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EDUCATION FOR A CIVIL SOCIETY

ABSTRACT. Democracy presupposes an active participation of citizens who are conscious of their importance and responsible for their decisions. The contemporary democratic society can hardly function without a developed civic consciousness. There are no other, more reliable ways, to ensure such participation of people in the democratic processes than the system of education and upbringing. Therefore, democracy can be developed only by people who are convinced of its validity, who are familiar with its meaning and the modalities of its implementation.

The main task of the educational system is to create average and responsible citizens. Without a doubt, the school does not possess an exclusive and monopolistic role in this matter. In this field, there is room for a variety of institutions that comprise a democratic society. Here, first of all, we consider political parties, syndicates, the church, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and civil and democratic initiatives. Still, the role of the school and its educational system is indispensable.

Education for life in a civil society must involve the adoption of its values. However, at the same time, reducing this adoption to unfounded coercion must be avoided. Certainly, such an action would only protect ignorance and hinder the freedom of choice, thus leading to more ignorance. This means that education for democracy must be democratic itself, it must be free, accepted without fear, and not imposed. Democratic decision-making depends on the reasonableness of conclusions in which everybody participates equally. Everyone's voice is respected but not worth the same, the decision is an expression of the will of the majority.

KEYWORDS: education; value; citizen; democracy; freedom.

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Education is an important factor in the development of democratic relations in a country. It is defined as “the process of adopting knowledge, facts, information, of building habits and skills, adopting a system of values and rules of interpersonal interaction” (Trnavac & Đorđević, 2013, p. 20). In this regard, civic education can be defined as a process of acquiring knowledge about social issues, the causes of their emergence, and the possibilities of solving them. Furthermore, democratic relations allow the articulation of the interests of citizens who, as is familiar, belong to various social strata, and their need to express themselves, as free and valuable beings, in deciding about state and social affairs. In citizens, this evokes a sense that the state represents a social community in which their human dignity is respected and they are, solely on the basis of this condition, prepared to defend it, as a framework of their human and social lives. Everything else, on this plan, the plan of defence and sacrifice for the homeland and the community, represents bare force and fear.

However, for the participation in social and political life, i.e. for the productive participation in the processes of democratic decision-making, what is necessary is political knowledge which is acquired through the system of civic education in schools, i.e. through education. In culture and education—the contemporary, worldly and nationally-oriented system of school education—democracy has its basic social standpoints and conditions for realization. Education does not only provide the knowledge about social relationships and social values which need to be achieved through democratic relationships; it also liberates people from prejudices and traditional forms of authority. Therefore, when it comes to educated people, it can be said that they do not follow authorities blindly, but that they learn to think with their own heads. Educated people are people who care about their integrity and dignity, people who will preserve these values when it comes to their nation and state. Only by being like this are they able to do so, not simply because they are educated, but also because they were brought up in this manner. We intend to say that this is also the context in which education should be viewed, i.e. that it also represents a significant factor in the preservation of national culture, the cultural identity of a nation. In this sense, Frederiko Major, the highest official of UNESCO, wrote that one of the key problems of the 21st century will be the preservation of diversity from cultural uniformity (Hantington, 1998, p. 31).

Naturally, the strengthened role of education will not automatically create active citizens, nor must it necessarily lead to their activa-

tion. Some will forget the acquired knowledge or use it only for the purpose of the egoistic and cold understanding of the times in which they live. In others, this knowledge will ensure a sense of competence, it will reinforce it, and these feelings will represent a stimulus for action. "Education has two goals: on the one hand, to form intelligence and on the other, to educate citizens" (Marković, 2001, p. 9). Therefore, education itself is not a sufficient condition for action in politics, but it is absolutely necessary. This necessity is particularly pronounced due to the appearance of the phenomenon of abstention from politics and it boils down to its rehabilitation, because such phenomena threaten the disappearance of the citizen or his subordination to entrepreneurs, who care and are interested only in profit, and who, as evidenced during our election campaigns, advocate hatred towards politics. "Education should represent the cornerstone of the democratization of societies, and it relates to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which support the values of freedom, peace, tolerance, and equality. It is assumed that this type of education should contribute to the personal development of individuals and their dignity, but also to the respect for and observance of human rights at the level of the relationship between individuals and the society. Beyond this UN action plan, the presumption about the impact of education on the society as a whole is recognized. However, there is a good number of authors who claim that it is not democracy that is the key process, but globalization" (Joksimović, 2003, p. 28).

