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The education systems of Europe: Education in Europe: The Way Ahead[1]

The ‘elastic’ borders of Europe and the diversity of its 'educational map'

On the base of long discussions the authors of this handbook have decided for an extensive concept. It comprises the education systems, in particular the schools, in Europe in a geographical dimension, whose borders essentially coincide with those uniting the member states of the Council of Europe. The education systems described, with their foci on primary and secondary schools, call attention to a concept of Europe, which is extended from the North Cape to Crete and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea. Therefore it is oriented to the notion of 'elasticity' whose applicability is, in particular, demonstrated by the inclusion of the Transcaucasian republics as well as of the two 'bi-continental' countries: the Russian Federation and Turkey. This 'elasticity' (Fernández-Armesto 2002, p. 13) is reflected by the diversity of the individual country studies with regard to the historical emergence and development of 'national education systems' in their specific political, legal, socio-economic and cultural frameworks. As regards their structures, significant differences are, above all, typical of both secondary levels of schooling: at the lower level the preference for integration versus vertical (bi-partite or tri-partite) structuring, at he upper level the specific kind of interrelations between institutions of general (liberal) and vocational education. In this context particular mention should be made of the pre-school level inside or outside the legally established 'education systems'. Finally, the mainstream of diversity had its significant impacts on curricula and syllabi, time-tables, examination systems and the ways of instruction and education.

Diversity in modern Europe traces back to the emergence of the 'national education systems' with the foundation of schools by absolute princes in Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries, gradually expanding all over Europe. England and Wales joined this trend comparatively late, namely in the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries. It has been further complicated by the temporal differences concerning the beginning of nation-states and 'national education systems'. It was only in the course of the 20th century that this process was pushed by the collapse of the multinational and multicultural empires at the end of World War I and the constitution of new nation-states on their former territories, and completed by the collapse of the Soviet-dominated 'Eastern bloc' and Yugoslavia at the beginning of the nineties (Mitter 2004a).

Observing comparable features of diversity should not, however, obscure the widespread range of commonalities interlinking the current education systems. First of all in the whole of Europe compulsory school attendance has been enacted, and it is still in the process of expansion. Everywhere schools are horizontally structured by primary, secondary and tertiary levels, regardless of their individual extensions and demarcations. It is true that curricula and syllabi are characterised by widespread variety, as regards extent, content and sequence of subject matter. Nevertheless they indicate essential similarities of their cores. In all countries they are composed of mother tongue (and national literature) teaching, mathematics, sciences, history and, nowadays as a rule, foreign languages. In particular, most of the national education systems share impacts of the big Educational Reform Movement (Reformpädagogik, Éducation nouvelle, etc.) of the beginning 20th century, but at the same time, however, survival and obstinacy of its traditional predecessors and its opponents. Finally, it is true that the 'national educational sovereignty', as monopolised by the modern state, has laid the foundations of all the diversities we get aware of in the current period. On the other hand adopting and implementing them has ended up in the commonality that formal education is the responsibility of the individual modern states.

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Predictions at the beginning of the 21st century

In the current period education systems are affected by growing influence of global changes, concerning both their internal processes and their positions in the perceptions by the society. Since this trend is ubiquitous and marked by strong dynamism, exact predictions on times to come are very difficult. The following considerations are made on the proviso that they need to be revised even in the near future. They are based upon the evaluation of quantitative and qualitative findings whose interpretations are restricted to issues of short and medium range. This statement deliberately includes interdependencies and overlaps between these two categories. The predictions are focused on six criteria which are interrelated and do not pretend to any completeness. The combination of both range-bound categories explains that the present approach is oriented to the claim of empirical legitimacy. On the other hand subjective judgments are not excluded, as far as they are tenable.

Educational sovereignty

Europe's schools have been institutionalised in 'education systems' which are subjected to the 'educational sovereignty' of the modern nation-state. Nowadays, however, this status is relativised by several parallel and counter-current trends. Answering the question, if these are to be considered as 'liberating' or 'threatening' is dependent on the expounder's historical, sociological or ideological standpoint. The processes indicating relativisation of 'national educational sovereignty' is to be observed in the regional and global dimension. As regards the regional level, one has to make a distinction between its intra-national and international range.

