

Education for a ‘better world’: The ‘Europe of the Euro’ vs. the ‘Europe of Knowledge’

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The paper aims to address – from the perspective of a history of ideas on ‘a better world’ – a topic which has been highly disputed in contemporary discussions on (higher) education: what are the effects of the progressing internationalisation and globalisation of (higher) education? Which conceptual shifts are obscured by the processes which are presumably transforming educational diversity into ‘one world’ and ‘one school’? Are we winning or losing in these processes? Should we support or contest international student mobility? Should we ease or tighten up the mutual recognition of educational credentials? Should we allow or stop the transnational provision of education and English as the teaching language in non-English speaking countries, for-profit schools, colleges and universities operating globally? Etc., etc. There is no single answer to these dilemmas and the public at large does not simply split into two distinct camps around each of them.

Our approach is typically European: it is defined by the context of post-World War II history and in particular the post-Berlin Wall history as the history of European ‘reunification’. What does political and economic ‘reunification’ mean when we discuss trends in education or culture? We will try to respond to some burning questions starting from the heritage of Enlightenment, focusing on the concept of education as developed since the early 19th century by nation states, analysing the process of internationalisation – and ‘Europeanisation’ as part of this process – in education and differentiating it from the process of globalisation in education. The processes we discuss here are not linear and simple; they always involve dichotomies as we already sought to suggest in the title. But first of all, we have to clarify the context a little.

‘The full range of purposes’ in higher education

The late 1980s and 1990s was a very dynamic yet also a very turbulent time in Europe. The Europeanisation process in the West took new steps reflected in both the EU enlargement (‘EU-15’) and in a broader political consensus (the *Maastricht Treaty*, 1992).¹ In the same period, fundamental political changes occurred in Europe’s East, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall. A process of ‘transition’ opened new pages in the reunifying Europe and awoke intensive aspirations in the East to ‘rejoin Europe’. These processes contributed to a new meaning of the word. Europe as a whole (politically, socially and economically radically divided in the past) was no longer

¹ See, e.g. <http://europa.eu/abc/treaties/index_en.htm>.

understood as a mere geographical entity. It began to shine in a new light: it is ‘one’ and it is ‘diverse’ – but its ‘diversity is our common richness’. The reunifying Europe as a symbolic entity was again recognised as a value: a strong value which can motivate people in both the West and East, in the North and South. Indeed, this new sheen emitted slightly differently in various parts of the continent and this value could also be understood or interpreted differently.

Political and social expectations with regard to higher education substantially changed. On one hand, all countries were already challenged in one or another way by the phenomenon of mass higher education and the many problems linked to it. On the other, they were challenged by global trends in higher education and by the danger of lagging behind North America and other parts of the world. Finally, the emerging ‘knowledge society’ began to suggest that ‘transition’ is not only something for the East and not merely political but that higher education is encountering a deep structural and conceptual change (Zgaga, 2007, p. 63ff).

The enhanced ‘Europeanisation’ process in Western parts of Europe combined with the political ‘transition’ process in its Eastern parts and ‘globalisation’ trends worldwide pushed European higher education into a situation which required a quite radical cut with extremely diverse national traditions. In a given atmosphere, the idea of building a common higher education (EHEA) and research area (ERA) was born² and soon recognised as the new paradigm. Yet, from the beginning there have been diverse interpretations and expectations regarding the EHEA and ERA. The academic advantages were quite clear but what might be their broader implications? To develop a new, more inclusive paradigm of international coexistence on the basis of ‘European values’ by means of higher education? To contribute to a new European citizenship? Or perhaps to develop, on the basis of the new geographical divisions, a new, stronger competition among national systems and/or world regions that has not been seen before? New dilemmas were encountered. In ‘politically correct’ language, they have most often been expressed in the dichotomy of ‘*economic competitiveness*’ vs. ‘*social cohesion*’.

This dichotomy is a general one; in various colours it glimmers between the lines of almost all European political messages of the last decade. This is perhaps the best known quotation: “The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Lisbon European Council, 2000). Its echoes can be heard everywhere in contemporary European higher education policy debates. Yet, they have been verbalised in different ways. On one hand, during the 1990s and in accordance with the *Zeitgeist* increased stress was put on the instrumental side of higher education. Understood as a

² The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was an initiative of the national ministers of higher education (the Bologna Process, 1999), while the European Research Area (ERA) was an initiative of the European Commission (the Lisbon Process, 2001). So far, 46 countries have joined the Bologna Process (the ‘EU-46’; ‘large Europe’, including e.g. the Russian Federation) while the ERA is formally linked to the European Union member states (‘EU-27’).

“service” it was regarded as “*the most dynamic segment of international trade*”.³ On the other hand, in a political initiative of 1998 which initiated the Bologna Process it was argued “*that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy*” but “*it must be a Europe of knowledge as well*” (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998).

