



SOCIAL AND CIVIC SKILLS OF 5-7 -YEAR- OLD CHILDREN IN THE “SURROUNDING WORLD”

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a content analysis of Program Systems in the Educational Field Surrounding World for the third and fourth group in the kindergartens in order to study the topics related to the formation of social and civic skills of 5-7-year-old children. The emphasis is placed on the results obtained from the system and targeted implementation of the thematic area. Based on the data obtained, recommendations are offered on the need to update knowledge and to develop skills in intercultural development.

Keywords: Social and civic skills, intercultural development, 5-7 year old children.

INTRODUCTION

Because of enhanced migration and increasing ethnic diversity, the issue of intercultural interaction has become a very important topic. In addition, an important feature of cultural diversity is the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups. According to Jacques Delor, the world belongs to the children and, in it, they need to learn how to live together and be themselves, to know and to take actions. In this context, pre-school education is an important period in their preparation for life. The knowledge, skills and habits needed for guiding the child in the *surrounding reality* is necessary for shaping productive social interaction with others and creating easy adaptation to the changing world around him. Thus, the main task of pre-school education is not only to preserve native traditions but also to update the knowledge of the preparation of children in the field of intercultural development.

The formation of the child as an active citizen with a high degree of social competence and civic skills is a requirement and an expectation of society from the pre-school age. It can be done in the process of pedagogical interaction in enriching the cognitive and practical experience of 5-7- year-olds, aiming at socially oriented lifestyle, and in particular for children who, for one reason or another, have been registered into a marginalized group. It is an undisputable fact that all children are unique and have their own specific features. They are "United in Diversity" (as is the motto of the European Union - Unity in Diversity) united by different traditions and languages, but of the same value. In the process of education, emphasis is placed on the child's value attitude to the world, as well as the affirmation of his individuality in conditions of sociocultural environment and diversity (Konakchieva, 2016). This way he gets a broader picture of himself and his relationships with people, despite his differences. All this change in the child allows him to cope with the more complex social environment and feel accepted, despite the feature of his cultural community (Doncheva, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the content analysis that focuses on the social and civic skills of children from the third and fourth age groups covered by author teams approved by the Ministry of Education in Bulgaria. The main objective is to find out the extent to which the idea of social roles and relationships in the family is advocated, children's rights, awareness of feelings and an appropriate way of expression, holidays and customs that are traditional for different cultural communities and cultural differences, etc.

The content data are related with forming of social and civic skills in compliance with the State Educational Standards. Ordinance No 5 of 03.06.2016 on pre-school education of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in Bulgaria is a normative document including the state educational standards for pre-school education (SESPE) as well as the requirements for the implementation of a program system. It is a complex of requirements for learning outcomes and it

reflects the educational directions on which pre-school education is carried out, the objectives and content of the individual educational fields, requirements for the learning outcomes of each of them in the different age groups (MES, 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table № 1, 2 and 3 presents the expected results regulated in Ordinance №5 of the MES, according to the educational field "Surrounding World" for the third and fourth age groups.

Table № 1. Expected results in the educational field "Surrounding World", unit "Self-affirmation and communication with others"

EDUCATIONAL UNIT "SELF-AFFIRMATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS"	
THIRD GROUP	FOURTH GROUP
1. Expresses his feelings to children and adults in the family and its vicinity	1. Partners the teacher and cooperates with peers
2. Observes rules for communication in pairs and in small groups of peers	2. Interacts with adults and peers, taking into account their mood and linking this mood to reasons that give rise to it
3. Understands family relations and his place in the family	3. Knows exactly what "social role" means
4. Expresses mutual assistance in games in pairs and in small groups. Compares his actions with those of others and actively interacts with adults and peers	4. Understands the difference between role playing and real relationships
5. There are specific notions of trust and tolerance towards the others	5. Exhibits tolerance towards children and adults being different
6. Works actively in partnership and teamwork	6. Demonstrates increasing independence and confidence
7. Realizes different feelings	7. Expresses his own thoughts clearly and specifically, takes into account the ideas of the others
8. Maintains interest in the game	8. Avoids conflicts and, if necessary, resolves them

