Anita LUKENDA
dr, University of Mostar
e-mail: anita.lukenda141@gmail.com

Slavica PAVLOVIĆ
dr, University of Mostar
e-mail: godotcici@gmail.com

Education of national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a case of Roma people

Keywords: national minorities, Roma people, education.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter B&H) is a multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural country where three constituent peoples – Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks live together with 17 different national minorities. In B&H there is a mechanism for protection of rights of national minorities consisting of the signed international documents[1], the Constitution of B&H as well as of several laws[2]

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[1] UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; UN Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986; UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 1992; UN Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, 1995; Council of Europe European Convention on Human Rights, 1950; Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1994; Council of Europe Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, 1993; UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960; UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms UNESCO, 1974; OSCE The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities; 1996.

[2] Law on the Protection of Rights of National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2003; Law on the Protection of Rights of National Minorities in the Republic of Serbia, 2004; Law on the

passed in B&H for that purpose. However, the realization of the rights of national minorities in B&H is quite problematic. For that matter, the largest single national minority in B&H, the Roma people, are in particularly difficult social, economic, cultural and educational position.

The Roma people in B&H face many problems when it comes to the realization of their right to education. Data coming from the governmental and non-governmental reports[3] (2017) and documents[4] (2018) indicate continuous exclusion of Roma pupils from compulsory and especially post-compulsory education in B&H. Namely, only 4% to 6% of Roma children are enrolled in school; they do not have instruction in their own language. Furthermore, with regard to the curricula in B&H the Roma people as well as all other national minorities in B&H are under-represented, they are invisible and one does not learn anything about national minorities, about their history and culture.

Regardless of its already mentioned cultural diversity, B&H has not embraced the intercultural education, i.e. education based on intercultural dialogue which is, according to Council of Europe (2008) and Spajić-Vrkaš[5] (2014), the key instrument aimed at preparing children and youth for living in culturally complex societies.

We start this paper by briefly looking at the treatment of the culturally different and differences through various stages that Spajić-Vrkaš[6] (2004; 2014) came up with as well as her typology of intercultural education. We then give an account of educational documents in B&H that contain certain values and principles of cultural pluralism which should actually be stated and promoted more vigorously in school through curriculum, management, organization and entire school culture. It is followed by an insight into the Roma people education in B&H based on the relevant education reports and research. The paper ends with stating the importance of upgrading the national minorities education and giving due attention to promoting cultural pluralism through education in B&H.

Protection of Rights of National Minorities in the Federation of B&H, 2008; Law on prohibition of discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009.

[3]   "Izvješće o provođenju Revidiranog akcijskog plana Bosne i Hercegovine o obrazovnim potrebama Roma (za školsku 2015/2016 godinu), Vijeće ministara BiH, Sarajevo; M. Jančić Doyle, *Reforma obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini kroz prizmu inkluzije romske manjine*, Sarajevo 2018.

[4]   Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue Living Together As Equals in Dignity*, https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/whitepaper_interculturaldialogue_2_EN.asp, accessed on: 3 X 2010.

[5]   V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *The Emergence of Multiculturalism in Education: From Ignorance to Separation through Recognition*, [in:] *Perspectives of Multiculturalism: Western & Transitional Countries*, ed. M. Mesić, Zagreb 2004.

[6]   Ibid.; V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne razlike, građanstvo i obrazovanje za interkulturni dijalog*, [in:] *Interkulturalno obrazovanje i europske vrijednosti*, ed. N. Hrvatić, Zagreb 2014.

Cultural diversity and intercultural education

Spajić-Vrkaš[7] discerned various stages in history through which went our attitude towards *the different* and *the differences* as well as of the various models of intercultural education. According to the same author, in the first stage, *the golden ages of ignorance*, since culturally different people were not recognized, their rights and dignity were not respected so the cultural differences were interpreted as the social anomaly and seen as the social threat. The dominant culture talked about *the savage* vs. *the civilized*. Further on, stated Spajić-Vrkaš, there was the second stage, *the disturbing ages of rhetoric*, which started immediately after the World War II following the adoption of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) worldwide. It resulted in banning the discrimination on the basis of cultural differences. The opposing categories became *the mainstreamer* vs. *the ethnic*. The cultural differences were seen and about to be recognized but still not respected. The policy in the first stage was the assimilation whereas in the second only assimilation or both assimilation and adaptation.

