# UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION TOWARDS AN INTEGRATING EUROPE

Had I been asked to deal with unity and diversity in education towards an integrating Europe only ten years ago my conceptual approach must have been entirely different from the following one. It is true that at that time already the 'European' orientation would not have been as hesitant and cautious as it would have been ten years ago. Yet, I should have had to lay my emphasis more on "possibilities" and "hopes". Seven years ago, however, the situation had totally changed. That was the year after the breakdown of the Berlin wall and the "velvet revolutions" which took place in most countries of Central Europe, to use Vaclav Havel's symbolic characterisation. Those years were full of enthusiasm after the collapse of the communist régime and "expectations" directed to a new and better future. Now, five years later, the scene has changed again. On the one hand the great upheaval of the late eighties and beginning nineties has turned out to be irreversible, and there are many occurrences and trends signalling that the former communist countries seem to be on the way for the better. On the other hand one cannot overlook that "euphoria" is over, and that the re-established or newly established democracies find it much harder to go ahead. In some of the Central and Eastern European countries members of the previous régimes have returned to power which, however, should not be taken as a way back to the past. Therefore the appraisal has remained valid that the radical changes in Eastern Europe at the end of the eighties and the fade-down of the West-East conflict have opened new contours for a "wider" Europe.

At the same time when the radical changes in Eastern Europe happened, the developments in the Western part of our continent were exciting too, though not so spectacular and turbulent as in the Eastern part. At the end of the eighties the European Community started to take definite steps towards integration, and that development ended up in the enactment of the treaty of Maastricht at the end of 1992 which has opened new perspectives for the old as well as for the new member countries. Summing up these introductory remarks, "Europe" as a whole has entered a new period in her history, and the political, socioeconomic and cultural changes have had essential implications on education in its formal and non-formal domains.

When using the term "Europe" we should be clear in rising no claim to any "hegemonial", let alone "imperialistic" policy against the "rest of the world". The notion is only used as a working concept to underline the "return" of the countries which had been welded into the "Eastern Bloc", to the free community of European nations. In this view the notion expresses the third dimension of Europe against the "EU-Europe" (first dimension) and the "Council of Europe Region" (second dimension), as it existed until 1990. In the meantime the second dimension has expanded to the countries of Central and, partially, of South-East and Eastern Europe having become full members of the Council of Europe; other countries are likely to follow in the near future: Georgia, Azerbaidzhan and Armenia. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the peaceful revolutions and upheavals in East Central Europe and, though to a lesser degree, the recent changes in South-East Europe have made the previous "West-East demarcation" questionable. I will resume this point later when discussing the impacts on these changes on education. In any case, the notions of "West" and "East" have lost their distinctive connotations which had been legitimated by the demarcations determined by the political and military power structure as one of the most significant and one of the most inhuman outcomes of World War II. The entry of Central European countries, to begin with Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, is likely to increasingly accelerate this process.

Of course, the fade-down of the Post-World War II division does not mean the abandonment of internal demarcations and tensions inside Europe which has always been a continent marked by the dichotomy between unity and diversity. Furthermore, the frontiers of Europe have always been controversially discussed. It is true that the South-West frontier has been definitively fixed since the end of the Reconquista in Spain. Identifying Europe's Eastern frontier, however, has turned out to be much more complicated due to the fact that geography does not offer any "natural" demarcation line – although the Ural mountains have been given this fictive function until today, for example in geography syllabi and textbooks and also in simplified slogans used by politicians.

Today nobody will question the "European identity" of all nations tracing back their inheritance to Catholic and Protestant Christianity. This agreement is likely to include the Orthodox nations of South-East Europe; however, controversial debates may arise with regard to the allocation of the Muslims having lived in South-East Europe for centuries. Let alone Turkey (with its "bi-continental" extension) we have to think particularly of the Muslims in former Yugoslavia, in particular Bosnia, as well as in Albania and Bulgaria. In this connection it should be worth adding that today Muslim "Europeans" are living in West European countries too, and that as migrants with many years of residence, apart from Muslim citizens in the United Kingdom and in France.

