AN EXAMPLE OF CROSS-POLLINATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ON CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SERBIA

ABSTRACT This article provides short introduction to the anthropological notion of culture. The concepts of Lifelong Education (LLE) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) as fields of practice are also under scrutiny. I argue that the latter may be seen as a cross-pollination of fields within the Humanities and Social Sciences, but have a fundamental difference from anthropology in that they are more heavily geared to introduce changes. However, one of my main points is that anthropological notion of culture has had a profound influence on the formation of these fields of practice and continues to be a fruitful source for contemporary practitioners in Education in general and in Lifelong Education in particular. Drawing on long anthropological tradition that anthropology uses case studies to shed light on its specific field of interest, I will provide one case study: “Basic Adult Literacy Programmes in Belgrade as a means of adaptation to neo-liberalism”. This will be useful primarily in showing the practical relevance of anthropological notion of culture to the educational sciences, broadly conceived. This might be placed within the context of value shift in contemporary Serbia.

KEY WORDS cross-pollination, lifelong education, case study, literacy, intellectuals

APSTRAKT Ovaj članak nudi kratko razmatranje antropološke misli o kulturi. Koncepti Celozivotnog Obrazovanja i Učenja, kao polja prakse su takođe predmet istraživanja. Autor smatra da se potonje discipline mogu smatrati produkutom međusobne saradnje oblasti društvenih i humanističkih nauka i razlikuju se od antropologije jer im je osnovni cilj da unesu promene u realnosti. Štaviše, jedan od osnovnih argumenta je da je antropološka misao o kulturi imala dubok uticaj na formiranje ovih disciplina i da je i dalje bogat resurs za poslenike u oblasti nauka u obrazovanju i celozivotnom obrazovanju. Pozivajući se na antropološku tradiciju koja koristi studije slučaja da bi osvetlila pojedine fenomene, jedna studija slučaja će biti razmotrena: „Programi opismenjavanja u Beogradu kao način prilagođavanja neoliberalizmu”. Studija slučaja treba da pokaže relevantnost antropološke
Short Discussion of the Anthropological Notion of Culture

Anthropology is a sub-field of social scientific knowledge that is centrally concerned with the study of mankind. Distinguished scholars working in this field argue that: “Anthropology is the study of people; social anthropology is the study of human society” (Layton, 1997:1). Yet, understanding mankind and human society at this stage of development seems to be a task that is impossible to accomplish. Eriksen and Nielsen argue that anthropologists are people who have an interest both in neighbours and in remote peoples (Eriksen and Nielsen, 2001:1). Hence it follows that it would require volumes to explain what this fundamental discipline means today. Importantly, anthropology uses the comparative method and focuses on specific case study examples. Therefore, we will try to give a brief overview of the anthropological discussion of culture from the Enlightenment onwards. It would be perfectly legitimate to begin with Herodotus, who discussed a number of questions that can be labelled as par excellence anthropological, but because of limitations of space, some examples must be given as an introduction to the main concerns of anthropological thinking on culture. It has many sub-fields, such as political anthropology, psychological anthropology, legal and medical anthropology. The number of potential fields of enquiry will increase substantially in the future. This is a consequence of the trend that makes the boundaries between social sciences permeable.

Anthropologists have always had a very strong interest in determining the nature of human society, the relations between society and the individual, and the in-depth insights into how culture shapes and re-shapes individuals throughout the lifespan. For example, it has always put a lot of emphasis on the study of culture as a pool that is shaped by individuals and that shapes its members over time (Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1989). The study of culture is seen as an important anthropological field, both for practitioners and intellectual outsiders, although outsiders see it as the most important anthropological notion. Geertz’s The Interpretation of Cultures is acknowledged as a classic book of this aspect of the discipline. Peacock (1986:2) also believes that anthropological fieldwork is done in indigenous and remote settings and is a contribution to the study of culture.

Anthropological perspectives on culture are many and this branch of anthropological thinking itself has many subfields, such as the Culture and Personality School that is centrally geared towards the inquiry whether different cultures and cultural patterns create different types of personalities. Moreover, the stream of thinking that sees culture as a set of symbols is geared towards the inquiry into the nature of myth, ritual, religion, knowledge, relations between individuals
and other perennial issues. This stream of thinking generally does not inquire into the contribution of technology, hard science, labour as central to cultural development. The scholars of this particular orientation do not see this as purely irrelevant to their main concern. They rather see ideational elements as the most important to the study of culture.

The stream of thinking to which Edward Burnett Tylor was the most important contributor, can be labelled as ‘holistic’ in that the authors see both spiritual and technical/technological aspects as central to their main concerns. Ideational elements do not exist independently of science and technology. Moreover, it is the interaction and continual growth of both elements that makes culture possible and meaningful. Consequently, technology in the form of tools, artefacts, remnants of the past plays an important part for this particular perspective. The existence of science and technology is a condition of higher spiritual forms as literature, poetry, philosophy, art.