In the Spajić-Vrkaš's third stage, *the promising ages of accommodation*, the issue of cultural identity came to the focus of political and scientific discussions while the oppositional categories of the different became those of the *Citizen belonging to the Minority or Majority*. These changes, stated Spajić-Vrkaš[8], were brought about by the social movements, engagement of the international and European organizations while the national governments were asked to confront and solve the problems of xenophobia, racism, intolerance, exclusion and marginalization of the culturally different. The policies introduced were the intercultural policies as a means of strengthening culturally plural societies.

In the newest stage, according to Spajić-Vrkaš[9], *the challenging ages of exchange*, intercultural dialogue becomes the political priority, especially in Europe. The dialogue is seen as a tool which is supposed to ensure cohesion and stability in European democratic societies after recognizing the right to be equal and the right to be different[10]. In order to prevent dialogue from turning into manipulation over *the other* and *the different*, emphasized Spajić-Vrkaš[11], it is necessary that the intercultural dialogue is promoted together with the promotion of social justice and active citizenship with which, she continued, the goals and content of the intercultural education have to be harmonized.

With regard to the aforementioned stages, Spajić-Vrkaš created a typology[12] of different perspectives when it comes to introduction of the idea of cultural

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[7] V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *The Emergence...*; V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne...*

[8] V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne...*

[9] V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *The Emergence...*; V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne...*

[10] Council of Europe, *White Paper...*; V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne...*

[11] V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne...*

[12] V. Spajić-Vrkaš, *Kulturne razlike, građanstvo i obrazovanje za interkulturni dijalog*, [in:] *Interkulturalno obrazovanje i europske vrijednosti*, ed. N. Hrvatić, Zagreb 2014.

pluralism in education. According to her, there is a *monocultural perspective* in which differences are seen as a transitional quality; its objective is to equalize educational opportunities for culturally different students and to challenge the cultural deficiency hypothesis by developing knowledge and skills for participating in the mainstream culture; its target group are minority pupils. The *multicultural perspective* in Spajić-Vrkaš's typology sees differences as social reality; its objective is to reduce ethnocentrism and ethnic stereotypes from curricula and textbooks by providing information about different cultures, developing intercultural sensitivity and, in some cases, addressing racism and discrimination; its target group is both minority and majority pupils. Finally, Spajić-Vrkaš talks about *intercultural perspective* of education for cultural pluralism, which sees differences as social value, richness or strength. Its objective is to develop critical awareness, resistance to oppression, emancipating dialogue and interaction among different cultural perspectives, values and experiences as a means of developing a democratic society; its target group is all pupils.

Socio-cultural context of Roma people in B&H

The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established at the beginning of 1990s after the break-up of Yugoslavia. According to the Constitution of B&H (*Annex 4* of the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in 1995), B&H is a decentralized state consisting of two entities, i.e. the Federation of B&H and the Republic of Srpska as well as the Brčko District. Furthermore, according to its Constitution, B&H is the country where three constituent peoples, the Serbs, the Croats and the Bosniaks live together with so-called 'others' (seventeen national minorities in total). The Federation of B&H is further divided into ten cantons all of which have their legislative, executive and judicial authorities.

Kasapović[13], Iličić[14] and other political scientists' state that B&H is a plural society or a divided society, which is, as Kasapović[15] explains, characterized by the cultural heterogeneity, whereas its culturally heterogeneous segments – different racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic communities – form separate political entities/parties.

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[13] M. Kasapović, *Bosna i Hercegovina: podijeljeno društvo i nestabilna država*, Zagreb 2005; M. Kasapović, *Pluralno i pluralističko društvo*, "Političke analize", 2011, no. 7; M. Kasapović, *Metodološki problemi kritike konsocijacijske demokracije u Bosni i Hercegovini*, "Status", 2017, no. 12.