The intra-national range includes, on the one hand, centuries-old territorial units, to be exemplified by Germany with its 'federal states' (Bundeslaender) and Switzerland with its 'cantons'. On the other hand modern forms of regional units have been constituted, such as the 'communities' in Belgium and the 'autonomous provinces' in Spain and Italy. In their status as 'sub-sovereign' legal bodies they bear responsibility for legislation, administration and supervision of their education systems. In this respect they must be demarcated from emerging decentralised units on the map of 'Europe of Regions' in form of local self-government with greater or lesser competencies. 'Educational sovereignty', however, remains with the super-ordinate national or regional authorities. Political decentralisation has also stimulated the emergence of border-crossing Euroregions. It is true that they do not question the sovereignty of the nation-states involved, but they are initiative in launching educational projects in the field of bilingual instruction and intercultural education (Mitter 2004b).

The international range of regionalisation is mainly represented by the European Union with its 25 constitutive member states (since May 1st, 2004). In the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) whose essentials were confirmed by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) education has been explicitly included in the EU's legal responsibilities, with its general and vocational sectors (Mitter 2004a; 2004b). In particular this innovation has become manifest in articles 126 and 127 declaring the contribution of the EU to 'the development of an advanced education' as a prior task of European policies. In this respect these agreements go beyond the strategy that had been already pursued by the previous European Communities in the field of vocational education, including higher education. That strategy had concentrated on the elaboration of mutual acknowledgement of professional qualifications and higher education diplomas, achieved in the framework of the common employment and labour market policies and oriented to mobility of the workforce within the EC.

Compared to the economic competencies that the EU has been provided with in the last decade, its educational competencies have hitherto remained formally insignificant which is due to the central position, allocated to the principle of 'subsidiarity' in article 3b of the Treaty of Maastricht. This formal restriction can be regarded as one side of the coin. The other side, however, points to article 149 and to how it has been made use of in the past decade. It deals with the EU's contribution to the development of 'quality education' which has opened 'something of a loophole that has been more recently used' (Dale/Robertson 2002, p. 25). This subcutaneous trend has materialised in the establishment of the separate Directorate General for Education and Culture in 1999 and the introduction of the new Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC), adopted by the Lisbon Summit in 2000, as a tool to develop common indicators

and benchmarks (ibid., p. 26). Furthermore this Summit has also commissioned a report on the future of general and vocational education. Based upon the recommendations of that report, the post-Lisbon Summits have initiated a working programme (Heidemann 2001; BiBB 2002).

Furthermore, one has to look at the multifarious activities extending the EU's sphere of action below the upper level of formal decision-making. This 'lower level' is demonstrated by exchange programmes for teachers and students in higher education as well as of trainers and trainees in vocational education of the secondary and post-secondary levels. Finally, the European Commission continually publishes memoranda whose medium-term impacts on the educational policies of the member states should not be underestimated, the less so as these publishing activities are getting associated, in particular in the framework of OMC, with the invasion of international evaluations of achievement into the decision-making procedures (see below). In this connection further mention should be made about the comprehensive Commission Report of November 2001 containing the programme of 'creating a European space of lifelong learning' (Kommission 2001a; cf. Eurydice 2001 and Kommission 2001b). All these documents reveal a change in the self-identification of the EU, namely to grow, beyond economic, social and political integration, into an 'educational and cultural community' (Hochbaum 1993) and, consequently, into a 'European space' (BMBF 2001).

The exceptional status of the EU among the international organisations to be described in the following paragraphs is rooted in its supra-national competencies within the legal provisions including issues of instructions to the member states. It is this supra-national status, which distinctly defines its singular position among all the other regional organisations. Among these the Council of Europe can be regarded as the 'elder brother' (and rival!) of the EU. It was founded already in 1949. It is true that the absence of any 'supra-national' competence certainly curtails its influence on national educational policies. Yet, its territorial extension and the greater number of its member states enable the Council of Europe to act as a connecting link between the regional and global dimension in the current shift of paradigm. Beside the West, Central and all the Southeast European countries the Council of Europe also includes Norway, Iceland and Switzerland as well as Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the Transcaucasian republics.

