

## THE REFORM OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN CROATIA IN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> HALF OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND IVAN FILIPOVIĆ\*

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The reform of elementary education, which was implemented by Ban Ivan Mažuranić, was one of the most important reforms in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Together with Ban Ivan Mažuranić, Ivan Filipović was one of the key people who prepared and implemented the school reform. In this paper I will show how Ivan Filipović, and his colleagues contributed to implementation of the school reform which started in 1870's and enabled development of the modern education system in Croatia.

**Keywords:** school reform; cultural transfer; secularization of the school system; Ban Ivan Mažuranić, Ivan Filipović; Croatia; the 19<sup>th</sup> century

### Introduction

The inner reasons of the reform of elementary education in Croatia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be followed since the demand for the reform of education during the revolutionary period in 1848 and formed in the educational basis in 1849.<sup>1</sup> In 1860's, following the development of educational

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<sup>1</sup> About the reform of elementary education in Croatia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cf Ivana Horbec, Maja Matasović, Vlasta Švogter: *Od protomodernizacije do modernizacije školstva u Hrvatskoj*. Knjiga I.: Zakonodavni okvir/From Proto-Modernisation to Modernisation of Croatia's School System. Volume I: Legislative Framework (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za

community, the demands for the educational reform were being expressed by many suggested schooling bases showing the educators' interest for the education reform. From the year 1859 (the first publication of the expert magazine *Napredak*) till 1871 there was the beginning of the teachers' movement which worked in an organized manner on the teachers' emancipation. The leading initiator of that movement was the teacher Ivan Filipović.<sup>2</sup> He held the first Croatian teachers' assembly in Zagreb in 1871. Around thousand teachers from all parts of Croatia came to that assembly.<sup>3</sup> Participating in the assembly the Croatian teachers' community confirmed itself as the inevitable part of any future education reform, whereas Ivan Filipović was confirmed as the main leader of the Croatian teachers' movement. That assembly was the peak of unity of the then teachers, but in the next assemblies in Petrinja in 1874 and in Osijek in 1878 their presence was smaller due to the growing differences inside the teachers' community. All the conditions for the reform of the educational system in Croatia were fulfilled after the Hungarian-Croatian Settlement was made in 1968 by which Croatia was granted autonomy in the sphere of legislature and administration in the areas of religion and education.

Along with those internal reasons, there were other external conditions that played the decisive role in the implementation of the school reform. First of all, it was the passing of a liberal constitution in December of 1867 in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. That constitution made possible the passing of a series of liberal acts in the whole of the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian Minister of Culture Jozsef Eötvös was the main initiator of the passing of the first modern act of primary education in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1868.<sup>5</sup> In May of 1869 The Imperial Elementary School Act (*Reichsvolksschulgesetz*) was also proclaimed in the Austrian part of the Monarchy, which clearly stipulated the liberal principles that ensured elementary education for all children, irrespective of their religious,

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povijest, 2017); Mirjana Gross and Agneza Szabo, *Prema hrvatskome građanskom društvu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1992), 402-414, and Dinko Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva," in *Intelektualac, kultura, reforma: Ivan Mažuranić i njegovo vrijeme*, eds. Dalibor Čepulo, Tea Rogić Musa and Drago Roksanđić (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu – Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2019), 265-282.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Filipović (24 July 1823 – 28 October 1895) was a teacher, writer, lexicographer and leader of the teachers' movement in Croatia in the second half of the 19th century. Cf "Filipović, Ivan", *Hrvatski biografski leksikon 4* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1998), 230-232.

<sup>3</sup> Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva", 266.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-267.

<sup>5</sup> Haselsteiner Horst, *Ogledi o modernizaciji u srednjoj Europi* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1997), 275-277.

national, gender and social differences.<sup>6</sup> The Imperial Elementary School Act that modernized the school system in the Austrian part of the Monarchy in 1869 was the main pattern for the making of the first School Act in Croatia that was enacted in 1874 during the reign of Ban Ivan Mažuranić. The Mažuranić school reform separated elementary education from the Church, and it got its own institutional structure that was primarily reflected in its bureaucratization and the establishment of its own supervising mechanisms. On the basis of that reform, the Croatian educational system formed itself as a distinctive part of society by the end of the 19th century with its own autonomy and instruments of power. The educational system reached that position by means of a graded functional differentiation of society in which the educational system was slowly taking over an array of functions that by that time were performed by the Church and family.<sup>7</sup>

