



# PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

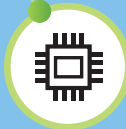


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# **PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION**

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# TEACHING RHETORIC IN PRIMARY SCHOOL – TOWARDS MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY WITH CLASSICAL TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES

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## INTRODUCTION

The socio-cultural scope of rhetoric as a discipline that comprehensively examines public persuasion is exceptional both in chronological terms, having been present within various educational systems for more than two thousand years, and in terms of the influence it has had as a discipline and social practice of successful public persuasion. Regardless of different value notions and dilemmas about the justification of rhetoric as an independent field of science or perhaps even more notorious questions about the ethical boundaries of (public) persuasion that have followed rhetoric from the very start (Booth, 2004), its persistent and permanent presence in science, education and everyday life shows that it is a fundamental socio-cultural phenomenon, a ubiquitous *meta-language* (Barthes, 1990), which is differently applied in different social contexts and is permanently subjected to ideological processes.

In this chapter we present a classical rhetoric-inspired reflection on the current challenges in education, with a special focus on the potential of teaching rhetoric in primary school as a source of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are essential for modern citizenship education.<sup>1</sup> With the improved model of rhetorical lessons, which is based on the revised subject curriculum for the subject of rhetoric in the 9th-grade of primary school, we concur with contemporary conceptualizations of citizenship education and literacy that incorporate classical

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<sup>1</sup> In the chapter, we equally use the terms 'rhetoric' and 'classical rhetoric', which represent the discipline and practice of successful public persuasion based on the ancient tradition. In cases where a longer version (i.e. classical rhetoric) appears, we want to draw particular attention to the relevance of the ancient context.

rhetoric as an essential part of the neo-humanist ideal of liberal education (Miller, 2007; Rutten & Soetaert, 2013). We underpin the notion of rhetorical education with conceptualizations of citizenship education that warn against instrumentalised ways of teaching a particular kind of citizenship (i. e. being a “good citizen”) and call to a more contextualised approach to the “different ways in which young people actually learn democratic citizenship” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 75) to be able to critically examine all forms of social and political life they engage in. Also, we want to bring to attention the idea that integration of the classical perspective in the modern curricular planning provides support for the humanities paradigm (Rutten & Soetaert, 2013, p. 5), which opposes the current growing managerial culture in education and places arts and humanities (and rhetoric along with them) at the centre of educating students to become competent (i. e. critical and empathetic) democratic citizens (Nussbaum, 2010).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conception of classical rhetoric in this paper reaches beyond its common definition as the art of successful (public) persuasion. Keeping in mind its complexity and many different aspects, we want to emphasise the intellectual, moral, and aesthetical dimensions of classical rhetoric. A useful ground for such extended view is found in Miller’s (2007) argument for the value of classical rhetoric in contemporary humanistic education where besides the persuasive expression he highlights the main socio-cultural components of the notion of rhetoric:

*In the classical tradition then, the art of rhetoric is not the art of persuasion as such but rather the art of making judgements about practical, political, and human matters. /.../ To exercise the art of rhetoric requires, therefore, the development of a personal culture or paideia, and this in turn entails developing the humane knowledge needed to understand one’s self and others as social, political, and cultural beings. Along with self-knowledge comes the knowledge of how to live – practical wisdom (p. 196).*

The idea of classical rhetoric as one of the cornerstones of education and democracy is as old as the discipline of rhetoric itself. It originates in the 5th



century Athenian democratic society and is closely connected with the notion of active citizenship, a “social duty” of a competent (male) citizen who can argue and participate in different forms of public life such as political deliberations, judicial procedures, public festive occasions. Due to the oral nature of social structures of the *polis*, rhetorical training in speaking and writing became an essential part of the free citizens’ upbringing in the process of education “that cultivated the mind, trained the intellect and formed the character – the process the Ancient Greeks termed *paideia*” (Miller, 2007, p. 187). At first, as completely individualized instructions of Sophist teachers, rhetorical education became more conceptualised and systematically structured within the educational program of *enkyklios paideia* with Isocrates, Aristotle and later with Hellenistic rhetors and the Hellenistic system of education. The latter was adopted by Romans by the end of the 2nd century B.C. and modified for the needs of political and social systems of *res publica* (and later *imperium*). Roman model of rhetorical education represents a coherent system of public schools with a common curriculum of standardized subjects and a sequence of carefully planned teaching methods. Its primary goal was to instil “in its students a habit of effective expression” (Murphy, 2020, p. 41) through a systematic development of speaking and writing, which included ethical training, knowledge, and appreciation of literature and history. Due to their integration in a coherent educational program, these teaching and educational contents – together with the goals of *paideia* (i. e. the formation of the self), provided a future orator with the ability to speak eloquently, to think clearly, as well as to be able to construct a cogent argument (Miller, 2007, p. 198).