The dichotomy of ‘economic competitiveness’ versus ‘social cohesion’ has deeply affected the understanding of the potential purpose(s) and role(s) of the modern university. Criticisms have been often made that higher education is now progressively understood ‘only as an economic drive’. On the other side, it has been also said that ‘higher education romanticism’ has no real grounds and harms social and economic development.⁴ Of course, the mutual objection of ‘one-sidedness’ (i.e., a dominance of one purpose/role of higher education and the neglect of any other purposes/roles) has been a matter of various considerations. Eight years after the idea of the EHEA had been confirmed in Bologna, we read in an important political message that higher education should be considered with regard to its “*full range of purposes*”. In the London Communiqué (2007), European ministers responsible for higher education agreed as follows:

*“We recognise the important influence HEIs exert on developing our societies, based on their traditions as centres of learning, research, creativity and knowledge transfer as well as their key role in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: [a.] preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; [b.] preparing students for their future careers and [c.] enabling their personal development; [d.] creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.”*⁵

³ “The traditional framework of public service increasingly proved inappropriate for operating some of the most dynamic and innovative segments of the economy, and governments apparently lacked the entrepreneurial spirit and financial resources to exploit fully existing growth potential.” Taken from a recent document: *The General Agreement on Trade in Services. An Introduction*. 29 March 2006. – The GATS ‘philosophy’ was a particularly frequent and hot topic in European higher education discussions at the beginning of this decade.

⁴ A brief remark should be made here. An approach which likes to see the course of history as an ongoing process leading towards a progressing ‘emptiness’ has, however, been known for centuries but does not seem to help in reconsidering the problems of today as it has never helped – in my understanding – with redirecting the ‘wrong’ courses of human history. On the contrary, this approach has always been just the reverse side of the problematic, supposedly ‘empty’ present. In my understanding, a productive *confrontation with the present* can only lie beyond the dichotomy of ‘realism’ and ‘romanticism’. This dichotomy is not only characteristic of policy discourses but also for academic ones.

⁵ This position statement was recently reconfirmed at the Leuven / Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) ministerial Bologna Conference (28-29 April 2009). However, it took quite a long time for this idea to finally enter a political document signed by 46 European education ministers. We can trace it from the reports of early official Bologna seminars or working groups, e.g. a seminar on recognition issues in the Bologna Process (Lisbon, April 2002; a document in the author’s archives), a seminar on employability (Bled, Slovenia, October 2004; a document in the author’s archives), a report from the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (December 2004; [Berg], 2005, p. 23). Documents prove that stressing ‘a full range of purposes in higher education’ was in particular pushed forward by the Council of Europe’s agenda (Bergan, 2004, p. 24; Weber and Bergan, 2005, pp. 27, 235; Kohler and Huber, 2006, pp. 13, 213) – an organisation which is not an ‘EU body’ but covers the ‘large’ Europe.

Interestingly, this list begins by stressing the citizenship purpose of higher education and not by setting out points of a more ‘popular’ nature, e.g. contributing to economic competitiveness. This appears unusual as we have been accustomed to education being ranked as ‘the most dynamic segment of trade’ and being reduced to only one of its functions – ‘learning for earning’. To make it clear from the start: it is not my intention to diminish the importance of the ‘economic’ dimension of higher education and to favour its pure ‘social’ dimension; that would be childish. My presupposition is that the ‘full range of purposes’ – set out in the four points marked in the above quotation – is very important. The idea holds an internal relationship with the dichotomy of the ‘Europe of the Euro’ vs. the ‘Europe of knowledge’ and, from today’s point of view, it seems necessary to reconsider this dichotomy against the background of a history of ideas on ‘a better world’.

Education for ‘a better world’: from cosmopolitanism to nationalism

Again, our aim is to address from this perspective a highly disputed topic of our times: the relationship between the variety of educational systems rooted in diverse national traditions and progressing trends towards their convergence and harmonisation, perhaps even their ‘uniformisation’. This is an issue which is not an exclusive problem of education; other social subsystems encounter similar dilemmas as well. To describe this relationship, and similar ones, today we often use the widespread notion of *globalisation*. Yet, what do we mean by that? Despite years of discussions and a huge number of books on this theme there is still a lot of confusion using it. It is increasingly a matter of strong and emotional questioning.

