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Education for a Multi-lingual Community (Europe)

Since the war, migrations on a grand scale of the kind that used to cross the Atlantic have been taking place between the countries of the European Community. Looking for alternatives to the enforced absorption of millions of children into the alien and unilingual schools of their foster-nations, McConnell explores the models offered by a number of "international" schools which have set out to make a virtue of the mix of cultures and languages among their students, and which frequently function in more than one language, bilingually or even multilingually. As so often, the practice of such schools reminds us that difficulties occasioned by such things as differences of language and custom, far from being fraught with omens of disaster, are full of educational opportunities for school children.

The educational scene in Europe has been subject to a number of sweeping changes during the period since World War II. One factor alone has created enormous problems. By 1973 there were 11 million migrants living in Western Europe, and in 1977 the European Community estimated that there were 12 million migrants in the nine Member States. (The European Community referred to is the Europe of the Nine — Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of West Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom.)

The term *migrants* is a loose and unsatisfactory one. We must remember that these totals include the 400,000 Irishmen living and working in the United Kingdom and the 800,000 Algerians in France. It also includes a very significant group which may be defined as intra-Community migrants. The Treaty of Rome confers on citizens of Member States of the EC the right to establish themselves and to work in any other Member State. The statistical services of the European Commission estimated that by the mid 70's the total number of such workers was 1,600,000, a figure which, if it were to include their spouses and children, would rise to over 3 million.

It goes without saying that the presence of such numbers of foreigners with an alien background speaking a foreign language placed an enormous burden on the educational systems of the host countries. The Federal Republic of Germany, with a million migrant children on its hands, faced the biggest problem. Two million more children of school age are spread over the other countries in greater or lesser concentrations. The blanket solution to the question is to admit migrants to the state education system with the same rights as citizens of the state, with two important provisos:

Special teaching in the language of the country is recommended so that pupils with a comprehension problem can participate in normal classes as soon as possible.

Maintenance of the language and culture of the country of origin is recognised as vitally important, and in most countries special classes are organised for this purpose wherever they are a practical possibility.

In 1977 the European Ministers of Education adopted a resolution calling on all Member States to put these and other measures into effect. The terms of the resolution, though sounding well, mask a number of difficult problems. These may perhaps be best illustrated by the case of the Italian migrant. The Italian Government, faced with the exodus of $\frac{3}{4}$ million of their citizens to other EC countries, have made a more detailed study of the problem of emigration than the other Member States, looking at it very much from the point of view of the migrants. Their research indicates that the plight of many Italian children attending state schools abroad is very serious. The rate of success of Italian children is markedly below that of native children. For instance in 1970/71 in Germany only 350 young Italians were at university, while in France in the same year only 428 were at university. The following factors are seen as leading to this low performance:

- economic instability in the family
- transfer from a rural to an urban environment
- loosening of family relationships when both father and mother go to work
- change of climate and diet
- uncertainty of parents as to their length of stay and therefore reluctance to accept the cultural standards of the host country.

The Italian authorities point out that to cope with such a situation an extremely flexible school structure is required. In reality the systems of many countries receiving Italian immigrants are rigid.

To such problems there can be no completely satisfactory solution, but it is encouraging that some twenty years after the tide of migration turned, the nations of Europe recognise that here they have a common problem which can best be solved by common policies.

International schools

It is not accepted by everybody that absorption into the state system is an adequate solution of the educational needs of an expatriate child. Many families qualify for or seek places in schools which are geared to cater for their needs. I would like to try and give you a brief survey of the various kinds of school in Europe which can be loosely termed *international*. By an international school I mean one which accepts pupils of many different nationalities and adjusts its curriculum and methods to meet their special needs.