School education systems represent a necessary, organic, and logical need of every type of society and conceptualization behind its organization. This is simply the case because governing a human community is possible only with the existence of certain value systems. The value system of a civil society aims to protect the autonomy and dignity of an individual from coercion of any origin – by the state, church, or society and social majority. This system combines two closely related ideas. It is liberal, because it emphasizes the freedom of the individual, relying on the philosophy of the ancient Greeks. Secondly, the value system of a civil society is constitutional, because it places the rule of law at the centre of politics. Its basic contents are the defence of the individuals' right to life, their right to own property, and their freedom of religion and speech. In order to ensure these rights, it emphasizes, in the first place, the control of the power of the government, equality before the law, impartial courts and judiciary systems, and the separation of church and state. In almost all of their specific types, the value systems of civil societies are based on the the-

sis that human beings possess some natural (“inalienable”) rights and that governments must accept a fundamental law which restricts their own power in order to ensure these rights. This consists of several interdependent variables that need to be determined through their interdependent relationship. Without this, the educational system, and therefore the practice as well, can easily become enclosed in their internal contradictions, unsuccessful and meaningless. It is even more important to emphasize that no conceptualization of social organization can be permanently established without certain knowledge about governing a human society, i.e. about politics.

Democracy is not only comprised of a set of legal institutions, however necessary they may be, but also, above all, a certain culture. This culture is acquired patiently and gradually. It comprises of strict moral and political virtues, which are, at all times, threatened by the possibility of distortion. Among these virtues are the propensity towards freedom, rather than passive conformism, a sense of responsibility, inventiveness and activity, rather than neglecting the tasks received, respect for the opinions of others and pluralism, rather than blind obedience or contempt for adversaries, a well-developed critical spirit, rather than conforming to the authorities, a tendency towards taking risks, rather than hiding behind the attitudes and directives of the political party, etc. Democracy assumes an entire moral and spiritual development, without which it would be nothing but an empty shell. This means that the attitudes which consider educational programs in schools as unnecessary are unacceptable. Many people are of the opinion that this goal is reached spontaneously, through practice and practical experiences of the “self-taught democrats”. We considered it important to emphasize all of this, moreover because insight into extensive literature suggests that numerous debates on civil society and the role of education in its development circumvent the issues of the philosophical nature, the problems of the cultural nature and actual difficulties initiated by contemporary democracy. Additionally, even though we all gladly speak about democracy, and what is more, we turn it into a subject of a cult, we never even consider the role of upbringing in its establishment and consolidation. And even if we do, we usually do it as if we do not even sense, or as if we avoid, the possibility of two extremes, which, although different, can condemn education for democracy to failure, make this type of upbringing meaningless and enclose it in a circle of contradictions (Kovač-Cerović, T. et al., 2004).

The first extreme consists in an approach which identifies education for democracy with democracy itself, i.e. it considers that education for democracy represents only a maximum cooperation with students, where their suggestions and opinions are taken into account, the procedures for an exchange of opinions are determined, and finally where efforts are taken to establish “democratic school governance”, the ideal *mutatis mutandis*, with all possible special modalities, in accordance with the parliamentary model, inherent to the governance of states and local communities. The texts that emphasize the benefits of this concept, as well as of the efforts to attempt its implementation are more and more numerous.

With all due respect to the efforts of teachers who practice this concept, which, in essence, supports the concept of parliamentarism, we ask ourselves whether the unconditional support for something like this is sufficient and necessary. Does the unconditional support for such a concept of education not emerge from the confusion between the goal and the means, as if the goal is necessarily of the same nature as the means? It is often believed that the firm establishment of goals frees us from everything else. Still, education does not consist, however necessary this may be, exclusively from the announcement and acceptance of justified goals. It must find the procedures that aid in their realization, but this, however, does not mean that these actions must be of the same nature as the goals themselves, and even less that this is something that is necessary and sufficient.

However, such understandings and practices are common in our country. Indeed, many people, from the fact that school must prepare us for life, easily conclude that it is possible to identify it with life itself, and thus they deny it any specificity. Of course, the advocates for the specificities of the school do not imagine it as education of ascetics. They see this deviation from life precisely as a condition for a better adjustment to it. “As the most significant part of the activities of every school, it occupies the most significant place and has the most significant role in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of student abilities” (Nedeljković, 2010, p. 344). This is most evident in relation to the self-governance in student communities which is, undoubtedly, the ideal goal. Nevertheless, the question is whether this goal can be achieved and how it can be attained, particularly if it was set prematurely and without much thought. We have enough experience in discussions about the authorities and freedom. Even those who, with the highest regard, advocated strict obedience to the authorities, knew, as did those who advocated freedom from authorities

– the advocates of absolute freedom, that the search for freedom represents a necessity. It could thus happen that, education for democracy in a civil society, which we consider “democratic” and for which we wish that it was such from the first moment, fails. For example, a neglect of education occurs due to excessive permissiveness, where failure becomes tolerated for some individuals, their progress unhindered, thus making them deprived of necessary educational qualifications, which are required for useful and expected participation in democratic governance.

