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Development of Primary Public Education System in Serbia in 1832–1882

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Abstract

The article examines the history of the system of primary education in Serbia from the time of the organization of public schools in 1832 to the introduction of general primary education in 1882. The dynamic of the opening of schools and the number of students in schools is presented in the study.

Scientific and reference literature on the research topic was used as materials. The methodology used a set of scientific methods: multi-factor and integration methods, periodization, typology, comparison, etc., which in unity ensure the reliability of the results on the studied problem. This is an interdisciplinary research, based on the comparativistic principle, which allows revealing various informative sources.

In conclusion, the authors note that during the period of 1832 – late 1890's the primary school in Serbia experienced a period of its dynamic development, from its formation till the introduction of general primary education. This period was a difficult one, as it was necessary to overcome not only the complexity of the financing of primary education, but also a part of Serbia often became a place for political and military conflicts. Along with these reasons were purely domestic ones – the unwillingness of parents to send their children to school. The work of the Serbian Ministry of Public Education was focused on these difficulties, and the majority of this work was completed by the end of the 19th century.

Keywords: public education, elementary schools, Serbia, primary education, 1832–1882.

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1. Introduction

Serbia entered the XIX century without a system of public education. The Ottoman Empire, which controlled Serbia for nearly 400 years, did not introduce any school education and was limited only by Muslim religious schools. In this regard, the Serbian priests and monks tried to develop education in monasteries. Almost every monastery conducted work in the field of education, but this work was specific. According to Vuk Karadžić, the reformator of the “new Serbian Principality”: “The majority of those who studied in monasteries could not even write and count after 4-5 years of studies” (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 259). The main reason for this was that the students did not read any books in 2-3 years, but they studied rural life in practice: they plowed, sowed, mowed, chopped wood for the monastery, etc. In the remaining two years, the learning process took place only in the winter, and the summer months again were devoted to field work. In addition to the monasteries, priests opened schools for village children, but the number of students there almost never exceeded 3. There was one more type of school – master's schools, called so because teachers in them were called masters. In master's schools students were taught religious literature and the basics of writing.

2. Materials and methods

Scientific and reference literature on the research topic was used as materials. The methodology used a set of scientific methods: multi-factor and integration methods, periodization, typology, comparison, etc., which in unity ensure the reliability of the results on the studied problem. This is an interdisciplinary research, based on the comparativistic principle, which allows revealing various informative sources.

3. Discussion

Various aspects of the history of the system of primary education in Serbia in the period of the XIX century began to be considered since the 1870's. One of the first publications on this topic were the works of Rozen-Chudnovskii (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870; Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870a). The author analyzed the system of primary and secondary education in Serbia in 1830-1860.

L. Trgovčević studied women's education in Serbia (Trgovčević, 2011). It is important to note that, along with women's education, the researchers turned to the topic of academic and intellectual exchanges of Serbs with the representatives of the other peoples of Europe (Stoianovich, 1959).

The pedagogical problems of Serbian innovators, published in the XIX century (Bakic, 1878; Bakic, 1897), researches in the field of school education (Cunkovic, 2016; Nikolova, 2017), as well as works on the formation of the Serbian intelligentsia (Karanovich, 1998; Paunic, 1998) can be mentioned among other problems covered within the research.

4. Results

The situation with the system of public education began to change fundamentally only in 1804, during the first Serbian uprising, when Serbia became independent. At this time, the Serbian voivode Kara-Georg Petrovich established several state elementary schools. The teachers from these schools became officials and received salaries from the treasury. In 1808 Kara-Georg Petrovich founded the so-called “Great School”, similar to the Lyceum. Unfortunately, after the suppression of the first Serbian uprising in 1813, the school was closed.

Until the early 1830's the initiative in the field of public education belonged to private investors or to rural and urban societies. In 1830, in Serbia, the first school was opened in Kragujevac (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870a: 241). In 1832, Prince Milosz, in addition to the gymnasium in Kragujevac, established 26 state elementary schools, and also provided support to the existing schools. As a result, in 1835/1836 there were 72 schools in Serbia, with a total of 2,514 students.

