

Europeanization as a horizon for education for sustainable development

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Abstract

The paper discusses the increasing importance of Europe for education in general and for education for sustainable development by introducing the term of “Europeanization”. The two main political actors of a Europeanization in education are presented and it is asked what role education plays in European initiatives toward sustainable development. The concept of a “Cosmopolitical Europe” is presented that links a top down perspective with a bottom up perspective of Europeanization. Tentative arguments are provided why Europeanization can be seen as a horizon for education for sustainable development.

Key terms:

Europeanization, cosmopolitical Europe, education for sustainable development, Council of Europe, European Union.

1. Introduction

Europe is an important context for education. This is the starting point for my projects at the Comenius-Institut in Germany and in European organisations. In a new research project I try to find out how Europeanization in education and citizenship as two main discourses on the European level influence education and the involvement of the churches in education.

My thesis of this paper is that a complex process of Europeanization takes place influencing content, structure and perspectives of national and regional contexts of education and also education for sustainable development.

The German scholars Ulrich Beck & Edgar Grande mention in their book on “The Cosmopolitan Europe” (2004): “Europe does not exist, there is only Europeanization conceived as an institutionalized process of permanent diversification. (16)” They speak of the “both-and Europe” (57ff.) where the nation state is transformed by Europeanization but not dissolved. This approach questions perspectives that are focussed on an “either-or” view,

where Europe becomes something new and different, replacing regional or national contexts.

For me *Europeanization* is seen as a research agenda investigating the ramifications of the concept for education on the domestic level. This includes taking account of developments and initiatives in political organisations like the Council of Europe and the European Union. Obviously more awareness about the European context is needed in education. Also more comparative research can help to deal with current challenges that go beyond national boundaries.

One example of an influential development from the EU level to national education systems is the Lisbon strategic goal for Europe (2000) to become the “most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world”. This ambitious aim includes building knowledge infrastructures and enhancing innovation and modernising social welfare as well as education systems in Europe. Education systems in Europe are encouraged to serve the innovation and modernising needs expressed in the Lisbon strategy.

A global example of a “both-and-perspective” is the Earth Charter, a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society for the 21st century. In the text it is expressed that, “we are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked.” (The Earth Charter)

One of the leading principles in the Earth Charter is: “Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful”.

The Earth Charter mentions the importance of education and underlines the need to “integrate into formal education and life-long education the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life” and also to “recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living.”

The challenge seems to me to take account of European and international developments and to analyze how they influence theory and practice of education in national and regional contexts and as well how education can encourage youngsters and adults to take part in shaping the mentioned processes.

The thesis of my paper is that a trend called “Europeanization” takes place in the field of education and influences also concepts and perspectives of education for sustainable development. Europeanization goes along with trends of globalisation on the one hand and regionalisation on the other. Europeanization addresses the impact of European-level policies at national level. But Europeanization happens not only from above but also from below. It shapes an increasingly supra-national context in which schools and institutions of higher education are operating.

In a first step I introduce and discuss ‘Europeanization’ followed by presenting the Council of Europe and the European Union as main political actors in the field of education and promoters of a Europeanization in education.

Next I discuss education for sustainable development and introduce the concept of a cosmopolitical Europe that can link different levels and can give a new impetus and perspective for dealing with Europe and education.

This provides some tentative arguments why Europeanization can be seen as a horizon for education for sustainable development.

2. Material and Methods

The analysis includes policy statements, documents and initiatives from the European Union and the Council of Europe as the main political bodies as well as data from research about Europeanization.

The theory and concept of a Cosmopolitical Europe (Ulrich Beck) will be introduced to discuss links to theories and practice for education for sustainable development.

The paper is part of a wider research project (2007 – 2009) to analyse documents on Europeanization and citizenship by using theories and methods of different approaches in the field of discourse analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Europeanization

Some ideas about Europeanization first:

The term ‘Europeanization’ “has gained widespread currency amongst scholars as a newly fashionable term to denote a variety of changes within European politics and international relations.” (Featherstone, 2003, 3). It can be a useful entry-point for greater understanding of important changes occurring in politics and society. In a recent collection of articles about Europeanization (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003) a typology of ‘Europeanization’ shows that the term is applied within four broad categories: (1) as an historical process; (2) as a matter of cultural diffusion, (3) as a process of institutional adaptation; and (4) as the adaptation of policy and policy processes (5). Concerning mechanisms of Europeanization we can basically differentiate between a, ‘*vertical*’ and a ‘*horizontal*’ Europeanization. Vertical mechanisms seem to demarcate clearly the European level where policy is defined (mainly European Union and the Council of Europe) and the domestic level, where policy has to be metabolized. By contrast, horizontal mechanisms look at Europeanization as a process where there is no pressure to conform e.g. to EU policy models. Instead, horizontal mechanisms involve a different form of adjustment to Europe based on the market or on patterns of socialization.