Table № 2. Expected results in the educational field "Surrounding World", unit "Social and healthy environment"

EDUCATIONAL UNIT "SOCIAL AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT "	
THIRD GROUP	FOURTH GROUP
1. Understands the purpose of public buildings in a nearby environment (polyclinic, school, post office, theater, park, amusement park)	1. Has ideas for the school – classroom, furniture, teaching tools needed by the student
2. Explains adequate standards of behaviour towards persons familiar and unknown to him	2. Expresses his right to choose and initiative among others

<p>3. Explains the differentiated purpose of game equipment and materials for mobile and relay games 4. Shows that he knows how to move along the corridor, along the escalator</p>	<p>3. Selects game actions according to the peculiarities of toys, game items and game situation 4. Understands and demonstrates the necessary different behavior and observance of rules when on the street, in the eatery, at the place of recreation, at the place of entertainment.</p>
<p>5. Knows rules for own health protection and healthy eating</p>	<p>5. Compares state of health and disease</p>
<p>6. Has an idea of professions from the nearby environment – education, medicine, services, etc.</p>	<p>6. Recognises professions from different fields and their importance for the life of people – construction, security, public transport, etc.</p>

Table № 3 Expected results in the educational field "Surrounding World", unit "Cultural and national values"

EDUCATIONAL UNIT "CULTURAL AND NATIONAL VALUES "	
THIRD GROUP	FOURTH GROUP
<p>1. Congratulates on the occasion of a particular holiday, trying to observe customs in the community</p>	<p>1. Names personal, public and national holidays, local customs and traditions</p>
<p>2. Recognizes the national flag</p>	<p>2. Recognizes the national anthem and reacts by expressing national pride and paying tribute</p>
<p>3. Understands and observes the main elements of the protocol of conduct when celebrating the national holiday, as well as personal, folklore, public holidays</p>	<p>3. Links specific holidays and celebrations with relevant personalities and events (3 March, 24 May, 18/19 February, 2 June)</p>
<p>4. Connects traditional rituals with relevant community holidays (e.g. Christmas, Easter, etc.)</p>	

Ordinance No 13 of 21.09.2016 of the Ministry of Education and Science sets out the framework requirements for the results of training in civil, health, environmental and intercultural education. This normative document defines the state educational standard setting out the objectives, ways and forms for their implementation, as well as the framework requirements for the results of training in civil, intercultural education (MES, 2016).

Regarding the "picture of the world", the child begins to receive information in kindergarten, in the educational direction "Surrounding World". For the third and fourth age group is realized through pedagogical interaction aimed at socializing processes - building an adequate idea of the surrounding close, social environment, acquiring a culture of behavior, social communication skills and independent game activity as a prerequisite for school (Doncheva, 2017). Systematization of objectives and expected achievements in it are specified through the four educational units. In three of them social and civic skills is a priority: "Self-affirmation and communication with the others", "Social and healthy environment", "Cultural and national values", and "Social and healthy environment".

The objectives of the unit are an integral part of a variety of ways to connect and successfully communicate with the others. Activities are planned for the children to familiarize themselves with the national values and traditions in order to preserve and promote national identity. In the process of pedagogical interaction on the above-mentioned topics, adolescents enrich their knowledge of the surrounding world, which they need to acquire skills and competencies such as communication, tolerance, understanding and respect for the other people's opinion. Gathering experience and skills to build a broader picture of the world is crucial to the child and for the formation of his social and civic skills.