Table 1. Distribution of colleges by districts in 1835 (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 261)

No	Districts	Number of schools	Number of students
1	Belgradsky (with the city of Belgrade)	6	282
2	Valevsky	6	126
3	Shabachky	9	278
4	Podrinsky	1	32
5	Uzhichky	4	76
6	Chachansky	2	88
7	Rudnichky	1	42
8	Kraguevachky	9	253
9	Smedrevsky	4	173
10	Pozharevachky	8	222
11	Krainsky	5	216
12	Tsernorechky	2	67
13	Bansky (Gurgushevachky - Aleksinachky)	5	190
14	Chupriysky	3	211
15	Yagodinsky	9	146
16	Krushevachky	3	112
Total		72	2514

Table 1 shows that the number of children in schools ranged from 16 people in Jagodina district to 70 people in Ćuprija district. There were 34.9 people on the average per school in 1835.

All 72 schools in Serbia were divided into three categories: state-owned (26), social (27) and private (19). The administration of the public education system was carried out by the chief administrator.

ABC, the Psalter, the first four rules of arithmetic, the study of prayers, the sacred history and writing were in the curriculum. Catechism with Slavic grammar was studied only in a few schools.

Because of the state crisis in Serbia in 1837, state schools were transferred under rural society administration. It should be noted that rural societies were in a lack of finances, and this affected the financial provision of teachers, whose payments were constantly short of funds. As a result, the teachers began to resign and the education system entered a period of stagnation.

Nevertheless, the problem of public education required attention. On September 23, 1844, the government of Prince Alexander Kara-Georgievich (the son of voivode Kara-Georg Petrovich) adopted the "Law of school establishment". In fact, it was the first legislative act of the system of public education in Serbia. The goal of public education according to the law was that it would provide the state with "good Christians, respectable people and useful citizens" (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 263). The Austrian school system was used as an example (Cunkovic, 2016: 63).

The Guardianship of Education (similar to the Ministry of Education) was responsible for the opening of colleges in Serbia. Actively lobbying the idea of increasing the number of schools, the Guardianship faced the first legislative problems. The fact is that the law stated that only 400 households had the right to demand the establishment of a school, that the school building should be only made of stone, and only some city societies could open 4-grade schools, but almost all schools were limited to 3 years.

These legislative restrictions were bound to inevitably slow the spread of literacy in Serbia, for the following reasons:

1) The Serbian villages in their majority were similar to Russian ones; 400 households in one village were a rarity. Consequently, with the establishment of one school for 400 households, children from 4-6 villages had to go to the same school, which presented a significant inconvenience for the students, both for educational and hygienic reasons;

2) The economic situation of villages in Serbia was in a decline and it was difficult and often even impossible to raise money for building a stone school. Many families couldn't send their children to school for this reason;

3) There were a small number of gymnasiums in Serbia and all of them were located at considerable distances from each other. Therefore, for most children, education was limited to primary schools (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 264).

It should be noted that at that time Serbia was very limited in financial means and the problem of public education could not be solved easily. However, even these measures gave a positive result. In 1845/1846 school years in Serbia there were more than 200 schools with 6 thousand students (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of schools by districts in 1845 (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 264-265)

No	District	Number of schools	Number of students
1	City of Belgrade	7	399
2	Belgradsky	13	225
3	Valevsky	20	560
4	Shabachky	23	657
5	Podrinsky	10	369
6	Uzhichky	7	254
7	Chachansky	6	216
8	Rudnichky	5	158
9	Kraguevachky	21	561
10	Smedrevsky	9	327
11	Pozharevachky	26	784
12	Kraynsky	8	245
13	Tsernorechky	9	145
14	Gurgushevachky	4	105
15	Aleksinachky	6	189
16	Chupriysky	12	362
17	Yagodinsky	9	376
18	Krushevachky	6	149
19	Private schools	12	120
Total		213	6201

From the data in Table 2 it follows that the number of children in schools in 1845 ranged from 16 in Tsernorechky district, to 57 in the city of Belgrade. The very minimum indicator of the number of pupils was in private schools, only 10 pupils per school. On average, in one school in 1845, there were 29.1 people, that is, this indicator declined in the first decade.

