

60 YEARS OF THE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGE

IN THE CITY OF NOVI SAD

Summary:

Education of children and work with children are the activities with a long history in Vojvodina. The first preschool institutions in region of Vojvodina were opened in Subotica in 1843, Veliki Bečkerek (nowadays Zrenjanin) in 1858, Senta in 1866, while the institutions in Novi Sad and Kanjiža were opened the following year.

In 1866, the Magistrate of the City of Novi Sad analysed the possibilities for opening of a preschool institution for children aged from three to seven. The reason behind this endeavour was the need to provide nursing and care to smaller children whose parents were working and older children attended schools. The Magistrate received support and financial contributions from some artisans and the artisans' guild. The Empress Elizabeth, Emperor Franz Joseph's wife, who was at the same time the founder of the Fund for assistance to educational institutions across the Empire, provided the most significant support. The Mayor of the City of Novi Sad at that time, Svetozar Miletić, sent the letter to the Empress expressing gratitude and appreciation for a "generous gift".

The "Institute for Childcare" was founded on October 1st, 1867. The first preschool was a German teacher David Sagmeister. The majority of attendants were children of German and

Hungarian nationality, but there were also children of Serbian nationality among them. In 1872, the ownership over the Institute was taken over by the Roman Catholic Church.

The General Assembly of Teachers, which was held in Stari Bečej, in 1890, passed the “Decree on Serbian religious confession kindergartens”. One of the articles of the Decree was regulating the issue of “education of female small children care providers (“zabavilje”), which was the expression used for female preschool teachers at that time. The Decree emphasised that **female small children care providers**

have to have a solid general and professional knowledge, as well as personal qualities such as: diligence, love for profession, conscientiousness, and moral values. The Assembly passed the Decision on establishing of a “professional institute that would be developed by public funds, and in which the education would last for two years”.

The Law on Children Protection was passed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire approximately at the same time (in 1891). The above-mentioned Law obligated all “free royal cities” to establish permanent nursery schools (kindergartens) if there are more than 40 children living in the city while cities with more than 15 children had the obligation to establish the **day-care centres** (“čuvališta”). The first Serbian nursery school (kindergarten) was founded by the Charity Association “Serbian Women of Novi Sad” (“Srpskinje Novosadkinje”) on

April 10th

, 1892

. The nursery school (kindergarten) was located in the former
Hanska Street

, i.e. current

Matica Srpska Street

. Marija Simić was the first preschool teacher in this nursery school (kindergarten).

In addition to the Serbian nursery school (kindergarten), there were also the Hungarian and German nursery schools (kindergartens) in Novi Sad by the end of the 19th century. They were all functioning under the auspices of corresponding churches.

After the World War I, the AP Vojvodina joined the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Ministry of Education was founded in the newly founded state by the end of 1919. The Ministry undertook a series of measures, which also encompassed the activities related to preschool institutions.

The City administration of Novi Sad founded the School Committee for all elementary schools and preschool institutions. The Committee was presided by the Mayor of Novi Sad. In June of 1921, Novi Sad got the institution that unified the health clinic and nursery school. Pursuant to the Rulebook of the Nursery School, the children were to be brought to the institution during the morning hours, and after that they were examined by the doctor, they had to be given a bath and they were dressed up in the "kindergarten uniform". The children who attended the nursery school underwent the set regime and spent their time in playing, learning, resting, and meals consuming.

The Ministry of Education passed the Rulebook on taking of the exam for female preschool teachers. The applicants were eligible to take the above-mentioned exam only after having worked for at least two years in the nursery school and if their work had been evaluated with at least a satisfactory mark. The applicant needed to have a recommendation of the school supervisor, as well as the citizenship of the Kingdom of SCS. The application was complemented with a medical certificate stating that the applicant's senses are fully developed and that the applicant does not suffer from any speech disorders. The exam was taken in schools for female preschool teachers in front of the commission whose members were the same as in the case of the commission for male teachers.