The other extreme can be summed up as the effort to convince the students in the virtues of democracy and, in this case, the education itself becomes transformed into unrelenting imposition, all the way to coercion, which simply forbids any discussion about the validity of the civil society, the validity of any of its values, even the validity of democracy itself. There are even those who regard such discussion as equal to sacrilege or as an attack on the fundamental values of civilization. These people are also against discussion, conversation, and even mentioning of the possibility, let alone the existence, of the evident deviation of democracy, its limitations, and relativity, which also refers to civil society as such.

Such practice, in essence, when exposed to its extremes, is anti-democratic; such efforts are, in fact, contradictory to the very spirit of civil society. To put it mildly, it easily becomes simple indoctrination and agitation, the fanaticism of agitators and propagandists, with the most horrific consequences. This does not represent an arbitrary assumption. We are able to recollect the time of the Marxist education and upbringing, which was reduced to alienation and spiritual subjugation and the mere abuse of the very name, the very term of education. Therefore, if we now wish to approach education for life in a civil society in a democratic rather than violent approach, then we must not impose this type of society, nor its democracy, but we must offer it as a solution in order for the reasons which justify its existence to become evident and understandable.

Certainly, education for life in a civil society must ensure the adoption of its values but, it must simultaneously avoid reducing this adoption to unfounded coercion. Any such action would only protect ignorance and hinder the freedom of choice and lead to more ignorance.

This means that education for democracy must itself be democratic, it must be free, accepted without fear, and not imposed. It must also be well thought-out, without which it would contradict itself.

That is why the real question, when it comes to education for a civil society, is—how to educate people for life in a civil society in a democratic fashion?

This education must, in our opinion, include the basic categories of sociology and political philosophy, as well as democracy. Certainly, this includes many contradictions of the contemporary world and life, the uncertainties of democracy, all with the goal of mastering the knowledge that presupposes the activity of an individual in the life of a civil society. And introducing students to this knowledge is the indispensable role of the educational system. In this sense, it is possible to approach the acquisition of knowledge about democracy through a school curriculum in multiple ways (Joksimović, 2005). The first approach includes introducing a special school subject, however this is not sufficient. The second approach is to include democratic contents in all existing school subjects. To offer such knowledge not as finite and unchangeable facts, but to animate students to seek and offer arguments through discussions and asking questions. And, the third possibility is to, including the previous two, have education for democracy permeate all school activities and imply not only the acquisition of knowledge about democracy but its practice, as well. This approach to education for democracy is, taking into account its positive sides, the hardest one to achieve. This further means that it is possible to have education for democracy and prepare students for life in a democratic society in the school milieu only if school itself represents a democratic community.

Additionally, the effects of educational activities of the school, in general, as well as of education for democracy in school, cannot be viewed independently of the wider social context. Life in a civil society presupposes the rights and obligations of making choices and decisions. Fortunately, we do not make this choice while unprepared and unready, we do not make it randomly, in a haze, nor on a whim, but thoughtfully and prepared, unless we have some type of suicidal intent.

The importance of knowledge about this topic, given to us by the school system, is indisputable, given that many a regime has failed or become a victim of decisions made in ignorance or political blindness. Clever and prudent decision-making must be enlightened, based on appropriate knowledge and following a discussion. In other words, democratic decision-making depends on the reasonableness of reaching conclusions in which everyone participates equally. Everyone's

voice is respected but not worth the same, the decision is an expression of the will of the majority.

The significance, complexity, and tight interconnectedness of politics with other phenomena do not allow it to be approached in a simplistic manner, with unacceptable simplifications. To create, in students, a sense that problems of a political nature are solved by skilful discourse, hastily exchanged opinions, on the basis of superficial impressions and thoughts, would mean to cheat and play them. The exchange of opinions is far more demanding than the game.

The same is true of morality. Children should be taught, not made to believe a notion that morality represents a certain rule of behaviour, appropriate to their age; simply, a childishness that should be disposed of as soon as a person grows up. Certainly, the interpretation of moral lessons must be adapted to the spiritual age, maturity, and reasoning of the students, but not in a way which will make them abandon the ideas gained in this process of growing up. Instead, they need to understand that they will succeed in life if they respect them.

