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PhD Siniša Đukić¹, MSc Duška Zorić²

**SAFETY IN SCHOOLS WITH A REVIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE
OF A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
STUDENTS SAFETY CULTURE**

Summary: *Increasingly frequent verbal and physical violence, the use of cold and firearms, bomb threats, alcoholism, smoking, drug use, abuse of modern technologies, various TikTok and similar challenges are just some of the deviant (pathological) behaviors of young people that require a planned and systematic approach to the concept of protection and safety of students, teachers and other school staff. This includes the implementation of certain security measures in schools, assessment of threat risks, installation of security systems, or adequate physical and technical protection. In order for student protection to be as efficient as possible, it is also necessary to adequately acquire and develop knowledge and skills about security. With the aim of raising the level of security culture in the primary and secondary education system in the Republic of Srpska, some time ago, the subject "Humanity and security" was introduced as an experimental subject in some primary and secondary schools. The paper, among other things, points out the importance of developing students security culture and the need to create adequate teaching content appropriate to our security and educational needs. We believe that these contents would contribute to more effective protection of students and reduction of deviant behavior.*

Keywords: *security, school, students, systemic approach.*

1 Faculty of security and protection, IUBL, Banja Luka, e-mail: djukic-bs@blic.net

2 Faculty of security and protection, IUBL, Banja Luka, e-mail: zoricduska@yahoo.com

Introduction

Recent years, schools have often become places of physical and verbal confrontations, violence of various types and forms, misuse of modern technologies or, better said, the projection of our social reality onto this particular locality. Why is this so and what contributes to this is one of the questions asked by many, both teachers, parents, students themselves and the wider social community. Is this contributed by increasingly available media content that abounds in violence, a collapsed value system, insufficient commitment to children and students, or is it something else? When something happens at school, especially negative, it is breaking news and occupies our public for days, all the details of such events and their actors are analyzed, the school system and security system are reviewed, short-term and long-term solutions are offered and then, as usual, everything is forgotten until a new case occurs.

One of the studies related to school threat assessments (School Threat Assessment, NTAC) stated that it is difficult to determine a specific profile of the student attacker, neither would an attempt to profile him help to reduce violence in schools. Students can commit violence regardless of social status, gender, academic performance, or family life. Counteracting these negative effects requires a multidisciplinary approach and appropriate teamwork between school staff, education authorities, parents, and experts in the field of security and psychology. Violence against young people, or their endangerment, is far more dangerous than is often thought, and can negatively affect their mental and emotional development. It most often manifests itself through poor communication with teachers and peers, conformity, verbal and physical violence, social exclusion, monitoring negative and destructive content on the Internet and social networks, drug addiction, prostitution or equivalent.

There is no absolute security, but it must be continuously built and developed. Security in schools, or the protection of school institutions, must be given adequate attention both through physical and technical protection measures and through the development of the concept of education for safety. It is not enough to have a school guard or police officer, school duty, record the entrances and exits of visitors, lock the front door during working hours, a video surveillance system, a fire protection system, mechanical protection and the like; it is also necessary to actively involve and encourage students to participate in school safety. Students need to understand the importance of implementing security measures and be their active participants, recognize threats to themselves or others and inform the authorities (school police officers, psychologists, pedagogues, teachers, parents) about them and, if nec-

essary, ask for help from them, participate in the development of protocols and plans for dealing with emergency situations, but also be trained for such action. This also includes the permanent development of students security culture and the creation of adequate teaching content appropriate to our security and educational needs. Safety culture should become a subject that the school community must adopt as a mandatory subject, and not just as a set of procedures and rules on how students and teaching staff should act in the event of undesirable events.

The concepts of security education, which can also be presented in the form of security culture, have reached an advanced stage in various countries and are mainly aimed at developing security awareness among young people for the benefit of society, through the preparation of a conscious and educated generation with built-in security immunity. The importance of security education lies in the possibility that students, through these programs, learn the importance of protecting individuals and communities in the fight against various dangers - from crimes and deviant behavior to natural disasters and disasters caused by technical accidents and hazards. (Stanarević, 2021:12).

In the context of school safety, the main goal of a safety culture, in the simplest terms, would be to teach students to live safely. Educating students in a safety culture should develop awareness of dangers and teach them patterns of behavior and action in safety - relevant situations. A safety culture in the educational process would develop students life skills, i.e. the skills of avoiding risky behaviors, minimizing consequences and surviving when they find themselves in high - risk situations, including providing assistance to others. Safety culture in the context of schools does not only apply to students. The subjects of a safety culture in schools are, in addition to students, also teaching staff, non - teaching staff, parents and guardians. (Lalić, Lipovac, 2024:60).