Based on the normative documents and state educational standards authors teams who consist of teachers working in childcare institutions and lecturers from universities have developed program systems, that observe the basic pedagogical



principles of being scientifically and systematically approved, consistency, visuality, spirality, accessibility, etc. Expert committees of the Ministry of Education approve all of them, before being allowed to be used to work with children in the system, in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The author groups examined in this article are of three publishing houses: "Bit and Technika", Publishing House "KLET BULGARIA" Ltd. (successor of "Anubis" Ltd. and "Bulvest 2000" Ltd.) and Publishing House "VT- KOMS-Publishing House Slovo – Krusev & sie". The choice is based on some criteria that you may see below. The first publishing house we analyze as a basis for comparison and evaluation of social and civic habits and skills in children coming from an intercultural environment is "Bit and Technika".

The program system "Golden Key" belongs to a team of authors: Eli Georgieva and Gergana Ananieva. It consists of two cognitive books for the third and fourth group in the educational field "Surrounding World". The topics try to develop memory, attention, thinking and imagination of the child. When analyzing the publishing house we focus on the three educational units: "Self-affirmation and communication with others", "Social and healthy environment" and "Cultural and national values", and the expected results form the social and civic habits of the child in preschool.

For the third age group, the topics in the cognitive booklet are thirty-four, and for the fourth age group, twenty-four, presented with illustrations. The pictures are linked to child observation implying to start a talk with the kid in order to update personal experiences and share an experience. The ideas are presented in the form of storyline - role-playing games, didactic games, drawing from experience, watching movies, reading fiction, drawing a dashboard, storytelling, drawing, racing games, modeling, observation, etc. The efforts of the authors when developing the content for the fourth group are aimed at creating such constructive models and didactic games that allow the child to realize the gradual change of the dominant game activity with activities in which the game aims are differentiated from the learning motives - a game with learning.

First global theme from the "Self-affirmation and communication with others" unit. For the third age group, five topics were addressed: for positive association with others and a desire to collaborate with people from his close environment. In the four contents used, a specific idea of the child's order and his obligations in the kindergarten and the expression of interest in life in the group is formed. Active interaction with peers and adults is expressed in compliance with the rules. The program system focuses on ability of the child to explain the differentiated purpose of game play facilities. Two topics have been developed about the relationships between family members and the responsibilities between them. The main goal is for a child to get an idea of his own abilities, to help at home and to care for his loved ones. Six plots are selected in order to develop the skills, compare their actions with those of other peers, be able to evaluate their behavior in the process of communicating with them, using two kids and forming a small group. A special attention is paid to piling up trust and concrete notions of tolerance towards the others, for children from different cultural communities. The ideas in the seven topics are related to the acquisition of the ability to assert one's own individuality. Within the three units is illustrated the building of experience and how to use the appropriate words when communicating in a nearby social environment, as well as the ability to tell and share his own experience. Children are brought up to understand the relationship between feelings and the reasons that give rise to them. Involving them in a game, kids are provoked to feel emotional and to recognize between the different feelings. The main purpose of these situations is for the child to be able to navigate his own feelings and to possess the ability to experience empathy. To apply cultural etiquette when communicating in pairs and expressing mutual assistance.

In the fourth age group, in connection with the preparation of the child for school, a topic is set for the formation of notions about the school environment - teaching tools and teacher-pupil relationships. There are six plots where the child forms skills for differentiating right and wrong behavior expressed in exhibiting tolerance in communication and avoiding conflicts. The contents are planned to form the idea of the student's social role. Areas for recognizing the other's emotions are tailored. Ideas in programming content are sufficient on differentiating people's behaviour in different workplaces. The issue of educating skills to avoid conflict-provoking situations is also addressed.

Analyzing the global topics in the "Social and Healthy Environment" unit. In the third and fourth age groups, the authors have marked specific issues related to the formation of the child's skills to exhibit tailored behavior in public places; experience appropriate interpersonal communication and establish friendship; in three separate topics, he learns how to show his skills, how to be part of the group and to interact actively with the others. Knowledge on safe behaviour is repeated in four of the contents. The same number of topics is appointed to the child skills to explain the relationship of his health behavior and desire and readiness to adhere himself to healthy eating habits. Emphasis is placed on five topics in order to form a clear picture of professions from the nearby environment and to express respect for them. Also embedded in the program system

is the idea related to the social role of a student, focusing on school duties and school equipment. Another accent in five-plot content is put on notions to establish habits for safe movement.