Acknowledging the theoretical and practical benefits of the models of Greek and Roman rhetorical education along with taking into account several turns in the extensive tradition of rhetorical scholarship (for example, see Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001), various contemporary scholars emphasise the need for classical rhetorical perspective in modern citizenship education (Danisch, 2015; Ferry, 2017; Kock & Villadsen, 2012, 2017), critical literacy (Mortensen, 2012; Rutten & Soetaert, 2013;), stylistics (Burke, 2010; Murphy, 2020), oracy (Kaldahl, 2019). They all advocate a concept of (liberal) education that incorporates systematic teaching of classical rhetoric within the modern curricula as a subject discipline (Dainville & Sans, 2016; Žagar, Močnik, Pešec Zadavec, & Pavlin, 1999; Žmavc et al., 2019)

or a learning content that is properly integrated in other subject disciplines (Aczél, 2019; Bakken, 2019; Holmes–Henderson, 2016; Kjeldsen & Grue, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

It is the complexity that makes classical rhetoric an all-time relevant (and also controversial) topic in the context of education. In this chapter we want to shed light on the complexity in terms of conceptualization of classical rhetoric as a network of concepts, notions as well as tools, that enable a comprehensive (receptive – analytical and productive – synthetic) use of language as well as offering systematic teaching and training in such use. For our conceptualization of a renewed model of the rhetorical lesson, a contextual starting point is important, to enable a comprehensive notion of rhetoric that goes beyond its reduction to skill alone and encompasses three main aspects that define the discipline of classical rhetoric as a socio-cultural practice as well as encompass its theoretical orientation:

1) *The aspect of rhetoric as a process*: rhetoric in the broadest sense can be understood as the result of a complex process of the orator's cognitive and verbal/nonverbal (bodily) activities and it is primarily determined by specific, interrelated rhetorical processes, described in the ancient theoretical concept of the orator's tasks (*officia oratoris: inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*) founded by Aristotle and further developed by various rhetors through antiquity.

2) *The aspect of rhetoric as an interaction*: this corresponds to the communicative view of rhetoric as a result of the mutual interaction between the orator, interlocutors/audience, and the content/topic. It can be identified within classical theoretical concepts (e.g. Hermagoras' theory of controversial issues – *stásis*; theory of the favourable moment– *kairós* by Gorgias and Plato; Aristotle's, Cicero's, Quintilian's conceptualisations of three fundamental modes of persuasion – *éthos, páthos, lógos*) at different levels of the rhetorical process, while it is also attested by the ancient tradition of various rhetorical practices preserved in the speeches of Cicero, Demosthenes, Lysias (and many other).

3) *The aspect of rhetoric as an education*: rhetoric can also be understood as a unique education programme that is based on objectives and methods in formalised teaching of principles of public speaking as education for active participation in society. Its principles are based on the didactic principles of systematicity and gradualness and include the development of all three literacies

2 In this text, we are focusing solely on the European educational context, despite being aware of the rich tradition in rhetorical education of the USA.

(oral, reading, writing) as found in Quintilian's rhetorical pedagogy and established in ancient didactic models, such as preparatory exercises (*progymnasmata/praeexercitationes*) and declamations (*meletê/declamationes*).

Through our demonstration of the main (content and didactic) directions of developing a new version of the subject curriculum for teaching rhetoric in the primary school, we argue that it is precisely the complexity and controversy of classical rhetoric, which makes this topic/subject highly relevant in the context of modern educational goals that relate in particular to the development of pupils' ability to reflect critically on knowledge, reading literacy, and education for taking an active role in democratic processes inside and outside the school environment, as well as in the broader context of neohumanist education, which understands the acquisition of knowledge inseparable from the formation of the self.

## **RHETORIC IN SLOVENIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL: A SHORT HISTORY**

Research (Beletzan, Gabler, & Gouveia, 2017) shows that students successfully internalize rhetoric and argumentative principles and consequently use them more appropriately and effectively when exposed to explicit, systematic, consistent, and longer-term teaching of these principles. The comprehensive teaching of rhetoric thus presupposes its strategic placement in all educational programs, both at the level of independent educational contents/subjects and as a cross-curricular topic that enables interdisciplinary connections and supports the systematic knowledge and skill-based approach to the development of key competences from an early age and throughout life. In Slovene education, students become acquainted with communication skills in the broadest sense, and especially with rhetorical and argumentative principles, only in a fragmented, unstructured form. It seems that they are often expected to adopt relatively complex principles and concepts of reasoning, persuasion, and critical thinking in the form of instant "recipes" or so to speak, only by direct use in concrete (communication) situations. The problem of implicitness and inconsistency and the absence of appropriate theoretical bases were also highlighted by a qualitative analysis of rhetoric and argumentation in the curricula of primary and secondary education programs in Slovenian schools (Žmavc, 2011). The results showed that in addition to self-evident and often

unclear formulations in documents, teachers and students also understand and probably master rhetorical concepts and principles very differently. However, they all recognized these topics (when appropriately presented in a descriptive form) as factors that significantly affect the quality of teaching, encourage classroom communication, and improve interpersonal relationships.<sup>3</sup>