In the Republic of Srpska, as part of measures focused on preventing peer violence and raising the level of safety culture, the experimental subject "Humanity and safety" was introduced. The contents defined by the optional program "Humanity and safety" are designed in such a way that children develop empathy, friendship, and non-violent communication, and the ultimate goal is a more humane and safer society. Whether the offered concept of experimental teaching is acceptable and effective will be known only after a certain period of time has passed, necessary for gaining appropriate experience, or after a quality evaluation. In the following text, we will also point out certain models of safety education that are already being applied in certain countries, and whose individual contents could be incorporated into the existing curriculum and adapted to our educational and safety needs.

Humanity and safety

Developing life skills in students, tolerance, managing emotions, creating critical thinking are just some of the topics that are studied from the 2023/24 school year as part of the new subject “Humanity and safety”. This is an optional subject, which will not be assessed, and which was introduced into the school system of the Republic of Srpska as a part of measures focused on preventing peer violence, after the mass murders in the Belgrade school “Vladislav Ribnikar”. The subject was experimentally introduced in 20 elementary schools and 20 secondary schools, in the final grades of elementary schools and the first grades of secondary schools. The aim of this subject is:

- developing intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities and life skills in students (realistic self - image, self - esteem, recognition of own and others emotions, management of emotions and relationships, empathetic and assertive communication, tolerance, respect, appreciation, critical thinking, personal and social responsibility and productivity, cooperation, friendship, spirituality, etc.) with the aim of humanizing relationships in school and society;
- developing the abilities and skills of adequate emotional - social forms of behavior and reactions of students in order to create a safe school and wider social environment (both physical and virtual);
- developing the ability to identify current topics/problems in the school community and society, and to solve problems constructively and acceptably.³

Figure 1: Content of the program for optional classes in elementary school:
Humanity and safety

Teaching areas and topics	Number of lessons during the year
Area 1: Humanity Topic 1: A realistic self - image – a more humane society Topic 2: Empathy and humanity Topic 3: Nonviolent communication and friendship	30
Area 2: Safety in school and community Topic 1: School and community as a safe environment Topic 2: Family - a safe haven Topic 3: Security in the virtual environment	
Area 3: Humanity and safety in action Topic 1: Being humane and safe	

Source: Republic Pedagogical Institute of Republic of Srpska

³ Curriculum for optional classes in elementary school: Humanity and safety, RPZRS

Since the 2024/25 school year, new, or amended, curricula for the optional subject “Humanity and safety” have been in effect for the first, second, third and fourth grades of secondary schools, or the seventh, eighth and ninth grades of primary schools. The novelty is that all interested students will have the opportunity to study this optional subject and thus additionally contribute to the prevention of violence in schools.

Figure 2: Content of the program for optional classes in high school:
Humanity and safety

Teaching areas and topics	Number of lessons during the year
Area 1: Humanity Topic 1: A realistic self - image – a more humane society Topic 2: Empathy in the service of nonviolent communication and friendship Topic 3: I am socially responsible	30
Area 2: Safety in school and community Topic 1: School and community as a safe environment Topic 2: Life in the virtual world	
Area 3: Humanity and safety in action Topic 1: Volunteerism Topic 2: Humanity and safety as a lifestyle	

Source: Republic Pedagogical Institute of Republic of Srpska

The curriculum of this subject, with amendments and supplements, in a significant segment, follows current security issues and helps develop the ability to spot problems in the school and wider environment, and proactively resolve conflicts. Although significant progress has been made in education for security in the school system of the Republic of Srpska, increasingly frequent incidents in schools and the social environment require continuous renewal of certain thematic units related to individual security issues. This is primarily due to their topicality, dynamism and content. In this segment, it is desirable to continue with periodic education by police officers, or members of law enforcement agencies. We believe that it should also be considered that the subject “Humanity and security” should be taught as a mandatory subject in upper grades of primary school and all grades of secondary school, instead of being optional.

