EDUCATION IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM IN VOJVODINA - THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

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The name of Vojvodina today refers to the space of North Serbia, a region with an interesting past and present where multiculturalism and multilingualism of tens of ethnic communities living here has been nurtured and built into the essence of everyday life for centuries. Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Checks, Germans, Macedonians, Bulgarians and many others have created multicultural and multilingual construct which can serve as an example for many other regions. The education in mother tongues has certainly had a positive influence on the mentioned phenomenon. The paper offers an interesting outline of Vojvodina multicultural past and present, with a special attention paid to education in the Romanian language in the context of contemporary setting.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Multilingualism, Ethnic communities, Coexistence.

INTRODUCTION

Romanian population lives in approximately forty settlements in the part of Banat which was an integral part of the Yugoslav country since 1918, and which now belongs to the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, in the Republic of Serbia.

Romanians colonized this region in the present Vojvodina, mostly in the 18th and the first decades of the 19th century from the eastern parts of Banat. However, in several settlements, population from other parts of the Romanian ethnic milieu arrived, most of all from Oltenia, Transylvania and Crișana. The newly arrived population settled in places which existed since the Ottoman rule, and even the medieval times, while in some cases completely new settlements were founded.

After WWI and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Banat was divided between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom SCS) and Romania. Being a multietnic milieu, where Serbs, Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks and other ethnicities lived, after the establishment of the new borders which was a consequence of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, it was necessary to regulate the position of ethnic minorities which remained within the divided Banat. The status of the Romanian ethnic minority in Banat was regulated by international conventions which were signed after WWI, as well as by different Yugoslav-Romanian conventions. That is how the condition were created for the Romanian ethnic minority in the Yugoslav (Serbian) Banat to achieve its national rights, in the area of education, culture, religion etc., which enabled its survival in the region up to now.
Education with Romanian as the language of instruction appeared in western Banat, in present-day Vojvodina, in the 18th century and has taken place without interruptions until the present day, in conditions which depended on the social, economic and political factors. Education in mother tongues is certainly one of the most important prerequisites for the existence and development of an ethnic minority, because it enables not only the reduction of the illiteracy rate, without which there would be no economic or general social progress, but also the creation of the national intelligence that would represent the avant-garde in the national-cultural, confessional, economic and political activities of the ethnicity in question.

On the territory of Banat, a more organized form of education in Romanian appears with the Theresian reforms under the enlightened absolutism. In the 18th century, the Habsburg Monarchy, interested in the development of the education on its entire territory, started to take precise steps with the goal to organize the school system. Up to then, in Banat there was not a unique education system, the teaching staff was under-qualified, the length of the school year and the teachers’ salaries varied from place to place, there were no legal norms which would regulate employment and replacement of teachers and which would control their work.

So that order could be established in the school system, in 1774, Johann Felbiger, a school reformer from Prussia, was brought to Austria. The same year, the Education law was passed, which would, in the next years, be the foundation of the education system in the Monarchy.

The first rural schools with Romanian as the language of instruction in the western parts of Banat emerged in the mid-18th century. The oldest data about an institution of that kind come from a school in Sv. Mihajlo (today Lokve, in Romanian Sânt Mihai) and date back to 1765, although it is known that in Veliko Središte near Vršac there was an even older school, a school of painting (a zograf school), which was founded by Vasile the Deacon, who came to this place in 1736, leading 50 Romanian families from Tismana (Oltenia).

Education in a Gymnasium in Vršac, with Romanian as the language of instruction, has been for more than half a century the most important factor in the creation of the Romanian intelligence (along with the School for Teachers). It has its roots in the Grammar School, which was founded by the Vršac municipality back in 1790, with the intercession from bishop of Vršac Josif Jovanović Šakabenta. The languages of instruction in the school were Serbian, Romanian and Latin, and, unlike the 6-year Gymnasium, it lasted for only four years. However, it was closed down in 1819 because of the inability of the municipality to ensure the funds of 60,000 forint, which were necessary to pay the running costs of the school. An important event for the development of the secondary education in the town, in the 19th century, was the establishment of the lower Realschulen in 1852, with German as the language of instruction. It had a small number of Romanian students; at the beginning of the school year of 1853/54, in two classes with 106 students, there were only two Romanian students.

In order to form qualified teaching staff who would work in Trivial Orthodox schools, in 1812 two Präparandschule (Preparatory schools for teachers) were founded: in Szentendre with Serbian as the language of instruction and in Arad with Romanian as the language of instruction (Гаврилович 1997: 226-230). Also, the Serbian-Romanian seminary was founded in Vršac, which educated the clerical staff. However, because of the lack of teachers in rural schools, many graduate students of the seminary spent their entire lives as teachers in rural schools. The seminary was in fact the oldest permanent school in the region where teaching in Romanian took place, between 1822 and 1865. After the separation of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis, in
1865, the Romanian classrooms of the Vršac seminary were transferred to Caransebeş, the headquarters of the new Romanian Orthodox eparchy, and two years later the Serbian classrooms were closed, too.