“Europeanization” is most often placed within some type of institutional perspective. Caporaso et al. (2001) see it as political institutionalization. In more recent papers (like Olsen, 2002) broader schemes are used, taking account also of a “bottom up” perspective. Olsen differentiates between a political agenda of developing institutions for market regulation; reallocation of resources; reinterpretation and re-education of citizens and culture; and reorganization of the democratic polity. (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003, 13, footnote 4)

Common sense indicates that Europeanization has something to do with the penetration of the European dimension in national arenas of politics and policies. This can be clearly identified for those areas of policy where the EU has taken over *full competence* from the national level (tariff union, competition regulations of the common market, monetary policy, trade) or *shared competence* (social policy, agriculture et al.). It is less obvious – on first sight – in the area of education where the EU has only a *supporting competence* – supporting the member states to fulfil their national commitment better and to encourage exchange and mobility (cf. Schreiner, 2006).

Two causal pathways:

- (1) “European policies might lead to a ‘policy misfit’ between EU rules and regulations, on the one hand, and domestic policies, on the other. These policy misfits then exert adaptational pressures on underlying institutions, particularly political and administrative structures.
- (2) Europeanization might also exert direct adaptational pressures on embedded domestic institutional structures” and “might even threaten deeply rooted collective understandings of national identity.” (7)

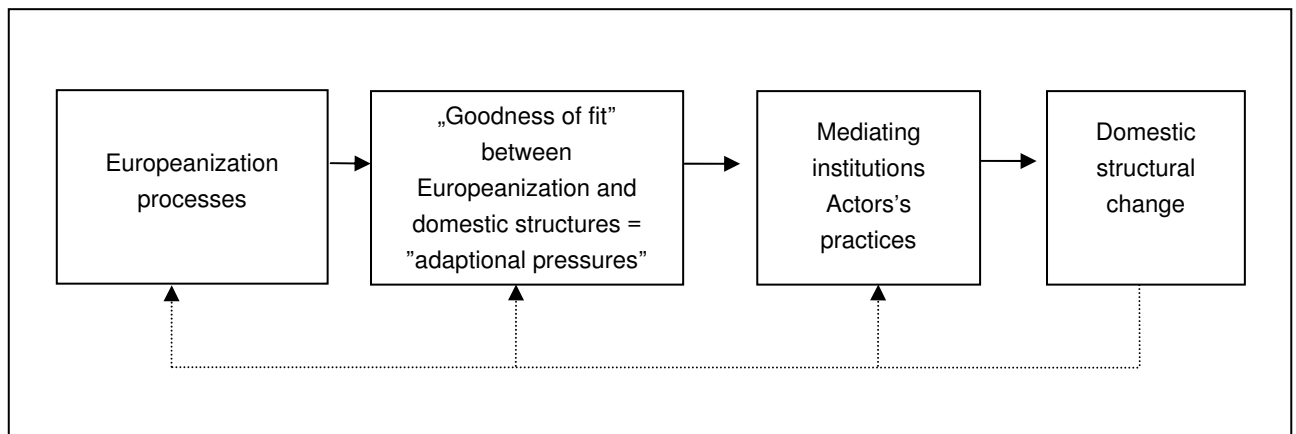


Figure taken from Risse et al., (2001) 6.

Mediating factors – institutions and actor practices come into play when high adaptational pressures exist. The presence or absence of mediating factors is crucial for the degree to which domestic change adjusting to Europeanization should be expected.

The dynamic use of the term and recent developments towards a broader understanding allows us to use “Europeanization” as a research agenda for the field of education. The research task is then to evaluate the significance of the different components of Europeanization in particular areas of education. This includes also introducing the main political actors of a Europeanization from above: The Council of Europe and the European Commission:

3.2 Main political actors

3.2.1 Council of Europe (CoE)

The mandate of CoE and its main values

One can say that for over 50 years the most experienced provider of education for democracy in Europe has been the Council of Europe (46 member states). This is related to the organisational identity of the Council, determined by three fundamental democratic values: human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law.

