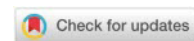


# CENTRAL FIGURES OF THE SERBIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT AND THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND CHILDBREARING AT THE TURN OF THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

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**Abstract:** During the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the childrearing and education of children, young people, and adults in Serbia was influenced not only by the working class, but also by the state and political parties in power. In this paper, we will examine the lives of notable figures of the Serbian socialist movement, their perspectives on parenting and education, as well as their contributions to adult education and their useful pedagogical and andragogic activities. The historical interpretations of that period served as valuable source for researching the socio-political and economic situation, while the scientific-theoretical influences were analysed with the help of the pedagogical teachings of the most influential educators of the day. The primary focus of this paper is an examination of the ideologies and biographies of the prominent figures in the Serbian socialist movement. The analysis includes Svetozar Marković, Vasa Pelagić, Dimitrije Tucović, Radovan Dragović and Dušan Popović, who played a crucial role in the development of educational concepts and practical pedagogical and andragogic practices. The goal of this paper is to investigate the influence of prominent Serbian socialist movement leaders on the upbringing and education of children, youth and adults in Serbia during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Their perspectives on education and parenting, adult education and learning, and their practical pedagogical and andragogic work in the labour movement of Serbia during the first decades of the 20th century will be all included in the research. The study's findings demonstrated how the ideas and efforts of influential members of the Serbian socialist movement influenced the formation and reform of educational systems, both for children and youth, and for adults.

**Keywords:** Serbian Social Democratic Party, Svetozar Marković, Vasa Pelagić, pedagogical studies, activities related to pedagogy and andragogy.

**Field:** Social Sciences

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The late 19th and early 20th centuries represent an important turning point in the history of education in Serbia, when the social, political, and economic landscape underwent tremendous upheaval. Education and childrearing were profoundly impacted by socio-political and economic changes. During the 19th and 20th centuries, institutional education played an important role in spreading knowledge and raising the population's literacy rate, influencing cultural and political development and enabling the lowering of societal inequality (Mrvoš, 2022, p. 13).

The state of Serbian society at that time was the result not only of internal changes but also of external factors, including the actions of the working class and the ruling political parties. During that time, the education and upbringing of children, youth, and adults were influenced not only by governmental institutions and political parties, but also by the labour movement, which was becoming more and more powerful. The socialist movement, particularly its prominent representatives, greatly influenced the concepts of education and childrearing that developed in Serbia.

This paper will investigate how central figures of the Serbian socialist movement, such as Svetozar Marković, Vasa Pelagić, Dimitrije Tucović, Radovan Dragović and Dušan Popović, influenced the advancement of childrearing and education in Serbia. Their views on parenting, adult learning and the value of practical work in education remain significant for comprehending how social and economic factors shaped educational policies and practices of the time. In order to give a thorough understanding of the socialist movement's impact on education in Serbia, and to show how their ideas influenced the evolution of the educational system during one of the most important periods of Serbian history, this paper will analyse the biographies of these notable individuals as well as their pedagogic and andragogical concepts.

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## 2. RESOURCES AND TECHNIQUES

The primary data source for this paper's examination of the sociopolitical and economic climate at the close of the 19th and the start of the 20th centuries will be historical analysis. In addition, we will rely on the pedagogical teachings and theories of the leading educators of that time in order to analyse scientific-theoretical influences. The analysis will include the study of biographies and pedagogical concepts of significant socialist movement leaders, as well as their influence on adult education and practical pedagogical-andragogic labour movement initiatives of Serbia.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. SVETOZAR MARKOVIĆ, THE FOUNDER AND LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND HIS PEDAGOGICAL AND ANDRAGOGIC IDEAS

In philosophy, truthfulness implies utility and practical application, particularly in the context of pragmatism. In this sense, something is true if it is useful. The question is not whether something exists, but whether it has practical value, although the influence of utilitarianism and pedagogical ideas had shaped the pragmatic views of Svetozar Marković in the areas of childrearing and education (Đorđević, 1977, p. 97).

Marković engages in journalistic endeavours to introduce young people in Serbia to contemporary scientific and social realities while cultivating his critical thinking skills. He defends realistic and socially conscious literature while criticising idealised aesthetics in the 1868 piece *Pevanje i mišljenje* ("Singing and Thinking") (Đorđević, 1977, p. 11). Marković makes the point that literature ought to reflect genuine life based on contemporary science and be beneficial to society (Marković, 1987, p. 174).

