

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS POWER IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Jovan Bazić

Teachers Training Faculty, University of Pristina-Kosovska Mitrovica, Serbia, jovan.bazic@pr.ac.rs

Bojana Sekulić

Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia bokaa_90@hotmail.rs

Abstract: In this paper there are the results of analysis of the ideological impact of the policy and presented religions to primary education as well as their mutual correlations in the educated process. In contemporary society politics and religion have the most organized and powerful ideological power in society, which is institutionalized and realized through the mechanisms of legitimate government. At the same time, they express their power through cooperation and conflicts in the process of designing, maintaining and controlling the dominant system of social values that shapes the education and upbringing of young people directing the processes of socialization creating and maintaining the dominant cultural patterns of the predominantly conceptual concept of political and religious culture. In the reforms of education of many post-communist countries in Europe, in the last three decades, the process of politicization of religion has been expressed in order to reconstruct or create new social identities. Politics and religion have the same goal in education, and this is the effect on the formation of awareness among young people especially in children whose attitudes and patterns are in intensive formative phase. This impact is achieved through mechanisms of selective access to cultural values, their evaluation and the imposition of a certain political and religious views of the world in order to create a desirable society. In a pragmatic sense, it is about educational reforms where redefinition of the goals of the tasks and contents of curricular as well as the way of their realization or methods of teaching. In doing so, special attention is devoted to the design and control of teaching contents in teaching subjects that are profiled for acquire knowledge of politics (Civil education) and religion (subject Religious) as well as through changes in relevant contents in other subjects (native language, Music education, Art education, The world around us, Nature and society, History, Geography, etc. It is quite clear from this that the teaching material is complementarily defined in the form of explicit or hidden ideological contents in accordance with the prevailing system of social values, primarily political and religious. Political and religious teaching contents are comprehensive and consistent, and therefore often referred to as political and religious education. This type of education is not worth neutral because students are required to learn, accept, and incorporate in their behavior the desired political and religious patterns. So, here is the ideological impact on education, as the dominant form of expressing political and religious power in primary education. In the function of this paper through the case study, it points to the manifestation of political and religious power through ideological influences in the first cycle of elementary education in the Republic of Serbia.

Keywords: primary education, politics, religion, power.

ПОЛИТИЧКА И РЕЛИГИЈСКА МОЋ У ПРИМАРНОМ ОБРАЗОВАЊУ

Јован Базић

Учитељски факултет, Универзитет у Приштини - Косовска Митровица, Србија,

jovan.bazic@pr.ac.rs

Бојана Секулић

Институт за политичке студије, Београд, Србија, bokaa_90@hotmail.rs

Резиме: У овом раду су изложени резултати анализе идеолошког утицаја политике и религије у примарном образовању, као и њихових међусобних корелација у васпитно-образовном процесу. У савременом друштву политика и религија имају најорганизованију и најснажнију идејну моћ у друштву, која је институционализована и остварује се кроз механизме легитимне власти. Истовремено, оне своју моћ изражавају кроз сарадњу и сукобе у процесу обликовања, одржавања и контроле доминантног система друштвених вредности према коме се обликује образовање и васпитање младих, усмеравају процеси социјализације, стварају и одржавају доминантни културни обрасци, превасходно одређене концепције политичке и религијске културе. У реформама образовања многих посткомунистичких земаља у Европи, у