The definition is my own. It is a remarkable but true fact that there is no overall organisation which takes international schools under its wing — even within the European Community. The International Schools Association has only about 80 members. The European Council of International Schools counts just as many members, but the title is a misnomer, for the bulk of the schools are American (U.S.) and by no means all international schools in Europe belong. A researcher such as myself who wants to make a survey of international schools has to go out and find them. And in the event it turns out that many schools which call themselves international are not so in the true definition of the word, and there are many who do not use that title but are in their composition very international.

National schools in foreign countries

My first category is national schools in other member states, whose main purpose is to ensure that families abroad can have access to the same kind of education as at home. They do not describe themselves as international schools though many have an international element.

The French Government has long recognised its duty to educate French children who are growing up abroad. It also sees education as a means of extending French cultural influence and of fulfilling its *mission civilisatrice*. As a consequence there is a world-wide network of schools which teach according to the French program but are often very international in their intake of pupils. Most of them come under *La Direction Générale de la Culture* of the *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*. Recently *La Mission Laïque* has been making a drive for the establishment of more international schools under its own control.

In European Community countries there are 15 *Lycées Français* or *Ecoles Françaises*. Some of them have a deliberate role as *écoles de rencontre*. For instance the Lycée Chateaubriand in Rome, with a total of 1300 pupils, has 600 Italians, 300 French, 70 Franco-Italians and 200 of other nationalities.

The German Government accepts a similar responsibility. Because responsibility for education in the Federal Republic devolves upon the

eleven *Länder*, the *Auswärtiges Amt*, the German Foreign Office, accepts the administration and finance of the *Auslandsschule*. There are 33 such schools in Europe, 12 of them in EC countries. Some of them are designated *Begegnungsschule*, and with good reason. In the *Deutsche Schule* in Brussels, for instance, we find 21 different nationalities represented, including 16 American students, 12 British and 3 French.

The United States Department of State accepts the duty to provide help for certain American schools abroad, principally to ensure that the children of US citizens working in foreign countries can receive a schooling which will equip them to return to colleges in their home country. The degree of financial help which such schools receive varies considerably. Some of them are entirely independent and are forced to charge fees which cover their costs. The Directory of the ECIS lists over 60 schools on the U.S. pattern throughout the world, and the American presence is very much felt in Europe. The majority of such schools, even though their title includes the word 'international', are simply American islands in foreign countries. A few have accepted a genuinely international role, such as the International School of Brussels, the Copenhagen International School, and the American School of The Hague.

The Italian Government responds in a somewhat different way by sending large numbers of teachers abroad to places where concentrations of Italians are attending foreign schools, whilst Sweden supports several schools abroad.

There are approximately 30 British schools in Europe, half of them in EC countries. Generally speaking they offer an education based on the British system. They are very much sought after, partly because of the high practical value which many parents place on an English-language education. The British School of Brussels and The British School in the Netherlands each have pupils of more than 30 nationalities. St. George's English School, just outside Rome, has more than 60 nationalities, including incidentally between 30 and 40 Canadians. These schools receive no recognition from the British Government.

We see therefore that many of these schools, which appeared by their title to be purely national, are very international at least in the composition of their student body. However, in all cases, teaching is in the language of the nation concerned. But these schools take special steps to provide new pupils who have a language problem with intensive tuition, so that they can participate in normal classes as quickly as possible, and it is surprising how quickly young children can break through this language barrier, sometimes in only a few months.

In terms of what these various types of schools cost the order is as follows. The German schools are the cheapest. In some cases the cost, even to a non-German, may be virtually nil. Next come the French schools, at the equivalent of roughly 400 Canadian dollars a year. The British schools charge about \$2,500 a year, whilst the most expensive

American school I visited was charging up to \$3,500. (Figures vary widely from school to school.)

International schools within state systems

One does not find many international schools within state systems, though in a country like Germany schools in areas with a high immigrant population have a high proportion of foreign pupils. France is one exception. There are three international schools within the state system: Les Classes Internationales at the Lycée de Sèvres are part of a normal French Lycée. Le Lycée International de St-Germain-en-Laye is the continuation of what was once the SHAPE school for the children of NATO personnel, and is now an international school serving the Paris region. Le Lycée de Ferney-Voltaire was recently founded to meet the needs of the international personnel at CERN (*Le Centre Européen de Recherches Nucléaires*) just outside Geneva.

