

Articles & Contributions / Članki in prispevki

UDC 316.614:37.011.3-055.2(480+497.12)"19"

1.01 Original Scientific Article

Received: 20. 10. 2019

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Unmarried, well behaved and well dressed: The socialization process of female teachers in early twentieth-century Finland and Slovenia

Neporočene, vzorne in urejene: Proces socializacije učiteljic v začetku dvajsetega stoletja na Finskem in v Sloveniji

Izvleček

Devetnajsto in zgodnje dvajseto stoletje je bilo obdobje feminizacije učiteljskega poklica. Namen pričujočega članka je proučiti proces profesionalizacije učiteljic na Finskem in v Sloveniji v začetku dvajsetega stoletja. Članek se osredotoča na naslednja vprašanja: Kakšnim zahtevam so morale dekleta zadostiti za vpis na učiteljske? Katere veščine naj bi bodoče učiteljice pridobile na učiteljskih? Kakšen oblačilni videz in kakšno vedenje se je pričakovalo od učiteljic? Na podlagi zgodovinskih virov prikazuje članek tako razlike kot podobnosti v teh pogledih. Poleg različnih zahtev, ki so jih morale učiteljice izpolnjevati za vpis na učiteljske, opozarja članek tudi na znanje in individualne karakteristike, ki so se pričakovale od njih. Ugotovitve kažejo, da so učiteljice morale biti moralne, spodobne, vzorne in skromnega videza. Članek odpira vprašanja, kako in zakaj se predstave o popolni učiteljici razlikujejo skozi čas in med različnimi državami.

Abstract

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the feminization of the teaching profession. The aim of this article is to examine the professionalization process of female teachers in Finland and Slovenia in the early twentieth century. As such, the article focuses on answering the following questions: What were the requirements for young women to enter teacher-training colleges? What kinds of skills were future female teachers supposed to learn at teacher-training colleges? How were female teachers expected to dress and behave? Based on historical source materials, this article reveals both differences and similarities in these respects. In addition to stating the various requirements for entrance to teacher-training colleges, the article indicates the teaching skills and individual characteristics that were expected of female teachers. As the findings indicate, female teachers were expected to be moral and decent individuals, who behaved well and dressed modestly. Thus, this article raises questions about how and why notions of the ideal female teacher vary across countries and over time.

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Ključne besede: podoba učiteljice, učiteljišče, ženske, Finska, Slovenija

Key words: female teacher image, teacher-training college, women, Finland, Slovenia
15th Symposium on School Life, part 52: Merja Paksuniemi. Visit us / obiščite nas: Sistory,
<http://hdl.handle.net/11686/37705>

Introduction

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the feminization of the teaching profession in many countries (Albisetti 1993), including Finland and Slovenia. In Finland, the training of female teachers developed under Russian rule at the end of the 1860s, following the 1866 Decree on Primary Education, which promoted the establishment of primary schools in Finland. Existing studies have emphasized that discipline, strict orders and respect for staff prevailed in teacher-training colleges (Hyyrö 2006; Paksuniemi 2013).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the teaching profession became an important career path particularly for women in rural areas. It was at this point that several teacher-training colleges were founded in Finland to prepare female students to teach at lower primary schools (Hyyrö 2006; Paksuniemi 2009). When male and female students studied in the same building, their classrooms were separated and they studied in groups of their own (Merciful Decree of Imperial Majesty 1866; Teacher Training College Act 1919). While most male teachers were from middle class families and rural backgrounds, the female teachers were from upper-class families (Hyyrö 2006; Nurmi 1989; Paksuniemi 2009).

In 1918, the organization and content of teacher education were revised in accordance with the Temporary Act of Regulations. According to this act, lower elementary teacher education would last for two years, female students would attend 36–38 hours per week of teacher training and the subjects that they studied would be geography, mathematics, handicrafts, drawing, writing, vocal and instrumental music, gymnastics and teaching practice (Temporary Act of Regulations 1918). As a result of the School Act of 1921, which was followed by the expansion of the primary school system (Westberg et al. 2017), several new teacher-training colleges were established for female students to fulfil the increasing need for teachers (e.g. Annual Report of Teacher-Training College of Hämeenlinna 1919–1920; Annual Report of Teacher-Training College of Tornio 1921–1922; Annual Report of Teacher-Training College of Suistamo 1919–1920).