According to Marković, the issues that young people face are a reflection of the social and scientific environments of their day. Whereas psychology views youth as a component of biological-psychological development, conservative classes frequently view youth as an issue of education (Đorđević, 1977: 12). Marković emphasises the necessity for enlightenment and education for young people as well as the need to alter the societal structures that gave rise to the current state of affairs. He contends that prioritising the people's freedom over other endeavours is essential. (Marković, 1987: 104). In terms of education, Marković believes that the school should prepare people who can both provide adequate parenting and make up for deficiencies of home schooling (Marković, 1987, p. 135). He is critical of teaching methods that prioritised mechanical learning above the growth of critical thinking (Marković, 1987, p. 118). Marković distinguishes three aspects of education: physical, mental and moral. While physical education involves raising children both in the home and in specialised facilities, mental education is the responsibility of the school. He believes that mental education should be connected with manual work, and that moral education comes primarily from social interactions (Parlić-Božović, 2011, p. 47).

Marković divides school education into general and special. General education is mandatory for everyone, while special education depends on individual abilities. He proposes that teaching programmes be modified to better meet the needs of students, criticising the system of student categorisation which does not account for individual disparities in ability (Đorđević, 1958, p. 45). Marković makes the argument that social skills, empathy, and the capacity to function in society should all be developed via schooling (Đorđević, 1958, p. 45). Research on his legacy has focused on the education of children, while his social views and the interaction between work and education have received less attention. Marković emphasizes that education is crucial for the development of society and humanity and that only in the 20th century was this proven (Savićević, 2000, p. 272).

The first request for the introduction of manual labour in the curriculum came from politicians Svetozar Marković and Vasa Pelagić (Đorđević, 1958, p. 45). Towards the end of the 19th century, manual labour was expected to revolutionise elementary education as a reform movement. Manual labour was supposed to "regenerate society and create a new generation with more sense for practical life," according to the historian (Đorđević, 1958, p. 45). This movement was a response, pedagogically speaking, to verbalism and formalism-heavy, out-of-date teaching. Marković believed that "the most important moral issue is the problem of will," and that "complete mastery of his freed thought and his strong soul" characterise the ideal man. (Marković, 1987, p. 104). He wanted friends who "have their own opinion, who act according to their conviction" (Marković, 1872, p. 105), and he despised the weak and pliant. His criticism of the school was centred on the necessity of social changes, since he believed that "the transformation of school systems is impossible without material and economic transformation," (Marković, 1966, p. 280). Marković believed that the development of both the individual and society depended on education. He supported

"lifelong education", which proved popular in 1960s (Savićević, 2000, p. 272). He contends that education encompasses more than just schooling and comes from reading, attending public lectures, and other sources (Marković, 1872, p. 272).

Despite his criticisms of the current educational system, Marković never separated education from social needs. He underlined that "the revolution's function is education and learning" and that it's critical to "adopt knowledge that helps to break the power of the enemy" (Marković, 1987, p. 7). He also believed in the "dialectical unity of general and professional education" (Marković, 1966, p. 49), and believed that education should be versatile, with an emphasis on general education, which is a "general national need" (Marković, 1966, p. 50). Marković emphasized the significance of education for the development of both the individual and society, considering that "the development of general national strength and the development of individual strength - these are two sides of the same coin" (Marković, 1987, p. 115). He argued that education fosters the growth of one's physical and mental abilities, which boosts one's capacity for production (Marković, 1987, p. 172). According to Marković, "worker education is the most important thing" for productivity, and "social structure" influences how workers develop (Marković, 1966, p. 235). He contends that the foundation of society's material and cultural enrichment is education (Savićević, 2000, p. 278).

Marković draws a connection between the growth of the manufacturing and machine industries with education, highlighting the drawbacks of the division of labour, which lowers worker skill and knowledge. The reduction of mental and physical demands resulting from work simplification in mechanical production reduces work to "the consumption of simple mechanical power" (Marković, 1966, p. 250). He advises switching jobs and pursuing other career paths to prevent "a living man becoming a dead device tied to a machine" (Marković, 1966, p. 262). Diverse employment strengthens the worker's mental strength and does not lead to "spending as if doing one job" (Marković, 1966, p. 260).

Marković warns that the oral transfer of knowledge does not guarantee its acceptance and stresses the need to research how novelties affect people, which is a contemporary approach to adult education and learning (Savićević, 2000, p. 280). His socialism is intellectual in nature, viewing the intelligentsia as the main agent of change. He believes that intelligentsia will enable the realisation of democratic principles (Marković, 1966, p. 91). According to Parlić-Božović, Marković was exceptional in his investigation of youth issues and methods of their education from revolutionary positions (Parlić-Božović, 2011, p. 48), and he is considered "a great fighter of our progressive pedagogy". In economically underdeveloped Serbia, where social classes had just started to emerge, his socialism was intellectual and ethical, because it could not be any other way (Skerlić, 1966, p. 153). For entire generations of Serbian intellectuals and politicians, regardless of whether they supported left or right political ideas, Svetozar Marković was a kind of teacher, despite the fact that he was only 29 years old when he died. The most famous examples are Jovan Skerlić and Nikola Pašić. Marković was also the primary ideological rival of Milan Obrenović and the pro-Western ruling elites (Mirović, 2019, p. 231).

