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Formation of a World Educational System

Christel Adick

The main aim of this chapter is to give a frame of reference to the diverse aspects and country reports of the 1993 International Symposium on Law and Education, for which it was written. This implies that one has to abstract from many historical and national differences, peculiarities, and unique experiences in order to concentrate on some categories and basic findings. The paper presents the world systems approach in Comparative Education as a useful analytical perspective for such an overall and encompassing perspective.

In the first section some methodological questions will be raised concerning the relevance of the world systems approach in analyzing developments in education. This is followed by a summary of the main empirical findings on the formation of a world educational system. We shall then approach the question as to what we may learn from these findings for law and education, i.e., for educational decision making in open societies in our present world situation.

CASE AND COUNTRY STUDIES OR GLOBAL APPROACH?

The mainstream of educational reasoning and practice has for a long time been based on the predominance of national settings. The structure, contents, lawmaking, and philosophy of education are usually analyzed on the basis of a nation-state model of a given school system in a given society. In this respect we speak, for example, of the French, the German, the Italian, and other school systems. Disregarding the differences in scope and approach of the manifold studies of this caliber, we may summarize this approach to examining school systems as the "case and country-study" tradition of comparative education. In this tradition the single state constitutes the relevant aggregate of analysis, comparison, and decision

making. Yet, for some time now, the question has persisted as to why school systems in the modern world have not become similar as a result of a set of answers and reactions to a new world situation that bears structurally similar challenges to every nation and hence to every national educational system. In a historically comparative perspective, then, it makes sense to look at the emergence of nation-state organized, compulsory education from a world systems approach. But before I elaborate on this approach, there should be a short description of what is meant by this type of schooling.

Modern school systems are one aspect of the overall practice of education and socialization. They may be characterized by some features that set them apart from other past and present modes of human upbringing, teaching, and education. The features of modern schooling are: a differentiated school system with subdivisions into school classes, levels, types, and graduation degrees; teaching according to a prearranged curriculum; a systematic organization of teaching and learning, by which a professional staff of teachers appears before a class of school children at a scheduled time; a state-controlled, public, legal regulation of the educational practice in schools, etc. The achievements of such a type of mass education for the individual and for society are to be found in its functions to qualify all children and youths in a certain way, to select them according to their performance and in varying degrees also according to their cultural and social backgrounds, and to legitimize the societal system as a whole (Fend 1980). The acquisition of "sanctioned" knowledge by compulsory education (sanctioned ideals by the ruling generation of a given society, e.g., through the mechanisms of curriculum development), rewarded with a school certificate, becomes a form of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1983). This type of allocation of chances for (an allegedly "better") life by means of compulsory education in a nationally organized school system seems to be basically "legitimate" in the sense that everybody believes in it, or at least acts as if he or she believed in it.

More than 20 years ago Ivan Illich made the forecast that schools in the above-mentioned sense would disappear from the scene by the end of this century. They would by then be a kind of historical relic, dating back from the times of the railway and the private vehicle, which would also be abolished (cf., Illich 1970, 16). Quite contrary to this prognosis, the school is still alive today and is present throughout the world. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Thailand, in which delegates of

educational ministries from all over the world participated, made quite clear that education should be considered a basic human right, and that universal admission to schooling should be achieved by the end of this century (Weltdeklaration 1990). So the challenging question for an internationally comparative analysis on law and education lies in the fact that the above-mentioned model of schooling is basically universally accepted today and not rejected as Illich predicted some 20 years ago. How to interpret this fact should be the focus of attention and the starting point of any global analysis of modern schooling today, rather than a case or country approach.

Important steps in the direction of describing and explaining the universalization of modern schooling have been taken in the works of John Boli, John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, and others at Stanford University. Their world systems approach to modern education is based on the following premise:

> Education as a social institution is a transnational or "world cultural" phenomenon, in precisely the same sense that science, technology, political theory, economic development, and a host of other phenomena are transnational in nature. By this we mean that what education is (its ontology), how it is organized (its structure), and why it is of value (its legitimacy) are features that evolve primarily at the level of *world* culture and world economic system, not at the level of individual nation-states or other subunits of the overarching system. (Boli and Ramirez 1986, 66).

