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ELEVEN

Educational Transformations in a "United" Germany

WOLFGANG MITTER

MANFRED WEISS

On October 3, 1990, Germany was legally reunified. The "transitional" phase started by Erich Honecker's overthrow 1 year before had come to a formal end, insofar as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) ceased to exist. Two months later, on December 2, 1990, the first all-German *Bundestag* was elected by the whole voting population of Germany. In the meantime, there were passionate debates about the chances of building an "alternative" East German state, to be based upon a merger of "democracy" and "free socialism." Though now reduced to low-level and limited manifestations, these debates have not disappeared among intellectuals and theologians. Yet this theme had already ceased to be a mass concern on the threshold of 1990, as the slogan "we are the people" was transformed into "we are one people" by the Leipzig "Monday demonstrators." This change in public sentiment was taken up (or accompanied) by West German policy and led to the well-known result. That is why the 12 months between October 1989 and October 1990 must now be considered as an "interim year," including its impact on education (Hörner, 1990).

In legal terms, German reunification has been based upon the "accession" of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany, according to article 23 of its Basic Law; the alternative provision as contained in article 146—namely, to elaborate a new

Constitution and to have it confirmed by general referendum (of all Germans) was also discussed—but finally rejected.

Schools in East Germany are facing numerous challenges regarding their orientation in the education system and, moreover, in the whole of the social system. The changes they have to undergo affect structural as well as curricular issues. Above all, however, they must cope with the attitudes that have survived the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. In particular, students must learn how to overcome their internalized shyness of making choices and decisions (Mitter, 1992, p. 51). These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that the problems must be solved with thousands of teachers who had been loyal executors of the hitherto official doctrines. Of course, teacher education is highly involved in the reeducation process. At the end of 1990, all departments and faculties of education at East German universities were dissolved and, over the course of 1991, replaced by newly organized units with former professors and lecturers given the chance to apply for reappointment. In short, East Germany represents a laboratory for educational reform in which there is an overall trend toward adjustment to its West German counterpart dominating the near future. Given that current policy debates in East Germany mirror other discussions about possible all-European or even global interrelationships, however, education in West Germany could hardly be expected to remain unaffected. Although structural and curricular issues had been handled quite smoothly in the late 1970s and 1980s, there are already signs that this "stability" is eroding in West Germany, with calls for an all-German system operating as a stimulus for change.

Aspects of Adjustment and Conflict

With the unification and the (re)constitution of the East German *Länder* following the elections of October 14, 1990, the "interim year" of more or less "wild growth" came to a sudden end. The following year was characterized by decisions and measures taken by Länder parliaments (Landtage) and authorities to restructure "their" education systems according to their constitutionally warranted "cultural responsibility" (Kulturhoheit). The legal reconstruction of the educational systems in the reconstituted Länder of Eastern Germany has

been strongly marked by adjustment to West German models. These processes have been created and reinforced by the following trends.

(1) Equal or similar composition of Länder governments, rooted in coalitions or one-party dominance, has favored the "importation" of structural and curricular peculiarities from West to East. Striking examples can be observed of how cooperation has been built up between Brandenburg and Northrhine-Westphalia, which are dominated or governed by Social Democrats (SPD), and between Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, which are governed by Christian Democrats (CDU).

(2) "Working alliances" have also resulted simply from geographic proximity and have been supported by shared reminiscences of former relations. These alliances have proven to be practical despite contrasting political majorities. This is the case with Schleswig-Holstein (SPD dominated) and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (CDU dominated), Lower Saxony (SPD dominated) and Saxony-Anhalt (CDU dominated), as well as Hessen (SPD dominated) and Thuringia (CDU dominated).

(3) The East German Länder governments have hired civil servants from the West at various levels of educational administration, up to the position of secretary of state (deputy minister). In contrast to other departments (justice, economy, and so on), the ministers themselves (so far) have been recruited from "native" East Germans only, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania excepted.

