# IN THE WEB OF ARGUMENTS AND INTERESTS: DEBATE IN VIENNA ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SUBJECT TEACHER SYSTEM*

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The need to replace class teachers with subject teachers in grammar schools is an intellectual product of the Enlightenment – and in Central and Eastern Europe even more so of enlightened absolutism. This important element of the secularisation movement called for a major transformation of secondary education that would have immediately affected its entire spirit and all its segments. Adherents of both movements put forward a series of arguments and counter-arguments, leading to a long and recurring series of debates in Vienna, the centre of the Habsburg Empire. The movement advocating the introduction of a subject teacher system flared up in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and lasted until the very end of the 1810s, thus proving the longest-lasting idea in the educational policy of enlightened absolutism. The prolonged struggle may be explained by the complexity of the problem: there were many different aspects to be considered in connection with the class teacher system vs the subject teacher system, and it thus became one of the main instruments and reference points of a game among several different actors and interest groups. The present study outlines the various dimensions and possible interpretations of this issue of pedagogical importance by presenting the educational policy discourse related to the question.

*The emergence of state (imperial) educational policy*

The essence of the class teacher vs subject teacher debate cannot be understood without considering at the general state of affairs in Vienna in the last third of the eighteenth century. Enlightened absolutism was aimed at both consolidating the ruling power of feudal origins and, at the same time, significantly increasing the economic and military capacity of the state or empire concerned. To achieve this, the rulers formulated their own political demands in areas that had previously been of little concern to them. Restrictions on the privileges of the nobility, the emancipation of serfs, the restructuring of relations with the state church – and with other denominations, the overhaul of civil and criminal justice, populating and cultivating neglected land, and the introduction of public

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health measures are all examples of how enlightened absolutist monarchs sought to re-regulate the centuries-old division of tasks and powers in all areas of life.

Education was a key element of this comprehensive modernisation policy. This was partly because the ambitious plans of the rulers, who generally wanted to follow the development of neighbouring countries and rivals, required the mass acquisition of economic and military knowledge, which necessitated a much more extensive education than before, and one which was quite different in content. Furthermore, education was in the hands of the church, which served the monarchs' absolutist power less and less while becoming increasingly self-serving, making it a disruptive factor at court. Thus, the state (the ruler) was able to make educational policy the primary arena in its struggle with the church.[1]

In light of this, we may speak of increasingly prevailing educational policy intentions and actions in the countries of enlightened absolutism from the mid-eighteenth century. The term 'educational policy' refers to a set of planned efforts to organise, operate or modify the educational system as a whole or one of its elements. Educational theory connects the existence of a modern education system to the fulfilment of a number of basic conditions, including compulsory education; the existence of national education acts; the right of national political authorities to control and supervise; the orderly financing of public education, mainly through public funds; the transparent and regulated interdependence of all levels of education; and professional teacher training. In Central and Eastern Europe, these conditions were met mainly in the second half of the nineteenth century; the introduction of the *Organisationsentwurf* (1849-1850) in Austria may be regarded as a symbolic starting point.[2]

Educational policy necessarily preceded breakthrough results. From the point at which programmes affecting the entire premodern system of the times appeared, we may speak of real educational policy efforts, separate from the earlier activities of founding schools and promoting culture. Furthermore, the institutions which were to be the forerunners of the lower, middle and upper levels of the later professional educational administration were established.

The two adjectives (royal and state) used before educational policy refers to the specificities of the division of roles between the state and the ruler. No action could be taken against the will of the monarch. In fact, in certain periods of censorship, implemented with varying degrees of intensity and authority,

[1] János Ugrai, *A központosítás és a modernizáció ellentmondásai. A bécsi állami (uralkodói) oktatáspolitika megszületése a 18. század második felében* [The Controversies of the Centralization and Modernization. The Beginnings of the Public Education in Vienna in the 2nd Half of the 18th Century] (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 2014), 107-138.

[2] Christoph Aichner and Brigitte Mazohl, ""Für Geist und Licht! ... Das Dunkel schwand!". Die Thun-Hohenstein'schen Universitätsreformen," in Christoph Aichner and Brigitte Mazohl, eds., *Die Thun-Hohenstein'schen Universitätsreformen. Konzeption – Umsetzung – Nachwirkungen* (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2017), 13-27.

drafts and concepts that did not please the ruler could not even be made public. Yet, even though the will of the sovereign remained decisive, the complexity of educational issues meant that he could not have pursued or established an educational policy without the specialised staff of the court and its intellectual base. One of the most important results of the emergence of policy discourses is precisely that they created the possibility and supported the legitimacy of an intellectual dialogue that was increasingly effective in evading the influence of the ruler. Consequently, while the new ideas did reflect the ruler's intentions towards something (church, nobility, the old order, a rival neighbouring country, etc.), they also broke down, imperceptibly, the boundaries of certain traditional structures of thought.

*The first results of educational policy*

The main result of the first decades of the discourse was the emergence of a continuous exchange of views. Court advisors, senior officials, academics, teachers and publicists – the most important members of the opinion-forming public elite of the time – took positions on educational and cultural issues. In Austria, eminent figures such as Joseph von Sonnenfels, Gerhard and Gottfried van Swieten Snr – and, later, van Swieten Jnr – Karl Anton von Martini, Johann Melchior von Birkenstock and the all-powerful Chancellor Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz were involved in educational issues. Propositions concerning schooling were frequently discussed in the emerging press and, as one of the most popular and most debated topics, they contributed to the consolidation of the position and popularity of newspapers and periodicals.

In addition to public awareness, the achievements of the first period of educational policy can be seen in three areas.