The 'governmental level' of the global dimension (Borden/Mc Ginn 1999; Carnoy/Rhoten 2002) is occupied by the educational activities of the big trans-continental world organisations, which are only outlined in this chapter, since they are not particularly limited to Europe. To begin with, the numerous programmes and projects of UNESCO are widespread and multifaceted. In recent years OECD and World Bank have attained growing weight in their capacities as promoters of education as well as contributors to policy-oriented educational research. Their decisions are dependent on the formal consent of the member states concerned, which does not directly affect their educational sovereignty. This restriction, however, does not exclude interventions of these world organisations, in form not only of budgetary injunctions, resulting from financial grants, but also of recommendations concerning curricular or structural aspects. In particular educational policies of East European countries (in their widest range) have been affected by such interventions. Furthermore, mention has to be made about the informal area of restricted national educational sovereignty, arising from the growing acceptance of international findings of educational assessment studies (Astiz/Wiseman/Baker 2002; Benveniste 2002). This is why not only the official international organisations, such as OECD, but also international associations, such as IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement), exert, at least indirectly, distinct influence on national policies in their capacities as informal informants.

As regards the concept of 'educational sovereignty' in general, political analysis gives insight into an educational map, revealing tension between the traditional 'national sovereignty', in the European Union legitimated by the principle of subsidiarity and supported by conservative perseverance, on the one hand and by the aforementioned interventions in the regional and global dimensions on the other. Historical comparison is offered by the competition between church-bound dominance, inherited from pre-modern periods, and the, in the end successful, challenge by the nation-state.

Educational goals in the tension between quality assurance and equity of educational opportunity

Promotion of educational achievement and equity (or equality) of educational opportunity has determined educational policies in their capacities as rivalling goals and tasks to be observed in the introduction and implementation of curricula and the enactment of school-leaving examinations, distinctly be-

ginning in the second half of the 20th century. The 1960s and the 1970s were dominated by the priority of equality (afterwards equity) of educational opportunity, linked with the foundation of comprehensive schools (in the widest meaning) in most European countries. The advancement of neoliberalism and globalisation in the nineties of the 20th and its expansion in recent years have, however, entailed a wide-reaching change of priority in favour of achievement promotion and quality assurance, this time motivated by disclaim of its ties to personality education having dominated educational philosophies in former periods, both in selective and elementary schools. Issues of 'economic precedence' in individual nation-states play a focal role in current debates, this trend being likely to gain growing importance in the predictable future. Advocates of including education in this trend are in a favourable position, insofar as empirical evidence of educational achievements have made remarkable progress in the past decades and, even more, in recent years with special regard to their international range. Therefore the outcome of the TIMS and PISA studies have caused, for example in Germany (Baumert et al. 2000; Deutsches Pisa-Konsortium 2002), great attention and even excitement, which is significant, the more so as the outcomes of the first mathematics and science study (FIMS) had been accepted by disinterest and resistance three decades before. Emphasis has to be laid on allocating the progress in quantitative achievement research to the all-European goal of quality assurance. Assessment, benchmarks, ranking and league tables, as explicitly underlined by the aforementioned Lisbon Summit (2000), have become ubiquitous tools, conceived by international expert teams and materialised in comparative inquiries.

Increasing pressure of the global labour markets reinforces the progress of neoliberal educational ideologies propagating one-sided selective policies in education. The 'commercialisation of education', hitherto associated with parts of the private school sector only, has recently encroached on the state sector too. National policies themselves contributed to this trend, insofar as schools are demanded to acquire curricular modules as well as qualification schemes on the 'market'. Further reinforcement is indirectly provided by the educational efforts of OECD and World Bank and directly promoted by WTO (World Trade Organisation) and, in particular, its associate GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services). According to its policy, defining, developing and implementing curricular modules and qualification schemes have become feasible (von Kopp 2002).

