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The Gymnasium as a General-Educational Secondary School in Slovenia, Austria and Germany – an Analysis of Selected Historical Periods

Abstract: As an institution which transmits general education, the gymnasium has existed since its origins because humanistic Latin schools and Protestant gymnasiums, as well as Jesuit colleges, transmitted and offered general education which was at the time represented above all as instruction in language and 'accompanying' explicatory content. Even substantial reforms of the gymnasium in the 19th century did not change this perception and objective. The gymnasium in Slovenia (and Austria) was always defined as a general-educational institution, as well as in proposals for reform as in the respective legislations – except in the time of career-oriented education, when the gymnasium was abolished – and differences were only with respect to singular subjects and their names.

The gymnasium was, on the other hand, at least since the 19th century, also comprehended as the only preparatory institution for university; a successfully passed *matura* or examination of maturity was an indispensable condition for matriculation to university study. The conclusion of schooling in the gymnasium was understood as a condition of maturity for an independent life and meant an 'entrance ticket' for the continuation of one's education and a better social position.

Key words: gymnasium, schools of the states, Jesuit college, general-educational subjects, *matura*, reform of gymnasium, examination of maturity, secondary education, Protestantism, general education, Neohumanism, Enlightenment

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Introduction

In the territory of modern Slovenia gymnasiums as secondary-level institutions have been present since the 18th century, but even before then we can include the School of Carniola States in Ljubljana and the Jesuit College in Ljubljana in the late 16th century in this category. From the beginning, one of the topmost objectives of gymnasiums in Slovenia was the transmission of general education and, since the second half of the 19th century, the objective was also preparation for university study because, without successfully passing the final examination, which was called the examination of maturity, i.e. the *matura*, nobody could matriculate to the university.

The gymnasium had, as mentioned, two main objectives during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries: the transmission of general education and enabling matriculation to university studies. At the time, the understanding of general education and its contents, and understanding of the form and contents of the *matura* were changing with regard to the social and political circumstances, but the essence of the gymnasium always remained in assuring a general secondary education and the *matura* as the final exam. In that way, the gymnasium was understood once and it is also understood today in Central Europe and in many other European countries.

Any deliberations about a possible alteration of the purpose of the gymnasium, which could even include the potential abolition of the *matura* and thoughts about redefining and reducing general education in the gymnasium, should above all consider past attempts, even failed ones (e.g. career-oriented education), to alter the basic function or objective of the gymnasium and therefore should have due regard to them. Considering this, and irrespective of the lack of interest in a historical analysis, the historical development and importance of the gymnasium in modern Slovenia and in the broader Central European region should also be taken into consideration. In the perception of the people of this region, the gymnasium is understood as a general-educational school which prepares

the student for university study and at the same time influences matriculation to university. The university on the other hand is considered primarily as a scientific-educational institution.

We intend to analyse the historical development of general secondary education in the time of Protestantism, the Counter-Reformation and at the beginning of the 19th century in Slovenia, which will help us point out the importance of knowing and take into consideration the historical development of a single education institution during the process of planning to change it essentially or during alterations of the education system. Then we will analyse the objectives of the modern gymnasium in selected Central European countries.

Development of general education in selected historical periods

The Reformation

In the field of education, the Reformation actually dedicated most of its attention to secondary schools, which were intended to educate and form future ecclesiastical and secular officials. At that time the Protestant gymnasium was founded as a school which already demanded certain knowledge upon enrolment, and the essential part of its objectives was to prepare its students for university study. The Protestant gymnasium was founded by a German pedagogue, J. Sturm, who also defined the educational ideal of the gymnasium, which later became the educational ideal of Protestantism as a whole: the objective of education is to produce a pious individual who is wise, educated and eloquent (*sapiens atque eloquens pietas*) (see Vormbaum 1860, p. 661). Based on the model of Sturm's school in Strasbourg, many types of secondary schools were afterwards established in the Protestant world, all of which are connected by the content, purpose and objectives of education.

Also in Slovenia, the nobility – the greater part of which accepted the ideas of the Reformation – felt the need to organise the school so as to prepare its students for certain occupations and at the same time for the continuation of their studies. In Austria, which modern Slovenia belonged to at the time, Protestant secondary schools, gymnasiums, were called the schools of the states (*Landschaftsschulen*) and were comparable with the German provincial schools (*Landesschulen*). Provincial schools were a type of gymnasium established and financed by provincial or country princes and, above all, intended for the fulfilment of provincial or country needs for ecclesiastical or secular officials (see Vidmar 2005, p. 117).

