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## Crucial and local events in the long-term evolution of secondary schooling in Hungary (1867–1938)<sup>1</sup>

Mátyás Erdélyi

The present paper addresses the long-term evolution of secondary education in Hungary between the 1867 *Ausgleich* and the outbreak of the Second World War. The changes that occurred in this period could be summed up under the concept of the social transformation of the educational system, as formulated by now classic studies in the history of education. By and large, the social transformation of the educational system entailed the expansion of enrollments (in all levels of education), institutional diversification, systematization, and the convergence of educational and occupational structure (Jarausch 1983, 9–36). The research problem of the present paper is to describe and understand the interrelations of structure and events by focusing on educational change. By educational change I understand variations and modifications of the structure of the educational system: it includes the modification of the educational system from a quantitative perspective (enrollment numbers, number of institutions, specificities of the student body), from an institutional perspective (institutional diversification, systematization), and from a social perspective (the changing social function of the educational system). It is obvious that no system remains static, but rather the speed and direction of change are contingent and determined by various factors. These can be planned, e.g. educational laws and decrees, or spontaneous, for instance by founding new schools or by the public favoring one type of secondary schools over others. The effects of events can hardly be predicted, nor can the larger

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chain reaction in educational change, e.g. the famous *topos* concerning the fears of an intellectual proletariat and the ensuing anti-Semitism. The goal of this paper is also to give an account of the Hungarian educational system over the long term, in contrast to most studies that deal exclusively with the pre-war or the interwar period. The contribution of my paper is specifically to provide statistical data that has not yet been published in a concise manner, and to analyze and understand the relation of crucial and local events to the change of educational structure in the long run. Questions concerning the effects of the Great War, the 1920 *numerus clausus* or the 1924 law of secondary education can only be addressed if long-term empirical data is taken into account. In that way, we can better grasp how particular events influence the speed of educational change, how planned or spontaneous events generate change, and how crucial events and local initiatives contribute to structural change in the long run.

It is not the notion of global structure that will be problematized: by »global structure« I simply understand a set of macro-level indicators defined by now classic quantitative studies in the history of education. From an empirical standpoint, *inclusiveness*, *progressiveness*, and *segmentation* will serve to delineate the global structure of Hungarian secondary education over the *longue durée*, while I place special emphasis on the emergence and *systematization* of different types of secondary schools and their corresponding social function in the period under scrutiny (the three main types would be the Gymnasium, the Realschule, and the Handelsschule;<sup>2</sup> and on a different level the rise of women's education) (D. K. Müller 1980, 1981; D. K. Müller, Ringer, and Brian 1987; Ringer 1979). The present paper does not aim to question this conceptual framework, which has been applied to the study of secondary education in Central Europe on many occasions (Anderson 2004): to the Austrian part of the Monarchy (Cohen 1996), to the Czech lands (Kadlec 2013), and to Hungary (Karády 1997, 2012; Sasfi 2013, 2014). To problematize the relation between

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2 Throughout this paper I use the term »Handelsschule« to denote a secondary school, called »felső kereskedelmi iskola« in Hungarian, that could be translated as »commercial high school,« and was also often called »Handels-Akademie« in the German context.

structure and events I analyze the relevance of two main types of »events« that influenced the long-term evolution of the educational structure, or, *vice versa*, »events« that could be instructive to demonstrate the resistance of structure vis-à-vis the former. First, I take into account those »crucial events« that are usually described as markers in the standard books on the history of education. For our purposes, the most important could be the 1867 *Ausgleich*, the 1868 law of public education, the 1883 secondary school law, and the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. It is evident that such »crucial events« often coincide with and might become markers in political history like the 1907 *Lex Apponyi* and the 1920 *numerus clausus*. Here, political and educational motives merge in both the making of these parliamentary acts and their historical interpretations. Second, I analyze the long-term effects of »local events« and their amalgamation, such as the establishment of a new type of school (e.g., the Pester Handels-Akademie in 1857) and local initiatives (e.g., associational life, pamphlets, publication of professional journals, engagement of local actors in the educational field). Overall, my paper assesses how the systematic comparison of structure (here understood in terms of quantitative indicators) and various types of events could contribute to interpreting the long-term effects of the latter, and their heuristic function in processes of social transformation.

### **Educational structure and »crucial« events in the educational field**

The Treaty of Trianon, the *numerus clausus* of 1920, and anti-Semitism

Table 1 and Table 2 show a steady growth of institutions and enrolled students in the upper 4 grades of secondary education between 1870 and 1917. The speed of the growth is remarkable: the number of institutions tripled in less than fifty years and the number of students grew by almost four times, from 12,805 enrolled students in 1882 to 46,902 enrolled students in 1917. In comparison, the dualist period also brought a rapid but less significant growth in the Austrian part of the Monarchy: in 1880 there were 47,968 students enrolled in Gymnasiums (Gymnasiums and Realgymnasiums), and 17,967 students in Realschulen (Cohen 1996, 272) (all 8 grades), in addition to the 1,236 students enrolled in Handelsschulen

(in the 1881–1882 school year) (*Statistik der Unterrichts-Anstalten*, 1884, 24). By 1910, the number of enrolled students had grown more than twofold: there were 94,278 students in Gymnasiums (including women's Gymnasiums) and 4,828 students enrolled in the Handelsschulen on the secondary level (*Statistik der Unterrichts-Anstalten*, 1903, 69).

