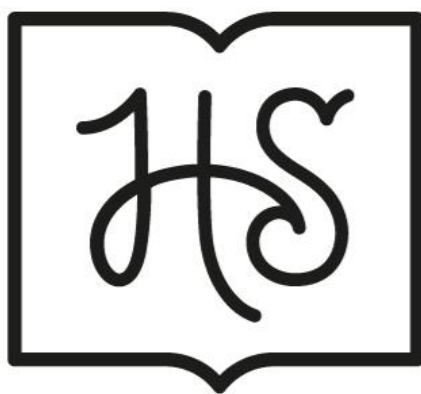


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Contents

EDITORIAL	5
Tomáš KASPER, Andreas HOFFMANN-OCON, Norbert GRUBE, Andrea DE VINCENTI and Markéta PÁNKOVÁ	
STUDIES:	7
1918 als Epochenschwelle? Analysen zu Reformpädagogik und bürgerlicher Familienerziehung	
Carola GROPPE	
„Vom Schwarzen aus“...? Vater Hulstaerts indigenistischer Ansatz im Kongo und sein Zusammenhang mit der Reformpädagogik in Belgien	22
Marc DEPAEPE, Honoré VINCK und Frank SIMON	
Wärmendes Stammesfeuer in emotional kalter Zeit – Theoretische Konzepte, Sehnsuchtsorte, gesellschaftliche Impulse in Lebensreform und Pädagogik	39
Ehrenhard SKIERA	
Paul Oestreich (1878–1959) – ein untypisch typischer Reformpädagoge der Weimarer Republik	50
Esther BERNER und Julia KURIG	
Landschulreform und „der Aufstieg unseres Volkes“. Reformpädagogik, Krisendiagnosen und Zukunftsentwürfe abseits vom ‚Roten Wien‘ anhand der Preisschrift des Landschulreformers August Bäunard	66
Wilfried GÖTTLICHER	
The Reform of the Concept of Education and Society in Montenegro between the Two World Wars	77
Vučina ZORIĆ	
Primary Education in Macedonia in the Period between the Two World Wars	90
Suzana MIOVSKA-SPASEVA	
Private Female Schools between the Two World Wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina	105
Snježana ŠUŠNJARA	

Erziehung und Bildung als Bindeglieder des Sozialen? Zäsuren und Verflechtungen in Debatten über Reorganisationen im Bildungswesen, Militär und in sozialen Bewegungen der Deutschschweiz um 1918 116

Norbert GRUBE, Andrea DE VINCENTI und Andreas HOFFMANN-OCON

VARIA: 131

Erziehung zur Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (1900 bis 1945)

Jürgen OELKERS

BOOK REVIEW: 153

Christoph Aichner – Brigitte Mazohl (Hg.) Die Thun-Hohenstein'schen Universitätsreformen. Konzeption – Umsetzung – Nachwirkungen. Böhlau Verlag, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2017. 424 pp.

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Primary Education in Macedonia in the Period between the Two World Wars

Suzana MIOVSKA-SPASEVA

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ABSTRACT

Primary Education in Macedonia in the Period between the Two World Wars

The article presents an analysis of the primary education in the Yugoslav part of Macedonia in the interwar period. It was the only rather developed segment of the educational system that reflected the educational policy and practice of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the beginning a brief overview of the socio-political and economic situation in Macedonia at that time is given as a framework in which the primary education took place, and which determined its characteristics and development. On this base, several aspects of the 4-year education for children of age between 7 and 11 are elaborated: school network and types, student intake, structure of students and teaching staff, and curriculum and teaching process. Each of these issues is discussed using quantitative and qualitative data from the official policy documents that shaped the primary education in Macedonia in this period, as well as other research findings. The analysis reveals low level of development of primary education, which was taking place in the context of denying of the national identity of the Macedonian people and their cultural and educational tradition.