The essence of this questioning could be: *globalisation – is it a good or a bad thing?* If we apply it to the area of education we are expected to respond, for example, to a question: ‘*one world*’ and ‘*one school*’ – *is it a good or a bad thing?* This cannot be answered simply on the basis of individual feelings at a given moment. First of all, it is a matter of conceptual considerations, a matter of reflection upon history and culture etc. This is an approach we would like to follow here. To start, we will address the problem as follows: *can education contribute to a better world?*

There has been a long tradition of a belief in continuous progress towards a better world. There has also been a long tradition of a conviction that *good* is associated with *knowledge* and with striving for knowledge, i.e. with *learning*. It was already Plato who told us in his famous metaphor of the cave “how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened”, that what we take to be real would in fact be an illusion, that only by means of education can we lift ourselves “in the region of the knowable” and that the last thing to be seen there “is the idea of good” (*The Republic*, 514, 517b-c). Against this background education has been understood as one of most important levers for a better world, and a better world has often been understood in a utopian way as ‘one world’, i.e. a ‘united world’ – a world beyond human divisions, collisions and conflicts.

In the age of the Enlightenment, 250 years ago, particularly firm stepping stones were built on this historical road. A number of scholars and political activists of the time could be referred to here but we shall quote only one – Condorcet, who wrote about his hopes in *the future progress of the human mind* in his hiding place just a few months before his violent death (1794): “We shall point out how more universal education in each country can add to such hopes” and how these hopes “increase even more, if a more general prosperity permits a greater number of individuals to pursue studies, since at present, in the most enlightened countries, hardly a fiftieth part of those men to whom nature has given talent receive the education necessary to make use of their talents”. Further: “We shall show how this equality of education, and the equality that will arise between nations, will speed up the advances of [...] sciences” (Condorcet, 1970, p. 208).

This fragment may perhaps provoke some cynical comments today – but it deserves much more than that. There is no doubt that human attempts of the last two centuries to proceed from “an age of enlightenment” to “an enlightened age” (Kant in 1784) have been really troublesome and contradictory. At this point, our observations encounter a number of paradoxes and bring us close to the ‘dialectics of the Enlightenment’ as we already learnt from authors of the previous century. We will try to come closer to some of these questions, starting from Immanuel Kant’s well-known work *Über Pädagogik* (1803) – a work which seems unavoidable in this context.

Like many of his contemporaries in various countries he had a lot of optimism regarding education. Kant was obviously born in happy times: in the Age of the Enlightenment, as he says, it is “for the first time” that “people have begun to [...] understand clearly, what actually belongs to a good education”. For him, education is closely associated with what he called “the perfection of mankind” and “perfection of human nature”. Thus, a clear understanding of the potential of education “opens out to us the prospect of a happier human race in the future”. (Kant, 1900, p. 8)

However, he identified a split between what we may call *actual* (or *present*) *education* and *education intended for the future*. “Parents usually educate their children merely in such a manner that, however bad the world may be, they may adapt themselves to its present conditions”, he complained and stressed that “children ought to be educated [...] for a possibly improved condition of man in the future; that is, in a manner which is adapted to the *idea* of *humanity* and the whole destiny of man.” (Ibid., p. 14)

There are two fragments in his text where Kant uses the concept of *cosmopolitanism* (ibid., pp. 15, 121). This is particularly interesting within the context of our theme. The first fragment starts with Kant’s warnings about the narrow scope of parents’ and rulers’ approaches to education: not only that they educate their children merely to adapt to present conditions – they do not aim at “the universal good” (ibid., p. 17) at all! Their understanding of education is purely instrumental.

Therefore, not the spontaneous desire of parents and rulers but “the judgment of the most enlightened experts”, i.e., not a narrow and partial but a universal and cosmopolitan view, should become the stepping stone towards a better future. Further, in Kant’s eyes the

basis of an education scheme must be truly cosmopolitan; he stresses how important it is to teach youth to go beyond selfish interests and “to rejoice at the world’s progress”. He is very radical here: “although it may not be to their own advantage or to that of their country,” he adds. “We must encourage the youth”, adding, “in love towards others, as well as to feelings of cosmopolitanism”. (Ibid., pp. 120-121)

These thoughts are now over 200 years old. They belong to a period just before the birth of nation states in Europe. Since the early 19th century, the term *cosmopolitanism* has not been used more frequently; on the contrary, it has continuously been used rarely – mainly within circles of intelligentsia to describe an individual position, e.g. as an opposition to the aggressive concepts of nationalisms of various kinds. In principle, it has not been used in dominating political and ideological discourses at all. Further, totalitarianisms of different kinds have always taken a very hostile view of it.

We confess that the term *cosmopolitanism* sounds somewhat old-fashioned today. Nevertheless, it seems that today we are much more ‘*citizens of the world*’ than ever before. Are we? The way I just translated the term with ancient Greek roots – ‘*citizens of the world*’ – could be strongly disputed. Perhaps we are not more ‘*citizens of the world*’ than Kant was. What distinguishes us and people from the 18th century it is that we are much more ‘*globalised*’: yet, not globalised ‘citizens’ but ‘consumers’. Both, ‘cosmos’ and ‘globe’ have something in common but a conceptual connection between *cosmopolitanism* and *globalism* seems out of place. Each of these terms was established in a substantially different historical context. However, both are linked to the ‘eternal question’ of whether progress towards a better future is possible – or impossible – and what could the role of education be in that regard.

