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Towards more meaningful teaching of literature in Serbian schools (Paradoxes of curriculum)

The neo-liberal concept of education – teaching literature and competences

The question we are asking at the very start is: What are the requirements which are posed for education, for literature studies, and widely seen, humanistic sciences, in connection with the teaching Serbian language and literature in Serbian education? Bauman says: "Children have always been seen as "the future of the nation", and depending on the view of the good state of the nation, it has been decided how children should be prepared for their future and future of the nation"¹. Neo-liberal concept is predominant, oriented towards efficiency of the market, education is seen as a significant factor of development and this is why the international organisations (MMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation) invest a large amount of money. Nevertheless, it is wrong to think that these investments are aimed at humanistic studies (*studia humana*) and the development of the thinking individual (what we call *l'uomo universale*). On the contrary, international organisations form international educational policy oriented towards acquiring competencies, skills which enable development of competencies, skills which enable development of market and capital, i.e. education which brings profit. Analysing the needs of the certain positions helps determine competencies of working labour, and educational product, and in final consequence – *instrumentalist*².

What is the situation in the education system of the Republic of Serbia? State is also involved into the change of educational policy which means adjusting aims and competencies with the frame of the European Union. National programme for integration into the European Union, strategic document of "reform coordination" between European Union and Serbian educational system³. Starting from

¹ Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge/Malden 2006, p. 135.

² M. Despotović, *Obrazovanje usmereno na kompetencije – implikacije za razvoj kurikuluma*, in *Obrazovanje i učenje pretpostavke evropskih integracija*, ed. Š. Alibabić, A. Pejatović, Beograd 2008, p. 37.

³ Асс: NPI: Национални програм за интеграцију у Европску унију, Београд, октобар: Република Србија, Влада 2008, р. 83; Т. Росић, *Настава књижевности у процесу евроинтеграција*, in *Наука и евроинтеграције. Зборник радова са научног скупа*, ed. Д. Мاستиловић, Пале, књ. 10, том 2, 2016, р. 464.

2003/2004 school year, primary school syllabi have been innovated and in 2002, Serbia started participating in the International programme for assessment students' achievements (PISA) in the organization of OECD (which produced numerous judgements of the educational system).

When we consider tendencies of pragmatism of education and suppressing spirituality, we come to devastating recognition about the further destiny of humanistic sciences, particularly literature. Literature is not profitable, and as such it is not necessary for the market, and it cannot be adjusted to competencies, according to its nature, it cannot be adjusted to direction towards competencies. Nature of literature is hardly reducible to measurable skills; verification of competence can be applied to the testing of knowledge of the language, and grammatical categories, as well as the understanding of the denotative text. But it is impossible to measure the understanding of connotative, metaphorical and layered literary text through the test - because of the individuality in understanding and because of the various ways to approach and interpret the text. We can check the knowledge of the concepts of literary theory or knowledge of certain literature epoch, but this itself does not show the skills of interpretation or an independent critical attitude towards literary text of one who solves the test.

When we talk about the educational reforms, we can usually hear that their aim should be *improving quality*. But, what is seen as quality within concept which neglects humanistic dimension and stresses efficiency and pragmatic role of education? This concept obviously does not mean affirmation of human personality, ethic dimension and ability of critical thinking. This warns us of the danger of further marginalisation of humanistic sciences and literature studies in the curricula at all educational levels⁴.

"Technological era and fast development of science did not contribute to creating a better world, but the world which paradoxically dehumanises a man"⁵. We are living in the era of the power of market, aimed at creating and directing the desires and needs of the individual who is seen primarily as a consumer: "each life aim, and what is most important dignity, self-respect and happiness, demands owning the market. The world built out of it is made of goods – objects"⁶. As the entire human life exposes the consumer's identity, such as a consumer, the child is under attack from an early age, therefore we are talking about the phenomenon of commercialization of childhood (marketing directed to the youngest consumers) and surprising spirituality in growing-up. The soul of a child is under siege, suggests Kuku Adato⁷. All of this leads to dehumanisation; the citizen stops being

⁴ Humanistic disciplines will be marginalised at all levels of education, because "creators of public policies see them as useless decorations, [...] they lose their place in the syllabi very fast, but not in the minds and hearts of parents and children". (M. Nusbaum, *Ne za profit: Zašto je demokratiji potrebna humanistika?*, „Reč“, 82/28, Beograd, 2012, p. 350–351).

