

INSTITUTE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION

Belgrade, 2024

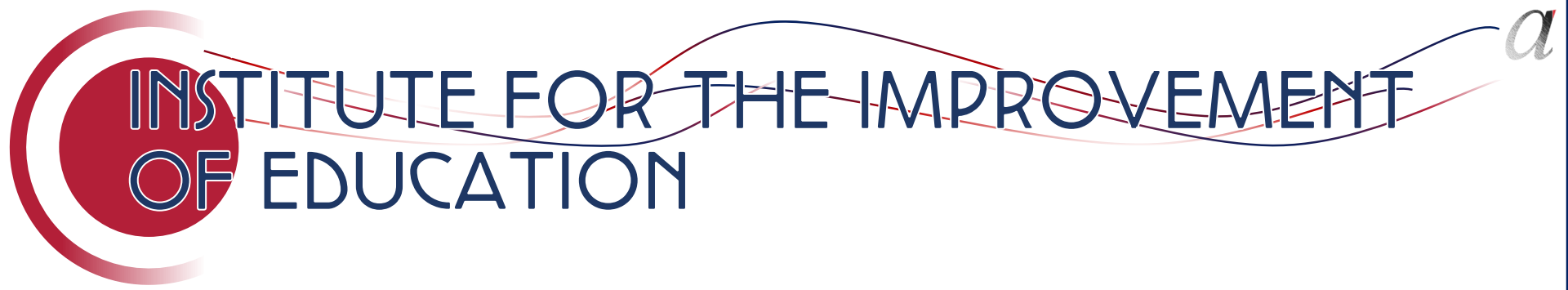
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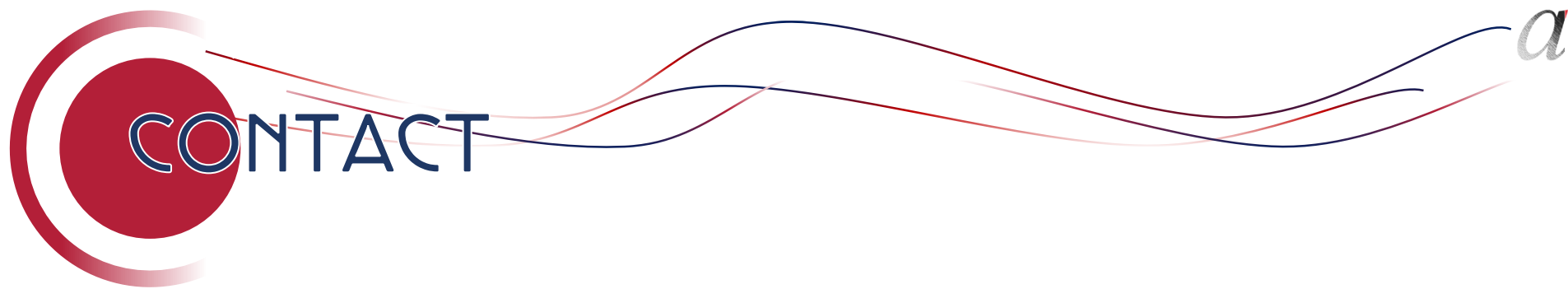
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	27
STRUCTURE	30
SCOPE OF ACTIVITY	31
CENTRES AS THE INSTITUTE'S MAIN HUBS	34
CENTRE FOR CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT	35
CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS	37
CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION	39
KEEPING PACE WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	41
NATIONAL EDUCATION PORTAL (NOP)	42
DIGITAL MENTORS	44
PROJECTS, COLLABORATORS AND KEY RESULTS	45
PUBLICATIONS	49
ONGOING OPEN COMPETITIONS	51
KEEP IN TOUCH	52



INTRODUCTION

TEACHER, CURRICULUM, TEXTBOOK AND STUDENT IN AN EVER-SWIRLING PEDAGOGICAL VORTEX

(through the lens of the past in the book *Pedagogy* by Lj. M. Protić)

What would be the characteristics of quality education? First and foremost a) quality teacher (a competent teacher who professionally develops and uses all available teaching methods) b) quality curriculum (a curriculum which is not overly detailed and “bounded”, but provides clear and simple guidelines focused on outcomes and functional knowledge rather than the content to be reproduced) c) quality textbook (a textbook which makes it possible for the student to review and apply the knowledge acquired in class). There are therefore three main pillars of education that should be developed. Where do we err while developing these pillars? As always, there are many mistakes that can be rectified and corrected: a curriculum focusing too much on content rather than outcomes, failure to apply functional knowledge and reliance on the curriculum content, overreliance on textbooks as the sole teaching resource, textbooks that are “churned out” and that compete in sales instead of quality, faculties that train teachers to become scientists rather than teachers, educational strategies that are long-term but also changeable depending on circumstances etc.

Are textbooks the foundation of education? Yes! Textbooks are the foundation of education if the education system is weak or insufficiently developed! It is only in such an education system that discussions revolve around mistakes in textbooks, textbook purchases, sales and re-sales, textbook wars among different publishing houses or textbook authors, defence of textbooks against anti-national organisations trying to

spread their ideas through textbooks, attempts of nationalist movements at increasing nationalist and annulling non-nationalist curriculum content and so on and so forth. In all this turmoil we forget who the textbook serves – the student. Why does the student need a textbook?

There are numerous definitions of a textbook as a teaching material but to put it simply: it should serve as a reminder of the knowledge and skills that the teacher has taught the student, or rather “has led the student through” in class. And naturally, it helps the student practise and apply the gained knowledge, if the textbook is interactive in any form. This would be the most simplified role of a textbook. So what are the roots of such distrust towards textbooks? Why do we either attach so much significance to textbooks or downplay their importance? The textbook is a necessary condition for education but it is not sufficient, nor is it fundamental. It is the teacher who should mentor the student through a myriad of important and unnecessary information (easily accessible to students themselves). Has our system lost faith in the teacher or has the teacher become too reliant on the textbook?

If we take a look at other countries, we can observe that all three mentioned segments are developed in those countries that have cherished the trust in teachers (competent teachers who have completed their education specifically to become teachers and not scientists), who use an “open” curriculum in a creative manner. This trust extends to the curriculum that fosters creativity of the teacher, trust in the publisher, but above all and ultimately, trust in teachers’ ability to select the best textbook for their students (just as nowadays medicine tailors treatments to individual patients, education should also be adapted to each student because equal

education for all does not necessarily mean quality education for all). Therefore, the future of education lies in an open curriculum that competent teachers put to creative use in their teaching (using integrative teaching strategies, contextually, individually), making cross-curricular connections (the boundaries of individual teaching subjects disappear and different subjects are taught through the prism of one subject never losing sight of key competences), accompanied by a heuristic textbook (a customised interactive student-tailored textbook based on the experience and instructional competence of the teacher). In order to have such future, it will take us a lot of strength to conquer “the fear of freedom”. To move toward this not-so-distant future (since many countries either already have the mentioned pillars of quality education or are in the process of building them), let us revisit the pedagogical past once more and perhaps draw some precious conclusions for the pedagogical future.

If we explore our pedagogical past, we will discover many problems of the present time that existed in the past centuries as well. Different tendencies in education, just like art and cultural movements, begin, persist, fade away and re-emerge at certain points in future. A quick glance at the past can be found in *Pedagogy* by Ljuba Protić (<https://zuov.gov.rs/3d-flip-book/pedagoska-pitanja/>), a book published by the Institute for the Improvement of Education in 2008. This collection of texts written by an education professional at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century provides an interesting perspective. After reading the first few pages, we notice almost identical pedagogical realities now and then, many similar topics and many similarities in the mentioned pillars of education. We will therefore try to analyse these texts written almost a century ago

and draw an analogy with education today.

