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Petra Slatinšek

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Applying Alain Bergala's 'three-phase' model to the history and development of film education in Slovenia

Petra Slatinšek* – *Kinodvor, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

Abstract

This article uses the three-phase model proposed by Alain Bergala to explain the history and development of film education in France as a sympathetic framework through which to illuminate a double history of film education, first in Yugoslavia, and more recently in Slovenia. Surveying both continuities and discontinuities, this article details some of the key institutions and personalities that have shaped the history of Slovenian film education, before exploring some of the contemporary challenges practitioners continue to face within an evolving film education sector.

Keywords: film education, Slovenia, national film policy, national film educational programme, Mirjana Borčič

On 19 June 2015, introducing the launch of the Framework for Film Education in Europe project at La Cinémathèque française (as discussed elsewhere in the *Film Education Journal* by Reid (2018: 7) and Chambers (2018: 47), French film education theorist Alain Bergala gave a short recapitulation of the history of introducing film into the French school system (Bergala, 2015). Here, Bergala identified three stages that made possible the development of France's unique practices of film education. Bergala described *Phase 1* as being characterized by a small number of teachers who are also film enthusiasts introducing film into their classrooms. At this point, however, the practice of such teachers remained local and individual, and – while tolerated – was not always supported by their educational institutions. This, Bergala describes as the phase of the 'pioneer'. Subsequently, in *Phase 2*, this base of pioneers, engaged teachers and those otherwise mobilized by the cause of film education begins to widen, becoming a disparate community that begins to organize itself into networks in which information is circulated, experience shared and peer-to-peer training meetings are organized. This rough organization sometimes leads to the start of partial recognition by schools and the formation of some specific methods of film education. During this phase, pedagogical ideas begin to be exchanged, breaking the solitude in which many teachers have hitherto been exploring practices of film education. Finally, in *Phase 3* centralized educational institutions (in a French context, the Ministry of Education) are compelled to implement a national education policy concerning the place of film in schools.

In the following study, I use Bergala's three phases as a template through which to explore the development of film education in Slovenia and, in doing so, illustrate the considerable parallels that can be drawn between Bergala's model and the history of film education in Slovenia. Indeed, with a certain sense of historical irony, Slovenia can

be seen to have gone through Bergala's three phases twice: first as one of the republics of the state of Yugoslavia, and second, after 1991, within the newly independent nation of Slovenia. The last ten years in particular have seen a particularly strong development within film education.

The beginnings of film education in Slovenia

The film pedagogue Mirjana Borčić, who turns 96 this year, has been a central part of the development of Yugoslav film education since its beginnings. In her book, *Filmska vzgoja na Slovenskem* (Film education in Slovenia) (Borčić, 2007), she reports that the first organized film educational screenings in the Yugoslav Republic of Slovenia date back to 1951, when selected films for school groups, with various selections for specific age groups, were followed by audience discussions. (While Borčić (2007) notes that distribution of international titles 'became more open and interesting as of 1955', she does not otherwise mention the titles of these films.) Following this early initiative, the first youth cinema was founded in Ljubljana in 1955, named kino 'Ljudska milica', and organized screenings for young people subsequently expanded throughout Slovenia in 1957. In general, this period can be compared to Bergala's first phase of national film education development.