The last issue in this fundamental consideration is raised by the question whether the successor states of the Soviet Union should be allocated to Europe. This question itself has a long history dating from the Middle Ages and, in its "modern" version, from Peter the Great. In the 19th and 20th centuries the idea of including Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians and also Georgians and Armenians in the "wider" range of European nations, has been permanently and distinctly discussed by natives and foreigners and has gained actual significance in these days, let alone the Baltic nations whose place in Europe has never been questioned. As far as the Russians are concerned, the in-depth and passionate debates between the "Zapadniki" (Westerners) and "Slavjanofili" (slavophils) give a paramount and representative example of this retrospect. Yet, the multinational (and multicultural) composition having emerged from the Soviet Union proves to complicate the "European" option in view of the "Asian" nations and nationalities forming the Commonwealth of Independent Nations. Needless to add that the Russian Federation, though remarkably reduced in territory and population, has inherited the multinational (and multicultural) problems of the former Soviet Union. In this context it should be taken into account that the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has included *all* the Republics of the former Soviet Union, including those situated in Central Asia. Moreover, the UNESCO Region of "Europe" does not only include the "Soviet inheritance", but also the United States, Canada and Israel. The latter extension points to an even farther-going dimension of "Europe" in historical and cultural terms which, though only roughly, I will resume in my concluding remarks.

Essential weight for the identification of "wider Europe" is given by the religious criterion, insofar as it transcends the contemporary people's commitment to a specific religious creed or denomination; in this context I will not give any deeper attention to the "Muslim" factor than I have done before. Christendom includes not only lukewarm and solely "registered" church-members, but also agnostics whose education has taken place in an environment shaped by Christian culture and tradition. That is to say that Europe's christian "substance" has affected its "heirs" until today, which becomes evident in its interaction with Humanism, Rationalism, Enlightenment and Modern Democracy. It is this moving and, at the same time, oscillating

interaction which discloses the principles of unity and diversity and the permanent tension in which they are interwoven. Yet, in the centre of this texture we discover the singular approach of European nations to conquer the "rest of the world", and furthermore, to subdue human's animated and inanimate environment. With the end of this century coming nearer, both sides of this approach have growingly seized our consciousness and our concrete existence in an alarming ambivalence.

Summing up this overview, we must be aware of the specific aspects we have in mind when talking about "Europe": in economic, sociopolitical, cultural, philosophical or educational terms. It goes without saying that the many-faceted shape of "Europe" has its impacts on identifying internal structures to be associated with societal areas (or sub-systems) which are expressed by these terms. Instead of indulging in details, however, let us state that the breakdown of the politically and ideologically dominated "West-East demarcation" has pointed the way for new demarcations inside this continent, in some cases connected with "old" patterns which have survived the Post-World War II period and are experiencing a renascence in our days. For instance, we observe the emergence of new debates about "Central Europe" whose advocates, in their term, are far from unanimity in defining its frontiers. Furthermore, the disappearance of the previous West-East conflict has opened the space for new problems which can be exemplified in a drastic way by the recent and increasing migrations of people across the borders of hitherto "Eastern" and "Western" countries. In this context we even become aware of the existence of ethnic groups without a state, particular the Romany (gipsy) people having migrated from Romania and former Yugoslavia to the "West", e.g. to Germany.

Unconsolidated and vague the paths may be entered by the Europeans in their expectations of a better future, the economic, sociopolitical and cultural scene signals attempts at integration to a greater or lesser extent. These attempts culminate in the policies which are being conducted by the big European entities, namely the European Union and the Council of Europe. This observation should legitimate my following considerations.

## Educational policy in the European Union

The Treaty of Maastricht which was signed on February 7th 1992, has been in operation since November 1st 1993. It is for the first time that an official document of the European Community, since Maastricht European Union, includes the vocational *and* general domains of the education system in the responsibility of this supranational institution by obliging the member states to co-operation and to the development of common goals. This new orientation in the area of general education is distinctly laid down in article 126, defining the contribution of the European Union "to the development of an education of high qualitative standard" as a distinct perspective of European policy. Thus the new agreements go beyond the competencies, which the European Community had held in the framework of vocational education, including higher education, already up to then. Concerning vocational education, the corresponding guidelines and recommendations had been involved in the documents dealing with the economic goals of the Community, within which the promotion of mobility had taken an important place - which has been confirmed by the Treaty of Maastricht. On the other hand the new agreements emphasise the specific position of the education system including, beside the aforementioned article 126, article 127 dealing with vocational education. Moreover, the commitment which, according to article 121, is to lead the European Union from now onwards "to the display of the member states' cultures in accordance with the preservation of their national and regional diversities and with the emphasis on the common

cultural inheritance", can be identified as a task, which reinforces its educational competencies.