EDUCATION IN THE MODERN WORLD SYSTEM

The research that has hitherto been accomplished under this approach by the Stanford group and others may be summarized as follows (for details and references cf., Adick 1992a, Ch. 5):

Schooling Has Become Universal

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the invention of literacy and formal instruction already dated back some 5,000 years. But schooling had not become universal by the onset of the Industrial Revolution; at that time over 90 percent of the world population could neither read nor write.

For thousands of years formal education had remained the privilege of minority groups even in Europe, where in the middle of the last century about half of the population was still illiterate and compulsory education had not yet been fully implemented in many countries (cf., Cipolla 1969). Today, however, about 90 percent of the children worldwide spend at least some time during their lives in one kind of formal schooling or another (cf., UNICEF 1990). Thus, compared to the long history of schooling, we have to recognize the fact of a rather rapid and global spread of a new model of schooling that began roughly some two centuries ago. It took place in countries with former traditions of formal learning and literacy as was the case in Europe, but also in Islamic and Asian countries with their traditions of Koranic and Temple schools. But the innovation of schooling was also adopted in countries without prior institutions of literacy and formal learning as in many parts of Africa. Schooling was implemented in countries with autonomous governments; as a "non-Western" example we may remember the often-quoted case of Japan. But it was also implemented in countries with dependent status like the many former colonies in the so-called Third World. Schooling was spread by more or less external force (e.g., missions, colonialism), or adopted by a self-determined affiliation to modern world developments. As an example of self-determination in adopting western-style education we can again refer to the case of Japan, but many indigenous initiatives in other nonwestern countries make it quite clear that even in colonial settings, the implementation of schooling was more than just a mere colonial heritage (cf., Adick 1989, 1992b).

The fact that the school is universally accepted leads us to the question of how to interpret this rapid worldwide spread of modern education. This question might at first seem trivial, because schooling has become all too self-evident for us today. Seen from the perspective of the history of mankind, however, there is a need to explain, for example, the differences among national school systems. But stating the fact that the school has been universally accepted does not mean that there was no resistance to this innovation or that it was not criticized and adapted to national and local circumstances. Historical processes of implementation and domination especially in nonwestern countries include many instances of protest, rejection, and critique of this new allegedly western model of teaching and education. So to sum up the argument: schooling existed in many countries before the advent of modern schooling (training of bureaucrats and religious personnel, monastery and temple schools, Koranic schools, etc.);

and, as was already mentioned, the invention of literacy and numeracy, accompanied by the first forms of instruction and schooling, dates back some 5,000 years. But the pre-modern types of schooling were never the same as the new invention of schooling that can in short be characterized as a state-controlled compulsory educational system, a term that is largely synonymous with what we call the modern school. The universally adopted modern school has become a reality; in the long run, schooling along distinctly new lines was actually globally accepted, and, despite Illich' s prognosis, it is obvious that no country would or possibly could reject this new model of schooling.

The Expansion of School Education

Schooling expanded and expands by the tendency to implement and extend compulsory education, by increasing enrollment rates, and by increasing levels of education. This expansionist trend seems to be a secular trend, i.e., rather independent from economic, cultural, and political conditions (including the factor "colonialism")—with the exception of the respective starting point of the trend: for example, expansion in European countries in this century began from a higher level of schooling than in African countries (for data sets and interpretation cf., Meyer et. al. 1992). The expansion of schooling has not yet come to an end. It seems to persist primarily in the so-called developing countries, where we find many programs for universal primary education and a host of new projects as a follow-up to the above-mentioned world conference on Education for All. But the trend is equally salient in the already developed countries of the west and in the so-called "newly developing countries," for instance in South East Asia, where we find an enormous expansion of the secondary and tertiary levels of instruction after World War II.

We may only speculate as to whether and when this expansionist trend will come to an end. In my opinion the trend to expand compulsory education (directed to children and youths) will eventually reach some kind of ceiling effect. This is because of the unique combination in the modern school of the two elements of "education"—directed to children and youths in a premature age—and "instruction" of human knowledge—which is not confined to any age. One may prolong the premature life-span to some extent (and it has already been prolonged to encompass young adults). But there will be a kind of "natural," anthropological end to this span in life,

and this will probably demarcate the end of compulsory education. But due to the enormous expansion of human knowledge this does not mean that instruction will not continue in other forms of noncompulsory schooling. On the contrary, vocational and professional training, university education, continuing education, and other programs catering to life-long learning will increase in response to the ever accumulating body of knowledge. But these forms of instruction will not all become part of the program launched by the invention of the compulsory state-run school model. This, the topic of state-run schooling, leads us directly to the next issue.

