

Fixing the gaze on a Transnational and Entangled Perspective: the case of the European Schools System

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ABSTRACT: The contribution aims to look at the European School System from a transnational perspective in order to trace the interactions and connections that characterised these Schools in the 1960s and 1970s. A close reading of two speeches given by Albert Van Houtte, a member of the Board of Governors, and of a preparatory study on curriculum reform drawn up in 1971 reveals connections with international organisations such as Pax Christi and UNESCO, as well as pedagogical influences stemming from the individual member states and traceable to different experiences of active pedagogy.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: European Schools; Transnational History; Entangled History; International Organisations; XX Century.

Introduction

The present contribution originated from the elaboration of ideas arising from ‘encounters’ and reflections occurred while conducting a research project on the European Schools (ESs), the citizenship education model they propose and the organisation of the curriculum from their origins to 1990¹. The first European School was officially established in Luxembourg in 1957 to formalise a school experiment that had already begun in 1953 and apparently intended to respond to the educational needs of the children of the *European Coal and Steel Community* workers². With the expansion of the *European Community* before and the *European Union* after, new European Schools were established³. Nowadays, there are 13 European Schools throughout the EU and 23 Accredited European Schools. Since their early years, the ESs have been structured in the following sections:

- a Nursery School;
- a five-year Primary School;
- a seven-year Secondary Cycle at the end of which students receive the European Baccalaureate.

As it has already partially been mentioned, the organisational structure has mostly remained essentially the same to this day despite a few moments of reform (in 1971, 1990 and 2009); the central pivot of this educational system continues to be the organisation into language sections based on the students’ mother tongue, as well as a multilingual education that takes place not only through the foreign languages disciplines, but also through the promotion of (multi)linguistic incidental learning⁴ implemented already in primary school

¹ For a more extensive and articulate historical reconstruction on the European Schools see E. Girotti, *Citizenship Education and the Curriculum in the European Schools System: A Multidimensional History (1957-1994)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2024. This aforementioned work and the related project generated further discussion between the two authors of the present article, which indeed aims to be a reworked and expanded version of certain points of reasoning addressed in the volume mentioned.

² Cf. European Schools Website, <<https://www.eursc.eu/en/European-Schools/background>> (last access: 22.09.2024); see also H. Van Lingen, *The European School. From Post-War Idealism to a Present-Day Cultural Opportunity*, Antwerpen, Garant, 2012.

³ Here are some details on the European Schools gradually established: in Brussels, Belgium, in 1958; in Mol-Geel, Belgium, in 1960; in Varese, Italy, in 1960; in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1962; in Bergen, The Netherlands, in 1963; again in Brussels, with the European School Brussels II, in 1974; in Munich in 1977; in Culham, in United Kingdom near Oxford, in 1978; the European School of Brussels III in 1999; in Alicante, Spain, in 2002; in Frankfurt in 2002; the European School Luxembourg II in 2004 and the European School of Brussels IV in 2007. For further information see the European Schools Website, <<https://www.eursc.eu/en/European-Schools/background>> (last access: 22.09.2024); Van Lingen, *The European School. From Post-War Idealism to a Present-Day Cultural Opportunity*, cit.

⁴ D. Swan, 1984, *The European Schools, Crossroads of Education in Europe*, Brussels, The Commission of the European Communities, 1984, p. 110.

with subjects such as the European Hours, and in later cycles, in Geography and History taught in *langue véhiculaire*⁵.

Whereas the history of the European Schools has already been recounted quite thoroughly⁶, a historical-educational perspective seems to be missing together with – most importantly – the idea of looking at them and their history not so much to judge their effectiveness and functioning as to try to retrace the different threads that contributed to their organisation, in search of influences, transfers, pedagogical principles that had a role in defining relevant concepts⁷. This is exactly the aim of the current article. After a brief theoretical review of the concepts of entangled and transnational history in the field of History of Education and the potential of adopting this vantage point to consider the ESs, we will focus on two specific sources and cases and on what emerged while looking at them: firstly, a close reading of Albert Van Houtte's speeches in 1960 and 1963⁸ will be carried out giving particular attention to the trans-

⁵ The concept of vehicular language is present in the *Harmonized Timetables and Programmes* published in 1957, 1963, 1972, 1977; although it is not explicitly defined, we consider it in the meaning used in the field of linguistics where it indicates a language «used as a means of communication between speakers belonging to different linguistic communities». See I. Chiari, T. De Mauro, F. Ferrucci, *Nuovo vocabolario di base della lingua italiana – NVdB*, <<https://dizionario.internazionale.it/parola/lingua-veicolare>> (last access: 17.09.2024).