Rhetoric as an official and independent learning content formally entered Slovenian primary schools in 1999 when the nine-year elementary education program was introduced, and rhetoric became a compulsory-elective subject in the 9th grade.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, the subject curriculum (Žagar et al., 1999) was approved and the first classes began in 2000/2001. In 2006, the official textbook (Zidar Gale, Žagar, Žmavc, & Pirc, 2006) was approved. At the Educational Research Institute (hereinafter ERI) where the subject curriculum and the textbook were created, in-service training for teachers of rhetoric was organized and successfully went on up until 2007 (with nearly 200 trained teachers) when the Ministry of education, science, and sport stopped its funding.<sup>5</sup> From then on, teachers were completely unaided and the subject had no formal supervision until 2014, when the political situation changed and the interest of policymakers in rhetoric grew again. There are 455 primary schools in Slovenia and according to the national education program, they must offer the subject of rhetoric in the 9th grade. Since 2000, the number of primary schools in Slovenia with rhetoric

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3 The research was conducted in 2010 at 8 primary and 27 secondary schools, was a part of a larger ESF project entitled *Professional Basis, Strategies and Theoretical Themes for Education for Intercultural Relations and Active Citizenship*, which in the period 2010-2011 was carried out by Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and Educational Research Institute.

4 See *Basic School Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, number 12/96, article 17)*. The inclusion of rhetoric in the compulsory elective subject has a political background related to the period of Slovenia's independence and the great reform of education in the 1990s. There is an anecdotal story about a heated debate in the Slovenian National Assembly regarding the issue of religious education when a representative of Liberal Democrats rejected the ideas of representatives of Christian Democrats about the need of including religious education in the primary school curriculum with the argument that instead of religious education Slovenes need rhetorical education, therefore rhetoric must become a subject in primary school. This indicates at least two things: 1.) that in the post-war period of Slovenian education the idea of rhetorical pedagogy was lost, and 2.) that rhetoric became a subject discipline that was in certain socio-political circumstances recognized as a sensible and (politically) acceptable alternative for inclusion in the new primary school curriculum.

5 It has to be stressed that the subject of rhetoric in primary school represents the only systematic learning of rhetoric in Slovenia. Rhetoric does not exist as a proper subject discipline in programmes of future teachers, therefore teachers cannot be educated or trained to teach rhetoric. The in-service training for teachers, which the ERI provided, was formed as an intensive 3-day seminar for max 20 participants, approx. 8 hours of lectures and workshops per day. Currently, we provide in-service training as a 10-hour seminar (for developing teachers' competences and knowledge about rhetorical pedagogy).

as a subject has varied.<sup>6</sup> However, in the last seven years, the number of primary schools with rhetoric lessons has remained solid (between 60 and 70). It is safe to assume that rhetoric has remained a subject of interest in Slovenian primary schools, despite very competitive topics in the group of elective subjects offered by schools, which contain much more appealing and mentally less demanding contents, such as sports and food preparation.

## THE 2018 PROJECT: A REVISION OF THE 1999 SUBJECT CURRICULUM AND OUTREACH TO TEACHERS

At the ERI, extensive research in the theory and pedagogy of rhetoric and argumentation has been done by Igor Ž. Žagar and Janja Žmavc since early 2000. In 2018 we started the project *Developing theoretical bases and practical guidelines for teaching rhetoric in primary and secondary schools* (head: dr. Janja Žmavc).<sup>7</sup> The main goals of the project are 1) analysis of the presence of rhetoric and argumentation within existing subjects in primary and secondary school, and 2) design of the model for contemporary teaching of rhetoric in primary and secondary schools as a cross-curricular topic with an emphasis on active citizenship education. In the general analysis (Žmavc, 2019) we found, inter alia:

- 1) Formal teaching of rhetoric exists only at primary school level; certain secondary schools include it in their elective block, formally unapproved lessons, with the title “rhetoric”.<sup>8</sup>
- 2) The primary school subject of rhetoric has no proper support from the institutions, which normally provide supervision for approved educational programs (i. e. Ministry of Education, Slovenian National Education Institute).
- 3) There is no active network of teachers, despite a significant number of schools teaching the subject (60–70 schools).

6 In the minority of schools (approx. 5 to 10) rhetoric has been taught from the beginning. On the other hand, some schools have carried it out in an alternative manner (every second or third year) and in some schools, the implementation of the subject has been solely dependent on the interest of pupils and their parents (Žmavc, 2019).

7 The project team consists of researchers from the field of rhetorical and argumentation theory, the theory of speech, nonverbal communication, as well as teachers of rhetoric and Slovene in primary and secondary school.

8 The review of these (the available documents) showed that goals and contents lack proper theoretical bases as well as sufficient professional competence of teachers

4) Teachers of rhetoric can no longer receive regular in-service training.