It is worth to mention a fourth pillar of the CoE that is the 400 participating NGOs, active in different areas including education and human rights.

The CoE’s advantages can be seen in the following facts:

- It is the oldest (1949) and the largest European organisation (48 signatory states to the European Cultural Convention)
- It can mobilise the largest pan-European forum on education
- It has a clear political mandate (unity in diversity, strengthening democracy) reiterated regularly on the highest political level
- It is open to the wider world and to inter-agency co-operation.

Education as a concern of CoE and its main themes

The education policies promoted by the Council explicitly underpin the fundamental values, namely respect for human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law.

It has to be taken into account at this point that the education policies of European countries are the responsibility of the respective sovereign states, but that education is also an increasingly subject of international co-operation (Lisbon strategy of the EU, Bologna process, benchmarking of the education systems etc.) The mandate of the CoE is not seeking to develop one education policy valid for all 46 member states but to define common guidelines and education policy principles based on the already mentioned fundamental values. One can say that the Council of Europe's work is more on education philosophy than on a common policy framework. Common principles or shared policy goals are expressed in Committee of Ministers recommendations, Parliamentary Assembly resolutions and recommendations or declarations from the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education.

Themes of the Council's activities in education have focused on five areas:

- Education policies and reforms
- Education for democratic citizenship
- Modern languages
- History teaching
- The European dimension, including the following issues: European identity and European citizenship; student mobility, school links and exchanges; non-formal education; intercultural education; interfaith dialogue, in-service teacher training.¹

The model of learning democracy

The clear mandate of the CoE to strengthening democracy has led to a specific model of learning democracy that has been developed over the five decades of its existence. It is based on five principles:

- Values-oriented education
- Citizenship competencies for all
- Direct practice of democracy
- Empowerment approach to the right of education
- The European dimension.

¹ Activities of the Council are mainly organized as conferences, involving policy-makers, colloquia with decision makers, stakeholders and experts, seminars with professionals and workshops involving practitioners and related publications. See: www.coe.int for more information.

The division for Citizenship and human rights education deals also with education for sustainable development, supporting pilot projects and actions in this field.

3.2.2 The European Union

Education has become through the years an intrinsic dimension of the European Community landscape. However the competence of the EU is a *supporting competence* where the responsibility for content and structure is with the member states cooperation in education started in November 1971 when the Ministers of education met for the first time. A European education sphere has been developed since then.

The current launch of the new lifelong learning programme for the period 2007-2013 in May 2007 documents another important step in Europeanization of education from above. It integrates the existing programmes. The objective is to ensure greater coherence between education and training actions and to support more effectively the implementation of lifelong learning.

In parallel to the constant development of these programmes cooperation in education between the member states at policy level has grown in importance over the years. A specific impetus has been given by the launch of the Lisbon strategy in March 2000.

Pépin (2007) provides an overview about four broad phases and its major landmarks in an economic and social dominated context:

1957-1971: 'Pre-History' – Education and Training Have Different Starting Points

Cultural and educational cooperation were left to the CoE. For more than 20 years “education” has been a taboo on the EC level. The situation was different for vocational training. The objective set by the Treaty of Rome in March 1957 was nothing less than developing “a common policy for vocational training” (art 128).

1971-1992: The Foundation Years for Cooperation in Education. Towards Recognition in the Maastricht Treaty.

In 1976 the first resolution of ministers of education established an action program. The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 was a turning point for education cooperation at Community level. The education sector received clear recognition (art 126 education: contribute to the development of quality education, and art 127 for vocational training). Member States made clear that the new article stated clearly the basic principles of the cooperation so far. “Any harmony was ruled out. Member states remained responsible for the content and organisation of their systems.” (Pépin, 125)

Subsidiarity was already at the heart of education cooperation since its inception in 1976. The Maastricht Treaty confirmed this approach both for education and vocational training.

1992-2000: The Emergence of the Concepts of Lifelong Learning and Knowledge-Based Society – Closer Cooperation in Education and Training

The common objective of education more and more was the concept of lifelong learning. In 1996 the European Year of Lifelong learning took place.

