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European Journal of Education 26 (1991) 2, S. 155-165

urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-7255

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Comprehensive Schools in Germany: concepts, developments and issues*

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Historical Background

The German school system for 10 to 16 year olds has always been geared to the principle of a tripartite structure [1] based on the idea of an all-round or 'general' education (*Allgemeinbildung*) that has evolved over the last 200 years in the German-speaking world. What precisely makes up such a general education and what educational aims are to be pursued by 'general' schools, has always been a matter of controversy. However, the common ground for all interpretations and practices has been reference to the tension, inherent in the concept, between character formation and the acquisition of knowledge. Recognition of this tension and its translation into teaching practice has always formed a link between grammar schools (*Gymnasium*) and elementary schools (*Volksschule*) as the 'higher' and 'lower' forms of the education system—in spite of the fact that they operated at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of pedagogic objectives and social position. Thus educational theories regarding the general education system have two roots: on the one hand, they go back to the neo-humanism of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who saw education as the process and outcome of an encounter with ideas and intellectual values; on the other hand, they can also be traced back to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's 'method', where the development of intellectual powers ('head') is closely intertwined with that of emotional and physical powers ('heart' and 'hand') (Blankertz, 1982, pp. 101–110).

The question as to how these two poles of general education and the values encapsulated in it are to be structured in themselves and what weighting each of them is to be given in their relationship with each other has determined the development of the *Gymnasium* and the *Volksschule* (and, at a later stage, also the *Mittelschule* in the wider sense). It has also given rise to differing, indeed divergent, views as well as to academic debate and political conflict. Recent arguments in the western part of the Federal Republic of Germany regarding the appropriate positioning of the different types of schools within the tripartite educational system *vis-à-vis* comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschule*) reflect a revival of attempts to rethink the concept of 'general education'. Intriguingly, the same is true of efforts to establish a 'theory of socialist general education' in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) (Neuner, 1989).

The 'general' component in the concept of 'general education' is rooted in the social acceptance of the view that there are ideas and values which are of significance to all adult members of society and which therefore need to be transmitted in the

*Translated by Gisela Shaw.

schools to the next generation. Thus the idea of a 'general education' is closely allied to that of an 'education for all' advocated throughout the world today (Hörner, pp. 30ff.). Looked at like this, private schools in Germany are included in this mission in so far as they, too, regard themselves as institutions providing a general education.

The view that a basic education is essential for all members of society—a view shared by Humboldt and Pestalozzi in spite of their very different theoretical and methodological stances—has, in recent years, been put forward as the core of an 'idea of the comprehensive school' (von Friedeburg, 1989, p. 65). Although this interpretation provoked (and, it would seem, rightly) considerable criticism, there is nevertheless some justification in the claim that there is a historical connection between the idea of a 'general education' and that of comprehensive schooling. Admittedly, during the 19th century this connection was forgotten as the tripartite school organisation at secondary level developed. Following the First World War it found its way into debates on educational theory under the banner of alternative pedagogic reforms. Advocates included, for example, Johannes Tews and Paul Oesterreich (Waterkamp, 1985, pp. 3, 62), who argued in favour of a 'unified school' (*Einheitsschule*). They were able to score an important partial victory in so far as, in the Act on the organisation of schools passed on 28 April 1920 (*Reichsgrundschulgesetz*), education at primary level was 'unified'. This was done by abolishing the preparatory schools (*Vorschule*), which had existed above all in Prussia and which had been intended to attract potential pupils for the *Gymnasium* from their first year at school onwards. Yet, at secondary level, the tripartite system for 10 to 16 year olds remained unchanged.

New approaches to the introduction of the 'unified schools' (still so called) in the western parts of Germany between the end of the Second World War (1945) and the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949) can be gleaned from debates on educational policy and pedagogy. However, these were brought to an end by the adoption of policies of 'stabilisation' (or 'restoration') during the 1950s. These policies were not unlike those propounded in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the Weimar Republic. Meanwhile, in the Soviet zone the Framework Education Act of May 1946 had introduced the 'unified' eight-year secondary school (*Oberschule*), i.e. the earlier version of what later became the '10-class general polytechnic secondary school' (*Zehnklassige allgemeinbildende polytechnische Oberschule*, POS for short) of the GDR.