In the first two years of the project, we focused on the thorough analysis and revision of the existing subject curriculum and evaluation of teaching practices in primary school rhetoric, since with its 20 years of implementation experience this was something tangible. Our general idea of rhetorical education remained the same and in the spirit of classical rhetoric. The main purpose of rhetoric lessons should thus be oriented toward the education of an orator in Ciceronian sense, that is an active and knowledgeable citizen who can competently participate in 21st-century public life. The 1999 subject-curriculum was designed as an annual 32-hour rhetoric course (1 hour per week). The general aim of the course was to introduce the main concepts of classical rhetoric and argumentation and to teach pupils how to independently, coherently, and critically form and express their opinions in different areas of social and private life. Nonetheless, after a thorough examination of learning goals, contents, standards, and comparing the overall level of difficulty of the rhetoric lesson with that of the Slovene lesson, which includes slightly similar goals and contents within the learning goal of developing communicative competence (yet less systematically and thoroughly), it became clear that the 1999 subject curriculum might be too ambitious in terms of complexity, with too many new and abstract components and too much content to be successfully covered within 32 hours, and with 13-year-old pupils (Cestnik, 2019).<sup>9</sup> Additionally, when compared to other elective 9th grade subjects in that pupils often selected for their elective module (e.g., sports, computer science, food preparation, drama, school journalism), the subject of rhetoric required a great deal from the pupils (and teachers) at different levels of the pedagogical process. In addition to the receptive learning goals, a large number of productive goals were meant to be achieved in class (such as rhetorical analysis of various texts and frequent oral presentations).

Consequently, an important part of the evaluation and revision of the 1999 subject curriculum was to contact teachers and try to get as clear a picture as possible of what was going on in their rhetorical classes. From 111 schools that

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<sup>9</sup> Mojca Cestnik, a long-time teacher of Slovene and rhetoric at primary school Polzela, played a very important part in the whole process of evaluation and revision of the subject-curriculum. As a member of the project group and with 20 years of experience in teaching the subject of rhetoric, she provided very valuable insight into didactic planning and realization of goals and contents. Her annual syllabus of rhetorical lesson served as a case study for our conceptual rethinking of a model of primary school rhetoric teaching as well as a starting point for expert discussions with other practicing teachers.

were contacted and invited to participate, 22 responded.<sup>10</sup> In December 2018, we organized a panel of experts, where a group of 20 experienced teachers of rhetoric in primary school discussed their practice, especially the difficulties they may have had with the subject curriculum over the 20 years of teaching rhetoric. We prepared a 3-part questionnaire with a set of detailed questions for discussion. In the first part of the questionnaire, we were interested in teachers' experience about achieving the learning objectives. For every operational goal and learning content in the 1999 subject curriculum, teachers wrote down and discussed how thoroughly they were able to achieve goals in the class as well as their overall positive or negative experiences. In the second part of the questionnaire, we asked them to reflect on the implementation and organization of lessons. In the third part, we invited them to present their ideas for successful teaching rhetoric in primary school and propose concrete suggestions for the revision of the 1999 subject curriculum.

## RESULTS

Based on the questionnaire and through the panel activities, we actively discussed different topics with teachers. The most common problems that emerged from the discussion were difficulties with the use of the subject curriculum and textbook, different problems with achieving subject goals of the subject, and organization of lessons. Here are the most relevant questions and summarized answers from the panel discussion.

1) *How thoroughly are the topics from the subject curriculum taught and what are the major difficulties in its implementation?*

The teachers confirmed that they had to make adjustments by leaving certain objectives or topics out (usually the ones that in their opinion might be too abstract for pupils, such as presupposition, implication, implicature; the argumentative

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10 There are many different reasons for a relatively small number of participants. The invited schools were selected based on the data we got from the Ministry of Education, namely the last five-year period of successful realisation of the subject. When we contacted schools, many of them were not interested, saying that they have already modernized their rhetoric lesson, or they don't need any new perspectives or experts telling them how to teach rhetoric in their classes. Some did not want to participate because of their lack of theoretical knowledge in the field of rhetoric and argumentation. Some of them also had problems with school authorities who did not want to pass the invitation or allowing them to come to the panel.

potential of language, analysis, and evaluation of arguments; a history of rhetoric; *topoi*; syllogism/enthymeme; stasis; rhetorical analysis of texts). They also adapted/simplified and substituted certain topics (i.e. argumentation, elements of *officia oratoris*) with formal debate as the main objective because they found it easier to teach.

The teachers primarily focused on the preparation of pupils' oral presentation (objective 6), which is based on teaching elements of rhetorical technique and argumentation. However, apart from the very simplified rhetorical structure of the speech (*partes orationis*) most of the topics (e.g., invention, style, means of persuasion; rhetorical situation, etc.) were covered only on an informative level or not at all. Argumentation was highlighted as a particularly problematic content due to the lack of proper didactic guidelines for teachers.

