

1. Introduction

Jorid Heir, Norunn Mari Mølstre Vikshåland and Oddlaug Holthe Olsen went abroad the fifth period of practising in teacher education. We were lucky and got our 1st wish fulfilled, we could go to Slovenia.

We were in Osnova Šola Franceta Prešerna Kranj, who is the largest school in Kranj. This school has children from 1st to 9th class. We were there 9 schooldays, and one day at the connected branch school Kokrica, where there are children from 1st to 4th class. The person we were connected with was the headmaster, Alež Žitnik. The communication with him before we travelled to Slovenia was very good. He asked us for our wishes about subjects we wanted to observe. He prepared our schedule included several subjects and classes, and also some afternoon activities, and we got it one week before we left Norway, so we could be prepared.

2. Our stay in Slovenia

2.1. The school system

The school system in Slovenia is changing from eight year of education to nine-year basic education. So now there are some children finishing the old system and some in the new line. In the new system the children starts in school when they are 6 years old. From 1st to 4th class they have their own classrooms, and when they starts in 5th class they go between different classrooms. The teachers have their own classrooms where they have all the equipments they need to teach.

The nine-year education is the basic education and there are different grades appending what cycle the pupils are in. They're using descriptive grading the three first years, descriptive and numerical grading the three next years and numerical grading only the three last years. In the last cycle the students can choose three subjects from among the options. The subjects will be different depending of what the school can offer.

The next step in educations is upper secondary education. Secondary school is orientated toward a particular profession, like trading and construction etc. or like high school (gimnazije) who's preparing pupils for university or other higher education.

The teacher education lasts for 4 years and depending what subject they choose it can last for 5 years. They take special education in one or to subjects. There is no practising during the education, only a few days of observing.

When they start to practise as teachers they mostly have one subject to teach. Every year they can go to courses to learn more, and the school will pay for the course.

The pupils in Norway starts when they are 6 years old, but they have 10 years in basic school before they go further in their education. The pupils don't have grading before the three last years in school. Then they have to study for 3 years in upper secondary education before higher education. So all together they stay the same numbers at school before higher education.

In the teacher education is the difference larger. We have four year with many subjects, and when we are finished we can teach pupils from 1st to 10th class. We also have 6 weeks of practise every year.

2.2. Pupils

Slovenian kids are like Norwegian kids. They act mostly the same way, and they even look very much alike. (Do we have relatives here?) If we compare the activities kids are doing in Slovenian classrooms, we would say it is about the same as in Norway. Discipline in the classroom depends on the teacher, also the same. So what is different?

When the pupils come to school in the morning they leave their cloths and shoes in some lockers in the basement. Everybody have to use slippers when they stay inside. By using their slippers they save the school from quick wear. If they want to go out, they ask the guard, who is there every break, to open the locker.

Between the school lessons there are breaks from 5 till 20 minutes. If they want, they can go out, but that's voluntary. That's a big difference from Norway where the pupils in primary school have to be out in every break the whole year around.

Between the second and the third lesson they have a meal with bread. When the school day is over, the children who want to, can eat a warm lunch at school.

The kids in the first class are dressed up with yellow hats and scarves. The scarf is obligatory, and by using it out in the street, the kid is very visible for the motorist.

2.3. Observations in the classroom

The subjects we have observed are English, physical education, chemistry, mathematics, art, woodcraft, music, German, physics, Slovenian language, geography, history and home economics. It's been interesting to observe all these different subjects, and especially we thought that it was nice when the teachers used us as a resource in the lessons.

We've mainly observed classes from fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth, but we've also observed the smallest classes for some lessons. On October the 9th, we were in Kokrica, a branch school. We observed first class, and it's not always easy to communicate without words. The school day is not much different from how it's organized home. The classrooms are adapted to these six-year-olds, and the school day includes a lot of playing. We also got the opportunity to join an English lesson in Kokrica. This was the fourth class, and it was their first year learning English. The theme for the lesson was colours, and the teacher used games and music to involve and motivate the pupils to learn.

In P.E. the boys and the girls were separated. The girls had a female teacher, and the boys had a male teacher. One advantage of doing it like this contra like in Norway, were the whole class is together, is that the teacher only has to deal with half of the class. One group were in the gymnastic hall, and the other one used the corridor.

We also observed several science subjects like chemistry, physics and mathematics. The chemistry teacher didn't speak much English, so he told two of the pupils to translate, so that we could understand what they were doing. It felt like they really wanted to take care of us. In mathematics the pupils worked with a lot of exercises without using calculators, and these operations went really fast, something, which impressed us greatly. Even the pupils in the highest classes worked without help from any technology. The weakest pupils had to do exercises on the blackboard, because then the teacher could help them if any problems occurred.

In the Slovenian lesson the pupils were reading fairytales. They also learned about some authors like H. C. Andersen and Roald Dahl. These two are mentioned in L97 (page 120) in the fourth class, and its nice to see that Slovenian pupils and Norwegian pupils are taught some of the same things when they are in the fourth-fifth class.

The teachers used a lot of maps in their teaching, and the pupils had to find different places on the map. Also in the German lesson they used the map to learn words and sentences.

We've also observed two music lessons. We sang a lot of Slovenian songs, and we had a lot of fun. They also had a school choir, and Friday afternoon, our last night in Slovenia, they had a cultural evening where we got the opportunity to enjoy their choir.

We also got the opportunity to join a woodcraft lesson and an art lesson. These subjects were not core, but optional subjects.