The European Union, therefore, has passed its limitations as an economic community towards a "community of education and culture". In the comments to the Treaty of Maastricht, however, the new competencies are complemented by consideration of the *limits*, which are set to the authorities of the European Union with regard to the *implementation* of their educational competencies. As regards the general (liberal) domain of the education system this means that responsibility of the member states for both the curricular content and the structure of the education systems continues to be subject to "strict observance". Any *harmonisation* of legal and administrative norms of the member states must be excluded. In the domain of general and, from now onwards, also higher education, the competencies of the European Union are thus limited to the dimension of promotion and encouragement. As regards vocational education, its competencies, however, are more extended, insofar as article 127 concedes to the European Union the task to "conduct" policies of its own. Since even in this domain, however, the principle of "strict observance concerning the responsibilities of member states for content and structure" is emphasised, the German expert *Ingo Hochbaum* has concluded that "as a result" the new orientation of European education policy has been even subdued to new limitations in the domain of vocational education, where the practical policy conducted by the European Commission in Brussels had covered larger areas already .

The priority of national educational policies against the competencies of the European Union is based on the principle of *subsidiarity* the member states have themselves obliged to. The new article 3 of the Treaty of Maastricht defines "subsidiarity" in the following way: "The Community will be active within the limits of the competencies and goals laid down in this Treaty. In the domains which do not fall into its exclusive responsibility, the Community will be active according to the principle of subsidiarity, insofar as these goals can be reached at the community level better than at the level of the individual member states with regard of the effects to be expected from the respective measures. The measures of the Community must not go beyond reaching the goals of this Treaty."

Summing up these considerations, we can observe that the agreements of the Treaty of Maastricht concerning further developments of educational policies must find their place in the tension between the new responsibilities of the Union and constitutionally and legally identified competencies which are to be held by the member states. *Theo M. E. Liket* has crystallized this problem to the question, "whether schools and other educational institutions are or remain the last fortress of the nation state against supranational institutions and international economic networks". His answer "yes and no" can be considered as an anticipatory reference to the centre of the challenges confronting educational policy inside the European Union :

"Yes, insofar as one's own school system, language, cultural identity and pedagogic-didactic approaches of university and school are the solid foundations guiding the meetings with colleagues of other countries. No, insofar as this fundamental openness may contribute to the withdrawal from nationalistic or parochial narrow-mindedness and to the enrichment of individual persons and institutions with experiences of other kind."

Discussing this tension we are, above all, to be confronted with the interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity. Accordingly, this principle will become manifest in the near future and show, whether the member states will practise their educational policies against the Union

in a defensive way or as an active and prospective contribution to the "European dimension", whose development is laid down among the first goals of the Union.

Particular relevance concerning the choice of priority is allocated to those member states, whose educational systems are structured according to the principle of federalism or, at least, regionalism. It is, above all, the case of Germany, but has expanded to other countries as well, in particular Belgium and Spain.

The constitutional and legal stipulations only indicate the *formal* side of the responsibility problem; they do not, however, clarify its practical relevance within the political system. Who is interested in the implementation of these stipulations, necessarily thinks about the economic, social and overall-political framework laying the ground for such practical changes in the education system. The "educator" (in the widest sense) has to take this two-level consideration very seriously. This consideration leads to the principles of *solidarity and mobility* which in the development of the European Community resp. Union have played an important role up to now.

Concerning the "solidarity among the member states" article two of the Treaty of Maastricht outlines the following tasks which distinctly go beyond the framework of the up to then existing relations:

- "A harmonious and balanced development of the economic domain,
- a steady, non-inflationary and ecology-oriented growth,
- a high degree of continuity of economic achievements,
- a high employment standard,
- a remarkable amount of social security (and)
- the increase of living standard and living quality".

These references mirror fundamental trends immediately affecting economy, environment and policy. Behind them one can get aware of the challenges to education, in particular through the impacts of these trends to technology and science.

The principle of *mobility* has, as mentioned above, played a focal role in the history of the European Community resp. Union, up to now. The expansive interpretation of this principle, as underlined by several spectacular decisions of the European Court in Strasbourg, could give even rise to the assumption that according to Hermann Avenarius' comment, "the thought is not far away that everything that promotes mobility, should be considered as a matter of the Community: the harmonisation of education systems, the equalisation of certificates and diplomas, the harmonisation of the length of training, the adjustment of curricular content etc." It is true that the assumptions included in such apprehensions have been invalidated by the Treaty of Maastricht. However, the implementation of the principle of mobility in school reality is unlikely to lose its integrative effects with the ongoing consolidation process in the European Union.