Among the remarkable educators and illuminators who contributed to the development of education in Romanian in the late 18th and in the first decades of the 19th century, and who lived and worked on the territory of the western Banat, we mention the following names: Paul Iorgovici (1764-1808), illuminator and teacher in the Grammar school in Vršac (from 1805), Constantin Diaconovici Loga (1770-1850), illuminator and school inspector, who lived in Bela Crkva (Weiβkirchen) for a number of years, then, Ştefan Popovici Neagoe (1800-1869), illuminator and teacher in a Romanian school in Pest, born in Sv. Jovan (today Barice, in Romanian Sân-Ianăş), Sofronie Ivacicovici (1793-1861), priest and teacher, born in Deliblato, Nicolae Tincu Velea, teacher in the Serbian-Romanian Seminary in Vršac, priest and historian, and others.

The politics of the Hungarian school authorities after the signing of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) was to gravitate towards the magyarization of the non-Hungarian population, although the Nationality Law of 1868 and the Education Law number 8 from the same year ensured education in the mother tongue to all ethnic minorities on the territory of Hungary. A great majority of elementary schools from the territory of the former Military Frontier were, after it was dissolved in 1872, converted to municipal schools, which functioned in accordance with the School Statute from 1877. In the following years, the Hungarian minister of education Trefort passed new education laws which increased the process of magyarization in the schools of ethnic minorities, and which finally reached its peak in the passing of the Apponyi’s education law of 1907. We mention the names of a few teachers who worked in the Romanian schools on the territory of the Serbian Banat in the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, and who left a trail in the educational and cultural life of the local population. Those are Petru Stoica (teacher in Banatsko Novo Selo (Neudorf)), Teodor Petrişor (in Alibunar), Nicolae Penţa (in Vladimirovac), George Bujigan (in Deliblato), Romulus Roman (in Dolovo), Petru Bizerea and Patrichie Ramneanţu (in Kuštilj, in Romanian Coştei), Ştefan Alexandru (in Malo Središte).

The issue of the protection of the ethnic minorities who remained in the Yugoslav State after WWI was one of the problems which were supposed to be solved by signing peace treaties. The conventions on the protection of ethnic minorities obliged the signatory states to regulate by law the protection of the minorities. In the Article 51 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, there is a convention between the Entente Powers and the Kingdom SCS on the regulation of the position of the ethnic minorities in this state. By signing the Declaration on December 5, 1919, the delegation of the Kingdom SCS accepted the Convention on the protection of ethnic minorities in the Article 51 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Some of the articles of the Convention and Declaration also referred to educational and cultural issues.

Still, the situation present in the first postbellum years was not most suitable for the Romanian minority, who remained within the borders of the Yugoslav State after the dissolving of the Austro-Hungary and the division of Banat between the Kingdom SCS and Romania in 1919. Namely, the position of education in Romanian in the Yugoslav Banat worsened then. Out of a total number of 105 teachers who taught in Romanian before the war, 70 of them left their posts and went to Romania, where they were reinstated. That is how a large number of teachers’ posts in rural schools remained vacant, and because of a lack of teaching staff, many schools employed teachers with insufficient knowledge of the Romanian language. Consequently, the crisis of education in the Romanian language in the Yugoslav Banat became very serious. The
problem would finally be partially solved by signing the Yugoslav-Romanian convention on the regulation of the minority elementary schools in Banat in 1933, which was based on the principle of reciprocity. It stipulated that the language of instruction in Romanian schools from Yugoslav Banat should be Romanian, while in the Serbian and Croatian schools from Romanian Banat it should be Serbo-Croatian. To make this possible, it was planned to employ teachers by contract from Romania to teach in elementary schools in the Yugoslav Banat, and conversely, to hire teachers by contract from Yugoslavia for schools in the Romanian Banat (Spăriosu 1997: 42-44).

