

# A RAISING DOUBTS ABOUT THE SUITABILITY OF COMPULSORY NATIONAL CURRICULUM OF SEX EDUCATION IN MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY: CROATIA'S CASE\*

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Educational policy in Croatia is facing serious problems due to disagreement on introduction of sex education in the national curriculum. This article combines two perspectives in defining the theoretically and practically relevant issues of implementing the sex education curriculum. From the 'top down perspective' it observes stakeholders' arguments which are not in accordance on 'what to do' (they are not in 'practical accordance'). Later on, from the 'bottom up perspective', the author observes how practical value judgments depend on silent (unspoken) theoretical (concepts of knowledge and of what it means to be human) and practical premises (derived from normative sources). This article defines the frame of the open question of contemporary philosophy on logical procedures of fair and rational resolution of different viewpoints. When faced with practical disagreement, the author argues that the communication ethics of argumentation should consist of discussion topics on theoretical premises: can question postulates of the opposing side – their truthfulness, sincerity and desirability. While exploring differences in attitudes, this article by default analyzes tacit premises of those who implement the compulsory national curriculum on sex education. The basic assumption for problem resolution related to implementation of the sex education curriculum is in reaching an understanding about theoretical premises, and not in proving one's own attitudes and ideas of how to actualize the plan. Understanding theoretical premises provides a way to establish common ground as a basis and starting point for discussion. Although existing solutions indicate general possibility for compulsory national sex education curriculum in multicultural democracy, in this case common ground is not reached.

**KEY WORDS:** *Case study, Communication ethics, Multicultural democracy, Philosophy of education, Sex education*

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## I. AN OUTLINE

This essay explores the theoretical premises of sex education curriculum in Croatia. Theoretical basis of curriculum is based on the strong claims that program offers nonbiased scientific information and insights into diverse value prospective without value judgments. Contrary to these assertions, it is possible to prove that sex education curriculum does not offer nonbiased scientific information and it gives value judgments on worldviews and sexuality. Probably, the sex education curriculum is built on silent or hidden worldviews or theoretical backgrounds. This could be proven by discovering theoretical background of the curriculum and its anthropological, ethical, scientific and social assumptions. Theoretical background is based on the background theory which means that empirical data cannot be basis for a selection of one of the existing theories. When trying to prove this thesis, I will explore the background theory that is inherent in the sex education curriculum: I explain the interrelated philosophical and conceptual beliefs about the nature of education, men, morals, science, and society.

The exploration of this theme is important due to doubt that the content and way the implementation of the sex education curriculum in Croatia threatens worldview freedom, denies multiculturalism and prevents the emergence and development of interculturalism, and violates parental rights for decisions on acceptable ethical, religious and philosophical education of their children. A similarity of the Croatian curriculum with those in the process of being implemented in other countries is another reason that adds value to exploring this particular case. Conclusions uncover the theoretical assumptions behind the implementation of the sex education curriculum and offer possible solutions.

## 2. A FEW NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Sex education curriculum in Croatia is in the implementation phase as one of the health education modules<sup>1</sup> (Ministry of science, education and sport - MoSES, 2012). When first mentioned, all expressions will be written both in the full and abbreviated form (e.g., World Health organization, WHO) and after that will be used in the abbreviated form (e.g. WHO). In this article, I rely on the common meaning of the concepts; nevertheless some important and substantially different concepts with similar names are defined.

The concept *worldview* is one of the key terms which is necessary to define: worldview is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe. More specifically, it is possible to describe worldview as "... a system of beliefs that are interconnected in something like the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle... it is an intertwined, interrelated, interconnected system of beliefs" (DeWitt, 2004: 3). Worldview groups of beliefs constitute an overall perspective from which an individual or group see and interprets the world. Traditional and liberal worldviews on sexuality are similar to religious and nonreligious views on sexuality; these are defined in the next section in more detail. The concept worldview is substantially similar to the concept of *theoretical background*, but theoretical background refers to the conceptual elements upon which some thing is based. A similar term with different substance is the concept *background theory* which defines theory dealing with the hypothetical.

<sup>1</sup> Title of the module is sexual/gender equality.