In 1955 in Novi Sad, the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia's state commission Film and Child organized the first Yugoslav seminar with the purpose of fostering a greater engagement with film culture among young people. The initial motivation for organizing the seminar arose from the dilemma of whether or not the commission should prohibit certain films made outside Yugoslavia, since the import of films from outside Yugoslavia became more liberal in 1955. The organizers of this seminar were the secretary of the Film and Child commission, Milenko Karanović, and one of the most significant Yugoslav film-makers, Dušan Makavejev, then a psychology student and active member of Cinemaclub Belgrade. Both Karanović and Makavejev were cinephiles who believed a good film had to reach an audience. Slovenian representatives at the seminar presented several surveys. The psychologist, writer and politician Dr Mihajlo Rostohar, who played an important role in founding the University of Ljubljana, reported on results of a survey exploring children and young people's responses to film, and the differing preferences for cinema between young people with and without delinquent behaviours (as researched by his assistant Levin Sebek). Also at this seminar, Henrik Zdešar, director of the National Education Institute of Slovenia, gave a presentation on the importance of encouraging students to explore film in their free time, and he also spoke about the attitude of pedagogues towards cinema, 'who were not yet able to see that cinema could have a positive impact on their pupils, therefore, they were not yet using it in their educational practice' (Borčić, 2007: 13). Henrik Zdešar stated that youth debate clubs are a good platform for critical development, and that debates between students and teachers about the film programme could open new paths for introducing film in school curricula, and consequently change teachers' attitude towards cinema. In response to these and other presentations made at the seminar in Novi Sad, the commission decided that, rather than prohibiting films from abroad, it was necessary instead to start with systematic film education in Yugoslavia in order to cultivate critical perspectives among young people. The commission thus concluded that Yugoslavia needed to begin educating teachers and implementing film education in school curricula.

Other film education initiatives developed in Slovenia as a further consequence of the commission up until 1961, organized by local communities and other social and cultural organizations. Borčić (2007) reports that the Association of Youth of

Slovenia, and the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth, as well as the Association of Adult Education Centres began to organize film clubs, and institute film theatres and travelling film exhibitions. In the Ljubljana region alone, there were 14 film clubs, 10 film theatres and 14 travelling film exhibitors screening 16 mm films distributed by Sava Film and Vesna Film, all with Slovenian subtitles.

Bergala's second phase of film education can be seen to be inaugurated in Slovenia by two particular milestones. First, in 1958, Zveza Svobod in prosvetnih društev Slovenije (an independent association of 131 cultural clubs across Slovenia with forty thousand members, which organized cultural events, such as theatre, music and dance shows) founded an expert grouping of film educational workers, film-makers and film critics with the specific aim of offering professional help to cinemas and travelling film exhibitors by preparing study guides, running audience discussions after the screenings, organizing seminars and, later on, publishing monographs.

Second, in 1963, in Pionirski dom Ljubljana (the Centre for Youth Culture), the Department of Film Education was founded. This was the first public institution in the Republic of Slovenia with a regular, systematic programme of film education (as well as theatre and dance education). The head of the film education department was Mirjana Borčič. During this time, Pionirski dom also managed a public Youth Cinema targeted at different generations of young people. From its inception, the Youth Cinema organized both school screenings and public screenings directed towards young people in their spare time. Alongside these activities, members of Pionirski dom's Department of Film Education attended seminars and film festivals abroad (such as in Teheran, Zlin, Moscow, Frankfurt and Venice). For 15 years, Borčič attended film education seminars at the Mannheim International Film Festival, where pedagogues, sociologists, film-makers and film critics came together to discuss film education. Borčič shared her knowledge from these seminars with practitioners back home. During this period, Borčič's department at Pionirski dom worked as the official centre of film education in the Republic of Slovenia, studying various approaches to film education. The basic mission of all the departments of Pionirski dom (covering dance, theatre and film) was to study and introduce new methods of aesthetic education. These methods were then studied and evaluated by a fourth department, dedicated only to studying the work and methods of the other three art departments. Evaluations and findings were shared with teachers and other cultural organizations through organized seminars. Between 1963 and 1969, the Department of Film Education of Pionirski dom organized courses for teachers in various schools in Slovenia, and this also provided an opportunity to get a better overview of the needs and condition of film culture in schools.