In Slovenia, the primary school system was organized within the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) with authority centralized at the state level in Vienna. Nevertheless, the Slovenian lands of Carniola (Kranjska), Southern Carinthia (Koroška), Littoral/Primorska (including Trieste, the province of Gorizia-Gradisca and part of Istria), Southern Styria (Štajerska) and Prekmurje (which was part of the Hungarian half of the Empire)

retained their own school system. In 1869, liberal Austrian legislation pertaining to schools established the control of the state and land authorities in place of the Catholic Church (Šuštar 2009, 80–81).

Women in Slovenia entered public life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Training for the profession of primary school teacher opened up a route to a higher level of education for women (initially only secondary) and granted them professional and personal independence. Female teachers were among the women who played the most prominent role in sociocultural development. They were involved in professional, educational and cultural work within teachers' societies. Women's right to education in Slovenia became the first battle call of nationally prescribed womanhood (Hojan 1970; Milharčič Hladnik 1995; Peček 1998; Šuštar 2009).

The teacher-training colleges in Slovenia were quite similar to those in Finland. Until 1870, teaching in Slovene primary schools was almost exclusively a male profession, and female teachers were indeed a rarity. The first female teachers in Slovenia were nuns (mainly Ursulines), who taught girls at convent schools. These convents also fostered teachers who went on to teach at the convent schools.¹ The subject of women's handicrafts was taught by female teachers with no formal teacher training and, often, no general education either. In most cases, these women were the wives of teachers and were only rarely remunerated for their work (General School Ordinance of 1774). In fact, a decree in 1807 had called for teachers to marry women skilled in women's craft work.

The impetus for increasing women's involvement in the teaching profession was created by the third Austrian State Primary School Act of 1869. Apart from introducing an eight-year primary school, the act made the teaching profession less lucrative for men, requiring them to forgo some of the indirect sources of income that teaching had afforded them. Consequently, there was a great deficit of candidates for the teaching profession.

The School Act of 1869 also permitted women to teach the first four grades of primary school. Since this change also required that their education be at the same level as that of their male colleagues, it was an important step forward in the education of female teachers. The 1869 reform permitted the subsequent founding of female teacher-training colleges and, with them, the possibility for women to continue their education within the public school system after completing lower public grammar school (Hojan 1968; 1970; Peček 1998; Šuštar 2009).

1 The Ursuline nuns came to Ljubljana at the beginning of the eighteenth century and, until the first half of the twentieth century, played a prominent part in the upbringing and education of girls and young women in Slovenia. In 1703, the order opened a private school and, soon after, a public school for girls. They also founded a kindergarten, private and public lower secondary schools, a teacher-training college for girls with five classrooms and a higher secondary school or gymnasium for girls (Hojan 1969).

Research questions

The feminization of the teaching profession in Finland and Slovenia, as in many other European countries, raises questions about how female teachers were taught and socialized at teacher-training colleges and the discourses on teaching and femininity that guided this process. This article focuses on what may be termed *professional socialization*, which denotes the process that a member undergoes to become part of the profession at hand. During this process, the individual becomes familiar with the norms, regulations, skills and ideology which are integral to the occupation and also learns how to act in accordance with the regulations (Harper & Lawson 2003). This socialization has two dimensions, which are understood in this article as a two-way process: the female students act as *role-takers* and the teacher-training colleges and society as *role-makers* (Lave & Wenger 1993).

The aim of this article is to examine this professionalization process that female teachers followed in Finland and Slovenia in the early twentieth century. To this end, it addresses the following questions: What were the requirements for young women to enter teacher-training colleges? What kinds of skills were future female teachers supposed to learn at teacher-training colleges? How were female teachers expected to dress and behave?

Data and method

The data were collected from archives located in Finland and Slovenia. They were carefully analysed using the historical method, which emphasizes the value of the original source. However, when using these sources, it is also critical to consider the kinds of questions to which answers are being sought. The objective was to employ the data to draw a big picture of the history of Finnish and Slovenian teachers' images (see Kalela 2000; Kuikka 2001; Walls et al. 2010).