Because of this, it is impossible to choose between the two rival theories on an empirical basis. The *code* concept is used for the explication of normativity (Broome, 2013: 117). The term *multicultural* deals with the existence and peaceful coexistence of more than two cultures in one state, and the term *intercultural* deals with the cultural dialogue that does not draw a line on the tolerance towards differences but expects acknowledgement and acceptance of differences and “finding yourself in another person”.

According to the latest census results (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) the population of Croatia had reached 4.29 million. Croatia is inhabited by Croats (3.87 million people or 90.4%), Serbs (187.000 people or 4.5%), and 21 other ethnicities (less than 1% each). The main religions of Croatia are Roman Catholicism (3.7 million people or 86.28%), Orthodox Christianity (190.000 people or 4.44%) and Islam (63.000 people or 1.47%). Also, in Croatia there are 163.000 people who are atheists or agnostics (4.57% of population). According to WHO (2011), in Croatia, the teenage birth rate is 14 per 1.000 which could be compared to the average teenage birth rate in the region which is 24 per 1.000. The first intercourse is occurring at the age 17 for girls and the age 16 for boys at the average. According to the Croatian Institute for Public Health (2014), HIV occurrence in Croatia is < 0,1, while the average HIV occurrence in the region is < 0,4 (WHO, 2011).

### 3. ISSUE

The Croatian sex education curriculum includes claims that the information contained in the document is scientifically based and that it offer insights into different ways of thinking about sexuality and diverse value perspectives that are comprised in the holistic perspective<sup>2</sup>. These strong claims are transferred from the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>3</sup> document titled *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* (p. 5). In some parts of the curriculum, the original text is literally translated and it loses its original meaning.<sup>4</sup> Detailed reading of the curriculum reveals a high resemblance between the Croatian curriculum and the WHO program. WHO suggests its program as a national standard for at least 53 European countries. The program provides materials that should convince educational policy makers about the importance of introducing sex education:

This document can be used for advocacy as well as for the development or upgrading of curriculums at different levels of education (p. 9).

Many people agree that young people should learn about importance and numerous aspects of sexuality (Archard, 2006; Labauve & Mabray, 2002; Reiss, 1995), while research indicates that parents opt for the pedagogically appropriate sex education for

<sup>2</sup> “This document is intended to contribute to the introduction of holistic sexuality education. Holistic sexuality education gives children and young people unbiased, scientifically correct information on all aspects of sexuality and, at the same time, helps them to develop the skills to act upon this information. Thus it contributes to the development of respectful, open-minded attitudes and helps to build equitable societies“ (p. 5).

<sup>3</sup> Federal Centre for Health Education (2010).

<sup>4</sup> Federal Centre for Health Education (2010), p. 13 the original text defines holistic approach when describing a certain attitude “... currently most dominant among sexuality and sexual health experts across Europe.“ The official translation is equal to the translation offered by google.translate.com saying “... today is predominant“.

their children without limitations in regards to biological aspects of sexuality (Marsman et al, 1986). On the other hand, there is no unity on methods of teaching when there are at least five different philosophical positions on which sex education materials are based (Reiss, 1995). There are open questions on the topics that young people should know, such as timing and order of instruction on selected topics, teacher qualifications, and the right to decide on the answers to these questions.

In 2008, two separate half-year long experimental sex education programs were implemented in Croatia: the first program was designed by Association GROZD (Voice of parents for children), while the other program was designed by Forum for Freedom in Education. The program designed by GROZD promotes traditional views on sexuality, while the program designed by Forum for Freedom in Education presents liberal views on sexuality. Traditional views cannot be identified with religious and liberal views cannot be identified with nonreligious or secular views (Archard, 2006). Nevertheless, due to the connection with cultural heritage and worldview, the similarities exist. Traditionalists believe that the module content is a worldview issue, while liberals see it as an issue of facts and science. The traditional program is similar to the religious perspectives of sexuality in Christianity and Islam, while the supporters of liberal views believe that their program is non-judgmental.