2) *What are the main external factors that affect the success of the achievement of the subject goals?*

In discussions, teachers highlighted the problem of heterogeneity of groups; pupils may have had differently developed abilities of logical and abstract thinking or expressed various and incompatible prevailing interests in the selection of a subject. Additionally, every year the number of pupils changed from 7 to 25 pupils (the optimal number is between 10 to 12 pupils).

The organization of the lesson also played an important role. The usual placement of rhetoric at the end of classes (both in terms of day and week) was seen as a problem because pupils were already tired and had difficulty in participating actively in the lessons, which require a great deal of mental effort and motivation. But this was a reality that teachers of the rhetoric had to face due to the elective nature of the subject. The optimal form proved to be a block of 2 hours every 14 days on Thursdays at the end of classes.

The teachers highlighted “generational” changes in pupils as a very important factor. Pupils today are no longer ready to read and work independently, which, as teachers saw it, affected the quality of their acquired knowledge (e.g. how successfully pupils understand and formulate arguments). The pupils generally liked rhetoric but would have liked to deal with it more or less “quickly” and on-site, without prior home preparation and in-depth study (let us just add, that this was known to be a problem in Cicero and Quintilian's time, as well!).

The teachers also spoke about the enthusiasm and competence of the teacher as something that highly influenced success in achievement of the



subject's objective. It was important that the teacher was well versed in rhetorical concepts, able to properly interpret (simplify) them for a given lesson, and also participate in the teaching process as a speaker and debater. Also, due to the general popularity of debate in schools, and common perceptions of rhetoric as a (mere) skill, the subject of rhetoric frequently served as a preparation for debate competitions, which resulted in their less successful achievement of objectives.

3) *How are the cross-/inter-curricular connections implemented in the teaching of rhetoric? How much is rhetoric, as cross-curricular content, present at the level of school culture?*

The teachers admitted that the inter-curricular perspective was being accomplished only in terms of addressing individual topics that pupils encountered in other subjects. There had been almost no example of team teaching, which is largely influenced by the more general problem of cooperation among colleagues in Slovenian schools. Also, there had been no cooperation among teachers of rhetoric from different schools. Some of the topics in their rhetoric lessons occasionally related to the Children's Parliament and the current global, national, local topics. However, rhetoric did not appear as part of activities in the annual program of schools which included the active participation of pupils.

After the panel activities and having been provided with valuable information on several issues, the second phase of the project began. Bearing in mind contemporary directions for curriculum design that emphasize a process-based approach with the underlined role of learning content and its educational potential (Jank & Meyer, 2006; Klafki, 2010; Štefanc, 2012), we started to revise the subject curriculum in three general directions: 1) to formulate a new principal aim of the lesson; 2) to improve the integration of classical rhetorical technique into the subject in terms of its feasibility; 3) to incorporate rhetoric into school culture so that it does not become an end in itself. Additionally, we believed that, among other things, the new version of the subject curriculum and modern teaching of rhetoric in the 9th grade should consider aspects, such as:

- 1) The incorporation of the extensive experience that pupils in 9th grade have already gained in preparing and performing an oral speech.<sup>11</sup>

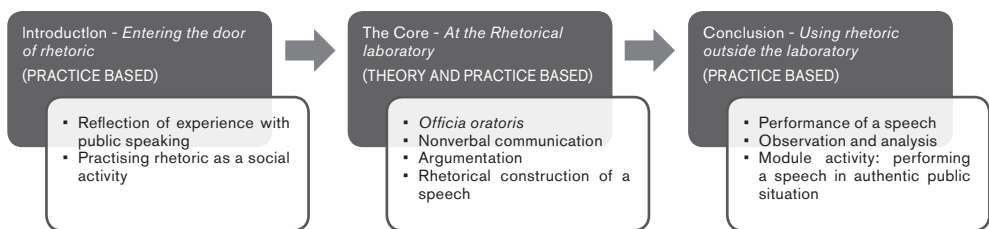
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11 This is an operational learning objective through the whole nine years of the subject Slovene. Also, pupils often have to orally present their projects and seminars at other subjects.

- 2) The specifics in the personal development of pupils in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the problems of active participation in the sense of public exposure (speaking, expressing opinions, emotions, controlling body, etc.).<sup>12</sup>
- 3) Due to the limited number of hours, certain topics in the current subject curriculum should be omitted but basic elements of rhetoric and argumentation should be maintained, to achieve a systematic and comprehensive knowledge of rhetoric.
- 4) The optimal organization of lessons as a block of 2 hours every 14 days.<sup>13</sup>

Based on the above-mentioned directions and aspects, five key guidelines for preparing a new subject curriculum were formulated as the final step. They reflect the main curricular changes in the revised subject curriculum at the level of content, methodology, didactics, and organization of the lesson:

- 1) A clear-cut, new definition of the main operational goal of teaching rhetoric in primary school, which became *the preparation and performance of speech grounded on the classical concept of the speaker's tasks with the basics of argumentation theory and nonverbal communication*.
- 2) Formulating and defining three minor (milestone) goals (Figure 1), which reflect process-oriented teaching of rhetoric and integrate the previous experiences/knowledge of pupils, not only as a starting point but at all stages of the lesson (i. e. *Introduction: Entering the door of rhetoric; The core: At the Rhetorical laboratory; Conclusion: Using rhetoric outside the laboratory*).