Anthropological perspectives on culture and cultural development include those of diverse theoretical and ideological orientations. Some thinkers on culture have even crossed the borders of social and cultural anthropology and worked on the borders of disciplinary ‘others’ such as social psychology, sociology, cultural studies. These theoretical orientations include Marxism, feminism, post-feminism and post-modernism. Erich Fromm’s inquiry into the nature of ‘basic personality’ is one perspective on culture and cultural development inspired by Marxism. For example, the study of culture has grown to include even the contemporary concerns on gender studies and post-colonialism. The study of this phenomenon has been weaving through anthropological thought. Nevertheless, anthropology implies an innumerable set of enquiries of which perspectives on cultural development are only a small part. However, the study of mankind, as understood by scientists working in this field, implies inquiry into much more specific areas of culture as for example the nature of religion (Frazer, 1922; Durkheim, 1965; Weber, 2007). Debates about what religion is, how the patterns of this social phenomenon change over time, how to decipher what peoples want to find in religion constitute this social science as well. Many authors have tried to shed light on this phenomenon.

Scholars working in this field have always had an interest in the phenomena like myth, ritual, magic. Differences between magic and religion are questions that many anthropologists have tried to answer. What constitutes myth, what is the function of ritual, what people expect from rituals have proved to be very important questions throughout the history of anthropological thought. As this implies, social anthropology, as the study of human society, focuses on other aspects of culture. Social institutions are necessary in order to make human agency within a particular society or culture easy and meaningful. Therefore, some anthropologists have tried to explain the form and meaning of institutions in ‘primitive’ societies. Mauss examined the function of the institution of gift exchange known as *potlatch* (Mauss, 1990). What is more, anthropologists have tried to answer questions regarding
institutions in modern societies and how these make society possible and facilitate interaction between people.

Some contemporary anthropologists have even tried to conduct research on such idiosyncratic topics as interaction in everyday life (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1939; Goffman, 1953; Znaniecki and Thomas, 1958). Boellstorff, (2008:6) for an example, used classical anthropology to study virtual worlds. This may, of course, be linked to phenomenology in philosophy and in philosophical anthropology. These research fields are inspired by the German stream of thinking known as *historicism*, and the notion of interpretation, which implies that human beings tend to ascribe meanings to their acts and activities. To enrich this stream of thinking, Clifford and Marcus (1984:32) believe that the idea of fieldwork is anchored in the belief in the usefulness of sensuous experience. Consequently, the task of a social scientist is to decipher this meaning that becomes available and observable in everyday interaction. Again, anthropology is often divided into two sections. First, throughout the history of this discipline, some authors have tried to develop theories about remote people, indigenous systems of knowledge and other areas that are of quintessential importance for anthropology, by reading accounts about the tribes that they wanted to investigate. Moreover, some of them who have managed to become established intellectual figures never bothered to start doing fieldwork. James Frazer was famous for having said that he had never had any direct contact with the people that he investigated.

Nevertheless, most contemporary anthropologists take fieldwork very seriously, and are of opinion that this provides insights that are more profound, and the theory better grounded in general. In fact, it is anthropology which pioneered what is now known as qualitative research in the social sciences (see for example Jarvie, *The Revolution in Anthropology*). Moreover, the direct contact with the people that is under scrutiny means a major commitment in terms of efforts to get acquainted with the laws, beliefs, moral precepts and the language. Anthropologists are credited with pioneering fieldwork (Mead, 1928; Malinowski, 1953). Malinowski investigated indigenous people in the Trobriand Islands. I argue that it is very important to unite both aspects of anthropology in order to enable much more profound inquiry. Modern accounts of fieldwork, for an example, are concerned with the intricacies of lives of Asian pupils in the British culture (Bhatti 1999:1). Van Maanen believes that fieldwork is essentially about how the one culture is portrayed in the eyes of another (1988:2). Fieldwork is interlinked with research on indigenous knowledge (Price, 1961; Rose, 1968; Skelton, 1971; Frideland and Mohr, 2004; Hulme and McDougall, 2007). Emerson et al (1995) believe that anthropological studies are sometimes interlinked with ‘backstage scribbling’. This subfield of anthropology is centrally concerned with perspectives such as the worldview and rationality of remote peoples. Rabinow (2003:84) believes that participant observation is a much more appropriate label for this type of enterprise. Modern anthropologists even concern themselves with problems such as medical anthropology (Kleinman and Kleinman, 2007: 468). Although this field belongs to
the field of medicine and psychiatry, it is considered perfectly legitimate to explore this phenomenon from the field of medical anthropology.

