

Education and Self Perception of People with Hearing Impairments in Municipalities of Tetovo and Gostivar

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Abstract

The late 20`s in Republic of Macedonia show a significant improvement in fostering, care and education of people with hearing impairments. The first institution for fostering and education of deaf people has been opened 50 years ago, as a special school. The importance of what kind of education the deaf children are going to acquire and how that will impact on their self perception, intrigued us to make a research in two municipalities of Republic of Macedonia, where 40 respondents participated. The research was of qualitative character by using semi-structured interview. The results show that a small percentage had no education at all, and the others had only finished high school, none of the participants had finished or at least enrolled in college. Those who have finished in special primary schools have higher level of self perception and more confidence, than those who were in the regular school system.

Key Words: *deaf community, special education, special didactic, self perception*

Introduction

The current state of the educational system of people with hearing impairment is the result of long various influences that have different impact in different countries. But as far as the education of the people with hearing impairment in Republic of Macedonia is concerned, the history of the country itself, proves that all the changes that have occurred worldwide, arrived very late in my country.

The first steps in care and education of the hearing impaired in the Republic of Macedonia dating from 1949, with the opening of the first institution named "House of defective people" in Skopje village Petrovac, where were included 57 deaf children from 7-14 years, and 28 adults, which is the germ of the Macedonian Rehabilitation. Now this institution, which was renamed in 1970, functions in city of Bitola, as The Institute for Rehabilitation of children with hearing impairments "Koco Racin" - Bitola, within the functioning of the elementary special school for children with hearing impairments.

In 1955, opens the first institution for professional training of deaf people in Skopje, under the title "Professional high school with practical training for deaf children", which nowadays functions under the name Center for Education and Rehabilitation - "Parteniya Zografski"-Skopje.¹

As it can be seen, the education of the hearing impaired people from the very start is based on special education, in special schools. The first attempts to change this system of education are detected in the late nineties but remarkable change came with the adoption of the law of primary education in the Republic of Macedonia, regulating the compulsory education of people with disabilities in regular and in special schools and therefore:

- Every child has the right of basic education (prohibits discrimination on any grounds) (Article 2)
- For students with special educational needs are provided appropriate conditions for the acquisition of basic education in mainstream and special schools, and are entitled to take their assistance for acquisition of elementary education. (Article 6)
- Primary education for pupils with special educational needs are organized and conducted in special schools and special classes in regular primary schools. (Article 10)

Article 30, 41 and 42 in the same Law stipulates that curricula should be tailored according to their abilities, and that at regular schools can be hired a special education teacher working with children with special needs, while the number of students in the special class is determined by the Minister. According to Article 48, the parent has the right to enroll in regular primary school, unless the special educational needs of the child are such that you need to follow instruction in particular school.²

Bilingual approach to the education of people with hearing impairment

Until now, no one has been able to answer the question, which kind of education is most appropriate for people with hearing impairments, because programs vary, and what may be convenient for one child, does not mean it will be for the other. Because of this reason parents are faced with a difficult decision when enrolling their children in primary school. Whether to choose special schools, whose outcomes of education of deaf children are already known, played the main role of deaf culture and the deaf community population. According to the experiences of deaf students, offsprings from deaf parents, special schools allowed them to be identified as part of a cultural linguistic settings, but deaf students who originate from parents who are not deaf, consider that the separation with their parents was uncomfortable and it represented difficulties in the first years of their education in special schools.³

What does the sign bilingual education mean? It can be described as "access to education for deaf children where they use the language of the deaf community (sign language) and the language of the hearing community (spoken and / or written language)." Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, oralism was dominant approach to education of people with hearing impairment, while the use of sign language is considered as a rigid system of mimics and gestures, but after some research, such as that of 1979 by Conrad, who investigated the ability of individuals with hearing impairments to read the written language and reading lips who were educated with oralism system, and according to the results their ability to read written language was at the age of 9 years, and also the reading from the mouth was not better than those who use sign language. Other studies done in the 1970s and '80s, proved that children of deaf parents were more successful in education than children of parents who are not deaf, and the reason for this was the early use of sign language, which contributed in these children to form much earlier confidence and sign language contributed to more successful education.

In the same survey done by Conrad in 1979, 38% of students prefer to use sign language not only as a unique approach to learning, but as the only way of communicating.⁴

¹ Ајдински Љ., Андреевски В. (2001). *50 Години заштита, рехабилитација, воспитание и образование на лицата со пречки во развојот во Република Македонија 1949-1999*, Скопје: Сојуз на дефектолозите на Р. Македонија, стр.77-157.