Even before the two republics were founded, this step marked the ideological refinement of the concept of the 'unified school'. While educational policymakers in the Soviet zone and (later) in the GDR took over the idea (adding the adjective 'socialist'), the concept of the 'comprehensive school' was devised in the Federal Republic in the 1960s. At that time it was intended to be clearly offset against the idea of the 'unified school' as proclaimed by the GDR. Contrasting these two concepts produced a criterion for demarcation within the German-German comparison that was to remain crucial for the next three decades, a criterion which highlighted the difference in socio-philosophical and socio-political framework conditions (Mitter, 1984, p. 3). However, once these framework conditions are seen for what they were and once our enquiries focus more firmly on structures, contents and methods, then the picture starts to become clearer and the concept of the 'comprehensive school' appears capable of encompassing institutions in both German states in the way suggested by the title of this article.

Structural Issues

While educational policy in the West German states (*Länder*) was geared to maintain-

ing and, to some extent, developing the lower secondary level within the traditional tripartite structures, the decision-making processes controlled by the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in the GDR expanded the unified school from its initial eight years to 10 years as the 'fundamental school type of the unified socialist educational system'. The '10-class general polytechnic secondary school' was modified by the Act of 25 February 1965 (precise wording in Baske, 1979, pp. 97–130). From a comparative point of view it is worth noting that this school type remained essentially unchanged up until German reunification (1990). This made the education system in the GDR appear relatively 'conservative' when compared with the systems in the neighbouring 'socialist' states and in the Soviet Union.

In contrast to the regular structure of the general education system in place during the 1960s in all West German *Länder*, where the *Grundschule* (i.e. the school for 6 to 10 year olds replacing the former *Volksschule*) as well as the school types within the lower secondary level have always remained organisationally independent and administratively distinct units, the POS was set up as a unified organisational and administrative system. Its key function was to provide the school-leaving certificate after 10 years of schooling for the vast majority of young people (in 1986 the proportion was 92.8%; see Anweiler, 1988, p. 131). As regards the transition from the lower (11 to 13 year olds) to the middle (14 to 16 year olds) secondary level, a discrepancy arose between legislation providing for a transition at the end of Grade 3 and the actual break between Grades 4 and 5. The latter resulted (as has been the case in the *Länder* of the old Federal Republic) from three factors: the shift from project-based comprehensive teaching to systematic subject teaching; the differing professional profiles of teachers involved in these activities; and the start of learning a first foreign language (in this case Russian) in Grade 5.

There is another aspect worth noting, which is the distinction between the POS and the 'extended secondary school' (*Erweiterte Oberschule* (EDS)). Contrary to the provision in the Education Act of 25 February 1965, special 'preparatory classes' (*Vorbereitungsklassen*) in Grades 9 and 10 existed up to 1982 to cater for those moving on to the EOS. Although these were formally part of the POS system, they were frequently set up within an EOS and defined as selective units. It was only after 1982 that all pupils selected for the EOS first had to complete Grade 10 of the POS.

In the *Länder* of the Federal Republic, calls for comprehensive educational reforms and for the introduction of 'comprehensive schools' (*Gesamtschule*) date only from the 1970s. The first such schools were set up in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Ever since, they have remained an alternative to the traditional tripartite (lower) secondary education system, albeit insignificant in purely quantitative terms. Yet, in comparison with most Western European countries, the old Federal Republic of Germany was lagging behind in this area even at the height of its reform phase. Indeed, even the *Länder* with uninterrupted Social Democratic/Liberal governments proceeded fairly cautiously in setting up comprehensive schools and certainly never took the step of making this new school type generally binding at the lower secondary level. This explains why in the more traditional southern states, i.e. Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, the few comprehensive schools that were established never dropped their pilot status.