(1) The offices of the state education administration were set up. At the top of the bureaucracy was the *Studienhofkommission*, or Court Commission of Studies. The commission, composed only of a few members, initially operated in a consultative capacity and only later became an institution with an increasingly extensive apparatus coordinating the implementation and monitoring of decisions – the forerunner of the Ministry of Education in the modern sense. With its diverse operations, it became highly significant in ensuring day-to-day business and in considering and developing long-term plans. At the medium level of the unified structure of school inspectorate were provincial school boards, while district school inspectors were at the lower level. At the lowest, local level, no institution for direct state intervention was established; therefore, small village schools continued to be supervised by the local parish priest.[3]

[3] Wolfgang Brezinka, *Pädagogik in Österreich. Die Geschichte des Faches an den Universitäten vom 18. bis zum Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 14-25; Hans Spreitzer, "200 Jahre oberste Schulbehörde in Österreich. Zur Errichtung der Studienhofkommission im Jahre 1760," *Erziehung und Unterricht* 110, 3 (1960): 129-137; Josef Stanzel, *Die Schulaufsicht im Reformwerk von J. I. Felbiger (1724-1788). Schule,*

(2) Universities were the first to be affected by educational modernisation measures. Of the imperial universities operated by the Jesuits, the Court's attention was focused on the most important one, the University of Vienna, while the University of Prague and other smaller universities merely followed events in Vienna. Changes in university governance, faculty-institutional structure, the order of appointing professors and the curriculum taught all served two main purposes: to remove Jesuit professors and replace them with scholarly teachers of Reformed Catholic tendencies, who would bring with them a new mentality,[4] and, closely related to this, to consolidate a practical curriculum formulated in the interests of the empire and, not least, the principle of the common good, the main reference point of Enlighted absolutism. Although decisive steps were taken in both directions during the period, higher education policy as a whole was ultimately characterised more by failure. Despite some promising results (e.g., the restructuring of the faculty of law and, especially, the faculty of medicine and the inclusion of certain professions – engineering, veterinary medicine, ophthalmology, etc. – in higher education), Habsburg universities did not win the right to freedom of research. What is more, by the early nineteenth century the great court collections (library, archives, natural history museum, etc.) had long since taken over the possibility of research itself from universities. Thus, Austrian and imperial universities remained at a serious disadvantage compared to Protestant universities in northern Germany (first the University of Göttingen and then, increasingly, Humboldt University of Berlin).[5]

(3) Popular education efforts proved to be more successful. Queen Maria Theresa of Austria invited Felbiger to Vienna in the early 1770s and invested him with broad powers. The activities of the former monk from Sagan in improving the size and quality of the elementary school network were widespread. He not only directly founded, or helped to found, schools, but also developed the organisational framework and laid the foundations for the content and methodology of teacher training. Furthermore, through his work as a textbook

*Kirche und Staat in Recht und Praxis des aufgeklärten Absolutismus* (Paderborn: Schönigh, 1976), 231-281.

[4] Hans Kröll, "Die Auswirkungen der Aufhebung der Jesuitenordens in Wien und Niederösterreich. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Josephinismus in Österreich" *Z. Bayer. Landesgesch.* 34, 2 (1971): 547-617.

[5] Herbert Hans Egglmaier, "Am Beispiel Österreich: Die Wissenschaftspolitik eines aufgeklärt-absolutistischen Staates," *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 15 (1995): 101-125; Notker Hammerstein, *Aufklärung und katholisches Reich. Untersuchungen zur Universitätsreform und Politik katholischer Territorien des Heiligen Römischen Reichs deutscher Nation im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Duncker-Humblot, 1977), 13-24, 170-177; Grete Klingenstein, "Despotismus und Wissenschaft. Zur Kritik norddeutscher Aufklärer an der österreichischen Universitäten 1750-1790," in Friedrich Engel-Janosi, Grete Klingenstein and Hermann Lutz, eds., *Formen der europäischen Aufklärung* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1976), 126-157.

author and school inspector, he efficiently encouraged the spread of literacy and the emergence of a bottom-up school system. The most significant result of these efforts, which continued into the Josephinian decade after Felbiger's departure, was a significant increase in school attendance, albeit with huge regional differences. In Tirol, for instance, the number of elementary school pupils increased fivefold in three years, but officials in Styria, Carinthia, Lower and Upper Austria and Bohemia also reported that at least one in two children received primary education.[6] It is quite contradictory that, while it was in this sector that the first major direct educational policy results were achieved, the monarch relied most heavily on church officials, namely the lower clergy, in the management and supervision of public schools.

While there were lasting achievements in the fields of lower and higher education, the grammar school was regarded as the 'stepchild' of imperial educational policy, owing primarily to Maria Theresa's decision, which was prepared and implemented conspiratorially. After suppressing the Jesuit order in 1774 – until then, the reform of the secondary sector had not even been considered – and sweeping aside all discussions and reform plans already under development, in complete secrecy she commissioned the Piarist monk, Gratian Marx, to draw up a curriculum for secondary schools in the empire in a matter of weeks.[7] The work, necessarily incomplete due to the short time available, was submitted to the *Studienhofkommission* anonymously; in this way, the empress hoped to avoid anticlerical objections from the commission. The draft, which by all accounts needed further substantial revision and additions, and which completely ignored the innovative ideas that had emerged in the meantime, was introduced under pressure from Maria Theresa just two weeks before the new academic year. Thus, the curriculum of grammar schools did not change very much compared to those used for centuries under Jesuit governance, and Joseph II, who neglected the issue of higher education on principle and dramatically reduced its capacity, did not change it either.[8]

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[6] Heinrich Ferihumer, "Das niedere Schulwesen im Zeitalter Maria Theresias und Josephs II., Mit Berücksichtigung oberösterreichischer Verhältnisse," *Oberösterreichische Heimatblätter* 12 (1958): 21-38; Rudolf Gönner, *Die österreichische Lehrerbildung von der Normalschule bis zur Pädagogische Akademie* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1968), 25-32; Eva Kowalská, "Die vergessene Rolle von Johann Ignaz von Felbiger in Ungarn, *Hung. Stud.* 32 (2018): 239-250.