² Закон за основно образование, *Службен весник на РМ*, бр.103/08, 33/10, 116/10, 156/10, 18/2011, 51/11, 06/11,100/12 и 24/2013, стр.10

³ Marschak M., Lang H., Albertini J., (2002). *Educating deaf students, from research to practice*, New York: Oxford University press, p. 141

⁴ Bradarić- Jončić S., Ivasović V. (2004). *Sign Language, Deaf culture & Bilingual Education*, Faculty of education and rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, Zagreb: Kratis, p. 112, 113

What are the goals of bilingual education?!

1. To enable deaf children to become competent linguistic;
2. To provide access to the wider program, curriculum;
3. To facilitate and improve literary skills;
4. To build a positive image for their identity in deaf students.

As an option for deaf parents and parents who are not deaf to be satisfied there is a program called Bicultural-bilingual program, or the BBC program, which allows deaf children to be educated in the language of the deaf community, example MSL, the language of community in which they live, as the Macedonian language, thus to capture the socio-cultural aspects of the deaf students from both communities.

The implementation itself of bilingual-bicultural program has several principles:

- Recognition of the language and culture of the deaf population;
- Recognition of the value of linguistic and social pluralism in society itself;
- Recognition of the need to eliminate discrimination and to encourage deaf people;
- Equal opportunities regardless of language, disability, ethnicity or gender;
- The use of language indicates that deaf people are linguistic and cultural group.⁵

Bilingual education in Republic of Macedonia has just been mentioned as a possible way of education for deaf children and hard of hearing, but till now very little, or let's say nothing has been done in that direction.

Inclusion of people with impaired hearing

Inclusion is a multidisciplinary concept, which in itself means a transformation of society in all its segments, i.e. changing the values, priorities, and policies that support the eternal law of exclusion and discrimination. Inclusion corresponds to the postmodern principle of pluralism, because of the approach which is based on a social interaction. Inclusive education involves identifying, challenging and overcoming barriers to participation, caused by social, ideological, and physical factors.⁶ The aim of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities equal educational opportunities as their peers, relatively speaking "normal."

Precisely for that reason, these children should be involved in social processes as well as in the academic process.⁷ In the U.S.A. about 50 thousand deaf and hard of hearing students attend regular schools. According to research by Holt, who collected data on the number of deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in regular schools, shows that his results correspond to annual report of deaf children conducted by the Center for Assessment and Demographic Research, according to which the majority of deaf children of 12-17 years attended special schools, and that those children with profound hearing loss probably did not reach the academic level of education.⁸

The social experience of hearing impaired

The process during which the children and adults gradually adopt behaviors by social norms and requirements is called socialization. Socialization firstly begins with the interaction between the child and the mother, then spread between the father and the family, peers, etc. Many theories of personality are distinguishing different aspects of human behavior and experience, which are composed of a mixture of innate and acquired traits of personality, such as instincts, drives, needs, attitudes, sentiments, factors and personality traits, where often emphasizes its adaptation to the environment and adaptation in terms of mental health. Also many theories emphasize early experience in shaping behavioral and structuring of personality and its customization. Many people with hearing impairment share with each other similar early experiences, dealing with difficulties in communication with the environment, which brings its own special patterns of adjustment and finally encounters with barriers and provocations posed by hearing impairment and speech.

⁵ Marschak M., Lang H., Albertini J., (2002). *Educating deaf students, from research to practice*, New York: Oxford University press, p. 144, 145

⁶ Јачова З., Каровска А., (2009). *Дете со кохлеарен имплант во рамките на инклузивната училишта*, Скопје: Студио Круг, стр. 36, 37.

⁷ Marschak M., Lang H., Albertini J., (2002). *Educating deaf students, from research to practice*, New York: Oxford University press, p. 143

⁸ Scheetz N. (2003). *Psychosocial aspects of deafness*, Boston: Pearson Education, p. 95

In the socialization of deaf people major role plays learning, but complex content such as motives, attitudes, moral values that cannot be explained, still play an important role in the social experience of people with hearing impairments, which are shown through the identification process, i.e identification of opinions, feelings and behavior of people (especially parents), thus creating a positive attitude towards those people.⁹

Some research shows that the way of education has different effect on the socialization and self perception of children with hearing impairments. For example the studies of Conrad show higher level of self perception and confidence of those children who visited special school for deaf children than those in the regular system.