⁵ J. Тодоровић, *Тржиште, компетенције и настава књижевности*, in *Наука и евроинтеграције. Зборник радова са научног скупа*, ed. Д. Мاستиловић, Пале, књ. 10, том 2, 2016, p. 214.

⁶ Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity...*, p. 129.

⁷ Acc. Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity...*, p. 138.

a contemplating subject and becomes an object, goods, as all human realisations are becoming purchasing⁸.

Why is teaching literature significant for children? "Literature owns certain depth in which brain and memory of culture, which, by reading and understanding is added to the readers' individual brain and memory". It tells about "man's complexity and depth of his soul; [...] the reader is faced by himself, with own existence in the world, with questions about himself/herself, choices that he must always make about the own finite"⁹. Reading nice literature enables developing cognitive, verbal, emotive, affective and other abilities. According to some researchers¹⁰ age 10–11 is a significant moment for the individual to decide whether they would love nice literature if that they would reject spiritual need and satisfaction. This tells us how the roles of education, syllabi of literature and teachers have an immense effect not only towards literature, but all of what the child gains by reading. This is why unifying educational outcomes and competencies should never be unified, which in humanistic discourse could not be standardised. If the area of language and literature is only formulated as functional literacy and check what today is called reading comprehension – and this is what is checked at PISA tests and these requirements are a part of tests for final exams of the primary school – this is how we neglect the role of literature in education.

As a comparison, we can think about the epoch of socialism in Yugoslavia, which was characterised by strict ideological control and systematic care about education. All those who were involved in upbringing of young people were aware of the power of influence of literature on the construction of the young readers' personality – reading was understood as an investment in the future, establishing bridges between nations¹¹. This is evidenced by the establishment of a network of organizations and committees in charge of the youngest population¹². In that period, it was understood that care about literature for the youngest means investment into future. Presentation of well known children's writer, Mira Alečković, at the Congress Writers' Union of Yugoslavia in 1955 represents an important review of the state of children's literature in a socialist country and here it because it springs from the full awareness of the importance of literature for the formation of personality in the development of: "responsibility of children's writers in front of the community is immeasurable because the writer is the one who is responsible for the future man/woman, who he/she will refer to people, community, will he or she be a bad man or

⁸ See Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity...*; S. Vladušić, *Crnjanski, Megalopolis*, Beograd 2011; Ж. Липовецки, *Парадоксална срећа, Оглед о хиперпотрошачком друштву*, Сремски Карловци / Нови Сад 2008.

⁹ А. Јовановић, *Бранко Ћопић, школски писац, „Иновације у nastavi“*, XXVIII, 2015/4, p. 72.

¹⁰ М. Crnković, *Dječja književnost*, Zagreb 1990.

¹¹ М. Krsmanović, *О друштвеној улози деčје književnosti*, "Naša deca, organ Saveza pionira Jugoslavije", Beograd, jun 1955, god. V, br. 6, p. 6–15.

¹² More on that in З. Опачић, *Писмо из Индије за друга Кардеља (слика другог култура у часописима за децу 50-их година 20. века)*, „Детињство“, Нови Сад, Год. XXXIX, бр. 2, лето 2013, p. 3–13.

cripple who will go through life unfulfilled and devastate"¹³. These words are actual today in full extent, and this care about the development of the young today in the era of neo-liberal attitude towards humanistic education can only be imagined.