The Church was strongly objecting to the secularization of education and trying to keep the stronger influence on education as it could. A question of power was the main question of the secularization of education. On the one hand, the Church was trying to keep its power over schooling. On the other hand, there was the State that saw education as a useful tool for keeping its power by producing desirable collective identities. Cardinal Juraj Haulik strongly attacked liberal ideas on reform and education secularization. He also criticized the Viennese Institute for teachers' training *Pädagogium*, which was founded in 1868 and directed by Friedrich Dittes. It was Dittes' ideas that influenced Ivan Filipović and his attitude towards the secularization of education, which he clearly expressed on the first Croatian teachers' assembly. On call of Ivan Filipović, Friedrich Dittes attended the first Croatian teachers' assembly in Zagreb in 1871.<sup>8</sup>

By the School Act from 1874 Croatia got involved in both the Austrian and the European trend of education modernization. For example, England got its first school act in 1870 (Elementary Education Act) on initiative of William Forester, but it only partly modernized the school system. It was only in 1891 that the obligatory and free elementary education in England was introduced, two decades after it was enabled in the whole Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. France also fell behind the Monarchy, even though the minister Victor Duruy made certain progress in the reform of the French education system in 1860's. France introduced the obligatory and free elementary education only in 1892, during the ministry of Jules Ferry.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva", 267.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

By their public action and expert commitment Ivan Filipović and his colleague Stjepan Basariček influenced the teachers' community which supported secularization of education and separation of schools from the Church's supervision. As early as 1860's some of the supporters of modernization of education openly criticized the then confessional education in the magazine *Napredak*. One of them was S. Basariček: "...if we could free ourselves from this unbearable condition and adjust to the spirit of the times, freedom and progress."<sup>10</sup> Basariček and Filipović became the main debaters with the conservative teachers gathered around the magazine *Školski prijatelj*. The debate was enhanced after the holding of the first Croatian teachers' assembly in Zagreb, which was boycotted by conservative teachers. Despite the boycott, most of the teachers supported Ivan Filipović and they confirmed him as the undisputed leader of the teachers' community in Croatia.<sup>11</sup> On the second Croatian teachers' assembly in Petrinja in 1874 the members discussed teachers' schools and further education, and they emphasized the importance of teachers' expertise. In Petrinja teachers' assembly many liberal and modern ideas were expressed. They transcended the opinions of the members of the teachers' community in so many ways. It manifested the best during the discussion of the disciplinary measures in schools, which led to the cancellation of the physical punishment despite the opposition of many teachers. However, the resolution was too liberal for the then teachers, so a few years later it was canceled, and physical punishment was introduced into schools again.<sup>12</sup>

## Elementary School Act from 1874

After becoming Ban in 1873, Ivan Mažuranić gave a task to Pavle Muhić (the superior of the Department of education) and his adviser Janko Jurković to assemble new education law. At that time there was still a draft law in the Parliament procedure which was assembled by the representatives of the government during 1870. However, the draft was withdrawn. Muhić and Jurković wrote a new draft of the education law which greatly resembled The Imperial Elementary School Act from 1869.<sup>13</sup> During April 1874 Ban Ivan Mažuranić convened an expert conference where the members discussed the new draft law and tried to form the new education law. Apart from Ivan Mažuranić and two representatives from the Department of education Muhić

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<sup>10</sup> Stjepan Basariček, "Naše pitanje," *Napredak* 2 (1869): 17.

<sup>11</sup> Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva", 267.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-270.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

and Jurković, there were other representatives: Živko Vukasović and Andrija Knežević (school supervisors), F. Petračić and Franjo Klaić (principles in Zagreb schools), Ivan Stožir (teacher), Adolf Weber (school supervisor) and the teacher Ivan Filipović.<sup>14</sup> Together with the government representatives, they formed the new education law, but the final form was made by Janko Jurković. Ivan Filipović described the work at the conference and the new law in his letter to Stjepan Basariček from May 5, 1874: “If the new law passes in the way the commission under the presidency of Ivan Mažuranić created it, we can be quite satisfied. It’s not everything the way we want it to be, and it can be much better in many ways, but it’s also not so bad that the law could not be perceived as progressive. School will be quite emancipated.”<sup>15</sup>