[7] Heribert Timp, *Die Problematik „Klassenlehrer" oder „Fachlehrer" in den Gymnasialreformen von 1792 bis 1849*, 2 (Wien: Ketterl, 1968), 27-44.

[8] Friedrich Endl, "Ueber die wissenschaftliche Heranbildung der Piaristen im 17. und 18. Jahrhunderte. Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die deutsche (sc. Österr.) Ordens-Provinz," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für die deutsche Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte* VIII (1898): 147-177; Gerald Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution oder „Bürgerschule"? Das österreichische Gymnasium zwischen Tradition und Innovation 1773-1819* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1995), 44-62.

*The idea of the subject teacher system*

Nonetheless, the failure to make significant changes to secondary education did not mean complete stasis. The idea of a comprehensive reform of grammar schools came in several waves, and while the deaths of Joseph II and Leopold II decided the fate of higher education for many decades – and soon afterward, at the turn of the century, that of elementary education as well – the struggle between various interest groups over grammar schools continued until the end of the 1810s. Although the Court managed to consolidate its influence at the universities, student numbers remained low. Furthermore, since village schools, rapidly growing in number, remained under the direct control of the lower clergy, grammar schools were the only serious target for state educational policy in regard to their social impact.[9]

The introduction of a subject teacher system was at the heart of the struggle. Only an innovation of this magnitude could have guaranteed the replacement of a traditionally profound system of secondary education, based on Latin and religion, with a broader-based curriculum, characterised by meeting the requirements of the Enlightenment, applying encyclopaedic logic, and reflecting the diversity of subjects and disciplines. Its implementation would have required a radical change in the way teachers were trained and recruited by the state. In addition, the introduction of a subject teacher system built on public teacher training would have logically led to a considerable weakening of the position of the Catholic Church, which had thus far been omnipotent in higher education.[10]

The need for a subject teacher system, and the increasingly intertwined aspect of teacher training, first arose after the suppression of the Jesuit order. This first phase lasted only a year and a half, and its end was marked by the introduction of Marx's curriculum. The immediate precursor was Count Pergen's draft, followed by the debates of the *Aufhebungskommission* (Reconstruction Commission), which took stock of Jesuit heritage and drew up plans to determine its fate. Count Pergen, who had travelled around Western Europe and was head of the Chancellery in the early 1770s, was a strong advocate of the secularisation and professionalisation of the whole sector, in agreement with the highly influential Chancellor Kaunitz. In this spirit, Pergen rejected maintaining the role of the clergy in schools, calling for teacher training with a purpose instead. Until this was achieved, he proposed to solve the problem of teacher shortages

[9] Simonetta Polenghi, "Habsburg Legislation on the Training of Elementary and Ginnasio-Liceo (Secondary) Teachers and its Implementation in the Italian Territories across the 18th and 19th Centuries," in Rita Casale et al., eds., *Kulturen der Lehrerbildung in der Sekundarstufe in Italien und Deutschland. Nationale Formate und 'cross culture'* (Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2021), 19-32.

[10] Karl Wotke, "Beiträge zur Gymnasiallehrerfrage in Österreich in den Jahren 1796 bis 1800," *Beiträge zur Österreichischen Erzeihungs- und Schulgeschichte* XII (1910): 72-106.

with academics from abroad. However, these principled demands were not matched by curricular ideas, and the author did not even consider the abolition of the class teacher system.[11] Although Pergen's views were well received, those working on the issue of public education deemed the invitation of foreign teachers to be excessive, and generally criticised the author for his superficial and over-optimistic comments on funding issues.

The most heated debates in the Reconstruction Commission pertained to the employment of former monks as teachers. The chairman of the committee, Kressel, suggested that the expertise of the ex-Jesuits be put to good use, and that they should at least be allowed to teach theology, ethics and metaphysics at grammar schools and universities. Sensing Kaunitz's strong reaction, Kressel, who was in favour of total secularisation, modified his proposal and wanted to prevent, for material and moral reasons, at least the exclusion of Dominican and Augustinian monks from the schools. The Chancellor, however, rejected this proposal as well and was only willing to consider the teaching activity of secular priests to be acceptable. It was Kressel's proposal that won Maria Theresa's approval. This way she could delay not only full secularisation but also the establishment of a state teacher training school based on the German model, as proposed by Pergen, which would have jeopardised the influence of the clergy and been costly. Thus, the former Jesuit monks had to leave the universities only, where they were replaced by Dominicans and Augustinians to teach theology and metaphysics. The Jesuits retained their influence on teaching at grammar schools, as they were still responsible for religious education and could effectively assert their will in didactical and content-related matters.[12]

In the first half of the 1770s, new experts joined the discourse and, partly as a result of this and partly due to thinking over and continuing the original tasks, the idea of a subject teacher system emerged among the new topics under discussion. In the Court Commission of Studies, the empress dedicated a special post focused on grammar school affairs. The first head of the Board of Humanities (*Directoris Scholarum Humaniorum*) was Johann Adam Haslinger, whom Maria Theresa relieved of his position a year and a half later. His successor was the increasingly influential Ferenc Ádám Kollár. Kollár's closest associate, Ignaz Mathes von Heß, was another brilliant mind won over to the cause of Austrian educational modernisation. Von Heß's involvement is particularly important because it was during the discussion of his concept that the advocates of the Enlightenment and the old order were first to be clearly separated in the committee – and it was also the first time that those who pushed for modernisation achieved temporary success.[13]

[11] Timp, *Die Problematik,* 155-159.

[12] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution*, 492-497.