**How Anthropological Notion of Culture Informs Lifelong Education and Learning**

The notion of *culture* is very important for anthropology. For example, one of the most important figures of American anthropology, Jerome Kroeber, published *Culture, a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Co-authored with Clyde Kluckhohn, it elaborated critically as many as 162 definitions of culture. Their conclusions suggest that some of the broad definitions of this phenomenon should be abandoned in order to define it in its cognitive aspects (Layton, 1997:101). This testifies to the fact that culture is a very important phenomenon for anthropology and that many other thinkers have been engaged in this debate and will continue to debate about these issues.

Morgan acknowledges the complexity of anthropological perspectives on culture with a colourful metaphor: “Culture is not merely a container for life’s activity, as a barrel is a container for beer” (Morgan, 2002:244). Essentially, it is a result of continuing interplay of collective system and individual agency.

As understood in anthropological theory, *culture* is a phenomenon that is interlinked with the relations of social organization, products of human knowledge and individuals. The influence of culture on individuals and what constitutes culture is an ongoing debate within the ‘study of mankind’. This notion is very important for the field of Life-long learning because the very definitions of culture imply that this entity, conceived entity of its own kind, contributes to the ‘learning for life’ strategy by literally imposing on individuals the need to acquire language skills, to shape and re-shape their identities, to engage in social outlets with foreigners and members of a their common culture. All of these processes influence individuals to acquire new knowledge and become knowledgeable without even knowing. As Durkheim pointed out (1982) the external pressure of “social facts” is exercised unconsciously or sub-consciously so that learning in the form of becoming acquainted with a native language, using the national currency, forming the national identity is often exercised continually and individuals are not always conscious that they are involved in this process. Indeed, I argue that it requires great meta-cognitive skills and philosophical reasoning from the members of a certain culture in order to actually ‘find out’ about this hidden ‘skills for life’ strategy.

Tylor’s conceptualisation of culture runs in this fashion: “Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1958:1, quoted in, Layton, 1997:23). Tylor’s definition of culture can be likened to the understanding of this notion in classical German idealism. Norbert Elias, one of the most distinguished sociologists working in the field of the development of manners, is of the opinion
that the German notion of culture or *Kultur* implies higher and ideational aspects such as philosophy, literature, art whereas the French and English notion of *Civilization* implies only technology i.e. applied knowledge in the form of scientific breakthroughs and achievements that are useful from practical and utilitarian point of view (Elias, 1994).

Matthew Arnold makes a similar distinction on higher culture enjoyed by the educated and those from well-to-do backgrounds and popular culture as belonging to the masses (Morgan, 2002:586).

Changes that take place when an individual becomes familiar with the norms and systems of knowledge of other cultures require a great deal of re-socialization and the ability to adapt and enter the process of continual learning. To be more specific, this requires that basics of the new language and the customs are adopted, that one makes himself acquainted with customs, knowledge and beliefs of other cultures. Indeed, I argue that Margaret Mead (1928) was indeed a lifelong learner, because her academic endeavours directed at the exploration of the society in Samoa, required a total commitment to LLL, because of the need to learn the language, make herself familiar with laws and surmount the overwhelming cultural shock that is always present when coming to live in an environment that has many differences from our native country.

Another example is that of the *Culture and Personality* stream of thinking in anthropology which is centrally concerned with how culture shapes individuals, what is a typical character for a specific nation or a set of nations, how this process impacts on the life-course of the members, and what are the fundamental differences between individuals belonging to different cultures. Moreover, anthropology being both a nomothetic and idiographic set of enquiries, the key issues to be addressed are also directed to the investigation of cause and effect relationships that are answerable for these differences. Key intellectual figures to be noted here are the Americans Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. It suggests that this stream of thinking is of great significance for LLL. The enquiries elaborated by the *Culture and Personality* stream of thinking are very important and fruitful for those engaged in work in Lifelong Learning.

Moreover, Raymond Williams, a well-known sociologist, links the analysis of culture to such notions as nation, state and identity that are becoming of great importance for contemporary social science (Morgan, 2004:178). Williams’ considerations show the significance of this notion for theory development in lifelong learning and education, as well as within social sciences, more generally.

Tribes that exist in contemporary world have their own types of rationality and world views which are a certain type of knowledge, though the assumptions upon which this rationality is based is clearly radically different from the type understood by objective science. Nevertheless, anthropology is an ambitious branch of social science and concerns itself with these phenomena as well. The number of inquiries in anthropology of knowledge is quite significant, so only a few examples will be mentioned briefly in order to depict this strong interest.
Durkheim and Frazer have focused particularly on what contemporary scholars would label as primitive types of rationality (see for example Levi-Strauss’ *The Savage Mind*). However, these fields deserve to be disseminated and analyzed as types of ‘making sense’ of the world in a society that is different from ours. Kuhn, as a modern author, analyzed scientific knowledge, and there is a controversy whether he can be labelled as anthropologist, strictly speaking. The number of authors in anthropology of knowledge is significant so that our analysis can hardly stand for a representative sample and give an overview of the debates and discussions in this area of knowledge. Similarly, it can not be a thorough analysis of a variety of topics, debates and investigations. It is worth to point out that anthropological interest in knowledge unites a range of authors from Durkheim, Weber, Frazer, Mauss, Benedict who concerned themselves with ideas that can hardly be called rational to a number of strictly rational philosophers of science as Popper, Kuhn and Feyerabend and a diverse set of volumes as *Economy and Society, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Golden Bough*, to modern volumes such as *Poverty of Historicism* and *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

