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# EDUCATION

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# EDUCATION IN THE MODERN WORLD SYSTEM: AN ATTEMPT TO END THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION AS A COLONIAL HERITAGE

by

CHRISTEL ADICK

The following discussion originated in connection with my inaugural dissertation, which is being generously supported by a scholarship from the German Research Society (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).

## *Introduction*

In this paper, I wish to criticise the common conception of the existence of *specific* educational problems in developing countries, believed to have resulted from the development of *education as a colonial heritage*. Explicitly, I assert that colonialism is *not* the cause for the development of school systems in developing countries according to the so-called Western model. Instead, colonialism and modern education are more adequately described as epiphenomena in the development of the *modern world system*. During the constitution of this system, the "modern" school system evolved over the past two hundred years as the *dominant global model of education and instruction*, gradually taking over or replacing other "traditional" forms of education and instruction, such as the medieval monastary school, private tutors, monitor systems or Koran schools.

Both here and in the "developing countries", therefore, the modern school has become an integral component of the modern world system, in which we all must live. It is a contradictory world system, characterized by the capitalist mode of production. Due to such aspects as the universalization of knowledge, the accumulation of capital and the international division of labour, emancipat-

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ory prospects and promises have been opened up, and to some extent, remain to be realized (human rights, improvements in the standard of living). In contrast, intra- and intersocietal power conflicts related to the accumulation of knowledge, capital and the division of labour have also created potential for exploitation and threats which continue to exist to this day (wars, ecological crises, structures of dependency).

In the *first* part of this paper, I will draw attention to several historical inconsistencies, which are only inadequately described by the common conception of "education as a colonial heritage".

In the *second* part, a short mental excursion in "theoretical paradigms" will be followed by several initial deliberations towards the conception of an alternative explanation for the "universalization of education in the modern world system". The goal here is to develop a common frame of reflection for educational problems in the "developing countries" as well as in Germany.

### *Part I: The Myth of "Education as a Colonial Heritage"*

According to a letter from the organizer, our study group was given the following assignment:

*The effects of education and instruction are to be examined in regard to the accommodation of the colonized peoples to the conditions and needs of the colonial rulers in the respective colonial territories.*

This mode of formulation, which is an accurate formulation of what I would describe as the model explanation for the concept of "education as a colonial heritage", contains several aspects, which – since they by-pass the main point in the global expansion of education – have become increasingly problematic during the course of the years I have been concerned with the situation of education in "developing countries", especially in Africa.

The myth of "education as a colonial heritage" involves some quite contradictory ideas. For example, one of these states that, besides destruction and exploitation, colonialism also introduced *positive* cultural achievements to the oppressed peoples, such as schools, which were left behind as a heritage; the contrary point of view depicts "education as a colonial heritage" as a *negative* foreign-dictated burden, which must still be born by the former colonies, and which must be overcome. Common to both interpretations is the undifferentiated culprit-victim perspective. Even when taken together, these views are not able to explain *why the "western" model of education has become globally dominant*. The introduction and propagation of school systems of "European" character in the colonies was always *more and something other* than a "good" or "bad" cultural deed of the European colonial masters.

In order to clarify what is meant when I refer to "school", I have put together a brief catalogue of characteristics of the modern school system (Appendix 1). These are *characteristics of the modern school system*, which have developed from many different national and cultural contexts over the course of the past two hundred years, but which have become more and more similar internationally. The term "systematisation of education", which was introduced by Müller (1981; see also the respective discussion in Müller, Ringer and Simon 1977) in reference to the German educational system, will be used here as a *transnational* term to describe the process in which the mentioned characteristics of education have evolved into *globally* dominant characteristics, and thus differentiate modern school systems from other types of instruction and education, whether past or present, European or non-European, such as monitor systems, initiation courses, private tutors, adult education, youth counselling, esoteric educational groups etc.

Now, I will return to the concept of "education as a colonial heritage". The following questions and factors are contrary to an interpretation of "education as a colonial heritage".

