

CIVIC EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FUNCTION OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA*

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Abstract. Starting from the socio-political context of changes that have affected the education systems of Eastern European countries, the authors summarize the specific nature of the process of democratization of education in Europe at the turn of the century. The paper analyzes the purpose of democratization of education and of introduction of Civic Education and Religious Education classes in the education system of the Republic of Serbia, observing the idea that education may serve as a generator of social changes, and stating that school is an important support pillar in promoting and accepting the values of the community, as well as in personal growth and the development of every individual. The presented theoretical concepts are supported by the summary of results of empirical studies that have been focused on the analysis of the pedagogical aspects of the implementation of teaching these subjects at the secondary level of education from the perspective of teachers, pupils and parents. Based on the insight into the topic, the authors suggest searching for a “common tangent” in Civic Education and Religious Education teaching process via an open and tolerant dialogue of participants of both subjects, which would enable the exchange of experiences, attitudes, and opinions of pupils, as well as coinciding and permeating of spiritual and democratic values as a foundation for further democratization of school in general.

Key words: democratization of education, education for democracy, Civic Education, Religious Education, secondary school in Serbia.

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Introduction: Democratization of Education

The last decade of the 20th century in Eastern European countries was marked with strong political, economic, and cultural transformations, whose nature was extremely turbulent in contemporary Serbia. The direct cause of the above-mentioned changes was “the collapse of communism in 1989 and reaching of international consensus on the needs for development of democratic forms of rule” (Clive, 1997: 184). Parallel with structural and economic transformations, the reforms in the countries of this region were also focused on the changes within education systems as generators of social changes, since setting up of a democratic political system and the development of a democratic culture entail the functioning of the overall community in accordance with the democratic values.

J. Dewey (1859–1952) provided the best description of inter-dependence between the process of education and democracy, as well as the type of education that could fulfil the requirements of a democratic society. The American philosopher did not comprehend democracy solely as a political system and the form of rule, but rather perceived it as a social system and the form of moral and spiritual association, a form of unique philosophy of daily life, the value of which develops in joint living and “joint exchange of experiences” (according to: Bernstein, 2008: 24). In his work *Education and Democracy* (1916), Dewey emphasized that this mutual exchange of experiences ensured in turn a stimulating environment that supports growth and the development of each individual. He explained the role of education in a community based on mutual co-operation as a process of enriching of power to freely and fully participate in joint activities. Therefore, education is necessary to all individuals, regardless of their physical and psychological inequality, so that each and every individual can develop their individual potential and accomplish their unique contribution to the society (Djui, 1970: 213).

Reviving the above-mentioned theoretical postulates, contemporary reformers use education in their attempts to reach all members of the community who need to be provided the understanding of democracy as a form of social life and its core values by adopting the democratic way of thinking and patterns of democratic behaviour. The noted processes in young democracies of Eastern European countries conditioned the changes in objectives, contents, and methods of education during the 1990s, which was recognized as the beginning of a new stage in the *democratization of education* (Mijatović i Šooš, 1999: 601). Numerous international discussions and exchanges of experiences related to the topic of democracy in school (Clive, 1997: 183) had an important impact on shaping of the above-mentioned processes. The period was also marked with launching of argumentatively coloured discussions on the importance of differentiating between the terms *education for democracy*, which emphasized the dimension of political socialization and rehabilitation, and the term *education in democracy*, which was much more in Dewey’s

spirit and marked an active mutual transformation of the school and society (Carr, 1998; Dobozi, 2003).

The Recommendation of the Council of Europe on education for active participation in the democratic society was passed in 2002. The Recommendation suggests to all communities in the region to introduce and further develop the so-called *civic education* via three levels of acting: as a special teaching subject, in the form of inter-subject topics and cross-curricular education. The document emphasizes that *education for democratic citizenship* could contribute to democratization, tolerance, promotion of values that lead towards the inter-cultural dialogue, and solidarity of all the citizens. The experience-based, participative and research study methods of teaching that rely on the exchange of experiences between teachers and their pupils at local, national and international levels via the co-operation with the civil sector, with the assistance of the media and new information-communication technologies (Council of Europe, 2004: 4), were deemed suitable.

