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Beyond the Iron Curtain: The Contribution of Yugoslavian Authors to Adult Education

Abstract: In the post-war political landscape, divided by the Iron Curtain, Yugoslavia emerged as an exceptional entity, positioning itself between the East and West as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. The country's geopolitical standing, coupled with its involvement in global political affairs and high international regard, propelled Yugoslavia to the forefront of the burgeoning field of adult education. Yugoslavia's active engagement with international bodies such as the United Nations, UNESCO, Council of Europe, and within the Non-Aligned Movement advocated for adult education and literacy, facilitated the dissemination and popularisation of adult education concepts worldwide. Positioned strategically amidst the Iron Curtain, Yugoslavia served as a conduit for the spread of andragogy both to Eastern and Western countries, as well as to regions beyond, including Africa and Asia. This catalyzed the establishment of academic chairs and institutional units dedicated to adult education across diverse political and economic contexts. This research examined the contributions of Yugoslavian authors and intellectuals to the field of adult education through three primary lenses: The establishment of adult education as a scientific discipline, including the conceptualization and foundational frameworks of andragogy; Their role in advancing adult education research and scholarship; The international engagement of Yugoslavian authors through participation in UNESCO and other global initiatives aimed at promoting adult education on a worldwide scale. Prominent figures such as Borivoj Samolovčev, Mihajlo Ogrizović, Dušan Savićević, Ana Krajnc, Ašer Deleon, and Nikša Nikola Šoljan will be analysed for their significant contributions. The study will explore factors contributing to their achievements within the specific political and economic context of Yugoslavia, as well as their enduring impact on the evolution of adult education theory and practice. Utilizing a historical methodology, this research employed biographical analysis, examination of contemporary publications in both English and the national languages of Yugoslavia, and scrutiny of international journals, where the authors have contributed. Additionally, insights gleaned from interviews will complement textual analysis, offering first-source data and a nuanced under-

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standing of the scholarly contributions and legacies of these influential figures in the field of adult education.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, adult education, andragogy, Non-Aligned Movement, UNESCO, internationalization of education

Iza Gvozdene zaveses: doprinos jugoslovenskih autora obrazovanju odraslih

Apstrakt: U posleratnom političkom pejzažu, podeljenom Gvozdenom zavesom, Jugoslavija se pojavila kao izuzetan akter, pozicionirajući se između Istoka i Zapada kao jedan od predvodnika Pokreta nesvrstanih. Geopolitički položaj zemlje, zajedno sa njenim aktivnim učešćem u globalnim političkim tokovima i visokim međunarodnim ugledom, doprineo je da Jugoslavija zauzme istaknuto mesto u razvoju oblasti obrazovanja odraslih. Aktivno angažovanje Jugoslavije u međunarodnim organizacijama kao što su Ujedinjene nacije, UNESCO i Savet Evrope, kao i u okviru Pokreta nesvrstanih, podsticalo je razvoj obrazovanja odraslih i pismenosti, te omogućilo širenje i popularizaciju koncepata obrazovanja odraslih širom sveta. Strateški pozicionirana duž Gvozdene zaveses, Jugoslavija je delovala kao svojevrsni most u prenošenju andragoških ideja kako ka istočnim i zapadnim zemljama, tako i ka regionima izvan Evrope, uključujući Afriku i Aziju. Ovi procesi doprineli su osnivanju katedri i institucionalnih jedinica posvećenih obrazovanju odraslih u različitim političkim i ekonomskim kontekstima. Istraživanje razmatra doprinose jugoslovenskih autora i intelektualaca oblasti obrazovanja odraslih kroz tri ključne perspektive: utemeljenje obrazovanja odraslih kao naučne discipline, uključujući konceptualizaciju i teorijske osnove andragogije; njihov doprinos razvoju istraživanja i naučne produkcije u oblasti obrazovanja odraslih; i međunarodni angažman jugoslovenskih autora kroz učešće u aktivnostima UNESCO-a i drugih globalnih inicijativa usmerenih na promociju obrazovanja odraslih na svetskom nivou. Posebna pažnja posvećena je analizi doprinosa istaknutih autora kao što su Borivoj Samolovčev, Mihajlo Ogrizović, Dušan Savićević, Ana Krajnc, Ašer Deleon i Nikša Nikola Šoljan. Studija ispituje faktore koji su omogućili njihove naučne i profesionalne domete u specifičnom političkom i ekonomskom kontekstu Jugoslavije, kao i njihov trajni uticaj na razvoj teorije i prakse obrazovanja odraslih. Upotrebom istorijske metodologije, istraživanje obuhvata biografsku analizu, analizu savremenih publikacija na engleskom i nacionalnim jezicima Jugoslavije, kao i pregled međunarodnih časopisa u kojima su autori objavljivali svoje radove. Dodatno, uvidi dobijeni kroz intervju dopunjuju analizu pisanih izvora, pružajući neposredne podatke i dublje razumevanje naučnog doprinosa i nasleđa ovih značajnih aktera u oblasti obrazovanja odraslih.

Ključne reči: Jugoslavija, obrazovanje odraslih, andragogija, Pokret nesvrstanih, UNESCO, internacionalizacija obrazovanja

The development of adult education has been shaped by a variety of intellectual, political, and social forces, with each period in history influencing its progression in different ways. In the post-war era, Yugoslavia occupied a unique position between the East and West, fostering a space where ideas and practices from both sides of the ideological divide could converge. Although the Iron Curtain no longer exists, misunderstandings between educational traditions emerging from the Euro-centric Global North and those shaped in Eastern European and post-Soviet contexts persist, making it crucial to critically reassess past developments and achievements beyond simplified East–West binaries and irrespective of the ideological frameworks in which they were formed.

Yugoslavia's geopolitical position and its active role in the Non-Aligned Movement enabled its scholars to contribute to global discussions on adult education, both within their own borders and beyond. These intellectuals played a key role in shaping adult education as both a scientific discipline and a field of practice, offering insights that bridged divides and advanced the global discourse on lifelong learning.

This article seeks to examine the contributions of Yugoslavia⁴ and its scholars to the development of adult education, focusing on four key dimensions:

- *System development – establishing an adult education system in Yugoslavia*: Their role in creating institutional frameworks and ensuring inclusive educational opportunities within the country.
- *Scientific foundations – founding adult education as a scientific discipline*: Contributions to the conceptualisation of andragogy, foundational theories, and advancements in research and academic work.
- *Professionalisation of adult education*: Efforts to define and develop adult education as a distinct field of practice and expertise.
- *International engagement*: Active participation in global initiatives and organizations, including UNESCO, to promote adult education worldwide.

This research employs a historical methodology to examine the contributions of Yugoslav scholars to the development of adult education. The historical approach allows for the analysis of the socio-political and intellectual contexts in which these contributions occurred, as well as the broader historical developments that influenced the field. This methodology involves not only the exami-

⁴ Today commonly referred to as the 'former Yugoslavia' or 'ex-Yugoslavia'; however, for brevity, this text will use the term 'Yugoslavia'. Although adult education was equally widespread in other Yugoslav republics, such as Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, and scholars from these federal units made significant contributions to its development, they are not included in this analysis due to space limitations.

nation of primary and secondary sources but also the analysis of contemporary publications, including those in English and the national languages of Yugoslavia.

