

# SECURITY CULTURE IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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**Abstract:** In this paper we will present the thesis that the development of a security culture through education in the secondary education system is one of the possible answers to many contemporary security challenges and threats. Prior to this, we will present the current Basics of the Defence System program, initiated and implemented by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, which has been in use since the 2018-2019 school year. Believing that with this approach many important problems remain unresolved, we suggest modifying and expanding the program from the field of defence to the field of overall security culture, by deeply respecting the educational needs of secondary school students in the context of human security. We will strive to prove that the range of qualified professionals who can be deemed competent for teaching should be expanded, taking into account the characteristics of the educational process which requires not only professional, but also pedagogical knowledge and skills.

**Key words:** security challenges, security culture, educational needs, defence.

## INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis of this paper is positioning education in the centre of complex relations that are established and mediated between an individual and society. In the last few decades, a number of questions addressing individual and social values of education have arisen. They are motivated by two types of benefits. On the one hand, there are economically inspired goals, where education is seen as an undoubted factor of global economic growth, but also as a profitable investment on an individual plan. On the other hand, there are democratically inspired aspirations and needs of individuals and society, which emphasizes its emancipatory character. Although research does not suggest that education is a panacea for all individual and social problems, it is undoubtedly one of the important factors of individual and social development. The phenomenon of education goes beyond

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the education acquired at educational institutions, including integral and various informal forms of gaining knowledge, self-education and informal education. Yet when one talks about education, even though this identification is wrong, it is mainly related to formal education which, with its institutional background and longevity, has a profound and pervasive influence. The importance of formal education, in relation to its other forms, stems from the fact that institutional education can have a considerable influence on social life outside the school, as well as on individual human destinies.

From the perspective of this paper, the significant feature of education is its ability to overcome a lack between the knowledge, abilities, skills, habits and attitudes that individuals possess and those that they would ideally possess in order to function in a satisfactory way. This lack of knowledge, which could be acquired through education, in the field of security can be considered as some kind of a guarantee that we act more safely in different situations that endanger security, that we acquire “tools” which we can act preventively with, that we prevent the main causes of anxiety and fear. From the point of view of society and global educational needs, the choice, selection and approach to a particular type of knowledge indicate a status that certain scientific or professional areas have, i.e. they suggest what knowledge is considered as the high status knowledge in a certain society, the knowledge that is worth handing down to future generations, and therefore should have a prominent place in the curriculum (Apple, 2012; Gevirc & Krib, 2012). Pedagogy thus becomes “essentially political” (Žiruš, 2013: 14), and education never neutral when it comes to value, even though in layman’s terms they are often perceived as neutral techniques used to spread objective truths. Therefore, the solutions to key educational issues in a democratic society should be formulated after professional and public discussions, and they should be closely connected to the public interest and strong needs of the society and individuals in order to provide a fair distribution of educational benefits.

## THE PILLARS OF SECURITY

Different security crises in the wider community, as well as in schools, have made the theorists of various profiles to have a growing interest in questions of security in the school environment. Educational institutions, relevant ministries and individuals with experience in this field have faced various challenges as well. The Ministry of Defence has recently started an initiative, called *Basics of the Defence System*, which attempts to contribute to strengthening the security culture of secondary school students in Serbia. It is still too early to make accurate conclusions about the results of this project, but it is possible to point out some conceptual and practical inconsistencies.

In order to understand the complex influence of education and security on each other as a whole, it is useful to understand security and the role of education in general, as well as in the process of achieving security. Numerous meanings of