Of great importance was also the decision to establish Romanian classrooms in the School for Teachers in Vršac, which would help overcome the lack of teaching staff in elementary schools, and so was the decision to establish lower grades in the Vršac Gymnasium, which would create the conditions for the forming of a class of autochthonous intelligence among the Romanian population. Of course, the Convention, based on reciprocity, stipulated the establishment of Serbian classrooms in the Gymnasium and School for Teachers in Timișoara. However, its implementation was late, so the first teachers by contract (17 of them) arrived to Romanian schools only on May 25, 1935, while on November 23 the same year, another 29 teachers arrived. The Romanian classrooms of the lower Gymnasium in Vršac were opened in the school year of 1934/35, while the classroom in the School for Teachers was opened a year later. These are very important moments in the further development of education, culture and the general development of the Romanian minority in the Yugoslav Banat, because the teachers by contract influenced the faster development of cultural amateurism in the countryside, the development of literature and other aspects of the social existence of this population. On the other hand, only after a few years, the revival of the autochthonous intelligence is present, whose lack was very noticeable mostly in the interbellum period. Students finished the Gymnasium or the School for Teachers in Vršac and laid the foundation for a new intellectual elite that will carry the educational, cultural, scientific, political and social life in general of the Romanians in Vojvodina after WWII. From the school year of 1941/42 onwards, the fifth grade was opened, which basically meant that the upper grades of the Vršac Gymnasium started working, having Romanian as the language of instruction.

In the postbellum period, from 1948/49, the Romanian classrooms were separated into an institution apart, the Romanian complete Gymnasium, which would keep its independence until 1955/56, when, because of the introduction of the compulsory 8-year education, the lower grades of the Gymnasium (grades 1 to 4) became the upper grades of the elementary school (grades 5 to 8), and the upper grades of the Gymnasium (grades 5 to 8) became the grades 1 to 4 of the Gymnasium. The Romanian complete Gymnasium was closed, and its classrooms were returned to the Vršac Gymnasium, where there were again two languages of instruction – Serbian and Romanian.

As already stated, the first classroom of the School for Teachers in Vršac (the first grade) with Romanian as the language of instruction was opened in 1935/36. Because of an insufficient number of students enrolled in the first grade, the students of Romanian ethnicity were at first included in the Serbian classroom, and only two subjects were taught in Romanian: Romanian Language and Literature and Catechism. The first generation, numbering 6 students, took their graduate exam in June 1940. Only from 1942/43 will all the subjects in the Romanian classrooms be taught in Romanian, which was possible owing to the fact that the teachers of the Gymnasium, of whom many were Romanian citizens, were employed to teach in the School for Teachers, too.

Regarding the elementary schools, in 1945 the first postbellum Compulsory-education Law was passed, by which education was to last for 7 years, and in 1952/1953 it was expanded to 8
years. This increased the number of students in elementary schools, but it also increased the need for qualified teaching staff who would work in the 8-year schools (Maran 2008: 287). In 1960, in the People’s Republic of Serbia, the first Curriculum for school for ethnic minorities was adopted, and so was the Syllabus for Mother tongue, Serbian Language and History. The number of hired teachers would in the next decades increase steadily, because of the establishment of new classrooms, and competence was often reached through work and by additional training of the teaching staff in corresponding educational institutions in Vršac, Zrenjanin, Novi Sad and Belgrade (Spăriosu 1982: 67). In spite of everything, in the next period, the number of students in schools with Romanian as the language of instruction starts to decrease gradually, which is a process lasting incessantly up to now. The causes for the decrease in the number of students in Romanian classrooms are numerous. We mention the most significant ones: declining birth rate, characteristic for all the nationalities in Vojvodina, which automatically means fewer students in schools; emigration to the countries of the West, which has been especially prominent among the Romanian population since the 60’s, although it existed before; and finally, enrolling children in Serbian classrooms, despite the existence of the Romanian ones in the same school, which is especially the case with children from mixed marriages. As a consequence of the reduction in the number of students in Romanian classrooms, in the last few decades, classrooms were closed in some places, such as: Jabuka, Glogonj, Omoljica, Orešac, Margita, Deliblato, Mramorak, Bela Crkva, Ković. In other places, education in Romanian takes place only in the first four grades, and even then in multi-grade classrooms. That is the case with schools in Dolovo, Jankov Most, Sutjeska, Ovča, but also in most places in the vicinity of Vršac with Romanian population. The situation becomes more and more unfavourable in other places too, where there are still Romanian classrooms in all eight grades, but the drastic decline of the number of students questions their existence in the future, which is the situation, for example, with the schools in Alibunar, Seleuš, and other. The direction in which the situation unravels is disadvantageous for the conservation of the Romanian classrooms in several places, so, unfortunately, the future of education in Romanian in Vojvodina is not bright. The government authorities truly provide all the necessary support for the conservation of the classrooms, tolerating classrooms with very few students, but despite that, everything indicates that the continually smaller number of students will lead to the closing of the classrooms.

