Higher Education in Slovak Language in Serbia

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First Slovaks moved to nowadays multiethnic Vojvodina in 1745 directly to Bački Petrovac. They continued coming from different regions of Slovakia establishing new Slovak settlements. Besides fighting financial difficulties upon their arrival to the so called "Lower land", there are records of the first catholic teachers there in *The History of Evangelical Church in Petrovac from 1745*. From 1750 people were allowed to have not just a catholic teacher, but also a teacher of evangelical religion who was in charge of performing the sermon and teaching the youth protestant religion.

One hundred years later, in 1845, the chaplain of Petrovac, Štefan Homola, established the first Sunday school in the "Lower land". These schools belonged to church until 1920 when they fell under the state administration.

In the post-war period during the first Yugoslavia, in accordance with regulations regarding minorities' education, classes were held in Slovak language. During the time of the Hungarian occupation, 1941–1944, classes in Slovak language were also held in elementary schools (eight-year education). All this indicates that Slovak people in Vojvodina have always had the right to education and upbringing in their mother tongue, from the lowest levels of education such as kindergartens over elementary schools and two grammar schools to three (nowadays two) higher education institutions.

Lectures on the University of Novi Sad are being held on the Faculty of Philosophy. In addition to this, there are classes organized in Slovak language which are meant to those students whose mother tongue it is.

Moreover, there was a similar situation on the Faculty of Pedagogy in Bački Petrovac from 1998–2011 when the outpost in Bački Petrovac stopped working. Also, lectures in the Higher School of Vocational Studies for teachers in Novi Sad are still being organized in Slovak language.

When it comes to the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade and the Department of Slovak language, Slovak is being taught as a foreign language.

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1. The Department of Slovak studies in Novi Sad

1. History of high education and scientific work in Slovak language started on the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade during the fifties as a part of eastern– and western– Slovenian languages group. The students of the grammar school in Petrovac used to continue their studies here. In this way, the preconditions for setting up a department of Slovak language and literature on the Higher School of Pedagogy in Novi Sad were set therefore making it possible for the first generation of students to enroll in 1960.

2. In the autumn of 1961, studies of Slovak language and literature were transferred to the Faculty of Philosophy. In the beginning they lasted for two years which was the case until 1968. In 1993, the Institute of Slovak Studies becomes known as the Department of Slovak Studies (Dudok 1998).

During the period from 1968 to 2006 the studies lasted for four years. Starting from 2006/2007 academic year, in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, the studies have lasted for 4+1 years, where there are four years of bachelor studies plus one year of master studies (Kolektív autorov 2011).

The lectures are still being held in the Slovak language, except for the general subjects such as Old Church Slavonic, psychology, pedagogy etc. where there are experts from the other departments on Serbian language. Today, this department has eight regularly employed teachers: three professors (Ana Marićová, Miroslav Dudok, Jarmila Hodoličová), two associate professors (Adam Svetlík, Ana Makišová), one teaching assistant (Marína Šimáková-Speváková), other two teaching assistants (Zuzana Týrova, M.A., Jasna Uhlárikova, M.A.) one foreign language instructor from Slovakia (for the third year Marta Součkova) and a librarian (Tatiana Pintírová).

There has been a good practice in this department of having a foreign language instructor from Slovakia ever since 1966. This practice has been preserved up until today. The Slovakian side sends a foreign language instructor for the period of three years. This is the way that the Department of Slovak Studies makes and keeps contact with the faculty in Slovakia.

Most of the employees on the Department of Slovak language continue their postgraduate studies on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade in duration of two years, where they also defend their master's thesis. Younger colleagues have finished their master's studies in Novi Sad.