A major disruption was caused not by the Great War itself, though numbers grew during the war as well, but by the dissolution of the Monarchy and the territorial changes that ensued. Undoubtedly, the crucial event in modern Hungarian history was the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 and the ensuing Treaty of Trianon in 1920 (Ablonczy 2015). Structurally, the system of secondary education was most influenced by the fact that a heretofore multi-ethnic and multi-denominational country became more homogeneous both culturally and ethnically (Lókkös 2000). This meant a reduction in terms of the supply of secondary educational institutions: 91,455 students were enrolled in altogether 262 Gymnasia, Realschule, and Handelsschule in the second year of the Great War in the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy (excluding Croatia-Slavonia); in contrast, in 1921 there remained 144 secondary schools for male and 32 such schools for female students, and 63,845 students enrolled in secondary schools (Table 1 and Table 2). Even without a deep understanding of the country's economic inequalities, the scale of territorial changes and the decrease in the number of secondary schools might suggest that the core territories were more developed and better supplied with secondary schools than the peripheries inhabited by a predominantly non-Hungarian population. This is not only connected to the economic and cultural development of the country but also to the ideological goals of public education in the pre-war period, namely *Magyarization*, which resulted in severe under-schooling of non-Hungarian speakers. This type of under-schooling was a characteristic element in the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy as well, serving there as a pretext for nationalist activists to create ethnic tensions (Cohen 1996; Judson 2006).

**Table 1: Number of institutions in Hungarian secondary education (male only), 1870–1936**

	Gymnasium	Realgymnasium	Realschule	Handelsschule	Total	Total N (male)
1870	84.3		13.3	2.4	100	83
1873	82.6		12.8	4.7	100	86
1876	71.7		21.7	6.6	100	106
1879	71.4		21.4	7.1	100	112
1882	71.4		19.3	9.2	100	119
1885	67.7		15.8	16.5	100	133
1888	67.1		15.7	17.1	100	140
1891	64.2		15.2	20.5	100	151
1894	64.6		14.6	20.9	100	158
1897	64.1		14.1	21.8	100	170
1900	65.3		13.6	21.0	100	176
1903	67.0		13.3	19.7	100	188
1906	68.3		12.6	19.1	100	199
1909	67.1		12.0	20.8	100	216
1912	65.7		11.4	22.9	100	236
1915	66.4		10.7	22.9	100	262
1917	64.4		10.1	25.5	100	267
1921	60.4		12.5	27.1	100	144
1924	16.3	42.8	13.3	27.7	100	166
1927	16.5	40.5	11.4	31.6	100	158
1930	16.8	41.6	10.6	31.1	100	161
1933	17.1	42.1	11.0	29.9	100	164
1936	16.9	43.4	10.2	29.5	100	166

Source: *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv*, various volumes (1870–1936)

**Table 2: Number of Enrolled Students in Secondary Schools (58 grades)<sup>1</sup> in Hungary, 1882-1936**

	Gymnasium	Realschule	Handelsschule	Real-gymnasium	Female Schools	Total	Total N
1882	82.7	9.4	7.8			100	12805
1885	78.7	7.2	14.1			100	13483
1888	75.5	8.9	15.6			100	13518
1891	74.1	10.0	15.9			100	14501
1894	64.4	9.6	26.1			100	18432
1897	66.2	10.7	23.0			100	22136
1900	67.4	11.4	21.2			100	24832
1903	68.4	10.5	21.1			100	26544
1906	67.4	9.3	23.3			100	27655
1909	64.9	8.1	27.0			100	30771
1912	62.6	8.0	29.4			100	34735
1915	62.0	8.4	29.6			100	39779
1917	52.9	9.2	30.5		7.4	100	46902
1921	50.6	10.1	28.3		11.0	100	27738
1924	15.6	9.9	32.5	31.6	10.5	100	31008
1927	15.1	10.1	30.9	32.0	11.9	100	36018
1930	16.3	9.0	27.3	33.4	14.0	100	36725
1933	17.0	7.6	24.7	35.3	15.4	100	31210
1936	14.9	7.2	27.4	34.6	15.9	100	40335

Source: *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv*, various volumes (1882–1936)

Changes concerning the denominational composition of secondary schools are more significant after the Great War. Table 3 shows the denominational composition of secondary school types in Hungary between 1870 and 1936. One major change was the disappearance of Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox students to the advantage of Roman Catholics. Since the Greek Catholic (predominantly Romanian and Ruthenian speakers) and the Greek Orthodox (predominantly Romanian and Serb speakers) populations had

only a few denominational secondary schools teaching in the vernacular, the two denominations did not represent a considerable weight in the school system; for example, as regards the Gymnasium sector the two »Eastern Christian« denominations represented 8.1% of all students in 1917, decreasing to 1.5% in 1921 (Table 3), while their proportion in the overall population was 12.8% in case of Eastern Orthodox and 11% in case of Greek Catholics according to the 1910 census, decreasing to 2.2% and 0.6% respectively according to the 1920 census. It is fair to assume that territorial changes affected the general inclusiveness of secondary education by excluding populations previously severely under-represented in secondary schools.

