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Workshop 8
**"From national narratives to shared memories:
Is a Pan-European memory possible?"**

By Vedrana Spajić-Vrkaš
Professor at the University of Zagreb (Croatia)

The introduction of new knowledge and skills in today's schools is often accompanied by controversies and disputes. Although many still understand the school curriculum as an assemblage of essential and objective knowledge, it is more or less a battle-field in which various interest groups, both from with-in and with-out education, fight over the issues of what constitutes the right knowledge, how it should be taught and assessed, and who should be entrusted to do it. The diversity of voices has opened the door to the pluralisation of educational purposes, objectives and contents, which has led to the (over) politicisation of the field. As the result, the professional voices are more and more marginalised, irrespective of whether they come from educational research or practice.

The (over) politicisation of education creates a special challenge to learning citizenship in school. The analysis of this issue discloses how different political ideologies promote different types of citizens and how their conceptions influence educational practices. Joel Westheimer and Joseph Khane (2004) point out that a wide range of educational approaches to citizenship „reflects neither arbitrary choices nor pedagogical limitations but rather political choices with political consequences“ (p. 1). Similarly, not introducing citizenship education into schools does not mirror the professional incompetence but a political choice informed by a particular political ideology and justified by a wide range of rather rational arguments.

Drawing from the Westheimer and Khane's thesis on the interconnectedness of political choices and educational practices, as well as from the theory of Michael Apple on the impact of power structures on the contemporary educational changes, in this presentation we aim to describe a two-decade-long failure to introduce citizenship education in Croatia as a separate school subject and to identify the powers that stand behind it.

In order to explain the contemporary changes in American education that threaten both the autonomy of the teaching profession and the emancipation of the learner, Michael Apple (2001), a world figure in critical pedagogy, has coined the term „neoconservative modernisation“. He describes it as a new hegemonic block in which four powerful groups - neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists, and the professional and managerial new middle class, have pooled their interests and are now remapping every aspects of education to fit their particular goals. Neoliberals, the proponents of market ideology, propagate the idea of the de-politicization, privatization and competition of schools so as to

make them serve solely the interests of the market. Neoconservatives stress the need for cultural restoration in education, i.e., the reintroduction of „proper“ knowledge, morals and values based on Western cultural tradition, which they seek to achieve by strengthening state control over the curriculum and by introducing rigorous standards of achievement and high-stakes tests as a means of pupils' assessment. The authoritarian populists advocate the Bible as the foundation of knowledge and authority in education and emphasize the primacy of tradition and family in the upbringing of children. The professional and managerial new middle class consists of „experts for hire“, as Apple calls them, who are not particularly attached to any ideology in its proper sense but seek opportunities to sell their expertise at a high price to any of the previous groups.

Apple's perspective on American educational reform is a useful tool for understanding the roots of educational changes in other countries as well. It seems particularly applicable in the analysis of dilemmas and conflicts embedded in the conceptualisation of citizenship and citizenship education in the transitional countries and new European democracies where the break of communism had led to the ethno-national renewal causing constant clashes between the need for strengthening of the nation-state and enhancing democratic institutions (see, e.g., Webber and Liikanen 2001). These countries are often referred to as formal but ineffective democracies in a sense that they legally guarantee their citizens a wide range of rights and freedoms but deprive them of proper resources to enjoy these rights (Inglehart, Wenzel and Klingemann 2003). One important resource is citizenship education, especially when it seeks to emancipate and engage students as citizens by developing their ability to critically observe and scrutinize the behind scene of political actions that do not serve common interests.

The acceptance of such an approach to citizenship education is essential for people in post-communist countries. After years of living under totalitarian regimes in which they were the *camarades* who had little political subjectivity and power, they, suddenly, find out that they are the bearers of individual rights and freedoms as *citizens*. Without understanding of the liberal notions of individual freedoms, equality, and responsibility, of the democratic ways in which the individual freedoms are enjoyed, as well as of the relationship between freedoms and citizenship, the “transitional” citizens cannot fully contribute to building a democratic political culture “from below” and thus improve the democratic political institutions which were established “from above” (see e.g., Wolchik 2003; Stan and Turcesku 2007; Willems 2008; Tobin 2010; Spajić-Vrkaš and Žagar 2012; Hedtke and Zimenkova 2013; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2014).

The neglect of citizenship education as a tool for upholding democratic development has been a constant drawback of educational reforms in Croatia since its independence in 1991. The country was established by adopting a democratic constitution that defines Croatia in terms of, on the one hand, an ethnic model of the nation-state and, on the other hand, a parliamentary democracy that guarantees equal rights and freedoms to all its citizens. As the proclamation of independence led to war in which Croatia had to defend its territory, the national renewal and homogenization became the top political issues. In such a condition, democratic development was seen as dependent not on the empowered and emancipated citizenry but on the institutionalization of Croat-ness understood in romanticised primordial terms and linked to the renewal of tradition, including religion and the family. Contrary to the legal definition, which was well attuned with the European democratic standards, the mainstream political discourses used the term “citizen” to refer primarily to the citizens' patriotism and loyalty to the new nation state. As these citizens' qualities were promoted by the education system as a whole there was, quite logically, no need for the introduction of citizenship education as a special subject into school.

