

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DOES WHAT IT WAS CREATED FOR. AND THAT IS THE PROBLEM

Ivan Stamenković

Academy of Technical-Educational Vocational Studies Niš, Serbia ivandrajzl@gmail.com

Ljubiša Mihajlović

Academy of Technical-Educational Vocational Studies Niš, Serbia ljubisam9398@gmail.com

Mirjana Marković

Academy of Technical-Educational Vocational Studies Niš, Serbia mirjanamar76@gmail.com

Marija Novaković

Elementary school Čegar Niš, Serbia m.novakovic@oscegar.edu.rs

Andjela Marković

Graduate student in journalism, Faculty of Philosophy Niš, Serbia andjela171098@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper is a continuation of our last year's presentation at the Knowledge is Power symposium and continues to explore the state of preschool and primary education in the Republic of Serbia, but also in the countries of the region, and in some aspects, the global picture. The paper first looks at the reasons for the unsatisfactory state of education, especially among children between the ages of eleven and fifteen, looking for reasons in the traditional settings of educational systems, but also in their inertness in relation to rapid social changes. In contrast to the previous presentation, which was based on the absence of necessary content and suggestions that could supplement education, this paper is focused on researching the conditions in which classes are held and the main problems perceived by teachers and parents. Special attention is paid to the problem of peer violence and the inadequacy of the mechanisms by which the educational system fights against unwanted phenomena. There is a review of the ways in which the educational systems of the countries of the developed world fight against violence in schools and examples of some positive solutions are highlighted, with an analysis of their applicability in the countries of the Balkans. Examples of the zero-tolerance policy applied in Finland, whose education system is considered one of the most effective in the world, were mentioned. As another positive practice, the voucher system is recognized, which is in force in several countries, and which is expected to expand over time and that it is necessary to inform the domestic public about the positive and negative aspects in time. Possible problems are pointed out, among which the biggest one is that state educational institutions could have reduced competitiveness, but it is also considered that additional pressure on the state education system could lead to certain improvements.

Keywords: education, problems of education, peer violence, examples from abroad

1. INTRODUCTION

It should be mentioned at the beginning that this work continues our presentation from last year's conference entitled Education for Real Life and that it represents a continuation of the research we are conducting at the level of preschool and primary education, among educators, teachers and teachers, but also among parents of children of the mentioned ages.

2. PURPOSE

First, let's clarify the paradox from the title - why is it a problem that the educational system does exactly what it was created for? There is a belief among the public (and the interviews during the research supported this) that the educational system was created with the aim of providing children with optimal development and a basis for a quality, fulfilled and productive life. At the same time, the majority of respondents agree that the educational system does not do this sufficiently, that there are omissions, errors and much room for necessary improvements. This belief is a consequence of the lay belief that the education system was created for the benefit of each individual child. The history of education, however, shows that this is not true. During most of human history, education was not a universal right, but the privilege of a privileged few. Only the children of the aristocracy could receive some kind of education, often very basic and focused on the practical aspects of their future position in society. Not only was no education provided for the children of ordinary people, they were actively prevented from getting it. In many medieval societies, a peasant could be punished if he learned to read on his own initiative. Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did the idea of general education emerge. Lay people, again, might think that there was a sudden appearance of some kind of altruism, and the authorities wanted to make the lives of ordinary people easier and more meaningful. History teaches us, however, that working-class life in the nineteenth century was often more

difficult than ever before, with sixteen-hour days in factories and mines. The introduction of general education was not intended to create happier people, but to create more efficient workers. The educational system served to create identical screws for industrial processes and soldiers for wars. Children were expected to conform to the system, to mold themselves and suppress their individual traits. Over time, of course, living conditions have improved, but the education system is inert and has not changed much in terms of the targeted end product. Still, no one asks our children after completing their education whether they have learned to lead a fulfilled and satisfied life, but they are asked what kind of work they will be able to do. Work is certainly an important aspect of life, that cannot be disputed, but it is only that - one of the aspects. Unfortunately, almost all education is focused on him. It can be said that children learn important things that they will need for life only in preschool institutions and to some extent in the lower grades of elementary school. From about the age of ten, their education is completely focused on preparing them for a future workplace.