To begin with, if a contemporary journalist were to publish this text on textbooks (written 94 years ago), no one would notice the difference of more than nine decades: “To answer your first question, we must say that in our schools, primarily public ones, there is a rule of chaos or, as the Germans would put it, *Unfug* – disarray, disorder, lawlessness. We can no longer talk about textbooks, school books that are first carefully considered and then written, but instead we deal with the fabrication of numerous, often weak, manufacturers of all sorts of things that are brought into schools, which children and their parents are then asked to buy. I would say that we have no curriculum or pedagogical goal ahead of us; we witness ordinary trade in poor-quality products that are, as a rule, harmful to the school, students and genuine educators, and beneficial only to the manufacturers and publishers. They want to squander and waste money, to achieve materialistic gains, and to this end they exploit students’ parents as much as possible. Books are printed for all students, with no difference, and students are expected to buy them even when they don’t yet know how to read! Books for all teaching subjects and all grades are sold at the school market and it seems that no means are spared to push all sorts of the so-called books; there were so many of them even before the World War but now they are countless, numberless. They are produced in large quantities, both by those who understand their purpose and those who do it only hoping to sell them at the vast school market. And now because of that someone writes to school inspectors, don’t be surprised if it is a former regional school inspector: “We kindly ask you just to mention... recommend this book to the schools under your jurisdiction... For your service and effort we

are offering you 5% of the gross price...if the teachers mention your recommendation in the purchase order. We will keep precise record of everything and in November this year we will calculate your fee and send it to your address.” In other words: go ahead, make people spend as much as possible on our products and it will be good both for us and for you!

Another textbook author, or rather a second-rate manufacturer, gets hold of his merchandise and goes from school to school, getting in teachers’ way pleading with them to order his goods. During these encounters, he uses the opportunity to criticise others and, when necessary, he even threatens if they don’t promise to buy his merchandise.

However, it is impossible to get everywhere and criticise in person. So long written complaints are submitted, like this one: “I don’t have the slightest doubt that you will do your best to ensure that my school books are used as much as possible in your district. They are carefully and meticulously prepared and methodical... The books written by so and so are the same as before, there is no difference, and it’s a fraud. Advocate for their use as much as possible, not just for my personal benefit but in the interest of the school and teachers. Our honour demands that my book should be chosen (remember this well).” You want to know: whose honour does he mean by the word “our”? He must mean the honour of all teachers as if they were all responsible for his follies because he undoubtedly has no honour of his own when he is capable of sending such awful and unworthy letters. It truly baffles the mind to hear and see these insults directed at teachers who are expected to listen to such unworthy advertisements and nasty, vile gossips that even a grocer wouldn’t resort to. And

on the other hand, we all speak about the teacher's freedom and the fight against the state monopoly over school books! This is what some parents complain about. And that's why there is often chaos in our schools. This is the reason why the education that is free according to the Constitution is an illusionary provision since school fees are charged in a particular way by certain speculators to whom the well-being of school, students and teachers is the least of their concerns (Protić: 112–114).”

The above text describes the liberal textbook market in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the two world wars. If nowadays you read newspaper articles addressing textbooks, you will not only see a series of accusations among different publishing houses, criticism that school principals and teachers take and receive money to choose certain textbooks, complaints from parents related to the price and quality of textbooks but also the identical thoughts and activities related to free education according to the Constitution and free textbooks stemming from that. It seems that agents have been continuously going from school to school selling textbooks and lobbying for a whole century.

We live in the time marked by constant controversy around national and anti-national content in textbooks and it is precisely this situation that Protić writes about, but in his own time: “They have come up with a formula that sometimes proves to be tricky: they give temporary approvals for something, or they publish only one edition, but as a private one, as if less harm is done in that way, or they say the second edition must be corrected, but it never is. Another time they say everything must be reviewed and examined to make sure there is nothing contrary to state and national interests. And sometimes they find nothing dangerous, but

sometimes the approval is given even when there is a lot of anti-state matter that an official in charge failed to take notice of. Sometimes people were even stripped of their office because they found something separatist or contrary to state and national interests in a textbook and they pointed it out! And they were removed from their positions by the highest representatives of the education authorities who were supposed to protect state and school interests (Protić: 115).“ Therefore, Protić, as well as the public nowadays, is of the opinion that the content dealing with the past must be meticulously written as it is of crucial importance for preserving identity from an early age: “The reading material in the higher grades of public schools essentially relates to the information that sheds light on our past, on what was crucial for our present and future since it was this that left a deep mark on the soul of our people who then celebrated and immortalised it (Protić: 130).“

So it seems that the lack of trust in those who write textbooks and those who evaluate them has not changed even after a whole century. It seems that there have always been suspicions that someone tries to insert anti-national interests in textbooks. Nowadays, on a weekly basis, organisations, politicians or parents present some mistakes they have found in textbooks, or point out certain topics they consider inappropriate, or share their opinions on a certain subject regardless of how much they know about it. Unfortunately, since we live at the time when knowledge is easily accessible through social networks and everyone can competently discuss any topic, it is impossible to oppose the rule of fault-finding and turn to constructive criticism. Everyone is a judge today and “is the first to cast the stone“ without first looking inward or around themselves. Where is

the way out? Or rather the way into quality education? It is, undoubtedly, the teacher!

The teacher is the key, and a good teacher should be paid, and educated, and given the opportunity to professionally develop. A good teacher is capable of using even bad textbooks or may not use them at all. A good teacher can implement a bad curriculum in a good way. In the sea of false information from social networks, doubts, hatred and injustice, a good teacher can guide students “between Scylla and Charybdis” to functional knowledge and critical thinking. Alongside a good teacher, a solid and supportive education system is a safe course of development, while textbooks and all other elements of an education system will either follow the set course or will not hinder it. Speaking of a good teacher not needing a textbook, let us see what Protić wrote in 1928: “Pedagogical science, however, believes that true teachers who want to incite interest in their students must never rely on a textbook, even the best one, and not just in terms of the sequence of the teaching matter but concerning the teaching matter itself. Not a single textbook takes into account the apperceptive representations of individual students as they are unknown. The spiritual and intellectual side of each student is different and can only become known through direct conversation between the teacher and the student. This is why there is not a single textbook that can be the true source of a student’s knowledge. The source of real knowledge is only what teachers and students collaboratively work on and then organise systematically. In higher grades, especially in the highest ones in grammar schools, the only purpose of textbooks for certain subjects is to repeat, consolidate and memorise what has been learnt (Protić: 116).“

Just as different movements in the history of arts appear, disappear and then re-emerge, or like history that repeats itself, pedagogy recurs in its own cyclic patterns. We can observe the journey from “rote learning” and “lecture-based” teaching in the past all the way to active and applicable learning. In just a few passages written by Ljuba Protić we recognise the same ideal then as we do now: that students should acquire applicable knowledge and skills and teaching should be interactive and based on problem-solving as this is the best way to gain knowledge and achieve learning outcomes. Consequently, we may add that one of the indicators of bad education is a bad curriculum, or in other words a teacher who relies solely on a textbook for instruction. Unfortunately, we had the same situation one hundred years ago: “This must be responded to: printed textbooks are absolutely unnecessary for proper teaching. However, if somebody justifies the use of textbooks by stating that there is not enough time to cover the required material, they inadvertently reveal their reluctance to teach properly and insist that students learn solely from textbooks (Protić: 120).” Speaking of textbooks and teachers, we can say now as well as then:...there are so many examples of teachers limiting themselves to a textbook and teaching word for word from it not knowing that the textbook has so many faults. That being said, it is the duty of teachers first of all to search for additional material from original sources, compare it and select the most important and indisputable content, elaborate on it and then prepare their own teaching materials. New, young teachers should spend a lot of time working on their lesson preparations for each class (Protić: 87).”

