture, as well as that they are better able to encounter an intercultural context and intercultural communication. These scores are slightly lower than the scores for the effects of trainings on the intercultural environment in the school.

The analysis of responses of different sub samples of teachers shows certain differences between them. Table 10 shows the average responses to the same indicators, depending on the level of training. Teachers with advanced levels of training show a tendency for more positive evaluation of the effects of the training on intercultural competence of students.

Table 10. Teachers' evaluations of the effects of NMIE trainings on the development of intercultural competence of students, by the level of training

Indicator: since the school has taken part in the NMIE trainings, the activities of the program have influenced students to...	Average response of teachers		
	no training	basic level	advanced level
deepen their knowledge about the culture of other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities in their environment	3.67	3.56	4.02
have significantly greater respect and understanding for the cultural features of students from other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities	3.59	3.68	4.09
be better able to deal with new and unfamiliar situations arising from an intercultural context	3.67	3.61	3.97
communicate and collaborate in a more constructive manner with students from other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities	3.57	3.71	4.06

The analysis of variance between sub groups shows significant differences between teachers in terms of their evaluations of the effects of trainings on certain indicators⁴ of the intercultural competence of students. Namely, scores of teachers with advanced level of training (compared to other teachers) are significantly higher when asked if in the period since the school has taken part in the trainings for NMIE students showed significantly greater respect and understanding of the cultural features of students from other communities, and if they communicated and cooperated in more constructive manner⁵. In favour of findings about the positive effects to the development of interculturalism in schools is the finding that there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities and those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers – in terms of their evaluation of the

⁴ The value of the statistic F for the given statements treated as dependent variables in the ANOVA test are 4.60 and 4.53 and are statistically significant at the level of .05.

⁵ The statistical indicators for these tests are presented in detail in Appendix 2.

effects of trainings for NMIE on the development of the intercultural competence of students. This finding indicates that the trainings in the NDC Training Centre probably nullify the ethnic stereotypes of teachers as members of different cultures and enable mutual respect and cooperation and, finally, belief in common goals.

We can summarize that teacher generally assess that those trainings have a significant positive effect on the development of the intercultural environment, intercultural education and intercultural competence of students. At the end of this set of indicators, they were further asked to provide general evaluation of whether students, if they could, would choose an ethnically "pure" or ethnically "mixed" school. Despite the rather high scores about the effects of the program for NMIE, and probably influenced by the permanent politicization of ethnic issues in the country and the concerns it raises, teachers show some doubt regarding this hypothetical situation. The average response to this indicator is 3.29, which is close to the middle option: "Unable to evaluate". However, in terms of this indicator as well, teachers with advanced level of training gave significantly higher scores regarding the probability that students (thanks to the NMIE program) would choose to go to a "mixed" school – compared to the evaluations of teachers with basic level of training or those without any training⁶. From the standing point of intercultural values, the encouraging fact is that there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities and those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers.

Readiness of teachers for innovative practices for intercultural education

This section presents findings of teachers' self-evaluations of their readiness to create and introduce innovative intercultural educational practices after trainings for NMIE at the NDC Training Centre.

Competencies of teachers for innovative practices

⁶ The value of the statistic F in the ANOVA test is 6.21 and is statistically significant at the level of .01.

The competences of teachers for innovative practices in intercultural education are indirectly evaluated through indicators of whether during the regular classes or extracurricular activities they have innovated or introduced an activity or practice for intercultural education that was not part of the trainings or manuals of the NDC Training Centre. On average, teachers across the sample opt for the middle answer option, indicating that they have introduced innovative practices, but very rarely, or only a few times a year.

However, the differences between teachers with different levels of training for NMIE in relation to this indicator are large ⁷:

- typical response by teachers *without any training* is that they have innovated and implemented an activity that they considered as intercultural only a few times (throughout their careers)
- typical response by teachers with *basic level of training* is that it happens rarely, only a few times a year
- typical response by teachers with *advanced level of training* is that they use to innovate and introduce practices several times a year.