[14] G. Iličić, *Različit pristup nacionalnom fenomenu i problem ravnopravnosti: preprjeka učinkovitu funkcioniranju političkoga sustava - slučaj Bosne i Hercegovine*, "Identitetska i kulturna raznolikost BiH", 2015, no. 1.

[15] M. Kasapović, *Pluralno...*

Among seventeen national minorities living in B&H the largest one is Roma minority. According to different sources[16], there are between 40.000 and 50.000 Roma people in B&H. However, the census from 2013 indicates there are 12.573 Roma people among 3.053.000 inhabitants of B&H[17]. They mostly live in five biggest cities in B&H: Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla and Zenica.

Roma people live in difficult socio-economic conditions; they do not have proper education, jobs, health insurance and living conditions. They usually live in tents in the suburbs, do not possess birth certificate and identity cards, and are mostly illiterate and socially excluded. They earn for living by collecting and selling secondary raw materials and/or of street begging in which predominantly women and children participate.

Educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina

It can be said that the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is decentralized. There is no ministry of education at the level of the state of B&H since the education policy is in the jurisdiction of the entities, cantons and the Brčko District. In the entity of the Republic of Srpska education is within the responsibility of the ministry of education of the Government of the Republic of Srpska, while in the entity of the Federation of B&H it is the responsibility of ten cantonal ministries of education. In the Brčko District the jurisdiction for education resides with the Department of Education. However, in the Federation of B&H there is a ministry of education with only a minor coordinating role. At the level of the state the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the Council of Ministers of B&H bears some competences for education.

Educational legislation and governmental documents
containing elements of intercultural education

The educational reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina was launched by the strong commitment of the international community in 2002. Namely, the Peace Implementation Council, responsible for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in B&H, tasked the OSCE mission to B&H to start the educational reform. Several framework laws in the area of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education were soon after passed at the state level. Those framework laws were later on harmonized with the entity, cantonal as well as with the Brčko District laws.

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[16] Roma Education Fund, *Napredovanje u obrazovanju Roma u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Budapest 2009; "*Izvješće o provedenim akcijskim istraživanjima „Mladi Romi u akciji"*, Save the Children Sarajevo; M. Jančić Doyle, *Reforma…*

[17] Vijeće ministara BiH, *Izvješće o provođenju…*

Legislative documents regulating primary and secondary education in B&H do not explicitly contain principles and values of cultural pluralism or interculturalism or define those concepts even though they ought to be promoted in school through curriculum, management and leadership, organization and entire school, i.e. institutional culture. However, the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2003) implicitly contains certain paragraphs that could be interpreted as general principles of intercultural education. Some of them are presented below.

In general provisions of the *Framework Law*, among others one of the general objectives of education, is "[…] developing awareness of commitment to the State of B&H, one's own cultural identity, language and tradition, in a way appropriate to the legacy of the civilization, learning about others and different by respecting the differences and cultivating mutual understanding and solidarity among all people, ethnic groups and communities in B&H and in the world." (Art. 3.d.)[18].

In the part 2. *Principles in education* referring to enhancement of human rights, it is stated in the Art. 7.: "[…] Use of languages of the constituent peoples of B&H in all schools shall be in accordance with the Constitution of B&H. All students shall learn scripts that are officially used in B&H in all schools."[19]; and in the Art. 8: "The language and culture of any significant minority in BiH shall be respected and accommodated within the school to the greatest extent practicable, in accordance with the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities"[20]. Furthermore, in the first paragraph of Art. 9 it is said: ''Schools shall promote and protect religious freedom, tolerance and dialogue in B&H"[21].

Moreover, Art. 36 requests the following: "The school promotes equal opportunities for all its students, teachers and other employees, taking into consideration and at the same time promoting the right for differences among them. With this aim, the school shall establish and carry out its own programs that support and promote different cultures, languages, and religions of its students and staff"[22].