In the last 40 years, the Slovenian School Museum has dedicated considerable attention to female teachers and women's education through its research and exhibition. The research of Tatjana Hojan², a historian in the Slovenian School Museum, in the late twentieth century, encouraged further examination of the

2 Hojan, Tatjana. Žensko šolstvo in učiteljstvo na Slovenskem v preteklih stoletjih [Female education and female teachers in Slovenia in the past centuries]. In: Zbornik za historiju školstva i prosvjete [Collected Papers for the History of Schooling and Education]. Zagreb, 47–81, 1968; Hojan, Tatjana. Vzgoja učiteljic [The education of female teachers]. In: Zbornik za historiju školstva i prosvjete [Collected Papers for the History of Schooling and Education]. Zagreb, 125–171, 1969–70; Hojan, Tatjana. Žensko šolstvo in delovanje učiteljic na Slovenskem [Female Education and Activity of Female Teachers in Slovenia in the Past Centuries], razstavni katalog [Exhibition catalogue]. Ljubljana: Slovenski šolski muzej [Slovenian School Museum], 5–48, 1970.



*Building of public Teacher-training college in Ljubljana, from 1884 /
 Stavba Učiteljska v Ljubljani iz leta 1884.
 (SŠM – Slovenian School Museum, Ljubljana, postcards collection)*

activities of female teachers and of women in history³ and, in recent years, several collections of papers⁴ on women's education have been published.

The data presented in this article were gathered from a combination of primary sources including archival sources from the Slovenian School Museum, pedagogical journals and the annual reports of teacher-training colleges in Ljubljana. The report of the state-run women's teacher-training college for the

- 3 Milharčič Hladnik, Mirjam. Šolstvo in učiteljice na Slovenskem [Education and Female Teachers in Slovenia]. Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče 1995 (Zbirka Sophia 5/95); Peček, Mojca. Avtonomnost učiteljev nekdaj in sedaj [The Autonomy of Teachers in the Past and Present]. Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče 1998 (Zbirka Sophia 7/98).
- 4 Izobraževanje in zaposlovanje žensk nekoč in danes [The Education and Employment of Women Yesterday and Today], (ured./Ed. Mrgole Jukič, Tjaša et al.). Ptuj-Ljubljana, I. 1998, II. 2000; Pozabljena polovica. Portreti žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem [The Forgotten Half. Portraits of Women in the 19th and 20th Centuries in Slovenia], (ured./Ed. Šelih, Alenka et al.). Ljubljana: Založba Tuma in SAZU 2007; Splošno žensko društvo 1901–1945 [The General Women's Society]: Od dobrih deklet do feministk (ured./Ed. Budna Kodrič, Nataša, Serše, Saša). Ljubljana: 2003; Učiteljice v šolskih klopih [Female Teachers at School Desks], Zbornik ob 130. obletnici ustanovitve slovenskega učiteljskega društva v Gorici, (ured./Ed. Tul, Vlasta). Nova Gorica: Zgodovinski arhiv 2005; Ženske skozi zgodovino [Women through History]: zbornik referatov 32. zborovanja slovenskih zgodovinarjev [Collection of Scientific Papers – 32nd Convention of Slovenian Historians], (ured./Ed. Žižek, Aleksander). Celje: 2004.

1930–31 school year lists relevant data on the school's pupils between 1871 and 1918. Data were also obtained from secondary sources – namely, literature and research publications in this field of history of education.

Requirements for female teachers

In both Finland and Slovenia, teacher-training colleges were intended to admit only the most suitable women. The entrance exams for these colleges in both countries were designed to be rigorous.