⁶ For previous research on the European Schools see D. Finaldi-Baratieri, *The “Only” European Schools in the European Union?*, EUI HEC 2000/6, Badia Fiesolana, European University Institute, 2000, <<https://hdl.handle.net/1814/50>> (last access: 26.09.2024); L. Haas, *Schola Europea – The European School: The Fifteen-National School in Luxembourg: The Pedagogical Mini-Europe*, «European Education», vol. 36, n. 3, 2004, pp. 77-86; S. Leaton Gray, D. Scott, P. Mehisto, *Curriculum Reform in the European Schools: Towards a 21st Century Vision*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2015; N. Savvides, *Investigating Education for European Identity at Three European Schools*, «Research in Comparative and International Education», vol. 1, n. 2, 2006, pp. 174-186; N. Savvides, *Comparing the Promotion of European Identity at Three ‘European Schools’: An Analysis of Teachers’ Perceptions*, «Research in Comparative and International Education», vol. 1, n. 4, 2006, pp. 393-402; N. Savvides, *Developing a European Identity: a Case Study of the European School at Culham*, «Comparative Education», vol. 42, n. 1, 2006, pp. 113-129; N. Savvides, *The European Dimension in Education*, «Journal of Research in International Education», vol. 7, n. 3, 2008, pp. 304-326; N. Savvides, D. Faas, *Does Europe Matter? A Comparative Study of Young People’s Identifications with Europe at a State School and a European School in England*, «European Journal of Education», vol. 51, n. 3, 2016, pp. 374-390; D. Swan, *The European Schools, Crossroads of Education in Europe*, Brussels, The Commission of the European Communities, 1984; D. Swan, *The European Schools - Tower of Babel or Brave New World?*, «Irish Educational Studies», vol. 8, n. 1, 1989, pp. 160-179; D. Swan, *The European Schools: Cultural Fusion or Cultural Fission?*, «Schola Europea 1953 – 1993», Bruxelles, The European School, 1993, pp. 83-88; D. Swan, *A Singular Pluralism: The European Schools 1984-94*, Dublin, Institute of Public Administration, 1996.

⁷ In a study published in 1984 D. Swan states that it was hard to retrace explicit pedagogical vision in the European Schools (see Swan, *The European Schools, Crossroads of Education in Europe*, cit., p. 50): such a comment made us wonder if and how it might be possible to reconstruct such a vision and pedagogical principles related to it.

⁸ The discourses that will be analysed are the following: A. Van Houtte, *The European Schools. A Paper Presented to the International “Pax Christi” Congress 1960 by Albert van*

national contexts with which the ESs interacted in their early origins and the implications the former might have had; secondly, we will engage with the 1971 preparatory document concerning the planning of future reform of the Nursery and Primary Sections⁹ and the influence detected from here and their impact on the curriculum and the organisation of the ESs.

1. *Entangled and Transnational History in Educational Research*

In a chapter on *Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education*, the scholar Noah Sobe starts acknowledging that «tensions between methods and objects and between researchers and their categories of analysis are endemic to historical scholarship»¹⁰; we mention it because these lines and the tensions they depict particularly resonate with the present research on the European Schools; as a matter of fact, when we started working on them, we found it extremely difficult to decide from which perspective to look at them. While this could be attributed to the fact that our skills as historians and researchers were and still are in need of improvement, it could as well be partly due to the very nature of these schools, given that behind a seemingly and at first glance coherent and uniformly focused discourse, there were and are instead so many geographical and cultural dislocations – since these schools are located in different geographical locations and are composed internally of different language sections – combined with various national origins and influences. And if for a long time we were stuck in the difficulty of understanding which thread to follow or getting lost behind them, it was at the end possible to break the impasse also thanks to the inspiration derived from the article by Sobe mentioned earlier. In fact, Sobe writes that «the challenge that we face as historians of education is to recognize the interaction between the historically constituted temporalities we study and the temporalities produced/imposed by the tools and methods we use to conduct these

Houtte of the Board of Governors of the European Schools, Geneva, 28-29-30 October 1960, <<https://aei.pitt.edu/14967/>> (last access: 09.09.2024); A. Van Houtte, *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C. Presented by Albert Van Houtte during the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO*, in *Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, Conference Proceedings and Attached Documents*, Chicago, 23-26 October 1963, <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/conf_1963_10_23-26_chicago.pdf> (last access: 27.09.2024).