A new "Law on People's (Public) School" was passed in 1929. According to that Law, the nursery schools as well as the people's (public) schools were to be treated as state institutions and that the major cities and industrial cities were obligated to establish the above-mentioned educational institutions. Nursery schools could be founded in smaller municipalities as well based on the request of the local administration or parents. The Law prescribed the programme and mode of work in nursery schools, which was not universal prior to the passing of the Law. The Law regulates the status of female preschool teachers in accordance with which "only the preschool teachers who had passed the examination for preschool teachers were allowed to work in nursery schools".

According to some available data, there were there were 11 Serbian nursery schools in Novi Sad, as well as one Hungarian, Russian, German and Jewish nursery school prior to the outbreak of the World War II. In 1938, the nursery schools were attended by 893 children of preschool age.

In the beginning of 1940, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia enacted the Law according to which the Teachers' Schools located in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Split, Mostar, Kragujevac, Cetinje, and Skopje were given the right to organise the exams for preschool teachers.

A new socialist government came into power in Yugoslavia in 1945. The restoration of the educational system was one of the primary objectives of the new government. The plans for restoration included the promotion and enhancing of the preschool education system along with the systems of elementary and secondary education.

The Ministry of Education enacted the Law in 1945 already according to which the nursery schools were separated from elementary schools. The Law made the distinction between nursery schools and preschool institutions. **Preschool institutions** worked according to a special programme i.e. for four hours with the purpose to enable the children to acquire knowledge and work habits necessary for elementary schools.

Nursery schools

were attended by children of employed parents, where children learned and played during an 8-hour period while their parents were at work.

The first preschool institution called "Pčelica" ("Small bee") was opened in Novi Sad in Železnička Street by the end of 1945. The first Principal was Milena Grujić. The programme was initially organised only in Serbian language but after a while, the Hungarian class was opened. The first **nursery school for infants** was organised in Vasa Stajić Street no. 5, in the building that was bequeathed by Vasa Stajić, the President of Matica Srpska.

Permanent and temporary (or, as they were called seasonal) preschool institutions were still present in Vojvodina during the 1950s. The number of children attending the preschool institutions started to increase hence the need for these institutions became greater. At that time, there were only 14 permanent nursery schools in the whole territory of the AP Vojvodina, 8 of which were located in Novi Sad with 25 groups of children.

The increase in the number of children and new school programmes resulted with the need for new staff trained to work with smaller children. The training for the profession of schoolteacher and preschool teachers was separated. The existing schools were named "schools for teachers" while new schools were called "schools for preschool teachers". The first "School for preschool teachers" was founded in Vršac, in 1949. As the need for preschool teachers became more expressed, and there were still no appropriate conditions in place for the establishment of schools in certain parts of Vojvodina, some schools for teachers held courses for preschool teachers that lasted from six months up to one year. The courses were held in Sombor, Vršac, Pančevo, and Sremski Karlovci. In the beginning of 1950, the County Committee for Education launched an initiative for establishing of school for preschool teachers in Novi Sad.

In 1952, the Ministry of Education of the Socialist Republic of Serbia passed the Decision on establishing of the secondary school for preschool teachers in Novi Sad, which would last for four years and educate professional personnel for nursery schools for infants, nursery schools, and preschool institutions. The School for Preschool Teachers was supposed to educate female pupils from the whole Yugoslavia. In June of 1952, the Provincial Council for Education informed the Ministry that they had begun with enrolment of pupils. Vera Palov was the first School principal.

The School for Preschool Teachers was open for pupils with completed elementary school i.e. lower grammar school. The basic condition for enrolment in the School was that the candidates should be of sound physical and mental health as well as that they were gifted in musical sense.