**Table 3: Denominational Composition of Secondary Schools per School Type in Hungary, 1870–1936**

<b>Gymnasium</b>									
	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Greek Orthodox	Calvinist	Lutheran	Jewish	Other	Total	N
1870	43.2	6.6	5.9	21.0	12.2	10.2	1.0	100	29358
1873	44.7	6.4	5.4	19.0	11.6	12.2	0.8	100	27220
1876	43.5	5.7	5.0	18.1	10.9	16.1	0.8	100	27800
1879	43.4	5.2	4.7	15.7	10.6	19.4	0.9	100	32019
1882	44.4	5.0	5.0	15.4	10.9	18.3	0.9	100	33492
1885	46.4	4.8	5.1	15.0	11.1	16.8	0.7	100	32909
1888	46.5	4.8	5.6	14.8	11.1	16.4	0.8	100	33027
1891	45.2	5.3	5.6	15.7	10.7	16.7	0.8	100	34729
1894	44.8	5.4	5.5	15.9	10.0	17.6	0.9	100	39268
1897	44.4	5.2	5.4	15.9	9.8	18.3	1.0	100	43618
1900	43.9	5.0	5.4	16.0	9.6	19.3	0.8	100	48353
1903	43.8	5.0	5.1	15.9	9.5	19.9	0.8	100	51619
1906	43.2	5.0	5.4	15.8	9.3	20.3	0.9	100	54199
1909	43.8	5.3	5.8	15.6	9.1	19.7	0.6	100	58615
1912	45.1	5.1	5.5	15.6	8.9	19.0	0.9	100	63592

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1915	45.3	4.8	4.8	15.1	8.7	20.5	0.8	100	67350
1917	46.6	4.0	4.1	15.3	8.4	21.0	0.6	100	68236
1921	52.8	1.3	0.2	18.9	7.3	19.2	0.3	100	37804
1924	56.3	1.4	0.2	20.6	7.6	13.6	0.3	100	13136
1927	59.9	2.0	0.2	23.1	6.0	8.6	0.2	100	13552
1930	60.7	1.9	0.1	23.3	6.1	7.8	0.2	100	14240
1933	60.7	1.9	0.1	22.8	6.4	7.9	0.2	100	13994
1936	59.5	1.9	0.1	23.3	7.3	7.7	0.2	100	14601

<b>Handelsschule</b>									
	R.Cath.	G. Cath.	G. Orth.	Calv.	Luth.	Jewish	Other	Total	N
1882	25.1	0.2	5.2	4.9	4.1	60.3	0.1	100	1018
1885	34.7	1.1	3.2	6.6	5.2	49.0	0.2	100	1929
1887	38.4	1.1	4.0	6.7	6.7	42.9	0.2	100	2116
1895	34.6	1.0	3.6	5.9	6.2	48.6	0.1	100	4802
1898	33.8	1.1	4.0	6.3	5.9	48.8	0.2	100	5101
1900	32.8	0.7	4.6	6.0	5.8	49.8	0.3	100	5269
1903	34.0	0.8	3.0	5.7	5.6	50.5	0.4	100	5589
1906	32.6	0.7	3.9	6.2	5.8	50.6	0.2	100	6451
1909	32.5	1.0	4.0	6.7	5.9	49.8	0.2	100	8308
1912	34.3	1.1	4.0	7.7	5.9	46.8	0.3	100	10205
1915	36.8	0.8	3.2	6.9	5.9	46.1	0.3	100	11757
1917	41.2	0.9	3.3	8.1	5.9	40.3	0.3	100	14302
1921	49.1	1.0	0.3	11.3	5.6	32.4	0.3	100	7840
1924	51.8	0.8	0.2	11.4	5.6	30.0	0.2	100	10063
1927	55.4	1.0	0.2	11.9	5.4	26.0	0.1	100	11145
1930	58.3	1.2	0.3	13.5	5.4	21.1	0.2	100	10020
1933	60.8	1.4	0.4	14.0	4.8	18.3	0.4	100	7719
1936	60.8	1.4	0.2	12.9	5.0	19.4	0.3	100	11051

<b>Realschule</b>									
	R.Cath.	G. Cath.	G. Orth.	Calv.	Luth.	Jewish	Other	Total	N
1870	62.3	0.4	2.7	3.4	12.1	19.1	0.0	100	4883
1873	60.3	0.4	5.4	4.8	6.7	22.4	0.1	100	7310
1876	52.4	0.4	4.2	5.4	10.3	27.3	0.0	100	7196
1879	44.3	0.6	4.4	5.7	10.4	34.4	0.2	100	5809
1882	42.2	0.5	4.9	5.2	9.8	37.0	0.4	100	4925
1885	40.0	0.4	3.1	4.9	11.4	39.7	0.4	100	5038
1888	39.9	0.5	3.6	6.1	11.0	38.5	0.3	100	6306
1891	41.2	0.6	4.2	6.1	11.1	36.5	0.3	100	7390
1894	40.3	0.7	4.1	6.1	11.0	37.6	0.1	100	8674
1897	39.0	0.7	3.8	6.6	11.1	38.6	0.2	100	9539
1900	39.5	0.7	3.8	5.4	11.2	39.1	0.4	100	9669
1903	40.9	0.6	3.6	5.7	10.3	38.6	0.4	100	9881
1906	42.6	0.6	4.0	6.0	10.4	35.9	0.5	100	9540
1909	43.8	0.7	3.7	6.3	9.6	35.6	0.3	100	10410
1912	43.7	0.8	3.5	6.8	9.4	35.2	0.3	100	11660
1915	43.0	0.6	3.2	6.9	9.5	36.5	0.3	100	12348
1917	44.8	0.6	3.0	7.3	8.3	35.6	0.4	100	13394
1921	50.3	0.7	0.2	9.5	6.4	32.6	0.3	100	8445
1924	53.6	0.7	0.2	11.7	7.6	25.7	0.4	100	9316
1927	55.9	0.8	0.2	13.3	8.3	21.0	0.5	100	8413
1930	58.8	0.9	0.3	14.1	6.9	18.6	0.4	100	8013
1933	57.6	1.0	0.2	14.7	6.5	19.6	0.4	100	7009
1936	58.0	0.7	0.3	13.1	6.5	21.1	0.3	100	7029