From nation-state education to the internationalisation of education

At first sight, the appearance of compulsory schooling systems in newly born *nation states* in Europe of the 19th century may look like the realisation of the brave ideas of the Enlightenment. It may even look like the implementation of substantially older humanistic ideas. Kant’s individualistic *cosmopolite education* opened new perspectives but, as we will discuss later, it led to the concept of *national education* which materialised in the social and political reality of early 19th century Europe under the leadership of the *nation state*. The change from the concept of *cosmopolite education* to national education occurred in an extremely complex transition process at the turn of the centuries. Here, we deliberately lean on John Dewey who analysed this issue – from a non-European perspective – in his considerations on *Democracy and Education* (1915).

He refers to the dichotomies mentioned above and the tradition of an idea of the free and complete development of a ‘private’ personality which is impossible without recognising ‘social’ responsibility, discipline and political subordination. According to him, the nation state was created in historical circumstances of the early 19th century as “an intermediary between the realization of private personality on one side and of humanity on the other” (Dewey, 2004, p. 93). These circumstances are characterised by “Germany in the generation occupied by the struggle against Napoleon for national independence”

(ibid., p. 91). He argued that “in less than two decades after his time, Kant’s philosophic successors, Fichte and Hegel, elaborated the idea that the chief function of the state is educational”. He concluded this passage by saying: “In this spirit, Germany was the first country to undertake a public, universal, and compulsory system of education” (ibid., p. 92). The pattern was born and soon spread across Europe and beyond; yet, it saw several national specific modes of implementation.

One could also dispute other aspects of Dewey’s argument – for example, the role of German idealism on the philosophical side or country-specific modalities of nation-state education on the historical side – but that move beyond our intention here. What is crucial is the specific historic form attached to the school at the dawn of the industrial age: it is ‘one school’ for the whole country – ‘one country’; for the sake of the nation, not for the sake of individualistic cosmopolitanism. This form cannot simply be derived from the ideas of the Enlightenment and their philosophical successors; as they had an important effect on historical changes, the real processes were much more complex. Thus, in their pre-revolutionary and revolutionary history of ‘*alfabetisation*’ in France (a treaty concerning another subject but related to our main theme), François Furet and Jacques Ozouf warned of a methodological danger – namely, that it is important to distinguish between the “ideology of the school” and the “history of the school”: if we do not consider this difference the history of the school could be speculatively deduced from e.g. “revolutionary ideas” and the “mythology of the school”. However, they highlight a feature which is not at all incompatible with Dewey’s analysis: on its historical way to the industrial age, the (state) school emerges as the chief figure of unlimited social power over the happiness of an individual. In this specific form, the *nation state* continues its task of contributing to the ‘better world’ (Furet and Ozouf, 1977).

There is another important comment in Dewey’s book: “the new idea of the importance of education for human welfare and progress was captured by national interests”, in particular in the European continental states, he stressed, while “science, commerce and art transcend national boundaries”; they are “largely international in quality and method” (Dewey, 2004, p. 93). He reminds us of another dichotomy concerning the middle of World War I when the confrontation of nation states had reached its high point: welfare and progress is the capital “national interest” but it can only be achieved by tools which transcend “national boundaries”. Science and arts are by their very nature ‘cosmopolitan’, not ‘national’. In a similar way, commerce remaining closed within the nation state would lead towards an autarchic economy; in its nature, it is ‘global’ if we may use this word here.

National education systems are children of nation states. Since they did not appear all at the same time but continuously, literally throughout the last two centuries, and as they are spread geographically across the globe, a huge diversity among them has developed. This diversity is equally a result of the politics, government and administration of a particular country or region and a result of cultural, religious, linguistic etc. traditions. Polarisation between nation states, their grouping in political blocs, economic co-operation as well as protectionism have also influenced their characteristic features and differences.

Particular features of individual national education systems have traditionally been jealously guarded as aspects of national identity, in certain contexts perhaps even sovereignty (e.g. issues of denomination, ideology, history, language etc.). However, as soon as nation states are not taken in isolation one from another but a need for their co-operation prevails these particular features may turn into obstacles. Not only are science and arts ‘cosmopolitan’, or that commerce is ‘global’ but education by its very nature also exceeds national boundaries. We have learnt from our histories that the potential of teaching, research and artistic creativity has always been dangerously reduced when a country has decided to hermetically close its borders. On the other hand, when people travel from country to country – and they have always been travelling, either as free citizens or illegally and in the face of difficulties – they not only need to change their money into the local currency but also to ask for recognition of their own or their children’s educational credentials. Unconnected and incompatible educational systems do not merely hinder individuals but obstruct political and economic co-operation between countries.