Significant differences in the organization of contemporary education are present as the effect of integration of national values and cultures of a certain country, honouring the tradition and previous positive experiences in this field, in spite of the fact that Eastern European countries have started changes in education systems with the same mission (the development of democratic community), deploying similar reform principles (decentralization, democratization, liberalization, pluralism, and freedom of choice). An important aspect of this process is related to democratization of the school curriculum. In this regard, the paper discusses the democratic changes of the secondary school curriculum in the Republic of Serbia through the analysis of the pedagogical aspects of implementation of the subjects Civic Education and Religious Education. The analysis included tests of achievement of education objectives, the implementation of teaching contents, as well as the experience of effects of their implementation from the perspective of teachers, pupils and parents.

Democratization of the School Curriculum

The values of the democratic community can be most efficiently developed and adopted in the school context, as claimed by Dewey, if school is enabled to function as a live and actual social institution where pupils learn from their own life experience through acting in the community of mutually different peers, and resolving actual, or real life problems (according to: Westbrook, 1993). At the same time, the pupils should primarily master the methods that enable continuous extension of the scope and accuracy of individual's perception of the meaning of things arising as the result of the experience of a specific community. This can be achieved in the environment that encourages participation and free expression of the opinion and needs of every individual, where no emphasis is placed on the adoption of finished knowledge, but rather

on the exchange through a dialogue that nurtures tolerance towards different opinion, fairness, honesty, solidarity (according to: Webster, 2009), as well as critical thinking and coping, i.e. facing.

That is why contemporary school reformers are inclined to single out democracy, critical thinking, relational ethics, creativity, social justice, and solidarity as the key values. The above-mentioned values are perceived as the basis for the re-organization of educational institutions at all levels, which need to become available to everyone and serve as a meeting point of different psychophysical, social, cultural, and political possibilities of children, young people, and adults (Moss, 2008: 15). At the same time, in schools of multi-cultural countries of Europe, which advocate the discussion on the rights, values, and ethical dimension of human activities, it is not possible to clearly differentiate the private from the public in the dialogue of pupils who belong to different ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Aiming at overcoming the potential tension in schools, the Council of Europe has affirmed an *inter-cultural approach* and training of young people for *international cultural co-operation* (Evropska dimenzija obrazovanja, 1997) on the one side, and the concept of *multi confessional religious education*, which includes introducing pupils to all religions of the world, on the other (Dačić, 2005; Mršević, 2009). On the other hand, in Eastern European countries, where religion used to be expelled from schools at a certain point due to ideological reasons, there is a strong tendency to re-instate Religious Education (Kuburić & Moe, 2006) in schools as a form of rehabilitation of national and cultural identities that are getting dispersed under the pressure of the globalization processes.

The above-mentioned contradictory flows of democratization of the contemporary school are the part of the endeavour to make the educational process more flexible and differentiated, thus making it more harmonized with the pressures of a modern life (Havelka, 2000) and challenges of living together within specific multicultural communities. An adequate space for the fulfilment of the above-mentioned objectives, contents, and methods of work in schools was created via the process of diversification, which enabled an introduction of a larger number of elective and optional subjects apart from the mandatory ones (academically oriented). According to the Eurydice data base overview, elective subjects that are present in European schools at the level of primary education include religious education, ethics, social and cultural studies, foreign languages, and programmes of civic, global and media education in the form of a cross-sector approach. In addition to elective subjects at the level of secondary school education dealing with the analysis and discussion on different aspects of social and cultural life, foreign languages, or IT and computer literacy, there are also elective subjects dealing with a more complex study of previously mandatory subjects or organized courses based on new approaches in teaching suggested by school and the local community (according to: Vujić, 2002).