During the first school year, the School enrolled 195 pupils in the first grade, who were divided in 7 classes. The pupils who had already completed certain grades in other secondary schools were enrolled as pupils of the second, third and fourth grades. Their previous secondary school grades were nostrified and they had to pass supplementary exams in subjects belonging to the field of pedagogy. The classes for Hungarian speaking pupils were organised from the very beginning. The Hungarian-speaking pupils had the same subjects as the Serbian-speaking pupils apart from the fact that their syllabus also included an additional subject i.e. the Hungarian language.

The education lasted for four school years. The education was extended to five years during the school year of 1954/55.

The original building of the School for Preschool Teachers is one of the oldest school buildings in Novi Sad that was constructed in Futoška Street, in 1912. Nowadays, the building accommodates the Secondary Vocational School "Mihailo Pupin". The School for Preschool Teachers moved to a new building in Školska Street number 4 during the school year of 1953/1954. The offices at the ground floor were converted into the **boarding school**.

From the very beginning, the School for Preschool Teachers organised taking of professional exams. The exam could be taken by all those who have completed this type of school and have been active in this field of work for at least one year. The professional exam was made up of

two parts. The first part of the exam included a practical part of demonstrating a certain activity with children. The written part of the exam included the presentation and clarification of the practical part. The practical part could be demonstrated either in Serbian or in Hungarian language.

During the school year of 1972/73, the one thousandth student passed the graduation exam in the School for Preschool Teachers.

During the 1970s, the Ministries of Education of the Socialist Republic of Serbia and Autonomous Province of Vojvodina realised the need for raising of the School for Preschool Teachers onto a higher level. The Ministries prepared the amendments to the Law prescribing two levels of the teaching degree. The amendments set forth that the first level of teaching degree would last for four year and that the second level of the teaching degree would last for two years. The Law on Secondary School Education applied to the first level of education. The provisions of the Law on Higher Education applied to the second educational degree of Pedagogical Academy.

In January of 1974, the Provincial Secretariat for Education decided that Pedagogical Academy should provide all necessary conditions for the beginning of the studies according to a new curriculum for preschool teachers until the commencement of the school year of 1974/75 the latest. The teaching process at the Pedagogical Academy is organised in different languages of national minorities. The Academy also offered the option to organise the teaching process based on bilingual principles.

In March, 1975, the Republic Secretariat for Education and Science from Belgrade passed the draft of the Law on Pedagogical Academy. The draft was submitted to the Academies under the process of establishing such was the Academy in Novi Sad.

Following the introduction of the system of vocational education the secondary schools merged again, and during the school year of 1982/83 thirteen educational centres were established in Novi Sad. One of them was the *Work Organisation Secondary School of Pedagogical Vocation "Svetozar Marković"* which was created through merging of the preparatory degree of the *Pedagogical Academy* and *Grammar School* for integrated education "Svetozar Marković".

The final degree of *Pedagogical Academy* was separated from the preparatory degree and became an independent educational institution within the *University of Novi Sad* that was named the *Work Organisation of Pedagogical Academy "Moša Pijade" in Novi Sad*.

In 1982/83, the School moved to the building of the old Jewish Community Centre in Petar Drapšin Street, which used to accommodate the *Secondary Vocational School for Design "Bogdan Šuput"*.

In the period from the school year of 1980/1981 up to 2007, the curricula of the School had been changing several times. The schooling of preschool teachers has reached a milestone thanks to changes and amendments to the Law on Higher Education enacted in 2005, which gave way to significant advances in modelling of the higher education in Serbia and harmonisation with the general European trends.

The overall education system in Serbia including the preschool education was undergoing a transformation in parallel. Changes and amendments to the Law on Fundamentals of the Education System (2004) introduced the Preparatory Preschool Curriculum, which was mandatory and free of charge for all children. In addition, the General Bases of the Preschool Curriculum (2006) and the Law on Preschool Education (2010) were enacted in the meantime.

The Preschool Teachers Training College in Novi Sad analysed the two-year curricula for preschool teachers. The process of self-analysis discovered certain advantages as well as disadvantages of the former Curriculum (1994).