#### *Autochthonous versus European Initiative*

Is colonial history really (only) the history of the "accommodation of the colonized peoples to the conditions and needs of the colonial masters" (see above)? Is it the history of the Europeans *actively enforcing* this accommodation and the *passively reacting* non-Europeans who were accommodated?

In African studies, this problem has been discussed under such titles as "European *versus* African initiative" and has thereby led to a new interpretation of some aspects of the history of the establishment of foreign colonial rule and to bringing out *African* reasons and interests which were involved in English colonial rule (see McCarthy 1983 on the Fanti, and Nzemeke 1982 on the Niger delta).

A discussion has been going on for some time in connection with the *introduction of schooling* and the African reaction to this institution. Does the acceptance or boycotting of schools on the whole or of individual elements (such as foreign language courses or certain types of schools) reveal any economical and political *self-interests* on the part of certain indigenous populations? Such interests would forbid a general interpretation of school as an exclusively *exogenously* imposed *foreign* institution. Traditional autochthonous cultural patterns and social structures and their modern European counterparts were not always monolithic, static and incompatible. In some situations they obviously "fit" together quite well and have *not* resulted in cultural conflicts.

Instructive for such an approach, i.e. for questions dealing with the various determining *autochthonous* conditions as relevant variables for the expansion of education, is a controversy on the "correct" assessment of the *exogenous* or *endogenous* factors responsible for the differences in the expansion of school education in two African kingdoms – Ashanti and Buganda – or on whether the *educational advantage of the Ibos* over the Yoruba and Hausa, who all lived in the colony of Nigeria under British colonial rule (and, therefore, under similar exogenous conditions) may be considered a result of an *ethno-cultural predisposition* for the acceptance of education by the Ibos (Nwa-Chil 1973 and 1978; similar deliberations on several different ethnic groups in Kenya were made by Kay).

*Was there an Alliance of Interests between Missionary Schools and Colonial Schools?*

Did the missions actually place their educational work in the service of the respective colonial power *per se*, as for example, is clearly implied by the title of the book, "Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism" (Tiberondwa 1978)? Using a similar title – this time followed by a question mark – Fletcher (1982) discusses the role of the British colonial school inspectors, for whom this presumption is more likely to hold true.

The so-called *national* mission agencies (German mission agencies in German colonies, British mission agencies in British colonies, etc.) are better suited to fit the definition of a *missionary-colonial alliance of interests and power*. Simultaneously, however, there were *other* traditions in mission work, *which were critical of colonialism*, as well as local mission and church activities carried out by the indigenous population. These developments do not unequivocally fit into the picture of an unbroken alliance of interests. In the history of German missions, for example, we hear of the colonial critic of the 19th century, Michael Zahn from the North German Mission Agency. There was also the British Henry Venn, who wished to put the missionary and church work into the hands of the native populations as soon as possible (the missionary policy of *native agencies*). Massive intervention on the part of the *colonial powers* in regard to the curriculum, school language, systems of subsidy and regulations on the opening of new schools often forced mission agencies to become integrated into, or excluded from, colonial educational policies. (For information on the relationships between missions and colonialism in the German colonial school system see Adick 1981a and Gelzer 1969/70; for the British colonies see Holmes (ed.) 1967; for the French colonies see Bouche 1975 and 1976.).

Also often forgotten is the fact that natives and – in the case of Africa – Africans returning from the Americas and, to some extent, from Europe have *themselves* performed educational and missionary work. To some degree, this had occurred *before* any type of colonial school systems at all had been established by any of the colonial powers. Examples of this are the work of Bishop Crowther in the Niger Delta, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission, which operated mainly by native management in West Africa in the 19th century, as well as the Rio Pongas Mission in Sierra Leone, which was initiated by Afro-Americans.

Although some *European* missionaries carried out their work on the spot and, especially in the colonial era, exclusively occupied the *higher positions* (again), it is important to remember that local school and mission work was carried out *in practice* to the greatest extent by the domestic population. This gave them a means of influencing their own independent interests as well as the school system itself.