[13] Gerald Grimm, Beáta Bali and Veronika Pirka, "Lehrerbildung in Österreich. Aspekte ihrer Genese von den Anfängen im späten 18. Jahrhundert bir zur Zweiten Republik," in András Németh

Kollár and von Heß's close working relationship did not, however, mean that they shared the same views. Occasional disagreement between them may be explained partly by their age, but mostly by conceptual differences.[14] Although Kollár personally proposed to dismiss or retire many of the ex-Jesuit teachers, he still regarded the grammar school, in accordance with its previous function, as an institution for the training of future scholars, and thus continued to support the class teacher system. In contrast, von Heß, who was more influenced by the French and German Enlightenment, would have built the grammar school on a broader neo-humanist foundation, and proposed the integration of general literacy in the humanities and the classical education of scientists. Characteristic of his approach, von Heß highlighted Locke, Condillac, La Chalotais, Montesquieu and Schlözer as intellectual fathers in one of his writings, and described the first two as "sensational". Thus, von Heß placed greater emphasis on the teaching of classical languages, history, mathematics and science, while Kollár, following the Jesuit tradition, treated these as subsidiary subjects and defended the exclusivity of Latin.[15] Von Heß's curriculum also introduced new elements such as hydraulics, architecture and physics, which could be directly applied in the economy. In line with all this, von Heß was the first in the history of Austrian educational discourse to urge the use of subject teachers. In addition to teachers of religion, he suggested employing teachers of history, science and mathematics, poetry and rhetoric, German and Latin style and language, and Greek literature. For this purpose, the pedagogist from Würzburg not only considered it essential to organise systematic teacher training in secondary schools but also wanted to organise it on the model of Protestant German universities, especially Göttingen and Halle.[16]

The two drafts were discussed by the *Studienhofkommission* in 1775. Contemporaries clearly perceived that von Heß had produced a more detailed, versatile work, more strongly defined by the liberal spirit of the Enlightenment.[17] This prompted the Court Commission of Studies to consider the young external expert's proposals – even though, unlike Kollár, he was not a member of the Commission. Owing to Martini's action, and because Kollár's concept was so incomplete, the meetings resulted in the success of the 'Enlightened party,' and Maria Theresa was presented with von Heß's draft. Of the twelve members of the *Studienhofkommission*, five were in favour of and six clearly rejected von

and Ehrenhard Skiera, eds., *Lehrerbildung in Europa. Geschichte, Struktur und Reform* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 94.

[14] Kollár was 50 years old and Heß was 28 when appointed.

[15] Ignaz Mathes von Hess, "Beyträge zum Schulwesen. Fragmente," in Ignaz Mathes von Hess, *Kleinere Schriften über Schulwesen, Erziehung und Wissenschaften* (Wien, 1781), 61-112.

[16] Ignaz Mathes von Hess, *Entwurf zur Einrichtung der Gymnasien in k. k. Erblanden* (Wien, 1775).

[17] Heß's proposal is the crowning achievement of Austrian history of education in the Enlightenment. Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution*, 76.

Heß's plan. (Rautenstrauch, a monk from the Benedictine abbey of Braunau in Bohemia, also expressed his support.[18]) The Enlightened grouping won the first battle with the persuasion of the twelfth member, Minister of State Hatzfeld. However, the empress found the young professor's findings exaggerated, and insisted on a system of schooling that would ensure a mass of controllable, politically and religiously disciplined subjects. The monarch quickly brought the debate to a close by commissioning Marx and giving her blessing to his half-finished work, and she postponed the discussion on the system of the subject teachers for many years to come.[19]

*A decade of stasis*

Although the issue of teachers and teacher training was also frequently considered in the Josephinian decade, the introduction of a subject teacher system was not discussed in any meaningful way. The monarch was committed to secularising grammar schools but, for economic and social policy reasons, he sought to do so by making significant cuts in the number and staff of schools and simply dismissing monk teachers. Secular candidates were discouraged by the modest pay, the rigorous discipline (which was particularly strict under the emperor), and the constant monitoring thereof, while the aptitude test, still largely linked to Latin, narrowed down the pool of potential candidates. Typically, it was as difficult to recruit teachers in sufficient numbers in the central regions as in the peripheral provinces. No suitable candidates were found in Vienna or Lower Austria either, so ex-Jesuits were just as often needed to run schools as teachers from abroad, even if they were Protestants. These compromises only served to cause tensions among denominations in the institutions concerned – tensions that were of no concern to the ruler but deeply divisive for others.[20]

While the 1780s saw no progress in the professionalisation of teaching, one of the most respected educationalists of the next two decades, Johann Melchior von Birkenstock, was placed in an important position. Birkenstock was actively involved in educational policy developments as a chancellor's adviser in the late Theresian period, as a commissioner of education under Joseph II and, later, as a member of the censorship commission and the *Studienhofkommission*. He had studied at the University of Göttingen and then visited other Protestant German universities on a court commission; he was a staunch supporter of the

[18] The proposal was supported by Freyherr von Koch, Rautenstrauch, Ignaz Müller, Scrötter and Heinke, and opposed by state councillors Gebler and Löhr, court councillors Störck and Khelcz, as well as Marx and the ex-Jesuit professor of the University of Vienna, Ignaz Wurz. Timp, *Die Problematik*, 59-64; Thomas J. J. Wallnig, "Franz Stephan Rautenstrauch (1734-1785)," in Jeffrey D. Burson and Ulrich L. Lehner, eds., *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe. A Transnational History* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 209-226.

[19] Timp, *Die Problematik*, 16-18.

[20] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution,* 349-386.