Broadly conceived, social sciences in general have always tended to develop scales and classifications with the aid of which societies could be classified according to a pre-conceived set of criteria. Evolutionism, an anthropological stream of thinking, sees development as a continual progress towards a certain end (Graham, 1997). This means that history is seen as a continual progress and approaching a certain teleological end. In my view, it is tendency of this stream of thinking to see the main demarcation point between the two types of societies in the form of the literate/illiterate divide. Literacy thus becomes a subject of great importance for anthropology in that anthropologists see this phenomenon as essential for progress and development. Literacy fundamentally changes almost every aspect of society beginning from communication, perception of reality, myth, ritual and religion to such spheres as science and technology. Moreover, written records enable profound changes in the history of the community because they enable individuals to learn the past and shape and re-shape their identities.

Many anthropologists have acknowledged the importance of literacy for technological advance (Sztompka, 1993). Thus, the invention of written records and the introduction of literacy becomes a specific watershed which divided “modern” and “backward” societies. Within the context of economic determinism, literacy is of great importance for anthropological investigations in that it enables the written records about technical and technological investigations. One obvious consequence of this is that cumulative technological progress becomes easily achievable because there is no need to re-think the innovations that have already been elaborated by previous generations. Technical achievements in the form of means of production, tools etc serve as a facilitator for further progress. With regard to the developments of sciences literacy becomes equally important. In pre-literate societies scholars can work independently of each other and it is very difficult for them to try and achieve cooperation if the means to attain that are not available. Literate societies enable a
relatively stable and developed society of scholars that can indeed be cosmopolitan so that further achievements become easy and attainable.

Contents and transmission of culture is fundamentally different in pre-literate and literate societies. Religion, as a *par excellence* anthropological phenomenon, gets new shape and becomes different in literate societies. Literacy enables religious and cultural tradition through the maintenance of historical and written records, myths become more and more elaborated and national history becomes more developed as well.

Many anthropologists and social scientists see identity as a fundamental question of this discipline (Evans Pritchard, 1940; Giddens, 1991; Cohen, 1994; Huntington 1996; Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). Identities change in literate societies as well. It is debatable whether stable regional or tribal identities can be formed if the history and knowledge of the past is not possible and available to individual members. Fundamentally, defining the ‘other’ is a part of this phenomenon and this can best be achieved through the knowledge obtained about past controversies. Being German is often defined through the mutual relations with the French, being Irish or Scottish is often defined through the relations with the English, being Japanese is often defined through the relations with the Chinese. In pre-literate societies identities must become rather lax and unstable because this crucial ingredient is clearly missing from the scheme. On the other hand, literacy enables a relatively profound knowledge of the relations between the significant others and this is one more argument in support of the view that this phenomenon is very important from anthropological perspective.

Morgan argues strongly that the ‘market’ of debate about adult education and literacy has been dominated by the Freire and Gramsci ‘industries’ for more than a decade (Morgan, 2000:470). Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationalist, argued that failure to grasp core symbolic concepts that exist within a particular society can lead to exclusion and marginalization (Freire, 1996). This main point intersects with Marxist debates on the significance of education for empowerment of social classes who thus become able to find out the subtle mechanisms that lead to marginalization, exclusion and oppression.

Gramsci was of opinion that literacy can be a powerful tool that could help establish counter-hegemonic education thus enabling the creation of a society of intellectuals. Consequently this can create a society that would be governed by individuals themselves (Gramsci, 1987, quoted in, Giroux, 1987). We have seen from our analysis of anthropological arguments that the introduction of literacy makes changes in all aspects of lives of individuals so that it can change patterns of religion, education, interpersonal relations. The questions if these changes are positive or negative should be a matter of further research in social sciences. One thing is almost certain: introducing literacy and efforts to enhance the literacy of the overall population do make changes in everyday lives and create more powerful individuals that are more reflective with regard to their practice and being in society.
Gramsci believed that literacy is so important and should be grounded in ethical and political projects that would enable freedom and dignify social classes. It is almost a necessary condition for cultural and political emancipation (Gramsci, 1987, quoted in, Giroux, 1987). Radical thinkers have the tendency to overemphasize oppression and the lack of freedom. Their constant need for the achievement of higher and higher degrees of freedom sometimes leads them to be biased. However, Gramsci’s arguments are worth taking seriously. Achieving a society of intellectuals is a utopian goal, but on the other, knowledge does lead to empowerment and inclusion. Freire acknowledges the fact that there is a dialectical relationship between the human beings and the world. The Brazilian educationalist argues that literacy is a political project by which individuals show that they are assertive and claim their right not only to learn to read, understand and enhance their relationship with society, but try to reconstitute their relationship with the societal system (Freire, 1987, quoted in, Giroux, 1987). Although their goals were similar, Gramsci and Freire had fundamentally different ontologies. One was a Marxist-Leninist atheist whereas the other was a Catholic priest. Morgan argues strongly that Gramsci was a communist revolutionary, and not a professional educator (Morgan 1987; Morgan 2004).