Nevertheless, faith in the unalterable nature of the tripartite system had been shaken. This explains why even conservative politicians—normally from within the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)—as well as traditionally oriented teacher representatives and educationists had difficulty in putting forward convincing arguments to

the public *against* the need for structural reforms and the introduction of comprehensive schools at the lower level of the secondary system. It was in this climate that the Educational Commission of the German Educational Council, an advisory body to the federal and the *Land* governments between 1965 and 1975, proposed the setting up and scientific evaluation of 40 experimental comprehensive schools within a pilot programme. The Standing Conference of *Land* Ministers for Education and Culture in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (KMK)) took up this recommendation and, on 27 November 1969, decided to implement these experiments regarding comprehensive schools (Führ, 1988, pp. 106ff.). The pilot programme was co-ordinated by the federal and *Land* Commission for Educational Planning and the Promotion of Research (*Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung*). In 1982, this body submitted a comprehensive report about the pilot schemes, which at that time numbered 78. However, *de facto*, this marked the end of the experimental phase. Meanwhile the pendulum had swung back to a 'consolidation' of the tripartite system. Interestingly, this happened long before the CDU took over the Bonn government.

While in the southern *Länder*, most of the few comprehensive schools with pilot status that had been created have since been disbanded (which in practice has normally meant their reintegration into the tripartite system), in the north developments in the comprehensive school sector as a whole have taken a varied course. This applies not only to the number of schools set up and their internal structures, but also and above all to the range of legal status as 'regular schools' (*Regelschule*), 'schools on offer' (*Angebotsschule*) or 'pilot schools' (*Versuchsschule*). The reason for these varied developments must be seen in the fact that the polarisation of the educational policies advocated by the two major parties, i.e. the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), has been a crucial factor in determining how the *Länder* with their differing majority constellations exercise their 'cultural authority' in terms of legislation and government. This explains why, in 1987, comprehensive schools in North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse, two *Länder* with long-standing SPD-dominated educational policies, had 95 and 71 comprehensive schools respectively, whereas the 'classical' CDU/CSU-governed *Länder*, i.e. Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria (where the Christian Democrats are organised in a separate Christian Social Union (CSU)) and Schleswig Holstein, had no more than two each (Mitter, 1990, p. 174). Mention must also be made of the fact that changes of government, as undergone by some *Länder* during the last 15 years, have had an impact on the development of comprehensive schools—albeit of varying intensity depending on *Land*-specific preferences influencing attitudes of political parties, irrespective of the line taken in Bonn. Thus the change of government in West Berlin of 1982, when the SPD-dominated government was replaced by one led by the CDU, did not bring about any changes in this area, while, in contrast, the change from an SPD to a CDU-led government in the Saar in 1985 resulted in a rise in the share of comprehensive schools in the total school population by 5% during the following four years.

The varying exercise of 'cultural authority' also affected the 'orientation stage' instituted during the 1970s in most *Länder* for pupils in Grades 5 and 6. This serves the purpose of replacing traditional admission tests and one-week sampling procedures by two-year continuous observation and testing taking into account the academic and personal development of individual pupils during this period. The basic outlines of the orientation stage were laid down by the KMK on 28 February 1974. Its implementation was either independent of the type of school to be attended later (e.g. in Bremen,

Lower Saxony and, in parts, Hesse) or dependent on the various school types of the lower secondary level. Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg took the decision in principle of restricting their orientation stage to pilot schools. On the other hand, in West Berlin Grades 5 and 6 of the primary school act as the orientation stage. This form of the orientation stage independent of the tripartite system can, in principle, be regarded as the initial stage of the comprehensive school. However, this function has largely remained rudimentary, as on leaving Grade 6 most pupils move on into one of the traditional secondary school types.

Even in *Länder* where comprehensive schools have achieved the statutory status of 'regular schools', i.e. Berlin, Hamburg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and the Saar, their share in the schools of the lower secondary level has remained comparatively small. This can be seen from the statistics relating to Grades 7 to 9 of 'integrated comprehensive schools' (Table I).

TABLE I. Share of pupils in integrated comprehensive schools in the total school population in Grades 7 to 9

	1980	1985	1989
Baden-Württemberg	1.8	2.2	0.8
Bavaria	0.5	0.6	0.4
Berlin (West)	25.2	28.2	27.3
Bremen	9.3	9.8	10.6
Hamburg	7.5	19.4	18.9
Hesse	16.8	15.7	15.6
Lower Saxony	2.6	2.6	2.9
North Rhine-Westphalia	3.0	4.7	8.1
Rhineland-Palatinate	0.7	1.4	1.7
Saar	2.1	3.6	8.9
Schleswig-Holstein	1.1	1.5	1.3
Federal Republic of Germany (West)	4.0	4.9	5.7

Source: Federal Ministry for Education and Science (Ed.) *Basic Structural Data. Education Statistics from the Federal Republic of Germany, 1990/1991*, pp. 36ff.