According to the data in Table 2, during the 10 years of the operating of the public education in Serbia, the city of Belgrade became a separate educational unit, in addition, the Bansky District was divided into two – Gurgusovachky and Aleksinachky Districts and separate private schools were singled out.

The total number of teachers was 213 people, that is, one teacher per school. Thus, in 10 years the number of teachers increased by 141, and the number of students by 3687 people. On one hand, this result was satisfactory, but on the other hand, the population of Serbia, in 1816, was 980 thousand people. In developed European countries, no less than 10 % of the population attended schools, which meant that the number of students in Serbia should not be less than 98 thousand.

The schools were divided into 3-category and 4-category ones, the differences were in the subjects. Serbian and Slavic languages, ABC, the first four rules of arithmetic, the study of prayers, sacred history, catechism, geography, church singing and all-round knowledge were taught in 3-category schools. In 4-category schools, in addition to the above mentioned subjects the Serbian grammar, the history of the Serbian people and the triple rule of arithmetic were added to the 4th grade curriculum.

A serious problem for the public education system in Serbia was the lack of pedagogical staff. Almost all of the teaching staff was represented by young people who could hardly write and read.

There were no professors-instructors, no educational literature, no organization. The system was completely lacking the technique of teaching.

Nevertheless, the system of public education in Serbia continued to develop.

In 1855/1856 school years, the number of schools exceeded 330, with almost 10 thousand students (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of schools by district in 1855 (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 266-267)

Nº	District	Number of schools	Number of students
1	City of Belgrade	14	639
2	Belgradsky	35	317
3	Valevsky	22	595
4	Shabachky	27	966
5	Podrinsky	13	349
6	Uzhichky	16	536
7	Chachansky	14	392
8	Rudnichky	13	341
9	Kraguevachky	28	830
10	Smedrevsky	23	587
11	Pozharevachky	34	927
12	Krainsky	23	849
13	Tsernorechky	17	479
14	Gurgushevachky	11	357
15	Alexinachky	8	318
16	Chupriysky	15	459
17	Yagodinsky	18	555
18	Krushevachky	12	367
19	Private schools	4	108
Total		337	9971

From the data in Table 3 it follows that the number of children in schools in 1855 ranged from 9 in the Belgrade District to 39.7 in the Aleksinachsky District. On average, in the same school in 1855, there were 29.5 people, that is, during the decade this indicator remained practically unchanged.

Comparing the data of 1855 with the data for 1845, we find an increase in the number of schools by 132 and the number of pupils by 3802 people. At the same time, out of 337 schools in Serbia, there were already 18 girls' schools for 846 girls. The establishment of schools for girls in Serbia was long overdue, as the woman here played an important role in family and social life. The first girls' school was established in Serbia in 1840 in the city of Belgrade, but this institution was private and only for the girls from the upper class of the capital's society. In addition to women's crafts, they were taught the Serbian and German languages and geography.

The law of September 23, 1844 stated that girls have the right to attend primary schools, and in the villages boys and girls could attend one school, and in the cities girls' schools were to be established (Trgovčević, 2011: 7). The law also stated that girls could study at school only until they turned 10 years old. The first public school for girls was opened in Belgrade only in 1846, and even later in the other cities.

Girls' schools had 3 grades as they were of the third category. The only difference in the curriculum were women's crafts, all the other subjects were similar to boys' schools.

Some changes in the system of public education in Serbia towards improving education took place by 1855. The teachers began to use special methods to improve the pedagogical process, thus helped to spread the literacy. This was preceded by establishing intellectual ties between Serbian and German youth. Visiting fairs and exhibitions in Europe, participating in academic exchanges, they brought to Serbia, as M. Nikolova notes, a part of German culture (Nikolova, 2017: 4).