The same goes for participation in political life. Children should be openly told that there will come a day when they will have to make decisions, but not misled them to think that this is something that they can already do now, or that they can do by playing a role of a mayor or a director of a company for a day. The ability to do this is not inherent to us, nor do we acquire it spontaneously. On the contrary, it is gained through great effort and determination. Democratic politics demands a double education – intellectual and moral. It seeks a noble heart and an effort of the spirit.

“Democracy in the process of education would signify such an educational process that is not reduced to the simple acceptance and accumulation of factual knowledge, nor the effective integration, without a remainder, into the relevant value system of a specific society, but rather the “mastering of the ability to think autonomously, with one’s own head, the ability to test the veracity of any claim by reason and not through any kind of conditioning... Without the realization of this goal of education, the value of democracy becomes impossible; without it democracy itself becomes meaningless, a form of primitive populism which, by the nature of things, is accompanied by a form of paternalistic tyranny or drowning in the idyllic, parochial world of obviousness without freedom. Education for democracy implies the cultivation and care of personality, and it must go hand in hand with education for life in the rule of law” (Ivanović, 2013, p. 183).

Above all, children must learn to listen to each other and share their own opinions, while respecting the opinions of others; of course, in accordance with their age. Because, just like we do not teach a mechanic about all of the procedures that he will use in his profession from a young age, we cannot tell a future citizen how to become a citizen *de facto* from a citizen *de iure*, from the time of his childhood, before he is able to adopt the knowledge, the acquisition of which is necessary for such responsibility. This is not just an issue of pedagogy and didactics, but simply the fact that both education and upbringing have their own thresholds, their possibilities and limitations, as well as their range. So, in addition to planned educational influences (school), this also concerns factors such as inheritance and self-activity of individuals. Also, the outcomes of upbringing influences depend on the students' age as well.

Finally, we may conclude that, in our opinion, the following three goals of education for life in a civil society are the ones that are the most important. The first one is that children, from their earliest days, acquire their own beliefs about values, and "values are, as we know, principles for which it is believed that they deserve or demand respect, according to which we direct our behaviour and express our judgements (value judgements)" (Weber, 1989, p. 421) and about the values of the democratic process, and it is necessary to understand that this is how the foundations of successful state governance by its citizens are laid. The second is that lessons on morality must not turn into moralizing. It is not advisable to teach children, for instance, that all they have to do is respect the laws and orders of the authorities, they must also be taught how to oppose authorities and sometimes disagree with them. And the most important of all is the development of moral traits. Thirdly, children should be openly, without idolatry of the authorities, told that its functions are performed by individuals and that hence there is a problem of how to restrain their personal desires. That is to say, they should first be taught how to avoid the temptations of demagogy and achieve tolerance and respect for others. In fact, the essence of the third goal is intellectual education, the development of the intelligence of the spirit and knowledge. There is no democracy at the local, national or international level without the knowledge and understanding of the matter related to the issues that need to be addressed.

It should be added that the mere provision of insights, without an investment of effort for them to be accepted and adopted, inevitably

leads to the stimulation of amateurism, curiosity, dilettantism, selfishness, lack of interest, unjustified and void criticism. All in all, the effect of education for life in a civil society will be equal to zero if we miss out on the opportunity to teach children, on the one hand, about the knowledge necessary for governing a society, through learning about discussions, just like the ones that are lead on the topics of civil issues as they are in actuality, as they are presented before adults; and on the other hand, by the creation of conditions that enable the experience of democratic life. Children should be taught to think about problems, about reasons for reaching this or that decision or solution. The role of the school is, let us not forget, education, orientation towards self-education, and the paths and manner of self-improvement and self-actualization. Of course, even in education for democracy and life in a civil society, the school has an indispensable role. It is unfortunate that regarding this, in our country, in general, the significance of experience itself is still more important and, perhaps it is better to say—more credible. Of course, knowledge itself is not enough. After all, it was Aristotle who said that it is not enough to know something, it is necessary to will it. When it comes to school, it is particularly worthy to emphasize a proper application of the method of persuasion and convincing, but also the methods of practice and habituation, as well as the implementation of that which is learned.

There is no doubt that mankind is progressing through knowledge and the uncovering of the truth, but knowledge itself is not sufficient and this progress does not mean that there is simultaneously a progress in the respect for obligations which arise from it. Thus, for instance, there is an undeniable progress in the recognition, but not in the respect of human rights and the equality of human beings. However, today, these rights are gaining a form of moral principles, and this being said, they are still being violated. Indeed, we have no difficulty in seeing and condemning their violation. However, this condemnation is often times not honest, it often comes from those who are also violating them in other situations.

