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ARTICLE



## History of education. State of the art in East and South East Europe: introducing the special issue

Vučina Zorić <sup>a</sup>, Edvard Protner<sup>b</sup>, Simonetta Polenghi <sup>c</sup> and Antonio Fco Canales <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Pedagogy, University of Montenegro, Nikšić, Montenegro; <sup>b</sup>Department of Education, University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia; <sup>c</sup>Department of Education, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy; <sup>d</sup>Departamento de Estudios Educativos, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

### ABSTRACT

This text introduces the special issue “History of Education. State of the art in East and South East Europe”. This issue includes some contributions that were originally presented in the international scientific conference entitled “History of Education as a Scientific Pedagogical Discipline and as a Teaching Subject – Past, Present and Perspectives” held in Montenegro (University of Montenegro) in 2019. These articles provide an overview of the history of education as a scientific discipline of education, as an academic discipline of pedagogy and as a field of pedagogical research from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century in Eastern and Southeastern European countries, highlighting its main development stages, problems, contexts, themes and actors.

### ARTICLE HISTORY



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This issue of *Paedagogica Historica* is a product of the international scientific conference held in Montenegro (University of Montenegro), on 25–26 June 2019. At the event, 19 papers were presented (24 authors) from 16 countries. The central theme of the Conference – also covered in this issue – was entitled “History of Education as a Scientific Pedagogical Discipline and a Teaching Subject – Past, Present and Perspectives”. In this thematic issue, nine selected articles are presented, which largely represent and analyse the development and current characteristics of the history of education in the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Greece). In addition, researchers from outside the region of eastern and southeastern Europe (Belgium, Germany, Azerbaijan, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, as well as Ukraine and Bulgaria), also participated in the conference, which greatly enabled and enriched the comparative experiences of all participants.<sup>1</sup>

The organisation of the conference was the result of many years of cooperation, first of all, by the group of historians of education from the countries of the former Yugoslav republics. Namely, as a result of the collapse of the SFR Yugoslavia (1945–1991), a two-decade vacuum appeared in the communication and cooperation of local researchers in the field of history of education in several dimensions: life and

**CONTACT** Vučina Zorić  [vucina@ucg.ac.me](mailto:vucina@ucg.ac.me)  Faculty of Philosophy, Danila Bojovica bb, Nikšić 81400, Montenegro  
<sup>1</sup>Vučina Zorić, ed., *History of Education as a Scientific Pedagogical Discipline and a Teaching Subject – Past, Present and Perspectives (Book of Abstracts)* (Nikšić: Faculty of Philosophy – University of Montenegro, 2019).

work in the contexts and borders of the new states; different focuses of researchers; but at the same time, the desire and need for new forms of collaboration among researchers who shared almost the same values and systems in the once-common state, as well as the contemporary need to review the past and compare new experiences. However, at the beginning of the last decade, on the initiative of Professor Edvard Protner from Slovenia, a very intensive cooperation between historians of education from the area of the former Yugoslavia began. The outcomes of the collaboration were very diverse and had an upward trajectory of production through, for example, organisation of conferences<sup>2</sup> and publishing independent and joint papers,<sup>3</sup> very often in joint thematic issues of journals<sup>4</sup> or monograph.<sup>5</sup> Parallel to the above, support and intensive cooperation were very important with colleagues from Central, Eastern and South East Europe through participation in conferences,<sup>6</sup> journals<sup>7</sup> and monographs, and professors Simonetta Polenghi, András Németh, Tomáš Kasper and Blanka Kudláčová played leading roles in this. These