The percentage of students in Romanian classrooms at the elementary-school level, in comparison to the total number of Romanians in the AP Vojvodina, is also decreasing. The following data, given in the table below, show this. They refer to the period after the introduction of the compulsory eight-year elementary education, and to the years when the census was taken, because that enables us to compare more easily the total number of Romanians in the AP Vojvodina and the number of students who were taught in their mother tongue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>the total number of Romanians</th>
<th>the number of students taught in Romanian</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>57 259</td>
<td>5323</td>
<td>9.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>52 987</td>
<td>3355</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>38 809</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>30 419</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The newest data show that the process continues. In the school year of 2009/2010, there were only 1386 students in Romanian classrooms, but since the census will only be taken in October this year, there are still no data on the total number of people.

Regarding the secondary education, over the last few decades, we witnessed numerous reforms and restructuring of education at this level, so that, for example, in the period of the so-called Common middle education, at the end of the 70’s and during the 80’s, there were the so-called ninth and tenth grades in Romanian classrooms in several places. Aside from Vršac, the traditional education centre of Romanians in this part of Banat, they also existed in Alibunar, Zrenjanin and Uzdin.

Giving up on the unsuccessful experiment meant going back to some forms of the classical organization of the secondary education, so that today there are two high schools with Romanian as the language of instruction: the Vršac Gymnasium, with old traditions and high-quality education in Romanian, and at the same with the sufficient number of students and qualified teaching staff, and High School of Economy in Alibunar, where technicians of economy are educated in Romanian.

Regarding the School for Teachers in Vršac, in 1973 it was converted to Pedagogical Academy, with Serbian and Romanian as the languages of instruction. After a number of new reforms, in 1993/94, instead of Pedagogical Academy, the School of Higher Education for Teachers was established, and in 2007/2008 it became the Preschool Teacher Training College, with Serbian, Romanian and, since last year, Romany as the languages of instruction. In the same building is the department of the Faculty for Teachers from Belgrade, with Serbian and Romanian as the languages of instruction. Apart from them, we also need to mention the existence of the Department of Romanian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology in Novi Sad.

All of this proves that in AP Vojvodina there is education in Romanian at all levels, from preschool to university, with a note that, in the near or far future, the crisis present in elementary education, caused by a small number of students, threatens to endanger the very existence of education in the mother tongue of this ethnic minority in Vojvodina.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WITH BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN SERBIAN AND ROMANIAN

Having in mind that the Romanian Orthodox population on the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy belonged to the Serbian Metropolis with the headquarters in Sremski Karlovci up to 1865, it stands to reason that the education in Romanian took place in similar conditions, because education in both language was in the care of ecclesiastic structures – ecclesiastic-popular councils, bishops and Metropolitans (Гојков, 2010). In numerous sources, mostly from the 18th century, it can be seen that Orthodox schools (with Serbian and Romanian as the languages of instruction) were called Illyrian schools, so it is not always clear what languages of instruction they actually used. Some schools used both languages. In 1778, on the territory of Banat, out of a total number of 205 Trivial elementary schools, 147 of them used Romanian, 52 Serbian, and 6 schools both languages. We single out two educational institutions of higher standing, where both of these languages were used for instruction. Those are already mentioned Grammar school in Vršac (1790-1819), with classes in Latin, Serbian and Romanian, where the well known Romanian illuminator Paul Iorgovici taught, and the Serbian-Romanian Seminary in Vršac (1822-1867), where the clerical staff was educated for the needs of the Vršac Orthodox Eparchy.
In the period between the Two World Wars, after the division of Banat between the Kingdom SCS and Romania, bilingual Romanian-Serbian elementary schools were still not uncommon in the Yugoslav part of Banat. We point out the fact that, during the 20’s, teachers who did not know Romanian, or did not know it well enough, taught in many Romanian classrooms. In the mid 30’s, when the teachers by contract from Romania started arriving to elementary schools, bilingual education began to take place in the newly founded Romanian lower classrooms of the Vrsac Gymnasium, and the situation was similar in the classrooms of the School for Teachers in Vrsac, where there were not enough teachers who would teach all the subjects in Romanian, the mother tongue of the students, so, in the first years of the existence of Romanian classrooms, the student had only the subjects Mother Tongue, Pedagogical subjects and Catechism in Romanian (Popi G. etc. 2006: 59-60).