It was proposed to launch new vocational studies for education and training of preschool teachers, which would last for three years, and the proposed Study Programme was harmonised with the contemporary global trends and status in the subject profession, science, and arts from the field of social studies and humanities. The proposed Programme was based on multiculturalism and interculturalism with the objective to enable students to build up and cherish understanding of nature and significance of living and growing up in a multicultural

community.

The National Council for Higher education of the Republic of Serbia has accredited the study programme of the basic vocational studies for education of preschool teachers in the Preschool Teachers Training College in Novi Sad in 2007. A slightly changed and amended study programme was accredited in 2012 for the second time.

The curriculum of the study programme is made up of knowledge in academic general-educational field (native language, languages of national communities, foreign language, health education and subjects in the field of social sciences), professional-applied field (information technology, teaching methods, organisation and structure of educational-teaching process), scientific artistic-professional field (subjects in the field of pedagogy, psychology and arts). The above-mentioned knowledge is offered via mandatory and elective/optional subjects. The contents taught in classes are structured through one-semester subjects. The structure of the study programme throughout all three years of studies includes mandatory subjects with whom a student acquires 80% of ECTS credits and elective/optional subjects with which a student acquires 20% of ECTS credits. The structure of the study programme enables the students to decide and to a certain extent create their own professional profile of a preschool teacher.

The proposed study programme can be compared with similar programmes abroad - Szarvas (Hungary), Kecskemet (Hungary), and Osijek (Croatia). The closest co-operation was established with Kecskemet – Kecskeméti Főiskola Tanítóképző Főiskolai Kar (Hungary). In addition, we have also established a fruitful co-operation with Pädagogische Hochschule in Zürich, Switzerland, which has chosen us for partners due to high compatibility of educational plans and programmes.

In 2009, the Preschool Teachers Training College received accreditation for the Study programme of specialised vocational studies of the second degree.

The Study programme of the specialised vocational studies is carried out during two semesters and students are granted 60 ECTS credits. The programme consists of three mandatory subjects that are attended in the following manner: two subjects are attended during the first semester and one subject is attended during the second semester. The students select two elective subjects out of the possible three during each semester. The final-specialised paper has to be elaborated and defended at the end of the specialised studies.

The Documentation for the Preschool Teachers Training College accreditation (2011) tells us that 26 professors and 6 associates are involved in the implementation of the study programme for undergraduate studies and specialised studies. The Preschool Teachers Training College disposes with 3,320.21 m² of gross space, which amounts to 6.64 m² of gross space per student i.e. approximately 4.66 m²

for holding of classes per shifts.

During the school year of 2011/2012, the Preschool Teachers Training College enrolled 547 students at all three years of undergraduate studies and 50 students at specialised studies.

Some of the most important objectives of the College include:

1. Education of preschool teachers who will acquire knowledge on the child's nature and its development, modes for motivating of child's development, institutional and non-institutional forms of work with children;
2. Preparation of preschool teachers to understand the nature and importance of living and growing up in a multicultural community and master the teaching and education methods required for living in such a community;
3. Providing of opportunities for cherishing one's own national language and culture in addition to the Serbian language and culture enabling better integration of members of national communities;
4. Providing the opportunity to preschool teachers to offer children of preschool age classes in English language;
5. Continuous cherishing of scientific, artistic, and professional advancement of both teaching and non-teaching staff and students.

The Preschool Teachers Training College carries out the continuous planning and control of results of all forms of its educational, scientific, artistic, research and professional activities in order to accomplish the implementation of its primary objective and goals.

The graduate students acquire the professional title of professional preschool teachers (abbreviated: profess. preschool teach.). The students are also awarded the Diploma Supplement stating all the subjects that they have passed with the number of obtained ECTS credits. The Diploma Supplement provides an insight into individual specific characteristics and

special interests and competences of graduate students.

This Monograph can be understood not only as the evidence on history of education of preschool teachers in the past, but also as the invitation to a dialogue on the future of this profession.