There is legitimate criticism, however, that such seemingly supportive engagements often include a tendency to impose "Western" experience and attitudes on "newcomers," without taking their assets and concerns into due consideration. Whether deliberate or unintentional, it is this patronizing behavior that has led critics to apply the term *colonialism* to these relationships. Although such comments should be recognized as exaggerations with regard to the "normality" of educational policies and everyday school practice, they do indicate dark facets of the current situation and call attention to the sociopolitical situation of a "united" Germany in toto. Moreover, it suggests a need to better understand the German people's frame of mind concerning their interrelations with one another.

Considering the close connections that have developed between and among educational administrations in West and East Germany,

an external observer is likely to be surprised to notice the emergence of specific structural and curricular features in the East German Länder, which signal their particular needs and interests. Perhaps even more important is the fact that these needs and interests mirror issues and trends relevant to West Germany as well. Without claiming anything like completeness, the following reflections present four such issues. The first two deal with primary and general secondary education, while the third and fourth are devoted to vocational and higher education.

Primary and General Secondary Education

Structural Issues

The education acts recently passed in East Germany (Führ, 1992, pp. 15-23) have focused on the abolition of the Ten-Year General Education Polytechnic Secondary School, the unified comprehensive school that had been established to merge primary and secondary education "under one roof." The lower stage of these comprehensive schools have all been reorganized as separate primary schools, while changes in lower-secondary education are more reflective of the majority political constellations in an individual *Land*. For example, all CDU-dominated Länder have (re)established selective *Gymnasien* (grammar schools), while only SPD-dominated Brandenburg has given priority to *Gesamtschulen* (comprehensive schools). Except for Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, all the East German Länder have refrained from (re)establishing *Hauptschulen* (short-course secondary schools), which represent the nonselective secondary school found in West German Länder. In Brandenburg, the Gesamtschulen recruit primary school-leavers without any selective procedure, with selective Gymnasien and *Realschulen* (middle schools) existing beside them. Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia, on the other hand, have introduced school types that merge Realschulen and Hauptschulen. In the education acts, these appear under the names "middle school," "regular school," or just "secondary school." This specific trend has been directly caused by the financial need to avoid having to run separate school units in thinly populated rural areas. But it also responds to a trend in West Germany that shows the rapidly decreas-

ing attractiveness of Hauptschulen for "German" parents, particularly in big cities, irrespective of their current political majority.

Whereas in 1960 almost two thirds of students in grades 7-9 attended Hauptschulen, in 1991 the figure was 33.4%. During the same period, attendance rates for this age group increased from 15.6% to 28.7% at the Realschulen and from 20.5% to more than 31% at the Gymnasium. Consequently, in many places, Hauptschulen have already degenerated into "schools for the leftovers," including socially disadvantaged German students, students with learning disabilities, and foreign children of different origin and command of the German language. The last group sometimes represents more than three quarters of the student population in these schools.

It is generally expected that the situation of the Hauptschule will worsen in the future despite measures aimed at raising educational standards, improving equipment, and expanding curricular and extracurricular offerings. Surveys show that the proportion of parents who content themselves with the Hauptschule certificate for their children decreased from 31% in 1979 to about 10% in 1991. At the same time, the proportion of parents who want their children to attain the highest school-completion certificate, the *Abitur* (which is the qualification necessary for general university entrance), increased from 38% to more than 50%. Comparable educational aspirations exist among East German parents, who were included in the 1991 survey for the first time (Rolff et al., 1992, pp. 11 ff.). After reunification, 30% of the relevant age groups transferred from primary schools to an educational track leading to the Abitur—twice the number of transfers that had been customary in GDR times.

A special case is presented by Berlin, which enjoys the status of a Land (like Hamburg and Bremen). In the now-united city, the schools of the East have adjusted almost entirely to the Western pattern, although the establishment of 6-year primary schools stands out as an exception to the West German 4-year "rule." Brandenburg, which is considering integration with Berlin into a joint Land, has adopted the Berlin system at this level. The organization of upper-secondary general education in East Germany follows the West German example in that the Reformed Gymnasium Upper Stage has replaced the former GDR Extended Secondary School (Erweiterte Oberschule). Yet, here again, the East German Länder, except Brandenburg, have followed a separate path by installing a 2-year course instead of the 3-year course that represents the normal pattern in West Germany.