Nowadays many teachers adapt and plan their lessons based on what is written in textbooks instead of the

curriculum. However, if we go back to the initial thought that a textbook is not a necessary condition for quality teaching, we now move on to a necessary condition – a teacher, who responsibly participates in the selection of textbooks and teaching materials for students. Thus, if we now combine the teacher, the curriculum and the textbook with everything mentioned above, we reach the following model: the teacher is a necessary condition for quality education, while textbooks and curricula are sufficient conditions.

Neither the present nor the past age **requires a teacher who knows but a teacher who learns** and that is the difference – whether we want, for example, a historian, or a history teacher who improves the teaching system instead of increasing his scientific and research knowledge. The teacher of the future must be an agent of change and adaptation and it is the duty of the school to provide research methods and define problems. We therefore need the knowledge that thinks and not the knowledge that merely educates.

In recent years, pedagogical sciences in other countries have been shifting the focus from the student to the teacher, realising that in all countries with a high level of education, the teacher is the key. We should therefore motivate teachers, push them beyond their comfort zone, encourage them not just financially but firstly by offering them chances for career advancement and guidance by creating conditions for adequate professional development, creating tools for the mutual exchange of knowledge and cooperation among teachers and institutions.

In parallel with this, we should improve the system of selecting and motivating talented new teachers, not

only during recruitment but also when admitting them to faculties, because there is a huge gap that lies between theory and practice. The classroom is no place to transfer knowledge by constant repetition of facts but rather a starting point where students are offered a multitude of possibilities to acquire knowledge.

What is a curriculum? Simply put, a curriculum or an educational programme is a set of knowledge and skills that students should acquire in different periods of learning, or grades. Based on this set, teachers create their yearly plans in order to best guide their classes towards mastering this knowledge. Before becoming teachers, individuals need to be educated in two directions during their studies. One direction – knowledge based on science and research, and the other direction – pedagogy, learning how to transfer knowledge and lead students towards the acquisition of knowledge. An open curriculum therefore poses no problem to teachers who before working in school received their teaching education, but instead it enables them to freely create their own ways of transferring knowledge in accordance with the individual characteristics of their students and classes. The teacher needs to be empowered and then given autonomy and creativity in terms of the curriculum. An independent, experienced teacher who constantly works on the methods of transferring knowledge, who is interconnected with other teachers and spreads experience is the key to success. This is how Protić explained the curriculum and teaching in the first half of the 20th century: “What every teacher must teach is regulated by the curriculum. The curriculum, as is known, must include all teaching subjects that lead to an overall and well-rounded spiritual development of children. From all teaching subjects we select the content that has real values necessary for children’s development. This selection is not dependent upon the

teacher but education authorities. However, this does not mean that the teacher has no obligation to think about this. On the contrary, teachers must search for and find the sense in every piece of educational content of all subjects. Why should we teach the particular content? What specific goals are we aiming for and how will we align them with the highest educational and, subsequently, moral goals? (...) All teachers must find this on their own, select what should be taught, when and to what degree, sort everything out and connect it with other teaching content to achieve the unity of consciousness, concentration of thoughts and overall spiritual well-being. Without this, even the most sensible teaching content misses its true purpose as it cannot be in the service of the proper development of the mind of a child. It is therefore clear that a good curriculum, even if it is the ideal one, cannot put forward all the details of everything and that is the reason why a teacher's role in this matter is not only to teach students how to mechanically memorise the content prescribed by the curriculum. The central aim of teaching is not to memorise the content; its impact on intellectual and moral development of children is what matters – does it spark curiosity and willingness to learn, or in other words: will learning the content lead to the overall development of the student, since, according to Herbart, we cannot approve of teaching that does not also nurture moral qualities in students (Protić: 86).”

In the above text, many educators could quote a number of scientists in the field of pedagogical disciplines and a series of educational strategies that state exactly the same as Protić. This means that the very word “advancement” has no limits because, simply, it is impossible to confine education to a mold and then successfully use that model for all time. The formula for successful education has been constantly searched for

and one hundred years ago the ideal was the same as it is today – teachers who creatively shape their teaching in order to form and develop a child’s mind in the best way. Education keeps pace with the time and given the rapid changes in today’s world, the changes being obvious and accelerated in the last one hundred years, education cannot make use of just one system but must lean on the previous experience to face the challenges of the future. Compared to times when knowledge and information were not readily available within one’s reach, when reproducing, remembering and note-taking what was taught by those who had knowledge were the primary methods of education, nowadays we literally have knowledge “at our fingertips” in the form of mobile phones. The main education method today is focused on how to use and apply the wealth of unnecessary or necessary information that we reach in a few seconds.

As teachers are the key to an education system, everyone will pose a question how we can get, or motivate a teacher to become a quality educator because the winning combination is a quality teacher with quality management providing quality education to each student. The Ministry can improve the system if it has a clear strategy that deals with all these links that ultimately result in quality.

Every nation wants better teachers. Teachers’ salaries, responsibilities, qualifications and professionalism vary from country to country. In Asian countries, the teacher spends at least 16 hours with students in addition to compulsory classes; in Finland, a master degree has long been mandatory for the teaching profession; in Estonia, due to the lack of teachers, the expertise is minimised, etc. Many have noted that salaries are not the sole motivator, but salaries through pay scales are a necessary condition for a motivated teacher. That was

also the case in Protić's time: "If the reward is small, then often even the most enthusiastic workers become dissatisfied and do not approach their job with dedication, and therefore cannot achieve that ideal, great goal. Dissatisfaction is caused, first of all, by the fact that, with the low salary, teachers cannot meet their needs as intelligent individuals and heads of the family (Protić: 105)." Today, we often hear school principals saying: "I would give them the highest salary, but then I would require them..." – very similar to Protić's: "Teachers should be given everything, and then required to do everything, otherwise we consciously delude ourselves (Protić: 288)." Even then, there were people who had the opinion that teachers were overpaid, the opinion based on the number of hours teachers spend in school and on vacation and the comparisons of the teaching profession with other more difficult professions. Namely, a similar discussion about teachers, good ones and less effective ones, has always been led (as in other systems – we have the Pareto rule stating that 20% of the employees in a company deliver 80% of the results). Even then, as well as now, there were quality teachers regardless of the salary, as well as those who say *considering how much I'm paid, they should be grateful for this much work I do*; there are unmotivated teachers who unwillingly do their job, and would not change the established processes. We also have young teachers who come fresh out of college thinking they should showcase everything they have learned – research and scientific work, everything they did as students, and then quickly get lost into the comfort zone.

Today, the reputation of teachers is described as dethroned in society, and it is often remarked that this was not the case in the past. Examples from the past are often given (excluding teachers in the Socialist Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia, since that was the system in which every job was, naturally or artificially, made to look respectable, we come to the past before the Second World War which Protić describes and which was almost identical in terms of the teaching profession). In the 1920s, the situation was as follows: "(...) it emphasises the thought that teachers are often underestimated, not as valued in society as they should be considering their task and work. Therefore, from a social point of view, this underestimation of teachers is reflected in the fact that many public servants, whose work has no greater importance for the social community than that of teachers, are nevertheless better rewarded. Teachers rightfully compare themselves and their qualifications with the qualifications of those officials as well as their jobs and their salaries. And when they find out that injustice is being done to them, it is quite natural that unpleasant feelings arise, dissatisfaction settles in and often forces them to leave their profession, no matter how much they love it, and devote themselves to jobs which will ensure a more secure life, or, if they remain teachers, they do not do their job enthusiastically. The truth is that educational work needs to be done out of love, enthusiasm, and not out of selfish considerations. But the same is required in other fields of social work, and then it is necessary to be fair to everyone and not give more to others, if they do not deserve it. Whenever the financial condition of teachers is discussed, two things stand out against the improvement of their financial situation: 1. that today teachers are sufficiently rewarded compared to the past and 2. that the large number of teachers makes higher salaries impossible. There are many teachers and higher salaries cannot be given, because it would cost a lot, and the state budget would be disproportionately burdened (Protić: 106)." Isn't the previous passage a description of each year in the past few decades? We have an ideal in which we emphasise the famous sentence: *if we want a prosperous*

society, we should invest in education, but unfortunately, in many countries this remains just an ideal, and therefore, the problem has not changed, as well as the comparison, since Protić compares the work from the beginning of the 20th century with the teachers of the 19th century: "However, comparing the state as it is today with what it used to be, one forgets, or perhaps deliberately skips over it: who were once the teachers and what they were like, and who the teachers are today and what they are like today – they are required to be experts and artists in their work, not mere craftsmen (Protić: 107)."