As well as some anthropologists have seen pre-literate societies as savage and underdeveloped, scientists working in the field of lifelong learning did perceive the danger connected with the inability to read and write. Giroux argues that: “Within the dominant discourse, illiteracy is not merely the inability to read and write, it is also a cultural marker for naming forms of difference within the logic of cultural deprivation theory (Giroux, 1987:3)”. This fact points out to the common denominator of both anthropology and lifelong learning. The illiterate have always been defined as “other” and have been perceived as a burden for those that are more developed. From anthropological perspective, this problem has been seen as a difference between modern and pre-modern societies. The modern have always tried to investigate pre-literate societies applying their own standards and perceptions of the world and if the latter did not manage to adjust to these standards, they would be defined as backward.

For example, there are many vibrant intellectual communities in the United Kingdom whose members conduct research on topics such as the introduction of literacy and numeracy in rural communities (Atkin, 2003; Atkin and Merchant, 2007). The rural/urban divide has often been the topic investigated in anthropology and rurality has been perceived as backward. One consequence of these trends is the fact that rural areas have been neglected educationally with the increasing numbers of uneducated and under-educated. The re-introduction of programmes designed to enhance literacy and numeracy in rural areas is a task of paramount importance for educationalists. For example, the Skills for Life strategy was a prerequisite for the formation of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, which is a body that concerns itself with the teaching and learning of basic skills. A number of bodies as the Institute of Education of the University of
London, Universities of Lancaster, Nottingham and Sheffield obtained the contract for the centre which officially came into existence in the year of 2002. Literacy and numeracy are the two principal activities of the Centre (Torgerson *et al*, 2004: 19).

In conclusion, anthropological notion of culture has been a fruitful field for the development of both theory and research in lifelong education. Not only have educationalists found some useful concepts for discussion in anthropological notion of culture, but practical action and research is heavily indebted to the ideas developed by both classical and contemporary anthropologists who elaborated critically the notion of culture.

### An Example of Cross Pollination in Social Sciences: A Case Study from Serbia

*Basic Adult Literacy Programmes in Belgrade as Capability Development*

In the words of Scholz and Tietje (2002:1) a case could be a university department, a railway company, a city or a child. The authors further believe (2002:5) that case studies are an approach for real, current and complex problems. What is more, future workshops are a specific case study geared to predict the future development of a case (Scholz and Tietje 2002:225). Chatterji and Mehta (2007:1) used this method to explore the violence between Hindus and Muslims in contemporary India. This case study shows how various political parties and intellectuals have had an interplay that contributed to the formation of *political liberalism* and *economic neo-liberalism*. Neo-liberalism, the system based on competition as the basic principle, created a gap between haves and have-nots. Moreover, case study explores how government, non-governmental organizations and the state have had a significant role to play in order to alleviate this social divide. As well as having this theoretical link, the case study explores the adjustment to this newly-created state of affairs on the level of values. Basic adult literacy programmes in Belgrade, in the form of efforts to acquaint the population with the notions of civil society, basics of the English language and essential computer-literacy are conducted by major agents. My judgment is that *Basic Adult Literacy Programmes in Belgrade* contribute to empowerment in Freireian and Gramscian senses, and alleviate the social divide created by the advent of neo-liberalism after a long period of state-socialism. The case study shows the value of the anthropological approach in general to the educational sciences.

Anthropological perspectives on culture and cultural development are centrally concerned with ideational contents of culture and that often implies the centrality of values. Apart from being a symbolic element of culture of every nation, values have a very strong motivational and emotional dimension so that they enable societal change and cultural development. Every anthropological analysis that does not take into account existing social context is self-defeating. The analysis has been predominantly theoretical; further analysis will be supplemented by a specific case...
study on the value shift in contemporary Serbia. My main argument is that basic adult literacy programmes compensate the shortcomings of modern neo-liberal economy. Intellectuals and political parties played a key role in the transition from state-socialism to post-socialism. One reasonable argument in support of the view is the fact that intellectuals have always been in the focus of attention of anthropological inquiry. Intellectuals are seen as persons that “exploit symbolic capital accrued in the cultural field in order to achieve properly cultural effects” (Bourdieu, 1996:129-131, quoted in, Ahearne, 2007:210). As such, it is their main role to be opinion leaders and policy makers.