⁹ F. Christiaens, *Étude préparatoire à une révision des programmes de l'école maternelle et de l'école primaire* of the European Schools (1971), Écoles Européennes, n/ref. 71-D-89, 1971.

¹⁰ N.W. Sobe, *Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education*, in T.S. Popkewitz (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Education*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 93.

studies»¹¹. We recognize ourselves in this challenge, and in order to embrace and comprehend the intricate nature of these schools, it was necessary to act as Calvino's Perseus, namely «change approach», «look at the world with another perspective, another logic, other methods of knowledge and verification»¹². Since the European Schools have a reticulated nature, we acknowledged it was therefore to the network that attention must be paid, always trying not to get caught in the middle. As a matter of fact, if we conceive the European Schools as an assemblage of various elements and threads – and indeed, Dussel thinking with Latour suggests that schooling can be considered as an assemblage¹³ – it is to the different actors and parts gathered together that attention must be paid and to their modalities of interaction so as to reconstruct an entangled history, a *histoire croisée*¹⁴, made of a tangle of knots. Or rather, to quote Sobe again, such a concept «can refer to analyses of the tangling together of disparate actors, devices, discourses, and practices, with the recognition that this tangling is partly accomplished by said actors, devices, discourses, and practices and partly accomplished by the historian her/himself»¹⁵. Another feature in this assemblage must be considered, namely the fact that within the European Schools multiple dimensions are involved: the national, the exchanges among nations, an inter and supra national level. Consequently, we argue that it is necessary to assume a position that pay attention to these levels and their interaction, a transnational perspective used in the sense proposed, again, by Sobe, who intends it as a concept including the «scholarly interest in examining links or relations between various entities whether they be national, nonnational, or in some fundamental respect supranational»¹⁶. With reference to the category of the transnational – synthesising and echoing

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹² I. Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio*, Milano, Mondadori, 2012, ebook version. From a purely stylistic point of view, we resort to this last literary quotation and to the use of the first person in the reconstruction of the theoretical horizon of reference of the present research because we consider them effective to position ourselves in such a reconstruction and to outline how we developed our line of reasoning while not forgetting the difficulties encountered; in doing so, we believe we are carrying out an action of reflexivity. On reflexivity see Sobe, *Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education*, cit.; C. Mayer, *The Transnational and Transcultural: Approaches to Studying the Circulation and Transfer of Educational Knowledge*, in E. Roldán Vera, E. Fuchs (edd.), *The Transnational in the History of Education. Global Histories of Education*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 49-68.

¹³ I. Dussel, *The Assembling of Schooling: Discussing Concepts and Models for Understanding the Historical Production of Modern Schooling*, «European Educational Research Journal», vol. 12, n. 2, 2013, pp. 176-189.

¹⁴ See M. Werner, B. Zimmermann, *Penser l'histoire croisée: Entre empirie et réflexivité*, «Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales», vol. 58, n. 1, 2003, pp. 7-36.

¹⁵ Sobe, *Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education*, cit., p. 100.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Thomas Bender – Matasci recalls that the transnational approach led to a re-consideration of the territorial space of the nation¹⁷ in an attempt «to include and emphasize the interactions, connections and circulations between countries and regions of the world»¹⁸. According to Matasci, this historiographical change in historiographical scale fits well into a traditionally strong analytical framework in the field of educational studies due to, in particular, comparative education which, since its origins, has paid attention to the international dimension and contributed to the circulation of ideas and debates¹⁹. Matasci examines the interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks and methodological proposals referred to in the debate on the global and transnational and identifies the following three axes as the most promising: the terrain of pedagogical internationalism on the circulation of knowledge or the history of pedagogical doctrines²⁰; the study of the reception of foreign pedagogical thought and practice in a given national space²¹; «the spatial dimension of educational globalisation [...], how connections, links and the very consciousness of a global world are crystallised»²² with multiple possible approaches that are still to be deeply explored. In a similar tone, Roldán Vera and Fuchs²³ examine how the concept of transnational emerged and evolved, how it impacted the methods of doing and addressing research, and finally the advantages of using a category that could give the benefit of going «beyond a specific locality or nation-state as a unit of analysis»²⁴. In particular, Roldán Vera and Fuchs explain that transnational history focuses on networks, entanglements, on intersecting dimensions; they highlight how the transnational turn in the history of education is correlated to the historiographical change occurred in other