Therefore, it can be said that the age-old struggle in this region is such that we have to explain that teachers who do not produce a tangible product, but something that will bring a lot to society one day, become, or should become, professional artists in their work. However, the evaluation and payment of that work will always be unequal, no matter how perfect the teacher is, because: "There is no social work that is more serious or important than educating the nation's youth. On what basis could we say that, for example, some other work is more important than education and that postmen, tax collectors, police officers, etc. should be paid more? ...It is necessary, therefore, for the sake of teachers' reputation, to put them on a par with other public servants, and give them salaries according to the principle of equality (Protić: 108)."

When talking about education and the need to acquire knowledge, both then, and even more so today, there is one job that is more necessary than others. Education and upbringing. If we take into account the fast-paced world we live in along with the family and society that often do not excel in education and upbringing and the development of social and emotional intelligence, it is clear why in the school, as an institution that is

a micro-mirror of social reality, education and upbringing become the primary task. This was also the case in the past: "The task of education and upbringing is often defined differently. Thus, some determine it only on the basis of experience, and seek to achieve, in the first place, personal benefits through education and upbringing. On the basis of such a point of view, they demand that the curriculum contains only the material that will be mostly useful in later life, and to some extent, even that which can be harmful. Such an understanding of determining the educational task is wrong because the goal of education and upbringing is not just to acquire professional qualifications. Education and upbringing are intended to support the development of students, to help them become good human beings; that is the reason why the goal of education is to be derived from the general task of humankind which is based on ethical standards (Protić: 221)." Only a good educator is a good teacher and vice versa.

If nowadays you cannot find a profession for which someone obtained a qualification in the early 1980s, without having to undergo further professional development in order to apply that knowledge nowadays, from a car mechanic to a scientist, then it is crystal clear that neither the teaching profession can be deemed so universal that there is no need to change anything in the ways and methods of teaching. Professional development, or teacher training, must be carried out daily. This was also known in the past, so Protić provided some guidelines for ensuring development:

1. Constant and continuous learning and improvement in pedagogical theory;

2. Examining children's mind in general, both by observing students, or in other words through personal experience, as well as by reading literature on these issues;
3. Constant connecting of pedagogical theory with practice, in order to transform knowledge into skills.

In order to refine pedagogical tact, in addition to this, the following is also necessary:

- A. immeasurable love for educational work, and
- B. the warmest parental love for students.

Without these two elements, the third aspect stated above under 1, 2, 3 cannot be achieved. Pedagogical tact assumes, therefore, the continuous work of the educator both in theory and in practice, from which it follows that teacher training can never be considered sufficient or complete. And in this context, therefore, the popular saying holds true: "A good priest learns until his death".

Comparing with Protić's notes, at the time when he was talking about individualised teaching, today different terms are increasingly used: context-based learning, integrative teaching, individualised instruction... All students have their own specificities and only by looking at the wider picture (social aspects, psychological factors, individual differences, intelligence, etc.) can we provide quality education to every student. Protić also writes about this: "It is recommended to write individual profiles of students. An educator who would consistently perform this would achieve far greater success than is possible today. These boundaries, as

mentioned, are primarily defined by the individuality of each student, which remains largely unchanged throughout their lives, distinguishing one from another. Therefore, individuality, as the strongest force, must be taken into account, and educational work adjusted according to it, because, even if it seems challenging, individuality will not be lost, but will become more pronounced. Hence, it is the duty of educators to get to know their students (Protić: 227)."

Ljubomir Protić wrote about what we would call today the context-based curriculum:

"Experience teaches us that spiritual characteristics differ based on whether children grow up in villages and live in the freedom of nature, or whether they are born and raised in large towns. Children growing up in the countryside have more exposure to nature and therefore have better understanding of certain natural phenomena. However, children from towns are less fortunate in this regard. (...) The need for this approach is evident when we consider that even later in school, students are taken out to fields and villages, and from villages to cities, to form a richer understanding, which in turn facilitates educational work and ensures greater success with artificial tools used in education. Only then can we discuss conscious educational methods based on the psychological study of children's minds (Protić: 229)."

The curriculum, as the foundation of education, is a fundamental element for improving education. As we can observe both in contemporary times and in the past, the quest for a good curriculum has been similar and has required answers to similar questions. How can we adapt the curriculum to better suit functional and applicable

knowledge? How can we adapt the acquired knowledge to the real-world contexts where it will be applied? The reality is always just around the corner, and sometimes it even unfolds during the educational process. Today, modern education requires teaching to be interesting and engaging: “Many believed, and there are still those who believe, that teaching should be interesting and similar to a game, because students will then learn better. If this approach is accepted, it implies that interests are the means, and that knowledge that is acquired in school is the goal... Unfortunately... Everywhere, the focus is on providing students with as much knowledge as possible, regardless of whether that knowledge will serve their educational needs”. At this point, we must ask: What interests should we cultivate and nurture in education? Should each teacher create interests according to their own preferences in their students, or are there universal principles that apply to all?

Nobody, at any age, wants to transfer knowledge that has no practical application, which is merely the reproduction of information. “Therefore, it is necessary for education to guide students, to show them how to best apply knowledge in practical life, where will and character are fully developed. For this purpose, the fifth stage of the teaching method is necessary after completing education, the stage of application. ... And we also want schools to serve life, all members of society.” (Protić: 279).

Today, we know that a context-based curriculum, focused on outcomes, has provided this generation with quality education worldwide. We also know that interdisciplinary integration is a method that yields positive results. Even in the past, the question arose: “The first question to clarify here is whether material from individual sciences should be interconnected or whether this is unnecessary. Learning individual subjects shapes

students' thinking. To make their will more consistent and decisive, there must be unity in their thoughts, and to achieve this, the teaching material must be interconnected. Consequently, the concentration of all teaching is necessary. The way to achieve unity of thought and consciousness should be demonstrated by psychology. It teaches us that the human spirit strives for unity. A teacher must always bring knowledge from various subjects into mutual connection, if possible, and ensure that there are no gaps in students' thinking. When seeking the concentration of all teaching, that is, when all the knowledge given to students in education is brought into relation, there must be a reliable central subject around which all other subjects revolve." (Protić: 263).

In an indirect manner, we cannot achieve quality education without the involvement of parents. Unfortunately, today, due to the distrust towards the system, relationships with parents are worse than ever. Parents have mostly turned to criticism, often identifying with their children and forming a negative view of the school and teachers' actions (of course, not all of them are good), generalising and showing impatience. In this way, much of the good that is learned in school is negated. Everyone working in education, from schools to ministries, internally or among themselves, acknowledges that parents are getting worse from generation to generation, they behave arrogantly and distrustfully toward schools, gossip about teachers, criticise their work in front of children, and expect the school to deliver a "finished product," an intelligent, well-behaved student, and if this is not the case, then the school is to blame. If parents have become worse over time, following this principle, then a hundred years ago they were at least two times better than today, but that is not the case: "Unfortunately, it seems that parental awareness is similar, with only nuances at play, or a system that allows too much

interference. They don't know how to educate, and even if they did, they wouldn't, thinking they have fulfilled their duty by sending children to school (...) responsibility for the reduced success in education today lies with both sides, although you can sometimes hear that teachers are not responsible for upbringing, but only for teaching students." (Protić: 152).