Introduction: Context

After the Balkan wars (1912/13) and with the signing of the Bucharest Peace Treaty on August 10, 1913, Macedonia, which represented a vast territory under Ottoman rule for more than five hundred years, was divided between the neighboring countries of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The Treaty of Versailles of 1919, that marked the end of the World War I, only confirmed the division of Macedonia in three parts (Lazarov, 1988, p. 21). As a consequence, near one million and two hundred of Christian Slavic Macedonians (Katardziev, 1999, p. 9) that represented the majority of the population in the territory of Macedonia within the Ottoman Empire, found themselves separated in three different countries: half of them in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and smaller number in Bulgaria and Greece. This situation would cause tragic consequences for the further socio-political, economic, cultural and educational development of the Macedonian people. In fact, the governments of the three countries immediately after the annexation of the Macedonian territories (Vardar, Pirin and Aegean Macedonia) began to implement a policy of assimilation

of Macedonian population, using primarily schools and education as the most powerful instrument for achieving their nationalistic aspirations (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 369). This policy had been grounded on the nationalist movements from the 19th century for imposing the self-identification of the Slavic population in Macedonia as Bulgarians, Greek or Serbs. It was done by taking advantage of the common faith (they all share the Orthodox Christianity) and of the language closeness (Macedonian, Bulgarian and Serbian belong to the group of south Slavic languages and use the Cyrillic alphabet). Thus, the church and the schools' role was to spread the respective national credo and to force the Slavic population in Macedonia into one or another allegiance. The same propaganda continued in the new political context after the Balkan wars, despite the fact that the self-designation "Macedonian" had already established itself among the Christian Slavs (Boškovska, 2017, pp. 6–10). The implementation of the state national programmes in the respective newly won territories of Macedonia was done through networks of schools with instruction in Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek. Macedonian church-school communities and schools that existed until the beginning of the 20th century were abolished (Apostolski, 1984, p. 58), Macedonian nationality was denied, and Macedonian language was forbidden. Thus, the Macedonian people found themselves in extremely difficult historical conditions: on one side being divided in three different countries, and on the other being nationally oppressed, without any possibility for their own national and social life and development (Kamberski, 1994, p. 14).

After the World War I the territory of today's Macedonia became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (founded in 1918 and renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929) and remained its constitutive unit in the following two decades, until the beginning of the World War II. The economic and political situation of Macedonians in this period, as well as of other nations that were not recognized in the newly formed Yugoslav state, was very difficult. Instead of the long-awaited national freedom and equality, the monarchist regime proclaimed the Macedonians for non-existent: they were all treated as South Serbs, their national identity and culture were denied, and the Macedonian name and language were persecuted. Macedonia became "South Serbia" or "Vardar district" (Vardar "Banovina"), a name that was created for purely national-political reasons and forced upon the region (Boškovska, 2017, p. 3). In the schools and administration the Serbian language was imposed, and use of the Macedonian language and printing of books and other publications in Macedonian were strictly prohibited (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 36). Many prominent researchers and analysts of the educational system of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia emphasized its undemocratic character: "It's a sad fact that a whole nation, the Macedonian nation, because of the incorrectly resolved national question in old Yugoslavia, had no right to instruction in their mother tongue" (Krnet, 1978, p. 112); "The unitary policy completely demolished not only minorities, but also nations. In such a way, Macedonians who were not recognized as a nation, didn't have schools in their own language" (Bezdanov and Nikolic, 1978, p. 33). On the other side, the educational policy of the Kingdom that reflected its political interests was not in favor of establishing and developing a school network, so the poor region of Macedonia in this period remained without sufficient number of schools. The

consequence of this policy was the large number of illiterate, both among the young people and adults (Ogrizovic, 1976, p. 10).

Educational system

The system of education in pre-war Yugoslavia that was implemented in Macedonia too, was undemocratic, dualistic and totally undeveloped (Krnet, 1978, p. 112). This situation was a result of the socio-economic conditions in the country that were extremely poor and unfavorable for educational development. Regarding its economy and culture, Yugoslavia before the World War II was one of the least developed countries in Europe. Without its own industry, with utterly primitive agricultural production as the main economic branch, Yugoslavia had to fall behind both in cultural and educational terms (Potkonjak, 1977, pp. 19–20). Within the Kingdom, Vardar Macedonia was the least developed region with the least developed system of education and network of schools. Preschool education, higher education, adult education and special education hardly existed (Kamberski, 1994, p. 18). The only segment that somehow was in function was the education provided in the primary schools.