the word “security” make it difficult to understand the structures derived from the use of this term, and thus to comprehend the security culture. Security is one of the most frequently used terms which, in spite of that or exactly because of this, is not used precisely enough even in scientific discourse. Security is most often perceived as a state of not being exposed to danger or being protected from it, but the same thing refers to other terms such as safety, protection and defence. The concept of security is fundamentally disputable and subject to various interpretations. As is often the case in other scientific disciplines, in a scientific community of authors in the field of security sciences there are at least two scientific paradigms, two disciplinary matrices. On the one hand, there is a traditional understanding of security as state security, which addresses the national, global, international security and other similar concepts. On the other hand, there is a wider and more comprehensive understanding of security that includes societal and individual security objects, non-military threats to security and human security. As said by Kuhn, “the paradigm rules not the matter, but a group of experts” (Kuhn, 2013: 80). Thus, various experts in the field of security suggest different versions of education for security. Different ideas, assumptions, intellectual approaches and the movement within a certain paradigm have not only theoretical, but also practical consequences. In the field of security education, by supporting one concept or another, they lead to strengthening or suppressing of certain social and political values of a wider society. The framework around which the conceptual similarities and differences are formed is about the coherent answers to several seemingly simple questions (Teriff, 1999; according to: Simić, 2002: 22):

- Who or what is the object of security?
- What is the nature of a threat?
- Who is responsible (who handles the security)?
- What methods, means and ways can help achieve, maintain and improve security?

Where we will seek support and who will be responsible for security should logically follow from the initial decision concerning the object under protection and the nature of the threat. In a traditional state-centric approach, these would be professional groups such as the military and police, while in a wider approach the responsibility would be distributed among the population, which would then require the strengthening of citizens’ competences in the domain of a wider security agenda. The human-centric approach implies the individuals as the objects of security, and recognizes new threats that traditional security structures cannot defend against. A multifunctional concept of human security develops seven key dimensions of security: personal, ecological, economic, political, social, health and food security (UNDP, 1994: 25; Dulić, 2006; Kerr, 2006; Hadžić, 2003; Katić, 2018). The desirable condition in these domains is not so easy to associate with the presumed forces and means for reaching it. Raising the level of citizens’ security culture, as a complement to the activities of state structures, is a slow but potentially optimal way to achieve fundamentally strong security in democratic societies.

Allocating citizens a part of the responsibility for security and preparing them for that role through the school system should be dealt with extreme care. At first glance, there is not much to object to. However, the reality of current social and educational formations requires serious and deep consideration. Similar initiatives that existed in our country in the past, such as the study of Defence and Protection subjects (under different names) in secondary schools and universities, were abandoned decades ago (Bebler, 2017, Katić, 2018). Their ideology, the lack of realism and respect for the properties of the school as a micro social community has resulted in giving up this form of education exactly at a time when security was extremely imperilled. There are numerous assessments about the current detachment of education from humanistic values and the common good, about the negative consequences of the dictates of efficiency in educational activities, about the responsibility of education for maintaining and deepening inequalities in society. Furthermore, there are assessments about gradually directing social and educational policies towards the economic usability, profit, competitiveness, and school's service towards economy, corporate and military interests. All of them require that each step in planning and programming this education be tackled carefully (Filipović, 2013; Tadić, 2019; Apple, 2012; Apple, 2014; Liessmann, 2009; Sennett, 2015; Žiru, 2013; Gevirc & Krib, 2012; Freire, 2018; Nussbaum, 2010).

It was necessary to define what we mean when we mention security - whether we are referring only to defence or if we are interested in the comprehensive achievement of security; whose security we are interested in - of children, a wider community, the state, the environment or all together; what will be given priority in the case of opposing values. In the same way, it is necessary to clarify which educational contents and forms should be emphasized - education, coaching, preparation or even training, because they fulfil different aims, lead to different outcomes, knowledge, skills and attitudes. Depending on these initial assumptions, it will be determined which professions will be considered competent to take part in the aforementioned forms of education. Furthermore, it will be specified which experts will be able to equally, with other teachers, organize the educational process while taking into account the properties of the school as the social environment, developmental and psychological needs of the children, as well as what competences they should have. All these, and many other issues, should be solved when engaging in the establishment of a new educational reality; the reality which has the potential to improve the security culture of young people as mature individuals who consciously take part in their community and its culture, and which should serve as another means of turning social problems into security concerns.