The analysis of differences between the sub samples showed that class teachers introduced significantly more innovative practices compared to the subject teachers ($t = 2.06, p < .05$). The reason for this difference may be that the class teaching allows teachers to get to know students better, but it may also be partly due to the stronger effects of the trainings for NMIE. Similar to the previous parts of the study, the finding that there are no differences in responses of teachers from different ethnicities or those who teach in different languages of instruction is affirmative.

Readiness of teachers for innovative practices for development of intercultural competence of students

⁷ These statistically significant differences and values are presented in detail in Appendix 3.

The main point in this section is to check whether teachers (in addition to the intercultural education activities provided by the NMIE program) feel prepared to innovate and introduce practices in extracurricular activities and regular classes that develop the intercultural competences *of students*.

Table 11 shows the average scores for each of the indicators of teachers' self-evaluations of their readiness to innovate intercultural practices *in extracurricular activities*. The table suggests that the teachers on average choose a rather high score in all indicators, i.e., they consider themselves as somewhat prepared to innovate intercultural practices in extracurricular activities.

Table 11. Teachers' self-evaluations of the readiness to innovate intercultural practices for the development of intercultural competence of students during extracurricular activities

Indicator: do you feel prepared to innovate practices in extracurricular activities which will...	Average response
deepen the students' knowledge about other communities in our country	4.15
deepen the students' understanding and empathy for students from other communities in our country	4.13
enhance the communication and cooperation between students from different communities in our country	4.18
enable students to more effectively deal with new and unfamiliar situations of intercultural character	4.16

Of great importance for this research is the analysis of differences between the self-evaluations in different sub samples of teachers. Table 12 shows the average self-evaluations of teachers with different levels of training for NMIE about their readiness to innovate intercultural practices in extracurricular activities. There is a tendency for the self-evaluations of readiness to increase with increased level of training for NMIE.

Table 12. Readiness of teachers to innovate intercultural practices for development of intercultural competence of students during extracurricular activities – by the level of training

Indicator: do you feel prepared to innovate practices in extracurricular activities which will...	Average response of teachers		
	no training	basic level	advanced level
deepen the students' knowledge about other communities in our country	3.68	4.10	4.46
deepen the students' understanding and empathy for students from other communities in our country	3.75	4.00	4.40
enhance the communication and cooperation between students from different communities in our country	3.84	4.07	4.42
enable students to more effectively deal with new and unfamiliar situations of an intercultural character	3.87	4.00	4.40

Additional analysis of variance in responses in the various sub samples provides encouraging evidence that teachers with advanced training consider themselves as significantly better prepared to create and introduce innovative practices, compared to teachers without any training, in terms of all indicators of intercultural competence of students⁸. In favour of the goals of the NDC program is the finding that there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities and those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers, in their readiness to innovate practices for the development of intercultural competence of students during extracurricular activities.

In the following section, we provide analysis of the readiness of teachers to innovate practices for development of intercultural competence of students *in regular classes*. Table 13 presents the average self-evaluations for each of the indicators for the

⁸ The value of the statistic *F* for each of the indicators treated as dependent variables in the ANOVA test is statistically significant at the level of .001 and ranges from 7.38 to 13.56.

entire sample of teachers. The table shows that they are slightly lower than those for extracurricular activities, i.e., teachers feel somewhat prepared to innovate and introduce practices that will develop intercultural competence of students in regular classes.

Table 13. Teachers’ self-evaluations of the readiness to innovate intercultural practices for the development of intercultural competence of students in regular classes

Indicator: do you feel prepared to innovate practices in regular classes which will...	Average response
deepen the students' knowledge about other communities in our country	4.08
deepen the students' understanding and empathy for students from other communities in our country	4.04
enhance the communication and cooperation between students from different communities in our country	4.06
enable students to more effectively deal with new and unfamiliar situations of an intercultural character	4.06

Particularly important are the findings on the differences between the self-evaluations in different sub samples of teachers. Table 14 shows the average self-evaluations of teachers with different levels of training for NMIE regarding their readiness to innovate intercultural practices in regular classes. In this case, too, there is a tendency for the self-evaluations of readiness to increase with the higher level of training for NMIE. Teachers with advanced levels of training show a significantly greater readiness to innovate and introduce intercultural practices in regular classes – for all indicators of students’ intercultural competence – compared to teachers without any training⁹. Additionally, there is a significant difference between teachers with advanced level of training compared to those with basic level of training in terms of the indicator:

⁹ The value of the statistic *F* for each of the indicators treated as dependent variables in the ANOVA test is statistically significant at the level of .001 and ranges from 6.98 to 9.59.

deepening students' understanding and empathy for students from other communities in our country.