Enlightenment in all respects. Yet, his firmly conservative stance on certain issues gave his innovative views credibility in the eyes of those who would otherwise have opposed them. Such was the case for the organisation of independent teacher training and the introduction of a subject teacher system, which he strongly supported, on the basis of the teacher shortage in Austria, the unqualified nature of those in the profession, and the principle of a state-controlled educational policy. He reported cases where, due to a severe shortage, the teacher employed was unsuitable to educate even an average pupil, and better pupils were ahead of their untalented teacher. In his view, the ex-Jesuits, most of them elderly, generally unfamiliar with pedagogical processes, and embittered by the loss of their previous lifestyle and familiar community, were inevitably unsuccessful in their school work. Birkenstock also described a case in which a former resident of a monastery, who would otherwise have been sent to prison for some misdemeanour, was given a teaching post to serve out his sentence. At one point, Birkenstock noted that at that time, as a commissioner for grammar school affairs, he took every opportunity to speak out against this practice. The overwhelming vigour of the emperor, however, would not allow the opinion of a councillor to prevail.[21]

Birkenstock identified the organisation of a teacher-training seminar as one of the primary tasks.[22] It is a mistake to think that teachers finish university prepared for the profession and have no further need for study and development. This would not be the case even if examinations and certificates could be trusted, since higher education is only the first step towards scientific thinking. Universities can only fulfil their function if they educate students to have high standards, to develop and think for themselves. Thus, one of the most important tasks is not to transmit specific knowledge, but to help develop an inner urge for continuous learning and knowledge acquisition among prospective teachers – ultimately, to achieve a change of attitude.

Birkenstock also noticed serious malfunctions in the system of exams and certificates. He found that the teacher training examinations of the time were flawed in two ways. First, they were too rigorous and discouraged the gifted with their harshness. Second, the possibility of repeated retesting and retakes helped

[21] Johann Melchior von Birkenstock, "Kurzgefasste Geschichte der in den k. k. Erblanden im Schul- und Studien Wesen bisher gemachten öftern neuen Einrichtungen und Versuche, Entwicklung der Ursachen der bisherigen Mißgeschicks derselben und mancherley Fehler in der bisherigen Einrichtung insonderheit der erbländischen Universitäten vorzüglich der Universität zu Wien," ed. Herbert H. Egglmeier [Retrospektiven in Sachen Bildung 4] (Klagenfurt: Univ. für Bildungswiss., 1996).

[22] Johann Melchior von Birkenstock, "Entwurf zur Errichtung eines Ober-Schul- und Studien-Kollegiums oder Directorii, dann der Provincial-Kollegien und zu zweckmäßiger sowohl Organisation derselben als künftigen Behandlung der dahin gehörigen Geschäfte," in Karl Wotke, "Drei Arbeiten des Freiherrn v. Birkenstock," *Beiträge zur Österreich. Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte* XV (1914): 157-188.

poor performers and the less diligent. In his view, this led to the unavoidable risk of diluting the profession.[23] On these grounds, Birkenstock argued that the ideal teacher was a qualified professional. Attention should be paid to the pedagogical education of not only grammar school teachers, but all levels and ranks of educators, including university professors and academic writers. Birkenstock identified seven basic conditions for the teaching profession. Among these, good education and a sound moral character were considered both indispensable and irreplaceable factors, and to be prerequisites for selecting those interested in teacher training. Further requirements (logical thinking, correct linguistic expression, scientific and subject knowledge, willingness to teach, commitment) could and should be strengthened or developed. This would require both pedagogical lectures and the practice of teacher training seminars at the university. The latter, despite its cost, was not to be spared, because the training institutes set up specifically to convey the practice of education were already proving to be of great service to the state in the first years of operation.[24]

Birkenstock had detailed ideas regarding teacher training and the employment of teachers. Accordingly, he consistently advocated for a subject teacher system. Citing Western European examples again, he argued that while teachers' deeper subject knowledge was essential, getting to know children could be achieved with sufficient diligence and dedication, employing new pedagogical methods, without spending the whole day in a single classroom.

*A turn at the turn of the century: The introduction of the subject teacher system*

The promising efforts made during the period of Leopold II's reign, such as the corporative participation of teachers in decision-making in different types of institutions, the creation of an organisational framework for professional autonomy and the revision of Marx's grammar school curriculum, soon ran aground. The restoration that came with Francis II threatened to prolong the period of stasis. These years were enlivened by the intervention of Franz Innozenz Lang (1752-1835), also a Piarist abbot. The monk served as a teacher first in a trivial school, then in a town school, and then at the grammar school in Horn, before being employed at the Court as a private tutor to the emperor's brothers in 1794. His extensive experience as a teacher enabled him to serve in the Commission of Studies from the end of 1796. His name was often mentioned by educationalists from the very end of the century. It was at this time that he drew up a plan for reforming grammar schools, unparalleled in many respects.

[23] Birkenstock, "Kurzgefasste Geschichte."

[24] Johann Melchior von Birkenstock, "Übersicht des ganzen Schul- und Unterrichtswesens nach den verschiedenen grossen Hauptabtheilungen, und dann in genauer Zergliederung nach bestimmten Klassen der Einwohner im Staate," in Herbert H. Egglemaier, *Die Studienrevisionshofkommisssion und die Leitlinien des österreichischen Nationalbildung. Die Grundsatzdiskussion des Jahres 1797 im Spiegel der Gutachten* (Klagenfurt: Univ. für Bildungswiss., 1995).

He proposed a six-year grammar school based on a subject teacher system, combining Enlightened and neo-humanist elements with a lower proportion of Latin and religion (47% in total) and a higher proportion of history, German, geography and mathematics than ever taught before. His declared aim was to transform the grammar school from an elite institution into a larger-scale school that would meet the needs of the bourgeoisie. The basic principle of Lang's proposal was that school education should be based on the mother tongue and its cultivation (German literature, stylistic theory). An increase in the proportion of natural science subjects, which were still of marginal importance to Marx, would have promoted practical success for those who had completed grammar school. At the same time, these unprecedented innovations were complemented by a traditional concept of discipline: in line with the Jesuit-Piarist tradition, it required detailed rules and regulations, regular written and oral examinations, and monthly meetings of the teaching staff to monitor pupils' diligence and discipline.