The universal opinion of parents and the public about schools in 1922 and 2022 is: "The school is not good, the curriculum is not good! Children are asked to do too much, they are overwhelmed with learning and writing," some believe, while according to others, class teachers do nothing, just walk around and play with children! Teachers in higher grades also do nothing, children just idle the days away, and the school does not prepare students for life. It takes all sorts. How will parents help schools and teachers when they have a negative opinion of them?

The only way is agreement and acceptance, as Protić suggests: "Parent-teacher meetings are joint, open gatherings where parents and teachers mutually advise on educational matters of general interest, discuss them and, if necessary, make decisions that will be mandatory for all, avoiding resolutions that no one will want to implement. This approach aims primarily to achieve consensus between parents and teachers, unifying home and school in the educational process for more successful, proper and reliable youth upbringing. School and home...work in opposition to each other. Teachers struggle, exert themselves, but despite their best qualifications and willingness to work, they do not achieve success and quickly lose enthusiasm. However, parents also rise against the school and teachers, which often leads to open hostility." (Protić: 162).

If in the coming years faculties accredited programmes that focus on methodological and didactic skills, master's courses where students would research and learn how to teach and transfer knowledge to children (since knowledge is now available everywhere, even without teachers), we would have future teaching staff capable of implementing an open curriculum with interdisciplinary connections based on key competencies. Such a teacher successfully carries out the reform and passes it to the distant future. Such an empowered teacher can implement the curriculum using only the most basic model, which allows ample space for free and creative action. Our educational institutions should provide support and encouragement to such teachers through a network of advisors across the country. Teachers should be free and creative, but they should not be alone without the support of educational institutions, parents and other important elements of society and governance. After all, the teacher, or education, represents the crucial link connecting vital components of any society. Nurturing a good teacher is the goal of every developed education system, regardless of the era: past, present or future.

Zlatko Grušanović, Ph.D.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Back in 1808, on 1 September, the first school in the Principality of Serbia was founded and the Ministry of Education (Popečiteljstvo prosvete) was established in 1811. The Ministry enacted a document governing school and teaching affairs. This is when the two-century-long history of education in Serbia started in which the ministerial scope of decision making has been intertwined with expert educational activities.

During the two centuries of education, the names of education-related institutions have changed as well as the scope of their activity. The School Commission (Školska komisija) was founded in 1840 and headed by Metropolitan Petar. The Education Board (Odbor prosvete) was established in 1845 with the aim of improving the quality of schools and education. The Main Education Council (Glavni prosvetni savet) was led by academician dr Josif Pančić from 1880 to 1887. The Minister of Education and Church Affairs approved the curriculum, qualifications of teachers, teaching instructions and school textbooks only “after having heard the opinion of the Main Education Council”. Members of School Commissions and the Main Education Council were renowned scientists and intellectuals.

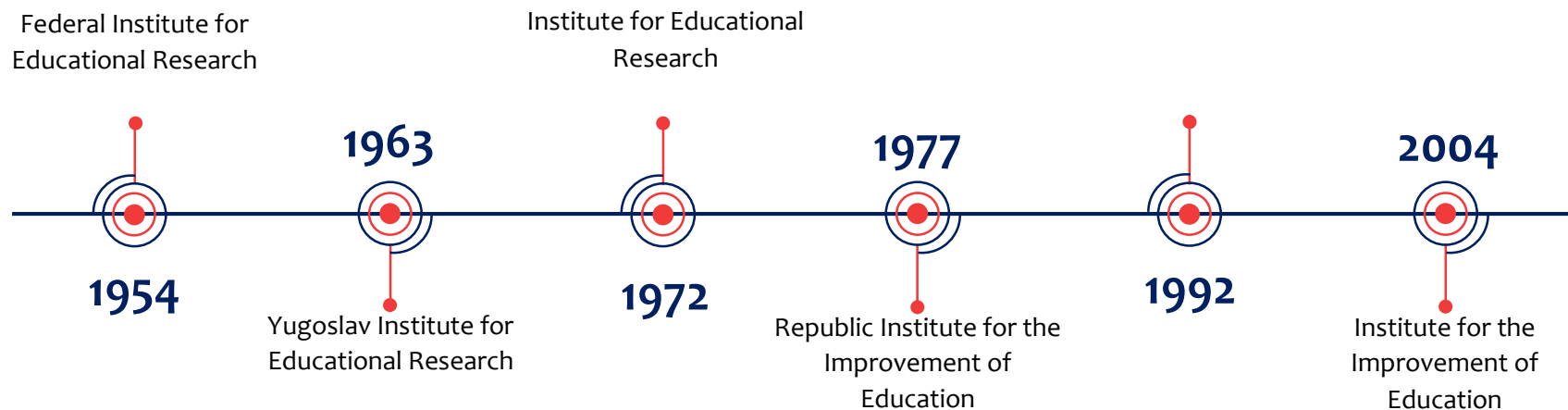
Educational Committees (Prosvetni saveti) intermittently operated within the Ministry of Education and Church Affairs in the Kingdom of SCS (Yugoslavia).

After World War II, in 1954, a major educational reform began when the Federal Assembly formed the Federal Commission for Educational Reform. The commission worked with the help of the Federal Institute for

Educational Research and proposed a document entitled *Proposal for Education System in the SFRY*. This proposal included "an elaboration of the social and pedagogical foundations of the reform, new social goals of education, an elaboration of tasks and the establishment of organisation by levels of education and types of schools (preschool education, compulsory education, eight-year school, second-degree schools, vocational schools and gymnasiums, third-degree schools, special education, adult education, teacher education), basic principles of work and life in school, principles of social management in the field of education and principles of building community connections." The Federal Assembly incorporated the basic positions of this document into the General Education Law, which was passed in 1958. This law defined the tasks of the Federal Institute for Educational Research, which, as an institution, was part of the educational and pedagogical service and collaborated with the republic institutes. In 1959, in the then SFRY, the Law on Educational and Pedagogical Service was adopted establishing regional Institutes which performed educational and pedagogical supervision, improved educational work and professional development of teachers, shared experience, monitored and analysed the work of teachers. In 1992, when the SRY came into being, the Institutes in the Republic of Serbia were abolished and affiliated to the Ministry of Education only to become independent once again in 2004 when the Government of the Republic of Serbia founded the Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE).