When in 1562 P. Trubar presented to the provincial states of Carniola the offer of Christoph, Duke of Württemberg, to give two scholarships for study at the University of Tübingen, they were looking for appropriate candidates but discovered there were no sufficiently educated candidates in Carniola (see Rupel 1965, p. 11). Trubar then had the idea that a school should be established in Ljubljana whose task should include preparations for university study. Trubar was some kind of initiator of the School of the States in Ljubljana (see Rupel 1951, p. 112). On the basis of Trubar's efforts, the provincial States of Carniola

established a school in Ljubljana in 1563. It was a one-class school up until 1566 when A. Bohorič became its rector; he organised the school on the model of the Protestant gymnasiums and wrote the School Ordinance (*Ordo scholae*) in 1575. The School of the States in Ljubljana finally began to function as a preparatory institution for university study and as a school equal to the German protestant gymnasiums after 1584, under the leadership of the third rector, N. Frischlin (see Vidmar 2005, pp. 124–128). The school of Bohorič had four classes. The best students were provided with instruction in the fundamentals of dialectic and rhetoric, concepts of natural and moral philosophy and theology, and elements of geography and astronomy (*sphaerica doctrina*). These subjects place the school of the States in Ljubljana amid the Protestant secondary schools. The purpose of these additional subjects was that 'students will be more prepared for these arts and that they will faster and more thoroughly comprehend them in the universities' (*Ordo scholae...1575*, in Schmidt 1952, p. 195).

In 1582, Frischlin replaced Bohorič as rector of the school. In 1584 Frischlin wrote his School Ordinance in which he foresaw a five-class school, where in the fourth class students would begin to learn poetry and the elements of ancient Greek, in the fifth class they would learn dialectic and rhetoric and continue with Greek. Arithmetics was programmed from the third class on (see Schmidt 1952, p. 99ss). These subjects and their contents formed a general education at the time of Protestantism. However, on 30 October 1598 the provincial prince delivered a decree according to which all Protestant teachers had to leave Ljubljana by sunset.

In the province of Carinthia, several schools were established during Protestantism but only one School of the States. Only the School of the States in Celovec included among its objectives preparations for university study. The school, which was perhaps a modernised Latin school, and was first mentioned at the beginning of 1560, had several names: the nobility school (*die adelige Schule*), the college of wisdom and piety (*collegium sapientiae et pietatis*) and the provincial school (*schola provincialis*) (see Braumüller 1924, pp. 16–19). It is not certain how many classes the school contained, but we can suppose that there were five to seven. The syllabus of the school is also not well known, but again we can presume it was like that of the Schools of the States in Gradec (Graz) and Ljubljana (see Braumüller 1924, p. 23). On 1 June 1600, the provincial prince issued a decree stating that all teachers had to leave the province but, because of resistance on the part of the States, the school was not closed until 13 April 1601.

In Styria the School of the States (*Landschaftsschule, schola procerum*) in Gradec (Graz) was at the beginning exclusively a school for the nobility, but soon the children of townspeople were permitted to enrol in the school. Teachers were paid by the Styrian provincial States and were mentioned in Gradec (Graz) already in 1538 (see Loserth 1916, p. 18). According to the School Ordinance of 1574, the School of the States had three *decurias* for beginners and four classes, of which the last one was called a public class (*classis publica*) where theology, law and philosophy were lectured. These subjects made the school in Graz comparable with its public lectures (*lectiones publicae*) to the Protestant academic

gymnasiums (see Loserth 1916, p. 32). In 1594, the Reformed School Ordinance (*Reformierte Schuel-Ordnung*) was published according to which five regular classes and one public class were foreseen (see Loserth 1916, pp. 155–166). Big problems started for the school in 1585 when the Jesuits established a university in Graz (see Loserth 1916, p. 79). On 28 September 1597, Protestant teachers received an order from the provincial prince to leave the city by sunset.

Counter-Reformation – the Jesuits

The closing of the School of the States in Ljubljana did not mean a break in the continuity of the development of general-educational secondary schools in Slovenia because they were continued in the Jesuit secondary schools, called colleges or gymnasiums. Wherever Jesuits established their schools, their organisation was the same.