Mirjana Borčič describes 'the golden era of film education in Slovenia' (Borčič, 2014: 18) – corresponding to Bergala's third phase – as beginning in 1963, when the film department in Pionirski dom was opened, and when the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Slovenia approved the inclusion of film education in school curricula. Within histories of film education, such progress at a national institutional level frequently depends upon a particular person in the right position at the right time possessing an awareness of the importance of film education. As Bergala (2016: 21–3) has described, in France this person was Minister of Education and Culture, Jack Lang. In Slovenia, it was Jovita Podgornik, who worked at the ministry in the department for Slovenian language, and strongly believed film education should be introduced in schools. The Department of Film Education in Pionirski dom researched film educational programmes in schools abroad (in some of the other republics of Yugoslavia, as well as in France, England, Hungary, Sweden and Finland), to inform themselves and prepare a proposal for a programme of film education in primary

schools (lasting eight years), beginning with six hours per year in each of these eight years as part of Slovenian language lessons. The proposed programme was accepted in 1972 as part of the primary school curriculum of the Republic of Slovenia. Following this, Pionirski dom's Department of Film Education organized seminars for teachers, and to demonstrate methods for how to run a film-based discussion with children.

Discussions about film education – and different possible methods, and practical examples, from home and abroad – were analysed and presented in several publications. These included the magazine *Filmski razgledi* (which published six editions per year from 1956), and the magazine *Ekran* (which was first published in 1962, is still in publication, and included in its first 50 editions a special page called 'Film – School – Clubs'). During the 1960s, ten manuals for film education were published (Borčič, 2007: 25), and from 1976 to 1980, several publishing houses released film-related books, six of which were manuals for film education.

On an academic level, film education was partially present within the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana between 1977 and 1979, as an optional subject. The Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theatre, Radio, Television and Film did not, however, teach film education, and in this respect, the task of training teachers in approaches to film education remained outside official programmes of teacher training until the present day.

The development of film education in the Republic of Slovenia in Yugoslavia can thus be seen to follow fairly closely the steps described by Bergala, regarding the three phases of film education in France. Initially, isolated and localized practitioners and enthusiasts (Phase 1) worked from bottom up to make a network, eventually gathering at a central institution (Phase 2), which generated a significant impact on the development of film education, and led ultimately to a national film education policy (Phase 3). Recalling Jack Lang in France and Jovita Podgornik in Slovenia, such progress at a national level frequently depends on one person in the right position, who, as Bergala (2015: 5) describes:

loudly affirms [their] conviction in this area [giving] immediate legitimacy to the teachers concerned. ... some problems (management of schedules, trips out of school, consideration of these teachers by their colleagues and school leaders, etc.) are [henceforth] quickly resolved. Everything becomes easier because of the legitimacy and the affirmation of a common and shared aim.

Independent Slovenia

Slovenia became independent in 1991, and in the decade that followed, many of the efforts of the 1960s and 1970s were forgotten. After subsequent changes at the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Slovenia, film education was no longer part of school curricula. Informal film clubs in schools that had continued through the 1980s and 1990s were the only option for some children, and outside schools only a few associations organized film workshops.

Koni Steinbacher – an art educator, tutor, director of animated films and film journalist – organized several regular animated film workshops. Having graduated from the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, Steinbacher began working as an arts teacher in the Izola primary school in 1964. He subsequently made a significant contribution to the development of Slovenian amateur media and film culture, particularly as a tutor to numerous generations of young film-makers and animators, up to (and including) the 1990s.

In 1996, JSKD – the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities – was founded, and since then, it has organized dance, art, music, literature, theatre and film workshops in schools across Slovenia. The current Head of JSKD's film department, Peter Milovanovič Jarh, has been developing film workshops and seminars for youth over four decades.

In 2001, Slovenian film director Boris Petkovič proposed the organization of film workshops for young people. Together with fellow film-maker Tom Gumizelj and film pedagogue Dženi Rostohar, Petkovič founded Luksuz Production as part of socially and artistically engaged youth association DZMP. Luksuz Production continues to organize local, national and international film workshops for children and youth, often with a strong element of social engagement (filming documentaries about and with Roma communities, refugees and other disadvantaged communities).