State Control over Modern School Systems is a Worldwide Fact

State control is documented by state offices or ministries of education, by public financial support for schools, and by a state regulation of curricula, teacher training, and diplomas. State control also manifests itself in the increasing tendency to include clauses into national constitutions concerning the individual right to education and the state's duty to provide education, as has been shown by a content-analysis of all constitutions between 1870 and 1970 (cf., Boli-Bennett 1979). But state control is organized differently and to different intensities. We find systems with a tradition of centralized management and control as in France and the former eastern European regimes, but also systems with regional, communal, and local decision making bodies as in the United States and England. The "political incorporation" function (Ramirez and Rubinson 1979) that modern educational systems fulfill, culminates in the claim of a state-controlled compulsory educational system directed in principle to all children and youths as the future citizens of a given society. This also includes the public regulation of private educational institutions, e.g., by grants-in-aid-systems to church-run schools, and their control by some sort of state regulations, e.g., concerning the curriculum that they teach, or the state recognition of the diplomas they issue. This political incorporation function reveals the claim of the modern state to significant aspects of the education of its subjects. And this does not only hold true for the history of schooling in Europe. It is equally significant in the newly independent countries of the so-called Third World in their ideas of the contribution of general education to the process of nation-building. Even if the newest developments (especially in fundamentalist Islamic countries and in very poor countries) may not yet be assessed, there is no case known in which

national educational policies suggest opposition to or a deviation from the path of compulsory state-controlled education. So, it is the rise of the modern state and resulting hegemony—and not industrialization as such, the need for skilled labor, or the need to prevent social tensions—that may explain the rise of popular education and the development of national educational systems since the nineteenth century (Green 1990). Taking the argument a little further, we have to recognize that these modern states are largely dependent on one another, that they are interacting and competing with one another in the modern world system. So the key to understanding the worldwide adoption of state control over the school is the existence of "a world-system of structurally similar nation-states" (Meyer 1980, 113), which leads to structurally similar forms of state control over the school.

Development is the Main Object and Legitimation of All National School Systems

School learning is part and parcel of the "project of modernity." It serves the development of the individual towards true membership in its society (cf., the above-mentioned political incorporation function) as well as fostering the economic, political, and cultural development of a given society (cf., the qualifying and legitimizing functions of the school). This tendency has been documented in a comparative content analysis of the official declarations on the objects of school education from over one hundred countries in the years between 1955 and 1965, undertaken by Fiala and Lanford (1987). They interpret the worldwide tendency to insist on development through education as the ideological basis of the world educational revolution. But development as the main object and legitimation of education has yet another implication for decision making. Since state-run compulsory school systems cater in principle to all their children and youths as members of the next generation and as future responsible citizens, the approach to the contents of instruction and education to be handed down in the school is general in nature ("general education"). This is so despite the particularistic tendencies inherent in certain subjects, such as the religious instruction of multiple denominations instead of an interreligious subject on religion as an integral aspect of human knowledge. Converting the universalistic approach to human knowledge into school knowledge also extends to the private schools sector by different mechanisms of (at least ultimate) state control, e.g., by

prescribing a (minimum) national syllabus or curriculum, or by the recognition of private schools' diplomas as equivalent to state-run compulsory education. Of course there is a struggle by particularistic interest groups (the church, elite groups, economic interests, and the like) to gain control over the school and thus over the education of the next generation. But this demand must be framed as an appeal to universalistic goods; it is a kind of compromise of the so-called "best arguments" as to what is good for all, for the nation, for culture, for the economy, etc. In other words, one could also say that the legitimation of power and influence in the educational policy sector is centered around a societal discourse on development, the state being the promotor of this development ideology and the moderator of this discourse on development.