This is nothing new; we know this well. I repeat these notorious truths in order to stress that they do not necessarily refer to *globalisation in education* as we understand it today. In fact, the point we have now reached refers more to *internationalisation in education* with which we have been familiar for quite a long time. The basic condition of the internationalisation of education is the existence of several independent nation states and their education systems.

The internationalisation of education subsumes links and co-operation between different systems which may remain different. There have always been various incentives for this. Its most traditional form has been university co-operation, either individual and institutional or initiated and supported by the state. The highest scientific endeavours and the most complex academic studies have always depended on the broadest possible ‘academic critical masses’. During the 20th century, voluntary inter-university co-operation was unfortunately very limited at certain times and between certain places, e.g. during the period of Nazism in the first half or during the Cold War in the second half of the last century. Nevertheless, even in the ‘coldest’ periods there were some ‘warm’ yet isolated exceptions: we know that when diplomacy failed, small groups of academics were sometimes used to maintain the lowest possible contact between opposing political blocs.

Therefore, besides *academic* or *cultural reasons* for international co-operation in education there have been *diplomatic and political* as well as *economic* ones. In fact, in the previous century the latter seem to have been stronger. These trends continue today. The ‘warmer’ relations between countries (i.e. nation states) have been, the broader the area of co-operation in education that has been covered (e.g. not only universities but also pre-university education). A history of bilateral and multilateral agreements in educational co-operation may represent a rainbow of possibilities: exchanges of students and teachers, exchanges of various educational experts and expertise, legal matters like the recognition of educational qualifications, development of textbooks, mutual promotion of national cultures, care for ethnic minorities or migrants, language learning,

unilateral or bilateral support to economic development, improvements in vocational and/or professional training etc.

To sum up: in principle, the internationalisation of education has not been a painful or ‘menacing’ process – it has usually only opened new perspectives and encouraged new developments in national education without endangering it. In the final instance, the nation state remains fully responsible for educational provision in the country. In legal terms, it is still one of the key characteristics of national educational systems. Yet, towards the end of the previous century it started to appear as an obstacle to further developments or at least as a problem needing to be addressed. The importance of education (including international co-operation in education) for ‘human welfare and progress’ which was in principle understood ‘as the national interest’ arrived via the rapidly progressing ‘science, commerce and art’ which are ‘largely international’ in their very nature and which ‘transcend national boundaries’, if we paraphrase Dewey. Education stepped beyond the limits of national education.

The ‘Europeanisation’ of education

This problem has been addressed in the last 20 to 30 years in several ways: inspired by agents of politics, the economy and business as well as education and culture. As a combination of all three aspects it has been addressed in a fresh way within the European integration processes. As we remember, the ‘new European story’ started with coal and iron, and then continued to atomic energy and the economy at large; finally common political bodies – a single Commission and a single Council of the three Communities – were established. For a long time there was no direct reference to education in the legal treaties of the Communities; ‘soft’ subsystems (like education and culture) were kept solely within the responsibility of the member states, i.e. nation states.

We remember the *Maastricht Treaty* of 1992 which not only included new provisions on defence, justice and home affairs but for the first time also on education. It was agreed that the Community “shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity” (Article 126). Thus, the Community also received certain responsibilities in education but the *subsidiarity principle* was applied and the final responsibility for national education systems again remained with the member states. This provision is still in place today. It is a step *beyond* the traditional form of international co-operation in education.

Almost 20 years have passed since then and it is perhaps necessary to reconsider some characteristics of the early 1990s. On one hand, this was a period of increasing global economic competition largely connected to technological development. It was a period which required Western Europe to reflect on its position on a worldwide economic and political scale. On the other hand, it was a period of great political change in Europe’s East, a time of the dissolution of a superpower in the East, an era of general turmoil in

Central, East and South-east Europe, including civil wars. It seems to be the right place here to recall an old and hardly known ‘education story’ – if known at all. I am personally connected to this story.

In the early 1980s – apparently far from the time when Europe and the entire world became conscious of the serious threats and unavoidable eruption of conflicts in the Balkans – an educational reform took place, which also partly contributed to the later decay of Yugoslavia. This was the last educational reform of the former regime and it faced a double task: to answer the challenges of political liberalism and civil society movements of the 1970s (the student movement in particular) and, at the same time, to adjust education to the then ‘needs of society’. This modernisation of education was understood in the then context of ‘socialism with a human face’ and in the framework of specific – today totally incomprehensible – political terminology which made socialist Yugoslavia so different from the countries of the Eastern bloc.

