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**CHANGES IN SOCIETY AND EDUCATION:  
EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND CHRISTIAN VALUES**

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**Abstract.** Globally spread strategy of neoliberal development, which is accepted by modern society, requires the adoption of specific standards. Standardization of legislation and action in different sectors sets before the local society, at the same time, (a) the issue of the relationship according to one's own tradition, culture, identity, and (b) the need to create appropriate development policies. Serbian society, seeking to join the European Union (EU), creates a development policy based on the strategy of neoliberal development and the values of the so-called Western cultural circle. Such orientation produced the need for redefining one's own traditions, history and cultural identity: tradition loses its significance; historical events are subject to re-evaluation and cultural identity to fragmentation. These complex processes with comprehensive and far-reaching effects are encouraged by partial policies, such as cultural policy and educational policy. Institutionalized education, as an important factor in the formation of culture and socialization of new generations, establishes, by its overall performance, a new attitude toward Christian values, which can be described as a misunderstanding and rejection.

**Keywords:** culture; socialization; education; cultural identity; Christian values; personality; harmonization; Serbian society.

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**ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ОБЩЕСТВЕ И ОБРАЗОВАНИИ:  
ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ПОЛИТИКИ  
И ХРИСТИАНСКИЕ ЦЕННОСТИ**

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**Аннотация.** Глобально распространенная стратегия нелиберального развития, которая принимается современным обществом, требует принятия конкретных стандартов. Стандартизация законодательства и действий в разных секторах ставит перед локальным сообществом в одно и то же время вопросы соотношения в соответствии с его собственными традициями, культурой, идентичностью и необходимости разработки соответствующей политики развития.

Сербское общество, стремясь к вступлению в Европейский Союз (ЕС), создает политику, основанную на стратегии нелиберального развития и широких, так называемых, ценностях западного культурного круга. Такая ориентация порождает необходимость пересмотра своих собственных традиций, истории и культурной самобытности: традиция теряет свое значение, исторические события подлежат переоценке, а культурная идентичность – фрагментации. Эти сложные процессы со всесторонними и далеко идущими последствиями опощряются с помощью политических сфер, таких как культурная политика и политика в области образования. Институциональное образование, как важный фактор в формировании культуры и социализации новых поколений, в силу своей общей эффективности устанавливает новое отношение к христианским ценностям, которое может быть описано как непонимание и отказ от них.

**Ключевые слова:** культура; социализация; образование; культурная идентичность; христианские ценности; личность; гармонизация; сербское общество.

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**Introduction.** After 2000, Serbian society passes through various stages of development with the ultimate aim to harmonize itself with the so-called European space, which comprises the European Union (EU), and which has led to demands that the “domestic” education is connected to the European. There are defined the new education policies, which represent the discontinuity with the established tradition of the socialist period of development and in the level of values are visible two main tendencies: 1) neoliberal ideology and values become dominant; 2) Christian values (under Christian values, in this paper, are included the values on which the Orthodoxy is based) have become part of the school curriculum after several decades. The ongoing education reform, however, has continued to strengthen the first tendency which is in the service of establishing a capital relations in all dimensions of society and constantly undermines Christian values, which seem to be incompatible with the new world order.

The subject of analysis in this paper are (a) the place and role of Christian values in the process of secondary socialization of students covered by compulsory basic education, which is being conducted within the institutional educational framework which is exposed to a long term reform; (b) the *manner* of acceptance of the recommendations that come from the field of transnational education space, specifically the so-called Western cultural circle. The intention of the author is to highlight in this paper the relationship between social dynamics and educational reform that defines the relationship toward *changes* and their acceptance. The initial assumption is that “domestic” education reform leads to redesigning Serbian cultural identity and complete removal from the supporting element of its vertical –

Christian values – by a pronounced tendency toward changes arising from the acceptance of transnational guidelines.