Research Methodology

The main subject of our research was to analyze the attitudes of people with hearing impairments in the municipalities of Tetovo and Gostivar, in relation to the educational aspect, and the aspect of social experience. The aim of our study was to determine the status of people with hearing impairments by the operation of educational and social institutions that include people with hearing impairments.

Definition of the research questions

Which is the level and the way of education which acquire people with hearing impairments?

Does inclusive education have a positive impact in self perception in comparison with special education?

What is the self concept of people with hearing impairments?

Are people with hearing impairments accepted as linguistic culture?

How is the social interaction of people with hearing impairments to people who are not deaf?

Research techniques and instruments

Interview was used as a research technique. Respectively as an instrument we used a protocol of semi structured interview. Previously prepared questions from topics relevant to the research provided us direction to conduct the conversation and gave a space for the full expression of the respondent.

Sample survey

We decided for opportunistic sample, respectively convenience sample, which means we have chosen subjects that were available, for which we had previous information from the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Tetovo. Exactly 40 respondents participated, with varying degrees of hearing impairment, 20 from the Municipality of Gostivar, 20 from the Municipality of Tetovo, aged 18-65 years, all in good mental condition and able to participate in the study.

Organization, conditions, and ongoing research

The survey was conducted in the municipalities of Tetovo and Gostivar, at the Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in the same cities, in the period from February to March - 2014, and each interview was documented on video.

Data processing

The data obtained from this study was qualitatively analyzed by a type of analysis known as interim analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Regarding to the first question, the extent, and the method of education of the hearing impaired, **31 participants have completed secondary education in a special school in Skopje,**

"Yes, I have completed both primary and secondary special school in Skopje, my grandfather would take me every day from the village Kamjane to Skopje, by car, for 12 years, all his treat.

While **three respondents have completed only primary education in regular primary school,**

"I have only completed primary school in the village school in Zhelino, I never continued high school, and I have learned nothing"

⁹ Радоман В., (1996). *Сурдопсихологија*, Београд: БИГ штампа, стр.101, 102

Only 6 respondents have not completed any education:

"No, I have not finished school because my father didn't allow me, I was very pretty, racial, and I went deaf because of the charms when I was only 5, and my father didn't let me in school, so he grew me up to marry me"

In relation to this issue have been distinguished two concepts, of which prevailed the thoughts **that people with hearing impairments have barriers in enrollment in higher education (31)**,

"In secondary school they did not give us motive for University, we were said that high school is enough for us, so certainly it is very difficult"

While 9 respondents believe that there is no problem to enroll in higher education

"Yes, deaf students can enroll in college, but only those that are special for the deaf. There are such universities, and it would be easier. I know that there are deaf students who finish university here, but I think it is harder for them, but where is a will, there is a way"

According to the analyzed results of the second question, **37 respondents** believe that inclusive education has a **negative** impact on **self perception** for students with hearing impairments, that deaf people would only be felt less valuable:

"There is no logic to be only one deaf child, and others to be able to listen perfectly, in which way they will understand each other, even if they have an interpreter between them. It wouldn't be nice, it wouldn't feel nice, for example, before moving me in Bitola, while I was studying in regular school I thought I was stupid, because all the others considered me like that"

Only 3 respondents consider there is a positive impact:

"I think it's nice for deaf children to learn together with the ones who aren't, but to have a translator in presence. It would be easier and they would learn better"

Analyzing the responses in relation to the third question, there are distinguished three concepts, **i.e. 13 respondents have a high degree of self-perceptions** with a sense of equality with the hearing population:

"I think we're all the same, why should I be different from the ones who are not deaf, they have illiterate too just like we do, which means that their illiterate ones can't understand either. We, who have education, do not deal with problems in understanding each other"

19 respondents have a degree of self-perceptions with a sense of difference in terms of hearing population:

"I think I am different only because I'm deaf. If I could talk and listen, then I think there would be no trouble for me in finding a job, and I would finish many of my unfinished obligations, I'm just saying"

8 respondents have a sense of inferiority in relation to the hearing population, i.e. less capable than those who hear:

"I'm not able to start a conversation because I don't even know the signs, and how do you expect me not to be different and lower than the others?!"