Jesuits were the first to entirely implement three levels of education. For matriculation to university they demanded that a student had concluded a college where the contents of general humanity were taught. The school institutions of the Jesuits were public education institutions. The Society of Jesus gradually took over secondary education and to some extent even tertiary education in the Catholic countries of Europe. It had domination over education until the second half of the 18th century when in 1773 the order was abolished (see Paulsen 1919, pp. 417–420; Schmidt 1871, p. 230).

Education or study in bigger colleges consisted of so-called lower studies (gymnasium studies, *studia inferiora*) and higher studies (university studies, *studia superiora*). The six years of gymnasium study, where central importance was placed on linguistics, were followed by three years of philosophical study, i.e. general-scientific preparatory study. In general, Jesuit education was divided into three levels: grammatical-rhetorical, philosophical and theological, of which the first one comprised the gymnasium. Whenever Jesuits came to a town, they began to teach grammar (*grammatica*) and in a short time they organised a college. College was sometimes concluded with a class in humanities (*humaniora*), but usually a complete five-class college was organised with a class of rhetoric. In bigger colleges, even dialectic and moral theology were lectured. Jesuit colleges required certain knowledge of reading as a condition to enrol, which they examined for through some kind of entrance examination (see Paulsen 1919, pp. 395–398; Schmidt 1871, pp. 237–242; Seifert 1996, pp. 329–331, Vidmar 2005, p. 168). The objective of their education was actually identical to the objective of Protestant education, i.e. *eloquens atque sapiens pietas*, which was also achieved with comparable means and methods (see Paulsen 1919, p. 421; Vidmar 2005, p. 169).

Jesuit lower secondary studies had five classes or grades. The first grade, grammar (*grammatica*), was made up of three classes: the lowest (*infima*), the middle (*media*) and the highest one (*suprema*). The second grade was called humanities or poetics (*humanitas* or *poesis*) and the third was rhetorics (*rhetorica*) (see *Ratio...1586*, in Pachtler 1887, pp. 144–146 and 183–192). Advancement (*promotio*) from one class to another was possible after successfully passing an

examination consisting of a paper done under supervision in Latin literature. After that followed an oral examination in grammar and the reading of certain authors (see *Ratio...1586*, in Pachtler 1887, pp. 176–178).

In Slovenia the Jesuits established their colleges in Ljubljana (1597), Celovec (1604), Gorica (1620), Trst (1620) and Maribor (1758) (see Paulsen 1919, pp. 411–412; Schmidt 1988a, p. 119).

Jesuit colleges had as an objective to transmit general education, as it was then understood, and at the same time their goal was preparation for the tertiary level of education.

New establishment of the gymnasium in the 19th century

There were some social, political and economic changes near the end of the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th centuries. It became obvious that education and not merely social status, which was acquired by birth, should be the criterion for higher-ranking services in the state administration and the military (see Blankertz 1982, p. 126). The Enlightenment had already emphasised the ideals of equality of people by birth, and of the necessity for education to become enlightened, but these ideas were not entirely implemented in educational practice because of the influence of mercantilism which emphasised early preparation for work. As a kind of reaction to the vocational pragmatism of Enlightenment, neohumanism began to shift the development of a human being in terms of personality and the development of individual characteristics to the center of educational objectives. A human being should at first be developed and formed as a Human because, by being generally educated, he could when necessary prepare himself for a particular vocation (*ibid.*). Neohumanists re-emphasised general education, the fundamentals of which were actually laid in the humanism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the 16th century, from which continuity can be drawn through medieval and Roman liberal arts to the classical Greek educational concept, which was comprehended in the terms *paideia* and *enkyklios paideia*.

At the beginning of the 19th century, neohumanists developed a concept of secondary school, the gymnasium, which later became known as the classical gymnasium. This concept was established by a German thinker, W. von Humboldt. The main purpose of the gymnasium was to transmit broad general and humanistic education and at the same time to prepare a student for study at university. In the gymnasium general educational subjects prevailed; of great importance in both a formative and informative sense were mathematics and Latin, the latter of which was still the most important subject in the gymnasium. The requirement for enrolment in the gymnasium was certain knowledge; schooling on the other hand was concluded with an examination of maturity or the *matura*, which attested that the student was formed and mature for life and that he was mature for scientific study at university (see Blankertz 1982, p. 125; Moog 1967, pp. 310 and 409; Paulsen 1921, p. 282). Until neohumanism, gymnasiums were also understood as a kind of vocational school for learning classical languages, especially Latin, but with the rise of neohumanism they became general-educational.

tional schools in the modern sense of the word and as the principal educational means they used the study of ancient culture.