During the first and only year of experimental implementation of the two programs, 89% of parents opted for the program designed by GROZD and 11% of parents opted for the program designed by Forum for Freedom in Education. The experimental program lasted one semester and was delayed. The module was begun in 2012. and was implemented as part of mandatory health education curriculum in the middle of the school year. The offered curriculum is very similar to the liberal program that is applied in several European countries (IPPF European Network, 2006).

While accepting the program as a free choice, the traditionalists contest the procedure of implementation and mandatory nature of module. The Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia abolished<sup>5</sup> the health education module with explanation that the process of induction and application was not democratic and that the state did not balance the health education content with the constitutional law and parental freedom to choose education for their children. This current case in Croatia once again raises the issue of appropriateness of different approaches to sex education in multicultural democracy (Labauve et al, 2002).

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND BACKGROUND THEORY

There is no single area of human knowledge and action that is released from the influence of certain fundamental beliefs. Hidden or silent nature of the fundamental beliefs commonly has devastating influence on beliefs and action (Popper, 2002). Science also presupposes certain beliefs, for example classical mechanics presumes a belief in the existence of the principles of causality, determinism, uniformity, symmetry, and reductionism. People commonly have a reasonable belief that some facts are empirical in

<sup>5</sup> Official Gazette (No. 63/13), Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia: Decision. Zagreb, Official Gazette No. 63/13.

their nature, although the facts were predominantly based on philosophical and conceptual beliefs on world nature (DeWitt, 2004). For example, consider the geocentric beliefs of Greek and Arabic cosmologists and astronomers (described in Ptolemy's *Almagest*). According to the Ptolemaic system, the Earth is stationary at the centre of the universe and the sun, stars and other planets are moving around the Earth in regular and uniform circular motion. With smaller deviations, this system was able to precisely explain, predict<sup>6</sup> and by repetitive observation check the predicted position of celestial bodies (DeWitt, 2004).

In contrast, the Copernican heliocentric system places sun in the middle of universe (not only the solar system). The earth, other planets and stars are circling around the sun while being equidistant from the center of universe and this system was not more successful in prediction and explanation. Both theories had equally good predictions and explanations of important fact, but the Ptolemaic system was "strongly supported by the facts available in that time period" (DeWitt, 2004: 131). Here at work is a background theory but it was impossible to choose between the Ptolemaic and the Copernican systems on an empirical basis because the available data did not permit us to make a decision between two rival theories.

However, by rejecting beliefs of perfect circular motion and permanent velocity of celestial bodies, Kepler's system established a model which accurately depicted the real nature of the solar system. The majority would agree on the content of instruction on movement of celestial bodies in the physics course and would accept single theory as a model which at the moment more accurately depicts reality of the world (while assuming ontological and epistemological realism). This type of agreement is hard to achieve in the area of the humanistic sciences which do not share postulates from natural sciences whereas include some additional postulates.

Philosophical and conceptual beliefs exist in the background of each theory including the theory which underlies Croatia's sex education module. The background theory comprises one of the numerous interconnected philosophical and conceptual beliefs on nature of upbringing: human, moral, science and society. When discovering hidden or unconscious background theory, it is possible to notice postulates of the curriculum with opposite background beliefs. The sex education module includes educational philosophy claims and pedagogical beliefs supported by philosophically based acceptance of educational goals. It is not easy to disclose this relationship:

A perennial problem for the philosopher of education is to demonstrate a connection between educational ideas and actual organizational processes (Oliker, 2013).

In the following subsections, I will attempt to reveal the hidden premises of the sex education module and show the phenomena of the practical educational problems. The path for this is the study of the hidden theoretical premises of the module, and the first subsection questions hidden or silent anthropology.

<sup>6</sup> This system can predict appearance of Mars with a high level of accuracy for a random day in distant year, while also determining moment and length of its retrograde motion.

## 3.1 ON HUMAN NATURE

Each person has certain beliefs about human nature which form one's relationships with the self, relationship with the world, and relationship with other people. Human nature is not easily defined, neither is it easy to agree on the questions that should be raised in search of what human nature means. Some of the important questions on human nature include:

If a human has a specific nature? If so, which type of nature is that?

Is human nature monistic (material or mental) or dualistic?

Did God create human nature or is man a product of nature?

Is the human created in the image of God or is pure matter, is its essence in reason, work or biology?

