

Anka Budimlija  
Republički zavod za unapredjivanje  
vaspitanja i obrazovanja SR Srbije  
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**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN PRESERVING THE CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE  
IDENTITY OF PUPILS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
BROTHERHOOD, UNITY AND EQUALITY OF THE PEOPLES AND NATIONALITIES  
IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SERBIA\***

During the postwar period, many schools attended by different nationalities and using their languages have been established on the principle of equality and solidarity; they have created the conditions for education in the native languages (Bulgarian, Albanian, Slovak and Rumanian).<sup>1</sup> Elementary education encompasses all Bulgarian children, while secondary education encompasses more than 95 percent of the youth. A high percentage of secondary-school graduates continue their education (about 51 percent) in the institutions of higher education, either in this country or in Bulgaria.

Although the society has developed the principle of education for all (i.e. compulsory eight-year education), a lower percentage of children and adolescents belonging to the Albanian nationality are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. Elementary education encompasses 94.5 percent of Albanian nationality children; secondary schools include about 80 percent of these pupils; more than 30 percent of Albanians continue education in their native language in the institutions of higher education and universities in SAP Kosovo, while a lower percentage study at other universities in the country. But, if we consider that up to 1945 this nationality did not have any schools where the teaching was conducted in their native language, and that more than 95 percent of the inhabitants were illiterate, it can be concluded that the Albanians have witnessed their educational and cultural regeneration by receiving unselfish support and solidarity of the Serbs and other nations living in SR Serbia.

The education of Rumanian and Slovak children is organized in their respective native languages only up to the fourth grade of the elementary school, because of the low percentage of children. Romany and Vlach children take preparatory classes before entering school, so as to more successfully follow the lessons in Serbo-Croatian.

The growth of education of the nationalities has stimulated the development of national cultures, and their interrelation with the culture of the majority nation and of those of the other nations. This process, to be sure, has not taken place evenly in each environment, because of the different levels of economic, social and cultural development.

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\* Original: Serbo-Croatian

During the National Liberation War and the Socialist Revolution, our country opted for the equality, unity and solidarity of the nations and nationalities, and consequently invested most of the available funds in the underdeveloped parts of the country, which include most of the communities where the nationalities live, in order to integrate them fully into the Yugoslav socialist community on an equal basis.

#### **Organized Action on the Part of the Schools in Realizing the Principle of National Equality, Brotherhood and Unity**

Education of all the nations and nationalities in SR Serbia proper is uniformly regulated by the Law on Education and other Republic and Communal self-managing acts. Equal rights and financial means are extended to all nationalities for the organization of schools, (either regular or extra-mural studies). The Law provides for a free choice of the language of instruction and a free orientation in deciding for or against learning the language of the social environment<sup>2</sup> in multi-national communes.

The Educational Reform (implemented in 1975) made a step towards socializing education, which meant a reduced role of government authorities in directing the educational policy, in managing schools, their connection with associated labour (economic and social organisations), and socio-political communities and their self-management organizing. The process of securing financial means for carrying out educational goals and tasks is based on the principle of the free exchange of labour. This has brought about a qualitatively new relation between the school and the social environment. However, in this process, the positive effects from various social environments were set off against the negative ones.

The dissociation of the school from the state and its stronger link with the social environment creates better possibilities for fostering national cultures and native languages, but on the other hand it requires, first, that the school establishes broader relations with the ideological, cultural, scientific and political influences of the society; and secondly, a complete socialization of the youth, training them to understand ideological, cultural and other values of their people and of the total social community, as well as developing their awareness of the necessity and importance of the homogeneous Yugoslav society. Therefore, the society must have the possibility of supervising, first of all, the relative success of schools in carrying out national equality, brotherhood and unity among pupils of different nationalities; and secondly, the performance of other such elements in the social environment, as are charged with educational policy matters.

According to the legislation and other social solutions regulating the school organization, there are the following possibilities in multi-national environments connected with the pupil's nationality and his native language:

1. Schools with a single language of instruction, where teaching is conducted entirely in the native language.

2. Bilingual schools for children of Bulgarian, Serbian and other nationalities (in the Dimitrovgrad, Surdulica and Babusnica communes). Lessons are performed in Serbo-Croatian and in Bulgarian. Both of the languages are taught as subjects of instruction.

3. Secondary schools for Bulgarians in Serbo-Croatian (on special request of students and their parents). In these schools many specifics on national culture are taught, and the mother tongue is cultivated through the teaching of Bulgarian language, literature, history, art, music education, and through extracurricular activities.

4. Schools with two languages of instruction (Serbo-Croatian and Albanian in the Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja communes). Lessons and other school activities are performed in the native language. Teaching in two or more languages enables the pupils to make friends with their schoolmates.

