

Teacher Education in Yugoslavia

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Abstract: *Pre- and in-service teacher education in Yugoslavia has no structure and pattern providing the system to cover all teachers coming from diverse background. Current situation of teacher education in Yugoslavia is presented in this paper. Its main characteristics and difficulties are outlined in relation to 1) the legislation and normative and 2) users needs. After analyzing the current situation, we present an agenda for reform and development that should enable teacher education to respond to the changing needs of Yugoslavia. Throughout the paper we refer to the initial and continuing professional development of history teachers: they are one element in the overall equation.*

Keywords: The National Pattern: Pre-Service, Primary, Elementary, Grammar/Vocational Middle Schools

Pre-Service Teacher Education

Government regulations relevant for teacher education in Yugoslavia cover the whole range of forms in which it exists, differing in accordance with the type of institution involved and diverse course length and contents. Below we outline the five main types of provision.

Teachers for **pre-school** children acquire their education at teacher colleges, the education lasting 2 years with the courses in main three areas:

- General,
- Courses in pedagogy and psychology,
- Different methodologies of particular subject matter teaching covering almost one half of the overall curricula.

Current discussions are being held on expanding the two-year pre-service pre-school teacher education to four years, as we have recently had changes in education of primary school teachers.

Primary school teachers are trained for four years at university level at the Primary School Teacher Faculties. When we analyze the relationships between all course elements, we can see that: there is a kind of balance between

- 1) so-called 'general' courses (like mathematics, sociology, foreign language),
- 2) different disciplines in pedagogy and psychology (general pedagogy, child development, educational psychology, didactics, sociology of education) and
- 3) Different methodologies of particular subject matter teaching related to subject matters included in primary school curricula.

Elementary school teachers for higher grades (5-8), together with **secondary** school teachers, acquire their pre-service educational training in the course of completing university degree in their major subject. For example, teachers of math, history or arts, get their degree at the Faculty of Mathematics, Faculty of Philosophy or Faculty of Arts respectively. As a part of their university education, teacher training varies from faculty to faculty in length, as well as, in structure. It varies, even, inside the same faculty from department to department (i.e., from one professional profile to the other). This diversity is not so much connected with the percentage of students who, after gaining their diploma, become teachers, but more with an implicit predominant professional image that more or less includes teaching as its

component. As a consequence of the whole interplay of circumstances, this group of teachers is the one that gets the least teacher training among all teachers.

For example, being involved in pre-service training of prospective teachers at the Faculty of Philosophy, we have the opportunity to analyze more thoroughly the situation at this Faculty. Prospective history teachers acquire their teacher training as a supplement to their major subject. This part of the education of our students consists of three courses aimed to cover relevant areas extracted from three scientific disciplines:

- Psychology (a potpourri consisted of issues in general, developmental, educational and social psychology);
- Pedagogy (theory of education, history of education, school pedagogy and didactics)
- Methodology of teaching history.

Each of these three courses lasts one school year with two hours per week. After completing a course, students have to pass an exam that is generally oriented towards theoretical knowledge assessment (some exception is methodology of history exam). So, our students acquire their teacher training during three school years, with only one course per year being a supplement to the majority of their major courses. This pattern is obligatory for all history students irrespectively to their future career plans (there is not diversity in the university education of prospective teachers and researchers). After completing whole university program, graduated students are eligible for getting job as history teachers in elementary, grammar schools and middle vocational schools.

This picture can be applied to other faculties that educate great number of prospective teachers like science, mathematics, geography, languages, and physical education... Teacher of arts can get their education at Art College (two years), but their license is adequate for higher grades in elementary schools only.

Teachers of professional subject matters in **middle schools for vocational training** don't acquire any teacher specific training in the pre-service phase.

Special teachers (all levels) for children with disabilities are trained in Faculties of Defectology¹ where they acquire bachelor's degree (4,5 years). For those special teachers who teach an individual subject matter at higher grades of elementary schools and in grammar schools a university degree level in the subject matter is required by law, with supplementary specialist training provided by the Faculty of Defectology. So, if a history teacher wants to apply for a vacancy at special school, s/he will be obliged to undertake this additional training in special needs. But, in practice, it is rarely that this legal requirement is fulfilled in special elementary schools. The majority of subject matter teachers in higher grades of elementary schools are trained in Defectology only.