Finally, when we have all of this in mind, we can ask what the consequences are on the contemporary child – participant in education. A child lives in Serbian society devastated by crisis, transition and it is a silent whiteness of culture marginalisation (and particularly small visibility of children's culture) and erosion of ethnic values. It is attracted by the world of media and consumers' world which is glittery and attractive – it does not demand any mental effort. A child observes and learns, Baumann says: "Family relation are very loose in on normal work days. They are additionally ruined and weakened by changing of authority and command structure"¹⁴. It observes teaches whose authority is ruined and values they are promoting are less attractive from the glitter of commercials. It is logical, therefore, that reading crisis occurs and rejection of required reading list. On the other hand, society which treats the young carelessly shows concern because of these occurrences, dealing with essential consequences and not dealing with causes.

Curricular paradoxes

One of the significant issues is creating curricula, i.e. choice of contents/pieces of literature which should be studied. The state and its state authorities are in charge of creating subject syllabi. The Institute for improvement of education is in charge of creating the curricula and the National Educational Council adopts them. On the other hand, there are opposite attitudes in Serbia, concerning the proposed texts in national curricula, what we call extensive reading materials. Many people think that this concept is old-fashioned and that it should be changed, innovated, liberated and framed into the orientation plans. From time to time, distinguished writers, teachers or cultural workers suggest their choice of literature pieces. That choice is most often subjective, and the issue of required reading list is complex. The key question is what should be done for the reading scope of students: i.e. what we want from someone who finished school to have in mind as an integral part of general culture, national identity, world literature; the ways in which we create the world around us, comprehend our own position and relation towards other cultures.

Curricula are created by multi-level criteria: *receptive possibilities of a reader in certain age; issues of educational aims and achievements, and what is important as well, the issues of children's affinities, educational and pedagogical aims*; the choice of literary pieces should fulfil very strict aesthetical criteria, there is also *adequacy of the text for recognising certain literary-theoretical terms*¹⁵. This is why, test is

¹³ Алечковић М., „Десет година југословенске литературе за децу, „Летопис Матице српске“, Нови Сад, год. 131, октобар 1966, књ. 376, issue 4, p. 366.

¹⁴ Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity...*, p. 138.

¹⁵ Methodological experts stress "functionality" of extensive reading materials and „applicability to age, previous knowledge and students' interests" (Z. Jovanović, *Obrada domaće lektire u mlađim razredima osnovne škole*. Beograd 2002, p. 34), without interfering into the precise qualifications of adjustability category apart from "style and scope".

not positioned diachronically, according to literary epochs, as this is in secondary schools, but this is according to genealogical characteristics (lyrics, epics, lyric-epic drama and scientific-popular literature; folk and art literature). Proposed aims and tasks of teaching language and literature refer to language nourishing, developing both written and oral culture of expression, developing readers' habits, aesthetical pedagogical work, and the power of critical thinking concerning the read text, building up awareness about national and cultural identity and heritage, and all developing general human virtues: humanism, solidarity, ethnicity, and patriotism¹⁶.

In the curricula, there are writers precisely stated, as well as pieces, texts for analysis, i.e. language contents and literary-theoretical terms which should be adopted¹⁷. In newer aims, there are requirements for students in the teaching

¹⁶ See Наставни план и програм за основно образовање и васпитање, на сајту: gprz.rs.org/sajt/doc/file/web_portal/05/5.2/Nastavni%20plan%20i%20program%20za%20osnovnu%20skolu.pdf, access 20. IX 2016.