In addition to historical analysis, a biographical approach is integral to understanding the professional trajectories of the scholars involved. By examining academic careers and intellectual pursuits of a few key figures, this research aims to uncover their contributions to the national and international field of adult education and highlight how their ideas resonated with international trends, within the framework of Yugoslavia's unique political and ideological landscape.

Between East and West: Politics, Economy, and Ideology in Yugoslavia

The development of adult education in Yugoslavia cannot be fully understood without considering the broader geopolitical and ideological context. Positioned between East and West, Yugoslavia maintained autonomy that allowed it to engage with diverse educational philosophies and policy models. While the Cold War divided the world into rigid ideological camps, Yugoslavia's unique path fostered intellectual exchange and innovation.

To fully grasp the significance of these contributions, it is essential to first examine the political, economic, and ideological context that shaped Yugoslavia's position on the global stage.

Global Political Landscape: The Formation of the Iron Curtain

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the global political landscape was polarised into two opposing blocs. The Western bloc, under the leadership of the United States, was characterized by a democratic political system, a capitalist economic model, and a liberal ideology, while the Eastern Bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union, embraced collective ownership, a centrally planned economy, and one-party rule. By 1947, the division culminated in the emergence of a protracted geopolitical and ideological struggle, known as the Cold War (1947–1991). Winston Churchill famously described this division in his speech at Westminster College in 1946: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent" (Churchill, 1946). The Iron Curtain became the defining symbol of the Cold War, representing not only physical separation but also deep ideological, political, and economic rifts

between East and West. On one side of the curtain were the democratic and capitalist countries of the Western Bloc, while on the other side were the communist states of the Eastern Bloc (Brager, 2004; Gaddis, 2005).

The ideological rift between capitalism and communism became the driving force behind geopolitical strategies, fostering a climate of mistrust and competition. This bipolar order shaped also global relations through military alliances, economic aid strategies, and ideological propaganda. At the same time, the Cold War gave rise to landmark events such as the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, each of which underscored the fragility of global peace during this era (Cumings, 2011; Gaddis, 2005; Munton, & Welch, 2011). The division of Germany into East and West, symbolized by the Berlin Wall erected in 1961, became a tangible representation of the broader conflict, highlighting the human cost of ideological and political discord.

Yugoslavia's Political Position

Yugoslavia refers to three successive states that existed from 1918 to 2003. As a unified state of South Slavs, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established in 1918, and in 1929, it was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This state lasted until 1941, when it was occupied and divided by the Axis powers during World War II. In 1945, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was founded. It consisted of six federal units (republics) and two autonomous provinces, with a high degree of autonomy, so Yugoslavia's governance relied on federalism to accommodate its multi-ethnic population.

Initially aligned with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito played a unique role in the emerging global order. Tito's communist partisans had liberated and revitalised the country without significant Soviet aid, granting Yugoslavia a degree of independence uncommon among communist states which were fully controlled by the Communist party of the Soviet Union. Further on, ideological and strategic differences between Tito and Stalin culminated in the 1948 split, formalised when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau – Agency of international communism founded under Soviet auspices in 1947). This break, known as the Tito-Stalin Split, was a defining moment for Yugoslav foreign and domestic policy (Rajak, 2013).

Following the split, Yugoslavia sought Western economic aid and aligned with the United States and its allies to resist Soviet pressure. The Washington Declaration of 1950, marked a significant shift, as the US provided financial and

military aid to Yugoslavia. Despite this cooperation, Tito remained committed to preserving Yugoslavia's sovereignty and avoiding full alignment with either bloc, advocating a 'third path' that prioritised non-alignment and a unique form of socialism distinct from both the Soviet model. Khrushchev's comment describing Yugoslavia as a 'Trojan horse of American imperialism' in 1958 reflected lingering distrust within the Eastern Bloc (Ramet, 2002). This pragmatic approach laid the foundation for Yugoslavia's policy of neutrality and non-alignment in global politics (Stopic et al., 2025).

Yugoslavia's unique position in the Cold War era distinguished it from other Eastern European countries tightly controlled by the Soviet Union. It enabled the country to establish strong political, economic, and cultural ties with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. At the same time, it maintained open economic, cultural, and political relations with the West, ensuring access to Western technologies, capital, and cultural influences. This unique position allowed Yugoslavia to act as a bridge between East and West, as well as between developed and developing countries.

The Cold War defined international relations during this period, with superpower rivalry shaping geopolitical developments. The decolonisation movement gained momentum, as African and Asian nations achieved independence from European colonial powers. Yugoslavia, a founding member of the UN and key international organizations like the IMF (IMF, 2024), World Bank, GATT, and OSCE, played an active role in these developments.

Yugoslavia was involved in the founding of UNESCO, which emerged from the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) during World War II. UNESCO's founding conference, called by the British and French governments, took place in November 1945 in London with delegates from 44 countries, including three Eastern European states from the Soviet bloc – Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia (Elfert, 2018; Popović, 2014).

A cornerstone of Yugoslavia's foreign policy was its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which aimed to offer developing countries a platform for asserting their interests outside the Cold War blocs. Founded in 1961 (Kardelj, 1976; Rajak, 2013), NAM was spearheaded by Tito (Yugoslavia), Nehru (India) and Nasser (Egypt). Yugoslavia hosted the first NAM conference in Belgrade (Kardelj, 1976; Rajak, 2013; Stubbs, 2023), reinforcing its position as a bridge between East and West, advocating for equitable global governance and decolonisation. Through NAM and UNESCO, Yugoslavia advanced global education initiatives, particularly in adult literacy, vocational training, and social equity. Its policies of self-management and workers' education influenced inter-

national debates on economic development and its impact on educational access and equality. Scholarships and training programs for students from non-aligned countries further demonstrated its commitment to educational cooperation and strengthening the Global South.

It is no coincidence that the UNESCO General Assembly was held in Belgrade in 1980 (Valderrama, 1995). As described by Popovic (2014), “The aspirations of the then-leader of the Non-Aligned Movement aligned with those of UNESCO, fostering the further expansion of the lifelong learning concept, aimed at personal and social development, progress, and the promotion of peace and understanding among nations” (p. 51).

Economic Experiment and Self-management

Yugoslavia successfully maintained a balance between the countries of real socialism with closed economies and Western capitalist states with open markets, developing a semi-market economic model. One of the key features of Yugoslav socialism was its unique system of workers’ management – socialist *self-management*. Inspired by Marxist ideas of worker control over the means of production, it blended socialism with market mechanisms, Workers’ councils, elected by employees, made key decisions on operations, investments, and profit distribution, allowing limited competition and private entrepreneurship alongside the state-controlled economy. Self-management also prioritized education as a means of empowerment. Political, vocational, and adult education programs were established to train educators, develop curricula, and promote lifelong learning as a pillar of economic and social development.

For a time, this model boosted productivity and innovation, leading to high living standards compared to Eastern European neighbours. By the 1960s and 1970s, Yugoslavia became one of the more prosperous socialist states. Even later, in 1990, in terms of gross social product, Yugoslavia ranked 25th globally in 1990, with estimates suggesting that by 2000 it could have risen to become one of the world’s 20 largest economic powers (Đukić, 1995).

However, regional inequalities and inefficient coordination exposed systemic weaknesses. Growing reliance on foreign loans to sustain growth led to mounting debt and economic crisis in the 1980s. After the country’s dissolution, self-managed enterprises were privatised or liquidated, marking the end of this distinctive system.