Bilingual schools, and by extension bilingualism in education, were also present during the entire post-WWII period of more than a half a century, up until today and should be viewed from two aspects: one the one hand, students whose mother tongue was Romanian could more easily learn the official language, which was once Serbo-Croatian, now Serbian, and on the other, it made way for assimilation, by allowing parents to choose whether they would enrol their children in Romanian (the mother tongue of the students) or Serbian classrooms. Since many parents considered that they children will better adjust socially if they finished school in the official language, and not disregarding the phenomenon which could be called the minority complex, we can see that the number of those who abandoned the education in the mother tongue is far from small, which lead to the decrease in the number of students in the Romanian classrooms, and, in some places, even their closing down (for example, Deliblato, Mramorak, Margita, Glogonj, Kovic etc.). This is primarily the case with children from mixed marriages, although it is not uncommon for children from ethnically homogenous marriages to also attend classes in Serbian. Out of 14 eight-year elementary schools where education in Romanian exists, 9 schools have both Serbian and Romanian classrooms, and only five have exclusively Romanian classrooms. It is the same case with secondary education, namely, both high schools with Romanian classrooms, also have several parallel Serbian classrooms. As we have already stressed, in schools with classrooms in both languages, the process of assimilation progresses faster, but, on the other hand, the possibility to communicate and hold classes in both languages enables an easier integration of the minority students into the society, easier learning of the official language and it facilitates the familiarization among the members of different ethnic, confessional and linguistic communities. In this sense, we consider bilingual schools to be an important factor of the multiculturalism present on the territory of Vojvodina.

MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM AS FORMS OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE CULTURAL MODELS OF MINORITIES IN VOJvodina – WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ROMANIAN ETHNIC MINORITY

For the two tangent phenomena such as multiculturalism and multilingualism to be understood in the context of the functioning of the cultural universes of minorities, it is necessary to know its core. The parameters in which the social, and therefore the cultural life of an ethnic-minority community happens, is significantly different from that which is characteristic for the cultural

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1 We will consider bilingual schools to be those that have parallel classrooms – in Serbian and in Romanian, where, in specific situations (like the lack of teaching staff), the language of instruction in Romanian classrooms for some subjects is also Serbian. Related to that is the notion of “bilingualism in education”.
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process of the majority. In the case of ethnic-minority communities, it is the relations between the two cultural milieus, between their collective and individual psychologies of the everyday cultural life, that give the measure and shape of the multicultural and multilingual expression, respectively.

From the historical stance, the Romanian ethnic community on the territories which today carry the common name Vojvodina or administrative name AP Vojvodina, has created its collective identity of a minority, we can safely say, for centuries. The fate of it as a minority was set by the WWI and the establishing of new borders in this region. The major part of the Romanian community becomes an integral part of the Romanian state, while a small number of people remain within the borders of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This lead to the creation of separate not only cultural but also psychological patterns of behaviour of the members of the Romanian minority in the new conditions.

The ethnic-minority communities, as it has already been indicated, have specific patterns of social conduct and of cultural expression. In their everyday lives there is an evident (more often latent) crisis of the personal and the collective identity, which creates a tendency to constantly revive it in accordance to the changes in society, proving itself in intra- and interpersonal relations, at the same time accepting social and cultural norms of the majority. All of this leads to a specific cultural construct where the ethnic minority socializes.

Cultural and even more artistic models of ethnic-minority communities in Vojvodina, including the Romanian, have a pronounced mark of the traditional. It can be noticed that all communities unwillingly accept products which are distant from that which is ethnically known. In their collective mind, such distancing leads to the dilution of the basic function of the cultural and artistic product, and to the danger of the complete overturn of the identity crisis, which would culminate in complete ethnic assimilation. This claim is supported by the results of a research conducted on the territory of Vojvodina by a team from the Faculty of Philosophy, from the University of Novi Sad, as a part of the project Sociološki aspekti multikulturalnosti i regionalizacije i njihov uticaj na razvoj AP Vojvodine i R. Srbije (Sociological Aspects of Multiculturalism and Regionalization and Their Influence on the Development of AP Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia). The research was conducted in 2002 on the territory of seven districts of Vojvodina, on a sample of 1253 subjects. The answer to the question: What is, according to you, most important for the nurture of the national (ethnic) affiliation, was in almost 45% of cases adherence to tradition and customs (Tripković: 2004). Still, the effects of the creation of unique social and cultural models which we call globalization, make the degree of acceptability of their models in the minority cultural micro universes gradually increase, especially among the young, which can very soon lead either to a complete blending with the cultural model of the majority, or to an ongoing existence with a complete transformation of basic unwritten centuries-long models of cultural expression.

Professor Milan Tripković from the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad made a clear distinction between the notions of multiculturalism and multiculturation, seeing multiculturalism as reality, basically as the cultural pluralism which is specific for any society. On the other hand, multiculturation is, according to him, the process which in its essence includes tolerance, coexistence of different cultures and subcultures on the same territory (Tripković: 2004). However, the very existence of a multicultural community, as the coexistence of different cultures, does not necessarily imply the real intercultural communication. Communication exists only when different cultures transfer their influence from one another. In that sense, multiculturation is the living space for cultural interaction, especially in multinational states.
However, if there is no such intercultural communication, the multicultural community does not transcend the state of bare coexistence.