Since the Roma children as well as children of other national minorities in B&H were not included into the educational system to the expected extent, the *Action Plan on the Education Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* was enacted at the state level in 2004. The *Action Plan* aimed to promote their attendance of primary and secondary education. Since the expected outcomes had not been achieved by the *Action Plan*, in 2010 the *Revised Action Plan* was formulated and it is the only document explicitly stating the need for 'multicultural education' of national minority children.

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[18] "Okvirni zakon o osnovnom i srednjem obrazovanju u Bosni i Hercegovini", Službeni glasnik BiH no. 18 Sarajevo, p. 426.

[19] Ibid., p. 426.

[20] *"Okvirni zakon…*, p. 426.

[21] Ibid., p. 426.

[22] Ibid., p. 429.

The *Revised Action Plan* (2010) requires the appropriate training of teachers enabling them to educate Roma children, i.e.: "multicultural education must be systematically introduced into initial teachers' training as well as their professional development – instead of providing instant courses and additional training [...]"[23].

Roma people in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of preschool, primary, secondary and higher as well as the adult education.

According to the *Framework Law on Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2008), preschool education is not compulsory until a year before the children's enrollment in primary school. In general, the rate of all children attending the preschool education is still not so high, and only 1.5% of Roma children have been included in some form of *preschool education*, mostly one year prior to their enrollment in primary school[24] (Jančić Doyle, 2018).

With the enactment of the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2003), the compulsory eight-year long primary education was turned into the nine-year. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of B&H[25], only two thirds of Roma children of relevant age, attend *compulsory primary education* while half of the enrolled Roma children gradually leave school. The same Ministry emphasizes that in the whole of B&H only 20% of Roma girls of those attending compulsory primary education complete it whereas only 4.5% of them complete secondary school. Furthermore, according to Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees in CoM B&H[26], the Roma children repeat class 35 times more than other primary school pupils in B&H. The class repeating among Roma pupils is more often in the first three grades of primary school. Most probably the reasons for low rate primary school attendance, high rates of drop-out and class repeating of Roma pupils are of socio-economic background.

At the level of secondary education, there are several types of schools in B&H: general secondary education schools (grammar schools), vocational secondary schools, secondary arts schools, technical secondary schools, religious secondary schools and secondary school for special needs youth. Ministry of

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[23] Vijeće ministara BiH, *Revidirani akcioni plan Bosne i Hercegovine o obrazovnim potrebama Roma i drugih nacionalnih manjina u Bosni i Hercegovini*, http://mhrr.gov.ba/ljudska-prava/djeca_bih/Revidirani%20Akcioni%20plan%20Bosne%20i%20Hercego-vine%20o%20obrazovnim%20potrebama%20Roma.pdf, accessed on: 29 IV 2015, p. 5.

[24] M. Jančić Doyle, *Reforma…*

[25] Vijeće ministara BiH, *Izvješće o provođenju…*

[26] CoM B&H shortened for Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice Bosne i Hercegovine, *Pokazatelji za praćenje provođenja revidiranog akcionog plana Bosne i Hercegovine o obrazovnim potrebama Roma za školsku 2015./2016. godinu*, http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/djeca/Zbirne%20tabele%20za%20BiH%202015-2016_uz%20Izvjestaj.pdf, accessed on: 7 V 2017.

Human Rights and Refugees in CoM B&H[27] reported that only 27% of Roma pupils of the final grade of primary school in school year 2014/2015 enrolled in the first grade of *secondary school* in the next school year 2015/2016, whereas 13% of that percentage left secondary school in the latter school year. The insignificant number of Roma youth both enroll and complete secondary education as well as *higher education.*

Since many Roma adults are illiterate, they actually need basic education. However, they cannot afford it due to their unemployment and lack of funds. Moreover, available data[28] indicate there is no organized *adult education* for Roma people.

After considering the presence of the national minorities, particularly Roma children and youth, in the B&H educational system in terms of numbers (quantitative dimension) we now move to discussing their presence in the official curricula[29] (qualitative dimension).

