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Challenges and Achievements of European Education Ministers on Information Exchange and Collaboration within the European Economic Community between 60s and 80s

Cristina - Iulia GÎLĂ[1]

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the meetings of heads of state or government, ministers of education on education in the European Community, in the context of economic and political change in the old continent. The methodology used was a historical analysis of the legislative documents in the Historical Archive of the European Union, but also of some scientific papers to understand the events that determined a Community policy on education from 1960-1980. We asked ourselves the questions: What determined the leaders of the European Member States to bring education to the forefront? and To what extent have economic and social factors led to changes in education at Member State level but also at Community level? Three evolutionary stages have been identified in this process: the beginnings of a Community policy on education, 1971, a joint action program at Community level, after 1974, the creation of European institutions, such as the European Schools and the European University of Florence. The results of the research proved that European leaders from the 1960s to the 1980s contributed to the texts of the documents, proposing exchanges of good practices and specialists, but also their recognition at university and pre-university level. Although at first there was hostility and divergence in the leaders' meetings, the barriers were gradually overcome and the results of the work of the European institutions on education are increasingly visible today, offering viable solutions and strengthening the European dimension.

The answer to economic problems, the tense social climate and rising unemployment in the Member States has been provided at European level through achievements in education and enhanced cooperation. Europeanization at university and pre-university level took place along a winding road, but today we are witnessing the construction of a European Area of Education.

Keywords: *European Community; Olivier Guichard; education ministers, equal opportunities; cooperation.*

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1. Introduction

The construction of Europe is the result of the work of personalities animated by the idea of peacekeeping and cooperation between the states of Europe affected by a devastating war and a world divided with the greatest human losses compared to the losses on other continents. In this context, in the 1950s, the importance of an economic community of Europeans was highlighted, which is based on supranational principles, but at the same time has a democratic foundation - Christian and anti-communist. If at first the European Communities expected essential economic changes, then the emphasis shifted to politics, education and culture. The first measures took into account a correlation of trades with the labor market.

This paper outlines the intense work of European education ministers, who discussed common issues at the meetings and put forward proposals for expanding and deepening cooperation, as well as validating professional qualifications in Europe. New institutions have been set up to manage education issues, such as the Education Committee working with the European Commission. The activity of these bodies was to analyze the education systems and to point out the common issues.

2. The road to the unity of Europe

The construction of Europe took a difficult path, because between 1945-1950 there was a separation between the partisans of intergovernmental cooperation and the supporters of federalization. In the 1950s, the importance of an economic community of Europeans was outlined, which is based on supranational principles, but at the same time has a democratic foundation - Christian and anti-communist (Dreyfus et al., 2006).

The Treaty of Rome of March 25, 1957 was one of the most important events in universal history. The Europe of the 6 since 1957 has not been without misunderstandings. It was possible to join those who wanted to join the Community, but they had to comply with the rules of the club. It kept its cohesion because the actions had a concrete plan and a set schedule. The international organization made progress and asserted itself on the international arena in the 1970s, gradually taking modest steps toward political cooperation. (Pepin, 2006) There have been several waves of enlargement of the European Communities, and the aim has been economic and social prosperity and peacekeeping. Domestic and international successes have been achieved, the Union has become an integrated, prosperous market, with its own currency, strong, globally recognized. A space for free movement has been created for the citizens of the European Union, but social policies have also been developed, aimed at food security, consumer protection, research, technological development, education. Natural evolution has shown that a wider authority, a deepening of the treaties, was needed to crystallize the European Union today. The Treaty on European Union was signed on 7 February 1992.

3. Education in the spotlight

Education has always been in the spotlight of political leaders and ministers in various European countries, who have tried to identify solutions to common challenges after the 1960s, such as the oil crisis or student movements.

The wind of change in education came with the meeting of heads of state or government in Bonn-Bad Godesberg on July 18, 1961, where it was proposed to expand cooperation in the field of education, research and culture, recommending regular meetings. It was requested the elaboration of some contracts in order to realize some exchanges between universities and the extension of the cooperation, but also the creation of the European University in Florence. The Fouchet Committee, created after the meeting of ministers, aimed to build programs in this field that unite the peoples of Europe. This idea of the Europeanisation of universities was not successful then, but it showed the interest shown in Community cooperation, the idea being taken up by the European Parliament in its Resolution of October 1969 (Parlement Européen, 1969). The document showed that the European vocation could be attributed to those national educational or research institutions that met the criteria based on the European idea. This idea of founding European Universities, which offers examples of good practice, has taken shape today, and in Romania 10 universities have been selected, consolidating the European Education Area. At the same time, the same Resolution of 1969 proposed the creation of a Council of Ministers of Education, in order to increase the exchanges of specialists, teachers and students between states.