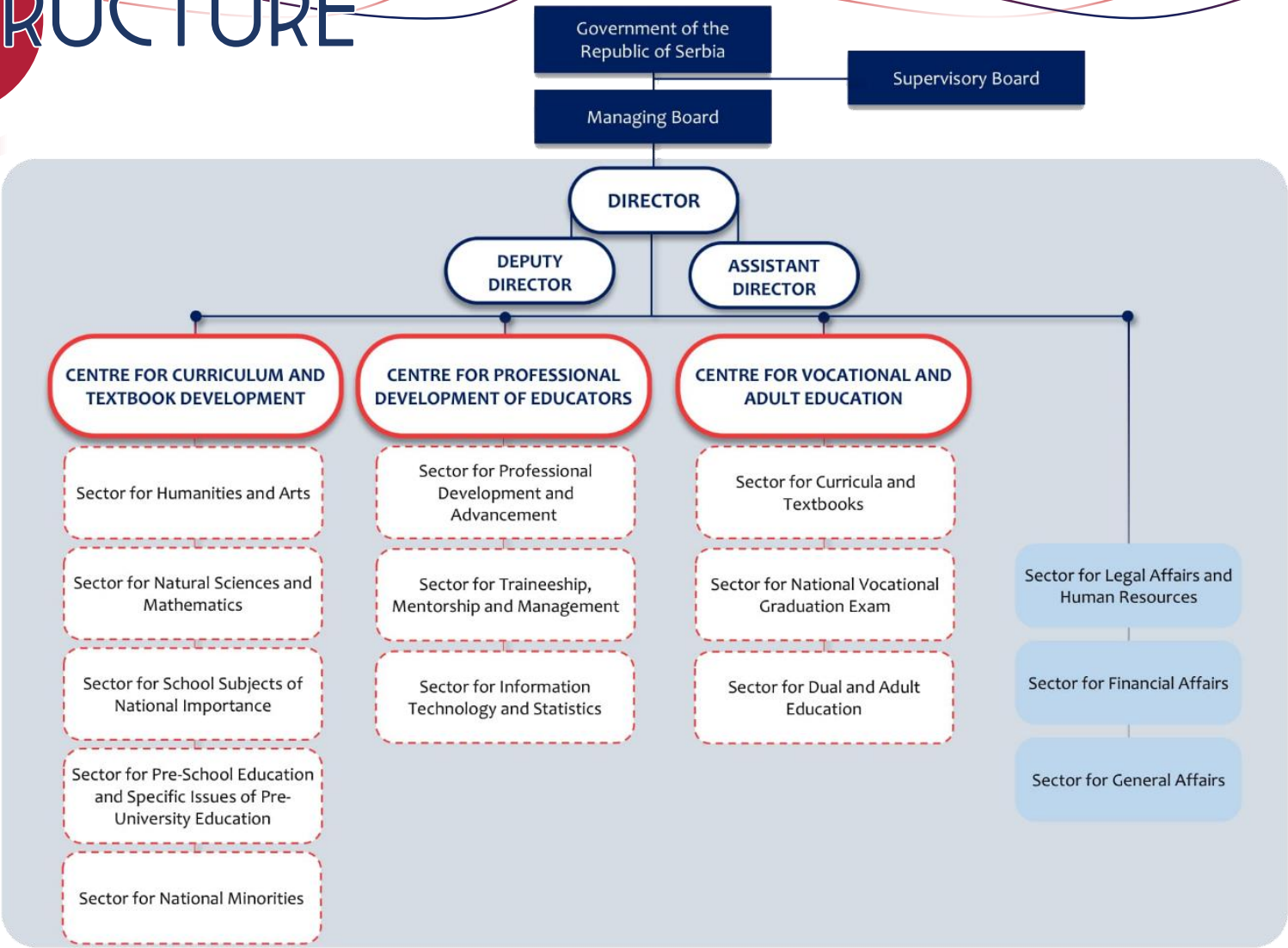
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Institute for the Improvement of Education has been operating in the field of education since 1954 with different names and standings:



STRUCTURE

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SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

The Institute for the Improvement of Education performs developmental, advisory, research and other expert activities in preschool, primary and secondary education with the aim of monitoring, ensuring and improving the education system quality and development.

ACTIVITIES:

- participation in the preparation of legal regulations within the scope of competences of the Ministry of Education, the National Education Council and the Council for Vocational Training and Adult Education;
- preparation of curricula for preschool education as well as the standards of conditions for the implementation of special programmes in this field;
- preparation of the National Qualifications Framework;
- preparation of curricula for primary and secondary education (general secondary education, vocational education and training, art education, adult education);
- preparation of the programme of the final exam and the vocational segment of the vocational matriculation exam based on qualification standards;
- preparation of curricula for specialist and artisan training and the corresponding exams;
- preparation of pedagogical programmes for boarding schools and students' dormitories;

- preparation of preschool and primary school curricula for education abroad;
- preparation of textbook quality standards and the plan of textbooks for primary and secondary education;
- textbook evaluation and approval of teaching tools and materials;
- approval of programmes and other forms of continuous professional development of teachers, preschool teachers, school support staff and directors of educational institutions;
- preparation and advancement of competence standards for the profession of teachers, preschool teachers, school support staff, secretaries and directors of educational institutions;
- preparation and continuous advancement of the programme for the induction of trainee teachers, preschool teachers and school support staff as well as the licensure exam training programmes;
- preparation and implementation of training programmes for mentors;
- preparation and implementation of licensure exam training programmes for directors of educational institutions;
- preparation of licensure exam programmes for directors and secretaries of educational institutions;
- preparation and continuous advancement of the criteria for the selection of mentors;
- provision of professional and pedagogical support to educators, implementation of trainings on current topics;
- planning of the network of vocational schools and adult education schools and the monitoring of its

suitability;

- preparation of developmental projects, analyses and research activities in the field of education;
- participation in developing the methodology for monitoring and evaluating experimental courses, launching initiatives for the introduction of experimental courses and their monitoring;
- professional development analysis based on continuously collected data;
- preparation and publishing of manuals, guides and other didactic materials for educators;
- other jobs commissioned by the Ministry of Education.

CENTRES AS THE INSTITUTE'S MAIN HUBS

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All professional activities are organised and implemented in three Centres:



Centre for Curriculum and Textbook Development – performs expert activities related to the preparation of: curricula for preschool, primary and general secondary education, art education and general education subjects in vocational schools; preschool and primary school curricula for education abroad; textbook quality standards and the evaluation of textbook quality as well as the approval of teaching tools and materials.



Centre for Professional Development of Educators – carries out expert activities including: setting competence standards for educators; approval of professional development programmes and events; preparation and implementation of trainings; providing support to the implementation of trainings of public interest and providing continuing professional and pedagogical assistance to educators.



Centre for Vocational and Adult Education – performs expert tasks related to the development, monitoring and quality assurance of secondary vocational education and adult education; professional development after completed secondary education; preparation of vocational matriculation exams, final, specialist and master craftsman exams; preparation of occupation-specific training curricula, as well as evaluations of textbooks and teaching materials for secondary vocational schools and adult education.



CENTRE FOR CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT

Two main areas of expertise of the Centre for Curriculum and Textbook Development cover the development of curricula and the evaluation of textbooks and teaching materials. Curriculum development and adoption is a complex process in which several institutions take part, the Centre having one of the most demanding roles. The most recent curriculum reform of primary and general secondary education started in 2017 and the curricula for all grades of primary school and general secondary school were completed by the end of 2019. Apart from this, the curricula for general secondary schools for students with special abilities were also prepared. A number of entirely new curricula for this group of students were created (general secondary schools for students gifted for geography and history, sports and performing and audio-visual arts) while certain existing curricula were reformed (for maths, languages, physics and computer science). The curricula for seventh- and eighth-grade students with special abilities for maths were also reformed. In the period between 2018 and 2023 new curricula for primary and secondary music and ballet education were also published. At the end of 2022, the Centre prepared new curricula of general education subjects in vocational schools whose implementation started in the school year 2023/2024. The crucial change in all the curricula at all levels of education is the introduction of learning outcomes. Besides, certain new subjects have been introduced (computer science and digital world) as well as elective teaching activities. The Centre prepared six models of curricula covering topics of current interest (life skills, the media, health, entrepreneurship, environment and arts). The curriculum for general secondary schools has been enriched with a new aspect – the introduction of

elective programmes designed to incite curiosity, motivation and creativity thus contributing to the development of students' social and research skills through various fields (business, the media, culture, sports and health, religion, arts...). With the aim of contributing to the successful implementation of the reform, in 2018 the Centre prepared the training for teachers focused on outcome-based teaching. The training has been attended by 70,000 teachers so far. As changes in curricula call for new textbooks, in the period between 2018 and 2022 the Centre provided evaluations of 1934 textbooks and 327 teaching tools and other teaching materials. Besides, 883 textbooks used within the project “Digital Classroom” were also evaluated.



CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

The main jobs within the Centre for Professional Development of Educators are related to the professional development of educators working in preschool, primary and secondary education, and to the mentoring work with novice teachers. When it comes to the professional development of educators, the Sector for Professional Development and Advancement is responsible for the approval of professional development programmes and events as well as for the monitoring of their implementation. The Sector has created the Manual and has defined procedures and forms both for the application of PD programmes and their approval. The following regularly updated documents can be found on the Institute's website: the Catalogue of Approved Programmes, containing the relevant data about each programme, the list of programmes of public interest, the list of approved professional development gatherings, with the relevant data about each gathering, the list of professional development programmes and events announced for the forthcoming period, the statistics on the implementation of programmes etc. The Sector is also responsible for regulating career advancement of educators and the acquisition of the titles *higher pedagogical advisor* and *senior pedagogical advisor* as well as for running the contest *Learnt at seminars – applied in practice*.