Does the human have a free will or is it in entirety determined in the previously specified causal sequence (Pojman, 2006)?

The answers to questions like these influence the entire society and history:

Ideas of human nature are not merely of importance to the individual, but radically affect the kind of society we live in and the kind we would like to live in (Trigg, 1999: 2).

Traditional and liberal views also include anthropological assumptions. These assumptions are included in the major theories on human nature: biblical view, ancient Greek tradition, Indian-oriental teachings (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Mazdaism), conservative and liberal theories, Marxist theory of human nature, Freudian pansexuality, existentialism, Darwinian theory, and some contemporary theories of mind (Pojman, 2006).

In the narrow sense of traditional and liberal views, three anthropological assumptions or types of self-understanding are posed: Judaist-Christian consideration that the human being is created in the image of God; ancient Greek teachings the human being, to whom reason, *logos*, provides a special position or responsibility in relation to the other living species (*animal rationale*); and the image emerging from contemporary science according to which human beings are the very late outcome of the Earth's natural development (Scheler, 2008).<sup>7</sup>

From the philosophical anthropology perspective, it is not possible to define human nature while relying on scientific facts that include only certain aspects of being human, but it is necessary to consider philosophical and conceptual assumptions which are often not compatible to each other. Philosophical explorations of human nature examine *conditio humana*, the overall experience of man, which is not dependent on race, age, gender, cultural context and all other individual characteristics. Nevertheless, *conditio humana* is not comprehensible without considering intellectual, social and cultural dimensions of human living, knowing that acquired differences in human cultures are a human product.

<sup>7</sup> *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* is first published in 1928th, in his later work Scheler adds two more types of self-perception: man as infantile monkey and postulatory atheism.

Major theories on human nature assume the existence of certain essential human characteristics: clothing, law, morality, insight into patterns in nature, tool production, care for the dying and regulated relationships between man and woman (Haeffner, 2003). The insights of cultural anthropology on culturally diverse regulations of relationships towards sexuality and variability of these relationships open several questions. From the ethical-ontological perspective, it is possible to oppose realism and relativism in relation to what is considered to be correct sexual behavior.

From the scientific perspective, it is possible to pose a question on the capability of scientific theories to determine what is the correct relationship towards sexuality and differently regulated relationships between sexes. Social and pedagogical perspectives can question the relationship between what is innate and what is learned about sexuality and different models of teaching about it. Croatia's sex education module assumes that there are generally accepted norms for sexual behavior and judgments, and claims that its assumptions are scientifically nonbiased.<sup>8</sup>

The following examples from the module show that the claim on insights in diverse gender value perspectives is not value-neutral- In the course attainments for the fifth grade, masturbation was presented as an integral part of human sexuality, with a remark that widespread beliefs about its noxiousness are wrong (p. 18). In the first grade of secondary school, it is expected that students have the ability to explain the importance of responsible sexual behavior with a partner (p. 30); in the second grade of secondary school, it is expected that students are able to explain the importance of responsible sexual behavior (i.e., the use of protection from impregnation during sexual intercourse), compare different types of protection, and discuss the situations that could occur when choosing protection with a sex partner (p. 33).

Listed outcomes indicate a liberal worldview that morally allows "... whatever is freely and knowingly consented to by competent adults and does not harm third parties ..." (Archard, 2006: 541). This worldview is not in harmony with different anthropologies, and in some parts, it is contradictory to a traditional worldview which morally permits only "... heterosexual coitus between a married couple" (Archard, 2006: 541), and morally prohibits "Masturbation, consensual adult homosexuality, and extramarital sex of any kind..." (Archard, 2006: 541). The traditional worldview about contraception is well known: abstinence and natural methods.