<b>Realgymnasium</b>									
	R.Cath.	G.Cath.	G. Orth.	Calv.	Luth.	Jewish	Other	Total	N
1924	56.3	1.7	0.2	18.7	6.8	16.0	0.3	100	27980
1927	57.9	1.8	0.2	17.0	7.2	15.5	0.4	100	27345
1930	59.4	1.7	0.2	16.5	6.9	14.9	0.4	100	28919
1933	60.1	1.5	0.2	16.4	6.4	15.1	0.3	100	31154
1936	60.4	1.5	0.2	16.5	6.3	14.6	0.3	100	31984

<b>Female High School</b>									
	R.Cath.	G.Cath.	G. Orth.	Calv.	Luth.	Jewish	Other	Total	N
1917	38.7	0.9	1.0	13.1	8.2	38.0	0.1	100	10442
1921	46.1	0.6	0.2	13.1	7.5	32.3	0.2	100	9756
1924	47.2	0.7	0.1	14.8	7.6	29.4	0.3	100	10410
1927	48.1	0.9	0.2	15.5	7.4	27.6	0.4	100	10976
1930	51.4	0.9	0.2	16.1	6.7	24.4	0.3	100	13046
1933	50.0	1.0	0.2	16.1	8.2	24.2	0.3	100	14615
1936	51.3	0.9	0.2	15.9	7.6	23.9	0.2	100	16156

Source: *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv*, various volumes (1870–1936).

The Great War and its consequences also had a crucial effect on secondary schools by fostering an anti-Semitic discourse and the legal discrimination of Jews in higher education following the 1920 *numerus clausus*. The 1848 and 1867 steps in Jewish emancipation quickly led to the increase in Jewish students in both secondary and higher education. For example, only 10.2% of students were Jews in 1870 in Gymnasium; that grew to 19.4% by 1879 and remained around one-fifth of all Gymnasium students until the interwar period (for the reasons for Jewish over-schooling: Karády 2000, 1990; Cohen 1990). By the turn of the century, Jews were massively over-represented in all secondary schools: 19.3% of Gymnasium students, 39.1% of Realschule students, and 49.8% of Handelsschule students were Jews,

while the proportion of Jews in the overall population was around 4.9% in 1910 (Table 3). This increase has to do both with »opening the gates« in secondary education (founding »state« Gymnasiums and the toleration of Jews in institutions supported by Christian denominations), and with the fact that Jews acted as agents of modernization in Hungarian economic and social life (thus the higher proportions in the Realschule and the Handelsschule).

In contrast, the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy made apparent the fall of the liberal consensus in both politics and social mentalities. The rise of anti-Semitism started at the home front during the war (Bihari 2005) and became an inevitable reality during the White terror in 1919–1920 and in the political upheavals surrounding the *numerus clausus* in 1920 (M. M. Kovács 1994; M. M. Kovács 2012). The *numerus clausus* was an anti-Semitic law; it limited the proportion of Jewish students in higher education to the proportion of Jews in Hungary overall. Since Jewish students were massively over-represented in higher education—in some faculties over one-third of students were Jewish before 1920—this law heavily influenced enrollment patterns at the expense and discrimination of Jewish students. In all secondary schools, growing anti-Semitism and the limitation of access to higher education for Jews resulted in a significant change in the milieu. For the Hungarian gentry, Jewish over-representation in Gymnasiums and higher education was alarming even in the pre-war era, as classical *Bildung*, a prerequisite for entrance to *gentlemanly* society, was readily associated with studying in the classical Gymnasium and less with the Handelsschule's practical curriculum. As a result, the proportion of Jewish students in the interwar era varied according to the prestige hierarchy of secondary schools: rising anti-Semitism influenced less the denominational composition of the Handelsschule (the proportion of Jewish students there decreased from 32.4% to 26% between 1921 and 1927 and to 18.3% by 1933), and of female high schools (the proportion of Jewish female students decreased from 32.3% to 24.2% between 1921 and 1933). The more prestigious the institution in the eyes of the public, the more dramatic the decrease: in the Realschule the proportion of Jews decreased from 32.6% to 19.6%, and in the Gymnasium from 21% to 7.8%.

When interpreting these figures, one has to keep in mind that Act XI of 1924 established the so-called Realgymnasium, a modern variant of the Gymnasium without the instruction of Greek and with a stronger emphasis on the natural sciences. The proportion of Jews stagnated in this institution throughout the interwar era at around 15%, this being another indicator that Jews were more inclined to attend »modernist« institutions (Handelsschule, female high schools, Realgymnasium) than the classical ones (Gymnasium). An equally important aspect is that the Handelsschule provided more career opportunities outside the public sphere, mainly as white-collar workers in banks, insurance and trade companies, industrial firms, etc., than the Gymnasium, whose primary function was preparation for higher education or state employment after the *Matura*. It has to be added to this picture that the absolute number of Jewish students in secondary schools did not decrease after the 1920 *numerus clausus*. One should also take into account the belated modernization of Christians in matters of secondary schooling in this regard. The number of Jewish students stagnated between 1920 and 1936, while the number of gentile students grew: for example, the number of Roman Catholic students in Gymnasiums and Realgymnasiums (after 1924) was 19,967 in 1921, 25,833 in 1930, and 28,025 in 1936, attesting that it was the *relative* weight of Jewish students that decreased in the interwar period.