The most important platform for quality cinema screenings, discussions and related publishing (although not for children) was the Slovenian Cinematheque. This was established in 1996 by the government of the Republic of Slovenia with an act that separated the National Theatre and Film Museum (in existence since 1978) into two public institutes: the Slovenian Theatre Institute and the Slovenian Cinematheque. The Cinematheque's activities are carried out by four departments: the programme, archive, museum, and the research and publishing department, which also takes care of the library and the mediatheque. In addition to these activities, the Cinematheque also publishes the film magazine *Ekran* mentioned above.

Despite earlier initiatives, cinemas did not, however, begin offering quality children's programmes, accompanied with discussions and study guides, until 2005. In 2005, Igor Prassel and myself founded a film education programme for the animated film *Elephant*, as part of the Animateka International Animated Film Festival. In 2006, we were joined by media psychologist, Martina Peštaj. Martina Peštaj and I wrote several articles and organized lectures to promote the use of animated film to teachers. Together, we developed the concept of 'active cinema viewing', described in the publication *Culture and Arts in Education in the 21st Century*, published by the Pedagogical Institute of Slovenia in 2008 (Tome *et al.*, 2008). Today, the Elephant programme still presents quality short animated films and workshops for children, both as part of the Animateka festival and further afield. The programme's biggest value is to enable children to encounter and engage with artistically challenging animated films that otherwise are not available via regular cinema distribution and television broadcast.

Overall, however, there still remained an absence of systematic film education on a national level. During my work at the Animateka festival, between 2004 and 2007, we actively presented our film education work to two essential figureheads – Nataša Bucik (Ministry of Culture) and Nada Požar Matijašič (Ministry of Education) – who recognized the importance of our work. In 2005, Bucik and Požar began to organize national arts education activities, which continue to this day. The biggest event is Cultural Bazaar, founded in 2009, which provides seminars for teachers in the field of arts education. Here, the work performed both by the ministries and by my colleagues at the Animateka festival was similarly influenced by the *Road Map for Arts Education*, published by UNESCO in 2006.

In 2008, the city of Ljubljana established a new public institution, the Kinodvor Cinema, founded with the special mission to show quality 'art-house' cinema and to offer an ongoing programme of film education. This was the first public institution in independent Slovenia to have a remit for film education written into its founding document. At this juncture, the city of Ljubljana's general cultural policy was also

changed, making arts education one of the city's key priorities, due largely to the efforts of Uroš Grilc, the director of the city's cultural department, who became Slovenia's minister of culture in 2015. Recalling the discussion above of key personages leading shifts in national policy, I argue that Grilc is the 'Slovenian Jack Lang', who helped an independent Slovenia move forward from Bergala's first two phases into Phase 3.

Kinodvor's film educational programme called Kinobalon (developed in 2008 by Nina Peče Grilc (director of Kinodvor), Koen Van Daele (programme director of Kinodvor) and myself, in my capacity as the head of the film education programme), was the first long-term, systematic film education initiative in independent Slovenia, available to schools and families all year round. The establishment of an ongoing film education programme at Kinodvor opened up access for teachers to an all-year-round catalogue of films and film educational activities, as well as study guides and teachers' seminars. Here, the founding of a central public institution with a film education department can be compared to the earlier opening of the film education department at Pionirski dom in 1963, and I would argue that the foundation of Kinodvor inaugurated a similar golden era of film education as Pionirski dom had done in the 1960s – leading subsequently to a series of systematic changes on a national level. In the case of Slovenia at least, it would seem crucial within national histories of film education to have at least one strong public institution to be able to make the step between Bergala's first and second phases.

As a consequence of the engagement with arts education at the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture, and an increasing interest in arts education among cultural institutions, a national survey was launched to explore the use of arts in Slovenian schools: the *Proposed Model of Arts Education* (Pečjak, 2009). This survey tried to answer several crucial basic questions: Which art forms are well represented in Slovenian schools, and which are less so? Which art forms are teachers familiar with, and which do students have an interest in and would like to engage with? The survey found definitively that it was performing arts and film that were the art forms with which students most wanted to engage, but that were nonetheless the least present in schools. Guided by these results, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture decided to take steps to address this situation. Among other actions, the survey proposed that: (1) film education should be conducted at faculties, for future teachers; (2) film education should be a subject in schools; (3) year-long projects of film education should be planned and supported; and (4) the importance of educating teachers in the field of film education, and introducing the 'active cinema viewing' method, should be recognized.