Regarding the fourth question, we have grouped the answers into three concepts, of which was dominant the thought **that people with hearing impairments are not accepted as linguistic culture (18)**:

"They do not accept me at all, they call me deaf, we don't understand you, and so I remain to associate only with deaf people, because they just mock me, so this is why I prefer being friends only with the deaf"

17 respondents consider that they are accepted as a separate linguistic culture:

"I am well accepted by all, we only had troubles the first time we see each other, but when they conclude that I understand them, after a while they accept me, they believe I have my own language"

Only 5 respondents consider that are accepted partially as linguistic culture:

"Sometimes they accept me, they know I have my own language, but still ask me to go for a coffee with them, and hang out. But they get angry very easy, just like me because there are times we can't understand each other, sometimes I actually think they consider me stupid"

According to the answers of the fifth question prevailed statements **that the communication between the people with hearing impairments and the hearing population is completely missing (19)**:

“I have no communication with the hearing population, imagine my own cousin has no patience to talk and listen to me, we begin to discuss something and minutes later he will find a reason to go away, because he always says to me: ‘I don’t have much time, it takes me forever to understand you’....so, what should I expect from others?”

While 12 respondents consider that they have good communication with the hearing population and they have no problems in communicating with them:

“I have a lot of friends who are not deaf, I have a good relation with all my neighbors, I got a lot of friends, we go out often for a coffee, we go to football matches too, but when I realize that someone is talking behind my back, I try to ignore them as much as possible”

9 respondents said that they have very poor communication, the only thing they do is greet each other:

“I have poor communication with them, we only greet each other, there are times when we ask about each other’s family and that’s all. This happens because they don’t understand me and they have no patience at all”

Conclusions and Discussion

For the first question we came to conclusion that 77% of respondents have secondary education in a special school for the deaf in Skopje, but 9.6% of them have not even finished a primary school, which means they were directly enrolled in secondary education because of not having enough information, however we can conclude that people with hearing impairments have acquired the necessary education. 77% of respondents believe that being deaf is very difficult, especially when it comes to enroll in higher education, while in Great Britain 854 deaf students enrolled in higher education according to the research of Joan Fleming and John A. Hay, deaf students, titled “Deaf and Successful” in 2006.¹⁰ Regarding to the second question, 92 respondents consider that the inclusive education affects negatively self perception, which corresponds with the results of the survey of Anny Malick, in her research, in which these students have to pass some several stages before they reach the level of high self perception, or may never arrive. According to the third question, 32% have a high degree of self perception, respondents who share this opinion have finished secondary education, and are employed, which means that the results that Katherine Rogers obtained, correlate with our conclusion, that the level of education and the way of education, and the sense of belonging, affect the self perception. 47% of respondents have a degree of self-perceptions with a sense of difference, they feel less valuable, but they are also aware that are different and limited in contrast with the hearing population.¹¹

The fourth research question stated that there is an equal percentage of respondents who believe that they are accepted as a *separate linguistic culture*, they have their own language, and that their language is a minority, respectively 42%, and *they are not accepted as linguistic culture*, i.e. 45%, because they still think that people see them as people with disabilities, and feel disrespectful, only 3 % have an ambivalent attitude toward acceptance of general population. In the fifth research question we came to conclusion that the majority of respondents have no communication with the hearing population because they can’t and don’t even try to understand the deaf ones i.e. 47%, while 30% believe that they have good communication, they have no problems nor difficulties.

Research Recommendations

1. To get to know people with hearing impairments with the opportunity for inclusive education equality in the education process, and the benefits of this mode of education.
2. To create a collaborative network of social centers where registered children with impaired hearing, with the ones in primary schools, in order to carry out advisory work with parents to properly inform the possibilities for their child's education.
3. Implementation of the professional orientation of students with hearing impairments in order to provide vertical transition into higher education.

¹⁰ Fleming J. and Hay J., (2006). *Deaf and successful*, Retrieved March 17, 2016, from: <https://www.google.com/#q=deaf+and+succesfull++class+of+2000>

¹¹ Rogers K., *Deaf Children and Young People – Promoting Positive Well- being*, Retrieved June 19, 2013, from: <https://dub105.mail.live.com/default.aspx?id=64855&owa=1&owasuffix=owa%2f#1/mail/ViewOfficePreview.aspx?messageid=c98643a7-dcc4-4d84-a663-cd899eb4309a&folderid=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000001&attindex=0&cp=-1&attdepth=0&n=72725710>

4. Active inclusion of people with hearing impairments, in various activities organized by central and local government in order to raise the self perception.
5. Promoting the sign language as a method of communication between the people with hearing impairments, in order to raise awareness among ordinary citizens.

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