The educational system in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was based on three rather weak pillars:

- Primary education, characterized by undeveloped school network, as well as outdated program structure and methodology of teaching (Potkonjak, 1977, p. 24).
- Heterogeneous and selective secondary education that was divided in “lower” and “upper” level and promoted two educational paths: one that led to gymnasium and university, and other to the schools of “practical type” that did not allow continuation of education at higher level institutions (Kartov, 1973, p. 38; Krnet, 1978, p. 113).
- Underdeveloped higher education with only few universities (in Belgrade and its branch in Skopje, Zagreb and Ljubljana), within which, in the academic year 1938/39, existed 26 faculties with 16 978 students (Kamberski, 1994, p. 18).

The educational system in Yugoslavia reflected and deepened the social inequality. Excluding the north-west part of the Kingdom, schools were available only for children and young people from rich families, because the attendance in all schools, except primary ones, was conditioned by paying tuition fees which, together with the rigorous entrance exams, was a selective tool for continuation of education, especially at gymnasias and faculties as elite institutions.

The educational system in Macedonia in this period was extremely undeveloped and served the denationalization and exploitation policy of the ruling regime (Damjanovski, 1985, p. 24). It had the same structure and organization as the overall system in Yugoslavia, but the situation regarding each of the three educational levels was even worse than the one in the Kingdom:

- Primary education was characterized by a poor school network, low student intake, bad school conditions, lack of teachers and overloaded classes (Jovanovic, 1983; Kamberski, 1994; Kantardziev, 2002).

- The network of the secondary schools was also scarce and corresponded to the poor economic situation in Vardar district, but also, to the ruling social and economic relations and the official Serbian policy towards Macedonian people. In 1926/27 secondary education was provided in 15 gymnasia, out of which 9 offered complete education of 8 years, and 6 were of lower range providing only the first 4 years of education (Markovic and Ivanovic, 1937, pp. 934–935). In the following years the number of both types of gymnasium decreased because of political reasons (Kartov, 1973), so at the beginning of the World War II there were only 6 left (Kamberski, 1994, p. 20). Beside these institutions, in 1938/39 there was a limited number of 4-year secondary vocational schools (only 4) and 22 lower vocational schools (mainly crafts and agriculture) that provided training of 2–3 years (Rumenov, 1961, p. 313).
- Higher education was the least developed segment of the educational system in Macedonia. The only higher education institution in the period between the two World Wars was the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. It was founded in 1920 as a branch of the homonymous faculty in Belgrade (Uredba o Filozofskom fakultetu u Skoplju..., 1920) with the aim to “develop the national consciousness” of “the Serbian people” in “South Serbia” (Kartov, 1973, p. 103). It started with five departments, 21 students and 9 teachers (Slankamenac, 1930), and two decades later, in the last academic year 1940/41, were enrolled 289 students who were taught in different disciplines by a significant number of well educated professors of different national background (Temkov et al., 2006, p. 22).

In the table below are presented statistical data regarding educational institutions in Macedonia at all levels at the end of the interwar period, when the educational system reached its peak.

Table 1. Number of institutions, students and teachers at all levels of education in Macedonia in the period 1938–1940

	Preschool education	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education
<i>Institutions</i>	25	850	41	1
<i>Students/children</i>	1611	95010	12605	289
<i>Teachers</i>	25	1561	457	N/A

Sources: Osnovni statisticki podaci o razvoju i stanju skolstva u FNRJ, 1957; Jovanovic, 1983; Rumenov, 1961; Slankamenac, 1930, Temkov et al., 2006.

As a result of the poor conditions for educational work, and consequently, the large number of illiterate population, in Macedonia, as well as in the entire Kingdom, great attention was given to various forms of “national enlightenment”. Their implementation was meant to create a movement for increasing the educational and cultural level of the Macedonian people, but at the same time to contribute to their assimilation and development of a Serbian national consciousness. Usually teachers (active or retired) and university students were engaged

in organizing and delivering courses for illiterate adults, in opening libraries and reading rooms, giving lectures for promotion of health and agriculture or for strengthening the national spirit during the national holidays (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 471). However, despite the government efforts, insignificant results regarding reduction of literacy were achieved, mainly because of disinterest of Macedonian population to be taught in Serbian and not in their mother tongue. Therefore the percentage of illiterate adults in most administrative units in Vardar Macedonia during the twenty-year period remained the same (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 276).