### 3.2. PEDAGOGICAL AND ANDRAGOGIC IDEAS OF VASA PELAGIĆ

In an effort to strengthen social order in Serbia, Pelagić proposes new laws and a constitution that would guarantee equal rights and duties to all citizens. Every legal and constitutional provision, in his opinion, ought to be a component of a social contract that ensures political, educational and economic equality (Pelagić, 1983, p. 104). Additionally, he suggests that a law would become enforceable if it is signed by two-thirds of the people's deputies, without the need for the signature of the government and the ruler (Pelagić, 1983, p. 104). Pelagić believes that every adult citizen ought to be able to vote and exercise their political rights. Elections for people's deputies should be held on Mitrovdan (St Demetrious day, 08.11.), and the assembly should meet on Arandjelovdan (the Synaxis of Saint Michael the Archangel, 21.11). Only the National Assembly has the authority to grant pardons and amnesty. Ministers and other leaders must have previously worked with the people as teachers or farmers, and their salaries cannot exceed six thousand dinars (Pelagić, 1983, p. 10). The army ought to be disbanded and replaced with a system of national defense. Pensions are only paid to people who are physically and mentally exhausted. All workers will have their working hours set by the law. Doctors should be paid by the people they treat, not by the government or local government. Teachers and professors can be transferred after working in the same place for six years, unless half of their fellow citizens request otherwise. Roads and bridges should be maintained from the state treasury, and orphanages should be built everywhere to train children in trades and agriculture. The national banks of Serbia should provide loans for economic development (Pelagić, 1983, p. 10). Svetozar Marković had a big influence on Pelagić when he first entered the teaching profession in 1866 when he was hired as a teacher in Brčko. Although he was a persistent political fighter,



his education was not as extensive as Marković's. Pelagić was critical of the current educational system, which he viewed as being out of date and ineffective, and presented his ideas in the books *Preobražaj škola i nastave* ("Transformation of Schools and Teaching") (Belgrade, 1989) and *Nova Nauka o javnoj nastavi* ("New Science of Public Education") (Belgrade, 1981).

Regarding what the purpose of education should be, Vasa Pelagić was in agreement with other 17th and 18th century Serbian pedagogues. Pelagić believed that the development of new education was the primary goal of the new pedagogical science, since it is impossible to build a new school on the foundations of the old pedagogy, which he criticised for the discrepancy between pedagogical theory and practice. In the modern context, his ideas about changing the function of school and teaching are very significant and current: "It is an inevitable step towards a more radical positive change and design of the teaching process even in our time" (Pelagić, 1971, p. 192). Pelagić placed a strong emphasis on the moral component of education, expecting teachers to be role models who are truthful, fair, and compassionate (Pelagić, 1953, according to: Kovačević, 2019, p. 65). He was against punishing students and believed that discipline should be regulated normatively. He stated that all teachers who mistreated or abused their students should be removed from their positions (Pelagić, 1953, according to: Kovačević, 2019, p. 65). In his critique of the current educational system, Pelagić drew attention to the unfavorable conditions in schools that lead to severe sickness and death of students, and demanded the construction of educational facilities to be in accordance with the health science plan. He insisted that the classrooms measure 12 by 8 metres and that the old, unhygienic benches be replaced with individual seats (Đorđević, 1958, p. 58). Vasa Pelagić was a fierce critic of the existing school system and advocated reform of pedagogy. He thought that the new school required new teaching methods, and the basis for its creation was the criticism of the old methods. Pelagić believed that a new school cannot be built on the foundations of the old pedagogy, which led to conflict between theory and practice (Kovačević, 2019, p. 62-63).

The development of freedom of thought, diligence, justice, philanthropy, truthfulness, feeling of belonging, resistance to hatred, conflicts, and warfare, as well as the understanding that human life is the primary value, are, in his opinion, the most important tasks of education, because our own happiness is reliant on the happiness of those around us, and we cannot be happy if they are not (Škipina & Kovačević, 2022, p. 71). Pelagić felt that the school atmosphere must be pleasant and include time for fun and games. Pelagić was in favour of making manual labour a compulsory subject in all schools and was against rote learning. He supported the advancement of ideas in education as well as a reasonable scope of teaching (Parlić-Božović, 2011, p. 51). Pelagić was involved in the socialist movement and took part in the Bosnian uprising of 1875 as a utopian socialist. Among the few educators who addressed school hygiene, he suggested that every classroom have nine ventilators (Parlić-Božović, 2011, p. 51). In addition, he collaborated with a number of socialist newspapers and assisted in the formation of the Socialist Party of Serbia. His ideas had a great influence on the masses of working-class and peasant people in Serbia and other Balkan countries.