In Finland, in 1922, teacher-training colleges had a three-step application process. This process was based on the Teacher Training Committee's Report (1922). First, young women would submit their applications. Second, those deemed the most suitable according to these applications were invited to the college to take an entrance exam. Third, the candidates were tested in different subjects, such as music, mathematics, drawing, Finnish language and environmental studies. Then the candidates were interviewed by the teachers at the college and were subsequently sent for doctor's check-ups. Even after gaining acceptance at a teacher-training college, the student would remain under observation for 6–12 months. If she did well in her studies and behaved as expected, she could continue studying. (Provincial Archives of Hämeenlinna, Archives of the College of Hämeenlinna, Ca:1, Ca:2; Provincial Archives of Mikkeli, Archives of the College of Suistamo, Ca:1, Ca:2; Provincial Archives of Oulu, Archives of the College of Tornio, Ca:1; Provincial Archives of Vaasa, Archives of the College of Vaasa, Ca:1). The students were mostly 17–18 years old and many of them were from rural backgrounds (Provincial Archives of Mikkeli, Archives of the College of Suistamo, Bb:2; Provincial Archives of Oulu, Archives of the College of Tornio, Bb:1; Provincial Archives of Vaasa, Archives of the College of Vaasa, Ba:1.)

In Slovenia, the lack of teachers was a state concern, and when female enrolment in public schools failed to produce enough new teachers, permission was granted to the convents to open additional teacher-training colleges in Ljubljana, Škofja Loka and Maribor, and candidates graduating from these schools would have to pass their final exam at a state-run college. In addition to the men's colleges, a new education law called for the establishment of four-year state-run teacher-training colleges for women in Celovec/Klagenfurt (1870), Ljubljana and Trieste (1871), Maribor (1874) and Gorica (1875) (Hojan 1968; 1970; Milharčič Hladnik 1995; Peček 1998).

In 1874, an organizational statute for male and female teacher-training colleges was released containing all the details regarding the operation of teacher-training colleges (organization of courses, curriculum and professional development). The entrance exam required knowledge of the subject matter as envisaged by the curriculum of the preparatory class. To take the entrance exam, a candidate would have to produce her baptismal or birth certificate, her latest school report and a medical certificate. Upon fulfilling all prescribed condi-



Female teacher-training college in Gorizia, around 1900 / Goriško žensko učiteljišče, okoli 1900. (SŠM, photo collection)

tions (i.e. physical and mental health, moral integrity, appropriate prerequisites and being at least 15 years of age), one could complete the entrance exam. The oral portion of the exam included issues of religious education, language of instruction, geography and history, natural history, science and computational geometric morphology. The written portion of the exam included language of instruction, arithmetic, drawing and practical test skills of handicrafts. Regulations were one thing, but practice was another. Due to poor prior knowledge of the candidates (because they could not attract enough candidates), the entrance exams for female teachers were quite toned down (Strmčnik 1970, 341–343).

However, the high number of graduates from teacher-training colleges in Finland and Slovenia per year indicates that the student selection process was quite successful. In a college in Slovenia, for example, in the first school year (1871–72), 39 female students were enrolled in the first class. In the 1878–79 school year, the number of students increased to 130 in all four classes. Later, in 1884–85, enrolment decreased to 41 students because they did not have the first and third classes. After this, the number of female students began increasing again. The

highest number (178 female students) was recorded in the 1896–97 school year and until 1914–15, it fluctuated between 160 and 170.⁵

In Slovenia, the state generously provided scholarships for female students and, in this way, encouraged the employment of female teachers, thereby causing their numbers to increase. In 1871, in Southern Styria, female teachers represented only 3.4% of all teachers in primary schools. In Carinthia, they represented 9.5% and in Carniola, 10%. Forty years later (1913), this figure was 31.9% in Carinthia, and in Carniola, more than half of the teachers (56.2%) were women. Carniola had the most female teachers and, thus, was also far above the Austrian average (Sagadin 1970, 101).

The skills, marital status and wages of a female teacher

Students in teacher-training colleges in Finland in the early twentieth century needed to study a range of different subjects. These included didactics, religion, Finnish language, environmental studies, mathematics, sports, music, arts and handicrafts. Besides being prepared for the teaching profession and meeting its requirements, students gained skills that they would need as women in the society. Depending on the location of the college, the teaching was either conducted in Finnish or Swedish (in Swedish speaking areas). (Teacher Training Colleges Committees' Report in Finland, 1922).