Opening of schools

The criterion dealing with the opening of schools conceals a trend occurring on the micro-level of schools and local communities. It has to be derived from the top-bottom reduction of state competencies and, at the same time, the desire of a growing civil society for participation in the bottom-top development of schools to self-governing bodies in economic-organisational, curricular and pedagogic matters. In this desire means of intern evaluation and decision-making play a particular role. Taken as a whole, this trend is not at all void of contradictory, ideology-based motivations and objectives. It is rooted in the aforementioned neoliberal conceptions and is connected with the global trend of people’s geographical and social mobility. On the other hand it reveals attitudes of tradition-oriented persistence, based upon demands for 'a return to the good old school'. Finally, it indicates widespread sympathies for overall concepts of democratisation and autonomy, in this case related to management and formation of individual schools (Döbert/Geißler 1997), whereby the rank of the persons responsible is exposed to controversially discussed approaches. Should self-government be restricted to the 'inner' circle consisting of head teachers, teaching staffs and (also) students’ bodies, or should the range be extended to the 'outer' circle with local communities, parents’ bodies and governing boards (representing professional, political, social or religious interests)? While compromises have to be sought and attained in identifying the participating groups and their members, other problems are posed, as regards the range of competencies, in particular in the fields of school management and financing as well as of decisions on curricular and pedagogic objectives. The appointment (and dismissal) of teachers has become an important item, as having been practised in Switzerland for a long time. National (and federal) authorities, in principle, support all these efforts aimed at local self-government, whereby, however, not only the encouragement of democratisation, but also considerations to delegate budgetary responsibilities play an important role. Moreover, the withdrawal of national educational sovereignty is compensated by the advancement of the aforementioned 'new sovereigns', exercising external assessment and, at least factually, casting the hitherto governmental competencies of inspectorates or other supervisory bodies into the shade. Finally,

opening of schools means opening the doors of classrooms to excursions, interdisciplinary projects, school festivals and visits on the one hand and invitation of experts from 'outside' to hold special lessons or courses on themes of their own professional expertise.

Curriculum development

Curriculum development is another field indicating various intern tensions and conflicts. Compromises are inevitable by the mere fact that the time factor compels compliance with condensations of subject matter, even in whole-day schools. Moreover, evidence grows that the years of full-time school attendance, including preschools, primary and secondary levels, should not be prolonged furthermore, but rather shortened. It is this pressure to restriction on the whole, however, which makes decisions in the concrete case even more crucial.

Advocates of traditional curriculum conceptions engage in retaining ancient and mediaeval history, ancient languages and 'classical canons' in the literature courses concerned. Nevertheless a shift of hitherto privileged subject-matter seems to be evident. Firstly, 'new' subjects focused on modern information and communication technologies ('computers to all schools!') have been propagated and implemented. Social studies and political education have been admitted to curricula too, even in countries, such as England and Wales, where their inclusion had been hitherto thought to be neglected. In this context further mention should be made of the extension of foreign languages. The EU and the Council of Europe plead for 'trilingualism' of all European citizens, but its implementation raises controversial argumentations. Advocates of 'open individual choice' (with certain preferences to teaching the languages of neighbouring countries) are quarrelling with their opponents who want to give English the exclusive and irreplaceable position against all other options. It seems that the latter argument is unbeatable, due to options by parents and youngsters as well by the 'market' and irrespective of recommendations by official authorities of national or regional status. On the whole debates on curriculum development are increasingly reinforced by considerations of standards and their implementation in sets of core curricula and examination systems, with reading comprehension (related to the instruction medium), mathematics, foundation of sciences and one foreign language as obligatory foci. They should occupy the first place in the syllabi against the other obligatory and the optional subjects.

Beyond the debate on priorities concerning content and sequence within individual subjects, current considerations signalise a regression, if not the end of the monopoly of the traditional curriculum, based upon individual subjects. The 'canonisation' of subjects which had arisen from academic disciplines in the course of the 19th century, has led to the present state that a few topical academic disciplines are not reflected in the school curricula, such as law and economics, appearing there only as components within history or social sciences, frequently taught by unqualified teachers. Psychology, to mention another example, has not got any entry into the curriculum. There has not been any consistent conceptualisation of subject-crossing curricula so far, but reforms in the (natural) sciences and social sciences areas indicate partial alternatives at least. Comparable approaches can be discerned in foreign languages tuition, aimed at developing this sector into a coherent learning area. It is based upon elementary courses in the tuition of the first foreign language including methodical foundations for the students' acquiring further languages without having always to start from the 'bottom' of elementary rules. Within the current curricular structures there is still too much space for duplication and inconsistency which need to be overcome.