It is possible to say that traditional worldview is similar to Judeo-Christian view on the human, and liberal to naturalistic type of self-understanding. In contrast to the content of the sex education module, a study of the great theories suggests suspicion in the possibility for proving the validity of the single definition of human nature. Is it possible to affirm that this curriculum is based on objective scientific information, and not on metaphysical assumptions and large theories on human nature, and that everybody should accept it regardless of their own worldview? The outcomes of the module do not acknowledge pluralism in determining human nature and do not specify what the basis for the claims linked to the curriculum outcomes. Specifically, it is not clear whether the assertion that masturbation is harmful is incorrect, and together with other listed assertions, are they

<sup>8</sup> Croatian sex education curriculum, page 5 (<http://www.azoo.hr/images/razno/Kurikulum.pdf>).



scientific facts or philosophical concepts? The implied anthropological premise of the module directs students towards thinking and behavior which is not compatible with at least one anthropological image of human nature (i.e., the traditional) and for that reason cannot be used as a common ground in reaching understanding necessary for implementation of the curriculum in democratic society.

### 3.2 ON SOURCE OF NORMATIVITY

Anthropological assumptions of the nontraditional view with the normative nature of the module, limit the field of the permissible ethical standpoints which weighed on approved types of sexual activities. This type of anthropology solely promotes ethical theory and norm (standard) or ethical principle for determination of values. Other ethical principles are limited or delegitimized, especially in the case of belief in existence of universal or objective moral values which are not in line with values from the module. The elements of normativity (code which produces norm) are: \*source, \*\*to whom is addressed (the one to which role is directed to) and \*\*\*situation; \*nontraditional ethics, \*\*child and \*\*\*universal educational requirement.

A liberal codex is without exemptions, universal, so that there is no large sensibility for difference between adults and children. The particularistic codex, on the other hand, differentiates adults, children and some other groups which do not have equal rights. Hence, the premises of the module can be viewed as a source of disagreement among codes with different value ranges. It seems that it is difficult and maybe even impossible to match the elements of normativity of liberal and traditional points of view:

Acknowledging this fact shows the real difficulty of securing acceptance of a general program of sex education (Archard, 2006: 542).

These two worldviews signify different starting points in the construction of ethical principles, both of which are legitimate in philosophical and in worldview terms and permissible in the multicultural democracy. The background theory assumes the existence of the knowable, objective universal ethical standards and ethical principles and it holds that knowledge. The confirmation for this assumption is in the claims on the type of sexual activities which are obligatory and which should be adopted as a norm of judgment or behavior. Thus, the list of the outcomes for the fifth grade requires students to adopt the opinion that the widely believed notion on harmfulness of masturbation is mistaken (p. 18). The assertion of a mistaken opinion about the harmfulness of masturbation is possible only from the perspective of someone who knows which sexual activity is harmful, who has the knowledge of universal ethical principles. There are three possible objections to this view.

First, there are people who believe in ethical universalism and do not think that the selected ethical standard is good. Second, there are people who believe in ethical universalism but notice that responsibilities, virtues and rights depend on the individual's maturity and ability to act (O'Neill, 1999). Third, there are people who assume ethical relativism and pluralism. Examples of the first objection are some versions of the ethical natural law theories according to which human morality is a product of nature. Morally good is what is in harmony with nature, otherwise it is morally wrong. Different versions



of the natural law theory see masturbation as morally bad. A biological version holds non-genital forms of sexual activity morally unacceptable «... contraception, masturbation, and homosexual sexual relations would be contrary to nature» (MacKinnon, 2011: 236). Freud (1915) writes in a similar way from the prospective of pan-sexuality, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, indicating that any sexuality in adults that assigns the role of genitalia to other parts of the human body is abnormal (Freud, 1989). Some other versions claim that genital forms of sexual activities unite and bring partners closer.

The second objection deals with the uniformity of the universal principles and inability to adjust to different situations and uncertainties: newborns, little children, people with dementia and intellectual difficulties cannot have the same responsibilities and rights as people outside these groups. The third objection deals with the position of ethical relativism according to which there are no universally valid ethical principles and moral judgment is dependent on cultures or individual's choice, there is no better or worse sexual behavior (Audi, 1999). The module disputes the legitimacy of ethical relativism (pluralism) by explicitly saying about “the incorrectness of sometimes widespread opinion...” without allegation of cultural specificities that can be an exception. According to this, it is clear that the module contests at least one ethical standard and disputes the legitimacy of ethical relativism as a philosophical and worldview issue. The only possible answer which would defend the module is in the claim that the expressed view is unbiased scientific fact. Disputing claims on the incorrectness of sometimes widespread opinion from the perspective of a philosophy of science is explored in more detail in the next section.