The gymnasium as founded by Humboldt had six classes and schooling lasted for ten years (later it was reduced to nine years). The first class, the highest class, lasted for three years, the second and the third for two years each, while the other classes lasted for one year each. Each class foresaw 32 weekly hours of instruction and the following subjects were obligatory for all ten years: Latin (eight or six hours), German (four or six hours), mathematics (six hours), natural science (two hours), history and geography (three hours), religion (two hours), music and sports (Wednesday and Saturday afternoons). Other obligatory subjects were Greek (in the four highest classes), Hebrew (in the two highest classes) and drawing (in the four lowest classes). Modern languages such as English or French were optional (adapted from Paulsen 1921, p. 292).

The *matura* consisted of two parts: written papers and an oral examination. Students wrote German, Latin, French and mathematical papers and a translation from Greek and into Greek. An oral examination was given in all taught languages, mathematics, history, geography and natural science (see Paulsen 1921, p. 289).

The Austrian gymnasium in the first half of the 19th century

At the beginning of the 18th century, the secular authorities in Austria stated that the secondary schools managed by the Jesuits did not satisfy the needs and demands of the time. They also stated that they were obsolete and should be modernised, above all with the introduction of more Realities and natural science (see Schmidt 1988a, pp. 140–141). That is why Emperor Charles VI in 1735 issued an Ordinance about the Establishment and Organisation of Schools (*Ordnung und Einrichtung der Schulen*), which put (Jesuit) gymnasiums under direct control of the state (see Wotke 1905, pp. 3–6). These efforts were followed by the Empress Maria Theresia with preparation of the Ordinance of Studies in 1752 (see Baumeister 1897, p. 239; Wotke 1905, pp. 7–11). In 1764, J. Gaspari presented in the Instruction for Humanistic Schools (*Instructio pro scholis humanioribus*) a modernised programme for gymnasiums, which remained in effect with minor modifications until 1775. According to the instructions some Realities were introduced into the curriculum for gymnasiums, but especially the share of natural science was augmented (see Wotke 1905, pp. 14–25). With the abolition of the Society of Jesus in 1773, secondary schools passed entirely into the hands of the state, which gave the state the opportunity for a thorough reform. The understanding of the generalness of education was beginning to change in the sense of extended content, which would, as V. Schmidt wrote, 'bring the gymnasium near production, near ›life‹' (Schmidt 1988a, pp. 271–272).

In 1775 I. von Hess prepared an outline of reform for gymnasiums according to which Realities would be equalised with Latin and the school would become a general-educational institution in the modern sense of the word. The gymnasium would have five classes; von Hess even proposed the introduction of teachers of subjects instead of class teachers, and professors also should not be clerics (see

Schmidt 1988a, p. 271s). These propositions were rejected with concern for overburdening the students being the main argument. Hess foresaw 25 to 26 hours of instruction weekly. The Empress then ordered a Piarist, G. Marx, to compose a new proposition for reform which he actually completed in four days (see Schmidt 1988a, p. 272). In 1775, the Outline for Organisation of Gymnasiums in I. R. Hereditary Lands (*Entwurf zur Einrichtung der Gymnasien in k. k. Erbländen*) was published. In accordance with the Outline, the gymnasium was defined as a vocational school with five classes, which with the help of 'useful knowledge of things and languages' prepared the student for civil service (*Entwurf...1775*, §3, in Wotke 1905, p. 97; see also §7, p. 99; Schmidt 1988a, pp. 272–278). The gymnasium at the same time also prepared the student for university because its task was to 'prepare in sufficient degree for universities with necessary instrumental knowledge' (*Entwurf...1575*, §7, in Wotke 1905, p. 99).

The subjects of instruction in the reformed gymnasium were Christian doctrine (religion) and morals, history, natural science with the principles of arithmetic, geometry and mechanics, the mother tongue, Latin, and Greek. As additional subjects gymnasiums could offer French and English, theory of style, fine arts and logic (*Entwurf...1575*, §7, in Wotke 1905, pp. 99–100).