### 3.3. SECOND GENERATION OF SERBIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

With a critical mindset and a strong affinity for Marxism and socialism, Dimitrije Tucović (1881-1914) will become a central figure in the labour and socialist movements in Serbia after Svetozar Marković (1846-1875). His theory and practical work began with the Marxist understanding of the liberation of oppressed and exploited classes and nations. Tucović devoted considerable attention to countering the influence of external imperial powers and establishing a Balkan federation of free states and nations (Kovačević, 2024, p. 241-242). As a political activist and teacher, Tucović actively worked on the education of the working class, organizing various training programmes to prepare workers for future challenges. He emphasized the importance of education for the progress of the labour movement, believing that progress is not possible without "valid, organized, continuous and healthy socialist agitation and propaganda" (Tucović, 1911, according to: Savićević, 2000, p. 288). He placed special emphasis on training those who will spread socialist knowledge and ideas. For this reason, he organised training programmes for union and party clerks (Savićević, 2000, p. 288). Tucović saw education as a daily necessity for the development of the labour movement, an aspect of cultural work that "never fails" (Tucović, 1911, according to Savićević, 2000, p. 289). In an effort to enable intensive educational work, he initiated the construction of the Socialist Home in Belgrade, inspired by homes in Europe.

In 1903, Radovan Dragović founded the Belgrade Workers' Society, the Social Democratic Central Committee and the Serbian Social Democratic Party. According to him, political, union, and educational organizing are not distinct processes, but rather emerge concurrently. In order to "spread awareness, strengthen mental development, develop solidarity, and gain knowledge about class position," Dragović

argued in favour of the founding of “workers’ societies.” These societies will eventually develop into trade unions, which will support social democracy (Dragović, 1954, according to Savićević, 2000, p. 284). Like Svetozar Marković, He also stressed that education must respond to the needs of society and the individual. Dragović believed that educational and cultural needs should be met in the same way as basic physical needs, and he saw many opportunities for workers’ organizations to address spiritual needs (Savićević, 2000, p. 285). He thought that learning and education were essential to the growth of the labour movement and the liberation of workers, and that the working class should receive its education from its organizations (Savićević, 2000, p. 284). In 1903, Dragović founded the first Workers’ School in Belgrade, where Dimitrije Tucović and Dragiša Lapčević also taught, and it was this model that led to similar schools being established in other cities, such as Kragujevac and Niš. Dragović took a mentoring approach to training, inviting students to his home where he would give them assignments and test them (Dimitrijević, 1954, according to Savićević, 2000, p. 285).

At the start of the 20th century, Dušan Popović was a well-known socialist theorist in Serbia. His lectures at the Social Democratic Party’s political school and the popularization of socialist ideas are examples of his contribution to working-class education. Popović recognized the importance of education in transforming social relations and eliminating prejudices that stand as an obstacle to the progress of culture and civilization (Savićević, 2000, p. 291). Like his contemporaries Dragović and Tucović, Popović emphasised the importance of individual work and self-education. In particular, he made contributions to education by using the media to disseminate knowledge. As the editor of *Radničke novine* (“Workers’ Newspaper”), Popović promoted literary and scientific contributions in addition to political reporting. (Savićević, 2000, p. 291).

#### 4. FINAL REMARKS

The analysis of the life and work of Serbian social democrats reveals important theoretical assumptions from the field of andragogical theory, such as lifelong education, the relationship between education and economic and social development, the role of self-education, and the integration of work and education. Svetozar Marković was an organizer and political idea propagator who had a significant impact on young people despite not being an educator. His appeal to young people to attend teacher training schools was very successful. Marković saw education as a critical component of social development and as a lifelong process that contributes to the development of the personality by combining education with work and shortening working hours. Marković particularly emphasised the importance of women’s education, self-education, and the role of innovation in assessing educational needs, which remained important in the 20th century. His pedagogical ideas were the basis of the educational initiative of Serbian social democrats, and his socialism was intellectual in nature, emphasising the intelligentsia’s role as the bearers of new ideas.

The Social Democrats in Serbia followed the development of adult education in Europe and recognised the importance of national universities for the education of the working class. Considering the social, economic, and political climate in Serbia at the time, they believed that the creation of national universities would be beneficial in educating and preparing individuals for employment in labor organizations. While Pelagić promoted progressive didactic concepts, and emphasised the need to respect the nature of children in teaching, Radovan Dragović had a great influence on the development of socialist ideas and the organisation of the labour movement in Serbia. His pedagogical ideas and self-education served as successful illustrations of how socialist concepts could be applied.

The Social Democratic Party’s emphasis on the need for organised and methodical self-education in order to more successfully carry out the tasks of the labour movement, led to the establishment of both domestic and foreign translated literature. Adult education was closely linked to the economic and political struggle of the working class, and Serbian social democrats were pioneers in the study of andragogical phenomena.

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