Convergence in National Educational Developments

Aside from national and historical peculiarities that characterize the educational developments of a country or an epoch, there seems to exist a long-term trend towards convergence of national schools development. Convergence patterns have been particularly evident in the structures of school systems concerning state-control, compulsory education, and the right to education, public finance, and administration. But they also encompass the articulation of types and levels of schooling, diplomas, professionalized teacher training, the standardization of a set of knowledge into a syllabus and curriculum, and its test of achievement for certification purposes (Inkeles and Sirowy 1983). After all, diplomas and the transfer of certain aspects of human knowledge in the schools are becoming more and more internationally compatible, and there are already numerous conventions to be found on the international recognition of national diplomas and certificates.

In addition, the emergence of social disparity-structures (gender, class, religion, ethnicity, etc.) with and by education is also to be found worldwide. These disparities reflect social hierarchies and power mechanisms in industrialized countries as well as in developing regions. They are a result of the selection function of modern schooling, combined with social reproduction processes that counteract the allegedly meritocratic principle governing modern schooling.

In a recent paper, which was courteously handed to me by John W. Meyer, one of the leading representatives of the world systems approach,

we find a list of arguments concerning "The global standardization of national eductional systems" (Meyer 1992). Meyer traces such standardization or convergence patterns in all the various dimensions of the school. Regarding the basic educational structure, he sees the school systems shifting towards the "tacitly-preferred UNESCO model of 6-3-3 years" and towards comprehensive models of secondary education, rejecting more and more any overt differentiation by ethnicity, class, and gender variables (p. 5). In view of content and instruction he notices a tendency towards world-standardized curricula and a similar set of subjects taught at schools and the time devoted to them, although he confesses that sufficient studies have not yet been done to prove this tendency. Furthermore he assumes that educational organization is not yet widely administered in a worldwide standardized way, due to different forms of political control and administration in the various countries; yet he sees a long-term trend towards greater nation-level control over education. Concerning the organization inside the school and the classroom he detects strong evidence for homogenization with respect to classroom teaching by professionalized and somewhat autonomous teachers. Meyer then finds, in addition, increasing links between national educational systems, their developments, and reform projects with international influences that might eventually lead to "the rise of an international educational system" (p. 7) instead of nation-based compulsory schooling. So one could say that there is already a good deal of international discourse and mutual influence taking place concerning the organization and essence of education. (International conferences like the one for which this paper was written might be a further step towards such an internationalization of school developments.)

Meyer's paper is a keen, and—as he himself admits—in many parts still a speculative interpretation of recent developments. I am not sure if it is really wise to evaluate each and every development from the one hypothesis, i.e., that it purports to the internationalization of schooling, because this might really lead to a tendency of "overdetermination," for which the world systems approach in general has been criticized (cf., Boeckh 1985, 61). After all, there are currently strong tendencies to revive ethnic affiliations, particularistic, and private interests in the realm of schooling. This does not imply that it is my opinion that they should be fostered, but educationists and policymaking bodies have to take them into consideration, as the debates that are fought with these arguments are

powerful and influential. At this point scientific research and discussion along one or the other paradigm become a political argument.

In this section I summarized some trends and findings along the paradigm of the world systems approach. The outcome of such findings is not yet a fully developed theory. In addition to the above-mentioned points, and this is also a critique of some overt omissions of this approach, it should be kept in mind, that to state these findings as proof of the new global type of modern state-run and standardized school systems should, however, not be understood as an uncritical and affirmative consent: the "success story" of the spread of modern schooling is not "good" in a normative sense, just because it exists. On the contrary it is part of a complex and contradictory world situation of the practice of mankind today and has to be analyzed and criticized as such. Developments in the modern world system clearly produce the dangers of one-sided cultural and economical homogenization—in the Third World as well as in the metropoles of the West and (former) East, and education of the type practiced along the global model of modern schooling is part of this homogenization process, to the disadvantage of traditional and nonwestern cultures. But it may also offer possibilities for innovative, critical, and transnational action in domains for which traditions do not have an answer (e.g., ecological crisis, protest against multinational exploitation, and violation of human rights). To summarize: education can only repeatedly attempt to enhance the enlightening functions of learning in modern school systems. As such, educational systems are no mere dependent variables of external world systems and national societal demands, but partake actively and productively in the process of creating the future citizens of a modern world society.