Teacher pre-service training at a Faculty of Defectology is an integral part of students' training for degree level. Apart from some general and more professionally specific courses covering medical and psychosocial aspects of individual impairment in question, a significant number of classes are targeted at teacher training. For example, these are courses with titles such as:

- Pedagogy of People With...(impairment),
- Psychology of People With...,

¹ This tittle is applied from the old expression "defect" used for the children with mental, sensory and physical disabilities

- Methodology of Teaching Pre-school Children With...
- Methodology of Teaching Elementary School Children With...
- Educational Psychology,
 - Child Development,
 - Introduction to Pedagogy and
 - Adult Education...

The **main features** that can be deduced from this overall picture can be considered in a two dimensional framework:

1. Lack of a unified standard of previous training required for a license to become a teacher
2. Diversity of teacher education provided at different institutions in term of the different emphases put on the teacher-training component (ranging from those institutions where teacher education is the main aim of university education to those who neglect school as a source of employment for their students).

These differences are directly caused by the diversity and lack of standards legally imposed at a national level. Differences are reflected in length of courses, curricula and subject matter, ranging from compulsory elements to the purely optional.

Differences between institutions responsible for teacher education also have some indirect consequences on teacher training itself. There is the issue of education predominantly developed in autonomous individual institutions in charge of training a category of teachers. There are differences in the implicit pedagogy of teachers coming from different institutions, with their differences in aims of teacher training, in the content of education considered to be relevant to fulfill the stated aims and differences in training methods.

Quantitatively the differences between Higher Education courses range from two-thirds of elementary school teachers' courses consisting of teacher training to no teacher training involved in vocational subject teachers.

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Table 1 TEACHER EDUCATION IN YUGOSLAVIA- PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Subgroup of teachers	Type of education - institution/length of training	Prevalence of teacher training	Type of knowledge provided in teacher training courses
- Pre-school teachers	2 years teacher college	Domination of teaching preparation courses	Exercising versus academic? Knowledge vs. skills?
- Elementary school teachers for younger ages (grades 1-4.)	4 years university Faculty for Elementary School teacher education	Domination of teaching preparation courses (63,39%)	Exercising versus academic? Declarative vs. procedural knowledge? vs. skills?
- Elementary school teachers for higher grades (5-8.)	Faculty of respective major	Teacher training as a supplement (varying from 2,5 to 15,17%)	Academic versus exercising? knowledge?
- High school teachers			
- Vocational/secondary school teachers	4-6 university Faculty of Economics, Technical	No teacher pre-service training provided	
- Special teachers	University level - 4,5 years Faculty of Defectology	Teacher training as integral part of University education (varying from 13,54 to 44,95% respectively)	Towards a balance between academic and practical?
University teachers	University postgraduate education	no teacher training	No systematic knowledge

These differences lead to differences in type of skills and knowledge acquired by teachers trained at different institutions: it seems that (as a trend, as we perceive it) there is a correlation between the prevalence of courses and classes devoted to teacher training, from one side, and the type of skills and knowledge the institution provides, from the other. Our hypothesis is that the bigger the part occupied by teacher training in overall studies the greater is the emphasis on practicing; the smaller proportion of teacher training courses in overall university curricula, the greater the emphasis on academic skills and knowledge.

When referring on history teachers, we can point out:

- Main emphasis in study plan is on major, teacher training courses being a small component of their studies
- Teacher training is organized through separate discipline-based courses
- Dominant orientation on academic knowledge rather than on professional skills
- Lack of professional practice aimed to school experience acquiring
- Lack of university teachers qualified in history teaching methodology.