## NEEDS AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Maintaining and strengthening, or suppressing and weakening a prevailing system of ideas in a society, greatly depends on the school curriculum, educational plans and programs. Curriculum contents do not randomly “enter” the programs of schools, and others are not accidentally omitted. The fact is that schools seem to be neutral. However, thorough analyses indicate that the power the public and hidden curricula hold has both positive and negative sides. The burden of great expectations set up before the school system is followed by great disappointments as well, especially when the school is perceived to be responsible for the problems arising outside of it. The measure of its responsibility depends on what it does with the detected social problems, whether it problematizes, reproduces, emphasizes and intensifies them, or whether it attempts to alleviate and reduce them. In the struggle against many social problems, including those connected to security, the school cannot be engaged alone, especially if its key, essential characteristics that compose its essential quality are not sufficiently respected.

A prior educational practice focused on strengthening a certain security segment, taking place within the educational process in educational institutions, is related to the activities of three state ministries: the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

For a long period of time, while the idea of studying security culture in schools was being created, current initiatives were preceded by a pilot project “Security through learning”, in which the Faculty of Security of the University of Belgrade, under the former name, and the Ministry of Education were included. This program was designed in 2005 as an attempt to highlight the contribution that schools and learning can play in the improvement of complex youth security profile. In addition to keeping the idea of education for security, the key contribution of this project is in positioning the security culture as an integral part of culture as a whole; in emphasizing the need to expand the base of knowledge that is considered necessary for every citizen with knowledge in the field of security. Although the pilot project was terminated after several years, it gave a practical incentive to the introduction of Security Culture subject into school and faculty curricula. In the aspect of theory, it resulted in a series of scientific and professional papers, monographs and textbooks in which the concept of security culture was established and theoretically grounded (Stajić, Mijalković & Stanarević, 2004; Stajić, Mijalković & Stanarević, 2006; Katić, 2006; Stanarević & Ejodus, 2009). From early works to date, security culture is defined as “a set of adopted attitudes, knowledge, skills and rules in the field of security, manifested as behaviour and process, on the need, ways and means of protecting personal, social and international values from all sources, forms and carriers threats” (Stajić, Mijalković & Stanarević, 2004: 32), suggesting that the optimal path through which the line connecting the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes should pass through the whole education system.

Current initiatives have been launched on several fronts. Since 2017, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has organized a program called *Basics of Child Safety* implemented in the fourth and sixth grades, and in the first grade since 2019.<sup>3</sup> Besides traditional teaching methods, there have been competitions (*What I Know about Traffic*), mobile applications (*Basics of Child Safety*) and similar activities. The Ministry has encouraged some forms of cooperation with the non-governmental sector such as training the volunteers of the Tijana Jurić Foundation, as well as “*Matura*” (*Graduation*) *Action*, in order to improve the safety of graduates on excursions and during prom nights. These activities are carried out by police officers.

Since 2018/2019, the Ministry of Defence has conducted a program *Basics of the Defence System* in the fourth grade of secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> Teaching is carried out in the form teacher’s lessons by the members of the Ministry of Defence. According to the materials available on the official site of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, there are eleven topics:<sup>5</sup>

- The place, role and tasks of the Serbian Armed Forces (hereinafter: SAF) in the system of security and defence of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: the RS)
- Military service in the RS
- Working and material obligations in the RS
- Application for enrolment at secondary and higher military schools in the RS
- How to become a professional soldier
- Physical readiness as a prerequisite for military service
- Observation and information service
- Forms of unarmed resistance
- Personal and collective protection from chemical, biological and toxic agents; chemical weapons, biological and flammable materials
- Civil protection in the RS
- Tactical-technical meetings.

It is not easy to relate some of the aforementioned topics to the needs of children in secondary schools, and therefore there is an impression that the designers of the program were guided by the needs of the military organization to interest, approach and motivate secondary school students for military service. Had this motive been dominant, we could pose a question if it is justifiable that one profession in society has a privileged position to be presented to young people, in comparison to all other professions that may be their life choices. The foundation of some other topics, such as those related to the means of protection, civil protection or unarmed resistance, is easier to be found in the current and future needs of children. Besides that, these classes begin with the RS anthem, which

3 <http://www.mup.gov.rs> (retrieved April 28, 2019)

4 <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/srednje-obrazovanje/>; Obaveštenje- Osnove sistema odbrane Republike Srbije; (retrieved April 28, 2019)

5 <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/srednje-obrazovanje/>; Obaveštenje- Osnove sistema odbrane Republike Srbije; Materijal-za-srednje-skole-MO-XI-2018.(3).zip

can be interpreted as aiming at the development of patriotism and ideological homogenization.<sup>6</sup>

The first attempts of integrating the important contents for the development of security culture in the RS school system could be considered useful if they developed, both in a pedagogical and professional sense, more towards fulfilling the needs of children than the unchanged collectivist matrices.