The age-specific inclusiveness of secondary education in the long term (Table 4) provides an additional element to the structural changes of the educational system in the aftermath of the Great War. Inclusiveness describes how many people went to the higher grades of secondary schools (fifth-eighth grades) per 10,000 male inhabitants at the age of 15 to 18. The table shows a steady growth overall in the Dualist period, mainly due to the dynamic increase in the number of Handelsschule students. Again, enrollments in Austrian secondary education changed in a similar fashion in the period under scrutiny: the total enrolled Gymnasium, Realgymnasium, and Realschulen students per thousand in the 11–18 year age cohort grew from 19.52 in 1880 to 30.57 in 1910, excluding the Handelsschule

students (Cohen 1996, 56).<sup>3</sup> However, changes between 1910 and 1920 suggest a significant transformation in Hungary: the *inclusiveness* of secondary education almost doubled between 1910 and 1920. While only 412.6 per 10,000 male persons aged between 15 and 18 went to one of the three secondary institutions in 1910, the same number rose to 724.5 by 1920 (excluding the growth of female enrollments). It could thus be argued that the Treaty of Trianon and the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy *did not* significantly *change* the *progressiveness* of the system—progressiveness meaning how far down the social structure the schools reached at a given epoch; on the contrary, the overall inclusiveness of secondary schooling grew to a great extent due to the territorial changes of the country in 1918–1920. At the same time, it must be emphasized that these changes could not be qualified as a substantial *structural transformation* but rather a »mechanical« consequence of the territorial changes.

**Table 4: Secondary School Students per 10,000 Boys at the Age of 15–18**

	Male population (15–18)	Gymnasium	Realschule	Handelsschule	Real-gymnasium	Female High Schools	Male Students Together
1880	510,557	207.5	23.7	19.6			250.8
1890	536,475	200.2	27.2	42.9			270.3
1900	691,964	241.8	40.9	76.1			358.9
1910	745,731	267.7	33.5	111.4			412.6
1920	340,647	412.4	82.0	230.2		89.8	724.5
1930	329,217	181.8	100.6	304.4	372.3	156.5	959.1

Source: *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv*, various volumes (1880–1936).

3 These numbers are not directly comparable to numbers in Table 4 because these are based on the number of students in all 8 grades of secondary education per the respective age cohorts, while Table 4 only included the highest 4 grades of secondary education and the 15–18 year age cohorts of population.

### Legislation and secondary education

Educational laws and ministerial decrees represent »crucial« events in the history of education, but their influence on the structural transformation of the educational system is much less evident. The set-up of the Hungarian educational system is mainly the result of parliamentary acts and decrees that created new types of institutions (the Bürgerschule in 1868, the Realgymnasium in 1924), incorporated existing ones into the system (see below for the case of the Handelsschule), or made possible the education of hitherto excluded groups (e.g., female students). By creating the institutional framework for each secondary school, in this way making possible the systematization<sup>4</sup> of the educational field, acts and ministerial decrees seem to stimulate the numerical growth or stagnation of certain school types. For example, Act XXX of 1883, the first complex regulation of high schools in Hungary, codified and standardized the country's existing network of Gymnasiums and Realschulen. It was exactly this standardization that made possible the growth of schooling infrastructure: it created the framework for growing state influence in the form of the newly established »state-administered« Gymnasium; previously, the large majority of secondary schools had been administered by the Church (monastic orders, Christian Churches, and the so-called »Royal Catholic« schools that were financed by the funds of the dissolved Jesuit order). However, if one looks at Gymnasium enrollments per 10,000 inhabitants (at the age of 15–18) in the pre-war period following the 1883 secondary school law (Table 4), it can be argued that the extension of the system was barely faster than the growth in the population. All the more, the same regulation, by limiting the social functions of the Realschule, caused the stagnation of the latter type in the subsequent decades. A similar observation could be made concerning the effects of legislation on the Handelsschulen. In this case, the first ministerial decree in 1872 and the

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4 Systematization is the process which leads to the constitution of an educational system. In the words of Müller, one is dealing with an educational *system* »only when the various school forms or educational institutions are interconnected, when the parts of the system are related to each other and their functions inter-defined« (D. K. Müller et al. 1987, 16).

subsequent ones provided the legal cadre, situated and legitimized the school type within the educational system, and thus made possible the dynamic numerical growth of Handelsschulen over the following decades. In that sense, systematization is a means to enhance the use of certain school types at the expense of others.

**Table 5: The proportion of female students per secondary school type in Hungary, 1900–1936**

Gymnasium	Realschule	Handelschule	Real-gymnasium	N of students in Female Schools	All Secondary School Students	Girls altogether	% of female students among all secondary school students	Gymnasium
1870	43.2	6.6	5.9	21.0	12.2	10.2	1.0	100
1873	44.7	6.4	5.4	19.0	11.6	12.2	0.8	100
1876	43.5	5.7	5.0	18.1	10.9	16.1	0.8	100
1879	43.4	5.2	4.7	15.7	10.6	19.4	0.9	100
1882	44.4	5.0	5.0	15.4	10.9	18.3	0.9	100
1885	46.4	4.8	5.1	15.0	11.1	16.8	0.7	100
1888	46.5	4.8	5.6	14.8	11.1	16.4	0.8	100
1891	45.2	5.3	5.6	15.7	10.7	16.7	0.8	100
1894	44.8	5.4	5.5	15.9	10.0	17.6	0.9	100
1897	44.4	5.2	5.4	15.9	9.8	18.3	1.0	100
1900	43.9	5.0	5.4	16.0	9.6	19.3	0.8	100
1903	43.8	5.0	5.1	15.9	9.5	19.9	0.8	100
1906	43.2	5.0	5.4	15.8	9.3	20.3	0.9	100

Source: Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv, various volumes (1900–1936).