3. DISCUSSION

In the work that we mentioned at the beginning and to which we refer here, some proposals were already presented on what should be focused more significant efforts in education, and here we would like to mention some other aspects of the existing education that are not focused on the content of the teaching, but on practical problems with which education meets. Since we have several members in the team who have worked in primary education for years, as well as members who are still doing so, we have significant personal experience, supplemented by research into the opinions of educators, teachers, teachers and parents.

When talking about the competences of the teaching staff, the aspect of expertise is most often mentioned - mastery of the material and the ability to transfer knowledge. However, experiences in the field show that the biggest problem for teachers is how to teach at all. The theory of education and the majority of methodologies treat teaching as an idealized process in which the teacher only needs to find a way to best convey his knowledge, while there are children in the classroom who are eager and ready to learn. In reality, however, the majority of children between the ages of eleven and fifteen are not ready to learn and do not want to be in the classroom. This problem is most often expressed in boys, who often express the implicit attitude that learning is for girls and that boys who show academic ambitions are often abused by other boys and placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy at school. The decline in the status of educators and the fact that very often people who are perceived as the most successful in society did not have good success during schooling and are happy to emphasize this as a reason for pride also contribute to this. Also, in many families there is an attitude of parents that education is unimportant and that, according to their experience, those who did not waste time on education did much better. Children, of course, take on such attitudes and it is almost impossible to instill in them respect for the educational process. On the other hand, by force of law, such children are also obliged to attend classes and then they get bored, disrupt the lessons and make it difficult for teachers and children who want to learn. Statistics show that the largest number of teachers spend up to half of the class time on establishing discipline and solving situations created by uninterested students. In many cases, they also have to face cases of peer violence, including violence directed at themselves, for which they are usually not trained or prepared. The fact that almost half of young people in their early twenties stated in the survey that the period they spent in the upper grades of elementary school was the most unpleasant experience in their life so far is amazing. As reasons, they cited a constant feeling of anxiety and worry about being the subject of teasing, ridicule or physical abuse. They did not report the majority of these experiences during schooling, due to the ingrained belief that children must deal with problems on their own and real situations in which children who report violence were subsequently exposed to even stronger attacks from their peers. In the most severe cases, unfortunately, the victims committed suicide. Only in such cases would the public be interested in the phenomenon of peer violence for a while, but even then there were no concrete actions or improvements. Parents of abused children stated that they felt powerless and unprotected and that the schools most often advised them to change schools voluntarily. The teachers agree that their hands are tied. Among the disciplinary measures available to them are the reduction of the grade in governance, reprimands and administrative disciplinary measures. Since, however, the perpetrators of violence are usually students who do not value education and do not care about school success, the prescribed punishments do not affect them. That's why they start to feel untouchable over time, because the system can't do anything to them that would really affect them. On top of all that, in many communities, children as young as fourteen or fifteen already begin to have contact with criminal groups and teachers are often aware that they have children in school who bring drugs and weapons, and they can't do anything about them. They often fear for their own safety.

All the problems that we have presented are common knowledge to anyone who has contact with education, and most often the lay public is also aware of them. Unfortunately, the competent institutions react administratively, by ordering the formation of teams to fight against peer violence and introducing additional forms for teachers to fill out, further burdening their energy and time. Of course, the legal framework is such that it is not even possible to

implement measures that would give results - it is not possible to remove bullies from school, nor does anyone advocate for such a thing.