**Figure 1.** The model of process-based teaching of rhetoric according to the revised subject curriculum, which supports the achievement of the newly conceptualised goals and contents

<sup>12</sup> One of the important activities in teaching rhetoric is to establish and maintain a “safe learning environment”. This means setting general rules of proper conduct at rhetoric lessons (accepting a different point of view, making appropriate observations of someone’s speaking performance, etc.).

<sup>13</sup> The first hour would focus on the “theory” (learning about concepts), the second hour would be set for practical exercises, observation, role-playing, etc.

- 3) Adaptation of content from the existing subject curriculum in scope and structure:
- a) The new content reflects the idea of rhetoric as a process and enables a systematic and gradual approach to learning rhetorical principles (e. g. different types and forms of speaking and writing activities as intermediate stages with gradual criteria which focus on different elements). They are framed by four consecutive questions and represent the pupil's perspective in the didactic process: *What do I already know about rhetoric? What are the main rhetorical (and argumentation) principles? How do I prepare and present a speech? Where else can I use rhetorical principles?*
  - b) Operational objectives are structured around five thematic sets and expanded with descriptors, which emphasize the active role of pupils (e. g. experiment, observe, investigate, assess, develop a plan, generate and test, etc.).
  - c) Since the new main operational goal focuses on developing pupils' ability to plan and perform a speech by applying rhetorical principles and the basics of argumentation, the number of learning contents was reduced from the original eight to five or were slightly redesigned, in line with the primary focus on speech construction.<sup>14</sup> The operational objective about learning the so-called ethics of dialogue (based on the knowledge of concepts of linguistic pragmatics) is eliminated as well as rhetorical analysis as an independent objective (for details see *Table 1*).
  - d) Optional content is clearly defined (e. g. syllogism/enthymeme, *topoi*, *stasis*, analysis of arguments, history of rhetoric).
  - e) Topics are properly simplified in terms of goals and contents (e. g. means of persuasion, argumentation, speech structure).

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14 Due to space limitations, we cannot show detailed differences in the structuring of learning content and differences in operational goals at this point.

**Table 1.** A comparison of modification of learning contents

Subject curriculum 1999	Subject curriculum 2019
1. What is rhetoric	1. What and why rhetoric
2. What is it useful for	2. Rhetorical technique (the officia)
3. Ethics of dialogue	3. Argumentation (with evaluation)
4. Argumentation	4. Constructing and performing a speech
5. Evaluation of arguments	5. Rhetoric and active citizenship
6. Rhetorical technique (the officia)	
7. Means of persuasion	
8. History of rhetoric	

- 4) The new subject curriculum suggests motivational sub structuring of operational objectives and topics, which follows the general idea of pupils' previous experience, the dynamics of the school year, and pupils' interests. For example: in the thematic set *Rhetorical technique*, after pupils get acquainted with the concept of the speaker's five tasks (*officia*) in a linear manner (i. e. from *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio* to *memoria*, and *actio*), they begin to learn in greater detail about the elements *actio* and *memoria*. They practice elements of verbal and nonverbal communication, experience and observe a speaking performance, the control of the body, and exercise memory. From this, they move to principles of *inventio* and practice how to define a problem/issue. Followed by the thematic set *Argumentation*, they learn and practice their argument skills, and move to the *Speech/oral presentation* set where they focus on the practical use of *dispositio* and *elocutio* while they prepare (write down) and perform their main speech. Naturally, in this last thematic set they have to use everything they have learned so far about all *officia* and their use in practice).<sup>15</sup> The following structure is based on the teachers' practical experience that pupils are always most interested in the topic of nonverbal communication; therefore, it is motivationally effective if they start with the notions of a speaker's presentation in the context of learning about *officia*. Also, this topic is relatively easy to acquire and when addressed around the beginning of the school year, when pupils are just getting to know rhetoric,

<sup>15</sup> The ancient concept of the speaker's tasks does not in itself reflect a rigid, linear sequence from "theory to practice", but must be understood in the circular sense of intertwining activities in the rhetorical process. That would mean, for example, that the ancient speaker also thought of the performance even in the stages when he was deciding what and how to speak.

it allows them to master the discipline gradually according to the level of difficulty. For 13-year-olds, the topics of *inventio* and argumentation are by far the most difficult topics, which would come first if we kept the linear perspective of the *officia*.