#### Women's education and secondary education

Table 5 shows the proportion of female students in secondary schools, a statistic that was most influenced by ministerial decrees that gradually opened certain school types for women. The inclusion of female students in secondary and higher education started with a ministerial decree in 1895, allowing the enrollment of women as regular students at the Faculty of

Arts, the Faculty of Medicine, and the pharmaceutical course at the latter (Szegevári and Ladányi 1976; I. Müller 2001). Indeed, it was only a first step towards the full emancipation of women in higher education, which took place decades later, in the aftermath of the Second World War. This resolution in 1895 created a controversial situation: women could be admitted to universities when holding a *Matura* but there were no female high schools at the time (women could be only enrolled in Gymnasiums or Realschulen as non-regular students at the discretion of a specific institution). The first female Gymnasium was established a year later in Budapest: although there was a considerable demand for higher education (including the *Matura*), the social prejudices of the ruling elite (I. Müller 2006) simply prevented the further enrollment of women in many faculties. By 1912, there were three female Gymnasiums in the entire country. In this case, the Great War and a ministerial decree regulating the organization of female high schools in 1916 accomplished the integration of female schools into the field of secondary education. The effects of the Great War were palpable: female workforce was increasingly needed at the home front, making necessary the secondary and higher education of women. The 1916 decree on female high schools transformed at one go all post-elementary female schools into secondary schools offering the *Matura* (the 4-year curriculum was supplemented by 3 more years at the top). These two factors might explain the rise in the proportion of female students in secondary schools (Table 5): in 1909 the proportion of girls in secondary schools was 1.5% altogether (there were only two Gymnasia and three recently established commercial high schools for girls at the time), growing to 15.2% by 1917 (there were 47 female high schools and 11 commercial high schools for girls in 1917). The »real« growth of female students was more gradual, because the 1916 decree changed the status of many schools that had already existed prior to 1916.

This gradual growth could be connected to three school types: the women's Bürgerschule, the women's upper school, and the women's Gymnasium. The 1868 law of elementary education created the women's Bürgerschule (along with the male variant) (I. Müller 2000a; Kereszty 2010, 73–76). The Bürgerschule enrolled pupils at the age of 10 after 4 years of elementary

education. The number of these institutions grew gradually after 1868, reaching 294 in 1910, and enrolled 47,491 pupils (Magyar Statisztikai Hivatal 1910, 348). After the 1916 ministerial decree, which regulated women's secondary schooling, these Bürgerschulen formed the basis for future female high schools, since some of these were supplemented with 3 grades and became full-fledged secondary schools after 1916. The second type of institution, the »women's upper school« (*felsőbb leányiskola*), came into existence, just like the Handelsschule, thanks to private initiatives. In Hungary the first female upper school was established in 1869 under the auspices of the National Women's Association in Budapest. State regulation started only in 1875 when the Ministry of Religion and Education introduced an official curriculum for female upper schools and initiated the establishment of the first state-run school (Kereszty 2010, 76–82). It had a 6-year curriculum (after 4 years of elementary education) and prepared pupils for their »practical« vocation in society. In 1886 there were 13 female upper schools in Hungary; this number grew to 35 by 1910 with 6,233 enrolled students (Kereszty 2010, 302–3). After 1916, the school was supplemented with a seventh year and institutions could choose between establishing the upper 3 grades as a »women's upper school,« a commercial school or a Realgymnasium, each with a slightly different curriculum. These schools were also granted the right to hold *Matura* examinations at the end of the seventh year. The third institution that was affected by the 1916 decree was the women's Gymnasium. It was also a result of private initiatives: the National Women's Association established the first women's Gymnasium in Budapest in 1896, followed by a few other »private« Gymnasiums through the Great War (I. Müller 2000b; Kereszty 2010, 86–90). The Austrian case also suggests that women's secondary schooling, prior to state legislation, was solely a matter of private initiative. The first women's *Lyceum* was established in Prague in 1863 (the first German-language institute in Graz in 1873), and the first women's Gymnasium again in Prague in 1890 was followed by one in Vienna in 1892. State regulation only came in 1900 (a temporary regulation) for the Lyceum; the ministry thoroughly regulated women's secondary education in 1912 by a decree (Albisetti 1999). Women's education is thus a case in point for the influence

of both legislation and private initiatives. Here, the functional adaptation of women's schools into secondary education took place all of a sudden after the 1916 decree; it was, however, preceded by gradual growth thanks to private initiatives and a growing societal demand. The 1916 decree as an event simply made visible a structural transformation that had been taking place for decades.

### **Local initiatives and structural change: The Handelsschule in Hungary**

The case of the Handelsschule provides an occasion to trace structural changes at the macro-level that were initiated, formed and even coerced by local actors and institutions. Local initiatives are understood here as the outcome of changes induced by local actors and institutions, especially in contrast to changes induced by the state and state authorities. As opposed to the development of the Bürgerschule,<sup>5</sup> the establishment of the Handelsschule network was not part of a well-defined governmental project, but took place thanks to the blossoming of such institutions in various localities (A. Nagy 2014b, 2014a). The main reason behind these initiatives was generally that local municipal leaders, merchants, and industrialists wanted qualified personal for their urban capitalist endeavors (most importantly bookkeepers and other white-collar employees). Likewise, the history of the school type began in Hungary with the establishment of the Pester Handels-Akademie in 1857 at the initiative of the Chamber of Trade in Pest (Bódy and Szabó 1997; Bricht 1896). The birth of the Handelsschulen took place in a similar fashion all over the Habsburg Monarchy: in 1856 it was Eduard Pleschner, a merchant from Prague, who proposed the creation of a Handelsakademie to the local