Creating Adult Education System in Yugoslavia

Literacy and Early Adult Education Efforts

In the immediate post-war period, adult education was strongly focused on eradicating illiteracy and promoting gender equality. These efforts were fundamental to building a modern socialist society, considering that 50% of the population aged nine and older had no formal education (SZSa, 1949, p. 250).

To address this, massive literacy campaigns such as “Literacy for All” (1947–1951) were launched (Bondžić, 2010; Dimić, 1988; Petranović, 1988; Samolovčev, 1987). These campaigns were organized by ministries of education, trade unions, schools, cultural institutions, and volunteers. Over 630,000 people in Serbia alone became literate between 1945 and 1948 (SZS, 1949, p. 259).

Literacy was seen as crucial for:

- Socio-cultural transformation (adoption of new cultural patterns, values, and norms),
- Economic development (increasing productivity and employment), and
- Ideological influence (ensuring access to written ideological content and propaganda messages).

Despite its political prioritization and the mobilization of resources, these campaigns did not meet expectations. The 1953 census revealed that the illiteracy rate remained at 25.4%, similar to 1948 (Bondžić, 2010). Nevertheless, these efforts promoted adult education, challenged prejudices that learning was only for children, and laid the foundation for a culture of lifelong learning.

Women's Education and Social Transformation

The socialist government actively promoted women's emancipation as part of its broader goal of creating a “classless society”. This included the formal recognition of women's political and human rights – such as the right to vote and work – as well as social rights (like maternity leave, child care leave, and the right to abortion; Burcar, 2020).

Education was seen as a prerequisite for achieving these rights, leading to significant societal investment in women's education. However, to prevent independent political mobilization, the Communist Party treated women's education as part of general education policy, avoiding the creation of specific institutional

structures to address their unique needs. While the socialist state actively promoted women's emancipation through legal and economic measures, it distanced itself from feminism as an independent movement. Yugoslav feminism, however, emerged from within this framework, shaped by both socialist structures and engagement with Western feminist ideas. Rather than being purely an external import, it developed as a hybrid model – both influenced by socialism and critical of its limitations regarding gender equality (Zaharijević, 2017).

While progress was uneven and faced societal resistance, this period saw substantial advancements in women's participation in public life, education, and employment. Despite later political and economic upheavals – including the civil war, dissolution of Yugoslavia, and entrenched patriarchal norms – this legacy of women's education remained influential.

Vocational and Workers' Education

From the 1960s onward, adult education shifted towards vocational and technical training in response to rapid industrialization. Education for workers, with a strong ideological basis, became central, as lifelong learning and workers' education were perceived as integral to the self-management system (Šuvar, 1982).

Although all education adhered to socialist ideology, adult education – due to its practical and work-based nature – was less ideologically rigid than the school system. The ideological character was primarily reflected in overarching political goals, as defined by the Communist Party. In the period following World War II, a series of documents on adult education were adopted in Yugoslavia, indicating both socio-political and professional interest in adult education while reflecting a specific political agenda and adult education policy (see in: Despotović & Popović, 2014). However, beyond the obligatory ideological declarations, education programs developed dynamically and adapted to real-life needs.

Workers' universities emerged as key institutions, educating members of workers' councils and employees. The first was founded in Belgrade in 1952, and by 1979, Yugoslavia had 230 such universities (Despotović, 1986). These institutions offered vocational training, political education, and general learning, creating a remarkable network that integrated education with governance and industry.

The establishment of the Conference of Workers' and People's Universities of Yugoslavia in 1961 helped coordinate and enhance these efforts. However, with the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, both the Conference and most of these universities ceased to exist.

Institutionalisation of Lifelong Learning

In 1970, the *Resolution of the Federal Assembly on the Development of Education and Training on a Self-Management Basis* (Savezna skupština, 1970) introduced key reforms, including:

- The de-etatization of education,
- The establishment of lifelong learning as a national strategy,
- The integration of education and work—a concept later reintroduced as “dual education” in post-Yugoslav countries.

According to the Resolution, adult education was to be realized through:

- Traditional educational institutions,
- Work-based learning,
- “Return” or “recurrent” education (Savezna skupština, 1970; Krajnc, 1989; Samolovčev, 1987).

This expansion of adult education led to a broader institutional framework, with non-formal education flourishing in companies, cultural centres, libraries, museums, and clubs (Šoljan et al., 1985). Ideological education also remained significant, with institutions such as centers for Marxist education and self-management schools continuing to play a role (Samolovčev, 1963; Mrmak 1978). Despite its dominance, the practical link between education and labour persisted, influencing later educational reforms in the region.

Following Yugoslavia’s dissolution, the institutional network of adult education collapsed. Yet its legacy – particularly in vocational training – endures, as the integration of education and work has not only persisted but evolved into widely accepted and advanced educational practices. Stripped of its socialist-era terminology, its core principles, organizational frameworks, and methods – such as work-based learning, on-the-job training, retraining, and aligning education with industry needs – remain highly relevant today.

One of its main pillars, ideological/Marxist/socialist education, was almost entirely erased from history after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Today, little remains of it, aside from an emphasis on a well-rounded personality, which aligns with contemporary notions of holistic education.

Beyond vocational training, Yugoslavia’s legacy in adult education also includes an early adoption of lifelong learning strategies, a strong commitment to women’s right to education and work, and a broad vision of comprehensive education.

Science and Research

Foundations and Early Development

Although socialist ideology shaped and limited both the practice and scientific thought on education, it also contributed to its development. According to Marxist philosophy, continuous and comprehensive personal development was a central tenet, and lifelong learning became a widely accepted postulate. The demand for constant development of the 'revolutionary consciousness of the working class' led to an emphasis on intellectual, moral, physical, practical, and aesthetic (artistic) education. The slogan of a 'revolution that never ends' was seen as a call for education that never stops, reinforcing the idea that learning – particularly adult learning – should be perpetual and all-encompassing

Although the education system for children and youth was highly ideologized, state control over schools and curricula in Yugoslavia was not as strict as in other socialist countries. This allowed for cultural and intellectual openness to the experiences of other countries, and education held a high position in the value system of the people. As a result, a strong educational boom emerged, which was embraced and supported by people from all social classes. (Popović – Ceković, 1993, p. 226)

Yugoslav scholars quickly responded to global trends in adult education, integrating them with educational traditions from the first half of the 20th century. Given the historical context, as early as the 1950s, numerous articles on enlightenment, literacy, and ideological education within the antifascist partisan movement during World War II were published. Then, a growing body of research in the field began to take shape. In 1958, Zvonarević published *The Application of psychology in adult education*, opening new topics and contributing to the development of adult education as a distinct field. By 1966, 50 monographs on adult education and learning had been published (Mrmak, 1969). Among these, Mihajlo Ogrizović, a professor at the University of Zagreb, published *Osnovni problemi andragogije* (Fundamentals of Andragogy, 1956) and *Osnovni problemi penološke andragogije* (Fundamentals of Penological Andragogy, 1956a) – both appearing ten years before Malcolm Knowles introduced the term *andragogy* to American discourse.