The Minister of National Education, Edgar Faure, in France, between 1968 and 1969, began the reform process in this field. Thus, the law of November 12, 1968 on higher education opened the doors of universities, giving them wide autonomy and supporting the need to establish centers research and teaching, of a University Council to include student delegates, local representatives of all educational actors. Another measure adopted was to encourage multidisciplinarity. The adopted legislation has met with reluctance on the part of some academics, aroused concern and resistance to change.

Later, starting from the French example, the need to reform education was found in the legislative documents of different European countries. The ministers of education considered 4 fundamental ideas. First, the existence of the diversity of nations and cultures has not prevented the achievement of a community of aspirations and the solidarity of peoples. Secondly, education has always been the key to democracy. Third, the development resulted from the citizen's assertion. Finally, despite the existence of constraints, education can not only mean the accumulation of knowledge, but the evolution of the individual.

In an article published in the daily Le Monde, Olivier Guichard, former Minister of National Education in France 1969-1972, Faure's successor, showed that until the nineteenth century ideas, teachers and students circulated freely between European states, there a tradition in this sense (Guichard, 1971).

Guichard wanted to implement reforms in university education because he

faced the student uprisings of 1968 and was aware that the ministers of education in the other Member States were facing similar problems. The solution proposed by Guichard was to add additional burdens to the commitment of the European Economic Community Treaty to the recognition of professional qualifications on the labor market throughout Europe. It also encouraged academic mobility in higher education (Corbett, 2005). Given the importance of cooperation, it was decided to set up a working group of officials with whom the Commission was associated, with a view to setting up a European Center for Education and Development. The new Center was to identify ways to achieve interstate cooperation. Guichard considered that this center should be responsible for collecting information on education systems (studies, statistics), coordination and incentives. The report of the working group was completed in November 1972.

In December 1969, in the Communiqué after the Hague Conference, Member States expressed interest in setting up a center for the development of education, culture and creative activities in order to ensure a better future for young people. Governments have approved this decision and taken action in this regard (ECC, 1974).

A truly historic moment in the evolution of education at European level was the first meeting of education ministers in the Member States of the Community on 16 November 1971 (Garben, 2011). The most important outcome of the summit was the reaffirmation of the interest in cooperation in the field of national and community education.

Another European Parliament document adopted was the Resolution on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications. An absolutely necessary measure was the elaboration of a program for the harmonization of diplomas and study programs, in order to support students and researchers. and bridging the gap between examination and education systems in different countries. The Resolution on University Research and its Implications for Young Europeans, which was also found in M. Hougardy's report, demonstrated the importance of secondary education for the success of university studies.

The analysis of the 35 experts in the field of education was presented in February 1973 by Henri Janne and was enthusiastically received by members of the Commission and subsequently submitted to public debate.

The document was published under the name Janne's report for an educational policy in the field of education. Subsequently, the ideas in this document were found in the Dahrendorf program for research, science, education and scientific, technical information. The act summarized the problems and challenges facing states in education systems. The conclusions of the personalities who contributed to the report referred to the fact that education policies were already the responsibility of the Community. At administrative level, the Commission has set up the Directorate-General for Education. The organizational model of national education systems was maintained, but the states were consulted in order to increase the number of educational exchanges and progressive harmonization. At the same time, the importance of collaboration with institutions

such as: OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe on issues of common interest was shown, but also the possibility of setting up an Education and Culture Committee following the model of the Economic and Social Committee. Another proposal was to draw up a European Education Charter for all Europeans. The report noted that Community policy on education is a long-term "business" that requires planning for the future. Janne has shown that education and teaching must be used to make the peoples of Europe better known than in the past.

With regard to pre-university education, the European Schools have been set up as public institutions, based in Strasbourg, Brussels, Luxembourg, and their role has been to educate the children of employees of the institutions of the European Communities. The first European school was established in Luxembourg in October 1953, with 69 beneficiaries and 7 teachers. For 60 years, European schools have developed and evolved. The operation of schools has been regulated by international law, recognized by the Member States, based on the Convention on the Statute of the European Schools, which entered into force in October 2002, replacing the previous regulations of 1957 and 1984 and the European School Regulations. The first school created in Luxembourg included 6 nationalities and 4 language sections (Parlement Européen. Direction Générale des Etudes, 1988). The success of the students of the first generations of the European Schools in professional plan was completed by the academic success. These European schools supported the multiculturalism, respected the national differences, promoting, at the same time, the European spirit.