¹⁷ Правилник о наставном плану и програму за први, други, трећи и четврти разред основног образовања и васпитања и наставном програму за трећи разред основног образовања и васпитања – о изменама и допунама правилника о наставном плану и програму за први и други разред основног образовања и васпитања, Просветни преглед, Београд 2005; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за први и други разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Prvi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/2%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20prvi%20i%20drugi%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за трећи разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Prvi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/3%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20treći%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за четврти разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Prvi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/4%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20četvrti%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за пети разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Drugi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/2%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20peti%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за шести разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Drugi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/3%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20šesti%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за седми разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Drugi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/4%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20sedmi%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм образовања и васпитања за осми разред основног образовања и васпитања, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Osnovne%20skole%20PDF/Drugi%20ciklus%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja/5%20Nastavni%20program%20za%20osmi%20razred%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20vaspitanja.pdf, access 20 IX 2016; Наставни програм средњих школа за српски језик и књижевност, zuov.gov.rs/dokumenta/CRPU/Programi%20za%20gimnaziju%20PDF/01%20srpski%20jezik%20i%20knjizevnost.pdf, access 20. IX 2016.

process to achieve self-affirmation and pleasure, and this will happen only if they choose individually, the teaching contents. At this moment, this choice is strictly controlled, with the list of compulsory and additional texts. In compulsory texts, national texts are prevailing, and among the novels, there are canon writers for children and adults. ("Teaching literature, which is one of the fundamental school subjects, must strongly rely on national tradition"¹⁸. Only the same author points that in the primary school there is a small number of pieces of European literature.). Additional texts are concretises, as well and among them a teacher chooses 2–4 pieces in the third grade of the primary school, i.e. 3–5 texts in the grades 4–8. How is this list widened in praxis? Course book writers involve additional choice of texts in the readers, according to their free choice, and this includes about 20% of the whole volume of the reader¹⁹, and some teachers, in cooperation with students, analyse pieces which are not in the curricula.

Relation between the two criteria brings to a collision: canonical texts often overcome the possibilities of the age they are read in. For example, it is hard to believe that high school students can understand Kafka, Cami or *The Mountain Wreath* by Njegos. On the other hand, it is imaginable to expect that those who leave the high school without knowing that these pieces exist, apart from those who choose to study literature, would chose to read them in free time. Those pieces, which certainly belong to elementary culture, would probably disappear from the reader's scope. However, the texts expelled from the curriculum quickly disappear from the reader's perception, so today's students have never heard about some pieces which previous generations remember with joy from their childhood – primarily because they cannot be found in extensive reading materials. We can only imagine what would be the destiny of some classics after one decade.

The second issue is the question of readers' affinities. Cultural needs of today's child may be different from the previous generation, which affects the interests of their readers (not to mention the current issue of *the reading crisis*). The child is naturally conducive to the narrative act and the desire to enjoy the story. Research done throughout Europe in the Balkan states tell that "children read books according to their own choice, and then books from extensive reading materials", because they are only "partially satisfied with school – compulsory extensive reading materials"²⁰. Since librarians are directly involved in the development of reading habits, they can testify about the reading interests of today's children. And they (librarians - authors of the book *The Culture of Reading*) say that "children want to read books in which they can find answers to their questions"²¹. Taste of contemporary children readers has changed in comparison to previous generations and children need not love the books which were favourite to previous generations; they are too archaic according to their opinion, uninteresting and topics that are

¹⁸ Т. Росић, *Настава књижевности у процесу евроинтеграција...*, р. 465.

¹⁹ Z. Jovanović, *Obrada domaće lektire...*, р. 25.

²⁰ V. Jurdana, *Kako do užitka u čitanju osnovnoškolske lektire?*, „Pedagogija”, LXV, 3, Beograd 2010, р. 467.

²¹ М. Матијевић, Е. Георгиев, *Култура читања*, Лазаревац 2014, р. 47.