Primary school network

As a result of the wars that took place in Macedonia in the period from 1912 to 1918, the school network in Vardar Banovina at the end of the World War I was almost completely destroyed. The policy makers at that time faced a severe lack of school buildings, school furniture and equipment, textbooks and other teaching materials, as well as of qualified teachers (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 398). However, they did not show much interest and concern to improve the poor educational situation in this region. Therefore, in the school year 1918/19 only 381 primary schools of 4-year duration existed in Macedonia (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 303). The situation was slightly improving in the following period of twenty years, although with a slow pace and with occasional decline in development. The following statistical data show the process of spreading of the primary school network in Macedonia during the interwar period:

Table 2. Primary education in Macedonia in the period 1918–1939¹

School year	No. of primary schools	No. of students	No. of teachers	Teacher-student ratio
1918/19	381	27214	591	1:46,04
1928/29	710 67 town schools 643 village schools	64 526 60,32% boys 39,68% girls	1529 67,16% males 32,84% females	1:42,2
		59 882 dropout 7,8%		
1939/40	850	95 010	1561	1:60,86

It is evident that the number of schools through the years was increasing and that there was a constant grow of student population, approximately 50% in each of the two decade period. The primary school network had expanded especially in the first decade after the war, although there were years (for example 1923/24) when significant number of schools was closed particularly in the less developed eastern parts of Macedonia (Ibidem, p. 195). That

¹ The statistical data, especially regarding the number of primary schools, are slightly different in different sources. For the school year 1918/19 and 1928/29 data in the table are taken from the comprehensive research of Marija Jovanovic (1983), while the others refer to Osnovni statisticki podaci o razvoju i stanju skolstva u FNRJ (1957).

reveals the special educational policy that was implemented in this part of Macedonia, but also points out to the ruined school buildings, poor working and hygiene conditions in schools, as well as lack of teaching staff and the mistrust of the government to engage teachers of Macedonian origin. During the period 1918–1929 there was also an increase in the number of village schools and domination of mixed schools while the number of schools for boys decreased, and for girls remained the same (Ibidem, p. 196).

The political interest for opening of new schools in Vardar Banovina was motivated primarily by “national reasons”, because schools were the most effective means for the implementation of the policy of denationalization and assimilation of Macedonians (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 449). In an article published in 1926 in the newspaper “Our Old Serbia” issued by the radicals from “South Serbia”, it is written: “Enlarging the school network in South Serbia is done and will be done primarily due to national reasons, state interest and in order to enhance the development of the national consciousness in these parts” (Ibidem, p. 450). Still, the existing schools were not enough to satisfy the educational needs of the population in Macedonia. Due to the large number of destroyed and damaged schools during the Balkan Wars and the World War I, the state invested more financial resources in Vardar Macedonia compared to the other administrative parts of the Kingdom (Ibidem, p. 449). However, these funds were not enough, so the district and municipalities had to participate financially in the construction of new schools, supported by the local population’s free work and constructing materials.

Almost all primary schools in Macedonia were state schools of 4-year duration. Only small number of them was private and in those schools the teaching was carried out in French and Russian². In some places where the Turkish population was dominant, religious communities at the mosques organized private schools for children of Muslim religion in which teaching had purely religious character.

Student intake and structure

Primary education in Macedonia lasted for four years and it was compulsory. In 1929 a law was passed requiring eight years of primary schooling to be introduced in order to unify the school system in Yugoslavia, but practically it had never been implemented in Vardar region. Even 4-year schooling was difficult to achieve. As an illustration, in the dawn of the World War II hardly 50% of the school-age population in Yugoslavia at the age between 7 and 11 years was enrolled in 4 year primary education (Potkonjak, 1977, p. 23, Krneta, 1963, p. 128), and the percentage was almost the same in Macedonia – 46,2% (Osnovni statisticki podaci o razvoju i stanju školstva u FNR Jugoslaviji, 1957, p. 7). There are several reasons for this situation. Many villages, especially in the eastern part of Macedonia did not have schools so the children were not enrolled in the system of compulsory education. Many children, mainly from rural areas, left the schools before they had finished, as early as the second or third grade, and dropout was particularly pronounced in girls. Besides that, a large number

