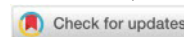


THE PERILS OF OVERLOOKING TRADITIONAL VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: In contemporary society, the education of youth and children increasingly requires a focus on tradition. This concept holds relevance across different regions and countries, reflecting the environments in which educators and children operate. Traditional values, deeply ingrained within the national spirit, play a critical role, irrespective of the origin of educational influences. In an era where destructive ideas that challenge the foundations of upbringing and education are prevalent, the risks to traditional upbringing manifest in various influences on the modern family. Moreover, the rise of artificial intelligence poses a notable threat to education by potentially diminishing the motivation and necessity for effort in schooling among the young. This paper seeks to explore several ways and mechanisms by which tradition can be more effectively integrated into the educational practices of a nation. Emphasizing the preservation of traditional, cultural, and moral values is essential to maintaining the integrity of the educational process for future generations.

Keywords: Identity, tradition, education, youth, nation, country.

Field: Social Sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to detect ideas, actions, and rituals that are important to the traditions and identity of a nation. In conducting this research, efforts were made to identify these elements and implement the analysis accordingly. Beyond the implementation of plans and programs in institutional education, elements such as traditions, events, important dates, prominent personalities, customs, rituals, celebrations, religion, and language all contribute to a certain extent to the perpetuation of tradition and national identity within education. By relying on written traces and literature, we have access to data dating back to the era of our ancestors, specifically to the time when the Slavs settled in the Balkan Peninsula. This period, marked by pagan beliefs, did not intentionally use education; instead, it was inherently linked to the division of labor into male and female roles, allowing the transfer of experience from older to younger generations to be recognized as an unintentional educational impulse. Over time, education has evolved into one of the most systematic processes, which, in achieving its goals, increasingly emphasizes the importance of identity and tradition more than at its inception. This paper attempts to highlight the strength of an education imbued with our tradition and national identity, without dwelling on the contemporary risks of losing these aspects, in hopes that it will aid in understanding the vulnerabilities imposed by the present in light of these facts.

2. TRADITIONAL VIEW OF THE FAMILY

The biggest threat to identity and tradition is currently an attack on the family on a global scale, including within the Serbian community. Increasingly, it is overlooked that the family is the primary environment for raising a child, serving as both a social and emotional milieu where a child is born and develops until starting school. In the Serbian language, the etymology of the word PORODICA (family) comes from POROD (descendants), emphasizing that this unit typically includes a man, a woman, and their descendants. Even if the child is not yet born but is conceived, this small community is referred to as a family. Thus, this perspective is deeply ingrained in Serbian history and tradition.

Extending this understanding to Christianity, and more specifically to Orthodoxy, we recall the Old Testament, where it is clearly stated: "...and God created man and woman, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth'." It is evident that gender equality is not aligned with the patriarchal model of education inherited from our ancestors, nor with pedagogical science, nor with the spirit of Orthodoxy.

The mother, as a figure and phenomenon, is paramount in the history of pedagogy, respected by all educators except for Schopenhauer—who, as a well-known pessimist, developed a theory about

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the meaninglessness of life and thus held no affection for his own or others' mothers. Contrarily, all other philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and pedagogues—not only from Serbia but from across Europe and the world for several centuries—view the Mother, with a capital 'M', as a being most similar to God. Similarly, the Father, whom the old Slavs still called "Blessed father" or "holy nurturer" (Парлић Божовић, & Ценић, 2021, p. 57), is traditionally respected in the patriarchal model of the family as the host and head of the house and family. From the creation of man, "The Lord God created the man Adam and from his rib the woman Eve, to serve him and honor him, and he loves and supports her as a part of his body". Also, "The man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the church", and "The husband should respect and love the wife, as Christ loves the church, and she obeys him and respects him". This matter pertains not only to Serbian tradition but also to the educational traditions of all healthy nations, where 'healthy' refers to both spiritual and physical well-being. The concept of gender equality undermines the importance of the natural roles of both parents, thus directly disrupting the traditional idea of family. Therefore, this idea can only be realistically considered within the realm of the intensity of love that parents of different genders express towards their children. In no other pedagogical, sociological, philosophical, or psychological variant can mother and father be considered equal gender categories.