An extremely clear revocation of the concept of a conspirative relationship between missions and colonialism has been presented in a recent paper by Sanneh (1985): European missions were always *forced* to deal with foreign cultures everywhere; instead of regarding the missionaries as agents of imperialism, it is just as possible to see them as indigenous agents; as figures of cross-cultural significance (p. 201).

Indeed, there were many situations in which the local population employed the missions and European missionaries as their mediators *against* violent colonial infringements, and in which they used the mission schools for their own purposes. According to empirical analysis, the numerous religious divisions and foundings of new churches occur as organic side-effects of missionary activity. This is especially true at a point when the educational status of the community has reached a level at which it becomes possible to effectively analyse and criticize the European missions. These changes in the religious organization, however, support an argument *against* the general assumption that the missions served indigenous interests rather than those of the colonial masters.

### *Indigenous Agents of Education according to the "Western" Model*

Why have many colonial subjects demanded the availability of education according to the "western" model and of "European"-style educational opportunities for themselves? Why did they become teachers, missionaries and educational politicians in the colonial school systems? Did they want to accommodate themselves to the needs of the colonial masters? Was it because of a false and corrupted state of consciousness?



The people who came in contact with the colonial system had to make many decisions as to how they wished to react to the respective system or its individual elements. As holds true for human activity in general, their decisions were not random. They were determined by the situation at hand, depending on the social situation in which they found themselves at the time and on the latent or manifest positive and negative *sanctions of their native group and the colonial system*.

In relation to the *acceptance of education*, a general pattern has often been observed: *an initial phase of lack of interest and rejection is followed by a massive movement towards euphoria for education*. (For literature on the conditions for the foundation of school with examples from Nigeria, see Okwu 1980, Nwa-Chil 1978, Tasie 1978; with examples from Togo see Adick 1981a; reaction typologies for the acceptance of schools may be found in Read 1955 and Hanf 1969). In addition to the general acceptance of education, which has occurred everywhere within one or two generations, an especially prominent characteristic of the history of education in Africa, and probably in other areas as well, is that education has not only been accepted in the sense of the formal teach-and-learn type of institution, but also that in spite of all the other suggestions and alternatives, a "western" educational system was demanded and accepted irrespective of the local conditions. Indeed, this choice was made by the *colonial subjects* themselves.

For the most part, all attempts and recommendations – wherever they came from (the mission agencies, European colonial school policies, native educational experts and politicians, mixed commissions) – have failed to replace the "European" academic model of schooling with adapted, ruralized, agricultural, vocational or any other types of formal education. This process took place to some extent even before the establishment of foreign political rule by the European colonial powers, as well as during the colonial period and up to the present day.

For a while at best, *parallel school* systems existed alongside one another: a modern western system and an adapted system. The evidence in this respect is so massive that the blaming of *colonialism* for the existence of the irrelevant, impractical book-knowledge-producing form of education (the "western" model of education) has long been exposed as nothing but a myth. In spite of this, these ideas are still among the most stubbornly propagated aspects of the "education as a colonial heritage" argumentation syndrome. Udo Bude (1984, p. 19 – 81) has presented a detailed Yates discussion on this problem concerning numerous historical and current *educational alternatives* to the "western" model of education in Africa. The educational and political foundations of these alternatives, as well as the reasons for their *rejection* by the respective populations, discussed in this paper provide many examples to support my

arguments to explain the global dominance (and conclusively, acceptance) of the modern "western" educational system.

Due to the scepticism and refusal allotted to "school" as a new pedagogical institution, the first *generation of pupils* in many areas was often composed of *marginal* groups within the respective societies (former slaves and dependants, the poor and members of the lower classes). As a result of the status *reversal* which took place after the education obtained by these groups later provided them with new professional opportunities and social *advancements*, education acquired a *socio-structural demonstration effect* within the time of the next generation and was consequently "discovered" by the other social classes of the traditional societies.