In-Service Training

By law, all teachers have to undertake in-service training. But, the organization of in-service training itself is not defined precisely by legal regulations in relation to individual school programs. This leads to wide differences between schools in terms of dealing with in-service training – some of them being very active, the others without any real involvement. Legally, one of the roles of professional teams attached to schools – school pedagogue and/or psychologist – is to organize in-service teacher training. But, we have to have in mind that we have a number of schools without any professional support for their teachers, i.e. without any school psychologist or pedagogue. So, every school creates its own program for in-service training during the school year. This program has to be approved at the government level. In-Service is delivered through different forms. Thus in some cases individual training (i.e. studying literature), or attending lectures in or out of schools, thematic discussions, courses, training seminars, counseling seminars, symposia, field trips, study journeys and so on.

What happens when a newly graduated history student gets a job at school as a teacher? During the first year s/he has a formally assigned mentor provided to introduce her/his to her/his teaching practice. After this one-year working experience, s/he has to pass an examination called “professional teacher examination”, or “state exam” in order to be allowed to continue to teach. This examination is consisted of two compulsory and two ‘alternative’ separate exams. Two compulsory exams cover curricula:

- 1) Legislation on education with state constitution and
 - 2) Subject methodology in subject s/he teaches at school.
- The two ‘alternative’ exams are:
- 3) Psychology and
 - 4) Pedagogy.

Last two exams are called ‘alternative’ because they supplement these courses if they are missing in pre-service university education of the novice in question.² But, if a teacher took these courses during his or her university studies, s/he is ‘released’

² This could refer to the teachers who graduated during some short-lived educational reforms that did not request them to pass TE courses

from this part at state examination. This requirement also confirms that the system assumes that a teacher needs only a minimal amount of knowledge (without skills, almost) in the areas of psychology and pedagogy.

The only part of this examination aimed at assessing teacher's professional (practical performing) skills is realization of an assigned teaching unit in a real classroom (out of his/her own school, usually).

Even if legal regulations define the whole system of in-service training as obligatory, this 'post-first-year' exam is the only part with mechanisms provided to ensure its realization. The real relation between his/her one-year mentored experience and this final exam is just formal: mentor writes his/her own assessment without any contact with final-exam committee. Mentors are not specially trained for mentoring novices and they are left without any support in this additional task. So, very often, mentor is present just at a formal level. The question here is, can this examination really be considered as teacher professionally oriented, bearing in mind that:

- 1) it requires of knowledge of state structure, legislation of state system and
- 2) that there are no other sources than handbook for its preparation.

Even if it is a legal obligation for a teacher to pass this examination, this doesn't mean that there is any systematic organisation of teacher preparation to pass it. There is no indication of what s/he is expected to work on during that one year, how s/he is going to prepare for the assessment or what are the relationships between his/her everyday practice and the assessment itself.

Also, we can question whether it is in-service training at all, when we have in mind that some of the teachers study educational-psychological issues for the first time in their lives. Accordingly they can only get some introductory knowledge (acquired by others on undergraduate level courses). For them this is, actually, a form of postgraduate education aimed to compensate what's missing from undergraduate level, but not an advanced training.

Apart from the weakness of state organised in-service training, in Yugoslavia we have a wide range of provision offered by great number of domestic and foreign NGOs. These in-service training are aimed at improving the practice of different categories of teachers. They differ in aims and contents so that some of them are provided for civic education in general, others being constructed purposefully for teachers. The latter are targeted to compensate for the imbalance between academic knowledge and teaching skills at present embedded in the system of pre- and in-service training, i.e. they are more skills-oriented. These programs are very promising in the term of changes in overall teacher education including changes in aims, methods and curricula contents becoming more relevant for teachers, pupils and their parents. With these programs, we have now a greater diversity of options for each school team that tries to develop improved teacher training programs.

Main Difficulties in Teacher Education

Overall, we can identify at three groups of problems:

1. organisational
2. conceptual
3. social

Organisational

Organisationally, there is a general lack of mechanisms to provide dynamic educational change. Here we have in mind the absence of any mechanism for the identification and recognition of local, grass-root initiatives and their role in the restructuring of the educational system. Local initiatives come from either aware, informed teachers or parents in relation to their children's needs. At present some NGOs may support these initiatives, but before October '2000 CHANGES' they were seldom supported by Minister of Education, at least in Serbia. There were no opportunities to incorporate effective evaluated programs as an element in the system of pre- or in-service training.