In order for the condemnation of the violation of human rights to be efficient, it is very important to be well informed, so that this condemnation, as well as the entire human rights campaign, do not become unilateral. Furthermore, it needs to be emphasized that there is no democracy without competence. Its establishment requires people who are able to accept responsibility for the type of governance which is implied by democracy. The lack of people who are capable of

taking the lead in institutions is not only slowing down the pace of democracy, but it is also undermining its development, which is quite understandable when it comes to countries in the process of transition. This fact is a consequence of indoctrination which has, abroad, but in our country as well, lasted for a long time and which represents a contradiction to education for democracy. However, even highly developed countries are not spared from these dangers. There are many moments in their daily lives that attest to the fact that, even in those countries, complacency and apathy may occur. And we know that this is precisely what opens the door for the elitism of several experts, as well as the indoctrination of the masses and their complete restraint and subordination to those who are the most skilful in seductive convincing. Contemporary society is no longer as it was in the nineteenth century, it does not belong to the period of the beginnings of liberal democracy. It strives towards other goals and hurls towards new challenges, whose dangers are hardly known to us, as are the ways of their ramification, hence knowledge about the basic values of a civil society is of utmost importance.

Our task did not include the creation of a concrete educational program for life in a civil society. "The new role of education in the conditions of globalization is confirmed not only in the process of transmission and acceleration of knowledge, but also in the understanding and acceptance of the changed world whose reconstruction is carried out by new technologies and the media" (Ivanović, 2006, p. 67). We have limited ourselves to demonstrating the justification for the existence of something like that, its ultimate goals and its spirit while, of course, considering the role of the school as being simultaneously necessary and limited. It is limited by numerous phenomena of our times, starting with the fact that the present world is increasingly dominated by media whose main feature is the dissemination of information, to the fact that, apart from schools, other social factors are also involved in education and upbringing. Their effects are different and sometimes contradictory. For instance, the media, as much as they are advancing when it comes to the speed of spreading information, are equally limiting when it comes to their truthfulness. What we wish to say is that they often do not spread information in such a way which would enable their digestion and which would improve their clarity and facilitate judgement. Hence, the activities of the media can sometimes even play an anti-pedagogical role.

Additionally, the media are radically altering the conditions of social life since they promote the emergence of sensory, passion-based reactions; they also lead to the prevalence of the phenomena of sympathy and antipathy at the expense of thinking and reason. They make education simultaneously more necessary and more difficult. Unfortunately, we did not find any evidence that this is the topic of concern for the people in the media. They are occupied by the problems of privatization and the race for circulation, the rectification of injustices and an urge to escape the embrace of political parties and corruption. Therefore, there is a basis for the hope that one day, albeit sometime in the future, education will become an item of the agenda – when all these other problems are solved. The situation is similar when it comes to other social factors as well as relevant state factors.

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ИЉАЗ А. ОСМАНЛИЋ
МИРСАДА С. ЗУКОРЛИЋ
УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БЕОГРАДУ
УЧИТЕЉСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ
НАСТАВНО ОДЕЉЕЊЕ У НОВОМ ПАЗАРУ

РЕЗИМЕ

ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И ГРАЂАНСКО ДРУШТВО

Демократија претпоставља активно учешће грађана свесних своје важности и одговорних за своје одлуке. Модерно демократ-

ско друштво тешко може функционисати без развијене грађанске свести. Најпоузданији начин да се такво учешће људи у демократским процесима осигура јесте систем образовања и васпитања. Дакле, демократију могу развијати само људи уверени у њену оправданост, људи који знају њен смисао и начине њеног остваривања.

Основни задатак васпитно-образовног система је стварање одговорних грађана. Ипак, школа нема у томе ексклузивну и монополну улогу. У том послу има места за све врсте институција које чине демократско друштво. Ту, пре свега, сем школе и целокупног школског система, мислимо на странке, синдикате, верске установе као и бројне невладине организације, стручна друштва и удружења грађанске и демократске иницијативе. Ипак, улога школе и васпитно-образовног система је изузетна.

Образовање за живот у грађанском друштву мора подразумевати усвајање његових вредности, али неопходно је издећи да се то усвајање сведе на неаргументовано присиљавање. Свако такво чињење само би штитило незнање и спречавало слободу избора и водило у незнање. То значи да и васпитање за демократију мора и само бити демократско, слободно, без страха прихватано, а не наметано. Демократско одлучивање зависи од разборитости закључивања у којем сви учествују равноправно. Свачији глас се уважава, али не вреди једнако, а одлука је израз воље већине.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: васпитање; вредност; грађанин; демократија; слобода.



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