In 1858, the number of girls' schools in Serbia reached 30 (Trgovčević, 2011: 8)

In September 1863, Serbia issued a new law on primary schools. The new law improved the previous legislation on public education. So, the law didn't allow one school for 400 households,

and allowed any society to open a school, with at least 25 students. The new law eliminated the demand of the stone school building, replacing it with a spacious and light building. In addition, each school received the right to independently decide on the opening of the 4th grade (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 270).

Due to the introduction of the new law in Serbia, there has been a sharp increase in the number of students and a slight reduction in the number of schools, through the merging of schools (Table 4).

Table 4. The number of students in the districts in 1862/1863 and 1865/1866 (Rozen-Chudnovskii, 1870: 271)

No	District	1862/1863	1865/1866
1	Alexinsky	530	683
2	City of Belgrade	597	844
3	Belgradsky	951	1011
4	Valevsky	732	1027
5	Knyazhevachky (ex. Gurgushevachky)	550	664
6	Kraguevachky	1158	1462
7	Krainsky	929	1037
8	Krushevachky	431	631
9	Podrinsky	407	400
10	Pozharevachky	1716	2752
11	Rudnichky	508	579
12	Smedrevsky	715	1004
13	Uzhichky	837	964
14	Tsernoretsky	660	704
15	Chachansky	433	648
16	Shabachky	1167	1238
17	Chupriysky	670	850
18	Yagodinsky	608	909
19	Girls' schools in cities	1862	2400
Total		15461	19807

In 1865, one school on the average had 61.7 people, that is, over a decade since 1855, this figure doubled.

By 1865 the number of schools in Serbia reached 321, 289 for boys and 32 for girls. The teaching staff numbered 406 people (356 male teachers and 50 female teachers). Since that time, a teacher's training school at the gymnasium in Kragujevac was established in Serbia (Nikolova, 2017: 4). In addition, in 1864 two state schools (boys' and girls') for the Jews of the city were opened in Belgrade.

In 1882, Serbia passed a law on general education. By this time, the Serbian People's School had been divided into primary school with a 4-year education and a high school with a 2-year education. In addition to public schools, there were private schools in Serbia. In 1893-1894, Serbia had a population of 2288259 people with 914 elementary schools, 1505 teachers (929 male teachers and 576 female teachers) and 77175 pupils (65846 boys and 11329 girls) (Ehntsiklopedicheski slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona, 1897: 741).

By 1893, one school in Serbia had 84.4 students, that is, after the introduction of general primary education, the number of students in schools increased by more than 2.5 times.

This data clearly demonstrates that by the end of the 19th century, the number of women among the pedagogical staff in Serbia had increased dramatically. This number was 38.4 %, while in 1865 this percentage did not exceed 12.5. Nevertheless, despite the introduction of general primary education, the percentage of girls enrolled in schools remained small. The reason for this was in the low awareness in the need of primary education for the girls.

In conclusion, we would like to present the dynamics of the opening of primary schools in Serbia during the studied period in the summary table (Table 5).

Table 5. Summary data on the development of the primary education system in Serbia in 1832-1894

Years	1835	1845	1855	1862	1865	1893
Number of schools	72	213	337	-	321	914
Number of students	2514	6201	9971	15807	19807	77175
Average number of students per school	34,9	29,1	29,5	-	61,7	84,4

From the data in [Table 5](#) it follows that in the period from 1855 to 1865, there was a reduction in the number of schools with a simultaneous increase in the number of students. This reduction was due to the introduction of the law of 1863 "On primary schools", which clearly stated the minimum number of pupils per school.

5. Conclusion

Thus, during the period of 1832 – late 1890's the primary school in Serbia experienced a period of its dynamic development, from its formation till the introduction of general primary education. This period was a difficult one, as it was necessary to overcome not only the complexity of the financing of primary education, but also a part of Serbia often became a place for political and military conflicts. Along with these reasons were purely domestic ones – the unwillingness of parents to send their children to school. The work of the Serbian Ministry of Public Education was focused on these difficulties, and the majority of this work was completed by the end of the 19th century.

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