The legal proposal was debated in the Sabor in the autumn of 1874, and its explanation, signed by Ban Mažuranić on behalf of the government, set out the basic principles that had guided its compilation, including the subtly expressed intention to secularize the educational system. After the debate, *Zakon ob ustroju pučkih škola i peraparandija za pučko učiteljstvo u kraljevinah Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji* [Law on the Organization of Elementary Schools and Preparation Schools for Elementary Schools Teachers in the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia] was accepted by the Sabor and received the King’s sanction in October 1874.<sup>16</sup>

According to the new law, the aim of elementary schooling is religious and moral education of children and the education for civil life. It was emphasized that, apart from developing “mental” education, it is also necessary to develop “physical strength”. So, physical education was introduced to schools as an obligatory subject. Elementary schools were divided into general and civic. Civic schools were mainly higher girls’ schools, which were then included in the public school system. With the establishment of general four-grade elementary schools, the almost hundred-year difference between the trivial and main schools was abolished.<sup>17</sup> The law did not make significant distinctions between rural and main schools which was the case in all previous school systems and legal proposals. It was the way to make education generally the same and to equalize all the students in the system regardless of the place where they attended schools.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>15</sup> Dragutin Franković, ed., *Povijest školstva i pedagogije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Pedagoško-književni zbor, 1958), 161.

<sup>16</sup> Župan, “Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva”, 271.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 272.

All schools that were at least partially funded by the state or municipal money were public and free, and thus open to all children. The only schools that did not support themselves in this way were private schools. Church communities were allowed to maintain denominational schools, but accreditation was granted to those schools only if they met as majority of students.<sup>18</sup> If there were two confessional schools in one village or community, they were recommended to merge into one public school. Teachers in public schools had to be of the same confession as most students. So, this law could not be called “godless”, as its critics put it, who were primarily from the ranks of the clergy. Moreover, the Church was still in charge of religious education and books used in those lessons. Mažuranić’s secularization of the educational system mainly referred to the state’s overtaking administration and supervision of schools, whereas the religious character of education remained the same. However, it was a great leap into modernization because there was a key functional differentiation by which the state took over the charge of upbringing and education.<sup>19</sup>

General schools could have one to four teachers, considering the rule to employ new teachers if the number of students per teacher goes over 80. Every teacher should teach in separate classrooms. The intention of this rule was to avoid overcrowding, which was one of the main problems in schools, together with students not attending lessons. Places with more than three thousand inhabitants had to have a public school with four teachers.<sup>20</sup> Every place that had at least 40 young students had to have a public school.<sup>21</sup> However, if there were no financial means, several neighboring communities had to establish a mutual school. The means of founding and maintaining schools had to be ensured by the communities themselves. So, every school community had to have a budget for that purpose, and for the purpose of financing teachers’ salaries. Financial aid for poor school communities was ensured in the state’s budget. School communities had to have a school board that managed the school and met once a month.<sup>22</sup> Permanent members of the board were: Mayor, teacher, pastor, and school patron, while the other members were elected every three years. The tasks of the board were: maintaining the school, taking care of attendance, suggesting new teachers, managing the school budget, supervising teachers’ work and mediating between teachers and parents. A month before the new school year the board members had to write down all the children

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 273.

ready for school, which were all the children from the school community who were seven years old. The main role in taking care of upbringing and education in school communities had a municipal school supervisor who was a member of the school board and was elected by county school board.<sup>23</sup>

County school board had to meet at least two times a year. The members were: county school supervisor, a representative of any religion which had at least a thousand members in the county, two public school teachers and six representatives of the county school inspectorate. Appointing the county school supervisors, the government had control over the whole school area of Banal Croatia. Their duty was: supervising all public and private schools on their area, professional counselling of the teachers, informing the government about the conditions in schools, supervising of the community school boards, chairmanship of the county school meetings and taking care of academic and moral conditions of all public schools. County school supervisors were highly positioned in the school hierarchy of power.<sup>24</sup> The only institution they were responsible to, was the Government, that is its department for education. Ivan Filipović was elected a school supervisor of the Zagreb school inspectorate, and in this way his influential role in the teachers' community was confirmed. According to the new law the Government had all the key authority concerning education. It determined teaching curriculums and textbooks for public schools, it had supreme supervision over education and solved all the professional and disciplinary problems.<sup>25</sup>