An overview of programmes and trainings from the last three Catalogues of PD programmes

Period	Number of applied programmes	Number of approved programmes	Number of implemented programmes	Number of organised trainings	Number of participants
2016–18	1,312	860	695	6,790	17,2917
2018–22	1,348	1,022	843	9,715	24,3272
2022–25 (until July 2023)	1,400	1,132	600	2,107	49,000

Major jobs done by the Sector for Traineeship, Mentorship and Management are related to the preparation of mentors for the work with novice teachers and to the professional development of directors of educational institutions. In 2022 the following activities were carried out within the Sector: the Mentoring Manual was published (as the sequence to and the revision of the previous Manual published in 2012); the training programme for mentorship in primary and secondary schools was prepared; the training programme for mentoring work with university students was prepared and implemented and the repository for mentors was created; presentations of manuals are regularly organised in primary and secondary schools as well as trainings for mentors; there has been an open competition aimed at collecting examples of good practice in mentoring work and forming a database for teacher mentors. In the forthcoming period the focus will shift towards mentors in preschool education who will receive different forms of support – trainings, manuals, counselling.

The Centre took part in the creation of the training for the professionalisation of the role of directors of educational institutions and it regularly participates in the implementation of licensure exams for directors of educational institutions in the Republic of Serbia.

The logo features a red circle with a white outline, partially overlapping the text. The text 'CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION' is written in a blue, sans-serif font. A stylized lowercase 'a' is positioned in the top right corner of the page, with a blue and red wavy line passing through it.

CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION

The most important activities of the Centre for Vocational and Adult Education are the development of the curricula for educational profiles and the preparation and organisation of final and matriculation exams.

The development of the curriculum in secondary vocational education is a long-lasting process involving numerous experts in the field, both from the education sector and the world of business. The curricula for vocational schools are outcome-oriented, based on the national qualification standards and a little *ahead of their time* in order to meet the needs of the labour market. Defined in such a way, the three-year curriculum offers students not only the opportunity to find a job but also the possibility to continue their education through formal and informal channels, while the four-year curriculum enables transition to higher education institutions. *Methodological and Didactic Instructions*, which are intended for teachers and provide the framework of the teaching process, make an integral part of the curriculum. The curricula for the dual education model are particularly challenging as they imply the involvement of companies and employers in the teaching process and provide students with the real working environment.

The Centre is also responsible for supporting teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating the teaching process in vocational educational profiles.

Apart from these jobs, the Centre also prepares manuals for matriculation and final exams with detailed instructions for their implementation. In cooperation with teachers and instructors from companies, the Centre also prepares working tasks, which are complex, comprehensive and representative of the real working

situation. The exam tests not only the skills but also the ability to prepare and organise the work, which necessitates the compliance with the regulations and standards.

The students in four-year educational profiles also take the test of professional theoretical knowledge prepared in the Centre and then distributed to schools. This comprehensive test covers the essential knowledge necessary for work and the continuation of education and it is organised at the same time for all students of the same educational profile.

The Centre organises trainings for exam evaluators – teachers and representatives of employers, who are mandatory external members of exam committees. This ensures widespread support to the evaluation of professional competences at the end of secondary education.

The adaptation to the changeable conditions in the labour market, the ongoing technological progress, digitalisation and the protection of the environment and health are our main tasks in parallel with the preservation of traditional values of vocational education which we trust and which we strive to advance.



KEEPING PACE WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Striving not only to keep abreast of new digital technologies in education but also to produce effective solutions and generate ideas that most educators will benefit from, the Institute organises numerous activities and initiatives in this field. One of the activities the Institute has engaged in to make teachers familiar with digital tools and their application in teaching was the organisation of the two trainings: *Outcome-Based Education* and *Digital Classroom*. The aim of these trainings was not only to support teachers to develop their digital competences but also indirectly to support students' digital competences. More than 60,000 teachers have attended these trainings so far.

Apart from this, in cooperation with UNICEF, the Institute has come up with ways to provide teachers with specific, continuing and strong support to successfully use digital tools in the classroom. To this purpose, digital support service has been created for all educational institutions and educators. This service offers assistance in planning and implementing the teaching and learning process with the use of ICT.

The previously mentioned activities entailed the launching of the National Education Portal (NOP) and the introduction of *Digital Mentors*.

The logo for the National Education Portal (NOP) features a red circle with a white outline on the left. Inside the circle, the letters 'NOP' are written in a white, sans-serif font. To the right of the circle, the words 'NATIONAL EDUCATION PORTAL' are written in a blue, sans-serif font. The text is partially overlaid by several thin, curved lines in red and blue that sweep across the top of the page. In the top right corner, there is a small, stylized white letter 'a' on a dark blue background.

NATIONAL EDUCATION PORTAL (NOP)

In 2019, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, the Institute launched the National Education Portal (NOP). The distance-learning platform ZUOVEdu (ЗУОВЕду) makes an important part of the portal. Since 2019 over 20 different professional development programmes have been organised on this portal. All trainings are of public importance and cover entire pre-university education. Participants apply through the electronic registration system and the certificates are issued through the Registration and Reporting Application.

The trainings are designed as open educational resources that teachers can revisit after they have completed formal learning and evaluated their progress during the implementation of a training.

Numbers we are proud of:

A total of 5198 individual trainings have been organised on ZUOVEdu platform so far. During 2019, they were implemented in a combined manner: part of them took place directly in schools and part on the platform, with a total of 1,273 facilitators. In the period 2019–2024 the trainings were attended by almost 360,000 teachers, preschool teachers, school counsellors and directors. Bearing in mind that the number of educators in pre-university education is around 90,000, this means that, on average, each educator has attended at least four training sessions in this period. The most attended trainings were *Digital Classroom* with more than 60,000 participants, and *Outcome-Based Education* with more than 70,000 attendees.

Trainings of public interest follow systemic changes in education and provide general information on the most recent changes, trends and tendencies in education.

The “Learning Passport” platform can also be accessed through the National Education Portal. This platform covers preschool, primary and secondary education in the Republic of Serbia. The platform is managed by the Institute for the Improvement of Education in cooperation with, and with the support of UNICEF Serbia and the Ministry of Education.



DIGITAL MENTORS

In cooperation with UNICEF, the Institute for the Improvement of Education has recognised the need to provide teachers with specific, permanent and strong support in the use of digital tools in the teaching and learning process.

Fifteen digital mentors, each one of them covering a different field, were hired to give answers to various questions. These are the Institute's collaborators – awarded teachers, external associates of regional school administration offices, directors of educational institutions, experts, pedagogical advisors. They are interconnected and trained to search for answers in case they cannot provide them on the spot.

The Institute's website provides users with the direct link to the support service where they can open a ticket and ask digital mentors a question. The mentoring system does not rest on a simple question–answer principle. Namely, the ticket opens up once a user sends a question but it does not close when an answer is given to the question but rather when the user decides the problem has been solved and closes it. Most often the mentoring support consists of a line of questions and answers leading to the solution. It is the user who determines the priority of a question but the mentors respond to all questions as if they were the highest priority.