The *colonial state*, which was at least formally *religiously neutral*, was often more acceptable to serve as a possible coalition partner for modern educational aspirations *without* the pressure to convert than were the *missionary* agencies. Colonial educational policy, therefore, achieved a certain degree of integration – or a subsumption – of other formal school systems (such as those of the Islamic tradition) under the "western" model of education. In other words, as time went by the *colonial school system* became acceptable for almost all social classes and cultural conditions, even though worthy of criticism.

There were also certain historical constellations which obviously led to the development of distinct groups of *indigenous mediators* for the expansion of education. As one example, I mention the Creoles of Sierra Leone. This extremely mobile and innovative population arose in the 19th century from various African ethnic groups whose destinies were determined by the Transatlantic slave trade. In all of West Africa, the Creoles were the pioneers of modern education as an *African initiative* even at a time and in places where European colonial educational policies did not yet exist.

The Creoles and other West Africans educated in schools and universities in the 19th century were deposed from their positions about the turn of the century after the consolidation of the colonial systems in West Africa. They lost their high status and positions of authority in schools, administrations, health services, churches and missions to *European* superiors and administrative institutions which were placed ahead of them for racial and colonial reasons. Therefore, it may be assumed that *the development and existence of such classes of native mediators must have been rooted in basic subjective and objective conditions*. Here, the Creoles provide an example:

- the uprooting and alienation resulting from the situation of their social histories as former slaves with culturally heterogeneous backgrounds living outside of their native lands made the Creoles more inclined to accept modern ways of life and educational principles. (Creoles as *cultural agents*, according to Little 1950, p. 309).

- Their roles as agents in trade and missions were pre-structured by the modern world system and connected the external European interests with native interests. This especially holds true where certain historical situations, such as high expenses or high rates of mortality of the European personnel, made it necessary for European trade or mission agencies to rely on native partners. (Creoles as *pre-fabricated collaborators*, according to Williams-Myers 1984, p. 5).

I would like to point out a number of further problems and inconsistencies in the concept of "education as a colonial heritage", without going into detail on the individual aspects:

- Why did the representatives of the national anti-colonial movements, who ultimately contributed to the end of the colonial era, come from among those who, by means of education and their upbringing, were supposed to have been most adapted to the needs of the colonial masters? Did the indoctrination of the colonial school systems fail? In academic debate, such occurrences are designated as "non-intended" or "dysfunctional" effects of colonial education: in my opinion a rather unsatisfactory explanation.
- If education and upbringing were indeed based on the needs of *different* colonial masters, why did educational *practice* and its *effects* produce so many *structural equivalents and similarities*? A favourite exercise is the comparison between British and French colonial educational policies. Besides a number of postulated typical conceptual divergencies, such as decentralized *versus* centralized, a more exact look reveals many *convergencies* as well. Therefore, I pose the question whether "formal education" had become established within a certain range of colonial experiences or whether the "colonial school system" was imposed upon the subjects by a certain colonial power.
- Why do the former colonies perpetuate the school systems that were forced upon them by the colonial powers and further promote educational expansion by means of schools according to the "Western" model? Is it because they consider the Western type of schooling a contribution towards the development of their countries, although it has supposedly long since been recognized that education actually *inhibits* development? This controversy has been the main component of the socio-educational discussion of the past ten years (for an introduction to this subject-matter see Hanf et al. 1975, Nestvogel 1980, Adick 1981b). As far as I know, however, schooling has not been abolished *anywhere*.

*Part II: On the Universalization of Education in the Modern World System*

*A Short Thought in Advance:*

The concept of "education as a colonial heritage" no longer fits from any point of view. There are several possible reactions to the inconsistencies of the historical development, or as Kuhn (1976, p. 65) states it, to the "anomalies" which no longer fit into the "paradigm":