The new law offered many measures to solve the problem of not attending school lessons, which was the biggest problem of education. There were series of sanctions for parents and guardians who did not send their children to school. Since elementary education became obligatory, parents were obliged to send their children to school.<sup>26</sup> When they did not do it, the community school board was obliged to give them a warning. When they still did not do it, they had to pay a fee of 1 to 10 forints. They could also be punished with one or two days in jail if they could not pay for it. In the most drastic cases the government had a right to take the children and appoint them new guardians. These measures show that the state crossed the line of a family with its actions of power and put itself over it as the supreme authority in the matter of upbringing and education. In traditional society the Church and the family had a key role in socializing children. However, in modern civil society they had to give up that role to the educational system.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 273-274.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

The next great problem was regressive literacy. So, it often happened that even the children who attended school forgot how to write a few years later. The new law paid attention to repetitions which had to ensure at least partial permanence of education.<sup>27</sup> Repeated training lasted two years and it was obligatory for all the children who finished elementary school. The obligation referred to both apprentices and to trade apprentices. Moreover, if their superiors enabled them to attend repetitions, they had to pay a fee of 20 to 50 forints. Repetitive lessons took place two times a week in two periods. In public schools, students had to attend at least 20 and at most 25 school periods. Thursday and Sunday were free.

According to the new law, teachers became public officials and were responsible for their work to the government.<sup>28</sup> Ivan Filipović and his colleagues insisted on that in 1860's. The main condition for employing teachers in public schools was to finish public training school in Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and to speak Croatian language. The county school supervisor decided about employing and discharging assistant teachers, whereas the government decided on the employment of permanent teachers in community public schools. In schools with many teachers the principal had to be one of the staff. It was the way for the teachers to get their professional independence.<sup>29</sup> By the new law, female teachers had to be equally paid to the male teachers. At that time, it was one of the rare laws in Europe which did not discriminate female teachers. In the Austrian part of the Monarchy and the most western countries female teachers were paid less than male teachers. The law also controlled the work of preparatory schools for education of teachers. According to the law, male students who finished high school and female students who finished higher girls' school could enroll preparatory schools. Education in preparatory schools lasted for three years, and after that students had to take a strict exam. The new law enabled all the conditions for autonomy of education. Secularization and autonomy of the education system were the greatest contribution of the school law in 1874.

## **Implementation of the school reform**

After passing the school law in 1874, a great part of the teachers' community was optimistic and enthusiastic about the implementation of the education reform. New conditions in administration and supervision of education

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 275.



brought a feeling of unity and participation in liberal changes that “the modern age” brought.<sup>30</sup> All school magazines which wrote about the new law marked the year 1875 as the point of discontinuity after which nothing in the school system should be the same. The new law should enable the modernization of the school system, but not only that. It should be the guarantee of the broad social changes which depended on the educated population. “We have the law; we have what we always aspired to, what we all desperately wanted. The foundation is laid for a progressive future. Now we must strive to ensure and speed up the material progress of the whole fatherland.”<sup>31</sup>

At the very beginning, Mažuranić’s school reform met many obstacles. One of those was disagreement of Catholic and Orthodox clergy about the new school supervision.<sup>32</sup> Catholic clergy was prepared to stop any further cooperation with schools, but at the conference in Zagreb the archbishop Mihalović succeeded in changing their minds and cooperate in implementation of the school reform. Ban Mažuranić informed all bishops that the new law was coming to force in October 1, 1875, and invited them to influence their clergy in implementing the school law. Orthodox Church declared that the new law was the way to abolish the Serbian autonomy. Even the Novi Sad “Zastava” dissociated itself from the new law and supported Serbian Orthodox clergy. Defending the new school law, Stjepan Basariček wrote a series of articles named “Our new school law” and responded to the attacks of Orthodox Church by arguments that in the civil society religious differences cannot determine the work of any secular institution, and that the new law ensures the equality of all the citizens. “The state itself knows neither a Catholic, nor an Orthodox, neither a Jew, nor a protestant, but only its people and citizens.”<sup>33</sup> However, the bigger problem for implementing the new law was the difficult material state of schools. According to the new school law, school buildings and classrooms should satisfy a series of new conditions. Many old buildings did not suit new legal requirements, but there was not enough money for their reform or construction, so this very important part of the reform went very slowly.<sup>34</sup> After passing the law, hygienic conditions and students’ health became a priority in schools. Physical and medical care of the students was determined by the law. There was a suggestion to enhance the medical control in schools because of the bad health conditions. The conditions in classrooms did not improve by the 1880’s, so Ivan Filipović as the school supervisor informs: “Teacher’s