In 1805 a new programme for gymnasiums was elaborated which foresaw a gymnasium with six classes (four grammar classes and two humanities classes) in places with a lyceum or university, and five-class gymnasiums everywhere else. Five-year gymnasiums did not have natural science in the syllabus. Teachers of subjects were foreseen and not class teachers (see *Sammlung...1820*, pp. 18–19; Baumeister 1897, pp. 242–243; Schmidt 1988b, pp. 37–38). Enrolment was restricted to those young men who did not have a good grasp of all subjects taught in the first three classes of advanced primary school (*Hauptschule*) (see *Sammlung... 1820*, p. 3). Students who were enrolled in gymnasium also had to matriculate in the university or lyceum where they existed because no one should take semester examinations if he could not prove matriculation (see *Sammlung...1820*, p. 4).

Each class had 18 hours of instruction weekly; in all classes the following subjects were compulsory: Latin (nine or ten hours), mathematics (two hours), geography and history (two or three hours) and religion and morals (two hours). Compulsory subjects were also Greek (in the three highest classes) and natural science (in the first three classes; adapted from Baumeister 1897, p. 269).

The following gymnasiums were active at that time: in Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper, Idrija, Celje, Celovec, Šentpavel na Koroškem, in Gorica, Novo mesto and Trst (see Schmidt 1988b, p. 42).

In 1819, new organisational and curricular reform of gymnasiums began which foresaw just a six-class gymnasium. Once again, a system of class teachers was introduced (see Baumeister 1897, pp. 243–244). A new programme of instruction was elaborated but there were no essential differences between the old and the new one; only natural science was completely removed. The main argument for the change was the increased number of colleges for modern sciences (*Realschulen*) and technical institutes (see Schmidt 1988b, pp. 258–259).

Each class had 18 hours of instruction weekly; in all classes, the following subjects were compulsory: Latin (nine or eleven hours), mathematics (two hours), geography and history (two or three hours), and religion (two hours). Greek was also a compulsory subject (in the three highest classes). As said before, natural science was completely removed from the syllabus (adapted from Baumeister 1897, p. 270).

With these changes of gymnasium education and curriculum in 1819, gymnasiums reached their lowest point because the purpose of the changes was to hermetically close Austria off from any possible outside influence and at the same time to intensify the moral-educational effect of gymnasiums to the detriment of the instructional-scientific effect (see Baumeister 1897, p. 244; Schmidt 1988b, pp. 258–260).

In 1848, a new reform of Austrian gymnasium based on the model of Humboldt was suggested. Gymnasiums became eight-class schools because the former compulsory two-year philosophical study in the university was incorporated into the gymnasium in the form of the two highest classes (see Entwurf...1849, §4, p. 14; Baumeister 1897, p. 248; Ciperle 1979, pp. 6–7). In 1849, F. Exner and H. Bonitz prepared an Outline of Organisation of Gymnasiums and Realities-Schools in Austria (*Entwurf der Organisation der Gymnasien und Realschulen in Österreich*) or, in short, an Outline of Organisation which with minor modifications remained in effect until the end of the 19th century (see Ciperle 1979, pp. 8–10; Schmidt 1988c, pp. 124–129). As the compulsory conclusion of schooling which would enable matriculation in any university faculty, the *matura* was also implemented (see Schmidt 1988c, p. 136). The objective of the gymnasium was defined as the transmission of 'higher general education' with the intensive use of classical languages and their literature, and preparation for university study (see Entwurf...1849, §1, p. 14; Baumeister 1897, p. 272; Halma-Schilling 1911, p. 3ss).

The gymnasium, as mentioned, had eight classes. The number of weekly hours varied from 22 in the first class to 24 in the eighth and final class. For all eight years, compulsory subjects were Latin (five to eight hours), the mother tongue (two to four hours), history and geography (three or four hours), natural history and physics (two to three hours), and religion (two hours). Other compulsory subjects were Greek (third to eighth class), mathematics (first to seventh class) and philosophical propaedeutics (eighth class; adapted from Entwurf...1849, §18, pp. 19–20; Baumeister 1897, p. 272).