Nevertheless, a number of authors argue that the notion of an intellectual can be derogatory-implying conceit and contempt towards masses. Their self-perception is that of natural aristocrats as opposed to masses denoted as semi human swarm (Carey, 1992, quoted in, Bennett 2007:4). Obviously, their action potential to produce change in reality would be of crucial importance here, rather than merely their self-perception.

The role of intellectuals in shaping values is of central importance. Not only do they help maintain the existing set of values through their agency, but they contribute to change as well. Morgan argues, reflecting on the broader Marxist thinking on moral education, that intelligentsia has the crucial role in contributing to the maintenance of a set of values within the general population and the change of values when historical bifurcation points occur (Morgan, 2005: 393). Georg Lukács, one of the most important Marxist philosophers, developed a programme with the aim of establishing gradualist programme in Hungary, thus creating a fruitful climate for the operation of the Communist Party (Morgan, 2007:147). As such, he is a par excellence example of an opinion leader.

Morgan argues further that almost all aspects of society as legal, religious, cultural, educational have been determined by the role of intellectuals and the state (Morgan, 2005:393). The predominance of intellectuals has been evident throughout the socialist period. However, this situation has not changed significantly with the advent of post-socialism. The values and norms are still shaped and re-shaped by the opinion leaders. The ongoing debate on the value shift meant reflecting on a number of essential questions: the conversion of intellectuals; if post-socialism represents a progress as compared with state-socialism; the contribution of the hypothesized aims towards EU accession and democratisation; the need to freed the system of the persons that contributed towards the maintenance of state-socialism; mastering of the past.

Perhaps two of the most important agents that contributed to the value shift have been the academia and political parties. Political parties have tried to exercise their power and action potential throughout the 1990’s whereas the societal change has impacted on intellectuals to rethink the established value system and contribute to the social and political development. A number of political movements have been very active during the 1990’s and they are generally acknowledged as the key agents in the change towards the hypothesized EU accession and liberalisation. Serbian
Renewal Movement played a key role in the mobilisation of the nation to stand up for their rights against the authoritarian regime of Milošević. The values proclaimed by this party include the eulogy for Serbian tradition, history and culture in general (SRM Programme, 2008). The party contributed to the development of the sense of Serbian ethnic idiosyncrasy and there was less emphasis on the power of individuals. Democratic Party of Serbia contributed with a set of values that have essentially been inherited from the tradition of French Revolution. The main goal is a society of individuals free to elect their own government and pursue their own motives; moreover, Democratic Party did not highlight the importance of tradition (DP History, 2008). Serbian Citizenship Pact was the organization with the strongest emphasis on the need to introduce market forces. They shared the same commitment for the individual and political freedom.

Other political agents that stemmed from these parties have enriched the set of values; Democratic Party of Serbia shared the same commitment for Serbian tradition, rural population and culture, and national pathos whereas Liberal Democratic Party promoted market forces and market driven behaviour. The agency of those parties was the driving force of the value shift towards political liberalism and economical neo-liberalism with the corresponding need for ‘lifelong learning’ agenda. They emphasized the need that every individual is answerable for gaining skills that will make him a productive member of society; the introduction of competition as the basic principle for the division to haves and have-nots; the need to abandon egalitarianism as the basic principle for societal organization; elements of welfare state need to be introduced as a means to alleviate the effects of competition;

Fundamentally, these values are what an overwhelming majority of Serbian citizens would agree with today. This does not necessarily imply that they contribute to the overall societal progress. It can be argued that they contribute to the societal division, limit the access to higher education only to the minority of candidates from well-to-do-families, undermine solidarity and foment nationalism and elitism. Therefore, it is only one perspective to argue that it contributes to the cultural development, though it can not be denied that the proclamation of these values have played a key role in helping the country overcome the remnants of state-socialism and start following the path of liberalisation.

Serbian university faculties that housed Chairs of political economy, sociology, philosophy, psychology and politics were dominated by the Marxist paradigm throughout the good part of the socialist period with academics working as both traditional intelligentsia with the publications and intellectual work supporting the state-socialist system and organic intellectuals in that they were practically engaged in political action to support socialist values. With the advent of post-socialism the academia has witnessed a shift in the organization which has produced a shift in values in the long run. The ‘mission statements’ of Politics, Sociology, Economics and Philosophy Departments now began to highlight the competitive advantage that the graduates will have on the labour market. Academia started to
think in terms of a “person-skills bundle” and began to promote values of utilitarianism and sustainable competitiveness (FOE, 2008). This further implied that students were encouraged to adopt materialist values as far as knowledge is concerned and live in a culture that foments competition as a basic principle.

Moreover, the leading figures from the academia joined the political parties to promote values and contribute practically to the change in value-system. An overwhelming majority of intellectuals working in the field of humanistic disciplines joined Non Governmental Organizations to promote the values that support the hypothesized EU accession and membership of regional organizations. Main organizations that work towards the attainment of these goals are the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, European Movement in Serbia, Alternative Academic Educational Network and many more. The values that intellectuals try to promote are centrally geared towards human rights and liberties; the benefits of EU accession; the need to prevent the danger of an authoritarian government; the values of capital and free market agency (Helsinki Committee Serbia, 2008).

