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EDUCATION IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS*

Maintenance and promotion of ethnic (national) characteristics of individuals and groups is considered to be one of the fundamental human rights. It is evident that attention should be paid not only to the unhindered development of cultural and linguistic characteristics but also to the socio-economic policy that supports the realization of these rights.

Such an approach to relations among groups in a multicultural society is based on the assumption that members of national minorities should have the possibility to participate in social and production relations on equal terms with members of the (national) majority population. When we speak of the access to social and economic activities on equal terms, the possibility to preserve and manifest their specific ethnic (national) features, language and culture being the most outstanding, is implied. A close investigation into the national minorities' situations, however, reveals the fact that the use of the mother tongue and the demonstration of the cultural distinction of national minorities is at least tolerated in most societies, while the development of the social structure of the minority groups and their economic prosperity are usually neglected. Therefore a substantial number of national minority groups (as well as other ethnic and linguistic groups), with very few exceptions (those that have strong economic sources whereby their possibility of participating in policy making is strengthened, are not minorities only in number but also in terms of their social status, being socially disadvantaged groups. The surplus labour and the surplus values produced by members of national minorities are namely collected in the production and the reserve funds of the majority (the state). Thus in reality the scope of rights of national minorities as well as the possibilities for their practical application depend upon democratic principles of the society and upon the good will of the majority to allocate sufficient financial support for this purpose.

The system of education is the first institutional level that paves the way for the development of the social structure of groups of different ethnic origin in multicultural society and for the maintenance and development of their specific linguistic and cultural features. The educational policy that takes into account the linguistic, cultural and social needs of each ethnic entity in a multicultural society is based upon the concept that national minorities are a constituent part of the society as a whole.

* Original: English

It goes without saying that the education and socialization in a multilingual setting is not only the matter and the task of scholarly institutions alone. The concept of permanent education implying also personality formation is of primary importance. Besides schools, other societal institutions should pay attention to it to an appropriate extent, so that cultural and linguistic development of national minorities is promoted and the atmosphere of coexistence and understanding among social groups of different ethnic (national) origin is created. The results of the educational activities of schools, the products of their work, i.e. socialization and cognitive achievement of young generations, can grow as long-term values only if all institutions of socialization in a multicultural society pursue the same goal. The awareness of ethnic difference and of linguistic, cultural and social needs of groups constituting a multicultural society should be transferred also to the young generations of the majority.

Of course, the effects of primary socialization should not be overlooked, the first experiences about cultural distinctions and language appropriateness in multilingual and multicultural environment being transmitted by the family.

Education in multicultural societies, as we see it, should fulfill two basic and unseverable needs discussed above: participation of all ethnic (national) groups in socio-political decisions and in socio-economic development on equal terms and unhindered promotion of their specific cultural and ethnic (national) characteristics, which implies also the right to use their language in all spheres of private and social life. It depends upon specific traits of social environment, including ethnodemographic, social, numerical, historical and cultural factors, all of which influence and determine the relations between different ethnic (national) groups that live together, and the forms of organisation of educational activities to be chosen for each ethnic (national) group. The variety of concrete forms of organisation of instruction where mother tongue of national minorities figures as the language of instruction or as the subject of instruction, is the consequence of the variety of multilingual and multicultural societies in the world.

Yugoslavia advocates the joint education of children and youth of different national origins in ethnically-mixed regions. However, due to different conditions under which this joint education in Yugoslavia takes place, the forms of instruction and education vary. The concept of joint education does not necessitate, but neither does it exclude, joint school attendance; what it primarily signifies is an educational process taking place in educational institutions where two or more languages are used (Mikes, 1976). In principle, children and youth of both national (ethnic) groups (the nationality and the nation) are taught the second language, the language of the social environment, in order to achieve a certain level of communicative competence in the language of their schoolfellows. They also learn the basic facts about each other's history and culture, whereby mutual understanding can be expected.

Such solutions in education lead towards the realization of the equality of languages which is judged in Yugoslavia by the social

function these languages are involved in. All processes, tendencies, and mechanisms decreasing the communicative value of a language draw resistance from members of the ethnic (national) group affected (Lük, 1977). Therefore, the aim of the education in nationally-mixed regions is, among other things, to develop motivation for equal use of the languages, so that the language of nationalities (national minorities) becomes an appropriate instrument for communication also in public and social life and is not restricted only to private life usage. The task of educational institutions is to stimulate the socialization in the bilingual nationally-mixed environment, by creating and developing constructive and positive attitudes towards both ethnic (national) groups that live together. Thus, children and young people are prepared for creative life in a bilingual setting which is possible owing to knowledge about both ethnic (national) groups and owing to the social intercourse which is not burdened by language barriers.