- 5) In the thematic set *Rhetoric and active citizenship*, an approximately 5-hour module is designed with objectives directly linked to the other subjects and/or school/local activities. Pupils choose where and how they will apply rhetorical principles (e. g. public address, panel, debate, classroom critical discussions at different lessons, epideictic speeches, media events, etc.). By enabling their active participation in different public contexts at the end of the rhetoric course, pupils learn and experience the role and importance of responding critically to current social phenomena.

## DISCUSSION

In the revision of the subject curriculum for teaching rhetoric in the 9th grade of primary school, we followed the guidelines for curriculum design prepared by the expert group at the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as principles of contemporary curriculum planning. Thus, when writing down the aims and goals, contents, standards, and didactic recommendations, we paid attention to these aspects: the autonomy of the teacher and the school (autonomy in the dynamics of learning content and adaptation to the specifics of the study group), openness and selectivity (specially marked general and special knowledge), objective and process-based curriculum approach, the inclusion of key competences (especially literacy, languages, digital, civic, cultural awareness, and expression), integration of subjects and disciplines (suggested cross-curricular examples and openness to planning common themes and activities) and formal assessment of student results. Additionally, more clearly defined expected outcomes of pupils were designed, which correspond to the main aim of the rhetoric lesson and fully derive from the written goals, contents, and competencies.

Since we perceive speech performance as an integral part of the classical rhetorical system and an essential component of the rhetorical process, special attention in the subject curriculum was paid to auditory and visual elements of speech and performance, which are emphasized as a particularly relevant

operational object. As aesthetic and physical elements of public persuasion, these elements play a key role in developing a rhetorical-argumentative competence. Also, their inclusion in the subject curriculum represents the first attempt at systematic teaching of elements of nonverbal communication at the primary school level in Slovenia. Another important element of learning a contemporary rhetorical civic practice is planned within the final thematic set, where pupils get acquainted with digital and media literacy as well as elements of sustainable development. Goals and aims, which are focused on mastering strategies and the use of new knowledge, are designed to provide pupils with an independent and comprehensive experience of the practical application of rhetorical-argumentative knowledge in various authentic public contexts.

The draft of the revised subject curriculum was preliminarily presented in March 2019 at the two-day teacher in-service training roughly to the same group of teachers that attended the 2018 December panel. The new concept of the process-based model of teaching rhetoric, the subject curriculum, and the practical information about its implementation were very well-received. The official version of the subject curriculum was formally approved by the Slovene Ministry of education, science, and sport in November 2019 and teachers started to implement it in September 2020. Since September 2020, we have also organized in-service training for teachers (so far, about 40 teachers have attended the seminar), where a comprehensive presentation of the new subject curriculum has been accompanied by workshops addressing new knowledge in the field of rhetorical pedagogy, argumentation, nonverbal communication, and curricular planning.

So far, the feedback from teachers has shown that the approach of teaching rhetoric in primary school which is focused on the construction of the speech might be systematic (at the level of learning and practicing rhetorical principles) and comprehensive enough (at the level of objectives, contents, knowledge standards) to enable pupils to reflect and improve their already acquired writing and speaking skills, to make them sensitive of the need to respond actively and critically, and preparing them for further education. We are currently developing a teacher's manual in Slovenian with theoretical and practical bases that properly underpin the subject curriculum and would enable teachers' better curricular planning and execution in their classes. Also, the draft of a subject curriculum for the teaching of rhetoric in high school has been prepared as well as a university program of

rhetoric. If implemented in all forms, this would be the first true vertical model of learning rhetoric and argumentation in Slovenia in the terms of Quintilian's pedagogy, which incorporates the idea of (neo)humanistic education with the notions of *paideia* and *Bildung* in the process of building its tradition of rhetorical education.

## CONCLUSION

In the 1st century A.D., after almost 300 years of ongoing rhetorical education in Greece and Rome, M. Fabius Quintilianus deliberated the question of a proper age for students to begin with rhetorical lessons and stated:

*For this purpose, we must think not of the actual age of the person, but of what progress he has already made in his studies. To save longer discussion of the question 'When should he be sent on to the rhetor?' the best answer, I think, is 'When he is fit.'* (Quintilian 2002, p. 265)

There is an important point in Quintilian's answer, which also formed the basis for our conceptualization of a process-based model of teaching rhetoric in primary school. When Quintilian says that what is essential for the beginning of rhetorical education is what a pupil has already achieved, he is talking about the pupil's knowledge and experience. This proposition was a key starting point in the process of our revision of the subject curriculum. We tried to restructure and redesign the objectives and contents in order to include and incite both students' previous experience with speaking and their existing "encyclopedic knowledge" of the world. This can help them in their first steps in the making of practical judgment and learning of how to construct and evaluate a cogent argument in the context of public speaking.

If we were to point out what is particularly useful for modern education in learning about ancient rhetorical concepts, it is the message that rhetoric is not an instant, empty-packed skill that can be mastered in a matter of hours. If we looked at it that way, then we would be very close to educating future speakers who would perform in an empty, superficial manner. History, as well as modern public speaking, is full of such examples and the discipline of rhetoric has always

been very critical of such forms of practice in terms of their lack of technical and ethical deficiency.