2.4. State, society and people.

Slovenia is a small state, not bigger than our county Nord-Trøndelag. With a population of about 2 million people there are 90% ethnic Slovenes and a minority of Croats, Serbs, Italian and Hungarians. The density of population is 95,0 pr. km², compared to Norway with its 11,4 pr. km². The majority of Slovenes identify themselves as Roman Catholic. Religion is however not a subject in school.

It's also a young state, independent first in 1991. 12 years ago Slovenia became its own state after being a part of Yugoslavia since 1918. Most Slovenian speak at least one other language, but they had an early consciousness of their own language, Slovene. Already in 1550 the first book in Slovene was published, a catechism. In 1584 came a complete translation of the Bible.

Tolar is the monetary unit. 100,00 SIT was about 3,50 NKR in Oct.-03. In many homes generations live together, because it's expensive and sometimes difficult to get an apartment or house of their own, especially for young and new established people. It's economical differences between people also here, but it's a well-developed society security system.

Slovenian are hospitable people. Our impression is that they are friendly, honest, open and polite. It's been such a pleasure to be with them and to be able to be their guests. Everything was so well organised for us. In school we felt so welcome, and everybody was well informed about us. Many of them speak English well, so even with our broken English the communication was easy even from the very beginning.

2.5. The day we ran the show

The last Thursday we ran the show for four hours. We thought the pupils Norwegian fairytales, folk-songs and dances. We told them a fairytale about Askeladden and the troll. We also played Norwegian pop-music (Lene Marlin), and showed them our flag and also the country on the map. In the mathematic lesson we learned the pupils a song there the text is counting to twenty in Norwegian, called tellemasurka.

Here's the text of two of the songs we thought them. The first one is a folk-song and also a ring dance. The second one is a nurseryrhyme with movements, and were really popular in the third grade.

*Guten hainn steig på ein stor ein stein
Bles i sett hoinn så de haurdes heim.
Mæ villa dæm jåggå lainn å strainn
Som ingen sko ha på fotom.*

*M Æ, sa en liten grønn frosk en dag
M Æ, sa en liten grønn frosk
M Æ, sa en liten grønn frosk en dag,
Og blunka med augo å sa
M Æ M Æ M Æ Æ Æ*

2.6. Other experiences

During our first weekend in Slovenia we bicycled a lot in Kranj and in our neighbourhood. The school lent us three bikes so that we could move around, and this was something that we really appreciated. The first Sunday we went to a catholic service. We were the only ones who were bicycling in the rain, but it was worth it. It was also nice to visit the church. In Kranj there are many cosy cafés, and some of them are also located on the countryside.

The headmaster had arranged a trip to Bled and Bohinj. The janitor and two of the English teachers took us there. Bled is known for its island with a church, and this island is the only one they've got. (Norway has 57 000 islands only in saltwater!). Slovenia has many castles, and we visited one of them, Bled castle. Slovenia is a country with both alps and coastline to the Adriatic Sea. In Bohinj we went for a walk in Triglav National Park, and there we saw a big and beautiful waterfall.



On Friday afternoon, one of the teachers, Irena, invited us to her garden to a chestnut party. The weather was really nice, and we had a wonderful time there. The chestnuts were roasted and some were boiled. It tasted nice, but also a bit strange. The chestnuts were enormous compared with the wild chestnuts we have in Norway. Irena also took us for a walk in the forest

near her house. During that walk we saw Triglav (2864 meters above sea level), the highest mountain in Slovenia. Triglav is also used as a notional symbol.

Saturday came, and the headmaster took us to many beautiful places. First we visited a castle called Predjama Castle. This is a very old castle, and it looked like a fairytale castle.



We also visited the Postojna cave, a cave of massive stalagmite and stalactite formations, created by water seeping through the limestone for millions of years. The whole cave gave us an almost unreal feeling, like stepping into the unknown.

After the visit to Postojna cave, we drove to Piran. Piran is an old city on the coast of Slovenia. Here we could see three countries at once; Slovenia, Italy and Croatia. The weather was warm. Even though the sea temperature was 21 degrees, we did not bathe. (We didn't want to be a big attraction). It was nice to see a different area in Slovenia with a totally different climate. In the evening we went to Ritkot in Dornberg, to visit a winegrower and his wine cellar, own by the father of the music teacher at school. He explained the whole process of how to make wine. The compulsory tasting of wine was of course also included in this tour. This was a day with a lot of adventure, although it was a bit long.

Sunday the janitor took us to Venice. It was a 3-4-hour drive from Kranj, and we started early, at 7 o'clock. In Venice we took a bus-boat to the St. Marcos square. We had a nice time, and it's nice to have been there. Monday afternoon we went to the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana. We visited a castle, and had a look around in the market.

Thursday we invited some of the teachers to our flat. We made "klubb and duppe", bacon and our guests had to taste these Norwegian delicacies. For dessert we gave them a Norwegian, traditional cream cake called Verdens beste and cloudberry cream. *Dober tek = Vær så god.*



We had also made a speech in Slovenian, that we executed with a lot of incorporation:

Kako si? Kako ste? Je v redu. Od kod ste?	Hvordan har du det? Hvordan har du det? Det er bra. Hvor er du fra?
Jaz sem iz Norveške. Rad bi šel v Postojnsko jamo.	Jeg er fra Norge. Jeg vil dra til Postojna grotta.
Kako pridem na Bled & Bohinj. Rad bi najel kolo za eno noč.	Hvordan kommer jeg til Bled og Bohinj? Jeg vil gjerne låne en sykkel for en natt.
O prosim, ne razumem.	Unnskyld, jeg forstår ikke.

3. Conclusion

HVALA ZA VSE LEPE SPOMINE!!!

And everybody agreed that it had been a very nice trip.