Curricular Issues

It is evident that the syllabi recently introduced in the East German Länder bear the stamp of their Western counterparts. This adjustment was reinforced by the adoption of textbooks issued, in most cases, by West German publishers. Yet, these "quick-fix" measures hardly serve to fill significant gaps. First, West German syllabi and textbooks are predominantly oriented toward methods of instruction based upon communicative interaction between teachers and students; therefore contents and methodological guidelines in the textbooks are aimed at motivating students to independent thinking and learning. This overall orientation necessarily confronts East German students, and especially their teachers, with unexpected requirements, because the GDR school had been focused on an authoritarian style of instruction, at least generally speaking.

Second, the East German school has to cope with the "socialist" inheritance of ideological indoctrination and must now open education up to the basic values of human rights, freedom, and democracy. This challenge is radical per se. Teachers and students can meet and internalize it only when they are given the chance to reflect upon the East German past with regard to their own life stories and the history of the GDR in general. West German textbooks that mirror different, if not contrasting, experiences can offer little help. Therefore providing East German schools with textbooks for history, social studies, and so on (or, at least, with Western editions adapted to new requirements) has become an urgent demand that has not yet been satisfied, although some West German publishers have discovered the opportunity for expansion. On the other hand, the unification of Germany, which was tackled as a theme of "utopian" character before 1989, has confronted the schools in the West with the task of reexamining many a chapter of what was previously taught. All these reconsiderations of subject matter and instructional methods are overshadowed by the challenge to define a "national identity" in the united country with special regard to a multidimensional "Europe" (to be dealt with later in the chapter).

Finally, religious instruction has appeared on the all-German agenda. Since its reintroduction into the syllabi, religious instruction has provoked controversial debate in East Germany, which in turn has produced ripple effects in the West—an occurrence that would have been inconceivable until now. It seems that resistance to giving reli-

gion the status of a "regular" subject can be discerned as the most visible aftereffect of "socialist education." Of course, such an interpretation comes close to being an oversimplification, because it evades a crucial problem concerning the position of religion and churches in modern society anywhere (both of which, in turn, must be addressed separately!). In West and, recently, East Germany, debates are being held about offering religious instruction in the form of "comparative religious studies." In the Land of Brandenburg, these debates have brought about a provisional curricular arrangement, which is focused upon a project to examine the viability of an interdenominational unit called "ethics." While the Protestant church, though rather hesitantly, has given its consent, the Catholic church has definitely refrained from joining this project.

Vocational Education

Vocational education in East Germany has also been a theme of critical discussions. Here, however, controversies do not affect essential structural or curricular issues, nor do they question the achievement level, which enjoys a relatively high reputation in West Germany and in international comparisons. This esteem refers both to full-time technical schools and to the "dual" training system that West and East Germany have retained and continuously extended as a common "German inheritance"—not withstanding some important structural differences between the training systems (see Uthmann, 1991).

Critical comments, however, have surfaced as to the technological backwardness with regard to modern standards characterizing part of the former GDR variety, particularly in comparison with innovations implemented in West Germany during the past 20 years. Observers have pointed out that many training courses simply cannot meet the requirements of economic progress in a satisfactory way. The process of total reconstruction, in which the whole economic system in East Germany has been involved, has aggravated this crisis of "dual" training insofar as many former state-owned firms have been closed, and with them thousands of training positions. New enterprises are growing slowly and there is a shortage of some 70,000 training positions. Special emergency projects (e.g., the establishment of suprafirm training centers) have not been sufficient to fill the gap. In this respect, the situation in West Germany is entirely different,

where decreasing birthrates and increasing attendance at Gymnasien by youngsters aged 15-19 have brought about a significant deficit in the number of apprentices. In 1992, for example, 120,000 training positions remained unoccupied.