So one should devote more discussion to some further topics like the role of the individual state policy in education that forms a kind of relay to the hierarchical and competitive world-market-structures, in which school-knowledge and diplomas have become a variant of internationally convertible cultural capital. The historical (and universal) accomplishment of state-control over the school would thus gain greater weight and another interpretation aside from the one that sees it as a struggle between the church and the state on national grounds. It would instead put the factor of state-control and how it is organized into the realm of national policymaking within a competitive and hierarchical world situation. In this sense one could say that states are also competing with one another for the

best, that is, the most effective national educational policies. And finally a question remains that is of special interest for educationists: what does the modern school contribute not only in its structure and administration, but also in its content, to the proliferation and maintenance of mankind's treatment of nature and herself in this global model of a possibly destructive way of life; and how, eventually, may school learning may help to overcome this mode of production and reproduction?

CONSEQUENCES FOR DECISION MAKING

In taking the above-mentioned aspects into consideration I will now try to deduce some arguments as to what the world systems approach would mean for the problem of law and education, and for decision making in national and international settings.

From the first fact, the universal acceptance of the new model of schooling follows, in my opinion, that we have come to a point in history where education has become a basic human right. But even in countries that have achieved universal education we still, or again, find analphabetism. And the more so in the so-called developing countries, where we find that at least 130 million children between 6 and 11 years of age have no access to schooling, and where one third or even more of them drop out of school before having finished the first four years, thus relapsing into secondary analphabetism. In sharp contrast to these figures we find only very meagre financial and technical aid to basic education in the developing countries. To put it clearly: less than one percent of the overall development aid from national, binational, and multinational agencies goes to the primary school sector (Adick 1991, 83 ff.). Yet, seen from the world systems approach, we cannot limit our policymaking to narrow national and short-term interests. Instead, policymaking has to appreciate the right to education as a historical achievement that offers chances to all members of the world society to actively partake in the fate of mankind. Schooling does not guarantee this, and the school is not the only institution catering to education, but historically, as has been shown, it has attained some kind of monopoly over the instruction of the future generation, and thus a moral responsibility as well. So, decision making in national settings as well as in developmental and international agencies has to take up the question of how to effectively realize universal access to schooling, for analphabets, refugees, drop-outs, etc.

From the second fact, the expansion of schooling follows that decision making has to come to a consensus concerning the duration of compulsory education on the one hand, and to the way in which this compulsory education is organized on the other hand. There seems to be a tendency to subscribe to about 10 years of schooling as the minimum level of basic formal education that societies should offer to their next generation. And there also seems to be a tendency to organize these 10 years in somewhat comprehensive school models. In the majority of school systems we find comprehensive primary and lower secondary levels of instruction, although the comprehensive models may internally be organized quite differently with streaming and setting systems, etc. (cf., Mitter 1990). Here, of course, school systems like the German with a tripartite, or—when one includes the existing comprehensive schools—even a four-part structure of secondary education, still exist. But they are under pressure due to parents' preferences that their children attend those secondary schools offering the more desirable higher certificates, thus reducing the number of students in the other tiers of secondary education. National educational policy has to react to these demands for education. It may encourage them by providing incentives, for example, free secondary and tertiary education, or scholarships and subsidies to low-income households; or it may discourage them by taking tuition fees, or by issuing numerous provisions to certain studies. Often, of course, financial arguments play an overwhelming role in such decisions to regulate the demand for education. But there are other arguments that have to be taken into consideration. Political measures to curb the expansion of education by cutting down national expenditure on the educational sector may not be accepted by the population; it may lead to public protest and corresponding reactions at the next ballot. Another argument derives from the world situation, which is the topic of this paper. National educational systems are under pressure by international competition as to what would be the best and most effective schooling system. International rivalry has become an accepted argument in national debates on education. In the USA, for instance, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education was titled "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission 1983). And in many other national reform initiatives we find arguments appealing to the international compatibility and competitiveness of school education.