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5 The Bürgerschule or *polgári iskola* did not have antecedents before the 1868 law on elementary education, and was only incorporated into the law thanks to the efforts of Antal Csengery, a lawyer, politician, and advocator of the *Ausgleich*. The subsequent history of the Bürgerschule proved that governmental determination alone could not be enough to create a new school type: the 6-year curriculum could not be maintained because students left the school after 4 years, and the two higher grades had to be abolished (Gööz 1895; J. Kovács 1900).

trade association, while Bernhard Ohlig, a member of the *Handels- und Gewerbekammer* in Vienna, even wrote a pamphlet to campaign for the matter (Dlabač and Gelcich 1910, 24–25; Ohlig 1856; Kleibel 1899, 68–141). There were 11 commercial high schools in Hungary in 1882, 37 in 1900, and 54 in 1912. This dynamic growth was halted by the dissolution of the Monarchy (the number of institutions decreased to 39 in 1921), and only reached 50 at maximum during the interwar period (Table 1).

In the nineteenth century, there were generally two forces competing for the control of the educational field, the state and the church, the influence of the former becoming overwhelming by the Second World War (P. T. Nagy 2011). However, the church could not play a decisive role in the field of professional education, and, over the *longue durée* this turned out to be a battle between local elites and the state, which sought to gain absolute control over commercial education. With the introduction of the first organization (and official curriculum) for commercial high schools in 1872, the state set off on a long road to take full control of the sector. This also happened by founding new institutions, through a greater financial commitment, and by the homogenization of the field, but a major influence was still exerted by local actors. Although the first institutions of commercial education were created in an associational setting, they also depended on state subsidies<sup>6</sup> and on the on-going process of social legitimization through special credentials and entitlements granted by the ministry of trade.<sup>7</sup> Still, only in the interwar period did state influence become overwhelming and local forces negligible: in 1920,

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6 In the 1911–12 school year the total budget of the 51 commercial high schools functioning in that year was 2,982,185 K, which was mostly financed by tuition fees (1,409,731 K) and state subsidies (1,296,215 K) (Sásdy-Schack 1913, 109–10); in contrast, in the 1879–80 school year state subsidies were only 12,500 K, and 8 out of 12 schools did not receive any financial aid from the state (Kiss 1896, 101–14).

7 The most important steps were the right of one-year voluntary military service for the graduates of commercial schools in 1869, and Act I of 1883 on the »qualification« of public officers that granted the same entitlements to gymnasium, Realschule and commercial high school *Abiturienten*.

all trade academies were merged into the University Faculty of Economic Sciences, and in July 1940 the last private institution, Pester Handels-Akademie, was nationalized by a ministerial decree. Thus, the state succeeded in gaining absolute control over this educational sector by the early 1940s.

Associational life played an important role as a counterweight to state influence; in the eyes of Handelsschulen advocates, it represented a double-edged sword: it was the source of funding and social legitimization, but equally a threat to the autonomy of the sector. In 1892, the teachers of the Handelsakademie in Pozsony (Pressburg, Bratislava) founded a monthly journal entitled »*Kereskedelmi Szakoktatás*« [Vocational Education of Trade] that later served as the official organ of all Hungarian commercial high schools. The Handelsschulen teachers in question later founded the official association of Handelsschulen; both the association and the journal became active advocates in the development of the field. To name just a few of their professional activities: the association took part actively in the reform movement in the 1890s and 1900s; propagated the publication of trade-related scientific books and textbooks; advised, sometimes with great influence, the founding and situation of newly founded institutions; kept fighting for ameliorating the situation of teachers in the field. Despite the growing state influence, local initiatives determined the evolution of the field: it was not the Ministry of Education that decided where and when to establish new institutions, but rather local actors pressured the Minister of Religion and Public Education to approve the founding of new institutions and then to grant state funding. The procedure usually took place as follows: local associations or the municipality decided to establish a Handelsschule and guaranteed its financial stability in the first years, then applied for state funding, and finally passed the administration of the institution to the ministry, thus making the school a »state-run« institution (Belóczy 1896; Novákovits 1901; Bún 1913).

Looking at the structural transformation of Hungarian secondary education between the 1870s and the 1930s, it can be argued that the aggregation of local initiatives had a lasting and significant influence on the system as

a whole.<sup>8</sup> In terms of inclusiveness and the institutional setting of secondary education, the accumulation of these local initiatives concerning the Handelsschule transformed the structure of the educational field. The inclusiveness of the system grew in large part thanks to students of the Handelsschule: half of its growth between 1880 and 1920 can be attributed to this type of secondary school. Until the 1924 secondary school law that created the Realgymnasium, the most important institutional change on the secondary level took place because of the Handelsschule, whose weight in the system grew from none to one-fifth of all secondary schools between the *Ausgleich* and the Great War, and later to almost one-third of all secondary schools in the interwar period. In terms of the convergence between the occupational and the educational system, the Handelsschule track became the most important catalyst. The curricula of the Gymnasium and the Realschule were not reformed substantially until after the Second World War, so it could not be accommodated to the exigencies of the emerging industrial sector. It is enough to allude to the lack of practical utility of Latin for most careers except for lawyers. In contrast, it was the Handelsschule that most fulfilled the needs of the modern economy: the teaching of bookkeeping, political arithmetics, and business correspondence (the core subjects at modern business schools) was rarely available outside the Handelsschule (law academies and the Technical University also taught some of them), so the Handelsschule

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8 Naturally, the enumeration of local and micro-level factors that influenced the evolution of the educational system cannot be complete in the present study. One such factor that has been neglected is the influence of parental choice on schooling patterns (see for example Nath and Dartenne 2008). The prosopographical study of the educational market of a northeastern town in Hungary can demonstrate this influence at the turn of the century. The schooling path of children in different families of the same social class turned out to be so idiosyncratic that it is impossible not to give credit to parental choice. Only this can explain the variety of schooling patterns (similar to all sons of a given family) among, for example, petty merchants. Some of them did not send their children to secondary schools at all, some sent all their children to the local Gymnasium, and some of them to the local Bürgerschulen and to the Handelsschulen (Erdélyi 2017).

played the greatest role in terms of the functional adjustment of the educational system to the needs of economic modernization.