## Challenges to education in the European Union

Firstly, we have to consider the development of *structures*. This issue was regarded to be paramount during the seventies, when the applicants for "comprehensive schools" fought against the defenders of traditional secondary systems consisting of two or three streams ("bipartite" or "tripartite systems"). Recently this conflict has lost its former relevance,

because growing interest has been devoted to what goes on *inside* the schools with regard to the persons involved: headteachers, teachers, pupils, and to what extent the immediate environment is involved in the "ethos" of the individual school. This does not mean, however, that structural debates about the future of the general education schools have disappeared from the agenda.

Vocational education has been more and more included in the debate which can be mainly explained by the growing importance of that domain of education. Here the debates are focussed on the functioning of school-based vocational training schemes and, firm-bound apprenticeship patterns. In Germany the debate deals with the "dual system" where adolescents between 15 and 18 years who do not continue full-time schooling beyond their compulsory school attendance, undergo a training where the practical part takes part in firms, whereas two days have to be spent in vocational schools.

Beside the structural developments *curricular* reforms are considered to be greatly significant. In this area one has to depart from purely "national" specifications which in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries dominated the syllabi of the nation states; it goes without saying that this trend has not come to an end yet at all. In this context it is worthwhile to follow the subtle thoughts which the British educationist Martin McLean has devoted to the issue of "national knowledge cultures" and their reduction to typologies of "national cognitive areas" . These "national knowledge cultures" indicate centuries-old traditions which had become dominant in the 17th and 18th centuries with the growing monopolistic position of the modern state. It is this state monopoly which on its turn, legitimates the statement that the child's and adolescent's school attendance for several years in a national education system has remarkable impacts on his/her knowledge domains, methods of thinking as well as on his/her attitudes to learning and social commitment. In this context research findings from the area of "intercultural learning" are particularly noteworthy, with regard both to the pupils and teachers involved.

Martin McLean has summarised his typology of "national knowledge cultures" to three, later to two types ("rational encyclopaedism" and "humanism") . I do not want to indulge in his specific considerations. Yet, I want to emphasise that the "national knowledge cultures" as identified by McLean, should not be regarded as isolated configurations, but instead as manifestations of "European curriculum traditions", pointing the way for the formation of a "European common knowledge" which is rooted in Classical Antiquity, Christianity, Humanism and Enlightenment. Used as a model, McLean's typology is useful, insofar as it helps analyse the interrelations among curricular developments on the European continent on the whole.

Transferred to the today's reality of educational policy and curriculum development, McLean's reflections on the "European common knowledge" become manifest in the "European dimension in instruction and education". This term appears in the Treaty of Maastricht and has been discussed in many articles and other papers, since its enactment. This means that the whole curriculum in general, and the individual subjects in particular, should be orientated to the consideration of what is relevant to Europe. This view has, on the one hand, a value component, aimed at the replacement of nationalism by the commitment to common European ideas needs and their reference to the basic values I have mentioned in the first part of this paper. On the other hand, the "European dimension" is connected with the goal of "modernisation" with regard to the challenges coming from science, technology, economy and also ecology. In the curriculum development both components of the "European

dimension" crystallize into debates on the *core curriculum* which can be considered as the 'modern' variant of 'Allgemeinbildung' (liberal education). Looking at the syllabi of *all* the European countries one can make out this core based on the instruction of mother tongue, one foreign language and mathematics (these three subjects representing basic codes of human communication), completed by one of the sciences, history and social sciences. In most countries, moreover, physical education and religious instruction are included in this core. The composition of subjects *per se* does not, of course, identify this core curriculum. It is significant that the core curriculum is filled with "European"-oriented content.

The debates on the "European dimension" with its impacts on the "core curriculum" entails the question about "functional equivalences" in the education system which play a great role in the discussions in Brussels. It goes without saying that the elaboration of such "functional equivalences" is caused by the principle of mobility and its manifestation in the employment system. Debates concentrate, on the one hand, on school- or training leaving certificates at the end of secondary education and, on the other hand, on qualifications issued by universities and other higher education institutions as well as by the examination boards in the area of vocational education. Already at the end of the eighties the European Community introduced certain standards which should make it possible for any qualified person to look for labour in another member state without being discriminated. These regulations include, for instance, teachers. Nowadays a young man or woman who has acquired a teacher's diploma in France is, in principle, free to apply for a situation, let us say, in Germany, provided he/she knows German and has fulfilled certain provisions which are inherent in the German training system, for instance with regard to practicums and didactic studies. Here, of course, the trouble begins in the appointment practice, because the young person may be asked to make up for certain achievements which he/she has not been provided with by the training in his/her home country. Anyway, however, the door is open to mobility, and there is no *basic* hindrance to enter and pass it.