The peak of the early stage of adult education theory development in Yugoslavia was marked by the extensive collective monograph *Osnovi andragogije* (Fundamentals of Andragogy) (Grupa autora, 1966), written by 13 authors from

all Yugoslav republics. Spanning over 800 pages, it presents the most significant overview of the main concepts, theories and practical issues and achievements in adult education, or andragogy. The book is structured into five main chapters, covering a wide range of topics, including: andragogy as a scientific discipline, the adult education system, the adult learner in the learning process, the organisation and implementation of adult education (including methods), and self-organized education.

The significance of this publication was recognized internationally. The American journal *Adult Education* (No. 3–4, 1967) published a review by J. Kulich, highlighting its contributions (Savićević, 2011). Even today, *Osnovi andragogije* could be considered a significant research and publishing endeavour even by today's standards, reflecting the all-encompassing and systematic approach of Yugoslav scholars.

One of the good indicators of intensive academic engagement in Yugoslavia was the development of a specialised adult education journal. In 1954, the journal *Narodno sveučilište* (People's University) was founded in Zagreb, later renamed *Obrazovanje odraslih* (Adult Education) in 1959, and finally *Andragogija* (Andragogy) in 1969. The journal was published until 1991⁵ and had a broad Yugoslav scope, focusing on:

- Theoretical and empirical research,
- Historical-comparative studies,
- Adult education policy and practice.

Published five times a year as a double issue, it included sections such as: *From the practice of adult education, Institutions, Organizations and associations, Foreign countries, Chronicle, Bibliography, and Reviews.*

The institutionalisation of research came in the seventies. In 1978, the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy was founded as a separate research unit within the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade: "Striving to overcome positivist empiricism and day-to-day political pragmatism in shaping educational policies, the Institute particularly fosters action research and strategies that simultaneously drive the transformation of educational practices and the development of pedagogical and andragogical knowledge" (Mihaljčić, 1998, p.184).

In the post-Yugoslav period, influenced by European trends yet building on the experiences of the Yugoslav era, Slovenia and Croatia established research centres dedicated to the study of adult education.

⁵ After the breakup of Yugoslavia, three journals were established: *Andragogical Studies* in Serbia (1994), *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* in Slovenia (1996), and *The Andragogical Gazette* in Croatia (1998).

International Presence

Internationally, Yugoslav adult education scholarship gained recognition. Jindra Kulich's bibliographic compilations provide a systematic overview of Yugoslav contributions to adult education. In *Adult Education in Continental Europe: An Annotated Bibliography of English-Language Materials, 1945–1969* (Kulich, 1971), he documented 40 entries directly related to Yugoslavia, including collected volumes, journal articles and studies. The earliest entry dates back to 1946; six are UNESCO publications or included in UNESCO reports, one is published by the IBE, and one article appeared in *The International Review of Education* (IRE) (Deleon, 1963). The topics covered in these texts reflect, on the one hand, the highly developed practice of adult education and, on the other, a wide range of research interests and dynamic scholarly activity. The topics covered range from the history of adult education, literacy, and financing, to workers' universities, vocational training, correspondence education, media in adult learning, etc. (Deleon, 1963, p. 206–214).

Even for a shorter period (1970–1974), Kulich's second Annotated bibliography (Kulich, 1975) identified 17 Yugoslav entries.

Several publications in English indicate the extensive interest from both academic and professional circles in Yugoslav experiences. These include the UNESCO monograph *Adult Education in Yugoslavia* (1962), and the 1985 anthology *Adult Education in Yugoslav Society*, co-published by the National Commission for UNESCO and the Union of Yugoslav Adult Educators' Societies (Šoljan et al., 1985). A selective bibliography for 1968–1984 (pp. 287–307), included 115 English-language titles while a Serbo-Croatian bibliography (1954–1984) listed 223 publications, with abstracts translated into English. Additionally, it includes a Directory of Adult Education institutions and societies (6 faculties and research institutions, 8 adult educators' societies, 8 associations of people's and workers' universities at the regional level and 11 at the provincial) – also in English, even with full postal addresses. Finally, the volume includes a Glossary (pp. 308–314).

This extensive bibliographic documentation underscores not only the global interest in Yugoslav adult education research but also Yugoslavia's active engagement with international discussions and their efforts to present Yugoslav experiences on the global stage.

Scientific Relevance

Although framed within the ideological discourse of Yugoslav Marxism and socialism (see Popović – Ceković, 1993) education remained open to international influences. Despite ideological constraints, Yugoslav scholars engaged with global discussions, particularly in the field of lifelong learning, which aligned with the country's self-management philosophy and emphasized permanent education as a means of fostering economic and social progress.

Evidence of this engagement includes following publications:

- Povratno obrazovanje (Recurrent Education), (Savićević, 1975),
- Recurrent Education in Yugoslavia (Šoljan, 1981),
- Lifelong and Recurrent Education (Filipović, 1987).

These works aligned closely with OECD discussions on lifelong learning and labor market adaptation. Paul Lengrand's (1970) *Introduction à l'éducation permanente* was translated and published in Yugoslavia as early as 1976, further demonstrating this early commitment. Almost simultaneously, Filipović (1971) published a seminal, nearly 300-page work on permanent education, followed by an article in *International Review of Education* (Filipović, 1974) discussing lifelong education in Yugoslavia – another concept that strongly resonated with Yugoslav scholars.

Most of the studies and articles by Yugoslav authors from this period reference and analyse the works of the most prominent global figures in the field of adult education (see, for example, Samolovčev, Krajnc, Savićević), major theoretical concepts, and dominant educational practices (experiences from the UK, Sweden, the USA, etc.).

Yugoslav scholars also contributed extensively to prestigious international journals, UNESCO publications, ICAE's journal *Convergence*, with Savićević serving on the Editorial Board since 1967 (ICAE, n.d.; Savićević, 2011).

Notably, many of their publications anticipated contemporary developments in education. Below are a few key examples:

- V. Andrilović (1973) examined programmatic learning, foreshadowing computer-assisted education;
- Samolovčev (1987) reported on the use of computers in education;
- Grupa autora (1966) and Krajnc (1981) explored distance learning, while Pongrac (1987) studied the potential of correspondence education – both laying the groundwork for online learning;

- Work-based education, a dominant theme of the time, was closely linked to industrial development and aligned with what is now defined as on-the-job training. Yugoslav scholars emphasised the strong ideological connection between the world of work and education, viewing worker education as essential for industrial progress. A notable example is Matijević's (1984) *Učimo uz rad* (Learning through work), which highlighted professional development within this framework – an issue that remains highly relevant today;
- The role of media in adult education was extensively explored, particularly the use of radio and television (Grupa autora, 1966; Špan, 1980);
- Self-education (Mrmak, 1975; Prodanović, 1973).

These studies illustrate that Yugoslav scholars were not only engaged in policy discussions in their time but also actively participated in global discussions on education, helping to adapt international paradigms to the national context – an approach that remains relevant today.

On Andragogy and Its Role

The dominant influence of the German academic tradition in shaping scientific disciplines in Serbia also extended to education. Consequently, the concept of andragogy, first introduced in 1833 by A. Kapp, later used in the Weimar Republic in twenties (E. Ronenstock, 1924), and revitalized in Switzerland (H. Hanselmann, 1951 – *Andragogy: Nature, Possibilities and Boundaries of Adult Education*) and Germany (F. Pöggeler, 1957 – *Einführung in die Andragogik / Introduction to Andragogy*), found fertile ground in Yugoslavia.