In addition to the democratization of the formal curriculum, some authors (Rakić & Vukušić, 2010) emphasize the significance of the “hidden curriculum” which helps pupils to learn about the values throughout their entire stay in school environment, where they receive messages via different social interactions, which sometimes remain imprinted in them for the rest of their lives. The teachers with their complex roles and “functional civic behaviour” (Christ *et al.*, 2003), which promotes efficient functioning of the institution, are the key of this complex network of social and cultural relations. The changes of culture of the contemporary school should be directed towards abandoning the model of power and setting a balance between the cultural role and cultural support. Such a model of school culture entails that the overall climate of school work and behaviour of all stakeholders of school life reflect a clear division of roles and responsibilities, interest for other people and active support to their participation in the life of the institution (according to: Pavlović, 2005: 220).

Religious Education and Civic Education at the centre of the curriculum democratization in the Republic of Serbia

The process of democratization of education in Serbia at the turn into the 21st century began with great enthusiasm and a wide circle of interested participants (the Government, the Ministry of Education and Sports, experts, professional public, teachers, institutes, international and non-government organizations), which enabled a rapid adoption of the appropriate strategy (Kvalitetno obrazovanje za sve, 2002) and the required legislation (Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2003), the mechanisms which guaranteed observing of human rights for all categories of population and participants in the education process. The above-mentioned Law set forth that the purpose of re-organization of school life was to enable active participation of all those who were learning “irrespective of gender, race, national, religious and linguistic affiliation, age, physical and psychological constitution, social and cultural heritage, financial status, political affiliation or other personal characteristics” (Article 4). A special Article of the Law set forth the rights of children and pupils (Article 95) and additionally elaborated their right to get organized (Article 98).

In accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the plans envisaged the introduction of appropriate contents at different levels of educational systems and their harmonization with the European dimension of education aimed at enabling pupils to adopt knowledge and develop attitudes and skills necessary for competent participation in the social life of a democratic community. The process has also taken into consideration the commitment of a community towards the rehabilitation of religious education based on the experiences of other countries in transition, as well as on the analysis of professional and scientific attitudes towards the need and the pos-

sibilities for introduction of religious contents into the process of education. Hence, *Civic Education* and *Religious Education* appeared both in primary and secondary schools in Serbia as (experimental) optional subjects in 2001, as the result of the above-mentioned process. During the following school year of 2002/2003, the afore-mentioned subjects were introduced as elective subjects in the first and second grade of primary and secondary school, and as optional subjects in the third grade of primary and secondary school. The Manuals and reference books for teachers were elaborated intensively along with the accelerated development of training programmes for teachers, since during their pre-service education teachers were not trained to work in these specific fields. However, democratic changes in the Serbian education system lost their impetus and entered the period of stagnation under the influence of the dramatic changes in the political life of the country during the spring of 2003. A type of impulse and intensification of efforts for the continuation of democratization arose in 2005, when Civic Education and Religious Education became mandatory elective subjects in all grades of primary and secondary schools, bearing in mind that pupils were enabled to change their original choice during the same education cycle (according to: Baucal *et al.*, 2009). At this moment, the subjects of Religious Education and Civic Education are alternatives chosen by pupils of all eight grades of primary school and four grades of secondary school.

Objectives and Tasks of Religious Education and Civic Education in the Secondary School System of the Republic of Serbia

Religious Education was introduced in the Serbian education system as a subject with confessional property. The objectives and tasks of Religious Education have not been changed since the official introduction of the subject and they have preserved their original form. The above-mentioned objectives and tasks were identically formulated for primary and secondary school for the first time in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – Education Journal (hereinafter referred to as: OGRS – EJ) No. 5/2001. The formulated objectives and tasks were transposed without any amendments into the OGRS-EJ No. 4/2003 (within the Rulebook on general and special bases of curricula for the first grade of primary education, where the term “outcomes” was used instead of the term “tasks”, although their contents were identical); once again, for the third time, they were laid down without any amendments in the Rulebook on the curriculum of the subject of Religious Education for secondary schools (OGRS – EJ No. 6/2003, which used the term “tasks”) (according to: Kuburić & Zuković, 2010: 36). The above-mentioned documents emphasized that the objective of Religious Education was to acquaint the pupils with religion and spiritual experience of their own, historically given Church or religious community, as well as the need for an open and tolerant dialogue and appreciation of other religious experiences, scientific findings, philosophical views and all