On the other hand, the curriculum will remain the domain, in which the differences among the national education systems will retain their specific "national colours", to be reinforced moreover, by intra-national and regional diversity. In this view the question can be posed whether it is advisable to use the concept of "harmonisation" against the comprehensive range of education in Europe. It has been introduced by policy-makers and administrators. Educators should, however, be aware of the inner-European *diversity* as the fundamental competitor with *integration*. "Harmonisation" seems to overemphasise the integrating process and, therefore, to underestimate the legitimate claim of pluralism.

## The Council of Europe and the importance of promoting programmes

Whereas the European Union has started to get direct influence on the education systems of their member states as a supranational institution, the Council of Europe as a European organisation has to be content with a more modest function. It cannot enact any normative documents, but has to stick to the instrument of recommendations. This, however, does not mean that this organisation has been non-influential all over the past decades. On the contrary, the Council of Europe has paved the way to integration on the European continent, at first by bringing EC and EFTA countries together, then – already before the breakdown of the "Iron Curtain" – by inviting educationists from 'moderate' countries of the Eastern Bloc, in particular Hungary and Poland, to its conferences and symposia. Since 1981 this early

initiative has turned out to be very fruitful. Nowadays membership of Central and East European countries in the Council of Europe can be considered, as was the case with the EFTA countries in the seventies and eighties, as a preparatory step to entry into the European Union or, as the 'wider Europe' is concerned, as a means to overcome gaps among the countries which have belonged to the former separated 'blocs'.

Let me end this consideration by referring to the various programmes the European Union as well as the Council of Europe have launched in order to promote co-operation and measures aimed at integration. Inside the European Union one has, in particular, to pay attention to the exchange programmes of SOKRATES, LEONARDO and TEMPUS, while the activities of the Council of Europe are focussed on the organisation of conferences, symposia and workshops convening educators and also students and pupils from all European countries. As regards adolescents in general, special mention has to be made about the 'European Youth Centre' which has been established by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

## Eurocentrism versus global openness

Examining recent documents, published by national and European authorities and organisations, in particular inside the European Union, and respective recommendations issued by national Ministries of Education, one cannot but recognise a certain "eurocentrism" to replace the hitherto "national" orientations. Critics have brought to light that in such guidelines the "intercultural" approach is often neglected, whereby they want to call attention to the need for opening the "European" to the "global" dimension. This problem has got additional relevance by the fact that today in many European states there are people of non-European descent whose children attend schools.

Beyond the concrete manifestations of this two-tier dimension which are materialised in programmes of *intercultural* education, the overall question about the "European identity" needs to be tackled in a distinct approach – an identity which must not be limited to any "fortress of Europe". In this context we have to bear in mind that the European Union does not represent the whole of "Europe" and, moreover, that the frontiers of the "wider Europe" are still open to the East and South East and want permanent re-consideration. In this context special attention should be given to the specific place which Russia occupies in this debate with regard to its European and Asian nationalities.

Finally, the special relation of Europe to North America must be given special attention, as I have already suggested at the beginning. This dimension is related, in particular, to the "cultural inheritance" of both continents in view of ethical values, such as human dignity, human rights and tolerance. The recent observation that in North America, above all in the United States, the issue of "national identity" has been unexpectedly "discovered" should not be excluded from our debate, even when, as is the case of this presentation, we are focussed on our "old" Europe. Ingo Hochbaum has recently remarked that "in 2015 the industrial democracies will make out less than ten percent of the global population; therefore the question is raised, whether the Western values will have a chance at all to assert their position" . Regardless this pessimistic outlook, all individual groups, regions, states and groups of states in Europe are challenged to look for allies to share their adherence to the overarching human values. It goes without saying that such search must be based upon the conviction that these values have to be acknowledged and practised in Europe itself. Moreover, the acceptance of the global challenge would be doomed to failure from the

beginning, if it took place in a "fortress mentality". In such a case it would not matter whether this mentality would become manifest within regional, national or "European" boundaries.

Education cannot solve the problems by itself. Yet, it can pay a contribution to the search for solutions. We should become aware of this contribution in conceiving and practising education which links modernisation and humanisation in retrospect to the national, European and universal assets to be discovered in the past and by orientation towards the challenges of defining Europe's place in the "global village" of tomorrow.

*WOLFGANG*
*MITTER*

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