

INTERCULTURALISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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Abstract: Contradictory processes are occurring today in Europe. On the one hand flows an ineluctable process of creating a united Europe with open borders and the free flow of people, goods and services, and on the other side multicultural community is disintegrating. Simultaneously, Europe is increasingly becoming a multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual society. Such a society can exist normally only with an intercultural affirmation. Serbia has great experience of life in multicultural communities which is not sufficiently evaluated and, as well as all other European countries, is not only a multi-cultural but a multi-confessional society too. The civil society organizations represent a significant factor of intercultural reaffirmation since they emerged as a response to ethnic and religious intolerance. Starting from the philosophy of the network structure of society and acting in immediate contact with people, while giving the emphasis on their own education, they have become an important factor of changes and humanization of society, supporting the new approach to education too. The trends of globalization and creation of a united Europe pose new challenges to the education both for school learning and lifelong learning. Instead of national myths and xenophobia education and learning must train society for a multicultural, multi-confessional and multi-lingual life.

Keywords: multiculturalism, multi-confessionalism, multilingualism, interculturalism, education.

Introduction

The process of globalization that has caught the whole world not only presents us with a new living conditions but opens up a whole new era in the way of life of human beings. Globally speaking today we have the four major civilizations: Western, Islamic, Indian and Eastern, but among them there is also a strong correlation and interdependence. A process of European

unification is occurring within the framework of Western civilization which aim is to open up the borders and make the free flow of people and ideas, and economic trends. On the global scale, the internet has made an unimaginable flow of information and immediate connection between people around the world. All this is a new challenge for education that can not be treated in a traditional way. At the same time right in Europe are happening opposite processes of decomposition of multicultural communities and the creation of new states, particularly in the region, and there are permanent conflicts on a national or religious basis. Obviously, multi-cultural communities can not survive without the affirmation of the idea of interculturalism which does not see the danger but richness in diversity.

There where ideas overcome xenophobia and ethnocentrism, various forms of discrimination, conflicts, and even wars that usually have enormous human and material consequences follow. How much in all that education is taking part? Apparently education is, not even a little bit, innocent because it often glorifies nationalism, celebrate those who violently solved the conflicts, advocated the war, and its neighbors sees as the enemy, but at the same time this orientation in education is the result of the ruling of value orientation in society.

Civil society appears to be a new phenomenon in Western democracy in the second half of the twentieth century and in most countries is a corrective to the prevailing, often ossified and bureaucratic structures. Its basic principle of action was education, primarily its own members holding the idea - we can not change others, but we can ourselves. Civil scene has actually opened a new page in accessing education which had a great influence on the official educational program.

European context of interculturalism

Europe is going through a turbulent period of its own changing and seeking of the answers to the new challenges. The cradle of many significant civilizations for the history of mankind, which has by the historical turmoil, migrations, wars, epidemics, class and religious conflicts, but also the development of science, art, technology, economic progress and changing social relations, produced so far the most advanced civilization in which man has ever lived - Western civilization. But Europe is in fact remained fragmented into many national states and statelets from those greatest such as France, Germany or the United Kingdom to very small principalities and city states.

During the globalization, the Internet, the world market, such a disunited Europe is becoming its own hostage and obstacles to further economic, but also cultural and any other development and therefore a project of a united Europe is setting up.

The project of a united Europe based on multiculturalism, which means that they take into account the differences that exist with regard to national, linguistic, religious and racial diversity, and that constitute contemporary European reality and proclaims the principle of tolerance for diversity. But, at the same time interculturalism is advocated, which suggests the possibility and the necessity of cross-links between cultures, and their members

The process of formation of nations and nation-states, which is historically associated with the development of the middle class and by creating of economic conditions for the development of industrial society, did not go even a little bit easy and painless and stretched not only to the entire twentieth but also to the twenty-first century.

The process of growing of certain ethnical groups into the nation didn't precede parallel with the formation of national states and that's why a pure nation-state virtually doesn't exist. By looking at the ethnic composition of some European countries, their ethnic diversity is revealed. In the nineteenth century colonial countries settled citizens of some colonies that are now so integrated that they no longer identify themselves by their origin but as members of indigenous peoples. Today only countries of Western Europe have about 30 million people which make up the minority in certain countries. (Perotti, 1994)

A look at the religious map of Europe leads to the conclusion that there are different Christian options so in that sense we can speak of Christian Europe. But all those conflicts and divisions that have taken place in Christianity since the schism in the Eastern and Western churches, and the development of Protestantism, they left their consequences. However, the religious map of Europe can be deceiving because it creates the illusion of religious homogeneity of individual countries. In reality it is a very extensive network of different religious communities. Today there is almost no religion which does not have its supporters in certain parts of Europe. Large migrations that occurred in recent centuries, and also the process of globalization have made a great impact on the religious aspect of multiculturalism.