- They may be simply ignored. The pattern of explanation runs on for a while – to put it figuratively – even after the motor has been turned off; for example in examinations.
- The frame of thought is expanded and rearranged, using new and changed definitions, so that it will "fit" again. Indeed, this has happened to the term "colonialism", which no longer only means foreign political rule, but has been modified by such qualifying prefixes as "formal", "informal" "internal" and "external" colonialization, "neo"-colonialism etc. to describe many of the very different types and historical constellations of humans ruling over humans. Furthermore, if Habermas' theory of the "colonialization" of life as a central aspect of the evolution of modernity (Habermas 1981) means that colonialization affects *us all*, the expansion of the meaning of the term "colonialism" has finally reached its limit. In the latter case, however, education must be considered the colonial heritage of *us all*.
- A new, better fitting frame of thought is sought for, and a subsequent "change in theoretical paradigms" is made (Kuhn). My present plea is for such a change in paradigms. The term "colonialism" should be returned to its original meaning: systematic foreign political rule, "formal" or "classical" colonialism. Other types and manifestations of repression and foreign rule should be referred to again as what they really are: racism, exploitation, discrimination, war, sexism, etc.

Academic paradigms are something like rationally constructed myths of limited validity: instead of the myth of "education as a colonial heritage", I now put forward the myth of the "universalization of education in the modern world system". One reason for doing this is that this new frame of explanation is better suited to resolve the above-mentioned inconsistencies. A second reason is to serve a more *constructive* interest in the success of the future of mankind in our world society.

It is not possible to list within a few sentences all the consequences which will result from this change in perspective. Furthermore it cannot be said that all the previous research on this matter will become obsolete by the introduction of these new ideas on the global expansion of education in which the

achievements and misfortunes of educational development under the conditions of foreign colonial rule are to be seen. On the contrary, my ideas on the universalization of education in the modern world system include many of the well-known discussions which have been commented on in various academic disciplines, such as historical education, educational theory, comparative education, educational problems in developing countries etc. Until now, however, these discussions have been often treated individually without sufficient consideration of their interrelationships.

### *Reasons for the Development of a Comprehensive Concept*

The question of whether and how a theory of education in the developing countries can or should be conceived, either as a component of a general theory of modern education, or as an independent theory in itself, has been posed among German-speaking authors, but has not yet been systematically analysed.

I consider my deliberations on the universalization of education in the modern world systems as a preliminary attempt to develop a total perspective, involving the points of view from which the development and – less often – the global expansion of modern education have been and still are being looked at, to overcome the almost exclusive fixation on educational history and its treatment as a problem in the context of individual *national states*. Instead, modern education is to be treated consistently as a *global* phenomenon. There still exists no satisfactory theory for this total perspective. Important steps in this direction have recently been introduced by John Boli, John W. Meyer and Francisco O. Ramirez (1985) and by Ramirez and Boli (1987).

The individual deliberations on which I base my discussion on the global expansion and systematisation of modern education are presented in my “ten postulations on modern education” (Appendix 2). These cannot all be discussed in detail and certainly cannot completely define what “school” or “education” is today. They cannot fully explain why these, and not other, structural characteristics have developed worldwide (recall Appendix 1), in spite of all of the differences in everyday educational practice and in the internal arrangement of the details of such a globally pre-structured school system.

The credibility of this total perspective (in contrast to national educational histories) is supported by the following arguments:

- a) Even the *differences in educational practice, in the formation of the external structures of education*, are only due in part to the factor of the “context of the nation-state”. There are great differences between such countries in which the ethno-cultural background and the national boundaries basically

coincide (such as Denmark, Italy, Japan, Egypt) and such countries which need to create a balance between ethno-cultural plurality and national citizenship (many African nations, U.S.A., U.S.S.R.) and the many countries whose situations lie somewhere between these two extremes and in which ethno-cultural minorities and regional aspects play a more or less significant role. In other words, even *within* a more or less ethno-culturally homogeneous nation there exists a considerable degree of variation in educational practice, depending on the location: city, village, industrial settlement, wealthy suburb, slum, minority region etc., and depending on ethno-religious, political, and socio-structural conditions, which determine the provisions of the schools with more or less qualified teaching personnel, pleasant or forbidding buildings, the presence or absence of teaching materials etc. This does *not* serve to explain my proposed total perspective. I want to regard and differentiate *the development and structuring of the modern school system in this epoch, and over a greater period of time, as having become "universal"; as a kind of "invariant of undetermined duration"* (Liedtke 1972, p. 262). These considerations must go beyond the national context so that many cultural, ethnic, religious, class and sex-specific influences and interests related to education can be clearly elaborated on. Such aspects are often forgotten where the existence of national homogeneity is assumed, such as in the discussion of "German", "Togolese", "Indian" or other educational systems.