Table 14. Teachers' self-evaluations of the readiness to innovate intercultural practices for the development of intercultural competence of students in regular classes – by the level of training

Indicator: do you feel prepared to innovate practices in regular classes which will...	Average response of teachers		
	no training	basic level	advanced level
deepen the students' knowledge about other communities in our country	3.62	4.12	4.34
deepen the students' understanding and empathy for students from other communities in our country	3.68	3.83	4.34
enhance the communication and cooperation between students from different communities in our country	3.64	4.02	4.32
enable students to more effectively deal with new and unfamiliar situations of an intercultural character	3.71	4.00	4.30

Just as in a case of extracurricular activities, very important finding is that there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities and those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers in their readiness to innovate educational practices in regular classes, in order to develop the intercultural competence of students.

At the end of this section, teachers were asked to provide a general evaluation of whether and to what extent the trainings for NMIE have encouraged their readiness to create and introduce innovative intercultural practices during extracurricular activities and regular classes. Table 15 shows the average evaluations of teachers, which are very close to their self-evaluations of the readiness to innovate practices for the development of intercultural competence of students. It can be concluded that teachers give moderately high evaluations of the role of trainings for NMIE at the NDC Training Centre

in their preparation for innovating and implementing intercultural educational practices in extracurricular activities and regular classes. It is important to point out that even in these evaluations there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities, those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers.

Table 15.

Indicator: did the trainings help you to be prepared to introduce innovative practices for intercultural education...	Average response
in extracurricular activities	4.15
in regular classes	4.11

In the last question, respondents were asked to provide a general evaluation of teachers with trainings for NMIE – whether they were generally prepared to introduce innovative practices. The average response on the same scale is 4.15. In this context, it should be noted that teachers with trainings (at both levels) have significantly higher evaluations than teachers without training, but there are significant differences between teachers with basic and advanced level of training, as well¹⁰. Regarding this indicator, there are no differences between teachers from different ethnicities and those who teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers.

At the end of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the intercultural education and the development of intercultural competence of students. Teachers believe that the pandemic and online classes have affected the quality of intercultural education activities, stating that those factors have somewhat reduced the quality. At the same time, they believe that these factors have prevented the development of intercultural competence of students to some extent. The negative impact of the pandemic and the online classes affect all teachers equally; these scores do not show any differences between teachers from different ethnicities and

¹⁰ The value of the statistic *F* in the ANOVA test is 35.65 and is statistically significant at the level of .001.

teachers that teach in different languages of instruction, nor between class or subject teachers.

Predictive models

In addition to testing the differences between different sub samples of teachers, the application of correlation test was used to check whether there is a strong relationship between certain indicators of attitudes and perceptions towards the intercultural education and the readiness of teachers to innovate practices for intercultural education, as well as between the self- evaluation of the effects of trainings for NMIE and readiness to innovate intercultural educational practices. This helped in determining indicators that can be considered as predictive for the readiness of teachers for innovative practices.

In the section dedicated to examination of perceptions and attitudes, most of the statements proved to be important predictors of teachers' readiness to innovate intercultural practices in the classroom and develop intercultural competences of students. Below are given the views of teachers with highest correlation obtained – with the indicator that *they have already innovated intercultural practices* in extracurricular activities or in regular classes (sorted from higher to lower correlation coefficient, with a value of correlation coefficient r between .25 and .35, with significance level $p < .001$):

- Creating an intercultural environment in a school enables the school to improve its educational outcomes;
- Belief that students would prefer to go to an ethnically "mixed" school;
- Since the school has taken part in Nansen's intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced the advancement of the intercultural environment in the school;
- Since the school has taken part in Nansen's intercultural education trainings, children from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities enjoy equal opportunities for quality education;

- Cooperation between teachers from different ethnic, linguistic or religious communities in ethnically mixed schools has enhanced since the school has taken part in Nansen's intercultural education training;
- My school offers opportunities for advancement of the intercultural environment;
- Joint school activities greatly improve the intercultural relations between students.