протекле скоро три деценије, изражен је процес политизације религије у циљу реконструкције или стварања нових социјалних идентитета. Политика и религија имају исти циљ у образовању, а то је утицај на обликовање свести код младих, особито код деце, чији су ставови и обрасци понашања у интезивној формативној фази. Овај утицај се остварује кроз механизме селективног приступа културним вредностима, њихове евалуације и наметања одређеног политичког и религијског погледа на свет у циљу стварања пожељног друштва. У прагматичном смислу, ради се о реформама образовања где долази до редефинисања циљева, задатака и садржаја наставних планова и програма, као и начина њихове реализације, односно метода извођења наставе. При томе, нарочита пажња се посвећује обликовању и контроли наставних садржаја у наставним предметима који су профилисани за стицање знања о политици (Грађанско васпитање) и религији (Веронаука), као и кроз измене релевантних садржаја у другим наставним предметима (матерњи језик, Музичко васпитање, Ликовно васпитање, Свет око нас, Природа и друштво, Историја, Географија и сл). Из тога се сасвим јасно види да је наставно градиво комплементарно дефинисано у виду експлицитних или скривених идеолошких садржаја у складу са владајућим системом друштвених вредности, преваходно политичких и религиозних. Политички и религиозни наставни садржаји су целовити и конзистентни, па се зато често о њима говори као о политичком и верском образовању. Ова врста образовања није вредносно неутрална, јер се од ученика захтева да науче, прихвате и у своје понашање уграде пожељне политичке и религиозне обрасце. Дакле, овде је реч о идеолошком утицају на образовање, као доминантном облику испољавања политичке и религиозне моћи у примарном образовању. У функцији овог рада, кроз студију случаја, указује се на испољавање политичке и религијске моћи кроз идеолошке утицаје у првом циклусу основног образовања у Републици Србији.

Кључне речи: примарно образовање, политика, религија, моћ.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political and religious powers are the forms of social power expressed as an organized power and based on the principles of hierarchy and domination. Political power, since the time of Weber (Max Weber, 1864-1920) and in all other later definitions, has been understood as the ability to implement political will regardless of other people's antagonism. All political factors possess power to a certain level, but the greatest political power in a society lies in the hands of the state, because the state is basically the largest and the most extensive political organization in a contemporary society. That's why the largest part of political power is realized through state authority. Religious power is a type of spiritual power, coming from the sphere of ideas, beliefs, tradition, knowledge and other cultural contents. Religious power influences the changes and the governance in a society, but it is usually under state authority's control and limited by a church's status or certain religious community in a society. Power realization of the church/religious community is accomplished through: hierarchic relations within its organization; relations to other churches/religious communities; and incessant fight with the state about conquering the space for its action. Political and religious conceptual powers in education are realized through the ideology and mechanisms of selective approach to cultural values, their evaluation and imposing certain political or religious world view.

Through the process of primary education one acquires basic knowledge and skills necessary for living and working in a society. However, education is not of neutral value, because it is profiled in accordance with ideologically molded society's interests through the prism of the governing ideology, in the form of explicit or hidden ideological contents. Ideological goals of primary education are the forming of desirable political and religious students' attitudes and their behavior, as well as the construction of certain concepts of political and religious culture. Thus, education is extremely significant in the power game of politics and religion. Starting from the roles of politics and religion in a contemporary society and the distribution of their power in primary education, this paper pays special attention to the consideration of political power in educational system and religious power in educational curriculum. Also, the function of this paper, through a case study, is to consider the expression of political and religious powers through ideological influences in the first cycle of primary education in the Republic of Serbia.

2. POLITICAL POWER IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

State's political power in education is expressed through the processes of defining and directing educational politics in order to achieve certain social interests and goals in education. Ideas and concepts of educational politics are changeable. Each new authority brings a certain ideological concept of understanding social needs, interests and political goals visions that it strives to achieve. State's political power in education is realized through: defining