Curriculum Issues

The following comparison of curriculum issues relating to the 10-class general polytechnic secondary school (POS) of the former GDR on the one hand and of the comprehensive school sector in West Germany on the other is based on the distribution of individual subjects and learning areas over the teaching week (Tables II–III). Hesse has been selected as a representative example.

Generally speaking, Tables II and III show that POS timetables comprise a range of compulsory general education classes under the heading of 'socialist general education'. These take up over 90% of teaching. The POS therefore comes closer to the traditional tripartite German system than does the West German comprehensive school. The example of Hesse shows a trend towards reducing compulsory lessons in favour of greater pupil choice.

TABLE II. Ten-class general polytechnic secondary school in the former German Democratic Republic (enacted in 1971)

Subject/ learning area	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Compulsory				
German	5	5	4+1	3+1
Russian	3	3	3	3
History	2	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	1	2
Civics	1	1	1	2
Mathematics	6	4	5	4
Biology	1	2	2	2
Chemistry	2	4	2	2
Physics	2	2	3	3
Astronomy	—	—	—	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2
Polytechnic instruction	4	4	5	5
Art	1	1	1	—
Music	1	1	1	1
Optional				
2nd foreign language	3	3	3	3
Total	35	36	35+1	34+1

Source: Ministry for the People's Education (Ed.) *Socialist Educational Law. The People's Education. General Polytechnic Secondary Schools*, 1982, p. 81 (in German).

A second differentiating criterion appears to be the course system in Hesse comprehensive schools, which is based on the setting of achievement levels (*Leistungstufe*), especially in mathematics, the first foreign language as well as in the mother tongue (German). This is reflected in Table IV. In this respect, the Hesse model clearly differs from the concept of the POS, which is based on the principle of unified cohort programmes for all pupils, irrespective of achievement levels and individual interests. The alternative of 'internal differentiation' in this context can only be mentioned in passing. Similar restrictions operated with regard to special provision, represented in both systems by special schools for handicapped children as well as, in the GDR, by special schools for 'high achievers and pupils showing particular talents'.

Why the Relative Backwardness of West Germany in the Area of Comprehensive Schools?

The question is whether it would be justified to interpret the 'consolidation' of the tripartite system at the lower level of secondary education in the West German *Länder*—a development which, by and large, is being reinforced by a stagnation in the comprehensive schools sector—as an expression of a predominant 'conservatism'? In my view, such an interpretation would seem rather simplistic. An explanation of this phenomenon would need to take fuller account of the regional and local variety within the West German education system, otherwise it becomes difficult to explain why many advocates of the traditional system are to be found amongst factions of the

TABLE III. Integrated comprehensive school (*Integrierte Gesamtschule*) in Hesse (enacted in 1983, amended in 1989)

Subject/ learning area	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Compulsory				
German	4	4	4	4
1st foreign language	4	4	3	3
Social studies ^a	4	4	6	4
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
Sciences ^b	4	5	4	5
Physical education	3	3	2	2
Polytechnic education ^c	1	1	—	—
Religious education	2	2	2	2
Compulsory choice				
<i>Group 1</i>				
Art/Music ^d	2	2	2	2
<i>Group 2^e</i>				
Foreign language				
Sciences				
Polytechnic education	4	3	5	6
Physical education				
Total	32	32	32	32

^a The learning area of Social studies is subdivided into the subjects History, Geography and Civics:

Subject	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Geography	—	2	2	—
History	2	2	2	2
Civics	2	—	2	2

^b The learning area of Sciences is subdivided into the subjects Biology, Chemistry and Physics:

Subject	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Biology	2	1	—	1
Chemistry	—	2	2	2
Physics	2	2	2	2

^c Alternative: two lessons over six months.

^d The two lessons/week for Art and Music take the form of six-month courses for each subject.