In ethnically mixed areas members of the Yugoslav nations increasingly learn nationality languages. The need to master these languages stems from the shared interests of all working people and citizens of a given region, who realize these interests at work and in the process of self-management decision-making and agreements. Added to this is one's natural need to gain at least some passive knowledge of the language spoken by one's close associates. As a result of democratic relations among nations and nationalities, the population in ethnically mixed areas is getting bilingual. Owing to constitutional guarantees and owing to the growing bilingualism in ethnically mixed areas supported by institutional facilities the social status of nationality languages is likely to grow.

This kind of bilingualism, with bilinguals found in a given area not only among nationality members but also among members of the broader community, can be called bilateral, functional bilingualism (Necak-Lük, 1979). The phenomenon can be described as follows: nationality members are able to use their mother tongue in all kinds of speech situations, both formal and informal, for communication inside and outside their own group; at the formal level, the use of their mother tongue is made possible by the bilingual organisation of the institutional system; at the informal level it is made possible by at least passive knowledge of nationality languages on the part of the members of the nation they live with.

The concept of the self-management socialist coexistence of nations and nationalities, together with their languages, on an equal footing demands theoretical examination of the contents of some sociolinguistic terms, such as diglossia and bilingualism. In dealing with diglossia, we proceed from the proposition that in case of two different ethnic communities living under the same socio-political system the functional differentiation (Fishman, 1976) of their respective languages is based on social (and often legal) inferiority of the language used by one of them, a status resulting from the community's social, economic, cultural and political inequality. the inferior social status of the language of a minority community restricts the mobility of its members and prevents them from becoming involved, as equal partners, in economic, social and cultural activities, and from making

progress within the broader community by way of their own language, whose prospects are at the same time reduced.

The diglossic situation involving the relation of the ethnic (national) minority language to the language of the broader community could be summed up as follows: two languages, each having its highly codified standard, perform different social functions; these are kept separate both in communication within the ethnic (national) minority as a group and in communication between its members and those of the majority people; the language of the ethnic minority is the medium of communication for its members in informal speech situations; the language of the broader social community is the medium of communication in formal speech situations and is used in discussing topics related to general social, political, cultural and economic development.

The function of the minority language is thus limited to communication within the ethnic group. The members of minorities are not able to participate by using their native language in socio-political, economic and cultural activities; consequently, their mobility depends on their proficiency in the language of the broader social community.

We hold the assumption of the necessity of functional differentiation of two languages to be open to question where an ethnic (national) minority is able to get involved by way of its mother tongue in socio-economic activities of the sociopolitical community, there is good reason to believe that it will not opt for renouncing the language as a comprehensive medium of communication in multicultural society. Demands of ethnic (national) minorities all over the world prove it.

The absence of functional differentiation among the values of languages of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities living together in ethnically mixed areas is to be achieved by imparting appropriate social and legal status to their speakers. The language of any of these groups enjoys the same status in the group's area of residence as the language of the broader community. Both are official languages, and the activity of social, political, economic and educational institutions is regulated in such a way as to enable members of both ethnic groups to communicate, as a rule, in their own language. The nationality language, as mentioned above, is guaranteed institutional possibilities to attain the same social status as that enjoyed by the language of the broader community.

Bilingualism, however, is still more frequent among nationality members than among members of the broader community. It can be understood if historical aspects of relations among the nations and nationalities on the territory of present-day Yugoslavia are analysed. Through history the majority and minority position of individual ethnic groups was changed. Once dominant nations (Italians, Hungarians) became minorities after the First World War, to give an example, in Slovenia. What happened in history - the succession of different forms of ownership and changes in the social living conditions, both reflected in inter-nationality relations in what is today Yugoslavia, and thus in the use and status of the various languages - constitutes a psychological

legacy that must be taken into account when the development of functional (bilateral) bilingualism is discussed.

The visibility of functional bilingualism is borne out by the growing attendance of members of the Yugoslav nations in optional courses in nationality languages. The function of education in ethnically mixed areas is, among other things, to provide pupils with communicative competence in languages of both ethnic (national) communities, so that the vertical stratification of the nationality language might gradually disappear. Thus the destiny of speech nets of the nationality languages is provided for, concentration of speakers of the individual language in a multilingual setting being one of the outstanding problems for the development of functional bilingualism.

Besides schools, all other institutions whose task it is to develop permanent education should take part in endeavours to promote functional bilingualism. Mass media is among the most powerful and influential means in this field. It goes without saying that a vivid contact with the parent nation of a nationality provides for the development of language and culture of the nationality. Therefore such contacts are stipulated by the law. Educational institutions in ethnically mixed areas take advantage of it by organizing common activities of schools from both sides of the border. These contacts are stimulative regarding the promotion of the nationality language and culture as well as the development of the awareness of coexistence among nations in young generations.

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