positive experiences and accomplishments of the mankind. The documents also emphasized the objective of building up social relations among pupils and the development of ecological awareness. The primary tasks of Religious Education included providing pupils a comprehensive religious view of the world and life as well as systematic acquainting of pupils with their religion in its doctrinal, liturgical, social, and missionary dimension in the spirit of a tolerant relationship towards other religions by embracing all positive experiences of the people irrespective of their national and religious affiliation. The process of accomplishment of the above-mentioned tasks should be carried out at both informational-cognitive level, and at experiential and active level, which opened up the possibility to direct the development of religious attitudes in a systematic way. The curriculum of Religious Education was conceived based on the principles of an "open curriculum", which provided space for free and creative work of pupils and teachers (Midić, 2004), taking into consideration the role of religious education in schools, as well as the observation of specific characteristics of Religious Education and the criteria of the "hierarchy" of the religious contents presented in teaching units. In that sense, specialized reference books (Kuburić i Zuković, 2010) emphasize that the contents of Religious Education should provide not only the knowledge on religion, but also assist young people to critically judge their own life as well as all the problems and issues of the society and the world they live in.

Civic Education, which was originally called Education for Democracy, was introduced as an elective subject along with Religious Education during the school year of 2002/2003. The objective of Civic Education at the secondary school age stated that "pupils should acquire knowledge, develop their own abilities and skills, as well as adopt values that are the precondition for wholesome development of the personality and for a competent, responsible and engaged life in a modern civic society in the spirit of observing of human rights and basic freedoms, peace, tolerance, gender equality, understanding and friendship between nations, ethnic, national and religious groups" (OGRS – EJ No. 5/2001). The analysis of consequent amendments to the Rulebook (OGRS – EJ No. 5/2003; No. 11/2005) showed that the topics were gradually extended, and the focus of teaching topics was shifted, which brought Civic Education in secondary schools closer to the issues of civic activism and education for democracy (according to: Klemenović, 2010). The curriculum of Civic Education in the first grade of secondary school anticipated the study of various issues of nature and mode of regulating relations within a group/community together with training in a non-violent communication and techniques of peaceful conflict resolution. The topics on the rights and responsibilities were transferred to the second grade of secondary school, while comprehension of democracy and civic society was envisaged for the third grade along with the planned actions. The curriculum of Civic Education for the fourth grade of secondary school familiarized pupils with the right to free access to information, socio-economic rights, and the world of professional education

and labour. The teachers were suggested to carry out the educational process in classes throughout the year in accordance with what was taught by building up democratic atmosphere and observing of pupils' rights. The workshop mode of class work was suggested as the basic methodical approach in Civic Education teaching, while other forms of class work included simultaneous individual activity, work in pairs or small groups, exchange and discussions in circle, group discussions, and presentations in front of the whole group. The new Law on the Foundations of the Education System (*Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja*, 2009) did not set forth the changes in the status of the subject of Civic Education. However, the implementation of an innovated curriculum for the first grade of secondary school commenced at the beginning of the school year 2009/2010. The institutions in charge of curricula drafting elaborated one curriculum for grammar schools and three curricula for vocational and art schools for educational profiles in the duration of 2, 3, and 4 years. The new curricula were aimed not only at acknowledging the differences in the duration of education, but also at those arising from specific needs of pupils in different schools. This caused some changes in the objectives and tasks of the subjects, content updates, and certain methodological improvements, although the central topics remained the same.