^e Pupils choose either three or four courses, one of which has to take up four lessons/week. The choice is made at the beginning of Grades 7 and 9 for the following two years of each course. Foreign language courses may serve to reinforce the first foreign language, but are normally used for learning a second foreign language.

Source: See Table IV.

TABLE IV. Courses in integrated comprehensive schools (*Integrierte Gesamtschule*) in Hesse (enacted in 1989)

Subject	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
German	2/3 ^a	2/3	2/3	2/3
1st foreign language	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
2nd foreign language	—	2 ^b	2 ^b	2 ^b
Mathematics	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
Biology	—	—	2 ^a	2 ^a
Chemistry	—	—	2	2
Physics	—	—	2	2

2, Courses at two achievement levels (A, B).

3, Courses at three achievement levels (A, B, C).

^a Provision not mandatory.

^b Provision of courses dependent on minimum number of participants (if only one course is offered, this has to be at level A).

Source: Decree issued by the Hesse Minister for Education and Science, 20 June 1988, in: *Schulrecht, Ausgabe für das Land Hessen*, p. 262.

'moderate Left'. The picture becomes even more complex if the 'consolidation' of the education system is related to developments within the social system as a whole, as the latter underlines still further the complexity of the current socio-political situation.

The following considerations are based on the thesis that the retention and, indeed, renewed growth of traditional structures can neither be attributed to political conservatism nor be identified as a 'return to the past'. In this context it must be kept in mind that although the large West German political parties can certainly be associated with fundamental ideological models (Conservative, Liberal, Social Democrat), as reflected in their programmes and even their very names, such ideological models can only partly shape the policies of these parties, because of the differing origins of their potential electorates as well as major tensions amongst their internal 'wings'. It is precisely educational policies that can serve as a prime example for demonstrating these complex ambivalences.

My first observation concerns the *ideological* position of those politicians and educationists who advocate the 'consolidation' of the tripartite system. They are to be found not only amongst Conservatives, but also amongst Liberals and Social Democrats. The continued widening of the spectrum that makes up these groupings can be explained by a growing awareness on their parts of the impact of new technologies on teaching content, teaching methods, learning processes and achievement in the education system and, consequently, by the (once again) growing interest in selection rather than promotion, an interest which culminates in the favouring of highly gifted pupils. In addition, we can observe a broad and increasing esteem for positive knowledge produced by subject-specific teaching. This trend has resulted in a lessening of interest in areas of considerable concern during the 1970s, i.e. open forms of teaching (learning areas spanning a number of subjects, project work), although admittedly there are indications of the tide beginning to turn once again. To sum up, it can be said that the widespread call for 'achievement' (with reference to the aim of 'modernisation', which is, however, rarely defined more precisely) amongst parents and the public at large has favoured the *Gymnasium* and its expansion. Yet, this trend is by no means without its contradictory features, as 'traditional' Conservatives, while welcoming it as such,

nevertheless reject standardised texts and other 'objective' selection mechanisms which have found their way into 'their' grammar schools.

My second observation relates to *internal changes* that have occurred during recent decades in the educational system of all West German *Länder*. They are reflected in a tendency on the part of parents, representatives of industry and the public at large to attribute to the school a 'service function', irrespective of recent efforts of some *Land* ministers for education to widen their authority beyond the scope available to them during the reform period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Internal changes within the system are evident in the growing significance being attributed to individual schools' quality as opposed to the school type as such, a phenomenon pointed out for England by Michael Rutter as early as 1979. In this way, some 'systemic differences' that were emphasised (and frequently overemphasised) during the 1970s and 1980s are now taken to be less important than differences existing amongst *individual* schools.

My third observation derives directly from the second. The growing 'service function' of the school system involves a greater say of *parents* in selecting the type of school they want their children to attend. Their decisions are ultimately immune to ministerial decrees and teachers' recommendations. This development operates in favour of, on the one hand, grammar schools, and on the other hand also of comprehensive schools. The latter is true of those regions where comprehensive schools have shown themselves to represent attractive alternatives. To this must be added the falling birthrate, which makes schools fear for their survival. In spite of their views regarding their own function and ideological position, grammar schools are becoming overly tolerant in selecting their candidates and are adopting structural as well as curriculum features previously associated with comprehensive schools, the only difference being that, at least in principle, pupils of different achievement levels are being taught in a single class.