They have all defended their PhD theses in Novi Sad on language and literature topics referring to literary-linguistic-cultural topics from Vojvodina (Ján Kmeť: *Yugoslavian motifs in Slovak literature*; Daniel Dudok: *Dialect of Pivnice in Bačka*; Michal Harpáň: *Poetry and poetics of Michal Babinka*; Samuel Čelovský: *The youth of Felix Kutlík in the context of Slovak culture in Vojvodina*; Miroslav Dudok: *Text glutination in Slovakian and Serbo-Croatian language*; Mária Myjavcová: *Development of literary Slovak language in Vojvodina in conditions of contact with Serbo-Croatian language*; Michal Týr: *Numbers in Slovak and Serbo-Croatian language*; Ana Marićová: *Verbal prefixes in Slovak and Serbian language*; Jarmila Hodoličová: *The review of history of Slovak children' s prose in Vojvodina*; Adam Svetlík: *Poetry of Vojvodinian Slovaks during the second part of the 20th century*; Ana Makišová: *Adjectives in Slovak and Serbian language*; Jozef Valihora: *Literary*

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work of Juraj Tušiak; Marina Šimákova-Speváková: *Intertextuality in the work of Víťazoslav Hronec*). By defending PhD thesis the quality of educational process is raised due to the fact that those theses could be used in the educational process. One of the teaching assistants defended her master thesis (Zuzana Tirova: *The use of idioms among Slovaks in Pivnice*). The youngest teaching assistant, Jasna Uhláriková, defended her master thesis entitled *Metaphorical function from the pragmalinguistic point of view* and is in the process of finishing her PhD thesis (Hodoličová 2008).

All things considered, we can conclude that this department, when it comes to representation of human resources from all aspects, both teaching and scientific work, is quite strong and in that respect it represents the strongest Slovak academic stronghold outside Slovakia.

2. Scientific activity. Projects

Besides taking part in educational process, the teachers from the department are involved in a project funded by the Republic of Serbia – Ministry of Science and Technological Development as well as in regional projects funded by the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – Secretariat of Science and Technological Development of language and literature.

The participants to the project funded by the Republic of Serbia have been selected on a competition run by various ministries after which they have been involved in the project for five years with the obligation of reporting annually on their publishing activities. For instance, most of the department members were included in the project entitled *Typological status and comparative grounds and flows of minorities' literature in the Pannonian region* in the period between 2006 and 2010.

Regional project lasts for five years, as well. Employees have lately participated in the project entitled *Regional linguistic, literary and cultural vectors in multicultural discourse – the Slovak paradigm*. The latest project that they were involved in is a four-year project (2011–2014) *Discourses of minorities' languages, literature and cultures in the south-east and central Europe*. The conditions for this particular competition were quite harsh, especially in terms of great responsibility it requires, a lot of effort needed to invest in it and evaluation of former work on scientific papers of each and every researcher. The Department of Slovak Studies managed to maintain its solid position after the experts of the Republic's Ministry of Science and Technological Development finished the scoring process of employees' scientific papers. Moreover, another project that got its clearance is a regional project entitled *Slovak language, literature and culture in Vojvodina in the diachronic perspective, synchronous sections from the aspect of contextual stratification*. However, what should be pointed out here is the fact that both linguists and writers work together on this project.

The department has joined in the international program of scientific and technological cooperation between the Republic of Slovakia and Serbia in 2010–2011 with a project called *Literature in contacts*, together with the Institute of Slovak literature on the Slovak Science Academy. The cooperation on bilateral project between Slovakia and Serbia financed by the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development has been continued since 2014. There are three teachers of literature from the Department of Slovak Studies involved (Jarmila Hodolič, Adam

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Svetlik, Marina Šimak-Spevak) with the same situation from the Slovak side. The results of this research will be presented in October the following year on a seminar in Novi Sad.

By means of these types of projects, the level of higher education is being raised considering the fact that the topics being covered are new, unexplored and can be used in the educational process afterwards. Furthermore, the quality of educational process is made better with the practical value of the results and the possibility of actually using them in practice.

The library which is at the disposal of the Department of Slovak Studies owns 15000 books and more than 200 magazines. The only problem concerning the library is the librarian who has a working status of a volunteer since we cannot manage to obtain the ministry's permission to officially employ a librarian.