Below are given the views of teachers with the highest correlation with the indicator that *they are prepared for innovative practices* in extracurricular activities or in regular classes – for development of the intercultural competence of children:

- Joint school activities greatly improve the intercultural relations between students;
- Creating an intercultural environment in a school enables the school to improve its educational outcomes;
- Since the school has taken part in Nansen's intercultural education trainings, the activities of the program have influenced some changes in the intercultural school environment;
- Intercultural education in all its essence is possible to be implemented and revived in our country;
- Since the school has taken part in Nansen's intercultural education trainings, children from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities enjoy equal opportunities for quality education;
- Belief that students would prefer to go to an ethnically "mixed" school;
- Belief that the trainings for NMIE contributed to the development of intercultural competence of students (extremely high correlation coefficient of about .50 for all indicators, with a significance level of .001).

These findings allow us to gain insight into which attitudes are the strongest predictors of teachers' readiness to innovate intercultural practices in their work. If we know that attitudes can strongly motivate an action, these findings indicate which attitudes of teachers have to be considered with particular attention. The findings can be used as a basis for future activity towards developing and strengthening certain attitudes, or preventing the development of certain prejudices as undesirable attitudes.

Encouraging fact is that the age and the length of service of teachers are not related to any of the indicators in their readiness to innovate intercultural practices. These findings can be interpreted in such a way that the readiness to create and introduce innovative practices in intercultural education is more conditioned by the trainings, and not by teachers' age or length of service. This emphasizes the importance of intercultural education training even more.

In an open-ended question, teachers were asked to provide answers to what they considered as necessary for successful implementation of the intercultural education and improvement of their readiness to initiate and implement innovative practices for intercultural education. The majority of teachers point to the need for continuous and quality trainings for intercultural education, as a mean to deepen the knowledge about other cultures, especially the cultures in their immediate surrounding, followed by the organized and structured interaction, endurance in the implementation of those programs, and opportunities for their long-lasting practicing. For intercultural education programs to be successful, it is essential that teachers truly embrace and believe in intercultural values. Many respondents find the motivation of the teachers as crucial, which is closely related to the development of attitudes towards the interculturalism. Some teachers believe that the unity and support by the teammates in coordination with the school management are prerequisites for initiating innovative practices for intercultural education. The main obstacles to the development of intercultural education in our country are found in the division of students (and the teaching process) along ethnic lines in different shifts and facilities, ethnic stereotypes and prejudices among teachers and parents – which are transferred to students, low motivation for intercultural education among some teachers and only the declarative

acceptance of the interculturalism, without its actual implementation. Insufficient continuous education and training of teachers for intercultural education is pointed out as an obstacle as well, and the lack of education of students and teachers about other cultures. It should be noted that the obstacle is also found in perceptions of some teachers that teaching students about the intercultural education is useless if their parents do not follow along – which indicates that some teachers do not quite understand their role in the education of children. Among the most important barriers to the development of intercultural education is the fact that it is not cross-curricular incorporated in regular classes.

CONCLUSIONS

The research results give grounds to conclude that teachers generally share quite affirmative and positive attitudes and perceptions of the intercultural education in RNM and believe that it should be part of regular classes. The results show that the trainings for NMIE generally have a positive effect on the advancement of the intercultural environment and intercultural education in the schools that implement the program. Namely, teachers who took part in the trainings for NMIE have a significantly more affirmative attitude to all indicators than those without training.

More specifically, it can be concluded that teachers give moderately high scores when asked about the effects of the trainings on the advancement of the intercultural environment in the school, with slightly lower scores regarding the effects on the development of the intercultural competence of students. It is evident that teachers' evaluations of the effects of trainings on their own competencies are higher than the evaluations of the effects on the development of intercultural competence of students. This can be interpreted in a way that teachers probably need support in developing a teaching approach based on *learning outcomes*, where the teacher will develop skills to shift the focus to the *learning process that is taking place in student's mind*, instead of being predominantly focused on teaching.