### 3.3 CHARACTER OF KNOWLEDGE

The sex education module claims that it provides students with “scientifically based information” (MoSES, 2012: 4) probably assuming that scientific knowledge is objective, truthful, secure, and reducible on the facts. But scientific facts are “blind” without theories. Henry Poincaré says that science is built up of facts, as a house is with stones, but a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house. In addition, scientific theories are permanently open to the attempts of dispute and revisions. The authority of the module curriculum in this conceptual form cannot be based in science, and that curriculum in the given form is irrelevant, deficient and inaccurate. The irrelevance of the module is derived from the assumed background theory of science which cannot determine practical life rules and because the module does not assume a need for understanding the nature of science.

Scientific theories do not have legitimacy to determine universal set of beliefs on what is right and how to live properly. In addition, continuous discussion on delineation of science from nonscientific fields, on its classification, on area of reach for its theories, on scientific method and its growth model suggest a need for lessons on nature of science. The module curriculum is flawed because science cannot unambiguously determine the nature of man, also there is no agreement on the characteristics that separate the human from the animal world. Materialistic reduction of human to his/her biology is reductionism which misses the determination of human nature.

Furthermore, the curriculum inherent in the sex education module is inaccurate from the perspective of a philosophy of science. In a separate case, it is possible to challenge

the assertion on "wrongness of the sometime widespread opinion on harmfulness of masturbation" from the scientific perspective. This special case is a result of a scientific study which points to the possibility of harmfulness of masturbation for younger men. The results of the study make a connection between prostate cancer risks and frequent masturbation in men younger than 60 years were published in *British Journal of Urology International*:

Alone, frequent masturbation activity was a marker for increased risk in the 20s and 30s but appeared to be associated with a decreased risk in the 50s, while intercourse activity alone was not associated with the disease (Dimitropoulou et al. 2008).

The results indicate a connection between frequencies of masturbation in young man with increased risk of prostate cancer, and suggest that the sex education module claims are inaccurate. The results could be questioned due to some methodological issues and the fact that the exact causal link was not determined. Nevertheless, the same complaint could be directed towards research studies which offer opposite results. An earlier study claims that there is no connection between ejaculation and increased risk of prostate cancer also acknowledges the methodological failures and necessity for additional interpretation: "... there are several plausible alternative explanations for our results" (Leitzmann et al, 2004: 1583).

Conflicting results and necessary interpretations of scientific studies testify that scientific theories are constantly open hypotheses, that they are not objectively true, absolutely certain and unchangeable. Scientific knowledge is open toward changes in terminology, content, and structure. Without lessons on the nature of science and what comprises 'impartial scientific information' is similar to propaganda that may be ideological. Croatian citizens are familiar with this approach – in the past, they were taught about the unchangeableness (truth) of historical materialism (Marxism) without the possibility for unsanctioned insight into existing criticism. Hence, it is necessary to teach teachers and students on the following concepts: differences between scientific and nonscientific approaches, scientific methodology, the concept of scientific truth, the distribution of the natural sciences and the humanities components, and discussions on the scope of scientific theories.

#### 3.4 SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

It is possible to claim that scientific facts cannot solve the conflict around the implementation of the module because the problems stem from silent (or unacknowledged) attitudes and tacit premises not the scientific facts. Before further elaboration, it is necessary to accept the assumption on the theoretical and practical legitimacy of different worldviews. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that in a multicultural and intercultural democracy one worldview cannot be taught as a normative standard for thinking and conduct (nor should this be the argument on the existence of one exclusive truth, although such is not excluded), but the possibility should and must exist for learning about different worldviews. This means that multicultural and intercultural democracy respect the diversity at least in cases which do not harm other member of society or do not pose a threat for society itself, or include the principle of respect for others' autonomy (Churchill, 2003). This article does not defend, promote or claim multicultural/intercultural democracy to be

a best available social organization nor it challenges that view, but just takes that as default position in dealing with sexual education in society which is claiming to be multicultural/intercultural. Anyway, in a pluralistic democracy, by definition, there are diverse views on religion, morality and politics, which should not be restricted by use of force. Albeit complex and stratified (metaphysical, moral and political) concept, many authors consider tolerance to be a real virtue of pluralistic democracy (Lacewing, 2010; Churchill, 2003). A pluralistic society permits different views on politics, morality, religion and achieving a happiness.