The third global topic is from the "Cultural and national values" unit. It is related to forming and strengthening of civic skills of preschoolers. For the third group in nine topics the author team develops questions for the formation of the child's desire to participate and belong to national customs and traditions. The content also builds a skill to recognize the national flag. In other eight topics, the team creates the idea of how to congratulate on and how to describe his emotional experiences. The idea of naming personal, public and national holidays is sufficiently covered, as well as the ability to describe his homeland. The issue of attitude to the environment and care for its protection is also developed. In five of the topics, the child demonstrates different behavior in a reading room, in a library. In one content, he learns to express national pride, to describe and tell about his own experience and knowledge. Using seven stories, he acquires the skills to associate the specific holidays and celebrations with the respective tradition, observing the main elements of the holiday.

The analysis of The Publishing House "Bit and Technika" can be summarized as follows:

- The cognitive booklet is illustrated with pictures, which facilitates the perception and understanding of the assigned tasks and corresponds to the learning age and its abilities. This supports the development of visually shaped thinking and its transfer into abstract logical thinking considered typical and age-appropriate.
- Particular attention should be paid and emphasis should be placed on topics related to relationships in kindergarten and rules of communication in pairs and within the group. The plots related to the family and the relationships between its members are not well presented. They could be expanded more and more, thoroughly examined, and searched in order to include children from families with different cultures.
- Pedagogical situations where knowledge about flag, coat of arms and symbols are advocated could be further and more thoroughly developed, prevailing the information about holidays and customs. There is no comparison with other cultural communities.
- The topic related to acquiring skills for collaborating with the teacher and forming the social role of the student is underdeveloped. Regulated situations in which children prepare for the future role of being students could be increased by providing more knowledge about the rules at school, the expected obligations of the student and attitude to school duties, especially to children from different cultures.

It is imperative that children who do not speak Bulgarian must form social skills for easier adaptation in a peer group. This way they will discover the differences and the similarities with the others, which will help them develop and establish a tolerant attitude towards kids with cultural differences.

Table 4 presents an analysis of PH "Klet Bulgaria" Ltd., (successor of PH "Anubis" Ltd and of "Bulvest 2000" Ltd.), authors team (Baeva and Yanakieva, 2000):

Table 4. Analysis of civic and social competences, PH "Klet Bulgaria" Ltd., (successor of PH "Anubis" Ltd and of "Bulvest 2000" Ltd.)

Program system "Viki and Niki"					
№	Educational unit	Third group		Fourth group	
		Number of Topics	Social and civic skills	Number of Topics	Social and civic skills
1.	Self-affirmation and communication with the others	10	1.Acquires the skills to comply with societal norms, good behaviour and rules of communication in a group	9	1. Acquires the skills to describe himself and to be aware of



					the differences and expresses affection for the others
			2.Understands family relations and his place in them		2. Interested in everything related to school
			3.There is a specific idea of trust and tolerance		3. Has a specific social role of the student
			4. Demonstrates preferences and manifestation of aesthetic taste		4. Shows affection for the family and comments on the idea of a family community
					5.Demonstrates independence and confidence
					6. Develops skills to collaborate with others by avoiding conflicts
2.	Social and healthy environment	10	1.Understands the purpose of public buildings and has a specific idea of the professions around him	10	1. Interested in everything related to school life and is willing to participate in it
			2. Interested in social relationships		2. Able to observe rules and demonstrates necessary different behaviors, works in small groups
			3.Shows self-care		3. Shows friendship and desire to support

					different children
					4. Recognizes different professions and imitates them through game actions
3.	Cultural and national values	5	<p>1. Observes customs, traditions characteristic of the community and tells about the family traditions associated with the holiday</p> <p>2. Recognizes the national flag and the specific holidays associated with the specific symbols</p>	8	<p>1. Names personal, public holidays, customs and traditions and emotionally shares his experiences</p> <p>2. Recognizes the symbols of statehood - flag, coat of arms, anthem</p> <p>3. Recognizes historical personalities and events from images and tells about them</p>