During the 2000s the position of citizenship education in the Croatian educational system remained unchanged. The issue of whether or not it should be introduced into school as a separate subject emerged from time to time in public but it never attracted so much attention as in the beginning of 2014. In that time the results of a yearlong monitoring and evaluation of the pilot-implementation of the first Croatian citizenship education curriculum were made public. The results of evaluation made clear that systemic preparation of students as citizens is necessary, as well as of their teachers (Spajić-Vrkaš 2014). However, as soon as the revised citizenship education curriculum was opened for public debate in April this year and the Ministry announced its introduction into schools, it became a hot topic that polarised the society. The supporters saw it as an imperative and recalled, apart from the results of the pilot-implementation of the curriculum, some earlier studies (Batarelo et al. 2010; Bagić and Šalaj 2011), in which it had been shown that Croatian students' democratic political knowledge and culture were underdeveloped. The opponents resisted the introduction by attacking the curriculum for its "liberal approach", "gender ideology" and "the lack of patriotism".¹ By drawing from the international and European standards on parental rights, they requested the government to respect these rights and to ensure that their children are educated in conformity with their values and worldviews to which a liberally-oriented citizenship education curriculum seemed to be antithetical. Under such pressure, the Ministry gave up the idea of introducing citizenship education as a separate subject and in a matter of days prepared a mandatory "interdisciplinary and cross-curricular programme" from which all disputable concepts were removed.

The question of who are the supporters and who are the opponents to citizenship education in Croatia brings us back to Apples' theory of a new hegemonic block. According to information received from media, including Internet, both groups mainly consists of the civil society organizations whose worldviews collide in this matter. While the supporters share, more or less, a liberal democratic perspective on citizenship, the opponents' perspective is more or less conservative. The main proponents of the former are members of the GOOD Initiative. It was established in 2008 by 16 civil organizations with a view to promote "a systemic and quality introduction of human rights and democratic citizenship education into the system of education"². The proponents of the latter belong to several civil organisations that became widely known in the country for their opposition to the introduction of sex education as part of the health education curriculum a couple of years earlier.³ They represent themselves in public as the defenders of Croatian family well being, and, through that, of national identity which they see as deeply rooted in Catholic values and tradition. Their members come from diverse professional strands, some are the returnees from Croatian Diaspora and they enjoy a great deal of support from the Church. Their social and cultural capital is respectable, which provides them with enough resources to exercise a great deal of influence not only on public media but on the contemporary Left government leading to the failure of the Ministry to introduce citizenship education as a separate subject into schools.

¹ See, e.g., Građanski odgoj bez vrlina i vrednota (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/gra-anski-odgoj-bez-vrlina-i-vrednota>); GROZD-ove primjedbe Programu građanskog odgoja i obrazovanja (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/grozd-ove-primjedbe-programu-gra-anskog-odgoja>); Analiza Mornarove verzije građanskog odgoja (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/analiza-mornarove-verzije-gra-anskog-odgoja>); Šo ne valja s „Jovanovićevim“ Građanskim odgojem (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/sto-ne-valja-s-jovanovicevim-gra-anskim-odgojem>); Građanski odgoj je suvišan (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/gra-anski-odgoj-je-suvisan>); Građanski odgoj isključivo po mjeri „alternativaca“ (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/gra-anski-odgoj-iskljucivo-po-mjeri-alternativaca>); HKDPD zabrinut zbog uvođenja građanskog odgoja (<http://zdravstveniodgoj.com/news/hkdpd-zabrinut-zbog-uvođenja-građanskog-odgoja>); Kome smeta tradicionalna mladež (<http://www.quovadiscroatia.com/kome-smeta-tradicionalna-mladez/>).

² See, e.g.: <http://goo.hr/good-inicijatia/>.

³ See, e.g.: <http://uimeobitelji.net/>; <http://www.vigilare.org/>; also: <http://zdravstveniodgoj.com>

In the end, it should be stressed that there are other groups of opponents to citizenship education in Croatia, as well. These groups are less visible and less traceable as they rarely publicly disclose their opinions on this matter. They belong to the academic community and constitute two probably unconnected categories of scholars. A more influential group is represented by the university professors and researchers who, during the totalitarian regime, enjoyed powerful positions partly as result of their cooperation with the secret service. With the turn to democracy, their networks were largely preserved allowing them to re-establish their control of the academic community through membership in the high-level commissions and other decision-making and counselling bodies. The second group of opponents from the academic community can be described as „the disciplinary-bounded scholars“. They insist on a value-free science, refuse to contextualise scientific research, and are unwilling to engage in discussions about the social purpose and impact of scientific work. These two groups of scholars may not share the same ideology but both, either actively or passively, contribute to authoritative devaluation of the need for students' preparation for emancipated democratic citizenry through schools. As such they, together with the opponents from the civil society, do make, in Apple's words, “a hegemonic bloc” against citizenship education. After almost two decades of attempts, each of these groups bears a great deal of responsibility for the most recent failure to introduce citizenship education as a separate subject in Croatian schools.

The discussion

Upon the presentation the discussion triggered some new perspectives on the impact of power structures on citizenship education. Some participants approached the issue from the institutional perspective and spoke of the in-school resistance to citizenship education. Referring to Kent Deal and Terrence Peterson, they described such schools as toxic and pointed out that these schools could change and become more pro-citizenship oriented through external assistance programmes. Another line of discussion focused on the impact of international policies on the future of citizenship education. Here, the main attention was given to the possible impact of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, a legally binding international agreement which aims at removing all national and local barriers to international trade in, among others, educational services. Having in mind the weaknesses of the international human rights protection system in relation to international trade, there is a great deal of concern for the future of citizenship education in the context of the progressive liberalisation of education.

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