Approximately eight students enroll the first year of studies on the Department of Slovak studies. This year, the Ministry allowed budget funding for 6 students in the first year of studies which is the exact number of students enrolled. Besides organizing lectures for students who study the Slovak language this department also organizes lectures for those students whose mother tongue is and is not Slovak. Students whose mother tongue is not Slovak usually come from the Department of Serbian Philology in Contact with Slovak Philology, Ruthenian Language and Literature and Russian Language and Literature and they attend Slovak language classes for 4 semesters. Students whose mother tongue is Slovak come from the Department of German Language and Literature (3 semesters) and Journalism (4 semesters). They can choose Slovak language as a foreign language. There are currently about 50 students from the other departments.

Students from the Department of Serbian Language and Literature and Serbian Philology: Serbian Language and Literature can choose Slovak as a foreign language.

When it comes to Serbian Philology in Contact with Hungarian/Slovak Philology, students can choose to follow the lectures on Serbian language since they eventually master Slovak language on various seminars of Slovak language. Besides linguistic subjects, they can choose other subjects such as Slovak Literature in Vojvodina, Mutual Connections between Slovak and Serbian Literature, and Translation Theory and Practice, as well. There is a rising interest in some of the subjects which led to the suggestion of the Serbian department to extend the courses to more semesters (Makišová, 2009).

Students at Slovak Language and Literature finish their studies by writing a thesis of their own choice of topic, be it linguistic or literary. 170 students have graduated from Slovak Language and Literature till now (from 1963 to 2015) while 10 students graduated from the master studies.

The fact that all of the graduates of Slovak studies can find an employment as teachers in schools, in newspaper and magazine editorial staff, television, theatres, in cultural institutions, publishing houses, as translators with the governing bodies and so on is commendable. The Department of Slovak Studies marked its fiftieth year of existence on December 3, 2011.

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3. The Faculty of Pedagogy in Bački Petrovac

Due to the lack of teachers in education of that time, a need for establishing the School for Teachers arose in the period after the World War II. It was founded in Bački Petrovac as a part of the Slovak Grammar School and it worked from 1947 till 1966. During its 19 years of existence it trained 216 young teachers. There was an additional training organized for the teachers in 1973/1974–1975/1976 academic years where 80 of them gained a degree after two years of additional training.

Special departments were set up on high school level of education on the Academy of Pedagogy in Petrovac in 1977/1978–1978/1979 academic years.

The Faculty for Teachers in Sombor had had an outpost in Slovak language in Petrovac since 1998. After graduating the Higher School of Pedagogy, teachers used to continue their studies here in the period from 1998 to 2003, and, in addition to that, they would go on to finish the additional two years of studies the result of which is obtaining the title of *class teacher*.

The class in Slovak language kept working without breaking the continuity. Each year, the Ministry opened a competition for 15 students. However, there was not a possibility of enrolling the first year of studies in the following school years: 2002/2003, 2009/2010, and 2010/2011. This signifies that this institution practically worked in a sense of enrolling students on the first year of studies during the course of ten school years.

Due to the lack of staff on the faculty, teachers from the Department of Slovak Language and Literature held classes there as well. The lectures of expert subjects were held in Slovak and in Serbian language, in cases when there were no experts on the topic that could teach in Slovak language.

14 students enrolled the first year in 1998/1999 academic year;

14 students enrolled the first year in 1999/2000 academic year;

6 students enrolled the first year in 2000/2001 academic year;

6 students enrolled the first year 2001/2002 academic year;

There was no enrollment on the first year of studies in the first year of studies in 2002/2003 academic year;

12 students (10 from the budget funding and 2 self-financed students) enrolled the first year in 2003/2004 academic year;

13 students enrolled the first year in 2004/2005 academic year;

There was no enrollment on the first year of studies in the first year of studies 2005/2006 academic year;

11 students enrolled the first year in 2006/2007 academic year;

9 students enrolled the first year in 2007/2008 academic year;

10 students enrolled the first year in 2008/2009 academic year;

11 students enrolled the first year in 2009/2010 academic year;

There was no enrollment on the first year of studies in the first year of studies in 2010/20011 academic year.