The next important conclusion is that teachers create and introduce innovative intercultural practices less often than expected, with large differences in favour of teachers with advanced levels of training. Teachers give somewhat high scores when asked to evaluate the role of the trainings for NMIE in their preparation for innovating and implementing intercultural educational practices in extracurricular activities and regular classes, although being more restrained in relation to *regular classes*. To some extent, this situation derives from the limitations of the common practice to implement the program through extracurricular activities.

This relative restraint in teachers' scores may be a sign of self-criticism and awareness that the innovative practices require specific knowledge, skills and attitudes (competencies), which can be interpreted as an expression of their need for support in that process. That support can be gained through trainings, but also from colleagues through joint work and mutual counselling. The collegial support allows teachers to get feedback from relevant source – such as their colleagues working in a similar context.

The research results show significant differences in favour of class teachers compared to subject teachers in terms of certain indicators. Of course, the characteristics of class and subject teaching are different, but these differences must not be used as an argument for lower expectations regarding the quality of intercultural education in subject teaching, just because the fact that subject teachers work with larger number of classes and students at the same time. Intercultural values are universal and they can be manifested in any context, regardless of the characteristics of teaching.

In open-ended answers, teachers most often require and recommend continuous and frequent intercultural education trainings. This view is in discrepancy with the view that seems to be widespread among the teachers – that they are overburdened with various trainings. The answer to this discrepancy lies in part in the effects of the NMIE trainings on teachers; in part because the majority of respondents in this study are teachers who are probably more enthusiastic about their continuing development; and in part because of the low awareness of those teachers who do not value enough the development of their competencies and show resistance to trainings for continuous

development. It can be assumed that thorough and continuous training for intercultural education will improve the awareness and competencies of teachers, which will make them feel better prepared to innovate intercultural practices in their teaching practice.

The research results provide grounds to conclude that teachers believe that well-designed and structured activities that enable constructive interaction between students and teachers can lead to quality intercultural education, as a prerequisite for a cohesive and inclusive society.

In the next section, in favour of clearer illustration of the research findings, we provide description of the typical teacher profiles with different levels of training for NMIE. They summarize the attitudes of teachers regarding all indicators, which will make it easier to see the importance of activities that encourage the interculturalism – including trainings for intercultural education.

Typical teacher profiles – by the level of training for NMIE

Profile of a teacher with advanced level of training for NMIE

A typical teacher with advanced level of NDC's training for NMIE has a positive perception and affirmative attitude towards the intercultural education. They believe that joint school activities greatly improve the intercultural relations between students, that creating an intercultural environment in a school enables the school to improve its educational outcomes, and disagree that it is better for students from different ethnic or religious communities to attend different school shifts or learn in separate facilities. They largely believe that intercultural education activities should be included in regular classes. They believe that their schools have prosperous opportunities to develop an intercultural environment and that teachers are willing to take part in that process.

They believe that the trainings for NMIE have a significant impact on the advancement of the intercultural environment and the iconography in the school, as well as on the development of the intercultural competence of students. Furthermore,

they believe that the trainings for NMIE provide children from different ethnic or religious communities with more equal opportunities for quality education, and find significant improvements in the cooperation between teachers with different ethnic or religious backgrounds. They create and introduce innovative practices for intercultural education several times a year and feel prepared to innovate practices in both extracurricular and curricular activities that will develop the intercultural competence of students.

Profile of a teacher with basic level of training for NMIE

A typical teacher with basic level of training for NMIE has a moderately positive perception and affirmative attitude towards the intercultural education. They believe that joint school activities enhance the intercultural relations between students to some extent and that creating an intercultural environment in a school somewhat enables the school to improve its educational outcomes. They believe that their schools have some potentials to develop an intercultural environment.

They share somewhat positive attitude regarding whether the trainings for NMIE have an impact on the advancement of the intercultural environment and the iconography in the school. Although sharing a mostly affirmative attitude, they show a certain amount of restraint regarding whether the trainings for NMIE contribute to the development of intercultural competence of students. Although they believe that the cooperation between teachers of different ethnic or religious origins has enhanced, they still share the view that trainings for NMIE contribute children of different ethnic or religious origins to have more equal opportunities for quality education only to some extent. They rarely create and introduce innovative practices for intercultural education during the school year and feel somewhat prepared to innovate practices in they work that will develop the intercultural competence of students.