being discussed do not interest them"²². It is much closer to poetics of contemporary literature and means thematic procedure of actual, painful problems of growing up, running away from sentimentality, activating the role of readers in the literary text (reader as the character of the story), experimenting by language and form, genre innovations and so on. New sensibility forms new values, and they by the time form new canon. Nevertheless new pieces are not a part of the canon, since they did not pass the "test of time". They remain outside the curriculum, in the best case can be found in a small percentage as an additional choice. This opens up space for changing the curriculum, which will reduce the gap between reading affinity and the required reading list. This is one of the ways of changing curricula, but only respecting strict aesthetic criteria in close to reading affinities of children. Literature courses have the role of upbringing and forming the taste of the young. Therefore, some scholars point to the dangers of "opening programmed contents in the texts which offer sensation and shallow fun [...], talking about the text for the sake of fun and pleasure"²³. Bearing this in mind, I still consider updating the curriculum is a good introduction to the new concept of teaching literature. The vertical approach to the literary work needs to be built in the opposite direction: from the contemporary literary text towards the past. Turning direction in the study of literary texts, and acquainting the child with the world of literature, starting from the contemporary text to classics can be inspiring and more efficient way in teaching.

The third question is the issue of (national) canons. What are the values which make someone a *school writer*? Jovanovic stresses that this category belongs to "those terms which all mean everything, and that there is not much to read about"²⁴. School writers are chosen according to artistic value of their work which are essential for the education of young people²⁵. This leads us to "the canon of national literature, to the list of pieces which represent the essence of tradition, to what is valuable to be preserved and given to the next generation. Tradition understood in this way is not only the condition for understanding contemporary state, but it is a significant integral part"²⁶. So, the pantheon of school writers starts from the canon of national literature, but it cannot be the same.

Small nations have literature pieces which make the role of building national and cultural identity, the preservation of which grows into procedure in which "one culture wants to maintain the basic strategic aim – survival"²⁷. Neoliberal

²² М. Матијевић, Е. Георгиев, *Култура читања...*, р. 56.

²³ Ј. Тодоровић, *Тржиште, компетенције и настава књижевности*. in *Наука и евроинтеграције. Зборник радова са научног скупа*, ed. Д. Мастиловић, Пале, књ. 10, том 2, 2016, р. 210.

²⁴ А. Јовановић, *Бранко Ћопић, школски писац*, „Inovacije u nastavi“, XXVIII, 2015/4 р. 71.

²⁵ Sometimes, this term has a negative determination in the minds of today's students and includes a selection of works that are imposed and read only because they are compulsory.

²⁶ А. Јовановић, *Бранко Ћопић...*

²⁷ Владушић, С., *Национална култура и процес евроинтеграција у 21. веку*, in *Српски језик, књижевност и култура у процесу евроинтеграција*, ed. М. Ковачевић, Д. Бошковић, Крагујевац 2014, р. 171.

discourse (which Vladusic names as neo-colonial) suppresses this identification, i.e. "extinguishes the idea for the culture to be seen as national, homogeneous value, so that cultural matrix can be affirmed, which starts from the hybrid identity, as it appears as national (or sub-national) cultural matrix²⁸", and helps consuming, entertaining culture, nourishing market rule according to which "the right of survival is only for what brings profit". Understood in this way, weakening the concept of national canon reading list helps „the process of surrendering, disarming and capitalisation of a national culture"²⁹. For this reason, the important strategic role of reading materials is to familiarize students with the key texts of national literature. Whether in school textbooks should be writers from earlier literary epochs, although they are remote from modern readers affinity? Undoubtedly yes, but they should be combined with contemporary texts.

In which direction to go?

After all the above problems and constraints the teaching of literature is faced with, there is no easy question: in which direction to go? The path to a better solution is between negative factors, external ones (orientation to the instrumentalization of knowledge / acquisition of competences, marginalization of humanities in neoliberal educational policy) and internal ones (hostility of students towards required reading list and reading itself) – and educational goals and needs on the other side – development of written and oral expression of students, reading habits, aesthetic criteria, development of reading competences and power of critical thinking, building and preservation of national and cultural identity – what we want from a member of a society to possess as a part of his cultural and national identity) and, finally, developing the integrity of the individual – critical, thinking attitude towards the world and empathy towards others, i.e. respect for others.

