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## Is Business the Key to Happiness? Motives and Actors Behind the Dynamic Development of Business Education in Imperial Austria (1890s–1918)

This paper aims to analyze the motives, actors, and sociocultural prerequisites for the dynamic development of business education in Austria-Hungary at the end of the "long" nineteenth century. The paper will examine the concept of "happiness," which has received increased attention in world historiography over the past twenty years, from global, historical, and modern perspectives. Happiness can be understood as fulfilling life goals or as a momentary or long-term feeling of life satisfaction. Thus, the motif of happiness shaped contemporary expectations associated with economic security, social stability, and personal fulfillment.

The preconditions for the dynamic development of business education and commerce in the last quarter of the nineteenth century are linked to profound societal changes brought about by the peak phase of industrialization in Austria, the development of transport infrastructure, the expansion of markets, and intensifying international competition. In this environment, commerce was increasingly seen as an area where individual effort, rational planning, and education could lead to material prosperity and social recognition — two key components of contemporary notions of happiness.

Higher education opened new career opportunities, especially for women longing for self-sufficiency, independence, and a better position in a man's world. Business education presented unprecedented opportunities for women and girls, including economic independence, geographical and social mobility, and improved marriage prospects.

These theses and a few more research questions will be presented using central statistical sources and school annual reports that document the density and quality of business education offered at the time. This education

ranged from evening schools and commercial schools with daytime instruction to higher commercial education, as represented by the Imperial Export Academy in Vienna. These sources will be compared with ego-documents and contemporary professional periodicals.

Thus, the topic is set in the context of the history of education and learning, economic history, and the history of emotions.

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