2000-2006: the Lisbon Strategy for 2010 and Lifelong Learning - from rhetoric to implementation

The Lisbon Strategy is a new ambitious EU 10-year economic and social strategy calling for concrete action and greater coordination of policies at all levels. “

Some measures in the area of education have been since then:

Developing of benchmarking and the open method of coordination (OMC) for the field of education

Adoption of a “Detailed working programme for implementing the aims of the education programmes in Europe” (2002)

European Framework for Key Competences (agreed by the Commission in Nov 2005) as a “practical reference tool to support Member States’ efforts” and basis of. This proposal sets out what are considered to be the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes that every European should have to prosper in a knowledge-based society and economy. The eight competences identified include:

- (1) Communication in the mother tongue; (2) Communication in foreign languages; (3) Basic competences in maths, science and technology; (4) Digital competence; (5) Learning to learn; (6) Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, and civic competence; (7) Entrepreneurship; and (8) Cultural expression. (European Parliament, 2006b)
- (2) These are underpinned by basic skills, and include ‘horizontal components’ such as critical thinking, creativity, the European dimension, and active citizenship. Taken together, they contribute to achieving personal fulfilment, active participation and improve a person’s employability.

In September 2006 the EP has adopted a resolution on initiatives to complement school curricula providing appropriate support measures to include the European dimension (2006/2041(INI)).

It is based on a longstanding concern about the need for enhancing the European dimension in education (resolution 24 May 1988 by European Council)

3.3 Education for sustainable development

The perspective of the EU:

Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, this is the challenge of today and the core of sustainable development. “Sustainable development is a deep-seated value of the European Union and encompasses issues of great importance to citizens, whether it be maintaining and increasing long-term prosperity, addressing climate change or working towards a safe, healthy and socially inclusive society.” (Europe – Idea of Sustainable Development)

The EU has developed a Sustainable Development Strategy aiming “at bringing about a high level of environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and active promotion of sustainable development worldwide”. (ibid.) This includes a broad vision of what is sustainable and the ambitious strategy to “improve the way in which we make policies”.

The need for a radical change is mentioned, however little is said about needed awareness building strategies. “We need to produce and consume in smarter ways, uncover new, more sustainable ways of growing and boosting economic activity while accelerating the changeover to carbon neutrality.” (ibid.)

This is linked to an overall call “to join forces behind the strategy and bring about real change”.

One can say that the review of the EU strategy in 2005 has taken a critical stance towards missing progress: “unsustainable trends have yet to start to reverse and the international stakes remain high.” (Commission, 2005, 38).

What role does education play?

“The aim of education for sustainable development is to put people in a position to play an active role in shaping an ecologically sustainable, economically efficient and socially just environment, while remaining mindful of the global dimension.” (BMBF 2002, p. 4, quoted in National Plan of Action for Germany, p. 7) Education is a crucial area for awareness building of the need for sustainable development. If people are not convinced that they should strive for a sustainable future, for more efficiency and more sufficiency also in their day to day life, then all political programmes, concepts and rhetoric will change nothing. This is true for all three dimensions of sustainability– economical, political, and ecological – and their inner integrity.

It has to be said that in EU documents on sustainable development education is rarely mentioned. One link is given in the above mentioned paper when “developing the open method of coordination” is presented as “a powerful instrument to promote exchange of good Practice, involve and mobilize stakeholders and put pressure on Member states to adopt a more strategic and integrated approach and deliver more efficient policies”. (ibid., 43). The open

method of coordination is also a method in the field of education, however the competence of the EU is strictly limited when it comes to content and structure of the education systems. Also initiatives to promote Corporate Social Responsibility are mentioned that include an educational dimension.

There is more thinking and theorizing about education for sustainable development on a national level. In a German guide for secondary level it is stated:

“Education for sustainable development (ESD) enables the individual to participate actively in analysing and assessing non-sustainable development processes, to follow criteria of sustainability in their own life, and to initiate sustainable development processes together with others at both local and global levels. This makes education for sustainable development a significant component of general education.” (ESD Guide, Secondary Level, http://www.transfer-21.de/daten/materialien/Orientierungshilfe/Guide_competences_engl_online.pdf)

From the perspective of another national context (England) Sterling (2001) defines sustainable education “as a change of educational culture which both develops and embodies the theory and practice of sustainability in a way which is critically aware. This would be a transformative paradigm which values, sustains and realises human potential in relation to the need to attain and sustain social, economic and ecological wellbeing, recognising that they are deeply interdependent.” (quoted in Jämsa, 2006, 13)

Both quotes put high expectations on ESD. It is no less than initiating sustainable development processes individually and globally and also to concretize a transformative paradigm aiming at a comprehensive well-being. This should definitely take account of the fact that Europeanization penetrates more and more areas of life.