In Slovenia, the first eight-class gymnasiums where students as early as the school year 1849/50 acceded to the *matura*, were in Ljubljana, Gorica and Celovec. Soon Maribor, Celje, Novo mesto and Trst joined them (see Schmidt 1988c, pp. 136–138).

The quantity of weekly hours of instruction was reformed in 1805 and 1819, but in 1819 natural science was entirely removed from the curriculum and the number of hours for Latin was increased. The instruction-subject religion and morals also became just religion. In 1849 the number of classes increased to eight; a significant increase was also seen in the number of weekly instruction

hours, from two in the second to six in the other classes. The number of instruction-subjects was also increased and the mother tongue was introduced as a new subject, which was taught for all years of schooling. Again, natural science or natural history and physics were introduced, which were also taught for all years of schooling.

Analysis of general secondary schools in selected countries today

Slovenia

Slovenia has a unified nine-year elementary school (*osnovna šola*), which comprises the primary and lower secondary level of education. In the secondary level there are some types of education institutions such as vocational schools (*poklicne šole*) (two to three years), secondary technical schools (*srednje strokovne šole*) (four years), and gymnasiums (*gimnazije*) (four years). Gymnasiums are general (*splošne*) and specialised (*strokovne*). Gymnasiums conclude with the *matura* examination, which enables matriculation to university (see Organisation...2007b).

The general secondary school, i.e. gymnasium, ensures a general education and prepares for university study (see Zakon o gimnazijah 1996, §2). Everyone who has successfully concluded elementary school can enrol in a gymnasium on the basis of interest – in the case of limited enrolment, also on the basis of an assessment in certain subjects in elementary school (see Organisation...2007b, p. 132). Education in the gymnasium concludes with the final examination called the *matura*, which enables matriculation to university or other education institutions on the tertiary level of education (see Organisation...2007b, p. 139).

In the gymnasium 29 to 33 hours of instruction are foreseen weekly; for all four years the compulsory subjects are: the mother tongue (four hours), mathematics (four hours), first foreign language (three hours), second foreign language (three hours), history (two hours) and sports (three hours). Other compulsory subjects are music, fine arts, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, sociology, philosophy and informatics. These subjects are as a rule foreseen to be two hours weekly. In addition to compulsory subjects in the gymnasium, there are alternative subjects, too (one to twelve hours; adapted from Predmetnik gimnazije 2006/2007, 2007).

Austria

Austria has a common four-year school (*Volksschule*) on the primary level of education; afterwards educational tracks for children differentiate. Some of them prolong their learning in primary school or in the main school (*Hauptschule*), as it is called, for another three years; the others enrol in one of the eight-year general-educational higher schools (*allgemein bildende höhere Schulen*), which are gymnasiums, real-gymnasiums and economic real-gymnasiums.

The objective of gymnasium is to transmit to students a comprehensive and in-depth general education and to prepare them for university entrance (see

Organisation...2007a, pp. 92 and 415). In gymnasium, a student can enrol after successfully concluding the fourth class of primary school on the basis of interest and a good end-of-year report (see Organisation...2007a, p. 106). The gymnasium concludes with the school-leaving examination, called the examination of maturity (*Reifeprüfung*) or *matura*. The *matura* certificate attests to general maturity for university matriculation (see Organisation...2007a, pp. 164 and 415).

For a better comparison between schools in different countries, only the four last classes of gymnasium (the upper level of the general-educational higher school) will be considered. Twenty-nine to 33 weekly hours of instruction are foreseen in the gymnasium, with an additional six hours of optional subjects weekly in the last three classes. All four years' compulsory subjects are: German (three hours), mathematics (three hours), English (three hours), Latin (three hours), history and political education (one to two hours), a third foreign language (three hours), geography and economics (one to two hours), and sports (two to three hours). Other compulsory subjects are the following: biology, chemistry, physics, psychology/philosophy, informatics, musical education and fine arts. These subjects are by rule foreseen as two or three hours weekly (adapted from Gymnasium – Studentafeln 2007).

Germany

In Germany, each federal province (*Bundesland*) organises its own school system but they all co-ordinate on federal-level issues of equality, possibilities of transition between schools, and the comparability of school systems. After concluded the common four-year primary school (*Grundschule*), educational tracks for students differentiate into four principal institutions: main school (*Hauptschule*), real-school (*Realschule*), gymnasium (*Gymnasium*) and comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*), but there are also some types of secondary schools which are particular to individual provinces. The majority of provinces have recently introduced some kind of reform of the gymnasium in the sense of reducing schooling time from nine to eight years (see Das Bildungswesen...2007).