A final argument against the suggestion that we have to expect a 'return to the past' relates to a change in attitudes over the last decades amongst *teachers* and pupils. Teachers working in different school types and at different levels are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that they are all members of a single profession. Innovative teachers can be found not only in comprehensive but also in grammar schools. Besides, *pupils*, too, have become a social group prepared to voice their own expectations. Unlike their predecessors, they have learnt to articulate views and aspirations, including criticisms and active protests.

In spite of some countertrends, the question whether comprehensive schools still have a future in Germany need not be answered in the negative. This can be backed up in two ways. On the one hand, there is, as I have pointed out, the growing attraction of *existing* comprehensive schools. On the other hand, future developments in a reunited Germany can be expected to lend a new topicality to the whole issue.

What Chances for Comprehensive Schools in a United Germany?

Following German reunification, i.e. the German Democratic Republic's accession to the Federal Republic of Germany according to Article 23 of the West German constitution (the 'Basic Law'), authority in educational matters was given to the *Länder* (re)constituted in the territory of the former German Democratic Republic, and legislation is currently (March 1991) being prepared there to allow for a reorganisation of the education system. Clear preferences are beginning to emerge. They are based on election results and the composition of the government subse-

quently formed in the individual East German *Länder*, but they are also influenced by West German models. Bills currently under discussion show that the only *Länder* envisaging the comprehensive school as the 'normal school' is Brandenburg, where the government is SPD-led. It appears that in the remaining four *Länder* the comprehensive school will only feature as either a 'school on offer' (as for instance in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania) or, even if only implicitly, as a 'pilot school' (e.g. in Thuringia). The coming months will show more clearly how these developments in the East German *Länder* will stabilise. Decision-making processes are being influenced not only by West German state administrations but also by teachers' associations of different ideological persuasions.

The '10-year general polytechnic secondary school' of the former GDR will definitely cease to exist by the end of the 1990/91 school year, although a transition period is foreseen in certain cases. Its main weakness is seen in the rigidity of the unified system, which is based on the levelling out of individual achievement and interests (Hörner, 1990) and on the disregard for highly talented as well as for underachieving pupils, especially since special schools and 'special schools for the particularly talented' were available for only a small proportion of these groups. Comprehensive schools that are being set up on the West German model represent an alternative with a view to offering differentiation according to achievement levels and individuals' interests, although the chances of the comprehensive schools gaining ground appear relatively modest as everything points to strong preferences for schools within a more differentiated form of lower secondary education.

However, current developments in Eastern Germany (with the exception of Brandenburg) indicate that, especially following protests from teachers and parents, the tripartite system initially intended might be replaced by a *dual system* for the lower secondary level, where the *Hauptschule* and the *Realschule* are being integrated. The resultant duality of grammar schools and comprehensive schools might serve to formalise a trend in Eastern Germany which, *de facto*, started long ago in Western Germany. This means that the non-selective *Hauptschule* might be eliminated as a genuine offer, especially in large cities, with the *Gymnasium* and the *Realschule* winning the day. What were, in quantitative terms, the 'main schools' will therefore increasingly become 'remainder schools' for children of immigrants and members of marginal groups. (Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow me to enter into the debate about the particular problems posed by these developments.)

Thus, debates about legislation in East German *Länder* might lend *new* topicality to developments in West Germany, as members of West German educational administrations as well as representatives of teachers' associations and educationists are taking an active part in these discussions. Even if the frontiers among the school types within the tripartite system of the lower secondary level and the comprehensive schools have already been blurred by internal reforms within the everyday life of schools, international comparisons carried out by the Swedish educational researcher Sixten Marklund suggest that structures within the education system "do not determine which processes are taking place, although they do determine which processes are capable of taking place or not" (Marklund, 1973, p. 1). Nor has Marklund's thesis lost its validity in principle in the face of recent and current developments.

NOTE

[1] The three alternatives are the selective *Gymnasium* (9 years, more academic) and

Realschule (formerly called the *Mittelschule*, 5 years, more vocational in emphasis), plus the non-selective *Hauptschule* (5 year, vocational).

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