Safety education – comparative experiences

When we look at elementary and secondary education systems in terms of safety in the wider area, we can see that most countries do not have an adequate curriculum that would have as its primary goal educating students about self - protection as well as the protection of others. The American system has adapted its education to modern life and thus pays attention to safety in several ways. Many public schools in the United States have taken steps in recent years to tighten security, including equipping schools with entrance detection, video surveillance, developing active preparedness plans and employing law enforcement officers to patrol the school. However, school safety protocols vary greatly depending on the type of school, location and other factors. (Joel I. Klein and Condoleezza Rice, 2012)

Almost all schools restricted entry by controlling access to buildings during school lessons with measures such as locking doors (97%), or requiring visitors to sign in and wear a badge (98%). About three- quarters (73%) had classrooms equipped with locks so that the doors could be locked from the inside. (Schaeffer, 2022) The use of panic buttons is very common in schools, allowing for a quick response in the event of a threat and access control that provides a safer environment for students.

In the Hungarian education system, a series of incidents faced by students and teaching staff have necessitated the engagement of non - pedagogical persons, who are responsible for creating a safe atmosphere in schools, namely school guards. There are many specific school safety programs available: for example, school interviews with the police. Also, almost all children and teenagers in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools have been undergoing first aid training for the last two years. The Hungarian education system works on awareness education, which begins with preparing children to know how to manage disasters, which is a priority in preparing young people and educating them in self - protection. For this reason, a system of community service has been established in which high school students preparing for their final exams are organizedly engaged in activities for the benefit of the local community through theoretical and practical knowledge in various organizations. A special role is played by the National Directorate for Disaster Management of the Ministry of the Interior, which teaches students about the specialties of civil protection, fire rescue, industrial safety, as well as educating them on what to do for others or for themselves in the event of a crisis. Youth competitions in disaster management are regularly held for primary and secondary school students. Hungary is also considering introducing some kind of training in sec-

ondary schools aimed at military training and preparedness of young people. (Organisation of the education system and of its structure, n.d.)

The Russian education system also deserves due attention, as it has been continuously introducing changes to school curricula in terms of safety in the past few years. The subject “Fundamentals of safe living” (Russian: Основы безопасности жизнедеятельности) introduced into primary and secondary general education institutions in 1991 as a mandatory subject. In forming and updating the curriculum of this subject, new challenges and threats in the natural, technogenic, social and information spheres are taken into account. The concept of this subject in educational institutions of the Russian Federation refers to the security of the individual, society and the state in the global modern historical process. The subject is oriented towards the practice and importance of using modern information technologies (Институт развития образования Омской области – ИРООО, 2018). This subject should enable the development of a basic level of security culture, i.e. to enable students to: recognize threats, avoid danger, neutralize conflict situations, resolve complex social issues and behave correctly in emergency situations. This should contribute to the protection of the life and health of students, the formation of the necessary volitional and moral qualities, which provides opportunities for effective socialization, successful adaptation in the modern environment and contributes to preventive measures in the field of security. (Radojević, 2021:126).

The system of primary and secondary education in the Republic of Poland is similar to the education system currently in Republic of Srpska. Compulsory education starting at the age of seven is guaranteed by the Constitution, as the highest legal act of the country. In addition to the regular general education subjects that students study, special attention is paid to preparing for emergencies at school that represent important events with serious consequences for the lives and health of students, teachers and school staff (e.g. flood, fire, construction disaster, epidemic, terrorist attack, etc.). In Poland, one of the subjects taught in schools (primary and secondary) is safety education (Polish: bezpieczeństwo); it focuses on improving human existence by preserving universal values (such as peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights, human dignity) and minimizing threats to human health and the environment. Institutional support and implementation of safety education fall within the competence of primary, secondary and higher education. An important fact is that in Poland it is a school subject, which was introduced on September 1, 2009, lasting one hour per week throughout the entire cycle of education in secondary schools. Also, since September 1, 2012, it has been in force with the same

duration in upper secondary schools. The educational objectives of this subject include: understanding the essence of state security; training students to act in situations of emergency threats (disasters and mass accidents); developing basic first aid skills and shaping individual and social attitudes conducive to health. (Agnieszka, 2019)

In the Republic of Serbia, one of the most similar education systems currently exists in the Republic of Srpska. In terms of security, an optional subject "Basics of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia" is implemented for students in the final grades of high schools. The aim of this subject is to prepare and acquire knowledge and skills for the needs of a state of emergency and war in the country. The subject includes several thematic units, divided into IV groups:

- Group I Topics – Place, role and tasks of the Serbian Army in the security and defense system of the Republic of Serbia; Military obligation in the Republic of Serbia; Work and material obligation in the Republic of Serbia; Voluntary military service;
- Group II Topics – How to become a professional military person; How to become a senior officer (officer and non - commissioned officer) of the Serbian Army; The importance of physical fitness for military service;
- Group III Topics – Surveillance and Intelligence Service; Forms of unarmed resistance; Chemical and biological weapons and incendiary devices; Civil protection;
- Group IV Topics – Tactical - technical assemblies. (Materijali za realizaciju časova Osnovni sistema odbrane Republike Srbije)