3. CULTIVATING THE EDUCATIONAL TRADITION

Tradition and identity represent important aspects of life for everyone living in a specific locale; in our case, the sacred and tormented Kosovo and Metohija. In this region, tradition is not merely a term but a phenomenon recognizable through a centuries-old folk tradition, transmitted from generation to generation through education—a fundamental pedagogical category. M. Reljić, in her research of Serbian cemeteries, views them as a conduit directly connecting us to our ancestors and the roots of our families. She distinguishes three groups of terms that "can be used instead of 'identity' to perform the theoretical work that identity is supposed to do, but without its confusing, contradictory connotations" (Релјић, 2014, p. 100). Reljić also notes that, in addition to subjective reasons, sometimes objective circumstances lead to a change in identity—linguistic, confessional, and even ethical. Objective circumstances are those that inescapably bind a group or an individual to conditions like bilingualism, influencing identity transfer without significant personal impact, while subjective reasons are acts of purely individual decision (Релјић, 2014, p. 103).

The importance of tradition in education, cultural heritage, and national identity cannot be overstated, as these are legacies left to descendants, argues art historian Marta Vukotić Lazar. In her study on the preservation of tradition and the establishment of committees for monastery restoration, Lazar concludes that from a historiographical perspective, "it is not just about the forgotten ruins of the past but about human professional achievements, which can be applied anew, both in a pragmatic and a theoretical form" (Вукотић Лазар, 2013, p. 44). The efforts of these authors play a significant role in mitigating the disruptive influences on the education of children and young people in these regions, considering it involves rich cultural and national traditions deeply embedded in the spiritual upliftment of the youth.

An increasingly neglected detail in modern families, which is crucial for upbringing, is the cult of the dining table and shared meals. Our ancestors practiced a tradition where, before eating, the host would say a prayer of thanks or "Our Father," bless and cross himself over the table, wish the household a pleasant meal, and then everyone would sit down to eat. This tradition exemplifies the essence of family gathering around the table. Today, we aim to remind the youth of how our ancestors gathered around the table for all meals. Of course, due to the numerous daily obligations of family members, it is challenging to maintain this tradition regularly. However, an effort should be made to adjust schedules so that everyone can at least share lunch or dinner together at the dining table, thus creating a 'table of love.' At this table, family members get to know each other better, share their daily experiences, and discuss anything that makes them sad or happy. If there are any problems, they can be addressed together.

Loving others as they are embodies the definition of love stemming from the tradition and national identity of our people. Solidarity, charity, respect, helpfulness, and other virtues accompany this phenomenon. Recently, in her work on the contemporary and traditional connotations of the teaching process, an author used the story "The Sparrow and the Swallows" from a second-grade reader to illustrate how teachers can emphasize and cultivate these virtues in children (Парлић Божовић, & Ценић, 2021, p. 73).

The preservation of tradition, folk customs, and rituals in education among Serbs in the region of Kosovo and Metohija can be extremely beneficial. The ritual cup is one such example. In our study, we employed methodological procedures used by ethnologists to uncover original facts from the field, following the example of some of our ethnologists (Павловић, 2022, p.389). This research approach,

based on the so-called emic, anthropologically key perspective, utilized qualitative methods, primarily conversations with interlocutors. The narrative material presented in the work of the aforementioned ethnologist was obtained from field research conducted in Kosovska Mitrovica and Zubin Potok, among the old residents of Vučitrn displaced to northern Kosmet and central Serbia during several instances in 2021 and 2022. Historically speaking, the practice of drinking from a large brandy glass among Serbs occurs in a broader area, including Ibarski Kolašin, located west of Kosovska Mitrovica, in the valley of the upper course of the river Ibar. (this region extends between Rogozna, Mokra Gora, Kosovska Mitrovica, and Kosovo and Metohija, covering a territory of 342 square kilometers. It is a rolling mountain plateau, traversed by streams and rivers, with an average altitude of about 1050 meters).

This practice was recorded in the northern Metohija regions, in the territories of the municipalities of Istok, Peć, and Klina, where the large brandy glass was used under one general name—"big." In the villages around Peć, it was even called the mother of the small glass due to its size (Букумирић, 1997, p. 17). According to one legend, a large brandy glass was used in northern Metohija under the Ottomans when drinking from it symbolically marked Slava (a family's annual ceremony and veneration of their patron saint): "Since they were not allowed to cross themselves in the presence of the Turks, the Serbs did it inconspicuously with a glass. The host at the sofra or low dining table, who sits in the place of honor 'at the top' and takes care of order and custom, toasted the guest 'at the bottom,' the latter then toasted someone further to his right, and he to the guest opposite him. In this way, the Serbs made the cross with a glass so that the Turks did not notice" (Букумирић, 1997, p. 17). As part of the wedding and Patron Saint Day ceremonies, drinking from a large brandy glass was also recorded in the Kosovo Polje area. At the beginning of the 20th century, during the wedding lunch, brandy was first drunk from a small and then from a large glass, similarly to the festive table. The practice of drinking from a "tea" glass in Ibarski Kolašin was described as follows: guests "drink from a small glass at first, then take a larger one and drink from it, while they want to drink" (Дебељковић, 1907, pp. 189, 207, 228). Brandy was also drunk from a large glass in Kosovo Polje when a bride entered her new home (Дебељковић, 1907, pp. 207, 214-215, 217). The aforementioned historical data indicate that drinking from a large brandy glass among Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija undoubtedly has a long tradition.