Innovations in knowledge teaching are reinforced by progress in imparting creative and critical thinking, constructive learning and, as a consequence of its implementation, practical action (e.g. in the planning and execution of action-oriented projects or the application of computers in all subjects). In this context particular attention is called to the outcomes of the international assessment inquiries, the more so as these explicitly underscore the interdependence between knowledge acquisition and problem solving. Finally, the list of curricular deficits includes necessary gaps in organising classroom instruction, such as excess of frontal teaching and underestimation of group and individual learning. These deficits are remarkable, the more so as the aforementioned alternatives were demanded and practised by the prominent innovators of the European Reform Movement and pioneers of Progressive Education in the United States and other countries one hundred years ago. The 'study house', as recently identified as the organ-

isational focus at the university-bound sector of upper secondary education in the Netherlands points the way to revival and advancement of those 'old' projects.

How are the prospects of a 'European Curriculum' to be estimated (LcLean 1993; Mitter 1996; Lowe 1999; Astiz et al. 2002)? Short-term and also medium-term predictions should be rather cautious, as regards formal harmonisation. The aforementioned trends, however, suggest that border-crossing mobility of students and teachers, linked with the overall cross-national developments in economy, science, technology and political co-operation, are likely to accelerate 'Europe-oriented' networks in certain learning areas. Such tendencies are to be expected in the sciences rather than in the humanities, due to their tradition-bound roots in national cultures. On the other hand the various projects aimed at harmonising national history syllabi textbooks, mainly initiated by Deutsches Schulbuch-Institut (German Textbook Institute) in Brunswick, are worth to call particular appreciation.

Intercultural socialisation and education

In Western Europe the streams of border-crossing migrant workforce have expanded, for a long time already, by those of refugees and asylum seekers. Central Europe is likely to be included in this trend rather soon. The Russian Federation is worth mentioning too in this connection, because it is confronted with the challenge to integrate millions of ethnic Russians 'returning' from former non-Russian Soviet republics. The receiving countries have initiated more or less effective strategies to integrate the newcomers into their new surroundings. On the whole the effects hitherto attained are far from meeting the migrants' needs and reaching acceptance among the nationals. Nevertheless intra-European mobility and intercontinental migration, affecting Europe to a growing degree too, exercise continuous impacts on the receiving national societies, as regards the compatibility of national and ethnic (and cultural) identities and the (re-) stabilisation of national cohesion. Anyway, multiculturality and, consequently, the need for multicultural education, have become real phenomena in many European countries, even where national governments or political parties are reluctant to transfer this reality to political programmes and legal measures. Schools are immediately affected by this development, in particular by the task to provide adequate education and instruction in 'mixed' classrooms, apart from the growing existence of classes attended by 100% or so of 'foreigners':

Recent inquiries have given evidence that the, frequently expressed, hope for coping with the 'migrant issue' merely by legal and administrative provisions, turns out to be illusory in the everyday reality, unless they are supported by permanent educational efforts. They concentrate on imparting the language of the receiving nation to the migrants' children by systematised efforts without neglecting the promotion of competencies in their vernacular as a basis for building up stable 'dual' identities in the children's personalities. (Gogolin et al.1991 ; Tulasiewicz 2001; Weber 2004). One-sided actions leaving their socio-cultural background disregarded are hardly helpful. On the other hand promoting awareness of 'multiculturality' needs to apply not only to the newcomers, but also to the 'locals' (in the widest meaning). Strategies of bilingual education, differentiated to specific existential and co-existential conditions, needs and aims, can benefit from countries having, frequently long-lasting, experiences with language instruction in schools of indigenous ethnic minorities (Mitter 2003). It is true that intercultural socialisation and education are distinctly dependent on efforts related to language competencies. However, they are doomed to failure, unless they are extended by further fields of educational action, such as teaching of history and social studies related to the 'European dimension'; human rights and peace education; provision for religious instruction (outside or inside the classroom); parents' participation; finally teacher training and education for the special requirements of intercultural education.