Post-socialist values are seen by many as a reasonable contribution to the cultural development. It is argued that it represents a watershed in that they enable education, benefits and work opportunities for the most able and hard-working. This is often a chimera because market-regulated education is often élitist and it is not a contribution to cultural development. Nevertheless, economically post-socialism is a system that can enable sustainable competitiveness in the long run. The values of competition, market driven behaviour and knowledge for development are those that will produce progress in the long run.

Socially, political liberalism and economical neo-liberalism need to be supplemented with the elements of education for all and welfare state provided by basic adult literacy programmes. Values and practices are interlinked. Within the Serbian context the advent of post-socialism brought the constant and ongoing need for skills development and lifelong learning. Moreover, the notion of literacy changes rapidly within the context of information rich knowledge economy and implies even the ability to use ICT, be English language literate, together with the ability to read and write.

As pointed out earlier, literacy is important both in anthropology and for lifelong education as a field of practice. From an anthropological perspective, literacy is essential insofar as it is a pre-requisite for cultural development. Lifelong education as a field of practice sees literacy programmes as a tool for overall societal development in terms of better education, quality of life, career perspectives. In its narrow form, literacy is seen as the ability to read and write which is a pre-requisite for personal growth and overall societal development. This notion has changed significantly over the past few decades. Morgan and Tuinjman are of the opinion that structures and institutions regulating adult education and literacy in Central and Eastern Europe have collapsed following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reconstruction of adult education has been going on ever since (Morgan and Tuinjman, 2000:57). Serbia was no exception to this general rule, so that we can now speak of
computer literacy as the ability to use computers, English language literacy and ability to grasp concepts of human rights and civil society. The case study will focus on the above-mentioned aspects of literacy in Belgrade. Justification in support of this view is that Belgrade is the area of Serbia where these programmes are developed to the highest degree and many NGOs are Belgrade-based.

Conceptually, basic adult literacy programmes in Belgrade can be perceived as the counter-reaction of the civil society vis-à-vis the neo-liberalism of the Serbian state. As Morgan and Kliucharev argue the notion of civil society was introduced by the Scotsman Adam Ferguson, Englishmen John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, while G.W.F. Hegel introduced the idea of the civil society as intermediary between the rights of individual and authority of the state in his *The Philosophy of History* (Morgan and Kliucharev, 2008:55). The educational activity of NGOs in contemporary Serbia with regard to non-formal and incidental learning can thus be perceived as geared to alleviate the shock caused by the advent of neo-liberalism and contribute to the empowerment in a Freireian sense of the word. I argue that the following case study supports this argument.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights is a non-governmental organization concerned with raising the “public awareness” of the general population including students, adults and professionals to the notion of human rights, civil society, ethnically correct behaviour, rights and liberties (*Helsinki Committee Serbia*, 2008). The organization has been active for a number of years and the main responsibilities include: workshops to help the general public understand the core concepts of civil society and thus become literate and knowledgeable in this aspect; distributing free books, publications and pamphlets to raise awareness on the particular “cases” of intolerance and bigotry; distribution of readings geared towards the introduction of political and sociological concepts. The activity of this organization is not restricted to Belgrade. The literacy programmes conducted by this and a number of other organizations have been important for the introduction of basic notions of civil society and making the general population sensitive towards the human rights abuse. Moreover, the notions of human rights, international cooperation and development, civil society and pluralism have been neglected throughout the socialist period. Literacy programmes are geared towards the distribution of books, leaflets, statements and other publications in order to introduce the general public to the above-mentioned notions.

The Alternative Academic Educational Network and the Centre for the Investigation of Religions are also contributing to the development of literacy programmes by conducting seminars and workshops on the phenomena or religious rights, education for all and tolerance. The themes of the seminars and workshops conducted by these organizations are orientated towards the basic literacy programmes on religious rights and liberties, basic concepts and histories of religions that are existent in the Balkans, as well as looking at the particular cases of intolerance and the possible ways to overcome these. Concrete research projects include specific case studies on the secularization-de-secularization dichotomy in
contemporary Serbia, as well as the distribution of pamphlets introducing the examples of religious cooperation between Islamic and Orthodox Community in Belgrade.

Computer literacy is often seen as one of the most important questions for societal development. Particularly within post-socialist Serbia and Belgrade, computer literacy is seen as a basic pre-requisite for the societal development and the corresponding need to introduce changes and catch up with the more developed world. The programmes are conducted mainly by schools and colleges that are organized according to the curriculum designed in economically/technologically developed countries. Although a praiseworthy progress, the system of ICT ‘skills for life’ strategy in Serbia is not as advanced as in developed countries as the United Kingdom, where these literacy programmes are conducted by the City Councils, independent IT consultancy firms and the government.