It is just this crisis of the "dual" system, though differently caused in West and East, that is likely to necessitate fundamental reforms in the whole system of vocational education. Western experiments in arranging special training courses for Gymnasium leavers who do not (immediately) want to enter higher education studies (some 17% of all apprentices belong to this group) can be regarded as one alternative model to overcome the crisis. An open question is, however, whether companies will still be willing to invest up to 100,000 DM in the training of a person who will continue university study at the end of his or her apprenticeship (currently about half of the apprentices holding the Abitur take advantage of this option).

In this context, critical observers also regret that the upper-secondary training arrangement *Berufsausbildung mit Abitur* (vocational training with secondary graduation), which was considered an asset of the GDR system, has not been retained. Such criticism is reinforced by the ongoing development and expansion of similar school units in a good number of Western countries such as France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Higher Education

Universities and polytechnics in East Germany have been exposed to thorough and far-reaching reforms whose outcomes are not yet predictable. On the one hand, departments and faculties in the humanities and social sciences (including education) have been dissolved and replaced by newly organized units. On the other hand, the universities that were mostly deprived of fundamental research (which was monopolized by the now closed Academy of Sciences and a variety of specialized research institutes) are expected to restore traditional ties between research and teaching.

Emphasizing this task does not mean concealing the crisis into which higher education had fallen in West Germany as well during the 1980s. There, the universities and polytechnics have to cope with an ever-growing number of students, which is likely to reach the 2 million mark. The resources allocated to higher education did not at

all correspond with the increase in demand in this sector. For example, between 1975 and 1991, student numbers have almost doubled, whereas staff increased only by 20% (scientific staff just 13%). Currently, some 900,000 study places are available for 1.8 million students. Thus the whole system in West Germany has had to cope with a tremendous overload, a situation that significantly affects research capabilities, let alone the various needs for basic and specific organizational and curricular reforms. The universities in the GDR were not affected by such expansion because their admission quota had always been kept at a more or less stabilized level (about 10% of the age group versus 25% in West Germany by the end of the 1980s).

For the time being, recruitment data do not yet signal any significant expansion at East German universities. This, however, should not be considered a static observation (see Führ, 1992, pp. 11, 26-29), because, in view of the high educational aspirations in the East German Länder, it can be expected that the demand for higher education studies will increase and reach West German levels in due course. It is hoped that by then the process of restructuring and extending the higher education sector in the new Länder will be largely completed, thus avoiding the detrimental developments experienced by West German institutions.

Impacts on Education in West Germany

It seems that the overall trend toward adjustment to its West German counterpart will dominate the near future of schools in East Germany. Yet, at this moment, the contours to be recognized of an East German educational system do not yet allow any justified predictions. While the current debates in the new East German Länder indicate uncertainties on the one hand, the aforementioned "deviations" from the "West-bound" trend are not to be overlooked. In fact, one should not be surprised if this trend increases on a medium-term basis. Whether the "assets" of the former GDR system will experience a certain revival (of course, related to the changed socioeconomic and political framework) must remain an open question. In particular, such an "asset" is given, above all, in the field of polytechnic and prevocational education, although its theoretical concept as well as its implementation need to be reconsidered. In this context, the former unit Berufsausbildung mit Abitur comes into the picture again.

On the other hand, education in West Germany can hardly be expected to be left unaffected by its cooperation with its Eastern counterpart. This prediction can be permitted for the sole reason that great numbers of school administrators and university lecturers have been delegated or invited to East Germany to help reconstruct education, teaching, and research—which is an ambivalent enterprise given the aforementioned "closing-down" and "reopening" activities. The experiences of "Western people" under East German "laboratory" conditions will no doubt influence them and affect their further professional work "at home" after their return. Moreover, the overall debates in the public, pushed by, among others, the various teachers' associations and the media, can be regarded as catalyzing stimuli in this process of mutual impacts. The following examples are put forward to justify this hypothesis. First, it seems that the newly established dual (bipartite) structure at the lower-secondary level, as enacted in the aforementioned East German Länder, can be considered a reaction to a West German deficiency, all the more so as some prominent West German educationists have recommended this model as an alternative to their traditional tripartite system (e.g., Hurrelmann, 1988).