Denmark is another country where government policy favours the establishment of international schools, because even schools of independent foundation can obtain a grant covering 85% of tuition costs. As a result one finds in Copenhagen one of the most truly international schools in Europe — the Bernadotteskolen.

However, governments in general have been slow to see the need for international schools in their main centres. Yet those which are members of the European Communities cannot escape their obligations to participate in the chain of schools known as the European Schools, and since these represent a unique example of international co-operation in the field of education I would like to dwell on them in some detail.

The European Schools

The Geneva International School came into being, on the demand of parents, to provide schooling for the children of League of Nations staff. The United Nations International School, now in New York, was similarly created to meet the needs of the United Nations Organization. The first European School was founded at Luxembourg in 1953 on the demand of personnel of the European Coal and Steel Community, which had its headquarters there. (The ECSC evolved into the European Community together with its sister organization Euratom.) Noticing the success of the first European School in Luxembourg, administrators and scientists whose work for Europe required them to reside abroad pressed for more such schools to be set up in Brussels, where the EC had established several of its institutions, and at each of the Euratom establishments — Mol in Belgium, Varese in Northern Italy, Karlsruhe in Germany and Bergen in the Netherlands. Thus by 1963 there were six European Schools. In 1975 a second school was opened in Brussels, the first one having expanded to bursting point, and in 1977 an eighth was opened in Munich to meet the needs of the European Patent Office.

These European Schools were established by a Statute, Annex and Protocol agreed by the six original members of the EC. New Member States joining the EC are required to sign this agreement. All eight schools come under a unified administration. The Governing Body includes representatives of each Member State and its decisions are implemented through the *Bureau des Ecoles Européennes* in Brussels, which administers all the schools. All the schools follow the same harmonised curriculum and are ruled by the same statutes and regulations. The school-leaving examination is the European Baccalaureate, which can only be taken at the European Schools, but which all Member States are required to recognize as a qualification for entry to university.

What is most interesting about the European Schools is how they deal with the problem of language. Prime importance is given to the maintenance of the mother tongue and culture. Pupils are allocated to the appropriate language section — French, German, Italian, Dutch, English or Danish. Basic instruction is given in the mother tongue by teachers from the home country. But despite the diversity of language the curricula and time-tables are common to all.

In addition to receiving basic instructions in the mother tongue, every pupil also learns a working language — *une langue véhiculaire*. This may be French, German or English. It is taught as a foreign language from the first year of primary till the third year of secondary school. It then becomes the language of instruction for history and geography, as well as for sociology and later philosophy. It is even possible to learn science subjects in the working language.

For a teacher of languages it is very interesting to observe these classes in action. You may find a French teacher, speaking only French, teaching history to a class which may contain Germans, Italians, British, Irish, Danes, Dutch and perhaps also the odd Asian, Japanese or American. The need for the teacher to communicate her facts and for the pupils to absorb them gives an urgency and reality to the lesson which are so often lacking in what we sometimes call “conversation classes”. The subjects taught in the working language are taught in a European and not a national context, and there is always a great deal of discussion, all of which promotes a really thorough mastery of the second language. And an added incentive to regard the language as a practical instrument is provided by the fact that the examination for the European Baccalaureate in these subjects is an oral one.

In addition to their first and second languages non-English pupils learn English as a third foreign language from about the third year of the secondary school. Those who go on to specialize in languages may study a fourth language for the European Baccalaureate. In addition to languages studied formally, pupils naturally pick up the *lingua franca* of the school, which is usually the language of the country where the school is situated. It really is most impressive to hear quite young children moving easily and fluently from one language to another, and

to see so many different nationalities mixing in their playgrounds without being conscious of any distinction of race or nationality.