ESD focus on building competences in an interdisciplinary and problem-oriented manner to be able to deal with non-sustainable processes. In particular the acquisition of *Gestaltungskompetenz* (shaping competence) is promoted: the ability to apply knowledge of sustainable development and to identify the problems of non-sustainable development. This is close to the promoted key competences for lifelong learning of the European Union (2006), where critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings are mentioned as important for all proposed eight key competences (2006, 14)

So far I have already mentioned some connections between Europeanization and education for sustainable development. I will try to amplify this line of argument by introducing an approach of thinking Europe anew.

3.4 The Cosmopolitical Europe or Thinking Europe anew

Europe is more than a collaboration of nation-states. But what holds Europe together? Ulrich Beck & Edgar Grande propose: There is no longer the alternative *either* the nation states *or* Europe but we need to develop a different perspective, a “both-and” perspective on Europe: A COSMOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE. A clear-cut perspective on Europe does no longer fits with the current situation. What we need is a plurivalent perspective.

The approach deals with phenomenon of Europeanization on the basis of Beck's theory of reflective modernity and aims to propose a new theoretical and political approach. The theory of reflective modernity exists of three areas: the proposition of the risk society (world risk society), the proposition of forced individualization and the proposition of multi-dimensional globalisation.

For Beck & Grande “Europe” does not exist, only Europeanization takes place as a permanent institutionalized process of change. Europeanization means a dynamic of interlocking departures und break downs, the self-creation of Europe. In this perspective Europe is an open political project that goes beyond the nation state. The European Union has been an important step not yet realized by European citizens. The concept of a cosmopolitical Europe can only become real based on a radical self criticism of the common terms of politics and state. What does cosmopolitanism mean? “Cosmopolitanism combines the appreciation of difference and being different with an attempt to work out new democratic ways of political governance beyond the nation state” (25). Three main principles shape cosmopolitanism: tolerance, democratic legitimacy and effectiveness (according to Archibugi). Beck focuses on cosmopolitanism as a term of social science and uses it for a specific issue: For the way of society to deal with cultural difference. This includes a new understanding of integration and identity because it combines difference and integration at the same time. We cannot elaborate all aspects of this new perspective now but we focus on aspects of this approach in relation to education.

Beck & Grande deal with education as an area where *horizontal* Europeanization takes place. This perspective focus not so much on the institutions of Europeanization but more on aspects of day to day life, civil society, or individual biographies. They state a Europeanization on content and on increasing mobility in education. The example for content is the teaching of history, a crucial area in education and for Europe. Europeanization is stated by the fact that in school books a convergent development can be discovered towards a common perspective on European history. There are several examples of cross-national initiatives in this area not at least the initiative by the CoE on teaching history. European history is integrated in regional and local history, saving the national historical identities and developing European perspectives at the same time. (An excellent example how local and European narratives are presented by Geert Mak in his book: *In Europe* (2007) where he deals with the history of Europe in the 20th century).

Increasing mobility takes place among students and scholars and the International JTET conference initiative is an excellent example for this. We should use the potential of JTET and other networks to take account of the political agenda of Europe and to participate in shaping the living together in Europe.

The underlying concept of a cosmopolitical perspective for Europeanization can be helpful when it comes to networking about burning issues that do not care of national borders. Sustainable development is definitely a demand in that respect.

3.5 Europeanization as a horizon for education for sustainable development (Conclusion and summary)

Where do Europeanization and ESD meet? Let me give you five proposals:

- The two tracks for sustainable development, identifying non-sustainable developments and develop more sustainable strategies in life styles, policies and politics cannot be limited to a regional and national context. Europe and the global world are main areas where these developments should happen. A European and a global consciousness is needed to implement the ambitious aims of sustainable development. Immediately education comes in.
- The concept of a “cosmopolitan Europe” provides a link between a horizontal and a vertical Europeanization. The “both-and-perspective” can encourage ESD by offering ways of dealing with existing diversity.
- Living together in a diverse Europe and following the route towards a sustainable development demand a similar set of competencies. Gestaltungskompetenz (shaping competence) is needed in both perspectives; new forms of participation are demanded for sustainable development and for shaping the future of Europe.
- Europeanization is an ongoing, continuous process and promotes acceptance of and participation in dynamics of societal change that meets closely the needs of ESD.
- In both fields a new style of learning and teaching is demanded that goes beyond the transmission of knowledge to encourage processes of transformation on a personal, societal and European as well as a global level.

This should be done following the old Chinese saying that every long journey starts with the first step.

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