It is worth comparing the status of the *Handelsschule* in Hungary to other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy. Just as for women's secondary schooling, the *Handelsschule* was born thanks to initiatives in the Austrian part of the Monarchy. As already mentioned, both the Prager Handelsakademie in 1856 and the Wiener Handelsakademie in 1858 were established by the local associations of trade without any governmental aid at the beginning (Gstraunthaler 2012). The recipe was similar in other cases in Austria: schools were initiated locally and established with municipal funds and with the financial aid of the local bourgeoisie. The struggles of the *Handelsschule* were also quite similar to those in Hungary: lack of qualified teachers, lack of parity with other secondary schools, low salaries and no pension funds for teachers, poorly qualified first-year students, inadequate training for »practical life,« etc. (*Stenographisches Protokoll* 1907). Yet there is one important difference: the weight of the *Handelsschule* in Austrian secondary education is less considerable than in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy. In contrast to the 54 *Handelsschulen* in Hungary in 1912, there were only 24 *höhere Handelsschulen* in the Austrian part of the Monarchy. The reasons for this difference must be sought in the palette of classical secondary schools in Austria and in Hungary: while Hungarian pupils could only choose between the *Gymnasium* and the *Realschule*, Austrian pupils had the choice between the *Gymnasium*, the *Realgymnasium*, and the *Realschule*, in addition to the *niedere Handelsschule*, a school type that did not exist in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy. In that way, these school types were able to cover many functions that, in Hungary, only the *Handelsschule* aimed at. The *Realschule* in Austria had a 7-year program of study until 1914 (in contrast to the Hungarian *Realschule*, which had an 8-year curriculum) and fulfilled a function similar to the *Handelsschule* in Hungarian secondary education (Cohen 1996, 119–26). In other words, it was more suited to prepare for careers in »practical life« in contrast to the »academic spirit« in the *Gymnasium*.

### Summary

To sum up, one must emphasize the long-term effects of local events on the structure of secondary education. The rise of the *Handelsschule* was not due to an official government policy or any plan concerning secondary education, but rather the result of various local initiatives (of the local business elites and municipal elites). This means its numerical growth can be attributed to the accumulation of local events. In terms of the institutional diversification of Hungarian secondary education, the emergence of the *Handelsschule* produced the most far-reaching changes in the period under scrutiny. It enrolled a minor fraction of secondary school students in the 1860s, while between one-third and one-fourth of all secondary school students graduated from one of the *Handelsschulen* in the interwar period. The growth of the *Handelsschule* also meant a greater progressiveness in secondary education, since its student body was more heterogeneous than that in classical secondary schools. Lastly, the functional adjustment of the educational system was made mostly in connection to the *Handelsschule* on the secondary level: it provided professional training for employees of the urban capitalist enterprises; the modern private clerk was stereotypically a graduate of the *Handelsschule* (Komor 1931). One could even suggest that the development of the *Handelsschule* actually served as a substitute for a thorough reform of classical secondary schools. In the midst of far-reaching social and economic transformation, it was the *Handelsschule* that assumed the functions that the *Gymnasium* and the *Realschule* could not take over. The training of private clerks in banking, insurance, trade, and transportation was carried out by the *Handelsschule*, and that is why it was constantly under attack in the period under scrutiny: the original goal of the institution, i.e. to train tradesmen, was not fulfilled, because it was training employees for the emerging urban capitalist enterprises.

The other major change was the growing representation of women in secondary schooling. At the turn of the century the proportion of women in secondary schools was negligible; however, this proportion grew to one fourth of all secondary school students in the 1930s. In quantitative terms, the 1916 decree that regulated women's secondary education brought

about a dramatic growth in their representation. One could thus presume that, in this case, legislation brought about the structural transformation of the system. However, a »hidden« and gradual growth in women's schooling took place before 1916 in school types (women's Bürgerschule, women's upper school) that did not constitute part of secondary schooling before 1916, yet were transformed into secondary schools by the 1916 decree. The case of women's education supports a similar conclusion to that concerning the Handelsschule. Due to a rising social demand and local initiatives (mostly in case of the women's upper school), the structure of secondary education underwent a profound change: however, legislation was still needed to integrate the emerging school type into the school system. Finally, the two cases of »crucial« events taught a different lesson. The changes that the Great War brought about did not influence the educational structure as such; these changes were simply the mechanical consequences of the territorial set-up of Hungary after 1920. Growing anti-Semitism and the 1920 *numerus clausus* had a significant influence on the structure of secondary education in the long run. The *numerus clausus* limited the proportion of Jews in higher education and thus influenced their representation in secondary schooling. It meant that, for example, the proportion of Jews in Gymnasiums decreased from 19.2% in 1921 to 7.7% in 1936. Still, just as in the cases of the Handelsschule and women's secondary schooling, structural change took place gradually and legislation merely influenced the direction of that change.

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