Second, current debates in the West German Länder about reducing the length of primary and secondary education from 13 to 12 years, which were motivated initially by "European" concerns of equivalence (according to the policy of "harmonization" in the European Community), have been reinforced by examination of the East German "12-year model." Consequently, this has led to an agreement reached by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister) that consists of the provisional recognition of both variations.

Third, a striking interest in private schools in East Germany appears to be a further significant phenomenon. Currently, this interest can be interpreted as a symptom of aversion to state control and as a corollary of people remembering the collapsed "democratic centralism." The increased interest such schools have also gained in West Germany (Weiss & Mattern, 1991) allows the assumption that common trends in West and East Germany coincide. Finally, reacting to the breakdown of the former "command education" (Kommandopädagogik), teachers, parents, and also students in East Germany have initiated pilot projects at their schools focused on "quality in education," that is, developing a "school ethos" for the sake of humanizing communica-

tion, interaction, and learning. Although the first initiatives after the collapse of the "socialist regime" seem to have faded out as a result of the formal "consolidating" effects of the new education acts, some have survived and continue their innovating efforts in the legal form of "pilot projects." So far, they have been small in number, but they have revealed a remarkable commitment that might have a positive impact on comparable efforts that have characterized the West German scene since the beginning of the 1980s.

The Financial Context of Educational Reforms

Any future room to maneuver for educational reforms will be significantly restricted by Germany's precarious fiscal situation. This is primarily a consequence of the financial burdens connected with reunification. Tax revenue in East Germany, whose capital stock experienced almost complete devaluation,[1] is far too low to finance the restructuring of the economy and the adjustment process of the public sector. For an indefinite period, substantial government transfers from West Germany will be needed. In 1991 East Germany received net transfers of 125 billion DM from West German public budgets; in 1992 the transfers amounted to 150 billion DM. Between 1990 and 1994, almost 145 billion DM will be provided by the "German Unity Fund." Up to now, the main burden of transfer payments has been borne by the federal government; the share of the Länder has been relatively small. This, however, will change by the end of 1994 with the expiration of the "German Unity Fund." Then the new East German Länder will be included in the system of revenue equalization between the Länder (Länderfinanzausgleich). The equalization contributions to be made by the financially strong West German Länder will considerably affect their budgets and thus their educational systems, which are funded mainly by Länder revenues (approximately three fourths of the total educational expenditure). The situation will be aggravated by an increase in the number of students in the general education sector in West Germany by more than 17% between the years 1990 and 2005.

The coincidence of budget constraints and increasing educational demand implies that the number of teaching posts cannot be extended in accordance with the increase in enrollments; that is, it will not be

possible (for the first time in the last two and a half decades) to maintain the status quo in education. Adjustments have been made, or are planned, by the Länder governments by prolonging the work time of teachers, increasing class size, reducing the prescribed schedule of lessons, and canceling certain reductions of the teaching load (e.g., old age reductions, reductions for administrative activities). Whereas these measures are strongly criticized by teacher and parent organizations, the Länder audit offices, anxious to check the "cost disease" (Baumol) in education,[2] insist on their realization. In recently published reports on the economy of resource use in education (Weiss, 1992a), some audit offices complain that too much of teachers' working time has been withdrawn from classroom instruction and, due to an inefficient school organization, personnel resources are being wasted.