When the mentioned notions are set in the frame of the Romanian ethnic communities in Vojvodina, we can see that multiculturation follows multiculturalism, revives it and gives meaning to it. Openness towards the reception of the foreign and transfer of the elements of its identity is in general a constructive approach for the building of the common society. This is a characteristic present for centuries on the territory of Vojvodina. In that sense, the multilingualism, and especially bilingualism, is the key element not only of the cultural but also of the social life of the minority community in general. It is true that it derives from the need for direct communication, but at the same time the need extends to the next level of emancipation, and that is through language, the ability to understand the surroundings in the best possible way, and by that bringing the quality of the actual coexistence to its maximum.

Multilingualism can, on the one hand, be seen as the instrument of multiculturation, and at the same time, multilingualism can be its consequence. As for the situation in Vojvodina, we will look back at the already mentioned research. This time the results come from professor Ljubinko Pušić from the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad (Pušić:2008). Unfortunately, the latest results are not encouraging, and the probably cause for this lie in the socio-demographic disturbances from the 90’s which shook Vojvodina. Namely, it is confirmed that the largest number of subjects of all age groups do not speak any of the languages of the ethnic minorities. It is even more concerning that the ratio of young people who do not speak any of the languages of the ethnic minorities is the highest (around 70%). As the professor Pušić himself concludes, these are not straightforward-enough indicators to determine that the linguistic component of multiculturalism weakens. The results also indicate that it is the ethnic minorities that exhibit the need to communicate on the language of other minorities, which is understandable. As we assumed, the ratio of those who do not speak any other language other than their mother tongue is bigger in the medium where the percentage of the population recently settled is higher.

Regarding the profession of the subjects and their level of education, the results show that about 67% of them do not speak any language of the ethnic minorities, which is still below the average when compared to other categories. At the same time, about 73% of students do not speak any language of the ethnic minorities in Vojvodina. The author of the research concludes that it is mostly the young people who do not regard knowing an ethnic-minority language as a form of communication with others, and on the other hand, the percentage of those who do not speak any ethnic-minority language among the highly-educated subjects is lower in relation to the subjects with a lower degree of education.

When the areas of work or profession of the subjects are regarded, the author notices that the state of affairs is pretty good, namely, that, as he says, the subjects are well distributed. The highest percentage of those who speak a minority-language comes from the area of culture and journalism, which is understandable. The subjects who work in healthcare, economy, trade, and even tourism know an ethnic-minority language to a lower degree. They make 2/3 of the subjects.

Another aspect of the research that needs to be discussed is the territorial distribution. The initial assumption, which proved to be right, was that speaking an ethnic-minority language is a lot more common in mediums where there are more members of ethnic minorities. Such is the case in North Bačka district and the town of Subotica, where the percentage of the Hungarian and Croatian minority is larger, up to 47% of subjects also speak an ethnic-minority language. In South Banat and South Bačka district, the percentage of those who speak an ethnic-minority language is the lowest (around 8-9%).
The results of the research conducted by the team from the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad as a part of a larger project were mentioned to create a realistic image of the situation present in Vojvodina, when multilingualism is concerned. There is no need to prove that Vojvodina has been multilingual for centuries. However, the changes that took place in that last 20 years, the reconfiguration of the ethnic structure in the settlements of Vojvodina, which were a consequence of the people settling from areas where interethnic tolerance was less prominent, lead to visible changes. Of course, it should be taken into account the fact that, for Vojvodina, the 20th century was the period of the most frequent settlements. The Two World Wars and the wars in the 90’s, as well as the post-war period, lead to changes in the ethnic configurations, whether spontaneous, by force or organized. Accepting autochthonous values, adjustment of the settlers in the first two migrations lasted for generations. Multilingualism is, unfortunately, always the last in the process (or even generally).

When the Romanian ethnic minority is regarded, the conclusion could be reached that one of the characteristics of its cultural and social interaction is bilingualism. As a phenomenon viewed from the aspect of everyday life of a certain ethnic-minority community, it is very interesting. Of course, it comes from the need for everyday communication and from the fact that knowing the language of the social milieu, in this case Serbian, is a part of the normal functioning within the community. Still, the constantly active usage of both languages leads to their familiarity and uses in the same amount, accepting the language and, by extension, the patterns of the culture in question, and it drives and maintains alive the process of multiculturation. In the case of the Romanian community in Vojvodina, the language is not a barrier but an advantage, and bilingualism as an element of multiculturalism, the instrument of multiculturation, is alive from the very beginning.