Because the ideological dimension was an important aspect of the reform, predominantly as an answer to the rising intellectual liberal opposition, it was only a question of time when open criticism would erupt. It happened during the process of drafting a new common core curriculum in the mid-1980s: in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society, politically organised as a federation and highly decentralised, ‘centralist’ powers, later identified as the Slobodan Milošević circle, demanded nothing less than the ‘*harmonisation of school subjects* like the mother tongue and literature, history etc., across the entire federation. It is important to add that in those times the responsibility for education was at the level of federation units (i.e., ‘socialist republics’), not at the federation level. Therefore, some kind of the ‘subsidiarity principle’ was in use.

This demand provoked a fierce revolt at once. At least in my country, Slovenia, it also became one of the important levers of the revival of civil society and the gradual democratisation process, which led to the country’s independence in 1991. Association and integration processes along with global trends on the larger European scene offered much more perspectives, hopes and chances than the forced ‘harmonisation’ attempts within the home country of that time. Strange at that time but very true: *internationalisation* (i.e., Europeanisation) seemed to be *the strongest guarantee of protecting the cultural identity of ethnic group as well as the cultural diversities among them*. It was understood as part of the fight for human rights and democracy. In the given circumstances characterised by growing autocratic pressures and an atmosphere of growing ethnic tensions, the protection and development of national education (i.e., education in one’s own language etc.) was only imaginable in an international context.

Indeed, the renewal of educational systems in the newly born independent state in the early 1990s was largely based on learning from best contemporary international practices, not on the mythologies of ‘brave national traditions’. On the other hand, during the period of ‘the transition’ my country never decided to rest the development of national education on a loan from international financial institutions, e.g. the World Bank. Fortunately, it had never been really necessary – like in some other countries which passed through ‘the

transition' in incomparably harsher conditions. The worst examples in several countries were burned schools and victims including pupils and teachers.

What is the point of this story? First, it reminds us that education may become a hostage of political turmoil and military conflicts while 'the importance of education for human welfare and progress' – including *national* welfare and progress – requires stable and democratic social and political circumstances and as many possible 'open windows' for 'fresh air' and inspiration. Therefore, and secondly, education desperately needs an established *polity*, a balance-keeping structure, a framework of fundamental rights which makes public education possible. Lastly, public education should have firm and stable grounds – legal and financial – but it should also retain its necessary *autonomy*: as regards government and/or political parties as well as market and financial institutions.

The European Union has grown into an entity which far exceeds a simple iron and coal community. If the Community had merely remained focused on iron and coal it would have stayed more or less a free-trade zone. However, the ambitions have always been greater. Recently, Anne Corbett presented a detailed 'story' of how higher education and universities entered the European agenda; her story starts back in the mid-1950s. This process was decisively pushed forward by the Erasmus decision (1985-87) and, at least partly, took its own logic: a logic of "educational Europe" *vis-à-vis* "technocratic or economic Europe" (Corbett, 2006, p. xi). Apart from creating EU programmes for co-operation in education, an '*educational Europe*' developed during the next two decades – a community of students, teachers, researchers etc. who co-operate across borders and across past divisions. This is indeed something new and something the old continent may be proud of.

Already in the 1990s the increased educational co-operation across countries – not only between 'EU member states' but also 'partner countries' – in a form not seen before posed a new question which reverts to the educational authorities in individual countries. Open questions and problems with growing mobility, in particular in higher education, made it necessary to *seek convergence* among diverse educational systems. The best known case here is the *Bologna Process*. It may be controversial at some points, there may be different interpretations of some principles among countries, but it has proved to be a voluntary process of converging systems and – what I find even more important – a process in partnership where educational institutions, university and student associations and other interested partners from civil society work together with governmental representatives.

In this context, both 'technical' and more substantial issues were addressed. With the start of the Bologna Process a far reaching point was raised, as already mentioned: namely "that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy" but "it must be a Europe of knowledge as well" (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998). This statement – setting aside the question of whether it was rhetorical or perhaps of more substantial – has survived a decade: sometimes contested and forgotten, other times supported and promoted, always attracting comments and amendments. Regardless of the variety of responses it has helped retain an important dimension open for ongoing discussion.

This dimension is just as important for the ‘large’ Europe as for the ‘EU-27’; it also has important consequences for global higher education. At the end of 2002, in an atmosphere characterised by the forthcoming enlargement of the EU to 25 member states in 2004, EU Commissioner Viviane Reding, then also responsible for education, articulated it at a conference on cultural and educational rights in the enlarged Europe in an interesting way: “Our challenge is to build a Europe reaching beyond the sphere of economy to promote sustainable development as a means to meet citizens’ expectations concerning quality of life and cultural and social diversity”. Further, “what needs to be reaffirmed, on the eve of enlargement, is the role of culture in the development of a European identity without which the Union would be doomed to be nothing more than a vast free trade area” (in: De Groof, 2005, pp. 27, 33).