In 2010, the Ministry of Culture made a call for the first national programme of film education, which looked to connect various cinemas and smaller film education initiatives and promote the importance of film education among schools and cultural institutions. This first national programme was led by Kinodvor in 2010 and 2011, its mission being to inform art cinemas across the country about film education, raise awareness of the importance of film education, and provide cinemas with a catalogue of films and teaching materials, so that they would be able to begin establishing their own programmes of film education. The Art Cinema Network Association, founded the previous year, played an important role in this step.

Between 2010 and 2015, several new film educational programmes were founded, both inside and outside cinemas. The Slovenian Film Centre added film education to its future priorities, and it has subsequently supported film education projects every year from 2011 onwards. On average 120,000 EUR is now allocated by the Slovenian Film Centre every year for film education. While this might be sufficient for smaller-scale

projects, a problem remains that there is to date no scheme providing financial support for year-long programmes that require larger budgets.

If the first national film education programme focused primarily on introducing film education into cinemas, the second programme, in 2014 and 2015 (run by the Art Cinema Network Association with the support of Kinodvor), focused upon educating future film educators, offering film educational screenings and workshops free of charge for more than 16,000 children across the country in order to demonstrate to teachers how film education is conducted. By offering film education experiences free of charge, a significant number of teachers received the opportunity to experience a considered approach to film education, which subsequently served to convince them that film education was needed in their curricula. This 'snow-ball effect' was also very important for the increase of children's films acquired for distribution in Slovenia.

In 2015, the British Film Institute-led Framework for Film Education project proposed strategic recommendations for the future development of film education in Europe (BFI, 2015). Around this time, the aforementioned Uroš Grilc, former head of culture for the city of Ljubljana, became Slovenia's Minister of Culture. Grilc recognized the rise of film education projects and programmes in Slovenia (Phase 2), and also the need for a policy document to help ensure the future strategic development of film education on a national level (a move towards Phase 3). A commission was created by the Ministry of Culture, where representatives of Kinodvor, the Slovenian Cinematheque, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture were gathered to create a National Strategy for the Development of Film Education. The commission proposed new subjects in schools, and also wrote curricula for the subjects of both film education and film, as part of this strategic document (Vlada Republike Slovenije, 2016). The document was subsequently confirmed by the Slovenian government and – although elections have meant that the minister of culture has changed several times in the following years – the Department of Film at the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Slovenian Film Centre remain committed to continuing taking the recommended steps to reach several of the goals within this document.

In 2017, the Ministry of Culture made a call for a third national film education programme. A financial scheme was provided for five years for three projects. The first two of these projects – both of which are ongoing at the time of writing – are a national programme looking to train primary school teachers, run by the Art Cinema Network Association and a programme seeking to train high-school teachers, run by the Slovenian Cinematheque. With the third national programme, we have now reached the point of educating teachers who wish to improve their existing knowledge of film and film education. In the first national programme (from 2010 onwards), film education was introduced to art-house cinemas and the first teaching materials formulated and made available. In the second programme (from 2014 onwards), teachers were given the chance to recognize the importance of film education, leading to the realization that more film educators and appropriate films from distributors were required. In this third, most recent and developed phase (from 2017 onwards), knowledge is being disseminated among teachers, who have the opportunity to adopt new approaches to teaching film.