PROJECTS, COLLABORATORS AND KEY RESULTS

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- Project *Strengthening the Pedagogical Function of Primary and Secondary Schools* (three models of pedagogical work were prepared and the open competition “Examples of good extracurricular practice” was organised – 303 applications were submitted and the database of good examples was formed on the Institute’s website).
- Project *Support to the Reform of Civic Education in Secondary Schools* was implemented in cooperation with UNICEF (civic education curricula were prepared for years three and four of general secondary schools; consultations with the young (50 participants) about their experience with civic education in schools were organised and implemented; and the training programme was also prepared for civic education teacher trainers in years three and four of general secondary schools).
- Project *Support to the Implementation of the Reformed Civic Education Curriculum through Trainings and Professional Discussions*, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia (three manuals were prepared and the trainings for civic education teachers were organised).
- Project *Cherishing National Values and Identity* (the teachers’ manual with educational material was prepared and the database with educational resources was created for learning Serbian as a mother tongue in Serbia and Serbian supplementary schools abroad).
- Project *Our Students in the World of Critical Thinking and Media Literacy* was implemented in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Serbia (the teacher training programme was developed and the manual was prepared, available on the Institute’s website).
- Project *Contemporary Concept of Traffic Education in Preschool Institutions and the First Cycle of Primary Education*, in cooperation with the Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering and the Secretariat for Transport, Belgrade City Administration.
- Project *Supporting Teachers in Implementing the Economics and Business Elective Programme in General*

Secondary Schools was implemented in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics from Belgrade (the teacher training programme was developed and five three-day trainings were organised).

- Project *Developing Training Programme and Implementing Trainings in the Field of Environmental Education*, in cooperation with the WWF Adria Serbia (three programmes developed and six trainings organised).
- Project *Financial Literacy for Primary School Students (Škola novca za osnovca)* was implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Erste Bank (the programme for the activity *The World of Finance* intended for schools with enriched single-shift school work was developed as well as the training programme for teachers implementing this activity; seven groups of teachers attended the training).
- Project *Serbian language – My Mother Tongue* (the database of activities for developing language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening for the first cycle of primary education was formed and launched on the Institute’s website).
- Project *Keep Educating Yourself (KEY, ERASMUS)* (IIE as a partner to Preschool Teachers Training Colleges in strengthening their resources for creating and implementing professional development programmes; member of a consortium consisting of 17 organisations from Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Hungary, Slovenia and Great Britain).
- Project *Support to Preschool Education System Reform – SUPER, IPA, 2019–2021* in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF (the document named “Competence standards for school support staff in the preschool institution and their professional development” was developed).
- Project *Inclusive Preschool Education*, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF (trainings of public interest were organised for the implementation of the preschool curriculum framework – Years of Ascent: “Curriculum Framework Concept – Years of Ascent”, “Developing Realistic Curriculum“,

“Documenting“; the following documents were prepared: “Preschool Teachers’ Digital Competencies Framework”, “Guidelines for Applying Digital Technologies in Preschool Institutions” and “Guide for Advancing Professional Development in Preschool Institutions“).

- Project *Support in Development and Establishment of the National Model of Dual Education*, in cooperation with the Centre for Education Policy (CEP) (evaluation of the implementation of the Framework for Monitoring and Evaluating Dual Education and Dual Educational Profiles and preparation of monitoring and evaluation reports).
- Project *2000 Digital Classrooms*, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (implementation of the trainings within the project: trainings for facilitators/mentors as well as year-one class teachers and year-five subject teachers).
- Project *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* in cooperation with the Council of Europe – the manual “Guidelines for Integration of RFCDC in Selected Subjects of National Curricula” was published.
- Project *Enhanced Equal Access to and Completion of Pre-University Education for Children in Need of Additional Support in Education*, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, IPA, UNICEF 2021–2024.
- Project *South Eastern European Teacher Education and Training*, in cooperation with the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE).
- Project *State Matura – Improving the Quality of Education by Introducing Examinations at the End of Secondary Education*, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Institute for Education Quality Evaluation (preparation of the education system for the implementation of final exams at the end of secondary education and greater participation in higher education).
- Project *Towards Regionally-Based Occupational Standards (TO REGOS)*, financed by ERI SEE. The project is a

joint work on the formulation of the occupational standards proposal in the following fields: *trade, catering industry and tourism* and *geodesy and construction* and it implies the development of qualification standards at the national level. Apart from the thematic priority fields, the project also integrates inter-sectoral topics such as gender equality, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

- Project EQET SEE – *Enhancing quality of education and training in SEE* – financed by the Austrian Development Agency with the Austrian Development Cooperation funds. The project participants are the Western Balkans economies. The project helps develop regionally-based occupational standards and qualification standards, as well as teaching materials for educational profiles in the fields of *mechanical engineering and metal processing* and *agriculture, food production and processing*, and the trainings for teachers and instructors.
- *Dual VET Serbia*, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The project partners are the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, the Institute for the Improvement of Education, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET. The basic aim of the Dual VET Serbia project is to enhance the productivity and employability of the young in Serbia, to bridge the gap between the skills students acquire and those needed in the labour market, to facilitate transition from the world of education to the world of work for “dual” students and at the same to increase the competitiveness of the companies taking part in the implementation of dual education in Serbia.



PUBLICATIONS

Different resources intended for educators, such as guides, manuals, brochures, related both to individual subjects and teaching in general, can be found on the IIE website <https://zuov.gov.rs/izdanja-zavoda/>. Some of them are:

- Serbian as a foreign language in teaching practice (2024)
- Methodological guidelines for teachers – Serbian as a foreign language (2023)
- Manual for teachers in supplementary schools abroad (2023)
- Guidelines for the preparation of continuous professional development programmes of public interest (2023)
- Mentoring – Teachers’ Guide (2022)
- Serbian Literature Canon (2022)
- Guidelines for integration of Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in selected subjects of national curricula (2022)
- Our students in the world of critical thinking and media literacy –teachers’ manual (2022 – revised edition)
- Research results overview and analysis: distance education (2021)
- Serbian as a foreign language – teachers’ manual (2021)
- Manual for teachers of civic education in general secondary schools (2020)
- Safety guidance on physical and health education in primary and secondary schools (2020)
- General guidance on strengthening the pedagogical role of school by improving extracurricular activities in primary and secondary schools (2020)

- Digital competence framework – teacher for a digital age (2019)
- Digital classroom/digitally competent teacher – introducing electronic textbooks and digital educational materials – teachers’ manual (2019)
- Recommended literature for elective programmes in general secondary schools (2018)
- Foreign language teachers’ companion (2017)
- Gifted education: scientific basis and teaching guidelines (2016)
- Manual for support programmes for children with developmental disabilities (2016)
- Contribution of research findings to the advancement of educational practice (2015)
- Advancing education, monograph, IIE (2014)
- National Qualifications Framework in Serbia – system of national qualifications levels 1–5 (2013)
- Competence-based assessment in vocational education (2013)



ONGOING OPEN COMPETITIONS

Learnt at seminars – applied in practice: With the aim of encouraging educators to apply the knowledge and skills acquired at seminars within the approved CPD programmes, the Institute organises *Learnt at seminars – applied in practice* competition for educators. In this way the Institute strives to support teachers, preschool teachers and school support staff to share the ideas and experiences acquired at seminars that have contributed to the improvement of their practice. The competition is announced once a year and it refers to the presentation of the application of knowledge and skills gained at the trainings approved by the Institute for the Improvement of Education in the last five years.

Extracurricular activities: Part of the project *Strengthening the Pedagogical Role of School* is the open competition for the selection of examples of successful extracurricular and pedagogical activities in primary and secondary schools and boarding schools. The examples should include different pedagogical activities, programmes, actions, projects and initiatives that are cherished within a school/boarding school. The selected works are added to the database of extracurricular activities and the best examples are publicly presented.

Mentors to mentors: In order to disseminate knowledge and skills necessary for quality mentoring work, the Institute organises *Mentors to mentors – examples of good practice* open competition. Teachers and school support staff from primary and secondary schools are invited to submit papers representing examples of good solutions to the problems occurring during the trainee-mentoring practice. Three best papers are awarded and all the papers that meet the criteria are added to the database of good examples of quality mentoring practice.

KEEP IN TOUCH

VIBER NOP COMMUNITY



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