In schools where teaching is conducted in the native language, equality as to nationality is fully realized. The literature, history, art and music curricula contain elements of the national cultures; teachers' and students' textbooks and handbooks for the teaching/learning of the native languages as subjects of instruction and as languages of instruction are provided. Teachers receive their education and in-service training in the native language.

The most topical issue in these schools is the question of the development of brotherhood and unity between peoples and nationalities, their togetherness, Yugoslav socialist patriotism, love of and respect for the heritage of the National Liberation War and the Socialist Revolution.

Classes in bilingual schools are nationally mixed. The curricular covering social science subjects contain proportional amounts of specific content derived from the pupils' national culture. Such a school organization, according to our research results, ensures full equality of nationalities, and promotes brotherhood, unity and togetherness among pupils of different nationalities. These schools employ mostly teachers of Bulgarian nationality, which is in agreement with the pupils' nationality.

As the Constitution guarantees the right to choose one's own language of instruction, secondary schools for Bulgarians have been organized in Serbo-Croatian. Such a decision arose from practical needs. Education in Serbo-Croatian provides better possibilities for choosing a profession, place of work and similar favorable conditions.

School organization, the furtherance of brotherhood, unity, togetherness and national equality of the peoples and nationalities, constitute the political components of the educational system. Therefore the organization and implementation of education in multinational and multicultural societies calls for greater care on the part of all the participants in these processes.

**Teaching Syllabuses and their Role in the Cultivation of National Cultures and Native Languages, and their Influence on the Development of Brotherhood and Unity**

The cultivation of national cultures and native languages can be made very successful through education. The adequate content of teaching syllabuses and the skill to implement it are of utmost importance in developing brotherhood, unity and togetherness of the peoples and nationalities. The planning of material to be covered, especially in the social sciences, is a complex task. The selection of the syllabus content must be made to ensure that the pupils acquire an objective view of the past and present in our country; that the peoples and nationalities acquire a sound knowledge of the economic, cultural and scientific achievements of the other peoples and nationalities; that they acquire abilities and skills for living and working in the Yugoslav multinational community; that they are able to understand, from the scientific point of view, the nation and nationalities question; that they develop brotherhood and unity, national equality and Yugoslav socialist patriotism and humanism.

These tasks can be actualized through the subject contents of the native language and literature, history, society, art and music as well as through the content of the other subjects, appropriate textbooks, handbooks and other literature. The teachers also play a very important role in this process.

Recent changes in the educational system of the SFRY have enacted a number of unified solutions in this area and many more common content in the syllabuses for the whole country, particularly the SR of Serbia, which makes possible the publication of common textbooks, handbooks, other literature and teaching materials.

Experience and knowledge deriving from our contemporary pedagogical theory and practice have shown the necessity for unified teaching syllabuses for the natural sciences and other subjects, and for a broader scope of the common content in the native language, literature, history, art and music syllabuses. This need has prompted the creation of the common core content for all the subjects of instruction and other areas of educational work,<sup>3</sup> which has served as a basis for the elaboration of the new curricula and syllabuses. For example, the program in Albanian as the native language in the elementary schools of SR Serbia included 80 percent of Albanian literature and only 10 percent of Yugoslav literature and another 10 percent of world literature.

Such common-core curricula enable the pupils to acquire knowledge of the national history, literature and other achievements and specificities of the nation they belong to as well as of the culture of the other peoples and nationalities. In native-language instruction the pupils will be introduced to the best writers and the most representative works from their own national literature as well as with the best writers and the most notable works of the other Yugoslav peoples and nationalities and from world literature. Thus the pupils are able to develop "an ability to assess artistic and other achievements with feeling, with research-oriented mind, and critically; a broader intellectual outlook and critical capability, a scientific view of the world,

and creative abilities and working habits; and a positive attitude towards the languages, cultures and revolutionary traditions of our country. We must explain to the pupils that further cultural and economic development of our national community depends on beneficial, persistent and skilled work; and the fostering of Yugoslav socialist patriotism and of readiness to defend one's homeland." (The educational tasks of the teaching of the native languages in the elementary schools of SR Serbia).

The educational programs for the subject Introduction to Society contain topics from the common past and present of the peoples and nationalities, their struggle for improving their national and social position, and for creating a homogeneous native country.

History as a subject of instruction can in particular help to foster the pupils' national identity. For instance, in schools of Bulgarian nationality the instruction includes specific content from the Bulgarian history. Through the subject contents, especially specific history topics, the following educational tasks are carried out: "Acquisition of knowledge of historical roots of events, processes, and oppositions within the modern society and learning to critically and objectively evaluate present events and occurrences, provide facts about the National Liberation War and the Socialist Revolution, and understanding the development of our socialist self-managing society."