¹⁷ See T. Bender, *A Nation Among Nations. America's Place in World History*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2006 mentioned in D. Matasci, *Note per una 'storia globale' dell'educazione tra Ottocento e Novecento. Approcci, problemi e prospettive*, «Ricerche pedagogiche», n. 195, 2015, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9. Here Matasci explicitly makes reference to P.Y. Saunier, *Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux*, «Genèses», vol. 4, n. 57, 2007, pp. 110-126.

¹⁹ Matasci, *Note per una 'storia globale' dell'educazione tra Ottocento e Novecento. Approcci, problemi e prospettive*, cit., p. 11. A similar consideration is expressed by the scholars Roldán Vera and Fuchs; see E. Roldán Vera, E. Fuchs, *Introduction: The Transnational in the History of Education*, in *Ibid.* (edd.), *The Transnational in the History of Education. Global Histories of Education*, cit., pp. 1-48.

²⁰ Matasci, *Note per una 'storia globale' dell'educazione tra Ottocento e Novecento. Approcci, problemi e prospettive*, cit., p. 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. In this field, the studies on educational transfers by David Phillips, Kimberly Ochs and Gita Steiner-Khamsi are mentioned. For further information see K. Ochs, D. Phillips (edd.), *Educational Policy Borrowings: Historical Perspectives*, Oxford, Symposium Books, 2004; G. Steiner-Khamsi (ed.), *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, New York, Teachers College Press, 2004.

²² Matasci, *Note per una 'storia globale' dell'educazione tra Ottocento e Novecento. Approcci, problemi e prospettive*, cit., p. 13.

²³ Roldán Vera, Fuchs, *Introduction: The Transnational in the History of Education*, cit.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

fields of social sciences, a change welcomed because it was able to intercept the interest that educational studies – and in particular comparative education – had about the international dimension, as well as the connection of the latter with an idea of education aimed at promoting peace. The two scholars point out that the transnational history derived from a context that was going beyond the nation-state due to processes of economic and political integration characterized by supranational entanglements: in this way, it was necessary to build the objects of study differently, going beyond national discourses. As they point out, transnational history «does not deconstruct the nation – it presupposes its existence, and it studies its development as a global phenomenon – but it contextualizes it in a set of translational relations, entanglements, and dependencies»²⁵. Drawing on the work by Werner and Zimmermann²⁶, the two scholars describe how in the past years it has become common not only to focus on «supranational multidirectional flows, but also reflects on and makes explicit the (entangled) conditions in which historians construct their transnational objects of research»²⁷ giving space to what has been called entangled history or *histoire croisée*. Like Matasci before, Fuchs and Roldán Vera also identify some areas and research topics in which the transnational perspective has been and is being used such as the focus on the international interactions and networks of educators²⁸; on the colonial and imperial histories of education²⁹; the international formation of educational science³⁰; the institutional history with an emphasis on the internationalization of school models and curricula³¹; the diffusion of pedagogical knowledge giving significance to the «processes of translation, appropriation and adaptation of pedagogical knowledge in a range of local contexts»³²; gender studies emphasizing transnational relationships³³; textbook research «on the transnational character and circulation of textbook production and distribution»³⁴.

In the present work, in the attempt to assume a transnational perspective towards the European Schools, attention will be particularly given to the international interactions, connections and networks, together with the processes of internationalization and circulation of school models and curricula.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁶ See Werner, Zimmermann, *Penser l'histoire croisée: Entre empirie et réflexivité*, cit.

²⁷ Roldán Vera, Fuchs, *Introduction: The Transnational in the History of Education*, cit., p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

2. *Albert Van Houtte's Discourses and the entanglements with Pax Christi and UNESCO*

The discourses by Albert Van Houtte that will be analyzed in the present section are the following:

- *The European Schools. A paper presented to the International “Pax Christi” Congress 1960 by Albert van Houtte of the Board of Governors of the European Schools*³⁵;
- *The Note on Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C. presented by Albert Van Houtte during the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, Chicago – 23-26th October 1963*³⁶.