Also, we don't have an institutionalized structure dealing with teacher education as its main task. (What is needed is a structure that deals with needs assessment, program coordination, recruitment and support for the training of teachers at all stages). We need provision of a continuous process for improving the system of teacher education.

There is either an absence or a low level of professional training for some groups of teachers (involved in higher grades in primary and in secondary schools) During their studies, the emphasis is given to their academic subject, but not to their prospective professional teaching roles. The main feature of university curricula is absence of, or short length of courses in pedagogy, psychology and subject methodology. Those faculties that provide some teacher education give a small number of classes, so that they can offer only introductory superficial information, instead of providing a much deeper awareness on educational issues and the acquisition of teaching skills. Here, courses aimed to teacher training are a simple addition to, separated from courses covering their training in their major. There is a:

- Lack of systematic, regulated in-service training for improving professionalism
- Here we refer to the above analysis of in-service training system.
- The connection between pre- and in-service training is strictly formal, so that,
- There is no link between different institutions dealing with training different categories of teachers and their prospective or current job institutions (i.e. link between schools and university is not provided)
- There is no connection between teacher training and a teaching career
- There is no career paths linked to training / professional development.
- No preparation of university teachers for teaching practice (job)

Conceptual difficulties

Some of the problems in teacher education system in our country come from conceptions underlying educational practice in general and implicit theories on teacher roles. These we can list as:

- Lack of generally accepted standards for evaluating teaching practice and for getting license to be a teacher
- Dominance of training teachers to transmit knowledge versus training to facilitate individual construction of their students' knowledge
- Lack of training aimed to building skills and attitudes – We train our teachers more to be a knowledge appliers/technicians instead of self-reflective explorer of his/her own teaching practice. Their education is more academically oriented (with curricula consisted of individual disciplines recognized findings), or else, when practical, simple recipes proceedings.
- Curricula and methods of teacher education are out-of-date

- Lack of research dealing with teacher education issues (we had a recent discussion on teacher education when we had preparatory discussions for expanding primary school teachers' education from colleague to degree level, but without any previous research)
- Legal regulations on education are more based on providing jobs for people coming out of University, than on needs for becoming a good teacher

Social - general situation in the country (socio-economic and value system)

Three elements are concerned:

- 1) Discrepancy between legislation and practice
- 2) Overall poverty and low status of education inside it (low income of teachers, low standard of school equipment), that leads to
- 3) Low motivation of teachers and negative selection of young people who choose teaching for their career

Some of the above listed difficulties could be considered as very factors influencing current situation in education, as well as a consequence of some other factors that are more basic. Therefore, it is sometimes impossible to separate the situation (the difficulty) from causes leading to the situation. If we try to outline the most striking aspects of general social situation influencing teacher education, we should consider:

- wider social context and general characteristics of our society (valuing education and teacher job, social status of teachers as a professional group, context for research in social issues...)
- methodology of organizing our system of education and network of educational institutions (bureaucracy and centralization, current situation at school...)
- -individual and collective initiatives and action (learnt passivity of an individual, belief in external determinism; interplay of individual and group interests and power).

All these circumstances are useful not only for understanding the current situation, but also as a background for identifying new resources and ways of changes. During the year 2001. the discussions at all levels already started about the current situation with a systematic assessment and elaboration of an overall proposal for reform of the educational system reform. Teacher education reform has been recognised as its crucial component. One of the precursors for real change is extensive involvement and respect for the contribution of different groups of participants in the debate: from students, teachers and parents up to the university experts, administrators and government representatives.

Guidelines for an Alternative Teacher Education Model

Given the teacher education system in our country described above, we, as teacher trainers are often challenged to reflect on questions of how to improve what we offer to our students/prospective teachers:

1. What are the objectives of my course?
2. What content to include in course syllabus in order to meet these objectives?
3. What types of knowledge do I expect my students to acquire?
4. How to organize my teaching so to make a connection between pre- and in-service teacher education?
5. How to prepare prospective teachers to act in a whole range of situations they might face?