This phenomenon, however, has not been given proper attention until today. We aim to present the research results in this paper as a desire of the aforementioned author to disclose the review or description of the mentioned practice as an element of Serbian culture in Kosovo and Metohija that has not been mentioned too often so far, in the scientific, but also in the wider social public. Central attention, in this sense, is dedicated to Ibarski Kolašin, while the research goal is aimed at presenting the personal attitude of Kolašin residents towards drinking from a "tea" cup. As mentioned above, Pavlović (2022, p. 392), an ethnologist, pays special attention to these details, and in his works, he provides insight into how people from the field think and speak about this practice. The results Pavlović presented in this paper can be seen as a starting point for new research continued the following year on this topic, concerning the deepening of the analytical approach to drinking from a large brandy glass as a factor in social relations among Serbs in Ibarski Kolašin.

The paper presents the role and relationship that regulates the establishment of "boundaries" between men and women, that is, the function of shaping gender identities. The starting point for this thesis was the narratives of the interlocutors that were useful to the author, concerning the statement that not only men drink soft brandy from a "tea" glass, but women do it mostly "within the limits of their capabilities," and similar, as well as, for example, that brandy from a large brandy glass is served exclusively by male members of the household or male relatives at any event, while female persons do not participate in serving (Павловић, 2023, p. 221).

Reflecting on all the above considerations, particularly through the narratives and observations of ritual glass usage in the field, it becomes evident that this custom can be imbued with significant educational implications. Notably, it is customary to utter a few words or sentences prior to drinking—sometimes humorous, sometimes blessings directed at the host or the recipient of the toast. Such practices serve not only as social rituals but also as potential tools for fostering positive mental attitudes and reinforcing communal bonds. The cultivation of a positive outlook is imperative, and its integration with the enduring moral and religious tenets of Serbian culture is paramount. These elements have been woven into the fabric of Serbian life for centuries, underscoring the importance of maintaining these traditions and the education of children against the erosion of time. According to Popović Muškić, national education plays a pivotal role in shaping national identity. In the face of traditional educational practices, the pervasive influence of modern mass media represents a formidable challenge. As highlighted by Muškić Popović and Plojović (2023), 'Information that reflects our situation in the world is distributed daily through mass media. In this way, an image is formed in our minds that dictates our way of thinking,

the way we dress, the way we act, and the way we live.' This profound impact of media extends to the realm of education, where it can often overshadow traditional values. The media's ability to mold public perception and behavior underscores the necessity for educational systems to adapt. Schools must now equip students not only with traditional knowledge but also with critical media literacy skills to navigate and scrutinize the information-rich environment they inhabit. This dual focus ensures that while students are grounded in the cultural and moral foundations of their heritage, they are also prepared to engage critically with the globalized media landscape, preserving their identity and values in a rapidly changing world. Analyzing this form of education involves understanding the array of ideas considered foundational to a particular population, ideas which manifest through well-organized, systematic, and explicitly defined educational frameworks (Поповић Мушкић, 2024, p. 4). Clearly, schools represent a crucial mechanism for perpetuating tradition and fostering national identity within the cultural milieu of a nation, paralleled only by the influence of familial and regional traditions where the youth are nurtured.

CONCLUSION

The significance of this topic is multifaceted and remains vitally relevant today, with its importance expected to grow. Engaging in family gatherings, upholding old customs, and nurturing our cultural identity are crucial for the emotional maturity of children, who will one day become the next generation of parents. These practices not only support the development of mature parents but also serve as a cornerstone for building a stable foundation for young individuals amidst a rapidly changing global landscape. Dobrić and Patrić highlight that "The phenomenon of parental emotional immaturity has been extensively deliberated upon since historical times. It is commonly found among parents raised in environments lacking intellectual, physical, and emotional support" (Dobrić & Patrić, 2024, p. 147). This insight underscores the necessity of fostering environments that promote robust emotional and intellectual growth. As we look forward, integrating these traditional values into educational curricula is imperative not just for preserving heritage, but for enhancing students' ability to navigate and contribute to the world thoughtfully. Thus, the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation within educational frameworks is essential for cultivating well-rounded, culturally aware individuals. It is crucial that educators and communities continue to actively nurture and revive these traditional practices, ensuring they remain vibrant and relevant in modern education.

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