During the 1960s, extensive academic debates in Yugoslavia examined the status of andragogy within the broader field of education. The central question was whether andragogy constituted an independent scientific discipline or merely a subfield of pedagogy. Early advocates of andragogy as a distinct science focused on adult education and learning, included Ogrizović (1956; 1959) and Samolovčev (1963). Other prominent researchers, such as V. Andrilović, M. Matijević, N. Pastuović, and S. Pongrac, contributed to this discourse. The establishment of andragogy as an academic field in Belgrade gained recognition, with Dušan Savićević (1961) emerging as one of its leading figures (Govekar, 2024, p. 55). These debates on andragogy's disciplinary status closely parallel discussions in the United States three decades later (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Elias, 1979; McKenzie, 1977, 1979; Pratt, 1988).

The international recognition of this term in the USA can be attributed to the Yugoslav andragogue Dušan Savićević, who introduced Malcolm Knowles to the concept during his study visit to the USA. Malcolm Knowles, a prominent adult learning educator and a key figure in the field of adult education in the USA, is renowned for his work on andragogy, self-directed learning, and informal adult education. "Knowles formulated his approach after his and Savićević's longstanding discussions on andragogy, following their mutual correspondence and exchange of andragogical sources" (Henschke, n.d.-a, p. 73).⁶

Knowles was the first scholar in the U.S. to publicly advocate for andragogy as a distinct scientific discipline, presenting his arguments at the 1966 national convention of the American Association for Adult Education (Savićević, 2006, p. 57). Since then, over 170 doctoral dissertations have been defended on andragogy in the United States (Cooper & Henschke, 2001).

The Yugoslav scholars who contributed to this field conceptualized andragogy broadly, defining it as "the discipline that studies adult education and learning in all its forms" (Savićević, 1999, p. 92). Their work addressed all levels and domains of adult education, encompassing what would later be categorized as formal, non-formal education, and informal learning. The significance of this conceptual development was reflected in international discussions, including the journal *Convergence*, which in 1968 published a correction of the term from androgogy to andragogy and described it as "the theory of adult education, increasingly recognized as a new discipline in university programs" (Savićević, 2006, p. 59).

Similarly, Ana Krajnc (1979) emphasized that andragogy, as a relatively young discipline, gradually became independent from pedagogy while remaining within the broader science of education and subject to shared principles governing both fields (p. 15). More importantly, these conceptual efforts around *andragogy* stimulated academic engagement, leading to the publication of numerous books and journals, the establishment of research institutions, and the organization of scholarly conferences. The field also benefited from historical analyses, comparative studies of adult education systems worldwide, and the adoption of diverse research methodologies.

⁶ Knowles himself described how Savićević introduced him to the concept: "...in 1967, I had an experience that made it all come together. A Yugoslavian adult educator, Dušan Savićević, participated in a summer session I was conducting at Boston University. At the end of it, he came up to me with his eyes sparkling and said, 'Malcolm, you are preaching and practicing andragogy.' I replied, 'Whatagogy?' because I had never heard the term before. He explained that the term had been coined by a teacher in a German grammar school, Alexander Kapp, in 1833..." (Knowles, 1989, p. 79). However, this event seems to have occurred earlier, as evidenced by Sopher (2003) in her dissertation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Despite differences in the understanding and definition of andragogy, Knowles expanded the concept in the USA, and Savićević contributed to its further dissemination worldwide.

In Croatia, efforts to preserve andragogy as a scientific discipline owe much to Professor Nikola Pastuović, who published *Obrazovni ciklus* (Educational cycle) in 1978) and who published *Obrazovni ciklus* (Educational Cycle) in 1978 and dedicated years to establishing andragogy as a multidisciplinary science (Pastuović, 1999, 2008).

While the term andragogy is now less commonly used, its role in shaping adult education remains undeniable. The extensive body of work by Yugoslav scholars – such as Ogrizović (1956; 1959; 1963), Grupa autora (1966), Krajnc (1976), Samolovčev & Muradbegović (1979), Samolovčev, 1981), and Andrilović with associated (1985) – is significant not merely for its terminology but for its foundational contribution to the scientific study of adult education (for example the seminal works of Andrilović, 1976: *How adult learns*, and Savićević, 1983: *Man and lifelong learning*). These works advanced subfields such as industrial andragogy, military andragogy, social andragogy, family andragogy, correctional education (penological andragogy), leisure time andragogy, and gerontagogy (education for older adults), thereby expanding the scope of adult education and increasing the number of areas subjected to academic research and scientific rigor. Furthermore, they contributed to the growing recognition of lifelong learning as a fundamental concept in education policy and practice.

Ultimately, the terminological debates surrounding andragogy are secondary to the substantive advancements the field generated. The systematic and comprehensive approach to adult education that emerged from these discussions not only shaped its academic institutionalization but also aligned with broader international trends, fostering the development of research, theory, and professionalisation.

Professionalisation of Adult Education

Yugoslav scholars were among the first to systematically address the preparation of professionals for adult education, both through theoretical inquiry and the development of practical training programs.

A significant step toward professionalisation occurred in 1958 with the establishment of the Summer School for Andragogues, initially organized under the auspices of the Union of People's and Workers' Universities of Croatia and, from 1973, as part of the Andragogy Center in Zagreb. Over time, this initiative expanded into both summer and winter schools, serving as platforms for the initial and continuing education of adult educators. These schools not only provided specialized training but also facilitated professional networking, attracting

andragogues from across Yugoslavia and beyond (Ogrizović & Sučić, 1983). Held in Poreč and Crikvenica (Summer School) and Samobor (Winter School), their programs encompassed lectures, seminars, courses, conferences, and discussions. By 1983, more than 500 programs had been conducted, involving approximately 13,000 participants and nearly 500 lecturers – 200 of whom were international experts, including UNESCO representatives (Andrilović et al., 1985; Ogrizović & Sučić, 1983). The schools became a focal point for the exchange of knowledge, theoretical debates, and the advancement of research in andragogy.

The growing significance of adult education in Yugoslavia led to the establishment of republic-based andragogical societies during the 1960s. In June 1968, these societies were unified into the *Union of Andragogical Societies of Yugoslavia*, aimed at fostering professional collaboration, advancing theoretical and practical knowledge, and strengthening the position of adult education within the broader educational and political framework. Modeled after Soviet professional associations, the Union operated through national congresses held every four years, each dedicated to a specific theme, culminating in comprehensive proceedings on the topics:

- I Congress (Zagreb, 1969): Contemporary andragogical theory and practice (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1969*).
- II Congress (Budva, 1973): Achievements and development paths of andragogical theory and practice in Yugoslavia (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1973*).
- III Congress (Skopje, 1980): The andragogical function of workers' self-management organizations: A factor for the development of productivity, income, and self-management (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1980*).
- IV Congress (Belgrade, 1985): Adult education in socio-economic development (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1985*).
- V Congress (Banja Vrućica, 1990): Andragogical science and practice in the face of the third millennium (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1990*).

These congresses (*Kongres andragoga Jugoslavije, 1969, 1973, 1980, 1985, 1990*) functioned as a kind of Yugoslav CONFINTEA conferences – they played a dual role: they provided a platform for summarising achievements and defining strategic directions for adult education while simultaneously serving as instruments of ideological and political alignment. Since all major policy decisions in education had to conform to the principles of socialist society, adult education, like other fields, was subject to political oversight.