Teaching profession and teacher education

All the critical statements and innovative approaches, related to the present criteria and their interdependencies lead to the focal criterion concerning the 'teacher's future'. The outcomes of the PISA studies and the conclusions to be drawn from them for the improvement of education and instruction have intensified the particular relevance of this criterion, The debates concentrate on the quality of pre-service teacher education, the teacher's professional activity and the needs for comprehensive and continuous

in-service training. The more or less controversially discussed individual themes are oriented to the following issues to be only outlined in this context: differentiation of training profiles according to school types or (horizontal) school levels; interrelation among subject-bound, curriculum-bound (didactic) and pedagogic training (to be completed by psychological, sociological and political science study units); interdisciplinary orientation of subject courses (as a base for the trainees' abilities to hold subject-crossing classes in schools); concurrent versus consecutive organization of the training on the whole. Special attention is furthermore called to modular models, as recently introduced into the Swedish teacher training and conceived as an overall approach by the Bologna Declaration of 1999 (on the reform of higher education; Kirkwood-Tucker 2004) and the corresponding devices. Prospective teacher training needs to be based upon a solid balance of the training components between theory studies and practice-oriented exercises (in particular by practica). Finally, today's training is widely suffering from the fact that trainees are not tested in proving basic pedagogic abilities before beginning their studies; the Finnish example offers the alternative way, apparently with remarkable success (Välijärvi et al. 2002). Up to now most training schemes are related to a teacher's profile, which is limited to his classroom work. Alternative models to be observed and discussed, are aimed at the roles of a teacher who, beside his abilities to teach and to fulfil pedagogic services in the whole school institution, has acquired social competencies enabling him to co-operate with parents and other members of the local community on the one hand, and to fulfil diagnostic tasks in his everyday practice.

The range of these desiderata is wide-reaching, and the tasks to be solved require knowledge, initiative and commitment, let alone that intuitive capacity that qualifies the teacher to cope with unexpected challenges in and outside his classroom. However, warnings of illusory expectations are imperative, if they are associated with images of the 'good old village teacher' who, though under pre-modern circumstances, was helpful to his local community because of his particular knowledge (literacy, numeracy, reading comprehension etc.). Nevertheless this analogy is useful to a certain degree, since it highlights the complementary relationship between specialised knowledge and all-round informative and social competencies in situations where quick decisions are required. The ability to handle drug abuse in classroom and school can be taken as another example in this context. All teachers should be familiar with the basic requirements to recognise drug problems in a given case and to call in the school psychologists or a colleague who has acquired special knowledge in this field during his pre-service or in-service training. Intercultural education could be tackled in a similar way. It would be unrealistic to expect extensive competence of every teacher; on the other hand his training must have enabled him to act in 'mixed' classrooms even in emergencies which make sudden reactions necessary – before calling an 'experienced' colleague for help or referring himself to handbooks or other information materials. All these considerations end up in paying growing attention to efforts and projects in the field of in-service training to accompany the teacher throughout his professional career. Beside the usual forms of extern courses in in-service training centres or at universities, the alternative of intern efforts and projects have recently emerged and are likely to expand. Prospects of modern teaching should be concluded by reference to the need for promoting teachers' mobility in geographical (including border-crossing) and professional terms; in this context the recruitment of people with required experience gained in other professional fields has turned out to enrich the competencies of the teaching staff.

Whether all the aforementioned requirements and expectations are realistic and tenable, widely depends on the conditions under which the teacher exercises his everyday tasks and, moreover, on the status he enjoys in the national and international community. In this context his professional satisfaction needs to be considered as an essential which consists of adequate remuneration on the one hand and social prestige on the other. In this respect the school map of Europe is still full of dark spots, not only in its Eastern, but also in its Western regions. Deficiencies in school reality are often caused by people underestimating the challenges the teacher has to cope with in his everyday work, and, furthermore by tendencies to make him a scapegoat for evils whose roots must be sought not with teachers, but with the society on the whole, parents included. This particular remark is legitimate in regard of the widespread burnout syndrome and of early retirement. To sum up, for the sake of progress and dynamism in education teachers need encouragement and care to be continuously confirmed by the local, national and international community. Needless to add that in a good number of European countries special qualifying measures for head-teachers, supervisors and inspectors have been taken as a further contribution to amelioration.