educational curriculums, as well as the mechanisms for their realization; determining educational network, types and levels of education; financing education and providing spatial, technical, material and other conditions for its realization; the choice of teachers and the supervision of their work; the choice of authority representatives on all levels who will take care of conducting educational politics. The role of the state in defining educational curriculums, especially in primary education, as well as the mechanisms for their realization, is very important. Aside from the contents necessary for acquiring knowledge and skills for living and working in a society, educational curriculums include political contents as well. Many theorists think that including political education in institutional education is important, because it creates a supposition for active inclusion of citizens in the processes of making political decisions and actions for the common good – “school, as one of the main institutions of education, is a place where we can ensure that all young people gain at least the minimum of knowledge and skills necessary for taking part in a political life”.²² Next, “political education has moral primacy over other purposes of public education in a democratic society”.²³ Other than that, “formal education gives favorable opportunities for: a) transferring the knowledge about political system; b) inserting positive feelings towards political community; c) strengthening modern rational-pragmatic attitudes (...); and d) encouraging the feelings of civic competency”.²⁴ This is why it is considered that political education should be an integral part of educational curriculums in public education. The contents of political education in educational curriculums are most frequently defined through special subjects or within other subjects. Political contents in teaching materials greatly influence not only gaining knowledge about politics, but molding political attitudes of students and building political structure as well. Aside from the state, political power in education is realized, or attempted to be realized by different organizations and associations, church and confessional communities, local communities and individuals. Also, in this context, the influence of non-governmental organizations is highly significant, because they endeavor to influence education or some segments of public education. Their interests in the area can be really various – from the demands for including or excluding certain contents in educational curriculums, mostly from the corpus of the value system, through electing their cadres to decisive positions in educational system, to the influence on educational budget distribution and transformation of educational network. In a contemporary society, international associations and organizations have great political influence on education, by directly influencing the government and educational politics in order to adjust national educational systems with the projections of international structures in education. These include The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), as well as many others.

3. RELIGIOUS POWER IN EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUMS

Religion has had a tradition of great influence on education for many centuries, especially in Europe. For centuries, priests were committed to education and upbringing, and the church established and financed schools, organized boarding schools' accommodations and orphanages, chose and schooled teachers, supervised schools and organized teaching. Until the Age of Enlightenment religion had absolute power in education. By developing liberal and rational thought, religious view on the world was suppressed and atheistic schools appeared which started the secularization of education. Thus, religion started losing its power in education, and its role was simultaneously taken over by politics, which was really demonstrated after French Revolution. At the beginning of the XX century, there was a legal separation of church from school, and in communist countries in Eastern Europe, in the second half of the XX century, religion was marginalized and excluded from the educational system. Its power in education was taken over by the state. After the fall of communism in Europe, religion revitalized and started the renewal of its influence in education, with the benevolence of new political regimes, but usually through introducing religious education in public schools. That is why this time we will consider the power of religion in primary education in European countries.

Religious education, as a part of school education, has a special social meaning which comes from its positioning in the interests of the state, religious communities and civic sector. Different models of religious education in public

²² Šalaj B. (2002). Modeli političkog obrazovanja u školskim sustavima europskih država, *Politička misao*, XXXIX, 3, 127-144, page 133.

²³ Gutmann, A. (1987). *Democratic Education*, Princeton: University Press, page 287.

²⁴ Coleman, J. S., according to: Podunavac, M. (2008). *Politička kultura i politički odnosi*, Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka, Čigoja štampa, page 106.

schools, modifications of certain models as well as the absence of religious education from schools were always the expression of religious structure of the society, the meaning of faith in a certain society, the mutual relation between religious communities and their institutions, as well as their relation to the state. In European praxis of religious education two basic models of it are famous: confessional and non-confessional. Other than that, some European countries don't have any forms of religious education in public schools. Confessional model of religious education is directed to certain religion and transferring its religious attitudes. Most of European countries have this model of religious education (Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Serbia, Spain, as well as some regions in France). Confessional model of religious education is "conceived and realized by the cooperation between the church/religious community and educational authority".²⁵ This is related to theoretically and theologically founded religious education which is enabled to the students of all confessions and/or religions. In each of the mentioned countries, religious education has different varieties, depending on the contemporary social-historical opportunities, cultural and religious traditions, as well as contemporary social-political circumstances. Each religious education program is authorized by the church or certain religious community, which decides about its contents and goals primarily, while educational authorities examine them additionally and adjust with the goals of educational curriculums. Non-confessional model of religious education or religious-phenomenological education is present in many European countries (Denmark, Iceland, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine, counties Bremen and Brandenburg in Germany and some cantons in Switzerland) and it is directed to the study of religions, their beliefs, values and praxis outside themselves, thus encouraging the creation of students' own religious attitudes. This model is meant for all students, although there is a possibility of giving up or refusing this form of religious education due to conscience. Educational authorities in most of the mentioned countries also consult religious communities for forming the program of religious education, although their word is not decisive. This form of religious education is mostly the consequence of strong secularization and religious pluralization of the society and it is directed towards universal ethic values and promoting the goals of civic society. Non-confessional model of generalized religious education comes to objections and resistance of religious minorities, because it mostly doesn't suit authentic orientation of certain religions and confessions, and sometimes with its character of commitment it offends religious freedom and the freedom of conscience. That's why there have been some corrections of the model lately, where religion is approached with greater respect for subjective religious studies and feelings, which enables and encourages the processes of religious and ethnic identification in students. Also, there is the practice of excluding religious education from public schools (Albania, Belarus, and France, except counties Alsace and Mazel). In France, only private schools offer the possibility of confessional religious education.²⁶ Until recently, Slovenia belonged to the group of countries without any forms of religious education.²⁷