In Slovenia, the teacher training curricula for women and men differed somewhat. In 1874, the female teacher training consisted of the following subjects: religion, pedagogy with practical exercises, language of instruction, mathematics, science, natural history, geography, history, economics, French language, writing, free drawing, music, piano playing, gymnastics, women's handicrafts and a practical part. All subjects except for religion and language were taught in German. From 1881, however, mathematics, women's handicrafts and special methodology were taught in the Slovene language. After four years of schooling, the teacher candidates had to pass the matura exam, which was divided into three parts (written, oral and practical). The written and oral portions of the exam included pedagogy, language of instruction, mathematics, natural history, science, geography and history. Students had to demonstrate their methodical knowledge and practical skills through a self-learning tutorial, which was performed in June, before the end of their lessons, while written and oral exams were held in July (Gymnasium Ledina 1998, 11–14; Strmčnik 1970, 347, 361–363).

Although female teachers had equal education and put in the same number of working hours as their male counterparts, they were by no means considered equal. Not only were female teachers in Slovenia limited by the constraint of

5 The annual report of the state-run teacher-training college for women in Ljubljana for the 1930–31 school year lists relevant data on the school's pupils between 1871 and 1918.



Graduates at Female teacher-training college in Ljubljana / Maturantke ljubljanskega učiteljišča, 1902. (SŠM, photo collection)

celibacy but they were required to be single; marriage was synonymous with tendering one's resignation. Only if they married a teacher were they permitted to continue working in the profession (Milharčič Hladnik 1995; Peček 1998). Further, their wages were not equal to those of men. In Finland, remaining unmarried was not a requirement, but it was perceived as an ideal and a sacrifice that a female teacher could make for her career. Staying single meant that they could devote more hours to teaching and their pupils. This was mentioned in a textbook which was used in teacher-training colleges (Salmela 1931, 10, 130–132).

Throughout Slovenia, as mentioned above, female teachers were paid less than their male counterparts. During the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they received only 80% of the average male teacher's wages. This discrepancy was justified by the argument that male teachers were the main providers for their families. At the same time, municipalities deliberately saved money by hiring women as teachers (Hojan 1970; Milharčič Hladnik 1995; Peček 1998). Despite the poor conditions, the teaching profession feminized and became increasingly popular because the teacher was a respected and accepted public figure who, though poorly paid, was financially independent (Milharčič Hladnik 1995, 32; Mrgole Jukič 1998, 116; Šebjanič 2013).

In Slovenia, a rift ensued between male and female teachers when the Union of Slovene Teacher's Association failed to give female members the support they were due. Subsequently, the women teachers left the union and, in 1898, founded the Slovene Women Teacher's Association – the first professional women's association in Slovenia. The goals were to represent the interests of its members and defend their rights and to fight for the principles of equal pay for equal work and

equal rights for equal responsibilities (Report of the 30th Anniversary of the Association of Teachers in Ljubljana 1929).

What was the character of female teachers?

In both Finland and Slovenia, teachers were among the first female intellectuals to enter public life. These specially trained young women were initially only the daughters of senior officials and parents who were engaged in the liberal professions. Daughters of aristocratic families enrolled in teacher-training colleges only to obtain a degree that was appropriate for their status. Middle class girls chose the teaching profession for the joy of teaching, but primarily because they wanted financial independence (Milharčič Hladnik 1995, 29; Mrgole Jukič 1998, 115–117).

The formation of the image, ideal and moral character of female teachers was influenced by the plans and expectations of primary school and by the expectations of what a teacher should be. In the second half of the nineteenth century in Slovenia, it was believed that a teacher should not educate by strict discipline and external coercion but by example. Increasingly, it was emphasized that teachers should guide their pupils with love and example. In other words, teachers should exemplify what they wanted to their students to be – serious, silent, humble, reasonable, wise, patient, modest, gentle, observant, people of character and pious (Peček 1992, 75; 1998, 152–171).

All of the aforementioned characteristics were embodied in the Slovenian female teacher at the end of the nineteenth century. She had to be cheerful regardless of her income and had to endure all the negative. She had to be an exemplary citizen of her homeland, who loved her nation and the people with whom she was working. Slovenian female teachers were also expected to be charitable and help poor children. They collected clothes and provided children with notebooks to enable them to attend school and study. Especially in winter, many children could not attend school because they did not have anything to wear; therefore, the aid was heartily welcomed. Female teachers also organized school kitchens (Šebjanič 2013, 452–454). Moreover, owing to their sophistication, education and commitment to their profession, they attended teachers' meetings and participated in preparing lectures on various topics.