Computer literacy programmes are offered by the International School Belgrade which has a curriculum specifically geared towards the acquisition of knowledge of modern technologies. Programmes are specifically designed to help candidates acquire basic skills of working with Microsoft Office package including spreadsheets, word processing, databases, Outlook and other useful tools that can be helpful in everyday life and on the workplace. In addition, these programmes help enrolees acquire the indispensable knowledge of using the Internet, web browsers, e-mail. At a more advanced level, computer literacy programmes are specifically designed to transmit knowledge of business information technologies, business through the web and more complex notions and processes interlinked with the use of computers. A number of organizations concern themselves with the introduction of changes in this domain and these are mainly working in Belgrade.

The USAID is an American organization that conducts computer-literacy programmes in Serbia as well. As opposed to the above-mentioned activities of Schools that offer computer literacy programmes with the possibility to continue on to the higher level, USAID helps deprived communities acquire basic knowledge of these technologies which is geared towards enabling them to continue on with their life in a foreign country without difficulties (USAID, Serbia 2008). The effect of these changes is obviously very positive and is a specific kind of empowerment of these communities. Some examples of USAID activity with regard to this aspect is the introduction of CL programmes for Islamic Communities in Belgrade. These communities are vulnerable to a specific kind of cultural shock when moving to Orthodox countries and the ability to function on a daily basis is seriously hindered if CL programmes are not introduced.

Post-socialist Serbia has been subject to many traumas as a consequence of social change from socialism to post-socialism. The indicator of this situation is the fact that the country has a very high unemployment rate. The inability to use modern ICT technologies and low levels of computer literacy are answerable to a great extent for the situation. The lack of computer skills creates a specific kind of “underclass” that is composed of persons that are unemployable. There are
indications that the National Bureau for Employment takes these concerns very seriously. The Bureau develops its own strategies on skills development and computer literacy programmes are a very important part of these projects (National Bureau for Employment, 2008). Many of these courses are conducted free of charge and unemployed adults are encouraged to attend in order to gain basic computer skills as a path conducive for the better positioning on the labour market.

These programmes are clearly being encouraged by the government and the employers, but there is a degree of reluctance on the part of the enrollees. Adults that have not had educational experience for a significant number of years feel embarrassed or not able to successfully complete these courses. A significant percentage of the unemployed are marginalized communities like gypsies, vagabonds or homeless that are reluctant to join educational settings because they have never had any experience of the kind. Essentially, the development of the programmes is one clear indicator of progress that can be achieved in the long run. These programmes are of quintessential importance in a country that has been isolated throughout the socialist period and a good part of the 1990s; the isolation has not been overcome yet. Consequently, the country did not have the access to the most advanced modern ICT technologies which is a hindrance to start following the path of progress. The introduction of computer literacy programmes is thus a very significant progress from economical and social standpoint.

Post-socialism is a changeable period. The phenomena that are under scrutiny of social scientists will increase. Because of these changes, constant learning and development is a pressing need for the majority of the population. The labour market has changed significantly as well with an increasing number of foreign companies that operate in Serbia. Their major requirements include the knowledge of the basic notions of civil society, computer literacy and confident grasp of the English language. The need to be English-literate is perhaps the most pressing of the three. Introducing changes with regard to this aspect is by no means a task easy to accomplish, because of the predominance of Russian throughout the socialist period and because adults find it difficult to adjust to the new changes and requirements of the labour market.

English language literacy (ELL) is becoming important as well. Many programmes are Belgrade based. Throughout the good part of 1990’s the provision of literacy programmes with regard to the English language has been done by the British council and private schools (British Council Serbia, 2008). Competition was not intense in this domain which resulted in high prices; one consequence of this situation was the inflation of prices which led to the fact that only higher strata of society could be seen as enrollees. These conditions had clearly been unfavourable for the spread of ELL.

With the liberalisation and the democratisation processes after the year 2000, the state and the general public understood the pressing need for the spread of ELL. Conditions clearly became favourable with the growing number of educational institutions on the market offering ELL programmes and traditional institutions such
as the British Council having lowered their fees and enabled subsidized courses for students and adults.

The case study has shown that progress has been made with regard to all of the three of the enumerated aspects. Literacy programmes in Belgrade are flourishing, which is a strong incentive for the development of these programmes in the country in general. Unfortunately, the results can not be extrapolated to the rest of country, because of the existence of a specific kind of cultural lag. With the ongoing need to further education, “lifelong learning” agenda being introduced, and the market penetration by major foreign companies, we can still be optimistic with regard to the future and perspectives.

Cross-pollination and the cooperation of disciplines in the social sciences is becoming of central importance for the development of these fields. Having said that, the cooperation of social sciences will become more and more intensive, and those scholars who practice these developments will benefit greatly from this important methodological tool.

References