<sup>2</sup>Edvard Protner and Marjan Krašna, eds., *Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Conference "The Development of Teacher Education in the Countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe", 11–13 October 2012, Maribor, Slovenia. Organiser: Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor) (Maribor: University of Maribor, 2012); Nataša Vujisić Živković, ed., *The Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Symposium "Socialistic Education and Pedagogy in Former Yugoslavia 1945–1990", 15–16 November 2014, Belgrade, Serbia. Organiser: Institute of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade) (Belgrade: Institute of Pedagogy and Andragogy – Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, 2014); Edvard Protner and Marjan Krašna, eds., *Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Conference "Between Tradition and Future Challenges: The Study of Pedagogy in Central and South-East Europe", 22–24 October 2015, Maribor, Slovenia. Organiser: Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor) (Maribor: University of Maribor, 2015); Igor Radeka, Štefka Batinić, Edvard Protner, and Vučina Zorić, eds., *Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Symposium "Alternative Pedagogical Concept in the territory of the former Yugoslavia", 4–5 November 2016, Zadar, Croatia. Organiser: Department of Pedagogy – University of Zadar) (Zadar: University of Zadar, 2016); and Edvard Protner, Jernej Kovač, and Marjan Krašna, eds., *Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Conference "Studies in Pedagogy – Traces of the Past and Future Prospects", 26–27 November 2017, Maribor, Slovenia. Organisers: Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor in Cooperation with the Slovenian Pedagogical Association and the Slovenian Educational Research Association) (Maribor: University of Maribor Press, 2017); 2nd International Scientific and Professional Conference "Ka novim iskoracima u odgoju i obrazovanju", 5–6 October 2018, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Organiser: Odsjek za pedagogiju – Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Sarajevu; i Ministarstvo za obrazovanje, nauku i mlade Kantona Sarajevo.

<sup>3</sup>Edvard Protner and others, "Primerjava razvoja izobraževanja učiteljev v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije", *Šolska kronika* 21, no. 1–2 (2012): 82–100; and Edvard Protner and others, "Bologna Reform of Subject Teacher Education in the Newly Founded States in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia", *Zbornik Instituta za pedagoška istraživanja* 46, no. 1 (2014): 7–28.

<sup>4</sup>*Analiz za povijest odgoja* 12, no. 2 (2013); *Sodobna pedagogika* 66/132, no. 2 (2015); *Sodobna pedagogika* 67/133, no. 3 (2016); and *Acta Iadertina* 14, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>5</sup>Edvard Protner, ed., *Razvoj i aktualne tendencije pedagogije i školstva na području nekadasnje Jugoslavije* (Maribor: Univerza v Mariboru, 2020).

<sup>6</sup>International Symposium "Teacher Training in Europe – Historical Background, Development and Actual Reforms", 7–9 October 2011, Eger, Hungary. Organiser: Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest; International Scientific Symposium "Education and Schooling in the Hand-Cuffs of Totalitarian Beliefs and Systems", 1–2 June 2015, Liberec, Czech Republic. Organiser: Technical university of Liberec; Blanka Kudláčová and Marek Wiesenganger, eds., *Conference Programme and Abstracts* (International Scientific Symposium "Continental Pedagogy – Its Issues and Challenges Through the Lens of History and Philosophy", 17–18 November 2016, Smolenice Castle, Slovakia. Organisers: Trnava University in Trnava, Faculty of Education in a partnership with Central European Philosophy of Education Society) (Trnava: Trnava University in Trnava – Faculty of Education, 2016); International Scientific Symposium "New Education and New School in New Europe", 20–21 September 2018, Prague, Czech Republic. Organisers: The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Faculty of Sciences, Humanities and Education – Technical University Liberec; and National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague; Blanka Kudláčová and Anna Sádovská, eds., *Book of Abstracts* (International Scientific Conference "Education in Totalitarian Ideologies of the 20th Century", 17–18 October 2019, Smolenice, Slovakia. Organisers: Trnava University in Trnava, Faculty of Education in a partnership with Central European Philosophy of Education Society) (Trnava: Trnava University in Trnava; Bratislava: VEDA publishing house of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2019); etc.

<sup>7</sup>*History of Education & Children's Literature* 8, no. 1 (2013); *Historia scholastica* 2, no. 1 (2016); *Historia scholastica* 5, no. 1 (2019); and *History of Education & Children's Literature* 16, no. 1 (2021).

were quite successful ways to present numerous segments from the field of history of education of the former Yugoslavia<sup>8</sup> beyond the local borders to the wider European professional public.