The last generation of students of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Petrovac graduated in 2012 making this the final year of the faculty's existence. What led to the closing of this center was the fact that it did not meet the necessary requirements for getting the accreditation recognized by the Ministry of Education. At the end of 2011

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academic year only three teachers had the titles and were teaching subjects in the Slovak language (Dr Jarmila Hodoličová, professor on: Children's literature and Methodical practice of Slovak language and literature; Dr Ana Makišová, associate professor: Slovak language and Methodical practice and Dr Jan Babiak, professor: Physical education).

Over the course of ten academic years, from 1998/1999–2009/2010, 106 students in total enrolled the Faculty of Pedagogy in Sombor – Outpost in Slovak Language in Bački Petrovac. There is no precise record of how many of those students graduated till today. Most of those who graduated found an employment in elementary schools in Slovak villages in Vojvodina, however there are still plenty of those who haven't managed to do so due to the fact that there is enough teaching staff in schools at present (Hodoličová 2008).

4. Higher School of Vocational Studies for Teachers

The Higher School of Vocational Studies for Teachers was founded in Novi Sad in the 2007/2008 academic year. Before that, teachers used to study on Higher School of Pedagogy – the Section for Teachers but the studies were in the Serbian language and they lasted for two semesters. In 2008/2009 academic year this school opened a special department in Slovak language. Students attend the classes held in Slovak language which is their mother tongue.

Five students who had previously finished their three-year studies enrolled this school in 2008/2009 academic year. The students come from numerous Slovak places in Vojvodina, even those that are far away. The principal and founder of the school, Mr Stevan Divjaković, and the current principal have made a significant contribution to setting up a group in Slovak language and getting it recognized by the Ministry of Education. There is such a rising interest in this school that only half of the students who applied were actually accepted and all the Slovaks who applied could study on budget funding.

During the first two years, expert subjects are taught in Slovak: mother tongue, culture of expressing, children's literature, and methodic of speech development. The subjects in Slovak language are being taught by dr. Ana Makišová – linguistic subjects, dr. Jarmila Hodoličová – children's literature and *methodology* of Slovak language and literature, and Mr Jan Ďuras, M.A. – mathematics with class methodic. The rest of the subjects are being taught in Serbian due to an insufficient number of Slovak teachers. Students go to practice to pre-school institutions in Slovak settlements. Faculty has good connections with the Republic of Slovakia. Students of this school, as well as students of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Petrovac attend courses in Slovakia provided by the Education Committee of National Council of Slovaks in Vojvodina and in this way help raising the level of the educational process.

This school organizes methodology exams for those teachers who are employed in Slovak pre-school institutions but have finished Faculty of Pedagogy or Higher School of Vocational Studies in Serbian language. This is how they obtain the license needed to work in pre-school institutions where the primary language is Slovak.

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5. The Department of Slovak Studies in Belgrade

Slovak as a foreign language is being taught on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade on the Department of Slovak Studies.

After a long time, this department was renewed in the eighties. Several teachers from the Department of Slovak Studies in Novi Sad have worked there part-time since 1988/89. During the first two years the lectures are held in Serbian and, starting from the third year, in Slovak as well. The faculty currently employs one teaching assistant, one associate teacher, lector from Slovakia, lector from Serbia, and one professor from the Department of Slovak Studies in Novi Sad. 30 students have so far obtained the title of philologist of Slovak language and literature – bachelor. In the period from 1987 till now, an average number of 10 students per year started studying Slovak Language and Literature. Besides the possibility of studying Slovak as their major, Slovak language is being studied as second language by students of Russian language and literature. After their graduation, students most frequently find employment in companies from the Republic of Slovakia trying to set up their premises in Serbia.

Taking all this into consideration we can conclude that, based on the results and statistical data on higher schools in Serbia, the current situation in schools in Slovak language in Serbia is satisfying. The only issue here would be the status of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Bački Petrovac.