Although the multicultural/intercultural democracy are not universally accepted as the best way of organizing human society, it seems that this kind of organization protects human dignity and promotes the fundamental human rights as universal value (Fleiner & Fleiner, 2009). The human dignity, as Kant's categorical imperative, assumes that human person deals inside the realm of freedom which belongs exclusively to human. Specifically, this means that human person which is oppressed to leave his or her political view, morality, religion or way of life loses his/her freedom and tends to be less human. Different worldviews include numerous anthropological, ethical and other assumptions which should be respected for the purpose of survival of the multicultural society.

Accordingly, none of them should be banned, and there must be the possibility that they can be freely lived and freely taught to others. Worldview or cultural values are reduced on traditional and liberal view, which at least differ according to the anthropological and ethical assumptions which are linked to sexuality. Worldview difference could be directed towards civic values which are common ground for survival and development of the plural society.

... there are indeed certain virtues which can be seen to be of universal values, desirable for human beings whatever their cultural circumstances ... whether or not there are universal virtues, there are virtues which are essential to life in modern, plural, and democratic society (Haydon, 2006: 327).

Teaching of these moral and civic values which are necessary for life in a modern multicultural democracy should be obligatory, while the moral of the specific religions and cultural values should be taught in these communities and in their own way (Haydon, 2006). Civic education should be included and discussed actively as a medium for achieving a common ground. This means that civic values include free communication in which each person can question postulates of the opposing side: their truthfulness, sincerity and desirability. Basically, this means that free speech is the essential principle of democracy, although some authors claim that a free speech "is a standing question of normative political theory" (Richards, 1999:787). Still, the same author claims the political normativity of free speech is based on the argument for tolerance or democracy.

In contrast, in Croatia there was a formal discussion which did not assume improvement of mutual understanding; instead the goal was to implement the planned sex education module at any cost. If the communication goal is not the establishment of the common ground for discussion on practical action, it is possible to assume that the module has an ideological goal. This does not mean that in principle it is not possible to have compulsory national curriculum of sex education in a multicultural democracy, but that there is a need for a different approach to problem solving. One approach that can lead towards achieving the solution is shown in the next section.

#### 4. ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS

It can be seen from the foregoing discussion that there is a doubt about the possibility for formulating an appropriate mandatory national curriculum on sex education in a multicultural democracy. There is a belief that:

A government that favors one set of values over other does not treat its citizens equals. Consequently, any sex education program informed by a set of moral views about sex that the child's parents cannot endorse violates the liberal principle of neutrality (Archard, 2006: 542).

Many Croatian citizens share this feeling because in 2008, 89% of parents opted for the program designed by GROZD (Association GROZD, 2012). Archard's claim and contemporary research suggest that there are at least two (inconsistent) views on morality which are related to sexuality and that mandatory implementation of one view discriminates unfairly against the other view. Implementation of the compulsory sexual education in multicultural democracy is possible in three ways: (i) simple factual-biology education which avoids controversial moral statements, if it is possible, because sexuality is much more than biological fact; (ii) instruction of basic moral values by teaching about sexuality in a form which is acceptable to everybody, which is probably possible (one of the views would be in disadvantage because a number of sexual activities which are acceptable in one view would not be discussed); (iii) bypassing disagreement by teaching facts on sexuality followed by an overview of the different moral judgments related to these facts (Archard, 2006). The first two possibilities are apparently unacceptable, while the third option is generally acceptable. The solution should be similar to Archard's proposal on teaching facts about sexuality followed by an overview of the different moral judgments. In this way, it is possible to generally satisfy both sides because accepted facts on sexuality would be overviewed from different perspectives. Each side would have an opportunity to keep their own worldview, while introducing the other views would enrich an understanding of different cultures and would facilitate a society that is close to an intercultural ideal. It is possible to achieve agreement on the content of sex education. Nevertheless, there is a trick due to the fact that assumed harmony is weakened by methodological disagreement on the appropriate ages for teaching specific sex related information:

A further issue concerns the appropriateness of any sex education program for the age of those who are taught. Here the liberal and traditionalist may be divided further. For the traditionalists is likely to think that teaching children about sex too soon is not just pedagogically mistaken but corrupting of their childhood (Archard, 2006: 545).