The European Schools are criticized, of course. The first criticism is that they are exclusive and élitist. It is true that officials of the EC and Euratom scientists have first claim on places, but most headmasters do all they can within the regulations to widen the social and national range of their pupils. Thus we find the children of Italian miners being bussed 40 miles to the European School at Mol, and the headmaster of the school at Bergen canvassing the embassies of The Hague to let it be known that he welcomes children of all social classes at his school.

It seems a great pity that only eight such schools exist. They provide a unique example of international co-operation in the field of education and are places which foster a really genuine international understanding. Unfortunately they exist in a little world of their own, and there is no machinery by which the rich harvest of pedagogical experience can be shared with other international schools.

United World Colleges

It would be a serious omission in any talk about multinational schooling not to mention the International Baccalaureate and that other organization which has been so closely linked to its development — United World Colleges. The most truly international school in Europe, in fact, is the College of the Atlantic, on the south coast of Wales. This was the first of the group of United World Colleges; the second came into being when the Singapore International School became UWC of S.E. Asia. In 1974 the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific opened at Peddar Bay on Vancouver Island. It is the Canadian national memorial to its namesake, and the government of Canada has shown its support by financing 40 scholarships for non-Canadian students. Plans are well advanced for a United World College at Trieste in Italy and at Edenbohen on the Rhine.

The aims of the UWC movement are:

- to establish a chain of international schools throughout the world
- to promote international understanding through education
- to make education a force which unites nations and races.

Students of both sexes attend the colleges as boarders for two years from the age of 16 to 18. They live together, face challenges and hardships together, and tackle a common academic program. Most of them are supported by scholarships awarded by the national committees formed in 40 countries. Every continent in the world is represented at UWC. I have not had the privilege of visiting Lester B. Pearson College, but when I went to UWC of the Atlantic I found students of more than 44 different nationalities, including a dozen from the People's Republic of China and a dozen and a half from Canada. Their academic goal is the International Baccalaureate, behind whose development UWC has been the power house.

The International Baccalaureate

For my money the IB is one of the most significant things happening in the field of education today, and a proper treatment of it would involve a whole lecture. Once again it started as a private and independent venture, though it now receives support from a number of Member States of UNESCO. Very briefly its object was to provide a school-leaving examination which would meet the needs of international schools and might hope to be recognized as a qualification for entry to university in many countries. The course runs for two years, and here it is worth pointing out that the IB offers not only a school leaving examination but also a philosophy of study for the final two years. Students taking the full Diploma take three subjects at higher level and three at subsidiary level. Only two working languages are approved — English and French. Both the course and the examination are designed (and here I quote the first Director-General) “less to demand a large body of factual knowledge than to broaden the mind and develop its cognitive powers and affective capabilities”.

The extent to which the IB after ten years of existence has been successful may be judged from a few facts taken at random. It has been recognized as a sufficient qualification for admission to 400 universities world-wide, and is now recognized by France as a qualification even for French students. In 1976 the first diploma holders graduated: none failed and 15% obtained first class honours. The IB is now the official leaving examination of the United Nations International School, and the head of the senior school assured me that it now influences all work in the senior school. More interestingly it is being adopted by state schools which have no international role, but which are drawn to the IB by its flexibility and more open philosophy. In 1977 a state school in the City of New York decided to offer the IB program to its pupils. I believe this is only a beginning, and that the IB's influence may in time affect the curricula and examination system of many nations.

Against the vast background of global education and mass migrations the role of such organizations as the European Schools at the EC level and of UWC at world level is still very small. But the seed has been sown and proof has been given that governmental co-operation can be achieved, and that it *is* possible to gather children of many nationalities and tongues in one school. Indeed I would go further and affirm that the international schools I have visited — in all about 40 — did more to establish my faith in human nature and the future of mankind than any other experience I have had.

NOTE

This paper is adapted from a presentation given at the Faculty of Education, McGill University, on 10th March 1978.