Yugoslavia presented a distinctive example of partnership between policy, practice, and research, as well as collaboration between organisations and individuals. In examining the professionalisation of adult education in the former Yugoslavia, Ovesni (2018) found that “the *Federation of Workers and National Universities*, as a union of adult educators, and andragogical societies, as professional associations, made a significant contribution to the process of professionalization in the field of AEL. They were also the generators of valuable professional knowledge” (p. 31).

A revealing example of the specific ideological and academic positioning of Yugoslav andragogy can be found in the proceedings of the First congress of andragogues of Yugoslavia, presented by Prof. Borivoj Samolovčev. The cited references in the main report were predominantly from West Germany and the United States, with only one reference from Eastern Europe (Rihta et al., *Civilization at a Crossroads*, Bratislava). This illustrates the unique character of Yugoslav andragogy – structured within a socialist system yet intellectually oriented toward Western scholarly influences.

The professionalisation of adult education culminated in the establishment of university-level programs dedicated to the education of adult educators and researchers. A major milestone in this process was the introduction of specialized study programs in adult education, which laid the foundation for the formal training of andragogical professionals. As early as the 1950s, lectures on various aspects of adult education were introduced at major Yugoslav universities, it was introduced as an independent scholarly discipline at the university level in 1956 and then the discipline spread to all major universities in all Yugoslav republics, in Zagreb, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje.

At the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, the first specialisation in Adult education theory and methodology was introduced within the Department of Pedagogy in 1961/62 under the leadership of T. Prodanović. A decisive moment occurred in 1979, when Dušan Savićević established the Department of Andragogy at the University of Belgrade, creating a fully independent academic program in andragogy. This included a four-year undergraduate curriculum, a three-year master's program, and doctoral studies in the field.

By 2017, 594 students had graduated from the Study Group for Andragogy, with 37 master's theses, 30 master's papers, and eight specialist papers defended, along with 26 doctoral dissertations, marking the institutionalisation of andragogy as a distinct discipline (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, 2022)⁷

⁷ Continuing to develop and expand to this day, the Department for Andragogy has around 20 scholars with academic expertise exclusively in adult education and offers a distinctive four-year BA program in adult education, as well as MA and PhD programs.

In Slovenia, Ana Krajnc began lecturing adult education in 1972/73 at the Department of Pedagogy, University of Ljubljana, with the primary objective to educate skilled professionals for adult education (Krajnc, 2011). Andragogy was established as one of the streams of pedagogy studies in 1976/77, and when the department had introduced two specialized chairs: the Chair in Comparative Andragogy and the Chair in General Industrial Andragogy (Govekar Okoliš, 2024).⁸

In Croatia, at the University of Zagreb, at the Faculty of Philosophy, Mihailo Ogrizović taught adult education courses from 1950, and andragogy in the 1970s (Mihajlo Ogrizović and Nikola Nikša Šoljan), and in the 80s and beginning of the 90s, students were able to participate in an andragogy module to earn a specialisation in the field of adult education. At the University of Rijeka, Silvije Pongrac established the Chair of Andragogy within the Department of Pedagogy (Mikulec & Govekar Okoliš, 2024). Despite significant advancements in adult education, Croatia did not achieve full professionalisation of the field or establish a dedicated andragogy program. Instead, andragogy remained a subdiscipline of pedagogy, leading to its marginalisation – particularly in the 1990s, when it was reduced to a single subject within pedagogy studies (Pastuović, 2022).

Shaping International Dialogue: Events and Exchanges

Owing to Yugoslavia's unique political position and the early engagement of its scholars in adult education, the country played an active role in shaping international developments in the field. Yugoslav experts participated in academic bodies, working groups, and commissions, contributed to international conferences, conducted collaborative research, and maintained close ties with leading figures in European and global adult education. Through these efforts, Yugoslavia became an integral part of broader trends in adult education.

Interestingly, a UNESCO conference on the social sciences of leisure was held in Portorož, Yugoslavia, in June 1960, marking the conclusion of the first stage of an international comparative study conducted by the International Study Group on the Social Sciences of Leisure, under the auspices of the UNESCO Institute for Education (Elfert, 2018).

Another example of this engagement was the International Conference on Adult Education Systems, held in Opatija in November 1964 under UNESCO auspices. Organised by the Yugoslav National Commission for UNESCO alongside major educational and labour institutions, the conference gathered repre-

⁸ It became an independent study programme in 1992.

sentatives from both Western and Eastern Europe as well as Africa (Savićević, 2006). Among them was Paul Lengrand, who praised Yugoslavia's achievements and specifically noted that he would share the proposals presented at the conference⁹ with his UNESCO colleagues to strengthen international collaboration and direct further research in adult education (Savićević, 2006, p. 38).

Yugoslavia continued to play a significant role in UNESCO's global adult education initiatives. Although it contributed to preparations for the Third World Conference on Adult Education (Tokyo, 1972), political inertia prevented an official delegation from attending, despite efforts by the Union of Yugoslav Andragogical Societies¹⁰. However, Yugoslavia actively participated in CONFINTEA IV (Paris, 1985) with a delegation of leading scholars (Dervišbegović, Mikašinović, Savićević, Krajnc, Samolovčev, Babić, Šoljan, Špan, Jelenc). The official platform, drafted by Dušan Savićević and approved by the Commission for Foreign Relations, positioned Yugoslavia as one of 14 vice-presidents of the conference, with its experts leading multiple working groups (Savićević, 2006).

The last major UNESCO-affiliated event in which Yugoslavia took part was the World Conference *Education for All* (Jomtien, 1990), preceded by the European Consultative Conference (Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1989).

Beyond UNESCO, Yugoslavia engaged in international collaborations across different political blocs. It hosted major conferences such as the International Symposium of Andragogists (in Poreč, 1972) and co-organized events with the Council of Europe, including the 1991 colloquium on adult education for the elderly. Scholars from all Yugoslav republics were active in global academic exchanges, attending conferences in Germany, Italy, the UK, and the USA, delivering guest lectures, and participating in research projects. At the same time, Yugoslavia hosted renowned adult education scholars, including Alan Knox, Peter Jarvis, Paul Bélanger, and Franz Pöggeler, and welcomed delegations such as the English Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in 1960 and a group of US professors in 1965, interested in Yugoslav andragogical models (Savićević, 2006).

⁹ This conference served as an important opportunity to present Yugoslav theories and practices of adult education to the international community. Given the context of the "Cold War," the observations made were particularly significant. Speiser remarked: "It seems to me that what we now need, and what is already being done in some areas of the natural sciences, is to develop an international approach, international teamwork. The time has come to focus on adult education. I see that in some countries there are signs of this work, while in others, there are no such signs, so the sciences from one country, another, and a third could be connected, and people could work together. As you, Mr. President, said, this task should be entrusted to UNESCO, and it is a task for all experts working on education in Europe and other parts of the world" (Speiser, 1965, p. 287).

¹⁰ Even a questionnaire sent by UNESCO on adult education went unanswered. This neglect of adult education in international forums was a consequence of the socio-political turmoil that affected Yugoslav society at the time (Savićević, 2006, p. 149).