² Arhiv na Makedonija- Skopje. Fond: Ministerstvo za narodna prosveta na NR Makedonija, k. 73 (unprocessed archive material).

of children of Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish nationality were not enrolled in primary schools, because their parents did not allow them to attend Serbian schools. As a result, a large percentage of the population in Macedonia remained illiterate. According to some statistical data, in 1936, 75% of the population in Macedonia, aged above 12 years, was illiterate (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 450). This percentage was even higher among Albanians and Turks living in Macedonia. In addition, for those who completed the 4-year primary school, almost no conditions were created to continue education for four more years, although 8-year compulsory education was stipulated by the Law of 1929.

The majority of the students in the primary schools in Vardar Macedonia, according to their nationality, were Macedonians, but they were all registered as Serbs. Not even in one school supervisor's report from that period on the number of students in any school environments, the name Macedonian existed. For example, the ethnic structure of the student population in the statistical review for the school year 1924/25 shows that out of a total of 42 341 enrolled students, 36 879 (84,12%) were Serbs, 16 (0,03%) were Croats, 2 Slovenians, 5061 (11,4%) Turks, 1046 (2,36%) Albanians, 251 (0,6%) Muslims, 726 (1,74%) Jews, 5 Russians and 2 Czechs (Godisni izvestai na okoliskite ucilisni nadzornici za ucebnata 1923/24 godina). In fact, Macedonian students were given a Serbian identity that was recorded in their birth and school certificates in which their birth names and surnames were changed. An example of these documents is given in the picture below:



Picture 1. A certificate for completing 4th grade of primary school, issued in 1933 from a public primary school in Debar, a city in the western part of Macedonia³.

All information in the certificate is given in two languages, Serbian and Croatian, and is written in two corresponding alphabets, Cyrillic and Latin, while the language of information written in hand is Serbian. The student to whom the document was given was Macedonian, born in the family of Macedonians. However, it did not contain his birth name

³ The certificate belongs to the author's private collection of family documents.

and surname, but their Serbian version. The name and surname of student's father in the certificate were changed and given a Serbian adaptation, too. The process of national oppression of Macedonians occurred not only in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at that time, but also in the parts of Macedonia that were annexed by Bulgaria and Greece: they were registered as Bulgarians or Greek and given Bulgarian or Greek names and surnames, and they learned in schools in Bulgarian or Greek language (Kantardziev, 2002, pp. 475–497).

Regarding the social structure of the student population and considering the fact that Vardar Macedonia was a predominantly agricultural region, majority of the pupils was children whose parents were farmers, fewer of them were coming from families of tradesmen, craftsmen and workers, and the smallest number of students had families of clerks and intellectuals. Since the school year 1928/29, as a result of a certain economic development of the population in Macedonia and in the Kingdom, the social structure of the population changed, which caused a decrease in the number of students from families of tradesmen, craftsmen and workers.

Teacher's structure and qualifications

One of the biggest problems in the interwar Macedonia that impeded more intensive development of education was the lack of qualified teachers. Compared to other regions in Yugoslavia, Vardar Banovina was the most neglected in terms of number of teacher schools, number of students enrolled in them and the average number of students per 1000 inhabitants. According to the data, in 1939 there was a lack of 289 teachers in Macedonia, and in 1940/41 even 500 teacher's places were empty, while more than 250 primary schools did not work at all (Kartov, 1973, p. 67). Regarding the already given statistical data (Table 1), there were 591 teachers in the first school year after the war, and they were distributed in 381 primary school in the seven administrative units of Vardar Macedonia (Stojakovic, 1923, p. 554–555). Some authors gave estimation that in Vardar Macedonia until 1922/23 there was a shortage of at least 500 teachers (Markovic and Ivanovic, 1937, p. 943). In the first decade of the interwar period the number of teachers gradually increased, along with the number of schools, and in 1928/29 it reached 1529, which means that one teacher came to 545 inhabitants (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 203). However, the increase in the number of primary school and students in the following decade (1928–1939) was not accompanied with the increase in the number of teachers, because there were only 32 new employed teachers. This situation caused a significant change in the teacher-student ratio – from 1: 42,2% in 1928/29 to 1: 60,9% in 1939/40 (Osnovni statisticki podaci..., 1957) and stressed even more the shortage of teachers.