After the summarized analysis of PH "Klet Bulgaria" Ltd., (successor of PH "Anubis" Ltd and of "Bulvest 2000" Ltd.), we can accent on the following notes:

- It is noticeable that the cognitive books for the third and fourth age groups focus on three positions, rules for personal health protection. The topics related to environmentally friendly behavior are covered in almost each pedagogical situation, whereas four situations put emphasis on civil and intercultural education. To be more precise, attention is paid to homes and buildings in other countries, as well as their history of occurrence. Thus, the child receives notions of the lives of unknown peoples, enriching his or her ideas about them. The topic about the New Year holidays provides information on the way the different people celebrate them. This way the proposed plots provoke the social responsiveness of children.
- Attention has been paid to both eating and behavioral habits. Children acquire the skills to describe and get to know the rules of environmental protection. In pedagogical situations for the fourth age group adolescents are introduced to the parts of the day and the time range. Presented are ideas of national identity and empathy. Useful are the notions related to identifying the differences in the anthem of Europe and Bulgaria. In addition, topics related to the formation of the social role of a student and familiarity with the rights of the child could be included.
- The author team has developed quite rich content. The idea related to the formation of competences has also been developed in the part of civil society, being exact orientation in the difference "resident of a town or village".

In conclusions, the creation (or formation) of competences in terms of cultural differences, tolerance and constructive interactions is necessary due to the fact that children from intercultural backgrounds must be able to show respect and understanding to peers from other cultural communities. This can be achieved by developing basic communication skills in the process of game activity in a multicultural environment.

In Table 5, we will pay attention to the topics studied in Program system “Pencil – I play and I know”, author Petya Konakchieva (Konakchieva, 2019).

Table 5. Analysis of the topics forming civic and social skills of PH “VT-Koms- Izdatelstvo Slovo Krusev i sie”

Program system “Pencil I play and I know”					
№	Educational unit	Third group		Fourth group	
		Number of Topics	Social and civic skills	Number of Topics	Social and civic skills
1.	Self-affirmation and communication with the others	20	1.Expresses affection for children and adults in the family and understands the rules of communication with others, describing family roles	22	1.Partners with the teacher and collaborates with the peers
			2.Realizes his own value and uniqueness and that of others and has the skills to describe differences and similarities with other people		2.Interacts with peers and adults, taking into account their mood, values patterns of behavior according to the rules and demonstrating respect
			3.Orients itself in ways of partnering between people and expresses affection, love, gratitude		3.Understands the difference between role playing and real relationships, compares, analyzes and describes patterns of behavior and role models
			4. Has a specific idea of trust and tolerance towards others. He is able to describe benchmarks and strive to emulate them		4. He is able to describe his and others' emotional experiences in situations of celebration. Evaluates patterns of behavior according to generally accepted norms. Listens patiently and carefully to someone else's opinion
					5. Applies rules and norms for a healthy lifestyle in everyday life
					6. Demonstrates attention, responsiveness and empathy and empathy towards others. Avoids conflict

2.	Social and healthy environment	19	1.Understands the purpose of public buildings and has a specific idea of professions in the environment	16	1. Has an idea of the school classroom, furniture, teaching tools
			2. Has a specific idea of social roles and activities and behaviors at home and in kindergarten, as well as basic hygiene norms for health protection		2.Understands the relationship and compares the behavior of children and adults in a social environment. Demonstrates and understands different behaviors and compliance with rules and healthy lifestyle
			3. Forms an idea of the rights of the child and the norms of behavior in the process of interaction in a daily environment; personal safety rules at home and on the street		3.Builds a generalized picture of occupations, the purpose of buildings and the inventory in people's work
					4.Selects game activities according to toys and promotes its own strategy of activity
			3.		Cultural and national values
			2. Recognizes the national and European flag. Builds a specific picture of national symbols around the world		2.Recognizes the national anthem and expresses national pride
			3. Understands and observes the main elements of the protocol of conduct in the celebration of the national holiday as well as personal, folklore and public holidays		3.Forms a generalized idea of significant cultural and natural attractions of the hometown. Adopts benchmarks of universal human virtues, following the example of local and national heroes