When discussing the cultural patterns of ethnic communities (minorities), there is always the question of their positioning in the conditions of transition and, in the case of Serbia and Vojvodina, of European integration. It is not only the question of formal-legislative regulation in the mentioned area, which follows the European trends, but also about the actual life of an individual, of a member of a minority and about the community as a whole. Europe is building up a civil society where ethnic affiliation slowly becomes irrelevant, making it difficult to reach some personal goals, and even, we dare say, it becomes rather non-pragmatic. In the countries of southeast Europe, where the new European trends are formally accepted, but in reality they come to life with difficulty, the life of an ethnic community which strives to preserve the elements of its identity, in different forms, becomes more and more complicated. In the concrete case of the Romanian ethnic community in Vojvodina, we can safely say that it has not accommodated in the best ways to the new conditions. Because of that, the solution to the future social and cultural activities of the minority community most probably lies in finding new patterns, or to rephrase, in drawing the best form of identity preservation from the modern trends, while distancing from the traditional format. The problem remains open. When interaction with others is concerned, in the individual and collective sense, here too the most probably solution lies in the active acceptance of the modern trends and change in the set of values which were in the past a national treasure in the collective consciousness.

**PROBLEMS OF THE MINORITY SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITION AND REFORMS IN EDUCATION**

After the end of a long period which was characterised by great internal disturbances, the Serbian society has, about ten years ago, set on an uncertain path of transition and since then it invests all
of its energy in change. Sometimes those changes are from the very start accepted in essence, but only formally, which creates a duality, which has as its consequence an even greater pressure on the whole society.

Great historical moments and transformations, the society most often awaits unprepared, and one of the forms of the unpreparedness is the difficulty to fundamentally change. This is the case with education in Serbia, regardless whether we talk about preschool, elementary, high-school or higher education. Since the formal reforms first began in the higher-education system, these tendencies were most visible here. Of course, the education of minorities shared the difficulties of the entire system, among its other specificities.

The reform of the higher education in the eastern Europe most often equates with the acceptance of the unique European tendencies personified in the principles of the Bologna Declaration. For the first time in the higher-education system transferable credits are introduced, and so is the mobility of students on the European educational territory, issuing diploma supplements, and changes regarding the qualification and the duration of the studies. Arguments against the introduction of these and other elements and, in general, against the overall understanding of the role of the higher-education system in the society, appeared in the very beginning. Professor Cornel Haranguș from the University of Tibiscus in Timișoara (Romania), analyzing in one of his works the process of acceptance of the Bologna Declaration in Romania, pointed out a few arguments, which were common in the local academic circles, who were very sceptical about the changes. We mention this because the same conclusions can be made in the case of Serbia. Namely, it was stated that:

- this is not the best moment for this type of change;
- not all European countries accepted this model;
- there is no need for changes;
- the quality of education is reduced, etc. (Haranguș: 2005).

With all the difficulties, when discussing the applicability of the principles of Bologna in Serbia, the new model managed to set in motion new views and new ways of understanding this very important domain of every society, and to point out that the higher-education system has to follow the social development, it has to be dynamic, void of stereotypical view, which often create resistance. There will certainly be polemics about the positive or negative properties, because it always takes time to accept novelty.

The education in Romanian in the schools of Serbia (Vojvodina), as a part of the same system also comes across the same difficulties, although, as we have already said, it has additional specific problems. In Serbia, the ethnic minorities, including the Romanian, are educated at all levels, from preschool to higher education, and therefore share the problems of other educational institutions. As for the specific problems, they could be grouped into several categories: into demographic, financial and problems coming from the interaction of the minority and its specificities with other entities in the society. The three categories of problems that we will shed some light arise from one another.

The core of all the problems of the Romanian minority schools is demographic in its nature. The last census conducted in 2002 states that there were 30 419 Romanians in Vojvodina. Here, and in the rest of Serbia, the number of the population constantly decreases, which has more drastic results in the minority schools. As for the educational institutions with Romanian as the language of instruction, which is also characteristic for schools with other minority languages of instruction, the number of students decreases more and more every year.
The financial problems in schools with Romanian as the language of instruction are mostly related to the insufficient amount of teaching tools. On the one hand, the small number of students leads to difficulties in the making of textbook in a society which is in the process of constructing market relations, while on the other hand, the small number of students, implicitly, the existence of small schools with big needs, requires exceptional effort.