The Department of Slovak Studies maintains its continuous high level of quality through its scientific practice with results in form of published scientific papers and presentations in various scientific seminars in and outside the country, through organizing scientific conferences with international participations, and workshops. The Department also gained the accreditation for doctoral studies. The department has managed to enhance the number of credible evidence of quality such as scientific monographs, expert and scientific papers in national and foreign magazines and anthologies by means of published papers from the organized scientific conferences and presentations on them.The department organized its last international conference entitled *270 years of culture, literature and language of Slovaks in Vojvodina* on October 16, 2015, and it gathered 60 applied reports from eight countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Macedonia, Slovenia, Romania, Serbia, Canada, and Australia).

The Department of Slovak Studies publishes two student's magazines on Slovak Studies: student magazine Traf and Slovak student's magazine of original papers for children entitled Čarbológ. Besides magazines of the Department of Journalism, these are the only student magazines of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad.

Positive results of scientific and research activity of teachers from the Department of Slovak Studies are also seen in form of published textbooks, scientific texts and their own scientific expert magazines.

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Abstract

This paper presents education in the Slovak language in three high schools in Serbia.

In 2011/2012 academic year the Department of Slovak studies of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad marked a significant jubilee: 50 years of the establishment of the study group – Slovak language and literature. The Faculty of Philosophy was founded in June 1954. Provincial authorities introduced a two-year study program of Slovak language and literature in 1960/61 academic year as a part of Higher School of Pedagogy in Novi Sad. When it comes to gaining greater independence, it was only possible for the Higher School of Slovak language to get it once it has met the legal regulations and strengthened the human resources department.

Reformation of higher education and science in Vojvodina in 1975 caused the reorganization of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad: it led to the establishment of separate institutes as individual study groups and to extending the duration of studies to four years. One separate department now becomes an institute in itself. These institutes included not only lectures but also scientific work. Starting from 2006/07 academic year, in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, the institutes transferred to four- and five- year (4+1) study programs- Bachelor studies. Up until today, 150 students have graduated from Slovak language and literature studies.

The Department of Slovak Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad is now the biggest Slovak center outside the Slovak Republic. After the end of the World War II, due to the insufficient number of Slovak language teachers, the need for setting up a Teaching School arose. It was established in Báčsky Petrovec as a part of the Slovak grammar school and it operated in the period between 1947 and 1966. Two hundred sixteen young teachers graduated from this school during its nineteen-year-old career. In 1973/74–1975/76 academic years there was a possibility for the Slovak teachers to go through specialization, 80 of whom got their degrees after a two-year studying program. Teachers who had finished Higher School of Pedagogy went through the specialization program in the period between 1988 and 2003, and, after finishing the two-year program, gained the academic title-class teacher. When it comes to high school level of education, directed departments of the Academy of Pedagogy were set up in Bački Petrovac in the periods 1977/78–1978/79.

An outpost in Slovak language within the Faculty of Pedagogy in Sombor was operational in Bački Petrovac in the period between 1998 and 2012. Last generation of students graduated the faculty in 2012 thus ending the presence of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Bački Petrovac. What led to closing of this center was the fact that it did not meet the necessary requirements for getting the accreditation recognized by the Ministry of Education since the program did not involve the needed number of professional courses that would enable the students to practice teaching in Slovak language afterwards.

The High School of Vocational Studies for Teachers was established in Novi Sad in the 2007/08 academic year. Before that, teachers used to study on the Higher School of Pedagogy – the department for teachers, but the studies were organized in Serbian language only and they lasted for two semesters. In the 2008/09 academic year this school started with a separate department in Slovak language. Students whose mother tongue is Slovak listen to the lectures in Slovak, as well. During the first two years of their studies, the students listen to all of their professional courses in Slovak language: mother tongue, speech culture children’s literature and methods of speech development. The rest of the courses that they attend are being organized in the Serbian language due to lack of staff.

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