State control over the modern school systems has proved to be another worldwide fact. The issue here is, then, how and by which means the

different state policies manage their educational systems. Would they learn from one another in the given global context? In my opinion they already learn from each other just as we learn from the various experiences in different countries here in this international conference, where there will surely be some kind of back-up to national decision-making bodies. As yet, we are still far from having attained a truly international level of educational planning and policy-making (cf., Noah 1991). But the opposite assumption, that policymaking is a purely national affair, is also no longer true. In my opinion, there exists an ongoing international discourse on educational policy, and national reform projects are to a considerable degree already influenced by what happens beyond their borders.

Another point should be stressed regarding the topic of state-control over education: seen from the world systems approach some kind of state-control seems to be essential for all eductional systems. So the dead end to any reform initiatives would be to abolish state control altogether and to privatize all education, whether for economic or other reasons. This point is particularly relevant for the topic of public and private institutions at this conference, but also for that of religiously affiliated and secular school systems. The assumption could be that there will be some sort of state control over the private and religiously affiliated sectors of a given school system. This may be organized quite differently, for instance in terms of controlling financial support, by prescribing a national curriculum, or by publicly recognizing the certificates issued by such private or religious institutions.

The second question arising from state control over education as a challenge for law and education and for decision-making bodies, in my opinion, is how to guarantee a balance between educational autonomy of the single school and teachers against an overregulation by the state. Seen historically, we may acknowledge that a potential for relatively autonomous pedagogical reasoning and action arose alongside the school and developed into a subsystem of every society. This relative autonomy stemmed—in Bourdieu's view—from the professionalization of teaching in the school (Bourdieu and Passeron 1974). It is not easy to decide where to put the stress: on the relativity and limitations given by this "relative autonomy" of the school, or on the autonomous pedagogical possibilities this model offers (cf., Roeder et al. 1977, 37, 42). But, however limited, an existing relative autonomy of the school could clearly be taken as an historical achievement, from which it follows that there should be at least

a minimum of educational freedom, choice, and responsibility of the people directly concerned, that is, teachers, but also parents, and pupils. This autonomy, which education has historically gained alongside the process of state control, must not be curtailed by ever more purely administrative and political decision-making bodies. On the contrary: in an open, democratic society the pedagogical autonomy concerning, for example, the didactic and methodical arrangement of teaching, and the mastering of professional teacher training, must find its way into political decision making. To put it plainly, there should be a national discourse on education, since this is the concern of the whole society, and educationists (instead of only politicians, or administrators) should be well represented in all those decision-making bodies.

Development has been described as the main objective and legitimation of all national school systems. This point concerns in particular the essence and outlook of the contents of education. For decision making in open societies this would mean that the society as a whole—government representatives, ministries, nongovernmental organizations, and representatives of teachers, parents, and youths, i.e., the citizens—should define what kind of education for what kind of development they want. The question is how to arrive at such a consensus, and how to organize a public and democratically accepted mode of decision making. This may be illustrated by referring to the example of decision making in curriculum development in Germany.

According to the German model, elected representatives of the citizens determine a minister for education in each of the federated states, who is considered legitimately responsible for the issuing of binding curricula. According to these binding curricula, textbooks for use in schools are written and edited by private authors and publishers. These textbooks are then submitted for approval to the educational ministries. The question is: is this a rational and democratic model of participation in decision making and in the determination of what should be taught in schools? Admittedly the minister's procedure will be the calling together of a curriculum commission consisting of a number of teachers, administrators, and scientists who work out a curriculum according to ministerial guidelines (cf., the empirical findings in Haft et al. 1986). And admittedly the minister is also counselled by some expert opinion in the decision as to whether to authorize a textbook or not. So one cannot say that the decree of curricula in Germany by the ministries of education is an irrational and autocratic

process altogether. But one cannot say either that it is really open for democratic discussion and control, since neither the choice of the members of the curriculum commissions, the guidelines according to which they work, the ultimate decree of the curriculum, nor the authorization of textbooks are controlled by a public and regular right of co-determination, by teachers and parents, for example. In the case of Germany the whole procedure of issuing curricula and textbooks becomes even more obscure when taking into consideration that each of the federal states has its own distinct means of commission appointment, work guidelines determination, etc. In short: although there have been proposals to harmonize and democratize the ways in which curricula and other aspects of the administration of schooling are regulated (cf., Schule im Rechtsstaat 1981), there has been as yet no national law on education and no open decision making in this respect in Germany.