Concern about the crisis of reading the required reading material, and the relationship of students to the teaching of literature can be resolved primarily systematically, by changing relations of society towards children. This means preserving humanistic tendency of educating, giving aid to reading habits within the school system and outside it, enabling more visibility of culture for children in public and many other things. This is why cooperation between institutions (libraries, cultural centres, educational system, academic community and Ministry) and systematic approach of state is necessary. It seems that we must look for solutions to all levels of teaching and education policy: the shift of the curriculum, in the determination of the different teaching methods, and above all, in changing attitudes of society towards the child.

As for the curriculum changes, we already talked about the possibility of modernizing the required reading list, bringing literature closer to young readers' generations while respecting the aesthetic criteria, and reversing direction in the study of literary texts, from the modern to the classic text. There might be a better way for finding new methodological approaches which lead us to classical pieces of

²⁸ Владушић, С., *Национална култура...*, р. 173.

²⁹ Владушић, С., *Национална култура...*, р. 175–176.

literature – and in trivial literature in developing critical way of thinking of students and direct it towards humanistic values. Finally, the question of the canon may be subject to critical review and open discussion within the class. Those who deal with issues of teaching innovations often criticise dominant application of immanent, structural (or textual) approach in teaching – interpreting formal and structural characteristics of the text, insisting on aesthetic autonomy of art³⁰, according to which “literature teaches itself”³¹, and in this way it even goes further from reality in which the students live (we have showed how children read books about the problems which are close to them). Advocates of contextual approaches (cultural studies, post-colonial theories, deconstructionism, etc.)” re-examine the idea of the canon and literary value, pointing at the existence and significance of various policies of reading and interpreting, as well as relations of power which in great extent form our perception [...] of literature”³². An independent critical attitude towards the text is one of the most important reading skills. As interpreters of literature, or mediators between the literary text and young readers, we want the kids to be able to situate themselves in different roles, to develop understanding and compassion, to be self-aware to be able to consciously access the ideology of the text. A teacher can apply numerous perspectives which would encourage a student to take active position in relation to the picture of the world in a literary piece, bring argumentative, critical judgements about himself/herself and critically apply this relation outside the classroom. This affects the formation of the personality of an individual who is able to actively participate in social and political life of the community. Therefore, it is important to encourage the confrontation of thought in teaching, or arguments advocating certain point of view (the method of “teaching the conflicts” by Gerald Graff³³). As much as it seems that finding the right solution in such a complex context is almost impossible, that does not mean that we should give up on it – because *this* means investing into “the future of the nation”, which will be thinking, thoughtful and which will be able to survive in fluid times.

Literature

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³⁰ Ј. Тодоровић, *Тржиште, компетенције...*, p. 215.

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Towards more meaningful teaching of literature in Serbian schools. (Paradoxes of curriculum)

Abstract

In this paper we deal with the current problems of teaching literature in the educational system of the Republic of Serbia and point to the complex external and internal factors affecting the collapse of its importance. We begin by examining the impact of neo-liberal tendencies of education policy, focused on identifying competencies and skills in the teaching of literature. Transforming education in useful, measurable product denies the nature of literature, since the form of the test cannot estimate the multiple understanding of complex artistic text. The role of literature in contemporary education has been further destroyed by suppressing the spirituality in growing up, phenomenon of fluid identity and social crisis and a period of

transition. The consequences are the reading crisis and counteraction of students towards literary texts from curriculum. We consider the multiple paradoxes of the curriculum: the contradiction between the canon and the reception possibilities of young readers, the issue of gap between young readers' affinity from curriculum texts and the question of the national canon in the global context.

How to achieve a better quality of teaching literature in Serbian schools and inspire students to read the curriculum texts? We recommend updating the curriculum, inclusion of modern literary texts (taking into account the aesthetic criteria) and vertical rotation in the approach of modern text to literary history; changing teaching methods of immanent orientation of the text to the application of multiple methodological approach and encouraging students to independent, critical attitude towards the text, forming substantiated, critical judgments about themselves and the world.

Key words: teaching literature in Serbian schools, required reading list, national canon, paradoxes of curriculum, readers' affinity

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