### Theoretical review.

**Globalization and educational policies.** The neoliberal strategies of development lead to a series of permanent changes in different “local” societies, and to “globalization or the homogenization of education” in the field of education (Barlow and Robertson, 2003). Institutionalized education in different societies is becoming an important actor in promoting neo-liberal doctrine and developing conformist type of social integration, by accepting the so-called standards and “business models” of operation as an expression of compliance with supranational agenda on education. The social role and aims of education are reduced and they are in the function of economic growth. Education should transfer knowledge and create human resources by whose engaging in the economy and other sectors of society there will be enabled its prosperity (Lynch, 2006). Continuous education reforms over the past two decades have, globally, led to the abandonment of Humboldt’s model (Dobbins and Knill, 2009) which was dominant for almost fifty years and to the orientation to the market model (Dobbins, Knill and Vögtle, 2011), whose main objective is to prepare contingents of market competitive labour, for the purposes of capital, whose competences will be in the function of its further fertilization.

Economic parameters in the sphere of education were declared to be the supreme quality parameters. It is all being quantified in order to determine with certainty the *effectiveness* of each factor and the subject of education in the creation of *added value (profit)* whose existence will, in fact, provide legitimacy to the survival of educational institutions and employees.

Educational policies in Serbia are trying to harmonize “Serbian education” with “European education”, for more than a decade. In achieving this ultimate goal the important role have educational policies in the European Union (EU) that seek to respond to: (a) *the challenge of preserving the specificity of the educational systems of the member states* and coordination between the so-called general and professional education, and the sphere of work and the search for mutual *understanding*; (b)

the challenge of action/influence on education policies of national education systems of the countries wishing to join the EU (Pack, 2011).

Accession to the EU, for any country that wants to become part of this integration, represents a major challenge because it is necessary in the pre-accession period to implement huge number of legal norms, which are binding for the EU, in the national legal systems. The procedure of accession is long and may cause a certain *fatigue*, therefore, the Committee on Education and Culture of the European Parliament carried out the idea so that the EU educational programs become open to third countries with the prospect of accession, in order to realize their accession to EU in the field of education.

Education was, therefore, given the role of the integrational contribution in the process of joining Serbian society to the EU, and education reforms are an expression of the political will of the ruling groups of neo-liberal orientation. The new education policies have led to changes in the organization and conception of education, redefining in that way many issues, among which stand out the attitude towards culture, cultural identity and Christian values.

### **Research Results and Discussion.**

***Education and identity formation.*** Identity, as a set of answers to the questions of *who we are*, *who we belong to*, *what is worth*, is based through the process of socialization, and socialization that takes place within the institutionalized education is particularly important. The aspect of identity, as a cultural and normative definition of *desirable/right* choice, will be taken as the basis for the analysis of identity policy, and as the most important in the current education reform.

The formation of identity is enabled by important processes of self-awareness, comprehension and understanding of oneself and others. It is impossible to establish social interaction without formed identities, individual and collective ones, which are, in fact, related to meaning (Jenkins, 1996). Interaction is only possible with the act of distinguishing one's own identity, identity of the group to which one belongs and the identities of other groups, that is, socially constructed mean-

ings that are attached to them. Constant confronting of the individual and society, at the level of values, leads to de-formatting and re-shaping of personal and collective identities. Society transmits collective norms and models of behaviour that guide the individual, their choices of identity and make them more predictable, by different instruments of action, and one of them is the institutionalized education.

It is being carried out socialization in the context of education that creates the basis for shaping the identity of participants in the educational process: it can strengthen the sense of belonging to certain groups as supports in the fragmented reality. Education policies that are in line with the ruling political will, however, create a framework of the functioning of institutionalized education in the field of identity formation, making thus its role contradictory and complex. It is deemed contradictory if we take into account that collective identities (national, cultural) lose their importance in the conditions of globalization and the occurrence of fragmentation of identity (Haralambos and Holborn, 2002; Hall, 2010). Collective affiliation is not as important to individuals as it used to be; they may have multiple identities at the same time and, depending on the challenges of the given environment, they can experiment with different cultural identities. In conditions, where the cultural identity is being *negotiated* between actors who come from different cultural areas, the role of education is also relative in the process of creating the basis for the formation of cultural identity (one or more). However, education policies can treat the problem of culture and identity in two ways: so as to impose a specific culture and identity, or waive organized action in this sphere.

