
**UNDERSTANDING THE DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AS A
CONSEQUENCE OF MIGRATION- MACEDONIA****Elsa Pollozhani**Institute of Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of the Albanians- Skopje, elsapollozhani@live.com

Abstract: Migration is an inseparable process of the establishment of human societies, and there are different types of migrations and of different character, depending on the reasons and the causes. Migration has always been oriented towards developed countries. In the past, on an international level, among “preferred” destinations for immigrants have been USA, Canada and Australia. With the end of World War Two, there was a new wave which was more attracted to the old continent. Europe soon started to attract many workers from the region as well as from other continents. At the end of the twentieth century, even those European countries that previously sent migrants to wealthier countries began to receive migrants from the rest of the world. Certainly, underdeveloped countries are those that are most affected by migration. Part of this group is also Macedonia, which has been mostly affected by economic migration as a specific type of migration, which in the last years has had an unstoppable flow. Taking into consideration this situation, through this paper titled “*Understanding the decrease in the number of students as a consequence of migration-Macedonia*” I will deal with the phenomenon of migration which causes social disorders with consequences on the country’s perspectives. In order to construct a clear and concise paper, mirroring the current situation, I will rely on the empirical-analytical research method. The research interest of the paper will focus on the situation of the last three decades, starting from 1990 to today. The actual situation with special focus on economic migration, which implies the aim for better living conditions, will be presented through precise figures. As a result of these movements, this group of the population lives a better life in the western countries; however their home country is losing its people and there is a significant decline in schools. In order to give an accurate description of the situation we will rely on data published by institutions that deal with statistics and these kinds of demographic movements. Some of these institutions include the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, the statistical office of the EU called Eurostat etc., which have published worrying data concerning the continued fall of the number of students in schools in the country. According to this data, the situation is even more alarming in the schools in Albanian language, particularly in places with Albanian majority.

Keywords: migration, education, consequences, development.

INTRODUCTION

The article that I decided to present in this conference, both by actuality and complexity, touches to the core the topic “The Teacher of the Future”. There are two factors which lead to the change of the demographic structure of a country: birth rate and migration. Since birth rate is a process which belongs to demographic politics, the object of study of this paper will be migration as the main cause of the fall of the number of students in the country. Both of these phenomena significantly affect the disorder of the future of a country of limited development as is the case of Macedonia. Migration, which these last two decades has experienced large-scale increase, is stimulating the emptying of schools in Macedonia. This phenomenon is vigorously decomposing the most vital substance of the country. Therefore, migration as a dynamic phenomenon, represents a study of interest for different scientific fields and disciplines. Apart from the daily and the weekly press in the country, migration and the decrease of the number of students in the elementary schools is also discussed in different scientific journals. In preparing this article, I have used the data gathered and published by the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, Eurostat and International Organization for Migration as primary sources. However, I have also consulted several scientific publications dealing with this issue.

MIGRATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Contrary to some beliefs that migration is only a recent phenomenon, data show that it has been present since the beginning of human history. Throughout centuries, there are registered movements from one continent to another, migration within the same continent or within the same country. Certainly, migration has had a significant role in shaping today’s society. These movements have influenced the development of countries and induced changes in society.

When discussing migration as a phenomenon, it should be mentioned that there are various kinds of migration, depending on the reason and the purposes that lead to these moves. One is social migration, when people decide to move somewhere else in order to have a better quality of life or only to be with their close family and friends. Certainly, one common phenomenon is political migration, which is mostly present in war-torn countries or countries in conflict. In these countries, people usually move in order to escape political persecution or the war itself. Another type is economic migration, which is also the focus of this study. The

Cambridge English Dictionary³²⁴ defines economic migrants as people “who leave their home country to live in another country with better working or living conditions”. Even though economic migration has been present for a long time, it cannot be denied that since the 1980s there is an increased number of people who move with the purpose of improving the standard of living. As a result, countries with slower development and poor living conditions are among those that suffer the consequences in many aspects, emphasizing here the decline in the number of population.