A special aspect of political and religious powers distribution is the politicization of religion which is performed with the function of reconstructing ethnic and state identities, especially on post-Yugoslavian areas. This is especially expressed in educational curriculums for primary education in nearly all post-Yugoslavian countries.²⁸

4. POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTENTS IN THE FIRST CYCLE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SERBIA

The first cycle of primary education is extremely important, because the teaching contents about social values are represented the most. With this knowledge at an early age, children form rules of behavior and basic attitudes about their social identities and values and they mostly stay until the rest of their lives in their behavior and cultural

²⁵ Filipović, T. A. (2012). *Modeli školskog vjeronauka u Europi odraz su značenja vjere u pojedinim društvima*, available on: <http://www.vjeraidjela.com/modeli-skolskog-vjeronauka-u-europi-odraz-su-znacenja-vjere-u-pojedinim-drustvima/>, 22.08.2018.

²⁶ For more info: Caldwell T. Z. (ed.), (2001). *Religious Education in Schools: Ideas and Experiences From around the World*, Oxford: International Association for Religious Freedom., available on: <https://iarf.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Religious-Education-in-Schools.pdf>, 03/05/2017.

²⁷ Marinović, B. A. (2007). Komparativna analiza kurikuluma za religijsko obrazovanje: primjer četiri katoličke zemlje, *Metodika*, Vol. 8, 2, 408-242, page 417.

²⁸ Ognjenović, G., Jozelić, J. (eds.), (2017). *Education in Post-Conflict Transition: The Politicization of Religion in School Textbooks*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

patterns.²⁹ In Serbia, at the end of 2000, great changes started and they led to structural reforms in the society and value system in accordance with neoliberal ideological principles. In education this reflected in introducing new subjects firstly (Religious Education and Civics Course), which were the expression of new ruling ideology “in a pure state”.³⁰ Soon, there were other changes too, new laws were passed and new educational curriculums introduced. Basically, in the process of the changes, the curriculum excluded many contents related to Yugoslavia and its cultural and artistic creativity, especially national liberation revolution and postwar development. Simultaneously, religious and spiritual contents were included, teaching contents were extended by including Serbian Middle Ages and Serbian liberation wars until the creation of Yugoslavia and the works of many authors were reevaluated. Ideologically speaking, the curriculum excluded all teaching contents with socialistic ideology and the praxis of Yugoslavian socialism, and, at the same time, it included religious and political contents of neoliberal ideology. New ideological contents in current teaching programs for the first cycle of primary education can be identified through the goals and tasks related to the development of conscience about state and national affiliation; religious conscience and tolerance; and training orientation for the life in a democratic society. These contents are present in the subjects related to political and religious education, mother tongue and literature, history, geography, music, and national tradition. Teaching materials in them are really complementary, so they express the combination of knowledge about traditional and religious values, national and state identities, democratic and pluralistic society. Religious education is organized as a confessional model for all traditional churches and religious communities in Serbia. Religious Education and Civics Course are conceived methodologically and adjusted to refer to the values of civic society together, especially to tolerance and inter-religious dialogue. Other than explicit contents of political and religious nature, teaching programs can have hidden ideological contents which are intentionally defined so as to direct students to skills and working habits necessary for the society of global neoliberal economy and in accordance with the ideology of social efficacy, known as “positivistic ideal”.³¹ By analyzing current educational curriculums for the first cycle of primary education in Serbia, it can be concluded that they are basically ideologically profiled in accordance with neoliberal strategy of development, pro-European values and interests of ruling elites. Thus, in these curriculums we can recognize the influences of the politics of unification of national educational systems, expressed in the strategies of the European Union.³²