However, there are many more questions to consider, and one that pervades the articles in this thematic issue of the journal is the “problem” of terminology. The reader should consider the different traditions of constituting the field of education research. While in the Anglo-Saxon world this field is understood as an interdisciplinary study of educational processes and practices, in the countries under consideration this field developed within the continental tradition under a strong German influence. While in the English-speaking world the term pedagogy suggests a practical activity, in the continental tradition it is an independent academic discipline with its own autonomy and theoretical construction. The reader must understand from the context when pedagogy is mentioned as a practical activity and when it is meant as an independent discipline at the level of a study programme or subject, originally named *Pädagogik* in German. The construction of this research field in its starting point differs from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, since everything that we understand in the English language by the word education here breaks down into two conceptually separate concepts (which are otherwise considered in their interdependence), namely *Erziehung* and *Bildung*.<sup>9</sup> Hence the English term *education* has a wider spectrum of meanings, which in other languages require more words, and the German *Pädagogik* does not coincide with *pedagogy*, which is much narrower in content.<sup>10</sup>

These conceptual differences are the cause of many translation dilemmas for the authors in the thematic issue. The term *Pädagogik* is sometimes translated as *educational science* or *science of education*. Since the term *Allgemeine Bildung* as a label for the central theoretical subject in the structure of *pedagogy* is unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world, it is translated by the term *theory of education*. And last but not least, what we call here the *history of education* is usually called *the history of pedagogy* in the original languages. Translational dilemmas stemming from conceptual differences will always be present. But in the scientific community that publishes in the English language, the knowledge of the above-mentioned conceptual differences should gradually become an established standard that would allow the understanding of the concepts without constant additional clarification.

An additional problem and paradox relates to the importance and consideration of fundamental contents from the history of education itself, such as the ideas of Friedrich Herbart, which are considered by the author Edvard Protner in his article on the

<sup>8</sup>András Németh and Ehrenhard Skiera, eds., *Lehrerbildung in Europa – Geschichte, Struktur und Reform* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2012); Tomáš Kasper and Marketa Pánková, eds., *Učitel ve střední a jihovýchodní Evropě* (Praha: The Academia – Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic & Národní pedagogické museum a knihovna J.A. Komenského, 2015); Blanka Kudláčková and Andrej Rajskey, eds., *Education and “Pädagogik” – Philosophical and Historical Reflections (Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers; and Bratislava: VEDA Publishing house of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2019); and Tomáš Kasper, Ehrenhard Skiera, and Gerald Grimm, eds., *Lehrerbildung im europäischen Kontext* (Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>Gert Biesta, “Disciplines and Theory in the Academic Study of Education: A Comparative Analysis of the Anglo-American and Continental Construction of the Field”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 19, no. 2 (2011): 175–192.

<sup>10</sup>Blanka Kudláčková and Andrej Rajskey, “Introduction”, in *Education and “Pädagogik” – Philosophical and Historical Reflections (Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe)*, eds. Blanka Kudláčková and Andrej Rajskey (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers; and Bratislava: VEDA Publishing house of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2019), 11–20; see also Zdenko Kodolja, “What is Philosophy of Education?”, *ivi*, 23–31.

development of history of education as a school and study course in Slovenia through the reception of J. F. Herbart. Namely, Protner points out that Herbart's reception and interpretations were followed by numerous misinterpretations, even from those who were sympathetic or tried to be objective interpreters and analysts, and only in recent times has there been a positive shift in this field. The above was analysed very skilfully through the process of developing the history of education in Slovenia. Both Herbart's ideas and the history of education itself as a teaching subject and a scientific discipline have long been on a downward trajectory in the intensity of consideration, representation and status. The author points out that they were always subject to various social, ideological and other interpretations, needs and trends, which all depended to a large extent on the holder of the history of education course in educational institutions in Slovenia.