According to the World Migration Report of 2011³²⁵, the numbers of migrants reached one billion in total, meaning that one in seven of the world’s population were migrants. The report showed that despite the effects of the economic crisis, there was no decline in the number of migrants on an international level. Indeed, there was registered an insignificant slowdown in migration movements to developed countries however this did not affect the patterns of migration. Concerning international migration, the IOM report³²⁶ for 2017 showed that there has been a rapid grow in the number of international migrants compared to 2010 and 2000. The total number reached 258 million migrants in 2017. According to the studies on the level and trends of migration, from 1990 to 2015, there has been an increase of 91 million international migrants. This number accounts for 60 per cent of the population.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Similar to other less developed countries, Macedonia has been continuously affected by this phenomenon. Emigration of its citizens is not a recent phenomenon. The reasons that have caused these migratory moves are various. According to Vanco Uzunov³²⁷, a professor at the Law Faculty in Skopje, the second half of the 19th century marked the beginning of Macedonian migration era. Migration was caused by socio-economic reasons, with the purpose of achieving better living conditions. However, he argues that, with the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the situation was to some extent improved, as a result of fair redistribution of wealth and reduced unemployment. This did not halt the migratory moves completely; but there was a slight decrease in migration.

Certainly, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and later the First and Second World War resulted in the migration of large number of people. Some of the main destinations were USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. A second large flow happened during the 1960s, which came as a result of the poor economic conditions within the country. However, these groups were mostly oriented towards Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, and Sweden, including here Austria, Denmark, Netherlands and Norway, even though the number was smaller. Finally, the economic stagnation as well as the Kosovo crisis and the armed conflict in 2001 caused an increase in the number of emigrants from Macedonia³²⁸.

As it is stated in the title and the abstract of the paper, the study will evaluate the impact that the phenomenon of migration has on society, emphasizing here its repercussions for the education in the country. These movements negatively influence both, the quantitative and qualitative aspects of education in the country. It should be emphasized that the mass migration process causes similar consequences as the phenomenon “brain drain”. In order to be in line with the topic “The Teacher of the Future”, through this paper I will show to what extent economic migration influences the future of education in the country. The data for the paper are mainly drawn from international organizations, statistical institutions, national media as well as independent academic researches, even though there is little research conducted on migration.

It is evident that in the last decades, the high rates of migration have had their consequences, with the number of people decreasing in many cities across Macedonia. Taking into account the fact that some data concerning earlier migration flows are not available or that some existing data published by institutions dealing with statistics on migration are inconsistent, the interpretation of available data should be done cautiously. The independence in 1991, and later the establishment of a new political system, brought several changes to the country, such as “privatization, restructuring and bankruptcy of state-owned enterprises”³²⁹. This was considered to be a difficult process, mostly because it had negative consequences for the population. Many people were excluded from the labor market which “contributed” to the rise of unemployment rate. Certainly, these socio-economic changes intensified the migratory moves from Macedonia. At the beginning, these movements were considered as temporary; however, eventually they were transformed into permanent. Even though there was an increase in the number of emigrants from urban areas, it was the people of rural areas that had higher level of migration. With regard to the gender structure, the number of women experienced an increase, mainly as a result

³²⁴ In Cambridge’s Dictionary Online

³²⁵ International Organization for Migration (2011), p.49,

³²⁶ International Organization for Migration (2017), p.1

³²⁷ Uzunov, V., 2011. pp.3-4

³²⁸ International Organization for Migration, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia., (2007), p.19

³²⁹ Janeska, V. p.4

of family re-unification. Therefore, the registered percentage of children, aged 0-14, was 16.8% and this applied only to EU countries³³⁰.

When studying the changes in the number of population, the reports of the inter-governmental organization IOM represent some of the most accurate data on the number of migrants. The report on Migration Profile of Macedonia³³¹, published in 2007, showed that the main countries of destination for citizens of Macedonia are Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Italy, Turkey, US, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, France. According to this data, the highest number of migrants is registered in Australia with 81,898. European statistics agency is another reliable source which was consulted in the preparation of this study. In the report that the agency published in 2013, covering the timeframe from 1998 to 2011, the continuous flow of migration was confirmed by the provided data. The estimated number of people that left the country to live abroad in a legal manner was as high as 230,000 people.³³² This number accounts for around 10% of the population. Taking into account the fact that Macedonia's population is 2.1 million, the number of people that left the country within this relatively short period is considered to be high. The Eurostat³³³ has been collecting data by sending questionnaires to partner countries regardless of their status. They cooperated with a network of contacts in each country, mainly being national statistics offices but also other institutions such as central banks and government ministries, which were engaged in producing data.

The State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia publishes every year the review on internal and international migration. The report published on June of every year shows the data of immigrated and emigrated citizens, by the country of origin as well as by the corresponding municipality. In the report of 2007³³⁴, the number of emigrants was relatively low, reaching 240 people. According to the report of 2010³³⁵, the total number of people that left the country was 1007. Compared to the previous report, there is a significant increase. The destinations include all continents however; the highest number migrated to Europe and USA.