Also, for students from the fifth to eighth grades of primary school, the elective subject "Virtues and values" has been introduced as part of the optional teaching activities (OTA) from the 2023/2024 school year, as part of the existing offer of these programs. The OTA is scheduled for one lesson per week in the class schedule, and until then, older primary school students could choose one activity, out of at least three that each school is required to offer. In order for a student to have the opportunity to choose "Virtues and Values" as a life compass, it is first necessary for the school to offer this OTA, which means that it will not be mandatory in the offer of every primary school or mandatory for all primary school students. Optional teaching activities were introduced in the 2017/2018 school year, instead of the optional subjects that were abolished. The school could independently design OTA programs or use the old elective subject programs. After four years of implementation, in 2021. it was determined that there are schools that need support for this segment of teaching, which is why, at the request of the Ministry of Education, the Institute for

the Improvement of Education (IIE) prepared two groups of programs – one intended for students in fifth and sixth grades, and the other for seventh and eighth grades. The first group includes Exercise to health, Life skills and media literacy, and the second includes Entrepreneurship, My environment and art. As stated in the program, the goal of the subject “Virtues and values” as a life compass is “to strengthen the personal development of students and encourage the development of values and virtues as the main supports and guides in life for the benefit of the individual and society, as well as the development of social skills important for prosperity, physical and mental health and life in an atmosphere of mutual respect and care for each other. The topics that will be discussed in the lessons are divided into four units: life values, human virtues, social skills and charity, and within each of them, key concepts of the content are given. (Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja Republike Srbije).

Looking at the described education systems, it can be concluded that the mentioned countries have recognized the importance of educating students in terms of developing a security culture and the need for continuous education for security with greater or lesser practical engagement of students. We believe that practical training of students is a very important component, especially in emergency/crisis situations such as fires, earthquakes, epidemics, floods, bombings and hostage incidents, but also in recognizing immediate security threats to oneself or others. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to foresee a certain number of lessons in the “Humanity and security” curriculum for practical training and training of students on the topic of responding to problematic situations.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to point out that in recent years, schools have often become places of physical and verbal confrontations, violence of various types and forms, misuse of modern technologies, bomb threats, various TikTok and similar challenges, or, better said, the projection of that part of our ugly reality onto this particular micro - locality. Why is this so and what contributes to this is one of the questions asked by many. Is this contributed by increasingly available media content that abounds in violence, a collapsed value system, insufficient commitment to children and students, or is it something else entirely? When a tragic event related to a school or students occurs, it is breaking news and captures the public's attention for days, all the details of such events and their actors are analyzed, the school system and security system are reviewed, short - term and long - term solu-

tions are offered, and then, as usual, everything is forgotten until a new tragic case occurs. In order for school security to be at a satisfactory level, it is necessary, first of all, to take a series of preventive measures, such as hiring a school guard or police officer, constant duty, visiting the external and internal areas of the school, locking the entrance doors, recording the entry and exit of visitors, installing and monitoring a video surveillance system, a fire protection system, and the like. Students should understand the importance of implementing preventive/security measures and be their active participants, recognize security threats to themselves or others and inform the authorities (school police officers, psychologists, pedagogues, teachers, parents) about them, but, if necessary, request a certain form of assistance from them, participate in the development of protocols and plans for dealing with emergency/crisis situations, and be trained for such action. This also includes the permanent development of students security culture and the creation of adequate teaching content appropriate to them but also to our security and educational needs. These two segments should complement each other and be functionally connected through theoretical and practical teaching. By introducing the subject "Humanity and safety" into the school system of the Republic of Srpska, a significant step forward has been made in educating young people for safety, developing their abilities and skills adequate to the emotional - social form of behavior and reaction. The priority task is to create a safe emotional, school, and broader social environment. Although some progress has been made in developing the safety culture of students, increasingly frequent incidents in schools and the social environment require the continuous renewal of certain thematic units related to individual safety issues. This is primarily due to their topicality, dynamism, and content. In this regard, we believe that it should be considered that the subject "Humanity and safety" should be considered as a mandatory subject in the upper grades of elementary school and all grades of secondary school instead of an optional one. In the future, it should also be considered to introduce a special position of professional associate/coordinator for safety in schools. This could be a person with a university degree in safety who would also teach classes and other content in the field of safety, but would also be in charge of it.

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