The objective of the gymnasium is to transmit intensified general education and general maturity for university (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*) which enables students to matriculate to university and/or continuing vocational education (see Das Bildungswesen...2007, pp. 98–100). Admission requirements for enrolment in the secondary level of education vary by provinces, but for enrolment in gymnasium after concluding the fourth class of primary school (*Grundschule*) is the expressed wish, a certificate of overall assessment of the pupil and successfully passed entrance conditions which the province sets up (trial half-year, trial lessons, entrance examination) (see Das Bildungswesen...2007, p. 108). The gymnasium is concluded by successfully passing an exit examination (*Abiturprüfung*) which confirms general maturity for university (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*) and enables matriculation to university (see Das Bildungswesen...2007, pp. 122–123).

Also in Germany, the last four classes will be considered for comparison. The number of weekly hours of instruction differs slightly in each province. In the gymnasium, there are 32 to 35 hours of weekly instruction. Because of the

greater optionality in the last two years of schooling, the subjects which are compulsory for all four years will be mentioned first: German (three to four hours), mathematics (three to four hours), history and social sciences (two to three hours), first foreign language (three to four hours), religion or ethics (two hours), and sports (two hours). Additional compulsory subjects in the ninth and tenth classes are a second foreign language, physics, chemistry, biology, art, music, economics and law, geography and an optional subject. Optional subjects in the eleventh and twelfth classes are natural sciences 1 (physics, chemistry, biology), natural sciences 2 (physics, chemistry, biology or informatics) or a second foreign language, geography or economics and law, art or music, seminar 1, seminar 2, and individual choice (adapted from Das achtjährige Gymnasium in Bayern 2007 and Gymnasiale Oberstufe in Bayern 2007).

In Slovenia and Germany, 13 years of schooling are needed to attain university maturity although in Germany the restructuring of the gymnasium is still in process, which will foresee eight and not nine classes. In Germany, university maturity will be achieved at twelve years until 2011. In Austria, schooling to achieve university maturity lasts twelve years. In all the compared countries, the *matura* or a concluded gymnasium is the condition for matriculation to university. In the analysed countries, compulsory subjects for all years of secondary schooling are the following: mother tongue, mathematics, foreign language, history and sports. None of the compulsory subjects can be defined as vocational or directly oriented to a vocation but all of them are general-educational in the modern sense of the word.

Conclusion

Modern school systems which have the gymnasium as the secondary level of education use it to transmit intensified general knowledge while the conclusion of gymnasium, the final exam or the *matura*, serves as a necessary condition for matriculation to the tertiary level of education, that is, university study.

As an institution which transmits general education, the gymnasium has existed since its origins because humanistic Latin schools and Protestant gymnasiums, as well as Jesuit colleges, transmitted and offered general education which was at the time represented above all as instruction in language and 'accompanying' explicatory content. Even substantial reforms of the gymnasium in the 19th century did not change this perception and objective. The gymnasium in Slovenia (and Austria) was always defined as a general-educational institution, as well as in proposals for reform as in the respective legislations – except in the time of career-oriented education, when the gymnasium was abolished – and differences were only with respect to singular subjects and their names.

The gymnasium was, on the other hand, at least since the 19th century, also comprehended as the only preparatory institution for university; a successfully passed *matura* or examination of maturity was an indispensable condition for matriculation to university study. The conclusion of schooling in the gymnasium

was understood as a condition of maturity for an independent life and meant an 'entrance ticket' for the continuation of one's education and a better social position.

When we want to define or change the system of the modern school, we certainly must follow modern guidelines and the needs of the time and society but when it comes to the possible abolishing or drastic changing of successful school forms or types we should be cautious and, in spite of everything, consider certain traditions, historical development, the comparability of education systems, and reasonableness in introducing changes. In modifying or abolishing the *matura* which Slovenians have – the same with university study as a scientific study – as part of our tradition, every change or modification should be commenced with caution, rationality and a comprehensive knowledge of education systems. Such a project should also consider the results and knowledge of other European countries which originated in a similar historical and social framework.

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