In the multinational environments of Serbia, the school realizes its educational role also by organizing the teaching of the language of the social environment (from the first grade of the elementary school to the end of secondary education). These languages are chosen by the majority of the pupils, especially in the nationalities' schools (although the subject is optional. Proficiency in the language of the social environment helps the pupils to get better acquainted with cultural values of the peoples and nationalities. All the languages of the social environment (Serbo-Croatian, Albanian and Bulgarian) are treated on an equal footing.

The syllabuses with their all-round character contribute to the maintenance of national identity and to the development of a versatile personality; they build the awareness of the socio-historical and cultural need for interconnecting the nations and their cultures; they enable the pupils to objectively perceive the position of their people in the Yugoslav and world community; they enable the pupils to acquire sound knowledge of the common past of the nations and nationalities whose destinies were for centuries interdependent.

A proper understanding of the past contributes to a fuller and deeper understanding of the present and future.

#### **Social and Extracurricular Activities in Developing Education, Brotherhood, Unity and Togetherness of the Pioneers and Youth**

Social and extracurricular activities broaden the pupil's knowledge and experience. They play an important educational role, especially in the education of the youth in the spirit of

brotherhood, unity and togetherness in the Yugoslav socialist community of the peoples and nationalities. Through their numerous forms and varied teaching content based on the educational aims and the needs and possibilities of the social environment, these activities enable the pupils to realize their wishes, interests, tendencies and abilities.

We shall mention only some of the existing forms and contents of social and extracurricular activities realized in joint pupils' collectives organized on a self-managing basis, communities and organizations in: Pioneers' Organizations, Socialist Youth League, class organizations and various out-of-school activities (groups, clubs, societies and other forms).

The Pioneers' Organization - as a unified educational and socio-recreational children's organization, takes care of socialist education for all elementary school children. The pupils associate in pioneers' units organized on self-management principles, through which their social life is organized, oriented and unified in schools, local communities and throughout the territory of Yugoslavia; they stimulate their working, self-managing and social concern through different forms and contents of social and extracurricular activities; working discussions and agreements - meetings and assemblies, work and humanitarian drives of a socially beneficial character, admission of Pioneer's into the Pioneer's Organization, Pioneer's meetings, marches, competitions, exhibitions, cooperation between units, sports and recreational activities and other forms.

The Socialist Youth League of Yugoslavia is a unified socio-political and voluntary organization of working-people, village, school and student youth, intended to satisfy their interests. Through this organization and its branches the schools propose, direct and implement the basic self-management tasks of pupils; organize ideological and political work; encourage creativity in work and production activities, in science, technology and art, social life, entertainment and sport.

Through different activities of pupils' class communities, especially in multinational environments, it is possible to establish and promote friendship among pupils. Joint actions in schools and in the social environment, common interests in trying to achieve best results in schoolwork, and joint work and humanitarian drives bring together pupils of different nationalities.

The whole-day school and prolonged school are conducive to the learning of the language of the social environment and to friendly associations. The cooperation between the youngest pupils is motivated by love and sincerity. Through childrens' friendships, the parents often get acquainted with each other too and become friends. Thus the children effectively do away with national and linguistic barriers.

Pioneers and youth joined in activities of the voluntary mass physical labour on the local, provincial or republic and federal levels, carry out programmes of production and other socially beneficial work; they collect medicinal herbs, take care of the cleanliness of the schools, afforest the bare rocky countryside

of the homeland, build public buildings throughout the country. These common activities are carried out in the native languages of the pupils, by a free choice of forms and contents of work and on the basis of self-management principles. Through joint activities the pupils develop the awareness of the equality and unity and interrelation of our peoples and nationalities, the need to understand each other's language, culture and specificities.

Extracurricular activities of pupils, especially in the drama, literature, recitation, language, history, geography, music and art activities of pupils and in the groups of youngsters who learn the language of the social environment, offer great possibilities for the education of young people aiming to integrate them into multinational environments.

In conclusion, we must stress that the education of youth is a very complex process, especially in multinational and multicultural societies, in particular those which are not evenly developed. Such is the case of Yugoslavia. Facing up to this problem, our society has developed a specific educational system based on the principles of national freedom and equality, solidarity and togetherness of the Yugoslav peoples and nationalities. The most important social task of the school in multinational environments is to foster national identity of pupils and to develop brotherhood, unity and Yugoslav socialist patriotism.

#### Notes

1. Most of the Albanian people live in SAP Kosovo, while most of the Slovaks and Rumanians reside in SAP Vojvodina.
2. I.e., any of the Yugoslav languages which is taught in schools in multinational environments as a subject of instruction in one's native language.
3. Common-core content of the syllabuses contains unified educational aims, tasks and contents of the educational work in all of the syllabuses, independent of the language of instruction used.
4. The educational tasks of the teaching of the native languages in the elementary schools of the SR of Serbia.
5. In schools of Bulgarian nationality the instruction includes specific content from Bulgarian history.