Taking into consideration the contents that are currently taught within the subjects of Religious Education and Civic Education we can conclude that they are based on different value systems. It seems, however, that even though they have different bases, both subjects have a significant potential for the development of the pro-European democratic values and the cultural identity of young people, which opens up the space for inter-cultural education via the processes of developing, cherishing, and strengthening of cultural pluralism and tolerance. The current experiences in the implementation of Civic Education teaching (Baucal *et al.*, 2009; Đurišić-Bojanović, 2006) show that, during the education process, pupils simultaneously build up self-respect and acquire competences required for coexistence with different cultures. The pupils are given the opportunity to develop the abilities of constructive communication, tolerance of different views and behaviour, awareness of individual and collective responsibility, understanding of national and cultural identity in the interaction with cultural identity of Europe and the rest of the world. The creators of the European educational policy have recognized the significance of religion teaching (irrespective of the fact whether it is conducted as confessional, multi-confessional, or non-confessional) for inter-cultural education and establishing of the inter-religious dialogue. They also emphasize that learning for diversity and learning for common interest should be perceived as a model where the particular and the universal can co-exist equally (Hasall & Roebben, 2006: 448). The essence is in the aspiration to create the conditions for understanding and acceptance of diversity by adopting religious values that will be positively correlated with the principles of tolerance, pluralism, and multiculturalism. In the light of the above-mentioned arguments, it seems

justified to expect both subjects to be in the function of democratization of education, modelling of the school community as a micro-cosmos of an open society (Kodelja i Bassler, 2004), and therefore in the function of the development of universal human values.

*Results of the Survey on Civic Education
and Religious Education Teaching in Practice*

The beginning of Religious Education and Civic Education teaching in Serbian schools attracted wide attention of the scientific, professional, and wider public, which contributed to the appearance of an increasing number of different reports produced by the government and the non-government sector every year (Avramović i Maksić, 2002; Joksimović, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2002). During the past several years, the team of researchers from the Department of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad has joined the above-mentioned efforts and the results of their research will be presented in short below. These studies focused on different aspects of teaching these subjects at the secondary school level, placing emphasis on the analysis of the fulfilment of tasks and objectives of Religious Education and Civic Education based on assessments made by teachers (Gajić, 2009; Klemenović i Lazić 2007; Klemenović 2009; Zuković 2006), with an insight into the expected and observed effects of teaching these subjects from the perspective of pupils and their parents (Zuković 2009a, 2009b). The studies also dealt with the extent to which educational contents of these subjects were in the function of the development of inter-culturalism (Zuković *et al.*, 2010) and an assessment of their potential contribution to the development of the national and cultural identity of pupils, i.e. their contribution to adopting pro-European and universal values (Klemenović i Zuković, 2012). The following paragraphs briefly present some results of the above-mentioned studies.

According to the results of the study (Gajić, 2009) that included the sample of 240 teachers of Civic Education in different types of secondary schools at the territory of the Republic of Serbia, it was concluded that the accomplishment of the curricula tasks and objectives in the teaching of the subject varied in practice. Although teachers gave different assessments of the level of fulfilment of tasks and objectives, the majority of them agreed that the greatest success was realized in the fulfilment of the following objectives: acquiring knowledge on the types of rights, relationships among them, and correlation between rights and responsibilities, as well as the development of sensitivity towards the violation of children's rights and readiness to protect one's own rights and the rights of others. Acquiring knowledge on cultures of other nations was singled out as the objective that was fulfilled to the lowest extent. Certain statistically significant difference occurred between the teachers of Civic Education who taught the subject in secondary schools in smaller cities. These participants in the survey singled out the following as

the most successfully fulfilled tasks and objectives of Civic Education: development of critical thinking about social processes; suppression of prejudice on cultures and history of other nations, and understanding of culture of one's own nation, and fostering development of national identity.

In the study (Klemenović, 2009) focused on the assessment of relativity of the programme package of Civic Education for secondary schools, the same participants in the survey criticized most the contents and activities in the field of human rights (2nd grade) and topics in the field of civic democracy (3rd grade). The teachers emphasized that the contents in the field of human and children's rights were less interesting, burdened with superfluous repetitions and inadequate methodological procedures and workshops scenarios, which were not best suited for secondary school pupils. Among the problems in practical work, the teachers singled out the unnecessary number of classes for planning of actions in favour of rights. The above-mentioned problem not only narrowed the topics and disturbed the dynamics of education process, but also often could not be carried out fully, due to the fact that pupils did not possess the required knowledge and skills, and did not display a required level of maturity. Therefore, teachers suggested the innovation of methodological procedures, an introduction of new topics, and the change of the status of the subject. Certain number of teachers emphasized the significance of evaluation of the overall commitment of pupils, and the need to evaluate the knowledge in this subject in order to strengthen the overall education effects.