An exemplary comparative excursion: United States, Australia, Canada

The analysed criteria mirror trends to be observed in all European education systems. They do not yet allow the conclusion that they appear everywhere in equal intensity and simultaneousness. Therefore investigations into individual national systems will remain to be an essential subject of educational research and assessment to explore not only integrative trends, but also relapses, conflicts and overlaps within the national systems and in the all-European dimension. In this context a few exemplary thoughts should be devoted to the demarcation of Europe as educational space in its own right against the 'rest of the world'. The following comparative approach, though in rough outlines, concentrates on the United States, Australia and Canada as comparative counterparts. This choice seems to be legitimate, since these three countries have managed to constitute themselves as independent nations equipped with democratic political institutions and national identities of their citizens and, at the same time, to retain their 'European heritage' in philosophical and cultural terms. This peculiarity can be regarded as a distinctive mark, when being compared to nation-states having emerged from indigenous cultural roots, such as China and Japan, or from colonial rule without constituting any substantial ties to a European heritage. The Latin American countries with continuing ties to their Hispanic or Lusitanian cultural roots, take an intermediate position between both configurations.

Which are the main constitutive marks of Europe in the present comparison?

History: Europe, in particular the European Union, is about to grow into a region provided with transnational or even supra-national responsibilities. This process, however, is based upon a history of more than one thousand years (to begin, in this context, with the early Middle Ages), characterised by wide-reaching political diversity of principalities and, later on, nation-states with sovereignties of their own. This historical diversity explains why it has never become a 'nation' with 'national education systems' as essential components, unlike its comparative counterparts in the ‘New World’ (in this context including Australia). Irrespective of the recent trends towards harmonising quality standards and qualifying certificates, there is no substantial change in sight indicating readiness of European states to dispense with their inherited – or even recently obtained – educational sovereignties. Consequently, education in Europe (more correctly: in the European nation-states) must be defined as an 'association of national education systems', though on the way to be restricted towards border-crossing co-operative tendencies.

Governance: It seems that the European Union is developing into a supra-national federation of sovereign countries. Some of them retain or develop intern federal structures, which indicate distinct similarities to the intern federal structures of the three comparative counterparts. However, differences show up in regard of existence and degree of decentralisation and delegation of self-government to the local (communal) levels of school governance. It is true that recent developments in Europe signalise increase in this direction too, but up to now national and regional authorities have asserted their constitutionally based competencies to a comparatively high degree.

Structure: Let alone the establishment of uniform schools in the former communist countries (with their impacts on the post-communist development), the history of education in Western Europe indicates the foundation of integrated schools consisting of primary and lower secondary levels and opening wide access to the upper level of secondary education. This trend has reached its most distinct form in the Nordic region. On the other hand the centuries-old dualism of selective academic schools (Grammar Schools, Lycées, Gymnasien etc., originally connected with special preparatory institutions or classes) and non-selective elementary schools (Volksschulen etc.) has given way to pervious structures. However, as a fundamental principle it has survived in many countries, above all in Germany, Austria and the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. The education system of the United States is essentially based upon idea and reality of 'common schools' (Horace Mann) for all members of the young generation to be traced back to the first schools in the early colonial period. This system starts with integrated kindergartens and elementary schools and is centred in the comprehensive high school which John Gardner – in his exemplary definition – called 'a peculiarly American phenomenon..., because it offers, under one administration and under one roof (or series of roofs), secondary education for almost all the high

school age children of one town or neighbourhood... It is responsible for educating the bright and not so bright children..., both academic and vocational...' (quoted in Conant 1967, p. 3). Australia and Canada share this 'American phenomenon' by having established comparable 'common schools'.

Curriculum: The PISA studies have demonstrated the world-wide progress of the demand for competencies-based curricula, according to the output-oriented concept of learning aims and objectives. In Europe this recent trend, though to various degrees, has to cope with the perseverance of the traditional content-based and input-oriented principle of curriculum development. This shift of paradigm is closely connected with the trendsetting replacement of the separate teaching of individual subjects (derived from the academic discipline structure of the 'classical' universities) by the introduction of subject-crossing and practice-oriented learning units. In this respect the three education systems in comparison, with their articulate preference for project instruction (based on subject-crossing approaches) seem to be better 'prepared' for the new challenges that characterise the current shift of paradigm. This trend, however, should not be mistaken for any assumption saying that the continuous tension of content versus method, to be discerned in modern history of education, has come to an end.