As with any other form of education, the planning and programming of the contents of education, important from the point of view of the developing youth's security culture, should begin by establishing the current and future educational needs. A long time ago educational sciences identified the elements of the educational cycle which commences by identifying the needs, then there are planning and programming phases, and finally undertaking the teaching (Pastuović, 1978; Pastuović, 1999; Savićević, 1989; Despotović, 2000). After the evaluation, the re-examination of needs usually repeats the cycle to improve the educational spiral. If educational needs remain unexplored, the educational programs can be the results of someone's arbitrary decision, the result of agreement and concession. This way the best interest for children could, but not necessarily, be taken into account. In our case, some of the topics related to weapons or tactical-technical meetings, in certain conditions can lead to a fascination with weapons, which can lead to violence (Bralić, Katić & Orlović Lovren, 2016).

Some characteristics of educational needs, in comparison to others, demand inductive and deductive ways to be determined. This happens because besides the descriptive level - the state as it is, a normative addition is necessary - as it should be, which is derived deductively from the theory. Although individuals are the best judges of their own needs, the experts who are familiar with pedagogical principles and the contents of some disciplines are more relevant in the field of education.<sup>7</sup> Agreeing that there is an educational need, the individuals "admit" that they lack knowledge whose type and scope is further mainly judged by the experts. Thus, simplifying the process of making a program and conducting it, as well as centralizing the decision-making of implementing it, represents an uncertain way which can lead to disputable solutions. Education management, which no longer requires the opinion of the profession,<sup>8</sup> can hardly lead to the improvement in the quality of education.

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6 In some countries, such as the USA, where this is traditional, the litigation was conducted because some children received disciplinary punishments because they rejected to stand up and repeat the lyrics of the anthem (the case of the twelve-year-old boy D. Spricler who won a court case) (Chomsky, 2017:27).

7 During the micro examination at the Faculty of Security Studies, the students of the final year, who were in the role of experts, agreed that secondary schools should deal more with the topics of wider security, and less with the topics of defence.

8 Solutions that strengthen centralized governance and the minister's authorisations, while the authorisations of the National Education Council and Institute for the Improvement of Education deal with giving opinions. The Law on the Fundamentals of Education System, (2017), Official Gazette of the RS, no. 88.

Apart from the characteristics of a wider educational context, the most important factor in a quality education is the quality of the teachers' work. They can adapt to the age and needs of children, because they possess certain competences that are further developed through rapport. Teachers influence not only the achievements of the children, but also the development of their personalities. Therefore, teachers' competences should be multidimensional. They should include the knowledge and use of procedural strategies of education, interpersonal relations and the creation of a positive school climate, as well as didactic-methodical procedures. That does not mean that some people without pedagogical, psychological and didactic-methodical knowledge cannot participate in teaching as guest teachers. They can, but through the coordination and cooperation with the teacher and with the teacher's guidance. Perhaps introducing military and police officers in teaching can allow children to acquire certain knowledge from the point of view of those professions. However, it should not be forgotten that in a school, as a micro social community, the interest, well-being and needs of the children are crucial.

## CONCLUSION

Sector initiatives, launched by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and directed towards the development of particular segments of the youth's security culture are deemed as one of the possible answers to the existing security challenges and threats. We believe that they should be complemented with a wider approach where security is interpreted as a multidimensional area which, apart from the problems of internal and state security, includes non-military threats to the community, individuals and environment. In that context, the contents and approaches would be closely related to the needs of young people and their personal security.

As teaching is conducted in the school environment, it is necessary to distance it from the possible ideological bias, by respecting the primary function of the school as well as the essential pedagogical principles, including those associated with the quality and competences of the people in the role of teachers.

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