The inclusion of universities in the process of European integration was on the agenda of the high-level meetings. From the beginning, the initiative of universities independence from the state and public institutions was encouraged. After long negotiations and efforts in the period 1948-1972, the European University of Florence was established (Pépin, 2006). It was not until 19 April 1972 that an intergovernmental agreement was established. There were differing views among universities between the inclusion of education as a sector in the Community and the opposition shown by academics around the world to this project. is an important center of the humanities and social sciences that connects excellence in Europe to bring about beneficial changes in society.

Another body set up, which held its first meeting on 18 October 1974, was the Education Committee, composed of representatives of the Member States and of the Commission, responsible for development actions in specific areas. The Education Committee, through its initiatives, has proven its extraordinary role as moderator, mediator, facilitator in its relationship with the Commission. This was indispensable to the functioning and effectiveness of the Committee. This education forum was cautious at first, but at the same time cooperation has steadily progressed, with education gaining a special place in the debates at European level. The Resolution of the Ministers of Education of 1974 set out principles that recognized the value and diversity of national education systems, and Member States implemented jointly established Community actions. The principles set out in the resolution aimed at: education not being identified as an element of economic

life, adapting cooperation in education to the objectives and requirements of the field, respecting the traditions, diversity of policies and education systems of countries in building cooperation. Ministers of Education have developed a unique formula for collaboration within the Community by mixing classic institutional models, Council practices and the commitment of Ministers of Education to work together continuously.

Following the signing of the Resolution on the Program of Action in the Field of Education on 9 February 1976, the first programs at European level began to take shape. The document opened the perspective of reflection on the content and methods for a community cooperation on education. Among the objectives proposed in the program, we mention: academic recognition of diplomas, mobility, cooperation in higher education, modern languages, exchange of information through a European network, education for the children of migrant workers. The resolution of the Ministers of Education was adopted in June 1974 as a result of the Commission's reflection (Ministers of Education, 1974). The resolution established the 7 priority areas for action for cooperation, such as: intercultural education, promotion of closer relations between systems, documentation, statistics, cooperation between academic institutions, recognition of diplomas, study periods, mobility for students, teachers and researchers, equality chances, language learning.

At European level, the comparison of policies and the configuration of common European aspects of education systems were considered. From the historical beginnings of collaboration with higher education, considered the easiest way to act, has been secondary education. A number of facilities have been implemented at Community level, such as: adapting language teaching methods, the importance of studying the mother tongue and culture present in the national school curriculum, analyzing the existing conditions for access to education at all levels for children with special needs. educational, the introduction of language learning programs on radio and TV, the need to arrange spaces in schools for teaching in several languages.

In 1975, a number of measures were taken by the Intelligence Offices to extend the study of the history of Europe and the organization of the European institutions in secondary education. European Center for Education proposed projects to coordinate and promote national schemes, but also offered teaching materials (notes, audio-visual materials, videotapes).

For the period 1976-1986 the implementation of the resolution focused on six priority areas of action: (Laval & Weber, 2002; Pépin, 2006) education of migrant workers and their children, collaboration between European education systems, cooperation in higher education, language teaching, equal opportunities, collection of updated documentation and statistics.

However, a prudent policy has been maintained, respecting the prerogatives of the states regarding the educational aspect. It took some time to familiarize Member States with new regulations for the organization of the education system in order to adapt free education to the needs of migrant children, school content and the organization of training programs for teachers.

In 1977, the Commission published a guide for students on university studies in the countries of the European Community.

Meetings at the level of education ministers highlighted a deepening and strengthening of cooperation, outlining new directions of action and providing in-depth knowledge of education systems and the possibility of implementing a wide range of European programs for the period after 1980.

4. Conclusions

The analysis allows us to conclude that the ministers of education from different European countries have contributed to the modernization and reform of curricula, supported academic mobility and the internationalization of education. The results of the newly created institutions that collaborated with the Commission and after 1979 with the Parliament were not long in coming.

Economic crises and social problems have led to a change in the tactics adopted by European leaders, who have understood the importance of gradually introducing vocational training and education on the agenda of the European institutions.

Education from an early age to adulthood, in the attention of national and European leaders offers economic and social benefits for society, but also reduced public spending on health, social assistance.

Meetings and exchanges of education ministers were important steps in the successive development of joint education and training programs, with a view to increasing quality and improving cooperation at European level. Meetings at the level of education ministers opened up the possibility of sharing past experiences and exchanging information and implementing common measures on the education of migrant children, promoting multilingualism, providing equal opportunities for all children, training programs.

During the study, two directions of future research emerged: conducting case studies on the views of education ministers on the restructuring of university and pre-university education systems and conducting a comparative analysis of teaching materials of the European Center for Education with current teaching European history.

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