Another published report deals with the situation in schools across 80 municipalities and the municipality of Skopje. The report was prepared based on the data of the State Statistical Office. The report clearly showed a general decrease in the number of students in the elementary schools around the country. The Center emphasized that the factors which largely influence this are the falling birth rate and emigration. According to the published data, the total number of students in elementary schools in the school year of 2006/2007 was around 231.497. However, the numbers follow a falling pattern, and in the school year of 2015/2016 the total number of students reaches the figures of 185.992. This shows that in the time span of nine years, the number in elementary school in the country has decreased for more than 45.000 or around 20%.³³⁶ The real situation caused by the process of migration can be presented by the number of students in the schools across the country, more precisely by the number of first graders. The yearly reports of the State Statistical Office provide data for the number of students registered in each school year on national level. According to the data on the number of first graders at the end of the school year, we notice that in 1991/92³³⁷ the number is 33,993. A decade later, in 2000/01 the total number is 30,679, while in 2010/2011 it falls to 22,130 and in 2015/16 it is 21,846. The drastic fall that can be noticed in the number of first grade students, from 1991/92 to 2015/16, is the decrease of 12,147 pupils. The highest fall is registered between the school years of 2000/01 and 2010/11, with a decrease of 8549 students on a national level.

In order to accurately mirror the situation, I will focus on the table³³⁸ which shows the number of students registered in first grade in 80 municipalities in the country. The number of first graders registered in the school year of 2006/2007 is 23.895. Even though in the following years a slight decrease is evident, it should be mentioned that in the school year of 2007/2008 there is a significant difference with the previous year. The number of first graders in this year reaches the figures of 41.569. Despite this high number, the following years the number continues to fall. In 2008/2009 the number is 23.103, in 2009/2010 is 23.002, in 2010/2011 is 22.224, 2011/2012 is 21.488, in 2012/2013 is 21.544, 2013/2014 is 21.437, in 2014/2015 is 21.872, and in

³³⁰ Bornarova, S., and Janeska, V (2012) p.9

³³¹ International Organization for Migration, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia, (2007), p.16

³³² Marusic, S. J., (2013)

³³³ Europe, Eurostat- Enlargement countries- statistics on living conditions: Since 2016, the agency changed the way of collecting demographic statistics. They stopped using the questionnaires; instead begin to rely on the Eurostat's unit which is responsible for demography statistics. In order for the statistical production of the enlargement countries to comply with the requirements set by the EU, Eurostat supports and assists the national statistical offices and other institutions which produce statistical data. The agency achieves this through "a range of initiatives, such as pilot surveys, training courses, traineeships, study visits, workshops and seminars, and participation in meetings within the European statistical system"

³³⁴ State Statistical Office (2010), p.86

³³⁵ Ibid. p.86

³³⁶ Cancarevik, O., (2016)

³³⁷ State Statistical Office

³³⁸ Cancarevik, O., (2016)

2015/2016 is 21.747. Concerning the higher number of students registered in the school year of 2007/2008, it should be mentioned that it applies to all municipalities, confirming that this year can be seen as an exception.

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year, the number of students in elementary schools was 192 448, which represents a decrease of 0.1% compared to the previous school year. If we take into account the media reports and articles, published at the start of every school year, it can be seen that they report about a continuous decrease, which in some cities and villages is much more noted.

CONCLUSION

As it is already emphasized in the text, different sources give different figures concerning migration from Macedonia. Even previous articles published by researchers, confirm this by warning of a possible discrepancy between data given by different sources. However, it is certain that the number of economic migrants is high and it continues to grow with steady intensity. The embassies of Western European countries in Macedonia are receiving everyday requests for visas. The country, apart from experiencing the migration of the most vital group of the population, that migrate as skilled workers, it is also experiencing the departure of highly educated people, who cannot find a job or leave for better living conditions. It is an undeniable fact that mass migration have resulted in the decrease of the number of students in schools, as well as emptying cities and villages. In one decade, the number of students in general, particularly that of first graders has been reduced by half. The decrease is more pronounced in the Albanian population in the Republic of Macedonia, which for many decades massively migrates to more developed countries in the search of a better life.

Two decades ago classes consisted of 40 students, while in the last few years there are classrooms with only 4 students. Until now, the emigrants were mostly skilled workers and those with primary or secondary education. According to the most recent reports of the World Bank, Macedonia and the whole region of South Eastern Europe is losing its younger generations. What is different in this case is the fact that these young people have high-education and they leave with the purpose of having better career opportunities, mainly in Western Europe. The migration of highly educated population which is also known as brain drain has negative implications for the country. This can negatively influence the growth of population, public finances as well as the economic growth potential.

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