The aforementioned situation demonstrates a basic problem of the differentiated German school system in which different competing schools coexist at the lower-secondary level (grades 5-10). The negative consequences of this structural peculiarity are especially being felt by the Hauptschulen (short-course secondary schools), which, as noted earlier, have experienced a considerable loss of attractiveness in recent years. Particularly in urban settings, many of these schools are significantly undersubscribed, causing substantial "diseconomies of scale." In view of experiences with a formally differentiated school system in West Germany, the adoption of this system (with some modifications) by the new Länder is difficult to comprehend. This is especially the case if one takes into consideration the "demographic implosion" currently occurring in East Germany—a demographic change unparalleled in German history. Specifically, between 1989 and 1992, the number of births in East Germany declined from 200,000 to about 80,000, that is, to 40% of the 1989 figure. This decline will have far-reaching implications for the newly established school structure in the East German Länder (Budde & Klem, 1992). School closures and the establishment of multigrade primary schools in sparsely populated rural areas will be unavoidable. At the lower-secondary level, where several school types compete for a steadily decreasing number of students, the existence of the schools ranked below the Gymnasium (or the corresponding tracks in comprehensive schools) will be jeopardized. This demographic decline will, on the one hand, relieve the budgets of the new Länder while, on the other hand, substantially increase unit costs due to "diseconomies of scale," which are to a great

extent a consequence of the school structure imported from the old Länder.

The pressure to overcome these inefficiencies inherent in the German school system will move the question of school structure—which was hotly debated in the 1970s in connection with the proposed replacement of the tripartite secondary school system with a comprehensive one—back onto the political agenda. Of decisive importance for the topicality of the efficiency issue in education was a widely publicized expert report compiled by a private management consultancy firm on the state of the school system in Northrhine-Westphalia ("Kienbaum Expert Report"). The reaction of the public to this report was more disquieting to educational policymakers than the uncovered severe shortcomings of the school system of this federal state and the measures recommended to remedy them. Its reception suggests a massive general loss of confidence in the efficiency of the German school system and a dwindling willingness to provide additional resources for education. This is reinforced by objections (raised especially by finance ministers and economists) to a further increment in the number of civil servants, in view of a substantial increase in future pension payments that is a consequence of the expansion policy of the 1960s and 1970s. According to projections for the former Federal Republic, the proportion of the total tax revenue necessary to finance all personnel expenditures of the federal government, the Länder, and the communities, given the current employment size and structure in the public sector and a constant tax rate, will increase from 45% at the current time to about 67% in 2030 (Färber, 1992). Suffice it to say that this is a politically unacceptable and thus unrealistic magnitude.

To summarize this section, it can be stated that the future fiscal situation in Germany will not provide favorable conditions for educational reforms. Educational policymakers can no longer count on expanding educational budgets as in the past. Instead, they will be forced, for the first time, to make special efforts to ensure a sufficient financial base for the educational system. This implies the fulfillment of a number of "fiscal management" tasks including (a) the full use of possibly redeployed resources, (b) the gradual elimination of inefficiencies (especially by changing the school structure), (c) the establishment of priorities guiding the internal allocation of resources, and (d) the search for new sources of funding in the private sector (Weiss & Weishaupt, 1992). Even in the case of successful "fiscal management" (which seems highly improbable), the room to maneuver for

educational reforms will be quite constricted. Consequently, cost-intensive reform measures like expanding all-day schooling and integrating disabled children into regular classes will largely have to be put off for the time being, forcing educational policymakers to place greater emphasis on "cost-neutral" reforms.

Conclusions

This chapter has been built on the assumption that current transformations in the East German Länder coincide with radical challenges affecting the united Germany as a whole. The need for educational reforms is, on the one hand, caused by the wide range of demands presented by science, technology, and the economy. On the other hand, Germany is increasingly incorporated into supra- and international ties, as there are (a) short-term contributions to the consolidation of the European Community, whose initiatives in educational matters have already become relevant; (b) concurrent and growing commitment to the "wider Europe," which entails the revival of former educational cooperation with Germany's neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the opening of new commitments; and (c) continuing commitment to projects aimed at supporting education in developing countries and regions.