- b) *To speak of education according to a "European" or "Western" model is an inadequate abstraction.* Furthermore, such an interpretation implies that there could be a formal educational system of a "non-European" or "non-Western" model. In my discussion, I have always been careful to speak of a *so-called* European model. A closer look reveals that the form which school education has taken on in the past two hundred years has resulted in part from similar and in part from different – and here, it is appropriate to say – mostly "European" national and cultural *developmental* interrelationships. In the long run, however, the *spread and further development* of education has led to international convergencies, resulting in a global model of modern school education, which over a period of time has come to dominate all other forms of instruction and education – whether European or non-European; i.e. other systems of teaching were either incorporated, adapted or excluded to be transmitted in other, non-school forms of education. In other words, globally, there is only one dominant model of formalized "education" with the designated, to some extent internationally standardized characteristics. There exist many various realizations of this model, which again, can only very simplistically be classified according to such criteria as "European" or "African".

Of course, it depends on the criteria used for differentiation in order to be able to say *when* this process of universalization, standardization and internationalization of the modern educational development began: whether it was the historic idea of Johann Amos Comenius, who may have been the first to propose a type of general education, or whether it was with the establishment of such modern administrative authorities as UNESCO or the OECD, which compel us to compare and adjust our national educational developments to each other, although these organizations themselves are the result of the development of the modern world system.

Although the process of expansion and systematisation of modern education is (so far) historically characterized by European-Western dominance, it cannot be sufficiently described as a principally "European" development. Instead, it must be understood as a global process with a long-term tendency towards more education for everyone in structurally similar systems, and must be seen in connection with the development of the modern world system.

The role of *non-European* regions in the development, application and reflection of theoretical concepts in the process of the advancement of the modern educational system, at least since the turn of and at the beginning of the 19th century, can be illustrated by the example of the history of the monitor system which, historically, was subsequently overcome in the course of the 19th century with the development of standardized elementary school systems with their tendencies towards being "secular", "free of charge" and "obligatory" (Schriewer 1985). According to this monitor system, a teacher taught with the help of older, more advanced pupils, who were employed as monitors, that is, as assistant instructors, for the younger beginning pupils. Often hundreds of pupils were taught in huge halls. Dr. Andrew Bell was one of the originators of this rationalized method for the mass alphabetization of the educationally deficient lower classes. After he had "discovered" and tested this method during his activity as a teacher in India (from 1789 on), he propagated it in a short pamphlet upon his return to England (1797). This most "modern" method of the day for the most inexpensive provision of an elementary education was not only used to teach hundreds of thousands of English working-class children. It was also tested and applied in the British (as well as French) influenced regions of West Africa alongside other educational methods, such as missionary village school concepts. African teacher candidates from Sierra Leone, for example, came to the Borough Road School of Joseph Lancaster, another originator of the monitor system. Experience of the possibilities and deficits posed by this system was reported back to England by means of school inspections and mission reports. In the meantime, a *National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor* and a *British and Foreign School Society* were involved in the discussion towards developing a new

concept of the British elementary school system. Here, the more modern ideas of Robert Owen, who was in contact with the Swiss educationist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, were brought into the picture.

- c) The focus on a total perspective on the expansion and systematisation of the modern educational system in various contexts illustrates clearly that we are dealing with *one and the same historical process*.