Above all, ancient concepts and models of education remind us that developing the ability to speak well is a complex process of the formation of a person, which is realized gradually at the level of the entire educational vertical and in the form of systematic and diverse training. This training largely involves observation and imitation and never introduces structured speech as a starting point for learning about it. Rather, it builds rhetorical performance as the ultimate derivative of reading literary works, training in diverse principles of writing, and responding to both of them critically. Therefore, the important task of the subject of rhetoric certainly remains within the entire vertical of the school environment. Despite its aim being to enable the successful development of rhetorical-argumentative competence in the 9th grade, at the end of primary education, this does not mean that the subject in terms of individual segments cannot be included in lower levels of education (i.e., in the first and second cycle of primary school) or connect interdisciplinarity with any other subjects, where it can contribute to better acquisition of knowledge and learning its critical reflection. In particular, the development of a vertical model of public speaking in primary school as a cross-curricular topic, which would be based on systematic training in rhetorical performance and adapted to the personal development of children at a particular educational level, is the potential that the subject of rhetoric certainly opens up. The process-based model of teaching rhetoric in the 9th grade can serve as a basis for a design of cross-curricular milestone goals within the school curriculum that students are expected to achieve through their engagement through oral performance in a variety of subjects over nine years. Namely, rhetorical performance always consists of a textual, aesthetic, and physical component that must be developed and trained in orderly sequencing to achieve the desired result in the form of a confident and authentic speaker. Therefore, based on the ancient model of rhetorical education and taking into account the structure of the Slovenian 9-year primary school, it might be sensible for the goals of speaking competence in the first cycle to focus on developing nonverbal elements and reading, which are then joined by intensive training in writing in the second cycle, and finally upgraded with learning and training in the principles of critical thinking or argumentation in the third cycle. Such a vertical model also carries an important goal, which is related to the idea of learning democracy in the school environment. Bringing rhetorical concepts



into teaching and learning by involving various actors in the school process would reshape the school culture and, due to the very nature of rhetoric, also promote democratic processes within it.

We want to conclude this chapter with a thought of Gert Biesta and Robert Lawy (2006) that underlines the need to shift from teaching modern citizenship education to learning democracy and its benefits:

*If learning democracy is situated in the lives of young people, then citizenship education should also facilitate a critical examination of the actual conditions of young people's citizenship, even though it may lead them to the conclusion that their own citizenship is limited and restricted. Such an approach would provide the basis for a deep understanding of democratic citizenship (p. 76).*

The discipline of classical rhetoric, in all its complexity, controversy, and timeless educational tradition, which addresses virtually all areas of human knowledge and offers comprehensive (i. e. reading, writing, speaking, thinking) tools for critical examination, seems to allow for just that.

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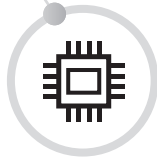
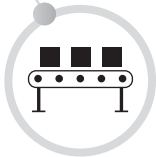
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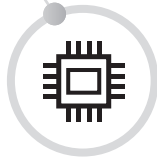
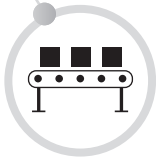
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## FROM REVIEWS

Main aim of the monograph titled *Problems and perspectives of contemporary education*, is to thorough explore, critically analyze and elaborate complex, dynamic, multilayers and reciprocal relationship between significant changes in educational social environment and readiness, of educational system to anticipate, recognize, understand and adequately respond to those challenges. All contributing authors enthusiastically embraced the notion that education presents an important and proactive agent of social changes and consequently accepted all challenges as an opportunity for improvement and development of both society and educational system.

**Professor Emeritus Djuradj Stakic**  
Pennsylvania State University, USA

The monograph is dedicated to looking into extremely significant and current concerns within educational policy and educational practice. The selected topic is viewed from the perspectives of contemporary theoretical approaches, but it is also empirically researched. A very large and relevant literature was used both for explaining the selected research subject and discussing the obtained results. A diverse, contemporary methodology was applied in researches, and the authors of works, starting from the existing results, analysed issues at a deeper level and illuminated some aspects that had not been studied thus far.

**Professor Marina Mikhailovna Mishina**  
Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia

The main topics covered by the monograph can be classified as traditional to some extent — related to approaches to learning, language culture etc., and modern — connected with the andragogical view, coaching in teacher training, also the problem of distance learning during the covid pandemic, and models for preventing problem behaviors...The main leitmotif that permeates the content of all presented articles is the topic of the development of key skills, attitudes, experience, creativity — by both subjects in the educational process, and it gives semantic integrity to the monograph.... In view of the new social realities, a reasonable emphasis is placed on the continuing education and development of the teachers themselves, dictated by the accelerated pace of social change.

**Professor Teodora Stoytcheva Stoeva**  
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