Five languages are spoken in Europe: English, Spanish, French, German and Russian. An attempt of introducing the artificially created language Esperanto, which would overcome the language divisions, did not succeed as

well as the use of a dead Latin language which was an attempt in the past. Multilingualism is predominant by learning larger number of other languages what is more accepted in smaller nations. Although there is no consensus yet English is becoming more prevalent in everyday communication. Europe, is in spite of everything, generally opted for interculturalism which does not aspire to assimilation but integration of minority groups into the society. The differences that exist are objectively taken into account and they are not considered as a problem and difficulties but as a wealth of diversity. The emphasis is not on ethnic groups, but on the individuals and to ensure their basic human rights. This approach has been confirmed many times in many European documents, as well as in programs and initiatives of non-governmental organizations.

Civil society in action

In the second half of the 20th century in Western countries were examined the existing social relations, especially after the massive social upheaval in 1968. Democracy of the West remained in many ways a hierarchical society with many totalitarian subsystems. The fact that people go out every four or five years in the elections and that can always choose from the same leaders of the two or three parties financed by certain lobbies, it is more a function of the status quo than in the function of dealing with social contradictions.

Under the influence of humanistic psychology and critical social theory, the process of globalization and the increasing openness of the philosophy of the East, theories about the network structure of the company has developed and it can be said that the attempt to transform traditionally guided hierarchical organization of society in a society in which there is no compulsion but government cooperation and mutual assistance. People according to their interests and needs are included with other people to work for changes.

In the beginning those were forms of organization of people during free time, different ways of gathering of interest and religious groups, but later it was realized that these forms can also be a factor of social change and not just outward form and organization, but also fundamental changes in human relationships, which primarily means a paradigm shift whereby individuals need not wait for changes to themselves change but should go away. It is believed that the change in awareness of the critical number of individuals can lead to social change.

Educational consequences

We can not talk about intercultural education without analyzing the situation in both theory and practice. As for the theory, many papers have been published that examine this topic. Problem of this approach is what is said in principle and out of touch with reality and such works do not make progress either in theory or in practice. Some rare analysis of the actual situation shows that in this region is not prevailed orientation interculturalism because it is the opposite of ethnocentrism which is still the main orientation. Analysis of texts in textbooks for primary schools showed that texts with the national thematic are most numerous part of the texts and were not selected by literary criteria. These texts speak mostly about the beauty of the country, the goodness and the courage of people, the history, the sufferings, resistance to the unknown, the leaders, the language as a national identity, the anthem, emblem and the flag and the connection of religion and nation. We talk about the tolerance and respect of others.

Although didactic materials for learning foreign languages logically fulfilled cultural amenities, intercultural activities are generally not part of the existing cultural content and do not complement grammatical and lexical objectives. There is another view which considers that intercultural competence a prerequisite of any successful communication and that progress in the future is guaranteed only to those who master the successful intercultural communication. Is not required a special curriculum for interculturalism, but the existing must be emphasized that dimension. The objectives of the curriculum which is facing intercultural respect for others and differences should have the following tasks:

- Strengthening the conditions for the development of pluralism in society.
 - raise the awareness of children about their culture and adapt them to the fact that there are different behaviors and different compositions value.
 - Develop respect for the way of life different from their so that children can understand and appreciate each other.
 - Strengthening confidence in equality to children were able to place themselves in relation to the prejudice and discrimination
 - Recognize and evaluate similarities and differences so that the children could talk about themselves and articulate their culture and history

Children must not be indoctrinated in school for any religious orientation, but should get to know the most important religions that exist in their own country (similar situation is in other European countries), their similarities and differences. Non-religious view of the world needs to be done equally

favorable. Intercultural education is more related to what is happening around us. Therefore a special meaning has the schooling in the multicultural and multi-confessional parts of any European country. It is not enough that minorities have only school in their own language and that children in education are separated by ethnicity. It is more important that in such environments all have the possibility to study the language of minorities to have a variety of opportunities to learn about the culture of the people who live in their neighborhood, and to have the possibility of common activities in order to gain experience of cooperation and unity in diversity.

Conclusion

Interculturalism is based in the philosophy of non-violence and is not something that can be solved by recommendations, guidelines or even programs. It is about profound and essential changes in people. This can be achieved by training, which is closer to psychotherapy than traditional education. Education is affirmed by civil society organizations in cooperation with colleagues from different European countries. A number of teachers also passed this education and they can be the beginning of changes in that direction. Schools in this area are still far from it because they are still engaged in programs and not with people, and it will take a lot of effort toward changes. Civil society associations, especially those that deal with nonviolence, peace upbringing and human rights, affirm that adult education is in trouble and is particularly important, because the attitudes of ethnocentrism, ethnic, religious and linguistic intolerance children mainly obtained from adults. If a country wants to become a society facing to the development it has to be society based on learning, and that learning should be essential learning, which in addition to the development of self-esteem and positive self-image and builds bridges of communication for others and differences, but also encourages creative responses on the challenges of a society that is changing.

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