A positive example of the increase in the importance and representation of the subject history of education is to be found at the University of Sarajevo precisely through the work and initiatives of the holder of that subject, first of all Snježana Šušnjara, who is the author of the text named "History of education as a teaching subject in Bosnia and Herzegovina". However, the text also points out the problem of the lack of experts who were qualified to implement that subject in the past. Also, what, in addition to ideological, political and other factors in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, shaped the status itself, and even more the contents of the history of education and their interpretations, were, and to a large extent still are today, not only national but also confessional aspirations and different nations.

A kind of synthesis of the experiences of both previous examples can be found to a significant extent in the text by Nataša Vujisić Živković "The development of History of Education as a Teaching Subject in Serbia (1871–1989)". Despite the fact that the history of education in Serbia today has reached its enviable development through cooperation with general historians on projects from the national history of education and schooling, research and publication with historians of education from the region and abroad, the orientation and achievements of the academic discipline were not accompanied by an increase, but by the reduction of the role of the history of education in the professional education of teachers in Serbia. History of education as a scientific discipline in Serbia had undergone different phases until the break-up of Yugoslavia: from Christian-oriented support for teacher training, through fitting into current developments in cultural history, to a particular propaedeutic of the method of dialectical materialism for all disciplines of pedagogy until the beginning of the nineties of the last century.

Almost the same situation was and is present today in Montenegro, as we can see in the work of Vučina Zorić on the subject "History of education as a scientific discipline and a teaching subject in Montenegro – past, present and perspectives", but with another paradox. Namely, in recent decades, there has been a significant decline in the status of history of education as a subject in teacher education in Montenegro. However, there is a huge increase in interest in researching the subjects of that scientific discipline (especially national history of education) by historians, psychologists, linguists, primary-school teachers, preschool teachers, sociologists, managers, lawyers, etc., and on the other hand, since 1993, history of education has not been reaffirmed as a teaching subject by the study programmes to which the experts from the above-mentioned fields belong (Department of History, Department of Psychology, etc.). It is important to know that

during the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, the most important influence on the history of education in Montenegro was from Russia (that is, the Soviet Union), and on the other hand it is interesting that the influence of ideas from Western Europe was present in the period between the two world wars and then it has become more and more dominant in recent decades, which is reflected in the research topics of those dealing with the history of education in Montenegro. This points to the fact that the historical periodisation used in Zorić's study is not linear but full of dynamics and twists and turns due to the influence of politics and educational policies in Montenegro, regardless of whether it was an independent state or part of a state union.

Suzana Miovska Spaseva's contribution entitled "The history of education as a teaching subject and academic discipline: Macedonian pathways and crossroads" presents the position and the ideological background of the study of the history of education in Macedonia over a span of almost 80 years, i.e. from the late 1920s until 2004. Teacher education and the academic path of educational study met in the 1980s, when the education of primary-school teachers and education specialists faced the common university challenges, but since then the academic position of the history of education has been declining over the years, in both teaching and research. Reflecting on the causes, attention is paid to the ideological turnovers: from the Marxist and Leninist theory of education that was dominant in the socialist period to the neoliberal agenda in education implemented since the late 1980s. The author raises a broader issue about the history of education itself in the context of understanding the modern world increasingly dominated by market principles and consumerism, and, consequently, of understanding contemporary university education, which is moving away from its original concept that teaching, learning and research are integrated to serve the culture and humanity.

A similar ideological experience was also found in Hungary, as one can see in Zoltán András Szabó, Imre Garai and András Németh's text entitled "The history of education in Hungary from the mid-nineteenth century to present day". Besides an overview about the emergence and evolvement of the history of education in Hungary, the authors managed to surpass the traditional approach of giving a schematic description of these processes in an effort to depict the interconnectedness of the Hungarian history of education with the European research tendencies and the thematic variety of the Hungarian research activities. Although history of education in Hungary lost its former status in the curricula of university training programmes, it remained an intensive research field within education sciences. As in many of the former socialist countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, in Hungary the present state of history of education can be characterised by the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon impacts, the signs of the German-Austrian traditions and the fading inheritance of the former Soviet- Russian influence.