Where are we today? Have we reached “beyond the sphere of economy”? At a minimum, there is certain scepticism surrounding these aims but it also represents an issue that should be readdressed today.

Education and globalisation

The enthusiasm in Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) calmed down some time ago and something similar has happened with the historical enlargement of the EU (2004). This decade has been marked, on the ‘hard’ side, by further growth and global economic competition while, on the ‘soft’ side, it seems that it has periodically returned to local, partial and even directly selfish political interests. At first blush it looks strange but in essence it is not a surprise: in our ‘global villages’ of today, in the so-called ‘age of globalisation’ we are encountering phenomena which were supposed to be creatures of the past: protectionism, nationalism, exclusion, homophobia, intolerance etc. This is far from being only a European problem, it is global.

The term ‘*globalisation*’ which was launched two or three decades ago and entered into everyday language has slowly turned from *a promise* to *a menace*. Globalisation in general, including the globalisation of education, today most probably attracts more opponents than defenders in the public at large. However, we continue to buy cheap items made far away and save money to send our child to a good university abroad. As briefly mentioned, the term ‘globalisation’ is often taken as a synonym for a number of seemingly ‘similar’ terms; as a result, misunderstandings often arise. For example, within our discussion it is important to distinguish between globalisation and internationalisation: globalisation *is not* internationalisation. Internationalisation is conditioned by development of the nation state; this step was taken in the 19th century – also holding important consequences for the development of educational concepts and systems.

On the other hand, another crucial distinction is proposed, at least to my knowledge, by Ulrich Beck: he distinguishes between *globalisation* as an analytical concept and *globalism* as an ideology: “To me globalism is the view that the world market displaces or replaces political action; it is the ideology of world market power, the ideology of

neoliberalism. This is a monocausal and economistic view which reduces the multi-dimensionality of globalisation to one dimension, the economic dimension (which is also envisaged as a linear process) and which only formulates other dimensions – globalisation of ecology, culture, politics, civil society – as subordinate to the system of the world market, if they are formulated at all” (Beck, 1997, p. 26).

In a certain way, the history of mankind and civilisation could be interpreted as the ‘history of globalisation’: a process of becoming ever more interdependent, a process of growing connectivity in political, economic and cultural life across the world. We can observe either absolute monarchies or nation states or multinational organisations as modes of political organisations at various stages of ‘globalisation’. Similarly, traditional national education systems as well as emerging contemporary common ‘education areas’ (like the Bologna-inspired *European Higher Education Area* to be established in 2010), ‘research areas’ and ‘knowledge areas’ can be seen as organisation forms responding to the challenges of a given phase of ‘globalisation’. Yet, this is a very broad and abstract approach; when discussing our times and education today we need more concrete answers.

Interdependence as the main characteristic of globalisation has in modern times reached a level that is incomparable with previous ones. Thirty years ago, at the very beginning of the discussion on globalisation, Daniel Bell noted that the nation state had become “too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life” (Bell, 1987). This witty note could also be applied to education: the role of the nation state as regards education has changed. On one hand, it is more and more often stressed that education should be governed closer to local communities or – as in the case of universities – with full respect of institutional autonomy. On the other hand, education was almost jealously kept within absolute national responsibility for many decades but in recent decades it has not only entered the EU Treaty but also international law. Let us remind ourselves, for example, of conventions on the recognition of qualifications which are so important not only for migrants and mobile students but which at least indirectly contribute to building mutual trust, quality enhancement, the transparency of educational systems and provision and, last but not least, to the convergence of systems.

To recapitulate: we encounter issues and problems of a global nature and we have to invent tools and approaches which can effectively address global problems. National as well as local problems still exist and education will continue to serve specific needs of specific social, cultural and economic contexts (i.e., identities, cultures, professions etc.), yet we also encounter issues which exceed local or national importance and can and should be addressed globally (i.e., education for peace, human rights, tolerance, environment protection etc.).

From discussing globalisation and education we turn now, as Beck suggested, to education and *globalism* as “the view that the world market displaces or replaces political action”. What has seriously affected educational concepts and educational systems around the turn of the millennium has been globalism rather than globalisation. The

traditional mission and aims of education – the educational contribution to a *better world* – has been seriously challenged.