6. How to educate teachers to become promoters of education system reform, instead of its obstacle?

All these questions can be clustered around topics arising from what is our image of a good teacher: good technician, his/her knowledge applier or creator and researcher? The preferred model leads to a solution for the basic dilemma of what knowledge we expect our students to acquire: more academic, concept-oriented knowledge about the issues relevant for teaching profession or building skills and attitudes covering the diversity of needs and alive classroom situations? Being a pedagogist and a psychologist by background, we also face a dilemma how to build a shared discourse with our history students so to bridge our differences in type of our education? How to build a network of their knowledges in history and psychology-pedagogy? How to support our students in their professional identity development so to strengthen teacher, rather than historian part of it? How to teach prospective history teachers to teach history as a multicultural course, how to teach them to teach their pupils in multicultural values and tolerance?

Reflection on these dilemmas, together with the opportunity to get to know more about alternative, different programs has fostered an authentic motivation to change our own practice. These dilemmas are the ones we as teacher trainers face, but they are shared by all those concerned with securing good teacher education, and, in general, good teaching.

At present circumstance to not allow us to create a structured model of teacher education. What we can do is to discuss some principle guidelines for approaching the issue and about some of our experiences in leading teacher training courses that we have organized and implemented in a different, alternative way. The starting point for this new approach to teacher education lies in re-exploring and, when possible, redefining the aims, curricula and methods of teacher education in an interactive framework as opposed to traditional, prescriptive manner. This alternative framework means a different relationship between teacher practice at school and teacher training (preparation) for this practice; different roles for teachers and different types of classroom dynamics both in teacher training courses and in (prospective) teacher work at school.

Aims

Our aim is not to train students/prospective teachers to become expert in lecturing, knowledge transmitting and assessing, nor to become (at least not only) "curriculum consumers". We want them to learn how to become professionals, capable to take an active attitude toward their own practice and open to continuous reflecting this practice. This means continuous re-examining of one's own teaching aims in relationship with planned curricula and active teaching methods.

Contents of the framework

In the term of the course content selected as relevant for prospective teachers, we argue that teacher trainers (as well as all teachers) have to have in mind significance, not only of 'knowledge about' scientific issues relevant to the given subject matter, but also, the importance of re-examining and building prospective teacher's attitudes toward theoretical knowledge and practical issues. To do so we need to include in our curricula some of the issues neglected in current system: self-assertiveness, empathy, attitudes, communication skills, cultural diversity, tolerance, human and children rights awareness, meaning of multiculturalism in education, problem identifying and stating, openness to new ideas and attitude changes, community work. All of these elements are selected in accordance with stated aims, and do not represent list of themes as structured facets of curricula. They should rather be

considered as areas in what we would like to help our students to: construct personally relevant meanings and attitudes that will have a dynamic power and influence their behavior in their future teaching career, and, develop skills necessary to deal with problems and challenges in their everyday practice.

In short, we argue that what prospective teachers need to acquire in their pre-service training is not declarative 'knowledge about', but a practice-oriented network of knowledge together with the readiness and capacity to act in accordance with this knowledge.

Methods

In order to realize our stated aims, to develop desired meanings and skills in our students/prospective teachers, we try to use teaching methods that are more promising in terms of influencing their personality and attitudes than the previous system. These are active teaching methods, particularly workshops using experiential learning as the main type of learning. Teaching methods that we have had the opportunity to master and implement in our in-service programs are based on trainees' own experiences and problems they had detected. Since our students, prospective teachers, do not have teaching experiences, simulation games and role-playing are emphasised in our activities. Using these active teaching methods, we provide students/teachers with the opportunity to learn the method of teaching through direct experience, together with the facets of knowledge/skill involved as a workshop topic. In doing so, teacher trainer shares her/his own meanings and skills with her students in accordance with her/his stated pedagogical principles.

An example from our own research on classroom interaction gave us the evidence that over 70% of classroom behavior was lecturing, i.e. verbal instruction in the form of one-way information giving. If we criticize this type of teaching practice in our course and describe strategies teachers can implement to increase pupils' active participation, this is going to remain as a declarative statement only. But, if we organize our course in the form of workshop, and assign students the task to try to find possible ways to increase pupils' initiative and active participation in the classroom, we can expect with higher probability that our students, once in a classroom, will try to foster their pupils' participation since: they've got experiential evidence that this is meaningful.