The teachers recognized a part of the problem related to the fulfilment of objectives of Civic Education teaching in a specific climate of the local community, which did not display sensitivity and understanding for the needs and activism of young people. Regretfully, the above-mentioned spirit is present in a certain number of educational institutions in which the Pupils' Parliament is present only formally and young people are deprived of a more significant impact on organization of life and work of school (Klemenović i Lazić, 2007; Klemenović, 2009). The teachers of Civic Education therefore emphasize that democratic education and training for participative learning is necessary for all school teachers since it serves as the precondition for the democratization of the education system. The fact that teaching personnel, particularly in vocational secondary schools, does not dispose with appropriate pedagogical and psychological knowledge and the didactic and methodological skills necessary for working with young people in interactive teaching, in addition to professional competences, makes an important obstacle in overcoming formalism and the traditional understanding of education.

In the survey of opinions of secondary school pupils on the implementation and effects of Civic Education teaching (Zuković, 2009a) it was found that almost three quarters of young people thought they could have great benefits from attending this subject but that their potentials were not sufficiently utilized in practice. One quarter of secondary school pupils were not sure whether certain changes in their behaviour could be attributed to the effects

of Civic Education, while almost one half thought that their attendance at classes neither affected the change of their behaviour nor had a significant effect on their development. Less than one third of secondary school pupils, however, considered that the attendance of Civic Education classes affected their development and behaviour primarily in the domain of improvement of communication and more mature, i.e. realistic perception of themselves and other people.

When it comes to Religious Education, it is important to point out the results of the study (Zuković, 2009b) focused on the analysis of the expected and observed effects of attending this subject by secondary school pupils and their parents. The research showed that religious affiliation and interest of pupils in this field were the most frequent motives for choosing the above-mentioned subject, supported with the desire for new knowledge and expectations related to a positive impact on personality. The respondents were asked to assess the extent to which Religious Education contributed to the fulfilment of certain educational goals as well as whether they noticed certain changes that happened under the influence of that subject. The majority of pupils and their parents claimed that attending the subject of Religious Education contributed to better knowledge of religion, culture, and tradition of their own people. The respondents also emphasized that positive effects were visible in the field of moral development of personality, system of values, and level of religiousness. In short, based on the presented data, it was concluded that the observed effects (new knowledge, development of religious feelings, positive changes in pupil's behaviour and personality etc.) were in accordance with the reasons for choosing that subject, and that respondents' expectations were fulfilled to a high extent. We should not, however, overlook the fact that, according to the results of this study, a significant number of respondents (22% of pupils and 26,95% of parents) did not notice any effects related to attending of the subject. The results of the research provided a contribution to the analysis of pedagogical and methodological aspects of Religious Education teaching in the school system. Positive impressions about Religious Education were primarily related to the contents presented via that subject, and the diversity of classes of Religious Education compared to other school subjects (less formal atmosphere, no pressure related to evaluation and grading). At the same time, some respondents stated their remarks related to teaching in the sense of organization, work conditions, and teaching methods. Therefore, based on research results on expectations of pupils and their parents, as well as based on their experience related to the effects of attending the subject in the previous period, one can get the impression that religious education in schools had a great educational potential, but that the above-mentioned potential had not been fully utilized.

In addition to the opinion of pupils and parents about Religious Education, it is also important to point out to findings of the study (Zuković, 2006) conducted on the sample of teachers and professional associates-pedagogues.

This study concluded that it was important to emphasize not only respondents' opinion that Religious Education found its place in the school system, but also their experience, which confirmed that certain problems occurred in Religious Education teaching. They included the problems of technical and organizational nature, the lack of personnel, insufficient pedagogical, didactic and methodological capacity of teachers, inadequate textbooks, and contents that were not best suited to children's age and their understanding of the subject. A very important finding of this research was related to respondents' attitude towards the need for overcoming the rivalry and antagonism between Religious Education and Civic Education. These subjects were set up as alternatives that excluded each other, even though it should not be the case, taking into consideration the purpose of their introduction in the school system.