Female teachers faced similar expectations in Finland. In the early twentieth century, they were not allowed to attend dances, smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. Any infraction of these rules could get them fired. Therefore, these rules for women were enforced from the time of their teacher studies. (Provincial Archives of Hämeenlinna, Archives of the College of Hämeenlinna, Ca:1; Provincial Archives of Mikkeli, Archives of the College of Suistamo, Ca:1; Provincial Archives of Oulu, Archives of the College of Tornio, Ca:1; Provincial Archives of Vaasa, Archives of the College of Vaasa, Ca:1). It should be noted that the rules were less strict for male teachers and students (Heikkinen 2000; Hyyrö 2006;



*Courtyard of Ursuline convent in Ljubljana as female school center /
Dvorišče Uršulinskega samostana v Ljubljani kot središče ženskih šol
(SŠM, postcards collection)*

Paksuniemi 2009; Paksuniemi, Määttä & Uusiautti 2013; Paksuniemi, Uusiautti & Määttä 2013). The female students' were not allowed to spend time with male during their leisure time. If they were seen to do so, they were expelled, as a form of extreme punishment. (Provincial Archives of Hämeenlinna, Ca:2.)

In Slovenia, a similar code of conduct was implemented. In the early twentieth century, the colour and length of dresses were determined and make-up and hair colouring were forbidden. Teachers were not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol, and they had to remain at home between the hours of 8 pm and 6 am (Milharčič Hladnik 1995, 36; Mrgole Jukič 1998, 117; Šebjanič 2013). Public behaviour was extremely important because teachers were seen as model citizens. They had to be role models for young people and novice teachers, and such character was consistent with the expected role of the profession in Slovenian society. Female teachers also had to be well-dressed and well-spoken professionals.

Around 1900, suitable apparel for female teachers in Slovenia included severe lines, high buttoned (white) blouses with long sleeves and skirts reaching to the floor, but this rigidity relaxed slightly in the new century. Many teachers learned how to sew and made their own clothes, especially for special occasions (e.g. a procession). The diversity of clothing increased and, after 1918, all clothing became less severe (Balkovec Debevec 2011, 284). The second paragraph of



*Šolski hodnik v Uršulinskem samostanu v Ljubljani, pred 1918 /
School hallway in the Ursuline convent in Ljubljana, before 1918.
(SŠM, postcards collection)*

a circular at the time reads as follows: "Teachers shall not be fashionable ladies with shorn hair, painted cheeks, luxurious and fashionable clothes and glittering jewellery, all of which turns on it the attention of the street and gives cause for suitable and unsuitable remarks and degrades the dignity and importance in particular of the upbringing side of her profession ..." (Šuštar 2012, 49).

Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the norms, regulations and ideology surrounding the feminization of the teaching profession in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In investigating female teacher training in Finland and Slovenia in the early twentieth century, this article has highlighted the great expectations for female teachers. In addition to learning to teach and the contents of a range of school subjects, female teachers were supposed to be model citizens, behave well and dress modestly. Furthermore, they had to be hard-working and lead healthy lives. For instance, the image of a teacher included abstinence, and being unmarried and devoted to teaching were virtues.

Apart from linking these ideals to the professional socialization of teachers – that is, the process of becoming part of a profession or an occupational group – this

article has placed this process in the context of nineteenth-century schooling. The expansion of primary schooling required a larger number of teachers which the male teacher profession could not supply. As a result, female teachers had to be employed, although teaching as well as public offices traditionally had been almost exclusively male arenas. Thus, the ideal of a female teacher may be understood as a way of adapting the female teaching profession to this context, where there were great expectations, but where one could not expect much of a salary in return.

Therefore, this article raises further questions regarding the similarities and differences in the ideal female teacher across countries. As the findings presented in this article show, despite the social, economic and cultural differences, there were certainly striking similarities between Finland and Slovenia in the early twentieth century. These questions also concern societal changes over time and how they were related to changes in the school system.

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15th Symposium reception at the City Hall of Ljubljana. (Photo: Ksenija Guzej, Marijan Javoršek, SŠM)



15th Symposium attendees participating in an old lesson at the Slovenian School Museum. Introductory information.