Profile of a teacher without any training for NMIE

A typical teacher without any training for NMIE, although working together and communicating daily with teachers who have attended such trainings, has a hesitant attitude towards the intercultural education. This is reflected in the only partially positive perception regarding the questions whether the joint school activities improve the intercultural relations between students in the school, and whether the creation of an intercultural environment in a school allows the school to improve its educational outcomes. They believe that their schools have only limited opportunities to develop the intercultural environment. They are not sure whether it is better to incorporate the activities for intercultural education in regular classes or keep them only as part of extracurricular activities.

Teachers without any training for NMIE are more reserved when asked whether the trainings for NMIE have an impact on the advancement of the intercultural environment and the development of students' intercultural competences. This is followed by a more reserved attitude towards the question whether the trainings for NMIE contribute to the children of different ethnic or religious backgrounds to enjoy more equal opportunities for quality education. They evaluate the cooperation between teachers from different ethnic or religious backgrounds as moderate, although it is unclear whether this is due to the NDC program. Given that they did not attend trainings for NMIE, it is expected that they innovate and implement intercultural educational practices only spontaneously and rarely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results provide a starting point for several recommendations in favour of improving the teachers' competencies for implementation of the intercultural education, which would significantly contribute the development of intercultural and cohesive society.

Wide range of trainings for intercultural education

Given that some teachers in the country are highly aware of the need for continuing training, while others feel overburdened with trainings, we recommend

implementation of activities that will raise awareness among teachers in RNM of the importance of intercultural education. Above all, this is necessary for teachers with low awareness of the importance of continuing professional development, as well as low awareness of the fact that the intercultural competencies are an important part of the general teacher competencies that they must possess in order to work as educational staff, especially in a multicultural society such as Macedonian.

Intensified focus on subject teaching

Starting from the findings about some indicators where subject teachers are less prepared for intercultural education than the class teachers, we recommend an intensified focus on intercultural activities aimed at and adapted to the characteristics of subject teaching for both teachers and students. Usually, subject teachers have less opportunity to get insights into the moral development and behaviour of students. As the nature of their work includes frequent and constant change of classes, they tend to be less sensitive to the relevant behavioural signs of students. This tendency can lead to less engagement in the upbringing work with students and to less initiative for continuing training for development of their own teaching competencies. This perception is even more true for the intercultural education in high schools. Hence, it is necessary to prevent the development of attitudes towards the intercultural education as an activity that is more relevant to lower grade students.

Intensified focus on regular classes with a cross-curricular approach

Having in mind that the teachers show a certain restraint regarding the implementation of intercultural activities in regular classes, we recommend devising an approach that, after certain adaptations, will offer enhanced support in this segment. This situation partly derives from the nature of the school subjects themselves, as well as the common practice to implement the program mainly through extracurricular activities. Adapted to the specifics of regular classes for different subjects, a cross-curricular approach can be devised for the development of intercultural values within the regular classes, which is in line with the recommendations of the EU Council for the development of key competencies. This approach recommends that all teachers practice

intercultural values and incorporate them constantly through the so-called hidden curriculum throughout the regular educational process.

Teaching based on learning outcomes

Given that teachers' evaluations of the effects of trainings on students' competencies are lower than the evaluations of the effects on the development of their own intercultural competences, we recommend measures to support teachers in developing competencies for teaching intercultural values based on *learning outcomes*. This kind of approach places the focus of education on the student, because the most important thing is the learning process that is taking place in the mind of a child.

Collegial support

In order for teachers with different levels of training for NMIE to get valuable feedback on how they practice the intercultural education, we recommend an extended model of *collegial support* and cooperation. This approach provides more experienced teachers in the implementation of NMIE (who are members of tandems) to give support to teachers who are not part of tandems and who have completed only a basic level of training – in advancing the intercultural education through tandem implementation of activities. Thus, new temporary tandems can be formed, composed of one more experienced and one less experienced teacher for the implementation of NMIE. This would create conditions for faster and wider dissemination of the philosophy and the values of NMIE.

Continuous evaluation

In order to promote the intercultural education, we recommend continuous evaluation of indicators of the intercultural environment in schools and effects of the intercultural education programs. We recommend students and parents to take part in the evaluation process, as well as teachers from schools which do not implement the intercultural education programs.