Some authors believe that some themes are inappropriate for certain ages of students and thus teaching such information can be seen as indoctrination. The child's age limits the ability of critically questioning content. Alignment of the student's age with topics of sex education is a challenge which in principle can be solved in pedagogy, developmental psychology, philosophy of education, and intercultural dialogues. It looks like the concept of national sexual education program which is suitable for a multicultural democracy is a complex problem which all stakeholders should rethink and discuss prior to implementation.

## FINAL COMMENTS

In a place of academic debate on the introduction of the module in Croatia there is a prevalence of ignoring differences of sex morale, lack of understanding of nature of science, and lack of awareness of hidden worldview and theoretical background of the module. In the academic world, it is blasphemy to claim that your own work is the best, nevertheless, the former Croatian Minister of education, science and sports in 2013 claimed that the proposed program is the best<sup>9</sup> which poses a worrying lack of criticism. Pedagogical weaknesses of module are related to the lack of understanding of science and civic education which necessarily include instruction on the openness of science and education.

This type of education presumes openness towards different contents and the process of changing one's opinions. This, in turn, includes the ability to question issues that intuitively seem clear and doubtless. Imposing one's own assertions about the correct way of life to others which do not question anyone's choice but want to maintain their own, is ideologically imposing on the freedom of the others and is not acceptable behavior in a multicultural democracy. Communicating arguments about the theoretical premises of the module is an approach that guarantees retention of cultural identity of individual, and offers the possibility of liberation from the cultural determinism, and increases the possibility of achieving equal rights for all individuals and groups in a multicultural democracy. Mandatory national curriculum of sex education is possible in a multicultural democracy, but is not yet feasible in Croatia.

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## PORAST DVOJBI O PRIKLADNOSTI OBAVEZNOG NACIONALNOG KURIKULUMA SPOLNOG ODGOJA U MULTIKULTURNOJ DEMOKRACIJI: HRVATSKI SLUČAJ

## SAŽETAK

Neslaganje oko uvođenja kurikuluma spolnog odgoja u Hrvatskoj predstavlja ozbiljan problem obrazovne politike. Rad kombinira dvije perspektive u definiciji teorijski i praktički relevantnog pitanja uvođenja spolnog odgoja. Iz 'ptičje perspektive' promatra argumentaciju aktera koji se ne slažu 'što treba činiti' (nisu u 'praktičnoj slozi'). Nakon toga iz 'žablje perspektive' promatra kako praktični, vrijednosni sud, ovisi o prešutnim teorijskim (antropološkim pretpostavkama i naravi znanja) i praktičnim premisama (izvedenima iz normativnih izvora). Ovaj rad definira okvir otvorenog pitanja suvremene filozofije o logici postupka ravnopravnog i racionalnog razrješenja razlike stavova tvrdeći da komunikacijska etika argumentacije u slučaju praktičnog neslaganja treba prenijeti predmet rasprave na teorijske premise: pravo preispitivanja pretpostavke suprotne strane – njezine istinitosti, iskrenosti i poželjnosti. Proučavajući razlike u stavovima u članku se analiziraju zadane prešutne premise strane koja uvodi obavezni kurikulum. Pretpostavka razrješenja problema uvođenja spolnog odgoja je u unaprjeđenju međusobnog razumijevanja teorijskih premisa, a ne u dokazu svog stava i ostvarenju nauma. Razumijevanje teorijskih premisa omogućava uspostavu točke razumijevanja kao temelja i polazišta rasprave. Točka razumijevanja nije postignuta pa iako postojeća predložena rješenja ukazuju na načelnu mogućnost uvođenja obaveznog kurikuluma spolnog odgoja u višekulturnoj demokraciji, to nije ostvareno u ovom slučaju.