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia also sent a delegation to the International Conference of Non-Aligned and Developing Countries on Eradicating Illiteracy (North Korea, 1986), attended by 60 delegates from 35 countries, including a UNESCO representative (Savićević, 2006).

A particularly noteworthy recognition of Yugoslav adult education came from C. O. Houle, who, in a letter of recommendation for D. Savićević (written on 12 April 1967), wrote: “The countries with the longest and most sustainable tradition of adult education as a discipline are the USA, Canada, the UK, and Yugoslavia. It is also true that other countries have their own models, such as Denmark’s folk high schools, but a broader consideration of adult education as a fully developed discipline is primarily characteristic of these four countries I have mentioned.” (Savićević, 2006, p. 103–104).

Outstanding Contributors to Adult Education

Dušan Savićević

Among the leading figures in Yugoslav and international adult education, Dušan Savićević stands out as a key architect of andragogy as a scientific discipline and its professionalisation. His impact is widely recognized, with John Henschke describing him as “a towering figure working, researching, and publishing in andragogy for more than half a century”, highlighting his contributions to mass media, self-directed learning, and comparative studies, spanning decades of research, theoretical elaboration, and institutional engagement, (Henschke, 2015, 2021).

Savićević was the founder of the first independent andragogy program at the University of Belgrade and an associated research institute while also serving as a relentless advocate for adult education worldwide. His work extended beyond Europe, reaching Latin America, China, and India. He conducted study visits and lectures across the Nordic countries, the UK, the USA (Chicago, Boston, Syracuse, Wisconsin, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Columbia University), and Canada (Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal). This exchange was mutual – he both introduced Yugoslav experiences abroad and integrated global developments into the Yugoslav context. His intellectual network included leading scholars such as A. Charters, M. Knowles, C. O. Houle, A. Knox, J. Kulich, and R. Kidd (Savićević, 2006).

A defining moment in his career was the First International Conference on Comparative Adult Education (Reischmann, 1966), which marked a turning point in comparative adult education studies. There, he presented the National

Report for Yugoslavia, later included in the Exeter Papers (Reischmann, 2021; Savićević, 2011). He also participated in the 7th General Conference of the International Federation for Workers' Education (in Milan, 1965), the Conference of the American Association for Adult Education in the USA, the National Association of Public Schools for Adult Education Conference, and the International Conference Learning How to Learn (in DeKalb, USA, 1987).

From 1967, he became a member of the Executive Committee of the International Congress for Adult Education (ICUAE), and from 1970, he served as its president. In this role, he actively shaped numerous processes in international adult education, influencing key events, networking, and policy developments.

He played a pivotal role in the founding consultations of ICAE (International Council for Adult Education) and was invited by R. Kidd to join its board in 1972 (ICAE, n.d.). He was also involved in ESTREA (European Society for Teaching and Research in Adult Education) and later supported the establishment of ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) and the launch of the European Journal for Adult Education.

His engagement with UNESCO was particularly significant, beginning with his early visits to Paris. At the 1970 ICUAE Conference in Montreal, he proposed the creation of an international center for adult education information and expert positions to support university departments in developing countries. These proposals were integrated into the conference declaration, which also called for a global adult education conference. Later, he collaborated with Asher Deleon (head of UNESCO's Adult Education Department) and Paul Bertelsen in planning regional conferences for Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as professional seminars, symposia, and comparative research publications. Under his influence, the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg further strengthened its role as a center for comparative adult education studies, expanding its engagement in international research and policy development (Savićević, 2006).

At the 16th UNESCO General Conference (1970), representing Yugoslavia and ICUAE, he proposed the creation of an International Institute for Comparative Studies in Adult Education. As UNESCO budget-related proposals had to be submitted by a member state, Yugoslavia formally introduced his initiative, which was supported by Germany, Norway, France, and several Arab and African countries. This led to an expert meeting on comparative adult education research (1972) and the development of European comparative studies on adult education systems and research methodologies (Savićević, 2006). Over two decades, he participated in UNESCO activities as a consultant, document contributor, and speaker at major conferences, emphasizing that his academic work and teaching

at the University of Belgrade actively and continuously promoted UNESCO's mission (Savićević, 2006).

Although Yugoslavia was not an OECD member, it actively engaged in international education policy, and Savićević contributed to OECD/CERI projects on adult and continuing education for nearly two decades (Savićević, 2006). He authored a few hundred publications, laying the foundations for specific areas of adult education research. Some of his works are translated to English (for example, Savićević, 1968, 1968a, 1981, 1991a, 1991b, 2008), with potentially more.

“He had learned how to live within a restrictive system, but he did not allow himself to be controlled by it” (Henschke, 2021).

Ana Krajnc

Ana Krajnc played a pivotal role in establishing andragogy as a scientific discipline, defining its theoretical foundations and integrating it into both academic and professional frameworks. She was instrumental in distinguishing andragogy from pedagogy, emphasizing its autonomy as a field of study while highlighting its connection to broader educational sciences. In *Izobraževanje ob delu* (Education at Work), she systematically outlined andragogy's theoretical framework, positioning it as an essential component of lifelong learning and detailing its key research domains, including comparative studies, didactics, the history of adult education, and the sociocultural dimensions of learning.

Ana Krajnc, *la grande dame* of Yugoslav, Slovenian, and global andragogy (Popović, 2018) played a crucial role in the establishment of andragogy as a scientific discipline. As Govekar Okoliš (2024) notes, “The most important figure in the emergence and establishment of andragogy as a scientific discipline was Ana Krajnc, who was a prominent advocate of adult education” (p. 69). Her contributions extended beyond national developments and played a key role in shaping the international discourse on adult education.

In 1967, Krajnc joined the first international comparative empirical study, Adult Education, Social Mobility, and Social Participation (1967–1972), as a researcher at the Institute of Sociology and coordinator for Slovenia. The study was conducted in cooperation with Hamilton University in Canada and involved experts from the United States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands. The findings were later incorporated into her doctoral dissertation, with parts published in 1973 by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) under the title Adult Education and Social Participation (Krajnc, 1973).

From 1976 to 1988, the results of this research were further integrated into the UNESCO project *The Systems of Adult Education in Europe* (Krajnc, 2011), which produced a country-by-country analysis of adult education systems. This large-scale comparative study provided a systematic foundation for developing the first andragogical textbooks in Slovenia, many of which Krajnc authored between 1976 and 1982. As Govekar Okoliš (2024) highlights, “This research served as the basis for the first textbooks on andragogy, which were written by Ana Krajnc (1976, 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1982) and Jože Valentinčič (1973, 1983)” (p. 70).

Alongside her contributions to the UNESCO project, Krajnc was at the forefront of institutionalizing andragogy as an academic discipline at the University of Ljubljana, where she designed and introduced courses such as *Theory of Adult Education*, *Comparative Andragogy*, and *Andragogical Didactics*. By 1976, andragogy had been formally recognised as a distinct academic specialisation, offering structured education in general andragogy, andragogical didactics, and later, industrial andragogy – which contributed to a more systematic and research-driven approach to the field.

Krajnc was also among the earliest researchers to explore distance education for adults, a concept that was still in its infancy at the time. Recognizing its potential for expanding access to learning, she examined how technology and alternative delivery methods could enhance participation in adult education beyond traditional classroom settings. Her pioneering work in this area anticipated many of the developments that would later define online and blended learning models.