Half of the primary school teachers, mainly in the cities, worked with one class only, while the other half with more classes, usually from two to four. Although the Law on Public Schools of 1921 prescribed that one teacher could work with up to four classes (Zbornik zakona..., 1921, knj. I), in practice there were teachers who worked with five and six classes. Regarding this situation, no measures were taken, so the number of these teachers increased year by year (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 205).

To satisfy the need for teachers the educational authorities had to engage, although unwillingly, Macedonian teachers that already had worked in Macedonia before the World War I, but were educated in Exarchate schools in Bulgarian national spirit⁴. The government doubted these teachers would consistently implement Serbian national policy in Vardar Macedonia, because in the postwar period it was still constantly exposed to the aspirations and pretensions of Bulgarian propaganda. Therefore, prior to their appointment as Serbian teachers in Vardar Macedonia, they had to attend courses to get acquainted with Serbian national history and culture, and to work for several years in schools in Serbia in order to learn Serbian language. In that way, they would become capable to “reborn Macedonian nation” in Serbian national spirit, and to contribute to “serbianisation of amorphous and non-national mass in Macedonia” (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 118). Nevertheless, they were often considered not reliable teachers and were sent in the northern parts of Serbia to be “reeducated”, or they were early retired or dismissed from teaching job.

The teachers’ gender structure changed during the years in favor of female teachers. At the beginning, teaching was a dominantly male profession, but the men’s interest weakened, because teachers were less paid compared to other professions, they had more difficult and very bad conditions for work, they were constantly transferred from one place to another, often outside of Macedonia, and they suffered the measures of the policy of denationalization (Ibidem, p. 204).

In the official documents from the period 1922–1929 is written that about 90% of the teachers were Serbs. However, among those registered as Serbs there were also Macedonian teachers who were strictly forbidden to declare their Macedonian nationality. From other nations, Croats, Turks, Albanians, Russians and Jews were represented to a lesser extent (Ibidem, pp. 205–206).

The qualification structure of teachers on a formal level was satisfactory, as most of them had secondary school diploma from teacher school, gymnasium or seminary. According to available statistics, in the school year 1928/29, 85,35% of the total number of 1529 teachers had finished secondary school for teachers, 3,40% gymnasium, 3,86% seminary and 7,39% are others (Godisni izvestai..., 1928/29).

In this period there were only two secondary schools for teachers, and one was open only for few years (1922/23–1928/29). The other, and for a long period the only one, was founded in Skopje in 1910 as a three year boarding school for teacher training. During the next two decades the duration of teacher education in this school gradually expanded to 4 and 5 years in order to raise the professional competences of the future teachers. The school was mixed, although boys and girls studied in separate classes and lived in separate sections of the school dormitory. Most of the students were children from poor families who paid the scholarship, but the poorest students who had shown excellent or very good results had free

⁴ Bulgarian Exarchate is a church organization that implemented the Bulgarian national and educational policy in parts of Macedonia in the period 1870–1918 (Kamberski, 1979). It was a governmental instrument for spreading Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia through the educational work in the schools that were open with the aim “to educate students in Bulgarian national spirit and in Bulgarian language” (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 352).

accommodation and food in the school. More than 40% of the students were from Macedonia, but they were all registered as Serbs, Croats or Slovenians. The other 60% of the students were from the other parts of the Kingdom, especially from South Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija (Jovanovic, 1983).

The first generations of teachers that came out of this school were not well prepared for the teaching job because of the insufficient educational background of their teachers. Majority of them had secondary education, and only few of them had a university degree and usually were part-time professors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, which at that time was the only higher education institution in Macedonia. However, the teacher qualification structure improved throughout the years, so that the number of unqualified teachers that in the first years after the war amounted to 55% gradually decreased to 48% in 1923/24 and to 38% in 1928/29 (Markovic and Ivanovic, 1937, p. 942).