They have learned the method to make it real. Of course, we can't consider methods separately from aims and course content. Both aims and course content depend on the methods we choose. Our selection of methods is contingent upon our aims and orientation in content selection. It is a rather complex dynamic network of double binds.

Benefits

In the light of the above-proposed new aims, contents and methods in teacher education model, we describe a number of our experiences of implementing this model with our students/teachers. Our experiences are, for now, limited to parts of our two courses – pedagogy and psychology – on pre-service level and some in-service teacher training programs. The evaluation data provided us with a list of the main benefits participants gained from active learning methods and seminar contents like:

- changes in their perception of the teaching profession in general
- changes in attitudes towards pupils' needs, rights and entitlement
- better communication skills

- mastering of new methods and forms of practice as well as
- successful strategies for motivating pupils
- improvement of co-operation with parents, colleagues and community in general
- enrichment of and redefining their own goals (the goals are not referred to cognitive only, but they expanded to socio-emotional, group dynamics management, and so on)
- rising awareness on the need to build a critical attitude towards the authority of the institution and the habit of continuing re-exploring it
- Changes in personal qualities and values towards flexibility, non-directiveness, openness, responsibility, tolerance and personal commitments.

Both, students and teachers felt that these training programs contributed to increasing their confidence, efficacy in their decision-making processes, openness to changes and recognizing other's needs, their optimism and readiness to act, readiness to explore themselves critically (their attitudes and practice), accepting one's own responsibility, tolerance to uncertainty.

We, as trainers/course leaders shared with our trainees a satisfaction and joy with the new programs compared to the traditional ones, opportunities to exchange our experiences in a new and more relevant way that this new approach provides.

Suggestions to Trainers

The ideas we have presented for the reform of teacher education is one of many possibilities. We do not argue that colleagues should accept our approach as a prescription to be used in every context, but as a framework for both overall orientation and elements a teaching or teacher training program (course).

Each individual course should be a programme for action, with different outcomes in different contexts. Each course would encompass diverse groups of creators/participants, students/prospective teachers, and teacher trainers/course leaders... Most important for the teacher educator is to develop a procedure of continuous training assessment, self-monitoring and reflecting his/her own work. To do so, one can:

- take notes on his/her own observation, impressions, feelings, experiences;
- ask students about their expectations at the beginning of the course
- ask students to make their comments, express their ideas freely
- ask students to evaluate newly acquired knowledge and skills, their feelings in relation to their expectation
- ask students to express freely their assessments of contents (themes, topics, issues), methods and outcomes (their personal profits, changes)
- get involved in a team work with some colleagues covering related subject matter
- video-tape classroom events
- Keep in touch with former students – now working as teachers – and monitor unmet needs – what they feel now had not been met during the training...

These are changes in teacher training practice one could make inside the system described, in spite of obstacles given in the first part of this paper that are part of the macro context we work and live in. Teacher trainers should be leaders of, and agents of change, in building more active attitude towards some aspects of the teaching context, through:

- 1) taking the initiative to build a closer connections between subject matter courses (major) and teacher education courses

- 2) overcoming de-contextualized character of the current teacher education itself
- 3) changing the relationship between school and university (establishing connections and co-operation)
- 4) undertaking activities leading to awareness of the need for increasing role of teacher education courses in University studies plan

Concerned and conscious teacher educators will find other opportunities than those listed for taking new initiatives that lead to small step-by-step changes of the quality of teacher education as well as bigger ones. S/he will be continuously researching or fostering how his/her students undertake research aimed to identify new ways forward. Finally, s/he will be continuously searching for any resources to develop new policies in teacher education aimed at the improvement of the wider social context so to provide higher quality of educational system in general.

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In-service training seminars:

Using the Primer on children's rights in promoting the UN Convention

Parents and teachers in action: Education for the rights of the child

Building partnership between professionals and parents of children with disability

In-service training of teachers in special education for implementing the programs:

"Affirmation of child's personality" and "Creative introductory math workshop"...