Presence of minorities within curricula

This section gives a short overview of the research into existence of the educational content on national minorities in the curricula in B&H. In reviewing literature on analyzing history textbooks for the purpose of writing her thesis Topić[30] found a general assessment by Karge & Batarilo[31] stating that the history textbooks in B&H were still not written in a manner contributing to tolerance, peaceful coexistence and regarding differences as social richness – all European standards. Topić also reported Baranović[32] in her analysis found out that B&H history textbooks did not mention national minorities living in B&H at all; they first and foremost had national state in their foci; and they did not pay much attention to the history of constituent peoples in B&H, either.

After carrying out qualitative content analysis of three history textbooks in final grades of primary education in B&H, Topić also asserted that to a great extent they lacked the content relating to national minorities of B&H. The same author contended that to pupils belonging to three constituent peoples the national minorities in B&H were either strangers or invisible members of the joint society since their history textbooks did not give them a clear picture as to the culture, tradition and role the national minorities had had in the history of B&H. Moreover, said Topić, the content relating to the national minorities in B&H did not

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Save the Children, *Izvješće o provedenim…*; Vijeće ministara BiH, *Izvješće o provođenju…*

[29] In B&H there are three curricula in primary and secondary education, i.e. each of the three constituent peoples has curriculum in its mother tongue.

[30] K. Topić, "*Položaj nacionalnih manjina u obrazovnom sustavu Bosne i Hercegovine*", unpublished thesis, Mostar 2015

[31] Ibid.

[32] Baranović, 2001 [in:] K. Topić, "*Položaj…*"

give the pupils enough information which could encourage them to further getting acquainted with, to accept and to respect members of the national minorities in B&H. In general, stated Topić, all the history textbooks analyzed did lack content that promoted cultural diversity and living in a multicultural country like B&H.

Conclusion

It is evident that in B&H there is a legal framework for protection of rights of national minorities. However, when it comes to the education sector there is still a lot of work to do in order for national minorities in B&H, in concrete case Roma people, to realize their right to education to the full extent. They are under-represented both in terms of the rate of their school attendance and in the sense of their visibility within the official curricula. For that matter children and youth belonging to the three constituent peoples in B&H do not learn enough about each other either. Since B&H is a culturally complex society, we believe it needs both *intercultural education*, in the form of *intercultural dialogue*, and *education for active citizenship*, so as to achieve social cohesion and stability.

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Summary

This paper gives an insight into the position of the Roma national minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of education. First, it draws on the Spajić-Vrkaš's various historical stages through which the attitude towards culturally different and differences went as well as the relevant typology of the intercultural education created by the same author. It is followed by an account of the educational documents in Bosnia and Herzegovina that contain certain values and principles of cultural pluralism after which the situation of the Roma children and youth education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is discussed on the basis of the relevant education reports and research. Finally, the paper argues for upgrading the education of the national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and giving more attention to the promotion of cultural pluralism through education in a culturally complex society such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Edukacja mniejszości narodowych w Bośni i Hercegowinie – przykład Romów

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule przedstawiono sytuację mniejszości romskiej w Bośni i Hercegowinie w zakresie edukacji. Autorki odwołują się do różnych historycznych etapów Spajić-Vrkaš, a następnie podchodzą do różnic kulturowych oraz do typologii edukacji międzykulturowej stworzonej przez tego badacza. W dalszej części znajduje się opis dokumentów edukacyjnych w Bośni i Hercegowinie, które zawierają wartości i zasady pluralizmu kulturowego, po czym omówiona została sytuacja dzieci i młodzieży romskiej w tym kraju na podstawie raportów edukacyjnych i badań. Kończąc, Autorki postulują podniesienie poziomu edukacji mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz zwrócenie większej uwagi propagowaniu pluralizmu kulturowego poprzez edukację w zróżnicowanym kulturowo kraju, takim jak Bośnia i Hercegowina.
Słowa kluczowe: mniejszości narodowe, Romowie, edukacja.