The document that sets directions of the development of all levels of education, that is, educational policies in the Republic of Serbia, is the Education Strategy by 2020. The Strategy defined the role of education in the level of the culture and formation of identity policies, which is reflected in the "persistent storage and nurturing of national cultural heritage and identity, the development of a tolerant and co-operative relationship to other cultures and strengthening the contributions of

culture for the total quality of life of the population of the Republic of Serbia”<sup>1</sup>.

Law on the Basis of Education Systems (2009)<sup>2</sup>, shows a commitment to *respect of diversity* and *respect of the needs arising from the diversity*. Identical objectives are also formulated in the Law on Primary Education (2013)<sup>3</sup>.

Educational policy that defines the role of education in the formation, development and preservation of cultural identity based on the characteristics of its own cultural heritage, and by highlighting and standardization of need for respect and understanding of cultural *differences* and other cultures that exist in society, shows that it complies with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) (*The Universal Declaration...*, 2002) which states that culture is at the center of contemporary debates about identity and that the defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative.

Serbia, like all societies in transition, has the so-called identity problem - it searches for new identities, and as it seems, more for a confirmation of their acceptance by *significant others* (the so-called, international community and representatives of pursued integration). It is continuously moving in the direction of overcoming its own limits of identity, which indicate *differences in relation to the others*, experiencing them as *limes* which prevents connection with the others. This indicates the imperative of erasing differences of identity between us and *others*, and the desire for recognition by *others* that gives us, according to our own estimate, legitimacy to the survival among these different ones. This constant need for acceptance from *others*, which imposes the adoption of norms and values characteristic of the *others*, suppressed the primary identity process of self-identification, denying us the answer to the constantly present question of *who we are*.

In the basis of the process that was initiated by the harmonization of Serbian with the so-called European educational space, assumingly, is *intercultural understanding and respect*, which

makes it possible that the experiences which are typical of European space *can be transferred* to other areas, but do not need to be *copied*. This is the fine difference, in relation to transnational experiences in the field of education that reformers of national education systems do not recognize, especially in countries that have the intention to integrate into the EU. Thus, they miss the opportunity to recognize the specificity of national systems of education which are the expression of the historical and cultural development, bringing into question the ultimate effects of the reforms.

**Socialization and Christian values.** It seems that globalism in Christian values recognizes the threat to its own strengthening. In the basis of global tendencies is clearly visible “hostility” toward Christian values: 1) the creation of supranational formations, like the EU, is based on values that are not Christian (Meyer, 2009): the free market, human rights and reason are the value bases on which the EU is founded; 2) international law imposes standards that enable individuals and minorities to act beyond the Christian value system, and even to develop the emphasised anti-Christian lifestyle; 3) Truth is being banished from public discourse and its place is taken by misinformation, which is aimed at creating New (or Fake) reality. Institutionalized education plays an important role throughout the whole story of rewriting and creating a new world because it has the capacity, human resources and methodology of action which may be in a function of: (a) creation of a *brave new world* according to the model given in the book of A. Huxley (1931) (Huxley, 2009) or (b) creation of the world that will respect Christian values and provide an opportunity for the individual to give their best and become a man.

In the Serbian society today as well, the idea of education as a public good has been replaced by market paradigm of education. Questions of history, culture and religion have become second-class, and even redundant, while the entire educational system turns to requirements of capital. The

<sup>1</sup>Education Strategy by 2020, 2012. URL: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/STRATEGIJA-OBRAZOVANJA.pdf> (date of access: 31.5.2017).

<sup>2</sup>Law on Basis of Education Systems, 2009. URL: [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi\\_download/zakon\\_o\\_osnovama\\_sistema\\_obrazovanja\\_i\\_vaspitanja.pdf](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi_download/zakon_o_osnovama_sistema_obrazovanja_i_vaspitanja.pdf) (date of access: 31.05.2017).