This "Europeanizing" and "globalizing" orientation must be achieved in a situation in which Germany herself has started her march into a *multicultural society*—although this term and its underlying concepts are controversial among both politicians and the general public. The number of migrants among the "foreigners" has come close to 5 million. In addition, the continual arrival of "ethnic Germans" from Poland, Romania, and the former Soviet Union must be coped with. This task is far more difficult than external observers may assume, because their "return" into the "home country," which their ancestors left centuries ago, involves identity issues, all the more so as many "returners" (especially among the younger generation) do not speak any German. Finally, the situation is further complicated by the vast, and seemingly never-ending, number of people seeking asylum. Controversial debates on whether or to what extent "political" and "economic" motives can be separated only hide the universal and topical foundations of the migration issue.

Within the framework of this overarching transformation process, the observer can identify problems concerning the internal cohesion of the education system per se. This hypothesis can be illustrated by the following three statements:

First, the "revision" of the large-scale reforms that were initiated and implemented in West Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s must not be simplistically labeled political "conservatism." The search for an explanation must be more open and differentiated. The observer should take into special account that conservatives, but also liberals and even social democrats, prefer to maintain or reestablish separate (parallel) schools at the secondary level of education (preferably in the form of bipartite structures). The recent restabilization of the Gymnasium against the overall trend toward making secondary education more comprehensive that prevails in the majority of the European countries has been affected by the widespread awareness of the importance of new technologies for content, method, process, and achievement in learning. Consequently, a striking public appreciation of excellence and selection has replaced concerns for equity and support (this is particularly evident with regard to the promotion of highly gifted youngsters).

Taking this situation into general account, it is not surprising that the Gymnasium can be considered the unchallenged "market leader" in the esteem of parents. This is even accepted in the meantime—admittedly with some reluctance—by the most radical advocates of the comprehensive school, the GEW teacher union. The "peace" that has been reached after the long-lasting "cultural struggle" over the school structure at lower-secondary level in the 1970s should not, however, hide the fact that the obvious structural deficiencies of the German school system press for political action. There is sufficient evidence that the tripartite school system cannot adjust effectively to shifts in educational demand and that the coexistence of different competing secondary schools tends to increase total system costs. Educational policymakers cannot shirk their responsibilities in this matter, as is suggested by their recently applied strategy of shifting important decisions to school-level negotiations, which has been introduced in the guise of strengthening school autonomy and parent empowerment (e.g., the new Education Act in Hesse—for details, see Weiss, 1992b). It might be that the growing concern for cost and efficiency in education will make it easier in the future to discuss the

school structure issue in a less ideologically biased way than in the 1970s, when equity considerations were the main issue.

Whereas the majority of the West German Länder governments hesitate to get (re)involved in this discussion, in a few Länder, promising structural changes have been initiated, for example, the introduction of "Regional Schools" in Rhineland-Palatinate, which combine Hauptschulen and Realschulen. This marks a first step toward the development of attractive alternatives to the Gymnasium within a "bipartite school structure." It could finally lead to a system of two formally equivalent types of schools as proposed by some educationists. According to Hurrelmann (1988), alongside the Gymnasium, with its preparatory-study orientation toward academic subjects, a new kind of comprehensive school should be established as an alternative, one that combines vocational and general educational curricular contents (practical and theoretical learning) and also provides the opportunity to attain (in addition to all other school-completion certificates) the Abitur.

Second, the de facto revival of the Gymnasium and the declining interest in the "comprehensive" concept must not obscure the emergence of a remarkable number of multifarious pilot projects and innovative activities within the traditional school type. We can even point out that the principals and teaching staffs of Gymnasien have fewer scruples in such engagements, because the existence of their schools as such, contrary to that of comprehensive schools (Gesamtschulen), is not in danger or contested. These pilot projects help strengthen the move toward internal school reforms at all levels of the education system. The goals are defined mainly as quality in educational school ethos (also known as "climate" or "chemistry").