This example demonstrates that if the school has become the project of at least ultimate state control, legal provisions should be made to guarantee that the citizens have some kind of rights to define what kind of education for what kind of development they want.

The last point derived from looking at the formation of a world educational system was the trend of convergence in national educational developments. From this one can say that school developments are dependent on national development factors as well as on international ones. So there is a challenge for decision making on national grounds on the one hand, and in terms of international compatibility and rivalry on the other hand. Arguments as to the international compatibility of, for example, diplomas, curricula, and the contents and methods of teaching are increasingly becoming the focus of national debates on schooling. The two aspects—national and international considerations—may sometimes contradict (or counteract) one another, but this is not always the case. It is not unusual, for example, to appeal to international experiences in order to state a national course.

To give an example: in the west German tradition we find 13 years of schooling up to the Abitur, the necessary certificate to enter university. In the east German tradition we found only 12 years. Taking hegemonic factors of the economically more successful and hence more powerful west Germany into consideration, it could be anticipated that the former east German states will adjust to the west German model. But on the other hand the international experience is rather in favour of a 12-year model. In the

present debate it is interesting to note that arguments of international competition (e.g., German students are too old, and this may lead to their disadvantage in the European labor market), and not the argument, which might actually be equally sensible, to adopt the east German tradition, may possibly lead us to the 12-year model.

I will give another argument concerning the international influences on school development: computer education. Compared to the experiences of many lengthy national curriculum reforms designed to introduce new subjects and contents into school learning, the pace with which instruction in new information technologies has entered the schools all over the world is really astonishing. Should this rapid implementation of this new subject not be attributed to the factor of international competition?

As educationists, or educational policymakers we should not fear international convergence: learning from and following the experiences of others does not necessarily lead to the detriment of our national and cultural interests. But neither should we see it as a salvation for our national problems. We should instead realize the mechanisms by which global influences enter our schools, and, even more importantly, we should guarantee that they make sense in a pedagogical way. The mechanisms by which external, international influences are translated into pedagogical actions would be the following:

1. Increasing international division of labor, competition, and interdependence lead to new political and economic arrangements. As examples, one can cite the recent processes towards the European Community, or the restructuring of world society after the fall of the socialist east European countries.
2. These new situations lead to societal problems, which are partly transformed into "objectives of the school," that is, they are delegated in part to be tackled and solved by the relatively autonomous national educational systems. There are, for instance, interstate agreements on the mutual recognition of national diplomas, and on creating new educational programs and certificates to cater to the new situation. This indicates that national qualifications and certificates are becoming—in principle—more and more internationally convertible in order to guarantee free choices within a transnational market of studies and labor.
3. Because of its relative autonomy, the educational system deals with these external challenges in a specifically pedagogical manner, and

exactly this is its specific contribution, which other subsystems of society such as the economy, or politics, do not achieve. This means that the educational system does not simply conform to external pressures, but instead—using specific educational means (e.g., curricula or teacher training)—it aligns them along its educational horizon in order that they make sense in a pedagogical way. To take the example of the new information technologies: computers are not simply put into classrooms, and students are not simply instructed in using them, but there is an ongoing debate on the educational aims, and on the relevance of teaching computer techniques and new technologies for the purpose of general education and enlightenment.

4. The school not only exerts global pressure on international developments, but it is actively concerned with the project of how to master and how to deal with developments in a productive way. Human knowledge of the world is selected and transformed in a pedagogical manner to be actively appropriated by pupils and students. And this acquisition of learning in the school includes critique and new ways of interpreting the world. Thus the process of education may eventually lead to a transformation of human knowledge and to a re-interpretation of the world situation into new possibilities for mankind, evoking responsibility and insight into the complex economic, social, and cultural world situation.

By throwing some light on the mechanisms of external international pressure and how they are translated into pedagogical action, I want to stress again the specific responsibility resting on education and the pedagogical personnel for which we all pay taxes and/or tuition fees. In other words, the formation of a world educational system does not exempt us from the task of interpreting the world in a pedagogically sound way for the next generation. And it does not relieve us from administering the school system dedicated to such an educational objective in a sensible way.

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