This is supported by research results on the attitude towards universal values in pupils who attend religious education and pupils who attend civic education (Klemenović i Zuković, 2012). Specifically, it was found that both groups of pupils positively and highly evaluated the universal values that can be regarded as inconsistent with the value objectives explicitly or implicitly present in the curricula of these subjects. The obtained results imply a necessity of reflection and the search for "common tangents" in teaching these compulsory elective subjects.

Conclusion

Based on the presented summary of changes in the curriculum at the secondary level of education in Serbia, it can be said that advocacy of democratization contained in policy documents and the newly-adopted legislation has become the daily life of educational institutions. In the life and work of school there are innovations which enable pupils to directly exercise their individual rights (and obligations), as well as the rights to organizing and associating (for example, the Pupils' Parliament has emerged for the first time), with the possibility to study new educational contents of both elective and optional subjects, which are better organized from the perspective of teaching methods. In addition, much more attention in this period was dedicated to additional general pedagogical, psychological and methodological training of teaching personnel in order to implement the activating methods and learning procedures and promote the importance of activism of young people both at school and in the community.

Religious Education and Civic Education have been introduced in all grades of primary and secondary school as elective subjects that satisfy different interests and potentials of pupils, in accordance with the affirmation of democratic values in the education system of Serbia. The tasks and objectives of the above-mentioned subjects were a basis for setting high expectations in the sense of their contribution to the development of democratic values in the education process. However, striving to come to life in Serbian schools,

the new subjects underwent different challenges and transformations: their status was changed three times; the Rulebooks on the type of degree required to teach these subjects were amended several times; the organization of basic training and specialization of teachers lagged behind; the elaboration of adequate Rulebooks for teachers was delayed due to changes in competent institutions, etc.

In spite of the mentioned obstacles, the results of presented empirical studies focused on analyzing pedagogical aspects of the implementation of the subjects Civic Education and Religious Education showed that all stakeholders in the educational process agreed that the objectives of teaching in practice were generally successfully exercised, and that special attention was paid to different teaching methods approaches. Continuous improvement of software packages for these subjects through amendments of interactive methods and content alignment with current social issues focusing on young people opened up the opportunities for Civic Education and Religious Education to remain important focal points in the debates about the meaning and dynamics of the democratic changes of education in Serbia.

The above-mentioned findings are also supported by the latest data on the effects of Civic Education teaching (Baucal *et al.*, 2009), which indicate that the general level of knowledge of the contents of this subject corresponds to the knowledge of other subjects taught at school. This study found that the level of trust in social institutions declined with the increase of pupils' knowledge on social phenomena, while the willingness of secondary school pupils to actively participate in the life of a family and community increased with the increase of trust in institutions. The same research found that more than one quarter of pupils were satisfied with the topics that were studied within Civic Education. Three quarters of pupils evaluated positively the opportunities offered by the subject to express their own opinions and casting of light on sensitive subjects from different perspectives, as well as their relation with everyday life. In that sense, it can be said that a significant improvement in the implementation of teaching the subjects Civic Education was achieved at the beginning of this decade, when particular amendments to the objectives and tasks were made, the contents were updated (protection of safety of young people against violence, inclusion of persons with disabilities, pupils' parliamentarism, implementation of pupils' projects, media literacy, gender equality, peace culture, humanitarian law, education for a society of equal opportunities, etc.), and certain improvements of teaching methods were introduced (application of films as teaching aids, developmentally based methods used in training of youth, workshops and evaluative procedures suitable for the school use) compared to the curricula that were implemented previously (according to: Klemenović, 2010).

The most recent data on evaluation of the process of implementation and effects of Religious Education (Gašić-Pavišić i Ševkušić, 2011) provide valid arguments for considering the need to introduce certain changes that would

contribute to the increase of the quality of teaching of this subject. For example, there are data that indicate the need for changes related to the concept of textbooks, application of various teaching methods, and the need for continuous professional training of the teaching personnel. Even though the findings on the dominantly positive evaluation of this subject are encouraging, the authors of this study expressed some remarks related to the aspect of the didactic transposition of certain theological knowledge, which indicates the need for further perfecting of the Religious Education curriculum.