Third, a manifest drive among parents and the public in general has crystallized in changing conceptions of schools from governmental institutions to service agencies. The outcomes of this drive result in the increase of competing alternatives instead of the hitherto privileged monopolizing solutions. It is true that, for the time being, public expectations indicate a significant preference for the tripartite system. In a growing number of places, however, principals and teachers of comprehensive schools have succeeded in making their social reputation and in consolidating their positions in and beyond their communities. This trend, taken as a whole, signals changes in public attitudes, tending to more flexibility on the one hand and to more democratization on the other. Among the social groups that have

made known their expectations and demands, we must not forget the youngsters themselves who, compared with their "predecessors," seem to have learned better how to express their attitudes and aspirations, including their critical judgments. In this respect, students attending Gymnasien today have little in common with those of previous generations.

The apparent "consolidation" that resulted from the "revision" of the reform in the West German Länder before the breakdown of the Berlin Wall at the end of 1989 was, in fact, far from maintaining the kind of "stabilization" that some people and, particularly, politicians might have dreamed in the early and middle 1980s. The above-mentioned examples seem to intimate that hopes for new innovations may not end in academic debate but may be translated into political and pedagogic action, all the more so as the current social and economic crisis underlines the need for reconsideration and reform.

Finally, it is the situation of the young generation that challenges educators and policymakers to new initiatives. Emotional reactions to the current crisis, prompted by confusion and ignorance, have laid the groundwork for aggression and even violence against "strangers." Young people in East Germany seem to be particularly susceptible to such aberrations, in counteraction to having been indoctrinated with abstract and unreal slogans of "proletarian solidarity" and "socialist brotherhood." Recent acts of violence committed by right-wing youngsters in several East German cities and villages, however, immediately exerted an "awakening" effect on nationalistic and even racist activities among like-minded peers in West Germany. Such outbreaks of a tiny minority might be treated calmly, if they did not signal latent sentiments among ordinary people. Youngsters and young adults, lacking qualifications and therefore permanently confronted with unemployment, can be identified as the group most exposed to such extremism. This radical challenge must be met in a period wherein all industrialized nations (the specific problems of the developing countries are neglected in this context) are confronted with basic value conflicts concerning the moral standards to be conveyed to the young generation. The recent "invasion" of drugs and juvenile criminality into East Germany, together with right-wing violence, only demonstrates the extreme and most detestable concomitants of "Western civilization." Here Germany is included in a crisis of European and, moreover, global scope.

In this connection, one must be aware that many objectionable

phenomena that required, among other strategies, educational counteractions, existed under the former "socialist" roof as well, though concealed by a regime that denied what should not exist. In this respect, one can find East Germany in the same boat with other "postsocialist" countries with comparable outbreaks of extremism, particularly among youngsters and young adults—which, of course, should not be used as any kind of excuse for what has become manifest in Germany to an alarming extent.

Summarizing, however, it is precisely the bulk of the young generation that has accepted the challenges set by the reunification in Germany and by the current social and economic crisis. It is true that this acceptance is hardly based on any "patriotic pride," let alone enthusiasm. One could rather speak of realistic response to what "must be done." It seems that the combination of realism, openness, and uncertainty should not be underestimated as a promising perspective, including its relevance to the education system as a whole.

Notes

1. This is reflected by several indicators: (a) Industrial production in East Germany declined to one third of the 1989 level; (b) the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) decreased by almost 50%; (c) former GDR enterprises are not competitive internationally; and (d) average productivity is only about one third of the West German level. The sharp drop in industrial production is also the result of the conversion of currency (the introduction of the DM on July 1, 1990), which led to an enormous decline in exports to the East European countries. In total, between 1990 and 1991, exports declined to one third of their former level. The impact of the economic collapse on the labor market is reflected by the decline in employed persons (1 million became unemployed; Siebert, 1992).

2. Between 1970 and 1990, expenditures per student almost quadrupled, from 1,550 DM in 1970 to 5,700 DM in 1990. In 1970 the student-teacher ratio in the general educational sector was 26.5; in 1990 it was 15.2.

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