Ten years ago, Thomas Friedman asserted that “the driving force behind globalization is free market capitalism” (Friedman, 1999, p. 9). As we can recognise from the title of his book, this is also to be understood as the driving force leading to a *better world*: the ‘Lexus’ (Toyota’s luxury vehicle division) symbolises the drive for (economic) *prosperity and development* while the ‘olive tree’ symbolises the desire to retain *identity and traditions*. Education has always had to serve both – prosperity and development as well as identity and tradition – and now it is facing a difficult dilemma: *either* prosperity *or* tradition? The turn of the millennium we just passed was a high point of ‘the greatest economic boom in history’, as it has often been declared. Deregulation, privatisation and markets became sacred words which seemed to have no alternative – at least no alternative when the public sector is under discussion. This has been promoted as a path to prosperity, to a better world.

Of course, there have also been frequent and numerous protests along with loud disputes on these theses. Polemics on the GATS and struggles against the ‘commodification’ of education (a term made popular by ESIB – European Students Unions) in the first half of this decade illustrate the field of education very well. Despite protests, educational systems have been strongly affected by globalism. Public education provision has practically everywhere been questioned and accused of not being efficient and offering quality. ‘Values’ became an economic word; they fairly lost their ethical connotation. ‘Customer-friendly’ education has to satisfy ‘customer needs’; it has to be based on a ‘right to chose’ and, of course, ‘purchasing power’. The discourse of ‘new public management’ shouted more traditional discourses down – and the school became an ‘enterprise’ (Laval, 2004).

There is a long list of further proposals of this kind and perhaps an even longer list of their criticisms in contemporary literature. Many authors have warned against the extreme and thoughtless application of the theory of the ‘invisible hand’ to social areas like education. The belief that the ‘invisible hand’ co-ordinates human actions best and that free enterprise will create a life that is better for everyone, even for those who now seem disadvantaged, was critically assessed many decades ago. What seems to be the key criticism of today it is that the ‘invisible hand’ theory, when applied to the last corner of social life, makes such things as the *polity* and *public spaces* or *public care* and the *public good* totally redundant. The public school is part of this redundancy. Parallel to the growth of the power of the world market we are witnessing a decrease in the power of the nation state.

In this perspective, Michael W. Apple critically noted that “[d]emocracy is no longer a political concept” if “[s]chools are to be treated with the same market-oriented logic as bread and cars”; “rather it is wholly an economic concept in which unattached individuals – supposedly making ‘rational’ choices on an unfettered market – will ultimately lead to a better society”. However, he also stresses “public institutions are the defining features of a caring and democratic society” he also stresses (Apple, 2008, pp. 12, 14, 15).

In the last year we have been receiving more and more signs that ‘the greatest economic boom in history’ is over. The financial crisis and its effects on the economy, politics and society will certainly affect education as well. Nothing will be like it used to be.

According to voices which came early this year to Europe from the other side of the Atlantic, the crisis has already had major impacts on education. “Most comments about the effects of the financial crisis on higher education have focused on the possible drying up of student loans,” says Arthur M. Hauptman, an independent public policy consultant from Arlington, Virginia. According to him, “[t]he effect of this drop-off will be most pronounced for students in higher-priced private institutions and for-profit trade schools” (Hauptman, 2009). Is this an opportunity to rehabilitate the idea of public education – or perhaps just a step towards expanding the waves of crisis from private to public education?

Also on the European side of the Atlantic these dilemmas are not just hypothetical. In February, 500 university leaders met at the EUA Annual Convention in Prague to discuss two hot issues: the future of the Bologna Process and effects of the financial crisis in higher education. Interestingly, they discussed the ‘bright’ future of European higher education in relation to the financial crisis. As far as we can currently see, it is difficult to seriously forecast what might happen in higher education in the weeks and months to follow. The EUA reports a wide variety of situations across Europe: some governments are announcing and implementing budget cuts for higher education yet some others are increasing the level of available public funds, especially for the academic infrastructure. Whatever the scenario will be, in European higher education which is moving ever closer to its goal of the decade – i.e., to a common Higher Education Area in 2010 – the most ambitious reform goals will have to traverse highly uncertain economic paths.

A conclusion

At the end we ask again: can education contribute to a better world *today*? At a certain level, the question is rhetorical; we have not heard any argument that seriously questions the link between good, knowledge and education. Of course, there is a polemic and perhaps also confusion about what we should understand by both a ‘better world’ and a ‘good education’. Yet, this is not for the first time in human history.

We should perhaps ask a different question: *how* can education contribute to a better world? What hinders education from contributing? My answer is borrowed from Ulrich Beck: a “monocausal view” which reduces the multi-dimensionality of education to one dimension, today the economic dimension. To clarify: I am the last person to argue against the importance of education for economic development. The point refers to a *groundless* reduction which endangers the concept of education. It is crucial to *recognise a full range of educational purposes*, for example in the form articulated in Jacques Delors’ well-known report to UNESCO: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be* (Delors, 1996). It is essential that we reconceptualise the idea of education.

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