All secondary schools for teachers in Yugoslavia, including the one in Skopje, implemented the same curriculum that was adopted in 1931 (Table 3):

Table 3. Curriculum of secondary schools for teachers from 1931

Subjects	Year				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Psychology with logic	/	/	4	/	/
General pedagogy	/	/	/	4	/
History of pedagogy	/	/	/	/	2
Teaching methodology	/	/	/	2	2
School work/practice	/	/	/	4	6
School organization and administration	/	/	/	/	1
People's economy and foundations of sociology	/	/	/	/	2
Religious education	2	2	2	2	2
Folk language	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign language	3	3	3	3	2
History	2	2	2	3	2
Geography	2	2	2	/	1
Knowledge of nature	3	2	2	2	/
Chemistry with technology	2	2	/	/	/
Physics	3	3	3	2	/
Mathematics	3	3	3	2	/
Hygiene	/	/	/	/	2
Agricultural economy and household	2	2	2	/	/
Singing	1	1	1	1	1
Playing instruments	2	2	1	1	/
Manual work	2	2	2	/	/
Gymnastics	2	2	2	2	2
Total	33	32	32	31	28

Source: Frankovic, 1958, p. 340.

As in other schools in Yugoslavia, the main attention in the teacher school in Skopje was given to the “national” subjects (Serbian language and literature, history and geography) that aimed at students’ ideological education, and to the pedagogical subjects (general pedagogy, history of pedagogy and teaching methodology) that were in function of their theoretical and practical preparation for the teaching job. The latter subjects were studied in the last two years, and among them, school practice was represented with the largest number of classes.

The teacher school in Skopje had a rich library with the most significant works of Yugoslav and world writers, as well as with scientific literature, particularly in the field of pedagogy and psychology. The school also had a developed network of extra curricular and out-of-school activities, such as literature and drama club, choir, sports games and competitions, excursions etc. In the second half of the 1930s, within the school operated an illegal organization of the Union of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunisticke omladine Jugoslavije-SKOJ), which had continuous contacts with the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje who have been supplying their younger colleagues with the Marxist literature. Being actively involved in the communist struggle to enlighten the Macedonian people for their national and social rights, many of the students of the teacher school in Skopje were excluded from school without having right to continue their education at other teacher schools in the country.

Teaching process

Primary school teaching in Macedonia took place in very bad physical and hygienic conditions. That was often emphasized in the reports of the school supervisors (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 199), on the basis of which they asked for more investments for improving the school conditions. The situation became better in some way with the construction of new schools, but the old schools operated in the same inadequate conditions for years.

The physical space of the schools was limited. During the whole interwar period the number of classrooms was hardly twice the number of schools, which means that most of the schools had only two classrooms. The equipment in the schools was more than poor and through the years the situation only got worse. Primary schools lacked everything: desks, chairs, boards, tables, books, teaching aids, so the teaching process was conducted in a primitive way.

The teaching in the primary schools in Vardar Macedonia was carried out in the official language of the Kingdom, that is the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian language, and in small number of schools in Turkish language or in both Serbo-Croatian and Turkish (Stojakovic, 1924, pp. 370–371; Obradovic, 1925, pp. 125–141). The policy of the Serbian ruling regime in Vardar Macedonia aimed at abolishing schools with instruction in any other language other than Serbian. However, the Turkish population was giving a strong resistance and they even succeeded in 1928/29 to increase the number of schools in which teaching was delivered both in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian, from 1 to 59 (Jovanovic, 1983, p. 202). The Macedonian language was denied and unrecognized for a separate language by the Kingdom and therefore it was forbidden in schools. However, outside those spheres where Serbian was compulsory, Macedonian was used, although to limited extent. It was sporadically used as a written

language in illegal papers and communist publications, newspaper articles, private correspondence, as well as in the theatre, and towards the end of the 1930s it made its way into ever more public areas (Boskovska, 2017, pp. 264–269). It is worth mentioning that in 1928, the Balkan Committee in London, on the basis of the report on the situation in Vardar Macedonia, filled a petition to the Council of the League of nations, with a request Macedonian to be a language of instruction in primary schools (Katardziev, 1999, pp. 9–15). However, as a result of the strong resistance and pressure of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as well as of Bulgaria, the initiative was not accepted.