Later in her career, she became a leading figure in education for older adults, both in theoretical research and practical implementation. She developed innovative programs that promoted active aging, intergenerational learning, and the role of lifelong education in enhancing the quality of life in later years. Her work significantly influenced the development of geragogical studies in Slovenia and provided a foundation for integrating aging populations into lifelong learning policies.

Beyond her academic and research contributions, Krajnc played an important role in shaping international discussions on adult education. As a member of the Executive Committee of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE – ICAE, n.d.), she actively participated in global policy development, strategic planning, and research coordination, helping to align international adult education efforts with contemporary societal challenges. Her collaborations extended across Boston (Knowles), São Paulo (Freire), Prague (Škoda), Belgrade (Savićević), Rome (De Sanctis), Toronto (Kidd), Tübingen (Dohmen),

and Florence (Federighi), strengthening a comparative approach to adult education and positioning Slovenia within the broader European and global discourse (Govekar Okoliš, 2024).

Her continued engagement in UNESCO research projects, policy discussions, and professional networks further amplified her impact. By integrating comparative perspectives, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and contributing to foundational research, Krajnc helped establish adult education as a critical component of lifelong learning strategies. Through her extensive work in education policy, research, and academic institution-building, Krajnc reinforced the role of adult education within lifelong learning frameworks, particularly through her contributions to comparative research, policy development, and the advancement of several key subfields, such as education for older adults. She not only developed this field conceptually but also played a practical role in establishing a network of Universities of the Third Age. Her inspiration for this endeavor dates back to 1976 when she attended a lecture by Paul Lengrand, who introduced the concept of continuing education and the Universities of the Third Age (Govekar Okoliš, 2024).

Ašer Deleon

Of all Yugoslav authors, Ašer Deleon played the most significant role at UNESCO, where he worked for many years in the Adult Education and Literacy sector. Since 1963, he served as Director of UNESCO's Department of Adult Education and Youth Activities. A former Secretary of the Central Council of Yugoslav Trade Unions, Deleon had been a member of UNESCO's International Advisory Committee for Adult Education since 1953 and also worked as UNESCO's Adviser for Out-of-School Education to the Government of India.

As director of UNESCO's large-scale experimental literacy program, launched at the General Conference, Deleon initially focused on literacy issues (Deleon, 1968), later expanding his work to include workers' education (Deleon, 1963–64) and, eventually, the broader concept of lifelong education (Deleon, 1976). His contributions were instrumental in shaping UNESCO's literacy and adult education programs during the 1960s and 1970s.

A key aspect of his career was his role as Executive Secretary of the Faure Commission, responsible for preparing the landmark Faure Report on education for the 21st century (see his article on the Faure Report – Deleon, 1996). M. Elfert discusses Deleon's role, stating: "Asher Deleon, a national of Yugoslavia, held the position of secretary of the Commission, and he played a crucial role

in the organization of the work. Deleon was a friend of Paul Lengrand's and a man Lengrand greatly admired as 'one of the richest personalities I ever had the privilege to deal with' (Lengrand, 1994, p. 108; ME translation). Lengrand called him 'un communiste de bon aloi' ('the right kind of communist,' or a 'genuine communist'), who had done tremendous service to the UNESCO education sector (p. 109).

His own reflections on the process and the Report were later published (Deleon, 1974, 1976; Popović, 2014)

"Deleon came from the Yugoslav trade union movement. Maheu appointed him to supervise the work of John Bowers on the fundamental education program, and Deleon went on to manage the EWLP. He was instrumental in shaping the concept of functional literacy, which underpinned the EWLP" (Jones, 1988, pp. 142, 148 as cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 113; Deleon, 1968).

Elfert (2018) further explains how Deleon played a diplomatic role in managing ideological tensions, particularly in de-escalating conflicts with the Soviet delegation, and in addressing criticisms of the report's political undertones. He was a strong advocate for the Faure Report, deliberately linking education to broader political, economic, and social issues, rather than treating it in isolation.

Years after the Faure Report, Deleon also served as Secretary of the McBride Commission, which in 1980 published the influential McBride Report *Many Voices, One World*, on communications and mass media. The report proposed the New World Communication and Information Order (NWCIO), a policy framework that sought to address global inequalities in media access and control. However, the report was fiercely criticized by the United States, which viewed it as an attack on press freedom. The political fallout over the report ultimately led to the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom from UNESCO (Elfert, p. 120).

Concluding Remarks

Yugoslav scholars played a formative role in shaping adult education as a system, a scientific discipline, and a profession, positioning it within global discussions. Although rooted in a socialist and self-management ideology, their work reflected the broader political project of education as a tool for economic development, social mobility, and collective participation. Unlike in many other countries, where adult education remained more a practical endeavour, Yugoslav scholars system-

atically developed andragogy as a scientific discipline, integrating psychological, sociological, and economic perspectives.

At the same time, the professionalisation of adult education was pursued with remarkable intensity, ensuring that the field was not only conceptualized academically but also structured as a distinct area of expertise. The institutionalisation of study programmes, specialised training initiatives, and professional networks created a strong foundation for adult education, both nationally and internationally.

Yugoslav scholars were also deeply engaged in international discussions, particularly through UNESCO and other global initiatives. Their work in shaping comparative research, functional literacy programmes, and policies on lifelong learning left a lasting impact, influencing debates far beyond the country's borders. The intellectual and institutional contributions of figures such as Savićević, Krajnc, and Deleon demonstrate the extent to which Yugoslav expertise was recognized and sought after on the international stage.

Even after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars of the 1990s, adult education in the post-Yugoslav states recovered more rapidly than it could be expected after the very troubled period. Despite political and economic challenges, these countries quickly reconnected with international networks, bodies and organisations, projects, and scholarly publications, reaffirming their place in global discussions on adult learning. "This challenging period can be regarded as an unintended experiment, demonstrating the possibility of nearly losing an adult education system within a country while preserving the intellectual rigor of scientific thought. In the context of Serbia, andragogy became a vital link between past achievements and the establishment of a new beginning" (Popović et al., 2024, p. 89). Upholding its core principles and holistic approach, andragogy played "a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the past and the present, leading to the revitalisation of adult education" (p. 85). This continued engagement serves as further evidence of the lasting legacy of Yugoslav scholarship in adult education, demonstrating the enduring influence of its institutions, research traditions, and intellectual contributions.¹¹

Despite the dissolution of Yugoslavia, many of its scholars' foundational ideas continue to resonate in contemporary discussions on adult education. Their work on the scientific conceptualization of adult education and contributions

¹¹ "That small, confident, and dynamic andragogical community was part of a powerful global movement, with Yugoslav authors among its leading figures – they lectured on adult education around the world, collaborated with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, wrote and published extensively. This group of scholars made Yugoslav andragogy a globally recognized and influential phenomenon in science, policy, and practice, inspiring generations of students, who remain proud and deeply committed to the field." (Popović, 2018, 91).

to the establishment of the system remained within the ideological framework of communist, later socialist thought. Nevertheless, their commitment to a holistic, interdisciplinary, and socially engaged approach to adult learning remains relevant today, particularly in bridging ideological and systemic divides through scientific principles. By deepening our understanding of their legacy, this research highlights not only their historical significance but also their enduring impact on contemporary adult education debates.

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