Here we intend to summarise their content very briefly and then focus on the contexts in which these speeches were delivered and what possible considerations can be drawn from them. Before moving on, it must be remembered that the speeches we refer to were given by Albert Van Houtte, who was *greffier* [registrar] of the European Court of Justice and, as Van Lingen points out in his work, also «the first President of the Parents' Association of the European School Luxembourg and the first Representative of the Board of Governors of the European School (1954-1964)»³⁷; these speeches were given as representative of the Board of Governors.

With regard to the first speech, given in Geneva in October 1960, it recollects the recent history of the European School of Luxembourg starting from the fact that in July of that same year and the previous one, several students – 32 in 1960, 23 in 1959³⁸ – had passed the European School leaving certificate examination, the *Baccalaureat Européen*, and were then allowed to enroll in university courses in different countries. The achievement of such a result seems to trigger in Van Houtte a reflection related to the origins of the European Schools experiment and its initial aims; as a matter of fact, he underlines that the point was to

provide suitable primary and later secondary education for children of all nationalities, but especially for the Europe of the Six, and to base their studies on a harmonized syllabus

³⁵ Van Houtte, *The European Schools. A Paper Presented to the International “Pax Christi” Congress 1960 by Albert van Houtte of the Board of Governors of the European Schools*, cit.

³⁶ Van Houtte, *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C. presented by Albert Van Houtte during the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO*, cit.

³⁷ Van Lingen, *The European School. From Post-War Idealism to a Present-Day Cultural Opportunity*, cit., p. 19.

³⁸ Van Houtte, *The European Schools. A Paper Presented to the International “Pax Christi” Congress 1960 by Albert van Houtte of the Board of Governors of the European Schools*, cit., p. 1.

which would fit the fundamental requirements of each country and later make it possible to embark in a successful course of higher education in any university³⁹.

In his view, this is particularly remarkable if considered «how difficult – indeed impossible – it has long been to bring the systems and methods of the various countries closer together»⁴⁰. In order to explain the circumstances that had allowed the outcome previously reminded, he then goes back to the origin of the first European School in Luxembourg, to the organization of the Secondary course of education in 1954 and 1955 based on the comparison of the syllabuses in the various countries and a combination between them; he doesn't give a more detailed explanation on the different syllabuses involved. He then moves to the legal status and development of the European Schools and the principles of instruction, such as the use of the mother tongue education for basic instruction and education with the original four language sections having uniform schedules and syllabus, the «thorough knowledge of living languages»⁴¹ and the idea of having «certain subjects taught jointly to classes of the same level in order to promote the unity of the school and closer cultural contact between pupils of the various language sections»⁴² while using a common «working language»⁴³. According to Van Houtte, the given recollection of the European Schools' experiment gives hints about their experience and «how much more experience we need»⁴⁴. He also affirms that this recollection makes it possible «to draw certain conclusions on the subject which will be dealt with at the 7th Seminar of the International Pax Christi congress: education on international lines»⁴⁵. Such considerations are then grouped into the following four categories:

- Collaboration between families of different nationalities⁴⁶;
- Collaboration between Governments⁴⁷;
- Collaboration between members of the teaching staff⁴⁸;
- Collaboration between pupils⁴⁹.

Within the various elements underlined, we consider the following worth to mention: in the first place he mentions that the officials originally collaborating in the creation of the European Schools seemed to become aware of the

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

differences embedded in the different nationalities, also due to «the political nationalism which has for far too long narrowed horizons, by the lack of foreign languages, which makes contact so difficult, and by so many other causes which stems from the facts of history»⁵⁰. He argues that education had a role in this process since it has «been given a nationalist slant which goes beyond the civic and patriotic training which education should indubitably give»⁵¹ with the prevalence, especially in universities, of a technical aspect that dimmed the «human and universal character»⁵² that education should have. In his view, the European officials soon understood and experienced that «the differences in the forms of behaviour and thought are only a veil behind which one can find complete identity of views on the basic principles and ideas: identity in the philosophic concept of life, i.e. the Christian concept, identity in social aspirations and identity in the aims pursued»⁵³. He then underlines the cooperation between governments and inspectors to create a harmonized syllabus and the idea of realizing new textbooks responding to the necessities of the former also on the basis of teachers' confrontation; teachers are indeed asked to accept the challenge represented by the European Schools and to be ready to re-think their ways of teaching being open to confrontation.