Our comments and analysis on the cognitive book “Pencil – I play and I know”, PH “VT Koms- Izdatelstvo Slovo-Krusev i sie”, author Petya Konakchieva” are the following:

- A special feature of the cognitive booklet "Pencil -I play and I know" is that the topics for the third and fourth groups aim to achieve individual competences such as expected learning outcomes by forming a generalized knowledge of the picture of the world. The author's view is that each topic is presented in two pedagogical situations, the first one is acquiring new knowledge and skills, and the second one aims at strengthening and permanently remembering the new material. Unlike the other authors teams, it is interesting that the first theme for the fourth group is related to modeling of consistency in human development and thus, the child builds a sustainable attitude for the positive "I" concept, which is presented only here.
- Emphasis should be placed on topics related to the focus on gaining social experience and forming social skills in order to adequately implement them in different situations. There is a sufficient number of themes related to family relationships, rules for safe behavior, positive attitude to health and the formation of a culture for healthy nutrition. In two of the topics there is a transition to educating environmentally friendly behavior, which, for example, we could not find in the book developed by the author teams from publishing house “Bit and Technika”.



- Pedagogical situations in which knowledge of the perception of national and European symbols is provided, are not well presented. The topics could be expanded and result in deepening the national consciousness and identity and awareness of one's own uniqueness and that of others in order to form civic self-consciousness. In contrast, there are a sufficient number of pedagogical situations describing the perception of holidays, traditions and customs, symbols and ways of celebrating and congratulating. They could be an addition to topics related to how to celebrate the different cultural communities in our country.
- Only in this publishing house in both age groups, there is a topic where are presented how technical achievements develop and thus educate the child to form a thinking and desire for copying their model in adventurous and adventurous games.
- In two of the topics, an idea of cultural and historical attractions is built, but not in a full aspect. Parts of the national costumes and symbols of different cultural communities are missing. Regulated situations develop basic communication skills in the process of game activity in a multicultural environment.

In conclusion, the necessity to provide knowledge about different cultural identities and understand intercultural relations aims at forming a positive attitude towards diversity and acquiring communication skills in a multicultural environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Most of the topics developed by the authors teams we analyzed, as well as the program systems approved by the MES, integrate content that partly allows to achieve the expected results in the third and fourth age groups. As a result of the content analysis we could conclude the following: the topics and resources used have age-appropriate content. Paintings, illustrations, photos from the close social reality provoke the child to express personal opinion, attitude and reasonable answers. The inclusion of intercultural elements from the authors teams is one of the conditions for preparing adolescents for life in a multicultural environment.

Based on the aforementioned opinion we can make the following recommendations:

- For easier adaptation in a group for the children who do not speak Bulgarian, it is appropriate to form social skills in order to establish a tolerant attitude towards peers from different cultural communities.
- Acquiring of competences regarding cultural differences, tolerance and constructive interactions in the process of pedagogical interaction with children can form an intercultural environment. Development of appropriate basic communication skills in a multicultural environment, realized through game activity.
- It is good to propose a greater diversity of topics related to knowledge of children about different cultural identities, respect for and recognition of their rights, and the value of being different. The perspective of a society related to the education of adolescents in social and civic skills is aimed at recognising the importance of diversity and equality in the common social space. This requires an active search for forms, methods and means of training directed at updating and modernising the educational processes. The emphasis in the process of training and education is put on the willingness of the child to live in a globalized and multicultural world as a socially competent active citizen. This can be done by carefully selecting the appropriate topics in the process of pedagogical interaction, including enrichment of children's cognitive experience.

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