The schools in Vardar Macedonia implemented the same curriculum as the primary schools in Serbia. In the first years after the war, primary schools did not follow a single curriculum. The curriculum for all elementary schools on the territory of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was adopted in 1926, and included the subjects: religious science, Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian language, initial real teaching, geography, history of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, calculation with geometric shapes, knowledge of nature, drawing, handwriting, manual work for men and women, singing, and gymnastics and children's games (Frankovic, 1958, p. 311). A new revised curriculum for all primary schools in Yugoslavia was adopted in 1933 and it introduced minor changes in some of the subjects.

Table 4. Curriculum implemented in primary schools in Macedonia since 1926

Subjects	Grade				Total no of hours
	I	II	III	IV	
Religious education	2	2	2	2	8
Serbian language with reading	8	8	6	6	28
Geography with Serbian history	/	/	3	4	7
Calculation with geometric shapes	4	4	4	4	16
Knowledge of nature with agricultural lessons in schools for boys and with lessons for housewives in schools for girls	/	/	3	3	6
Drawing and calligraphy	2	2	2	2	8
Manual work	2	2	2	2	8
Singing	2	2	2	2	8
Gymnastics and children's games	2	2	2	2	8
Total	22	22	26	27	97

Source: Jovanovic, 1983, p. 300

The primary task of the primary school was to develop oral and written expression among the students and to make them acquire elementary knowledge in the field of science, nature and society. At the same time, the aim was through the teaching of all subjects, and especially of the so-called national subjects (Serbian language and literature, history and geography) to cultivate in students the spirit of “integral Yugoslavism” and the loyalty to the unitary and centralist state (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 445).

The religious education had a central place in teaching in all types of schools. The teaching began and ended with a prayer, and on Sundays and holidays students were obliged to attend the church services, while twice a year to take a communion. The teaching of general history was reduced to the chronological presentation of events and the glorification of the rulers and their works. In the teaching of natural sciences, the students were careful not to acquire a materialistic understanding of nature.

The influence of the new educational movements that were spreading in the more developed countries in Europe, was felt in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, too, and as in the previous period, many practical and theoretical attempts were made to reform the old school with dogmatic instruction and with authoritarian relations and to create a new, modern school, in which the implementation of new teaching methodology would increase the quality of teaching. However, the conditions of the monarchical dictatorship and the educational policy of the ruling class were not supportive for the progressive educational workers of the “working school”, “active school” or “new school”. The government was interested only in creating a coherent school organization and management throughout the country that will impose a unitary educational system, but not in radical reorganization, democratization and modernization of the school system (Kantardziev, 2002, p. 406, 447). Therefore, the process of teaching in Macedonian primary schools was still determined by Herbart’s universal scheme of teaching (Ibidem, p. 463).

Conclusion

The historical path of Macedonian education is specific and very difficult, and it is closely connected to the history of Macedonian people and their centuries-long struggle for national, social and cultural liberation. The period between the two world wars was, certainly, one of the most heavy-going parts of that historical pathway, having in mind that Macedonians were divided in three different states and forced to change their identity and to learn in schools in foreign language. Macedonian educational legacy of the second half of the 19th century that was created with great sacrifices by the numerous representatives of the movement of National enlightenment, after the World War I had been eliminated, and the achievements of the long-term struggle of previous generations of Macedonian teachers (Macedonian schools, first textbooks written in Macedonian language, new school organization, innovative teaching methodology) had been wiped out. What remained in the Yugoslav part of Macedonia were the poor school infrastructure and an enormous illiterate population, issues in which the new regime did not have political interest to take more serious steps that would improve the extremely unfavorable educational situation. Therefore, the education in Macedonia in the interwar period deteriorated compared to the previous historical stage. Educational system was a damaged copy of the overall system in Yugoslavia and for twenty years it remained undemocratic and undeveloped. Yet, accumulated repressions, injustice and restrictions to which Macedonians were exposed led to their organized resistance that opened a new chapter in the Macedonian history and education: “The terrible oppression of the Macedonians was not able to break their fighting spirit and

to impose them permanently a foreign national consciousness and name” (Istorija na makedonskiot narod, 1969, p. 45). In the following years (1941–1945) they took a part in the National Liberation War together with other Yugoslav nations and nationalities, and fought not only for their liberation from the fascist occupation, but at the same time for national and social freedom, for new economic and political relations and for a national and democratic system of education.

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