Lang's paper was discussed by the Council of State in early 1798. The majority supported the proposal, with minor and major objections and, sensing the importance of the need to introduce a subject teacher system, urged the organisation of teacher training at universities. Various calculations were made with regards to the salaries of teachers, as well as the number of grammar schools needed and maintainable. The *Staatsrat* took a stand on the reorganisation of the sector and instructed the Court Commission of Studies to prepare plans for the establishment of new grammar schools. Francis II did not sanction the consensus among the policy-makers and the issue of grammar schools was taken off the agenda for almost a year.[25]

In the debates that unfolded up to the turn of the century, all the main issues concerning the reform of secondary education were raised, but no substantial progress was made. In two and a half decades, no changes were made to Gratian Marx's curriculum, which closely followed centuries of tradition. However, the questions raised but left unanswered or undecided now needed to be resolved as soon as possible. Social and economic developments in Austria and foreign influences on pedagogy and educational philosophy were both pressing. By the early nineteenth century, Lang had become a leading figure in Austrian educational administration. First, he was entrusted with the supervision of grammar schools in Vienna and Lower Austria, and later he became a member of the Consistory of the University of Vienna. The weight of his views on grammar school issues is indicated by the fact that in 1803 the Court's chief official for educational and cultural affairs, Martin Lorenz, put Lang's 1797 curriculum on the agenda without any substantial changes. For financial reasons, however, he proposed only five-year grammar schools instead of six, as originally planned.

[25] Timp, *Die Problematik,* 30-32.

Compared to his previous proposal, drafted six years earlier, this draft reduced the number of lessons per week considerably (from 28 to 18), maintained the predominance of Latin (56%), limited the teaching of natural history to the first two years and omitted the mother tongue as a subject. At the same time, it significantly increased the proportion of mathematics lessons and prescribed the employment of subject teachers. Having received a positive reception from the emperor, the following year the system was tested in four prestigious Austrian grammar schools (Vienna, Vienna-Neuchâtel, Melk and Krems).

Lang's main aim was to introduce a six-year grammar school providing general training and operating with the subject teacher system. To this end – while experiments were being carried out in four schools according to his plans – he designed a new curriculum and syllabus. Adding an extra year, he further reduced the Latin character of the grammar school and strengthened its general, civil school function. As in the previous draft, German was not included as a separate subject, and overall, knowledge of classical culture still made up half of the curriculum.[26] In 1805, Lang's plan was introduced in five grammar schools, with the intention that all institutions would switch to a six-form system of teaching from the following academic year. Due to a lack of money and adequate textbooks, this change was postponed until 1808-09. During the years of preparation, Lang took stock of the textbooks that could be used and those that definitely needed replacing, and prepared instructions for teachers and prefects alike.[27]

In parallel, the quantitative reorganisation of the secondary school sector continued. Although pro-secularisation Josephite officials were not enthusiastic about it, the increasingly acute shortage of teachers and priests made it clear that new schools had to be created or restored – and this could only be achieved by the return of the monk teachers and the renewed rise of the religious orders. This turn was not dramatic anywhere, as the proportion of secular teachers remained very low, reaching 18% in Bohemia and only 7% in Upper Austria by the end of the century. Secular teachers were employed in the highest number in Styria, where only two out of three secondary school teachers were church affiliated.[28] Reorganisation began in 1796 and reached its symbolic climax in 1814, when the Pope authorised the re-establishment of the Jesuit order, which, however, did not regain its former influence.[29] The ecclesiastical character of grammar schools

[26] Helmut Engelbrecht, "Das österreichische Gymnasium zwischen 1790 und 1848," in Gerda Mraz, ed., *Österreichische Bildungs- und Schulgeschichte von der Aufklärung bis zum Liberalismus* (Eisenstadt: Institut für österreichische Kulturgeschichte, 1974), 99-117.
[27] Timp, *Die Problematik,* 26-27; Philipp Decker, "The Building of Nations in Habsburg Central Europe, 1740-1914" (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 2017), 105-106, http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3965/1/Decker__Building-nations-Habsburg.pdf.
[28] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution*, 492-495.
[29] Engelbrecht, "Das österreichische Gymnasium," 101-102.

was strengthened not only by the eleven re-established Benedictine and Augustinian schools but also by relocating the existing ones. Quite large towns lost their secondary schools; for example, the school that had been moved from Melk to St Pölten in 1787 in the spirit of secularisation was now returned to its old location, and the grammar school in Seckau was allowed to move back from Leoben. The force of this reorganisation is well illustrated by the fact that the important mining town of Leoben did not have a grammar school for the following 60 years.[30] All this meant that the number of students in the Austro-Bohemian territories, which was 12,000 in 1813, tripled in the next ten years. Nevertheless, the grammar school remained an exclusive option for a lucky few: even in the most developed province, Lower Austria, only 0.25% of the total population had access to secondary education and the knowledge and literacy it offered.[31]

*The fall of the subject teacher system*

The introduction of the subject teacher system was a central element of Lang's comprehensive work; however, he did not give any specific instructions for it. In contrast to Prussia, where the number of teacher training seminars had been growing since the 1780s, Austria did not provide the necessary training to meet the new requirements. Monk teachers continued to be employed in the majority of grammar schools, as there was little interest in the job applications regularly advertised in the papers since the reign of Joseph II. Teacher training took place in upper-level institutes of philosophy: universities (Vienna, Prague, Lemberg, Graz, Innsbruck); lyceums (Klagenfurt, Linz, Laibach, Olomouc, Brno); the Piarist schools in Krems, Budweis, Brüx, Leitomischl and Nikolsburg; and also the Benedictine school in Admont and the Premonstratensian school in Plzen. In principle, these schools alone could provide a sufficient number of candidates and would not have led to a chronic shortage of teachers, but most ecclesiastics did not view teaching as their life's ambition and quickly gave up teaching for a better-paid priestly job.[32]