The development of education in the past two hundred years within and outside Europe can be seen

- *neither as different* historical developments, here "Europe" with a specifically "European" school system and there "Africa" with a specifically "African" school system,
- *nor as a phase-shifted* historical development, first the development of education in Europe, then the same development in Africa.  
Many factors speak in favour of this *thesis of a common, although historically extended process of change*, and do not fit into the picture of a "different" or "phase-shifted" development; for example:
  - It would have to be *merely a coincidence* that educational systems in countries with and without colonialism and in European and non-European countries all possess the above-mentioned structural similarities.
  - Even at a time in which obligatory school attendance was not yet enforced in all of Europe (according to a summary by Schneider 1982, p. 212, national laws for obligatory school attendance were also not introduced in all of Europe until the 20th century), modern schools had already also existed for some time in non-European regions. This is true not only of the "Western"-orientated European settlements in the colonies of America and Australia, but also in Japan, the Near East and in West Africa, to name but a few areas for which the possible and likely pretext cannot be claimed that the respective non-European areas were actually educational enclaves harbouring a kind of foreign-based European schools.
  - And when in the period between 1870 and 1910, when such factors as the age for school admission (between the ages of five and seven) and the duration of obligatory school attendance (between seven and eight years of school) were approaching certain standards – i.e. some systematisation in the sphere of the elementary school system – the first modern colleges of the "Third World", such as *Codrington College* in Barbados and *Fourah Bay College* in Sierra Leone, were already bestowing academic degrees.

It is not intended to state that there are or were no differences. However, these differences *cannot* be sufficiently explained by means of such factors as



"European" *versus* "non-European", "exogenous" *versus* "endogenous" or similar arguments. Instead, *national, regional and other differences must:*

- *be systematically related to the respective situation of global educational standards:* the so-called Sputnik shock as an incentive for increased educational activity in the United States and Western Europe in the 1960's, the introduction of computers and information studies in national school systems as a reaction to global competition and changes in production processes, and even the inclusion of West Africa in the modern world system as an incentive for the successful introduction of modern education there;
- *be systematically related to the status of the discussion on education within the respective society:* since modern education directly relates the school-leaving qualification to the labour market, there is a distributional contest for education as "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1983). Social groups which possess the necessary political or other forms of power, and which expect to profit or lose most from the educational system, also try to manipulate the system in order to impose their concept of education.

### *A Preliminary Summary*

The modern school system has become the globally dominant form of systematic teaching and education. The entire spectrum of practical upbringing, education and instruction encompasses much more than "school" and includes such non-scholastic institutions as family upbringing, extra-curricular youth education, the socialization process in the neighbourhood and the community, vocational instruction, social work, religious and political education. In spite of this, "school" is the one aspect of all educational practices in which the respective current situation of the world system is most accurately reflected, including the most recent advancements in science and technology as well as the politically and economically determined dependencies, interdependencies and competitions. The standardization and internationalization of the development of school systems creates a formal framework here (for the structural elements of school, see Appendix 1) for transnational and transcultural learning and teaching processes.

Modern education is involved in the production and universalization of knowledge on the one hand as well as in the selection and legitimization of knowledge on the other hand. It possesses an *enlightening, emancipatory component* and liberates from natural and quasi-natural dependencies. It provides access to educational opportunities for all, as well as the liberation of the individual. Simultaneously, however, modern education has a certain *domination component*: certificates and diplomas may open or block off the

way to a better life. Social and class interests are revealed in segmentation and school types. The educational pyramid links the hierarchy of the educational and vocational systems. The hidden curriculum creates discriminatory effects beyond the line of study.

Compared to all the above facets of educational practice, many of which are much more strongly structured according to *culturally relative* rules specific to respective regional sexual, ethnic and national aspects, education has become a *relatively culturally indifferent tool* of mankind in the epoch of the socio-cultural development of the modern world system – the “Evolution of Modernity” (Habermas 1981). In this sense, education has become *evolutionarily universal*, a tool which, due to its enlightening, emancipatory components (see above), creates a greater scope of freedom. Because of its domination component, however (see above), it also imposes new constraints.

“Relatively culturally indifferent” does not at all imply “neutrality”. The control and application of a tool always simultaneously connotes a *power potential*, which may be applied to serve certain interests. Politics are also made through the use of education, although the arguments are supposedly usually based on “pedagogical” reasons. The term “evolutionarily universal” is not being used to assert the existence of some kind of harmonious philosophy of progress. On the contrary, both the development and the present situation of our modern world system show a huge negative balance. This fact is illustrated by such key expressions as alienation, “colonialization of everyday life”, slavery, deportation and genocide, as well as serious ecological damage and atomic, biological and chemical weapons and technologies which threaten us all.