The essence, characteristics and dynamics of the development of history of education in the state of the Czech Republic are presented in the article by Tomáš Kasper entitled "The field of history of education – from development to stagnation, crisis and perhaps a 'new' beginning: the Czech example". His study focuses on the analysis of three levels: 1) the current position of history of education both among the representatives of educational sciences and within history; 2) the development in the interwar period, when the Czech educational sciences were oriented on the spirit of positivism and progressivism; and 3) the period after the Second World War within the Marxist-

oriented educational sciences and the formation of communist society. In conclusion, Kasper poses a common problem and questions why the history of education in educational sciences has been weakened since the beginning of the twenty-first century, while in history its position has been strengthened and further developed. Also, the author points out as a very important fact that the ideological influence on science led to a considerable profanation of the “theoretical starting points” of education, of the philosophical foundations of education, which led after 1989 to a strong inclination towards evidence-based research in education. In addition, this trend has been supported by the demands of national and transnational organisations measuring and comparing educational outcomes.

Slovakia had a lot of common history and history of education with the Czech Republic – Slovakia was part of Czechoslovakia with an interruption between 1939 and 1945. The article by Blanka Kudláčová, titled “History of education as study subject and academic discipline: the case of Slovakia”, is focused on the development of history of education from 1918 to 1992. The author points out that in Slovakia, as in the Czech Republic and many other European countries, history of education is closely connected to and impacted by the nature of institutions where it has been carried out, by the pedagogical erudition and scientific potential of personalities who have provided it, and by the wider political-social context. Kudláčová’s research and findings have shown that in the past at teacher training schools, history of education together with theory of education (orig. pedagogika) and didactics (orig. didaktika) formed basic educational disciplines. The big question is to what extent history of education as a subject is recognised and important in the education of future teachers today and in which way it is experienced.

And not only in the case of Greece, history of education was often included in other courses related to the foundations of education, as evidenced by Panagiotis Kimourtzis and Ioannis Betsas in the article “History of education in Greece: achievements, short-falls, and challenges”. In the last 10 years, inadequate staff reproduction led to renegotiating subject areas offered to prospective teachers. History of education faces challenges in terms of teaching status in university and a renewal of research perspectives. This fact is associated with insufficient renewal of the field with young researchers and a reduction of the interest in PhD studies in the history of education. The authors also state that research in the field of history of education faces challenges towards a transnational and transcultural understanding of the educational past and a renewal of research perspectives with emerging issues in the international research agenda. Despite a remarkable progress towards internationalisation of research work, history of education in Greece seems to be at a critical juncture – as seems to be the case in many countries.

The aforementioned researches represents the first ever attempt to present and analyse the topic “history of education as a scientific pedagogical discipline and a teaching subject” in a very comprehensive manner in certain countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The jointly researched topics provide a deep insight into the contribution of the process through which individuals, institutions and ideas have shaped education and history of education, in countries that had and have a lot in common. However, it turns out that even today, “besides the pressure of the research traditions, the specifically methodological problems related to the study of the history of the educational



reality also bedevil the historians of education”.<sup>11</sup> It certainly can and should be a reason for new researches on the history of the history of education as a discipline.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes on contributors

*Vučina Zorić* is Full Professor of History of Education in the Department of Pedagogy, University of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro.

*Edvard Protner* is Full Professor of History of Education and Head of the Department of Education at the University of Maribor, Slovenia.

*Simonetta Polenghi* is Full Professor of History of Education in the Department of Education at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy.

*Antonio Fco Canales* is Full Professor of History of Education at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. He is currently a member of the ISCHE Executive Committee.

### ORCID

Vučina Zorić  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8857-3310>

Simonetta Polenghi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7685-9925>

Antonio Fco Canales  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7035-1194>

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<sup>11</sup>Marc Depaep and Frank Simon, "Is there any Place for the History of 'Education' in the 'History of Education'? A Plea for the History of Everyday Educational Reality In- and Outside Schools", *Paedagogica Historica* 31, no. 1 (1995): 9–16, 10.