4. RESULTS

In the light of all that has been said, we have researched the practice in other countries, to look for solutions that would be applicable, and which would not threaten the guaranteed rights of the child to basic education. The first model that is imposed is the one applied in Finland, which is based on zero tolerance towards violence, i.e. on intensified work with children who show violent tendencies since preschool age, because it has been shown that the results are weak when the work starts only when bullies reach the seventh or eighth grade and when the reason for action is that it is no longer possible to hide problems within the school. Unfortunately, most of our interlocutors do not believe that such a model would be applicable in our country, because they often point out that the problem of violence is rooted in our society, that children have models of violent behavior both in the family and in the immediate environment, and that parents are often unable to recognize the violence that their child does and does not provide support to professional services, and they often actively oppose it.

The second model is present in a larger number of educational systems (Sweden, Ireland, France, USA, Hong Kong, Chile) and it is expected that over time it will spread to an even larger number of countries, so it would be necessary for our educational system to seriously consider this possibility, and that employees in education should deal with informing the public, so that this possibility, when the time comes, could go through a public discussion. This is the so-called voucherization of education. The concept of private education has already been introduced to us through private colleges, but also an increasing number of private secondary schools. Public views on the quality of private education differ, but no one questions the right of the private sector to engage in education. On the other hand, private primary education is taboo. Although there are several private elementary schools in Serbia, the public, even without sufficient information, considers such schools to be elitist and snobbish institutions intended exclusively for children of wealthy parents. The amount of school fees in those institutions certainly does not contribute to breaking those prejudices. Voucherization of education in the mentioned countries aims to bring private education closer to children from families with average incomes, because the school can redirect the money it allocates for each child's education to parents in the form of a voucher that pays the costs (or part of the costs) of private education.

What are the intended benefits of voucherization?

Parents of elementary school students agree that they do not have many choices when it comes to their children's education. Yes, every parent has the freedom to choose any primary school to enroll their child. But parents generally agree that there are not many differences between schools. There are small (sometimes pronounced) differences in the quality of teaching staff or material conditions, but when it comes to parents of children exposed to peer violence, there is no essential difference. It has already been mentioned that schools most often implicitly suggest to parents that the most painless solution to their problem is to voluntarily transfer their child to another school. However, there are no guarantees that there will not be identical problems in another school. Unfortunately, peer violence is a reality in our schools, especially in urban areas, where the students' parents do not know each other. Voucherization of education would make it possible to open private elementary schools for a larger number of children. Such schools would have the ability to create a violence-free environment because they have no restriction on withholding their services. And private schools also have an economic motive for this, because they will not insist on keeping one student with discipline problems, if that means the risk of several children leaving school and enrolling elsewhere.

5. CONCLUSION

We are aware that such a move would represent a major blow to state education, as the number of children would be significantly reduced in many schools. However, the public nominally advocates that the purpose of the education system should be the welfare of children, and not the safety of existing institutions. There is also the possibility that this threat could be an incentive for public schools to work more intensively on achieving competitiveness. In addition to legal frameworks that leave the hands of educators and school administration tied, a large part of the problem lies in their lack of motivation to deal with the problems, since no one bears the consequences for the prolonged existence of the problem. Only when the violence escalates, the public reacts, the school principal is often replaced, but essentially no lasting changes occur. Perhaps the existential pressure due to the existence of private elementary schools would in the long run make state education raise the quality of services.

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. (2019). *The Six Secrets of Intelligence: What your education failed to teach you*. Icon Books.
Colić, M. (2023). *Obrazovanje i savremeno društvo*. Dom kulture Studentski grad.

- Freire, P. (2021). Education for Critical Consciousness. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Martin, K. (2021). Evolving Education. Impress.
- Mogel, W. (2001). The Blessing of a Skinned Knee. Penguin Books.
- Nil, A. S. (1960). Summerhill. Hart Publishing Company.
- Papan, J. (2018). Politika za decu. Službeni glasnik.
- Rajović, R. (2017). IQ deteta – briga roditelja. NTC.
- Tvenge, J. M. (2017). iGen. AtriaBooks
- Tvenge, J. (2009). Narcissism Epidemic. Free Press.
- Warano, H. E. (2008). A Nation of Wimps. Brodway Books.
- Švarc, B. (2009). The Paradox of Choice. HarperCollins.