The revival of pre-modern, non-European cultural traditions, such as has been proclaimed in many former colonies in response to the injustices and developmental hindrances on the periphery of our modern world system, *may* represent a potential for resistance to alienation and one-sided capitalist dependencies. But it may also lead to the misuse of conservative relics of folklore as instruments of oppression to stifle demands for equal participation in the promises and achievements of the modern world system (longer life expectancy, human rights, international cultural contacts) according to the principle of ‘traditional culture for the poor, modern culture for the wealthy’.

#### APPENDIX 1

##### *Structural Characteristics of Modern School Systems*

The term “school” implies a spatial and temporal autonomy of learning in the form of regular *teaching* processes and – since it is directed towards dependent non-adults – a certain degree of socialized *upbringing*. The follow-

ing structural characteristics of "modern school systems" have become globally dominant approximately within the past 200 years, and are set apart from other past and present modes of upbringing, teaching and education:

1. a more or less differentiated *school system* to provide a general education, with corresponding subdivisions into school classes, levels, types and graduation degrees;
2. teaching according to a more or less intensively planned, state-sanctioned *curriculum*, the content of which is an intentional, legitimized and prearranged selection from the universe of possible knowledge;
3. a systematic differentiation between teaching and learning, so that a *professional staff of teachers* appears before a *school class* – i.e. a number of pupils – at scheduled time intervals – i.e. school periods, or lessons;
4. a *state-controlled, public, legally regulated educational practice*, which reflects the respective state of the social balances of power.

School is a component within the total spectrum of educational practices, which in turn are an integral part of the practices of the entire society. The reproductive role of education should be emphasized as its *social* function (reproduction, here, does not mean the production of an identical copy). The reproductive achievements of education are illustrated by its qualification, selection and legitimization functions: the acquisition of sanctioned knowledge, rewarded with a certificate, becomes a form of cultural capital. This allocation of chances for a better life is accepted as legitimate. Therefore, a school system cannot be better than (or different from) the society that creates or maintains it.

#### NOTES

A similar catalogue of characteristics of modern school system has been presented by Herrlitz, Hopf and Titze 1984, p. 57-60.

My views on education have been strongly influenced by Bourdieu 1974 and 1983, Fend 1980 and Menck 1986.

#### APPENDIX 2

##### *Ten Theses on Modern Education*

Modern education is . . .

part of the modern world system,

an expression of the capitalist mode of production, in its essence a globally expansive system,

involved in the production and universalization of knowledge (enlightening, emancipatory component) on the one hand, but also in the selection and legitimization of knowledge (authoritative component) on the other hand,

a result of an approximately 200-year process of expansion and systematisation of schooling: more education for all, in formally similarly structured systems, a "temporal invariant" (Liedtke), or an "evolutionary universal" (in the sense of Parsons) of the socio-cultural "evolution of modernity" (Habermas), an educational invention which serves (served) the interests of the aspiring bourgeoisie, at first in opposition to existing class privileges and birthrights, and in the course of further development also against subsequent pressure from the aspirations of the lower social classes, an institution of generalized and socialized upbringing and instructional processes in the medium of "relative pedagogical autonomy" (Bourdieu), a specific combination of upbringing and instruction; upbringing = universally necessary "reactions of society to the (biological) facts of development" (Bernfeld), instruction = a methodical treatment of knowledge and its conveyance as a reaction to the accumulation of knowledge (adapted from Liedtke), a piece of the history of the disciplining (Foucault) and control of "wild" human nature: disciplining of the senses, of thought, of emotions, and the control of external natural phenomena: knowledge, science, technology; a tool for the reproduction of mankind at a certain socio-cultural level of development, allowing greater freedom of activity, but at the same time imposing new constraints (Lenhart).

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