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>31</sup> Stjepan Basariček, “Naš novi zakon za pučke škole” *Napredak* 4, (1875): 49.

<sup>32</sup> Župan, “Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva”, 276.

<sup>33</sup> Basariček, “Naš novi zakon za pučke škole”, *Napredak* 5, (1875): 66.

<sup>34</sup> Župan, “Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva”, 277.

work kills man's health more than any other, especially in places where more than a hundred children are in unhealthy and unfit classrooms loaded, not considering teacher's health and life."<sup>35</sup> Filipović warned about teachers' low standard of living and bad health conditions that were spread not only in classrooms but also in teachers' flats which were usually a part of school buildings. Constant controls of the county schools' supervisors had to contribute to improving the conditions in schools. So, the inspection of the county school supervisor Ivan Filipović was noted in the yearbook of the school Cerje in the school year 1877/78. School supervisors and teachers were often called out for the poor academic performance of the students.<sup>36</sup> The school in Vugrovec was taken as an example in an article which criticized public schools. Allegedly, most students were illiterate there. In his response to the article, the school supervisor put the blame on the poor material conditions in the school. However, the article shows a true picture of the conditions in most public schools of that time because it was written from the perspective of the county supervisor who had no interest in showing the situation worse than it really was.<sup>37</sup> "The real reasons for that are: deficient and irregular school attendance, insufficient supply of prescribed teaching material for the children, inadequate and incomplete teaching aids, a large number of inadequate school buildings and furniture totally unsuitable. In the Zagreb County, barely 30 percent of children eligible for school attend classes; and of these 30 percent barely one third attends school on a regular basis. In a number of schools with 80-100 and more children, I found 15-16, and was told that attendance is good if there are 30. In general, school attendance is so poor that it is real horror; and all the reports by the teachers and more conscientious local school boards are completely in vain. Furthermore, children are very irregularly supplied with prescribed books, copybooks and notebooks."<sup>38</sup> Ivan Filipović was appointed a school supervisor of the Zagreb County in 1875, when supervisors in all other counties were also appointed. The new law determined their salaries; they were between 1000 1200 forints per year, while teachers' salaries were between 350 and 700 forints and depended on the categorization of schools.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ivan Filipović, "Osvrt na predstojeću reviziju školskog zakona," *Napredak* 31, (1882): 490.

<sup>36</sup> Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva", 278.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>38</sup> Ivan Filipović, "Na obranu pučkog učiteljstva," *Napredak* 12, (1876): 178.

<sup>39</sup> Župan, "Mažuranićeva reforma pučkog školstva", 279.

## Conclusion

In 1874 the modernization of schools separated education from the religious system, and it got its own institutional structure. It was the development of school administration and autonomy of school supervision. The educational system got to that point by functional differentiation of society, so the school system slowly took over the series of functions which by that time belonged to family and Church. By the commitment of Ivan Mažuranić, education got its own supervising system which was not under the influence of the Church anymore. The implementation of the new education reform was not finished by 1880. However, it enabled the permanent modernization of elementary schools like no other reform by that time. It was Ivan Filipović who invested most of his professional work in preparation and implantation of the school reform. During 1860's Ivan Filipović and his associates wrote "The constitution of elementary public schools" to reform the elementary schools. Filipović was the main initiator and organizer of three Croatian teachers' conferences where the reform was being prepared (Zagreb and Petrinja) and its implementation was discussed (Osijek). The first conference in Zagreb in 1871 was especially successful, where around a thousand teachers gathered from all parts of Croatia and supported the reform of elementary education. In 1875 Ivan Filipović was appointed a school supervisor in Zagreb County so he completely dedicated his work to implementation and defense of the new school law in 1874.

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