In 1805, Francis II's decree re-regulated studies in philosophy. It set serious requirements for teacher candidates, but only kept the three-year course at universities and reduced the period of study to two semesters at other types of institutions. An important result of the reorganisation was the introduction – alongside diplomacy, aesthetics and technology – of pedagogy into the range of philosophical subjects, which included subjects that were optional but could be taught in a relatively liberal way with little regulation. The first professor of pedagogy appointed was Vincent Eduard Mildé. The value of the measure is

[30] Re-established grammar schools between 1796 and 1814: Horn (Piarist), Hall (Franciscan), Neukloster, Heiligenkreuz, Lilienfeld, Zwettl, Wiener Neustadt, St Lambrecht, St Paul im Lavant, Seitenstetten (Benedictine), Vorau (Augustinian). Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution,* 492-497.
[31] Ibid., 502-503.
[32] Engelbrecht, "Das österreichische Gymnasium," 102-103.

diminished by the fact that the course was only made compulsory for home tutors and private teachers and, for a while, it was not a basic requirement of open job applications for teachers.[33]

The problem of teacher training, the unsubstantiated introduction of the subject teacher system, poor salaries, modest pay rises that did not compensate for the rapid inflation of the early 1810s, the unsuccessful attempt of the *Studienhofkommission* to establish a short one-semester subject-specific teacher training seminar, and, last but not least, the resistance of the Church and the re-establishment of the Jesuit order, were all factors fundamentally jeopardising Lang's reforms.[34] In 1810, a proposal by the Court Commission of Studies sought to mitigate this situation by allowing the employment of assistant teachers and senior lecturers. Under this proposal a young man, indirectly supervised by the superintendent of the grammar school and learning the profession, would be able to assist his senior colleague for two (and possibly two more) years. This would have both alleviated the severe shortage of teachers and provided a professional substitute for the lack of training. However, the proposal only came into force in a limited circle in 1813, and so did little to address the ever-growing problem.

Francis II's advisors increasingly considered the abolition of the subject teacher system to be the solution. Although Lang continued to defend the innovation, instead proposing the development of teacher training and, indeed, further training, as well as the establishment of specialised libraries in schools, opposition to the subject teacher system was becoming increasingly strong. In 1815, Chancellor-General and Minister of State Ugarte initiated a wide-ranging debate on the issue. Over the next two years all the provinces took a stand; Lang's innovation only received full support from the headmaster and teachers of Upper Austria, and had a narrow majority of supporters in Styria, Carinthia and Galicia. In the rest of the provinces, the opponents were the majority. Thus, even though Lang was still a member of the *Studienhofkommission* and the *Staatsrat*, the monarch decided to abolish the subject teacher system.[35]

The decree of late August 1818 restored the class teacher system with immediate effect from the beginning of the following school year. Only religious

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[33] András Németh, "Osztrák tanügyi reformok és a pedagógia egyetemi tudománnyá válásának kezdetei" [The Austrian Education Reforms and the Beginnings of Pedagogy as University Science], *Magyar Pedagógia* 103, 2 (2003): 189-210; Idem, "Die Rolle des Philantropismus am Anfang der Institutionalisierung der ungarischen Volksschullehrerbildung," in Tomas Kasper, Ehrenhard Skiera and Gerald Grimm, eds., *Lehrerbildung im europäischen Kontext. Anfänge, sozio-kulturelle Bedingungen, Ausbildungsprofile und Institutionen* (Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2019), 101-112.

[34] Anton Ernstberger, "Zur Wiederherstellung des Jesuitenordens. Vorschläge an Kaiser Franz II. 1794, 1799, 1800," *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 7 (1963): 3-18; Ferdinand Maaß, "Die österreichischen Jesuiten zwischen Josephinismus und Liberalismus," *Z. für Kathol. Theol.* 80 (1958): 66-100.

[35] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution*, 547-552.

studies were taught by a separate teacher, while the other subjects could be learned from the same teacher. As a direct consequence, Franz Xaver Schönberger came up with a new curriculum a few weeks later. Content regulations, also rapidly approved, radically reduced the proportion of science subjects, while Latin, Greek and religious studies together again covered three-quarters of the curriculum. All this meant that, after decades of futile attempts, the issue of Austrian grammar schools moved away from the concept of a general school for the bourgeoisie and back towards that of a classical elite grammar school. The development of the secondary school sector thus reached a deadlock, lasting until the mid-nineteenth century.[36]

*Pros and cons of the subject teacher system*

The fate of the first, decades-long attempt to introduce a subject teacher system was thus, at each stage, directly and clearly dependent upon the political power relations of the time. The main interest groups are relatively easy to identify. It seems obvious that the supporters were enlightened thinkers with experience from Western Europe and advisers to enlightened absolutist monarchs, while the opponents were members of the Catholic Church, who were, justifiably, protective of its influence. As the above overview has shown, the clergy was not united, and at times the reform Catholic forces became so strong that the Church was unable to assert its original intentions. This may explain why, among others, Rautenstrauch or Lang, who was key to the introduction of the subject teacher system, supported the new concept despite being monks. The proportion of secular teachers in grammar schools remained very low throughout the period and without the ecclesiastics it would certainly not have been possible to test the new system.

Changes in internal power relations in the church require further investigation, which may clarify exactly who and what factors are responsible for the turns in the subject teacher system. We may already attempt to take stock of the arguments clashing in the discourse that developed along the lines of political interests.