<sup>3</sup>Law on Primary Education, 2013. URL: [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_osnovnom\\_obrazovanju\\_i\\_vaspitanju.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_osnovnom_obrazovanju_i_vaspitanju.html) (date of acces: 31.05.2017).



introduction of religious education in schools in Serbia (2001) is also a requirement of capital: the new ruling groups, under false flag of establishing continuity with the tradition which was interrupted by establishing Socialist order (1945), conduct a reform of education that essentially collapses the reached quality and, in effect, disables the formation of the cultural identity. Classes of religious education, whose alternative are classes of civic education, and which are in line with the requirements of the class-hour system without participation in the liturgy, do not provide the school children with the fullness of *life in the community*. They represent a partial experience, interacting with school programs in the foreground and the so-called hidden programs, and they cannot significantly affect the socialization of school children.

Application of the instruments, which establish the new world order, such as standardization and unification, and which redesign the local societies (their economy, politics, culture, education, etc.), is more successful if it easily and quickly deals with tradition, historical values and Christian values such as Truth, Love, Justice, Catholicity. Interest of global formal and informal centres of power – constant increase of profits, involves the establishment of order which will lead to: 1) *atomizing of individual* (their removal from the *community* and from participation in *joint activities* such as participation in public services such as the liturgy); 2) loss of capability to understand the positions of others and sympathy towards others, which may only derive from Love; 3) *experimenting with identities*, which always represents a “showdown” with tradition and traditional notions of Goodness and Justice; 4) the collapse of collective identities, also including the cultural ones; and redesigning the history so that the notions of Truth would fade away and Falsehood would become a New Truth. It is important for people to “join efforts in the search for the suppressed truth, because only it can direct the humanity to more certain future” (Radisic, 2015). The role of institutionalized education is particularly important for the formation of relationship of new generations to the *truth* – if it transmits the truth contained in the authentic historical sources and the Truth that is spread by Christianity.

A prerequisite for the establishment of a new order is “formation” of the individual who will not step into maturity – will not develop the ability to make independent decisions, but they will systematically be prepared to reproduce the thoughts and ideas of others. By joining the institutionalized education that fosters no need for spiritual self-research, an individual is not prepared to question, to doubt, to investigate and trace. By taking away that personal effort, in the way of getting to know what is the Truth, from the individual is taken away the ability to achieve individuation (deification) (Jerotic, 2010), and they retain on a level of material and are prepared to act *for the benefit of others*, in this case, the world capital. The right education, however, is much more than mastering educational content: “the task of right education is to develop the capacity of young people to think ...; and Deification is a goal to be reached” (Matko, 2015) because any right knowledge has its origins in the knowledge of God in Whom are *all the treasures of wisdom and reason hidden*. The new generations will be able to feel the experience of Love and recognize the Truth to the extent that Christian values will become part of school curricula.

**Conclusion.** Educational policies are always formed in accordance with a variety of choices of concrete social order. Selected development strategy of the ruling groups directly influences the formation of educational policies, as its implementation achieves reverse impact on the various dimensions of initiated social changes.

Social role and goals of education depend on the choice of which right, the so-called political elite and the degree of their power to impose them as non-alternative.

Reform of education in the Serbian society is being implemented as part of a “package” of overall social changes that have been initiated “from above” as an expression of the ruling political will. Changes in legislation, in the field of education, have been proposed and created by the most powerful political and highest state structures.

The adopted policies of education, in the so-called contemporary Serbian society, provide the opportunity to present different identities within the “domestic” institutionalized education and

greater synergy of education and other social actors in their promotion. At the same time, the adopted education policies are aimed at promoting new cultural values – values that contribute to the harmonization of Serbian culture with the cultures of the so-called Western cultural circle. Traditional value systems are being marginalized, suppressed and even declared unacceptable. Creators of development policies in Serbian society are creating for the last two decades the socio-cultural context in which it is ignored the need to preserve cultural continuity, including education, and they are primarily striving to the adoption of solutions that are in compliance with Western megatrends.

Serbian society is looking for confirmation of their identity in the movement towards European integration, and “Serbian” education in European dimensions of its own reforms. Both the whole and its part show accommodation abilities - willingness to accept integration requirements to which they aspire and to adapt to the new environment. This, at the same time, means a new attitude toward Christian values – they are losing their crucial place within the institutionalized education. The introduction of religious education as a particular school subject (2001) is a screen behind which is smoothly and systematically strengthened atheistic and even anti-Christian view of the world as prevalent in the socialization of school children.

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