We come to what we could call the problems of interaction. Of course, this is about the relations which the ethnic minority needs to construct in its surrounding, about the readiness to absorb and about the adaptability of it as a whole. In that sense, the pragmatism starts to increasingly prevail and to willingly sacrifice the identifying elements of the ethnic community. Parents more and more often send their children to schools with the language of instruction of the majority, whether they come from mixed marriages, and, lately, also from marriages where both parents are members of the Romanian ethnic minority. The young people more often find their mother tongue to be the impeding factor in the process of socialization and social activity, even in cases of interaction between members of the Romanian minority. In one word, the specificities of the micro community, where language has a leading role, stop being the elements of personal identification, and, instead, their place is taken by the elements of the majority community.

In 2005, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights published in Novi Sad an interesting study bearing the name Pravo pripadnika nacionalnih manjina na obrazovanje u Vojvodini (The Right of Ethnic Minorities to Education in Vojvodina). In it, the results of the research were published, which was conducted in Vojvodina, in elementary and high schools, as well as at higher-education institutions which have education in the languages of ethnic minorities. The research was conducted in 2004 and 189 educators participated from 43 elementary schools, 14 high schools, 2 vocational schools and 4 faculties, in 29 places. (Pravo pripadnika nacionalnih manjina na obrazovanje u Vojvodini: 2005). The intent was to find out what the subjects, the educators, think about the most important changes that had happened in the education in the languages of minorities in the last 15 years. A brief review of the conclusions that were reached will be given, which shows best the perception of the minority education as seen by those who actively participate in it.

Namely, the biggest number of subjects perceives education in the languages of minorities as a system which has not changed significantly in the last period. This refers to both curricula and textbooks. The negative perception is complemented by the attitude that students still learn based on a model used regardless of the needs and goals of the students, learning by rote and the absorption of a large quantity of unnecessary and useless information. The positive effects mentioned are opening of some new school in the languages of the ethnic minorities, including the ones in Romanian.

The lack of teaching staff is also seen as one of the major problems in minority schools. The subjects see the solution to this problem in better cooperation between minority communities and the state, but also in the better self-organization and the better ability of cohesion within the minority communities. In the same context of cooperation, it is also mentioned that providing school equipment should be taken care of.

For us, the most interesting aspect of the mentioned research is the one related to the expectations of the subjects when reforms in education are regarded. The subjects do not expect fundamental changes, but modifications of certain segments. At the same time, there is a tendency to introduce European and international standards, to modernize education etc. From this, one can get the impression that the educators working in the schools in the languages of ethnic minorities, being educated in the same system they find outdated, are not entirely ready
for fundamental changes, but prefer formal modifications, which can be a major problem in the process of accepting new standards.

In the time of globalization, when societies lean towards higher degrees of being compatible, not to say when they lean towards equalization or uniformization, among the minority itself the question is unconsciously posed whether insisting on differences makes sense. Not making sense of it slowly becomes the way of collective thought also among the members of the Romanian ethnic minority in Vojvodina. It is a paradox that the European principles seek to preserve the rights of minorities and nurturing differences related to being a member of an ethnic community, and the minority communities, knowingly or unknowingly make an effort to annihilate all which is different from the majority. The global processes will continue, and most probably the problems we pointed out here, which are, of course, not the only ones, will lead to the complete absorption of the minority communities by the majority. The only question that remains is who the majority will be and how it will be called.

CONCLUSION

The modern European society is mostly based on the assumption of the existence of tolerance, and at higher stages, of the existence of interactions between different cultures. Simply put, on the one hand, the search for work force with acceptable demands outside of the Europeans borders, and, on the other hand, the search for better living conditions, without leaving out the freedom to movement within the European borders, inevitably lead to changes in the demographic sphere, but also in social, cultural and other spheres. In these conditions, multiculturalism becomes the only acceptable model that the modern democratic society recognizes.

Vojvodina, which is today a part of the Republic of Serbia, has been an area of multiculturation for centuries. This is where the mentioned model began to function, starting, of course, from the real need for interaction with the surroundings, in some segments reaching the highest level of absorption of the models of life which are specific for neighbouring communities. Many ethnic communities settled spontaneously or organized, searched for means for preservation of what they thought to be their identity. Education in the mother tongue was, and remained, one of the important and successful ways to realize it.

Educational institutions which performed or are still performing their activities in Romanian existed back in the 18th century. Their status, way of working and difficulties which they had differ from period to period. As minority schools, educational institutions with Romanian as the language of instruction in Vojvodina are a part of the education system of Serbia, and as such share the difficulties. Transition and reforms which came from the need to make the education system compatible to the European system, put the institutions of education in Romanian to the test, obliging them to seek modern instruments and models for nurturing and preservation of the collective and personal identity. It is in this search that lies the key to the survival of the ethnic communities in the whole of Europe.

REFERENCES