The argument of those calling for the development of the system was built on two main pillars. On the one hand, they referred to Western, mostly Protestant, examples. The general sense of lagging behind Protestants was partly fuelled by Prussia, which rapidly caught up in terms of culture in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Prussian example was an important model in almost all sectors of education in Austria, and the use of Prussian specialists and the adoption of Prussian solutions were recurrent elements in the reform of public, normal and grammar schools. This approach was particularly

[36] Engelbrecht, "Das österrichische Gymnasium," 103-106; Imre Garai and András Németh, "Construction of the national state and the institutionalization processes of the modern Hungarian secondary school teacher training system," *Espac. Tiempo Educ.* 5, 1 (2018): 219-232, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/ete.121.

characteristic of von Heß, the two van Swietens, Martini and Birkenstock.[37] Another important source of inspiration for widely travelled educationalists was the development seen at the University of Halle and, especially, the University of Göttingen. The latter was at the forefront of separating scientific disciplines and scientific specialisation, and thus the spread of a system of teaching that reflected individual disciplines.[38]

The cultural reference to Western examples was complemented by another argumentation from a pedagogical point of view. According to this, the system of class teachers causes internal imbalances, as teachers neglect certain subjects and parts of the syllabus and overemphasise others according to their liking. Subject teachers, on the other hand, gain a deeper, more intensive knowledge of their subject, which they can thus pass on more effectively. Furthermore, schools have to provide diverse sets of information the complexity of which class teachers cannot live up to. This change may increase the number of science subjects and lessons, and ensure that the grammar school is transformed from a school providing humanities education for the privileged into an institution of general education serving the state and its growth, that is, serving the embourgeoisement.[39] The subject teacher system meets the requirements of scientificity, secularisation and pedagogical thoroughness. To ensure this, the philosophy faculties of universities need to be adapted to the needs of training secondary school teachers.[40]

Opponents, on the other hand, listed organisational, pedagogical and moral reasons for keeping the system of class teachers. They emphasised that the introduction of the new system would lead to a serious teacher shortage. In addition, in the event of a teacher's long-term illness or departure, substitution, smoothly ensured up to then, would be impossible. Furthermore, the ethos of the school would also be threatened by the new order – they worried about discordant teachers becoming jealous of each other, which would have dramatic consequences on the knowledge and discipline of young people in the school. These counterarguments could be easily responded to with Kollár's inspector's report of 1774 on the state of the grammar school in Vienna. Kollár reported on the declining authority of the ex-Jesuit teachers and increasingly worrying disciplinary problems – which also meant that the system of class teachers did

[37] Grete Klingenstein, "Vorstufen der theresianischen Studienreformen in der Regierungszeit Karls VI," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 76 (1968): 327-377; Hubert von Weitensfelder, *Studium und Staat. Heinrich Graf Rottenhan und Johann Melchior von Birkenstock als Repräsentanten der österreichischen Bildungspolitik um 1800* (Wien: Wiener Universität: 1996), 115-140.

[38] Friedrich Paulsen, *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium* (Berlin, 1902).

[39] Hess, *Entwurf zur Einrichtung der Gymnasien*, 20-71.

[40] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution,* 332-347; Timp, *Die Problematik*, 17-20.

not necessarily guarantee the appropriate moral state of the schools.[41]

One recurring pedagogical argument was that a class teacher can get to know the personality of his students much better than a subject teacher who teaches few classes, so talent promotion, as well familiarisation with the developmental characteristics of individual students, would be better served by not changing the current situation. As opposed to subject teachers, class teachers can cultivate a much closer relationship with parents and, by always having an overview of the children's work, can avoid overloading students.[42]

The aspects of adherence to the old order were most clearly summarised by Ignaz Cornova, a member of the Bohemian scholarly society and former Jesuit monk. In his long letters to Count Lazansky, Royal Chamberlain of Galicia, he tried to support, in every possible way, the right of those who considered the Jesuits' service in grammar schools important. The essence of his reflections, written essentially from a cultural and moral point of view, was that the Jesuits had always placed great emphasis not only on the training of teachers but also on their selection, supervision and academic training. Cornova could refer not only to past glories but also to the textbooks, scholarly works and occasional speeches of recent decades, which preserved and enriched the values of a unified, closed world. The key to this world was Latin, which was in extreme danger and which, in terms of form and logic, as well as intellect and content, was putting humanity in an unforeseeable situation. It was the sacred duty of the educated man to appreciate old classical values, far from guaranteed with the proliferation of faulty knowledge of Latin, as well as of the German language and lighter texts. Although in another letter Cornova acknowledged that German was now indispensable and that Jesuit teacher training should comply with this fact, in several places he stated that, for moral and social reasons, there was no alternative to a classical grammar school education based on the predominance of Latin.[43]

The advocates of two worlds clashed in the second half of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth century when they expressed their views on educational issues. Their struggle was a war, with the stakes being the acquisition of unprecedented influence over public affairs and the masses on one side, and the loss of that same influence and the existential security of many on the other. All this was accompanied by real and serious moral and intellectual considerations and content. This complex period, with its many arguments, is perfectly illustrated by the fate of the attempts to introduce a subject teacher system. The supporters of the old order were no longer strong enough to prevent battles over education policy, to avoid the possibility of debate, and sometimes to

[41] Grimm, *Elitäre Bildungsinstitution,* 547-552.
[42] Timp, *Die Problematik,* 55-58.
[43] Ignaz Cornova, *Die Jesuiten als Gymnasiallehrer, in fremdschaftlichen Briefen an den k. k. Kämmerer und Vizepräsidenten in Gallizien von Lazansky* (Prag, 1804), 8-115.

quickly abandon ideas that had been sacrilegious even a decade or two earlier. In some sectors, they also suffered temporary or permanent losses. At this embryonic stage of embourgeoisement, they were still strong enough to ensure that the outcome of the struggle for secularisation would not be definitively decided and that the first debate on educational policy, which lasted more than six decades, would end in their victory. Yet, their triumph was not to last. The debates that took place some 200 to 250 years ago provided an excellent starting and reference point for participants in the new phase of the mid-nineteenth century, which enabled the state to gain a considerable foothold. The present paper has focused on one of the most important tests of this turbulent period: the attempts to introduce a subject teacher system. It has been shown how closely the fate of what at first sight appeared to be a purely pedagogical question of whether to have class teachers or subject teachers in secondary schools was in fact closely linked to the balance of political power relations. The problems of school organisation, didactics and morality raised by this dilemma were always decided by the will of the interest groups that have generally prevailed in the battles over educational policy.

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