5. CONCLUSIONS

In a contemporary society, politics and religion have the most organized and the most powerful power, which is institutionalized and realized through ideal influences and mechanisms of legitimate authority. Simultaneously, they express their power through cooperation and conflict in the processes of forming, maintaining and controlling the dominant systems of social values and according to these systems, education and upbringing of youngsters is molded, processes of socialization are directed, dominant cultural patterns are created and maintained, especially certain concepts of political and religious culture. Politics and religion have the same goal in education, and that is the influence on molding the students’ conscience and their upbringing. This influence is realized through the mechanisms of selective approach to cultural values, their evaluation and imposing certain political and religious world view with the goal of creating desirable society. In that goal, special attention is paid to the molding and controlling of teaching contents in educational curriculums, specifically the ones which deal with political and religious education, because this type of education demands the students to learn, accept and include desirable political and religious patterns in their behavior. Political and religious powers in a society are limited by the powers of global international structures which take over the jurisdictions of national states, in education as well, and are inclined to the unification of cultural values and political patterns.

²⁹ Bazić, J., Sekulić, B. (2017). Ideološki ciljevi i sadržaji u programima za prvi ciklus osnovnog obrazovanja u Srbiji, *Politička revija*, Vol. 52, 2, 65-85.

³⁰ Altiser, L. (2015). *Ideologija i državni ideološki aparati*, Loznica: Karpos, page 40.

³¹ Apple, W. M. (2012). *Ideologija i kurikulum*, Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, page 207.

³² Bazić, J., Knežević, M. (2016). Knowledge in EU Development Strategies, *KNOWLEDGE - International Journal Scientific*, Vol. 15.1., 83-88.

REFERENCES

- [1] Altiser, L. (2015). *Ideologija i državni ideološki aparati*, Loznica: Karpos.
- [2] Apple, W. M. (2012). *Ideologija i kurikulum*, Beograd: Fabrika knjiga.
- [3] Bazić, J., Knežević, M. (2016). Knowledge in EU Development Strategies. *KNOWLEDGE - International Journal Scientific*. Vol. 15.1., 83-88.
- [4] Bazić, J., Sekulić, B. (2017). Ideološki ciljevi i sadržaji u programima za prvi ciklus osnovnog obrazovanja u Srbiji, *Politička revija*, Vol. 52, 2, 65-85.
- [5] Caldwell T. Z. (ed.), (2001). *Religious Education in Schools: Ideas and Experiences From around the World*, Oxford: International Association for Religious Freedom., available on: <https://iarf.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Religious-Education-in-Schools.pdf>
- [6] Filipović, T. A. (2012). Modeli školskog vjeronauka u Europi odraz su značenja vjere u pojedinim društvima, available on: <http://www.vjeraidjela.com/modeli-skolskog-vjeronauka-u-europi-odraz-su-znacjenja-vjere-u-pojedinim-drustvima/>
- [7] Gutmann, A. (1987). *Democratic Education*, Princeton: University Press.
- [8] Marinović, B. A. (2007). Komparativna analiza kurikuluma za religijsko obrazovanje: primjer četiri katoličke zemlje, *Metodika*, Vol. 8, 2, 408-242.
- [9] Ognjenović, G., Jozelić, J. (eds.), (2017). *Education in Post-Conflict Transition: The Politicization of Religion in School Textbooks*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [10] Podunavac, M. (2008). *Politička kultura i politički odnosi*, Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka, Čigoja štampa.
- [11] Šalaj B. (2002). Modeli političkog obrazovanja u školskim sustavima europskih država, *Politička misao*, XXXIX, 3, 127-144.