Along with everything that was mentioned above, a gradual advancement in the organization of teaching of mandatory elective subjects could be accomplished by increased engagement of professional boards, where teachers of Religious Education and Civic Education would communicate and exchange experiences, supported both scientifically and professionally by the government and non-government sector.

There should be a continuation of work on the creation of the conditions for the attendants of different elective subjects to exchange personal experiences, attitudes, and opinions in an open and tolerant dialogue. The above-mentioned approach could contribute to the replacement of the current model of “modernism or tradition” with the model of “modernism and tradition”, which would enable encountering and permeating of spiritual and democratic values as foundations of democratization of school in general and ultimately facilitate the functioning of young people in the world of diversities.

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Јасмина Клеменовић и Слађана Зуковић
ГРАЂАНСКО ВАСПИТАЊЕ И ВЕРСКА НАСТАВА У ФУНКЦИЈИ
ДЕМОКРАТИЗАЦИЈЕ ОБРАЗОВАЊА У РЕПУБЛИЦИ СРБИЈИ

Анстракт

Полазећи од друштвено-политичког контекста промена које су захватиле образовне системе источноевропских земаља, ауторке резимирају специфичности процеса демократизације образовања на размеђи векова у Европи. Уважавајући идеју да образовање може да представља генератор друштвених промена а школа важан ослонац у промовисању и прихватању вредности заједнице, као и личном расту и развоју сваког појединца, у раду се разматра смисао демократизације образовања и сврха увођења грађанског васпитања и верске наставе у школски систем Републике Србије. Изложене теоријске поставке поткрепљене су и сажетим прегледом резултата емпиријских истраживања која су била усмерена на анализу педагошких аспеката реализације наставе поменутих предмета на средњошколском нивоу образовања процењиваних из перспективе наставника, ученика и родитеља. На основу увида у проблематику ауторке сугеришу трагање за „додирним тачкама” у реализацији предмета Грађанско васпитање и Верска настава кроз отворен и толерантан дијалог полазника оба предмета што би омогућило размену искустава, ставова и мишљења ученика, прожимање духовних и демократских вредности као темеља за даљу демократизацију школе у целини.

Кључне речи: демократизација образовања, образовање за демократију, грађанско васпитање, верска настава, средња школа у Србији.

Ясмина Клеменович и Сладжана Зукович
ГРАЖДАНСКОЕ ВОСПИТАНИЕ И РЕЛИГИОЗНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ
В ФУНКЦИИ ДЕМОКРАТИЗАЦИИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ
В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ СЕРБИИ

Резюме

Начиная с общественно-политического контекста изменений, которые охватили образовательные системы восточноевропейских стран, авторы статьи суммируют особенности процесса демократизации образования на рубеже веков в Европе. С учетом идеи о том, что образование может представлять генератор общественных изменений, а школа – существенную опору в продвижении и принятии общественных ценностей и поддержку для личного роста и развития каждого индивида, в работе рассматривается смысл демократизации образования и цель введения предметов Гражданское воспитание и Религиозное образование в школьную систему Республики Сербии. Изложенные теоретические положения подкреплены и кратким обзором результатов эмпирических исследований, которые были направлены на анализ педагогических аспектов реализации преподавания упомянутых предметов на уровне средней школы, оцененных с точки зрения учителей, учеников и их родителей. На основании обзора проблематики авторы статьи предлагают поиск «точек соприкосновения» в реализации предметов Гражданское воспитание и Религиозное образование через открытый и толерантный диалог учеников, посещающих эти предметы, что бы дало возможность поделиться опытом, позициями и мнениями учеников и осуществило столкновение и взаимопроникновение духовных и демократических ценностей как фундамента для дальнейшей демократизации школы в целом.

Ключевые слова: демократизация образования, образование для демократии, Гражданское воспитание, Религиозное образование, средняя школа в Сербии.