Culture: The United States and Australia share the eminent contribution their education systems make to the national coherence and stability. In both cases they have significantly contributed to the formation of national unity and solidarity, in spite of their multi-ethnic composition. In both cases educational policies are focused on efforts of cross-curricular range including national history, citizenship education (social studies) and, not to forget, the transmission of one national language as the official and nationwide medium of communication. It is the language criterion that may be awarded the highest rank in the identity-building endeavours of the education systems. In comparison with this achievement, European history gives ample evidence of the enormous role language diversity and language conflicts have played in the interrelations among European nations, let alone the troubles to integrate indigenous ethnic minorities or, in the current period, migrants with national ties to their home countries. Taken as a whole, these are much stronger and more pronounced than similar appearances in the nations compared. This is, of course, a rough statement, concentrating on the mainstream and deliberately neglecting 'exceptional' trends having recently emerged, such as the United States', confrontation with the advancement of the Spanish language as a concomitant of mass immigration 'from the neighbouring South'. While this process, however, can be considered as a 'particular' item, language diversity is constitutive for many European countries and, moreover, Europe on the whole. In this respect the Canadian case with its English-French bilingualism comes near the European model, the more so as it has become closely linked with the issue of migrants' (in Canada: immigrants') languages.

Concluding remarks: The global dimension of European education

The concise excursion into the comparative domain, as discussed in the preceding part, immediately points the way to the global dimension of European education. The present considerations have been focused on the assumption that educational developments of short or medium range will continue to take place in the framework of education systems, as established with the emergence of the modern state. This assumption entails the prediction that education will be, in principle, transmitted in well-organised schools (in the widest meaning), though gradually relaxing into intern diversification with regard to regulations of compulsory attendance, intern organisation (in classrooms and other groupings), temporal sequence (with advanced placement arrangements, etc.). The ubiquitous progress of culture, economy and technology suggests doubts that society will manage without compulsory school attendance per se in the predictable future. However, there are signs indicating radical innovations within the 'traditional' education systems, as to be concluded from the current trends already. These are, for example, related to wider-reaching remodelling of instruction patterns with individualised learning (focused on the students' different learning speeds) and enhanced use of electronic media, distance learning and early beginning of elementary learning in various forms. There cannot be any doubt that progress in research of learning psychology and learning theory will accelerate such changes, let alone findings in the domain of brain research to be expected. Finally, reorganisation of the customary curriculum systems, in particular the definition of core, obligatory and optional subjects, will become more urgent as a

consequence of changes in the academic teaching and vocational education, in form of the projection of new subjects and learning areas, etc.

Can globalisation, pluralisation and individualisation be regarded as driving forces stimulating the 'end of schools', as predicted by the 'deschoolers' a few decades ago (Illich 1971)? While Illich's argumentations were based upon socio-philosophical theorems, the range of such considerations have been recently extended to empirical research, embedded in theoretical analyses, first of all in genetics and informatics. At this spot, however, we enter the domain of speculation. Is a 'world without schools' conceivable in the sense of 'Real Utopia'? As long as we limit the concept of 'school' to the customary institutionalised school, the answer can, in principle, be in the affirmative indeed, although predictions of short or medium range do not indicate the probability of such radical shift. However, respective predictions of long range are unrealistic as well. Posterior generations are unlikely to manage without 'schools', for even educational institutions having realised all the aforementioned alternatives will remain to be 'schools' in the fundamental meaning of learning places (even in their distance variation) with targeted categories. These considerations end up in the prediction that the topic of 'educational sovereignty' is unlikely to disappear from the agenda, although radical changes will pose new questions enforced by changes in the economic, political and cultural domains. The editors and authors of 'Education systems in Europe' (respectively their successors) will have to cope with all these new questions, when being asked to revise their chapters and to end up in an entire re-conception of the present handbook.

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