As a consequence of the ongoing national film education strategy, three new film and theatre departments were opened in artistic high schools in Slovenia in 2018, offering the opportunity to study subjects such as film theory and film-making. As of September 2019, in both primary schools and high schools, the optional subject of film education has been established. The primary school subject (called 'film education') offers 35 hours in seventh grade (children aged 12), 35 hours in eighth grade (aged 13)

and 32 hours in ninth grade (aged 14). It includes practical film-making, but also a significant amount of film screenings and discussions. These subjects were written as part of the national strategic document by members of an expert group consisting of Nina Ostan (Ministry of Education), Andrej Šprah (Slovenian Cinematheque), and myself as a representative of Kinodvor. We were challenged to combine classical teaching with what we believe to be important in film education. In our pedagogical recommendations, we wrote that watching films is an absolutely necessary activity, followed by a discussion, which should be based on individual experiences of cinema and dialogue, corresponding with Mirjana Borčič's recommendations.

The high-school optional subject (called 'film') is a 140-hour course including film history and theory, while also exploring critical perspectives on cinema. The pedagogical recommendation of this course is to use 'the principle of many perspectives' and recommends both specific topics and an overall holistic approach towards cinema, in which students are able both to experience cinema and to discuss and write about cinema. Again, watching films and dialogue play important roles.

The authors of both 'film education' and 'film' were motivated by the idea that teachers are not fostering future film-makers, but rather film lovers with a deep engagement with film culture. Here, the goal is for a student to be able to answer the basic question 'What do I see?' as independently as possible. The same question informs the more practical parameters of the subject, in terms of the students' practical film-making work: 'What do I see in this world that I would like to show?' would seem here to be a significantly more important question than any framework of classical steps of film-making, from script to filming and editing. At the film education training sessions organized for teachers who were interested in teaching these two subjects, teachers themselves had to answer this basic question several times, both with a camera and during the film debates after the screenings.

These training sessions – organized as preparation for those wishing to teach these subjects – were attended by over a hundred teachers interested in offering these new courses of film-based learning in their schools. It would seem that the challenge for the future is to keep teachers motivated and ensure that after the first year, they continue to deliver the two new subjects in the future. From the point of view of film educators in cultural institutions such as myself, the challenge is to provide teachers with a sufficient number of inspiring films and educational materials, and to encourage them to leave the subject of film as open as possible, rather than closing it down into familiar, traditional approaches. As Bergala (2016) states at several points in the *The Cinema Hypothesis: Teaching cinema in the classroom and beyond* (and see also the exploration of Bergala's ideas in the first issue of the *Film Education Journal*), the reality of film education in a classroom setting is defined by a pedagogical experience and, indeed, it would seem that the biggest challenge of these two new subjects is precisely this reality of pedagogical experience in terms of finding conditions in which students will be able to experience cinema, which avoid strict authoritative approaches and assist young people in making their own connections with cinema. During the teacher training sessions we conducted for this subject, the work of Alain Bergala, Jacques Rancière (for example, Rancière, 1991) and Mirjana Borčič was explored, in particular in terms of trying to encourage teachers to seek a real sense of shared exploration and partnership with their students in the study of film. The second challenge of these two subjects is how to evaluate and measure student learning, for film education of this sort requires slow, continuous process that can be intuitive and hard to measure. While it would not seem very practical in terms of the demands for concrete measurements of student attainment so ubiquitous in a contemporary context, continued exposure to

cinema through watching and debating films is an essential aspect of film education, and it is worth insisting upon.

In conclusion, both Mirjana Borčič and Alain Bergala stress that it is an important element when introducing cinema not to try to *teach* cinema, but rather to help create the environment for students to explore cinema themselves. Further, however, both Borčič and Bergala's work presents the invitation for teachers who love cinema and would like to be involved in film education to remember their own childhood, which can be a crucial source of inspiration in developing one's ability to lead such explorations of cinema, both in and beyond the classroom.

Notes on the contributor

Petra Slatinšek has been actively contributing to the shaping of film education for children and youth in Slovenia since 2004. She founded two major film education projects: in 2005, the education programme for the animated film *Elephant (Slon)*, and, in 2008, the film education programme Kinobalon at the Kinodvor Cinema. The Kinobalon programme received Europa Cinemas' Best Young Audience Activities Award for 2010. In 2013, Petra Slatinšek was elected to the board of the European Children's Film Association.

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