He finally underlines the «friendly mixing of pupils» with an «imprint of their education in an international environment» favouring «a prosperous and united Europe»⁵⁴.

So far, we have looked at the content of Van Houtte's discourse in 1960 and, even though the influences of the different national curricula were recalled, we have not been capable, until now, to retrace any concrete information about transfers that had taken place. Consequently, it is reasonable to ask which transnational element we want to point out or which transnational perspective we aim to underline while looking at this document. We think that we can assume a transnational perspective if we look at three elements of this discourse: the first one is the physical location of the discourse, that is, namely, the Pax Christi International Congress in Geneva, in 1960. As described in the Pax Christi International's website⁵⁵ and previous research works such as the one by Étienne De Jonghe⁵⁶ or Sabine Rousseau⁵⁷, Pax Christi was cofounded

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ Pax Christi Website, <<https://paxchristi.net/about-us/https-pcintlorg-files-wordpress-com-2019-10-timeline-posters-pdf/>> (last access: 09.12.2023).

⁵⁶ É. De Jonghe, *Pax Christi International: The Role and Perspectives of an International Catholic Peace Movement*, «CrossCurrents», vol. 33, n. 3, 1983, pp. 323-329.

⁵⁷ S. Rousseau, *Les Mouvements de Paix en France depuis 1945: Un Objet de Recherche en Construction*, «Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA since 1945», vol. 32, 2004, pp. 49-65.

in France, in 1945 by the French Bishop Pierre-Marie Théas and the French woman and teacher Mrs Marie Dortel-Claudot to promote peace and reconciliation between France and Germany after the Second World War⁵⁸. Pax Christi was, first, established in France and soon after in Germany; it then spread rapidly – already in the early 50's – in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium. It was blessed by Pope Pius XII in 1950 and was fully approved «as an international Catholic peace movement in 1952»⁵⁹. Its first international president was Cardinal Feltrin of Paris who summed up «its main program in three points: prayer, study, and action. In line with this first “charter” Pax Christi always emphasized both education and research, study conferences and grass-roots activities, prayer and the gathering and diffusion of information»⁶⁰. Therefore, there was since the beginning a strong commitment towards the promotion of peace to which problem of justice and human rights were incorporated later, during the '60s when peace started to be «linked with problems of development and worldwide solidarity»⁶¹; the discourse carried out implied the promotion of a «catholic peace»⁶², a peace addressing «the innermost self of man, interpersonal relations, social and international relations»⁶³ in a way that seems to recall, in our view, to the «human and universal character»⁶⁴ and the «identity in the philosophic concept of life»⁶⁵ mentioned by Van Houtte himself. The scholar Sabine Rousseau has drawn on the work by François Mabillet, also to point out the not always activist nature of Pax Christi as the congresses were often described as «des sessions de formations des adhérents plutôt que des lieux de débats. La parole des experts, théologiens ou technocrates, prédomine. Le mouvement Pax Christi international, inspiré par les évêques français, tend à être un mouvement de masse... élitiste!»⁶⁶. As a result and in light of what we have just mentioned,

⁵⁸ De Jonghe, *Pax Christi International: The Role and Perspectives of an International Catholic Peace Movement*, cit.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Rousseau, *Les Mouvements de Paix en France depuis 1945: Un Objet de Recherche en Construction*, cit., p. 56.

⁶³ F. Mabillet, *Le Mouvement Pax Christi, 1944-1976; origine et développements d'une mobilisation catholique pour la paix*, Doctoral Thesis, Department of Political Sciences (Supervisor: Alfred Grosser), Institut d'études politiques (IEP) de Paris, 1996, p. 852, quoted in Rousseau, *Les Mouvements de Paix en France depuis 1945: Un Objet de Recherche en Construction*, cit., p. 56.

⁶⁴ Van Houtte, *The European Schools. A Paper Presented to the International “Pax Christi” Congress 1960 by Albert van Houtte of the Board of Governors of the European Schools*, cit., p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Rousseau, *Les Mouvements de Paix en France depuis 1945: Un Objet de Recherche en Construction*, cit., p. 56. The aforementioned lines can be translated as follows: [training sessions for adherents rather than places for debate. The words of experts, theologians or tech-

is it possible to consider Van Houtte as one of the technocrats participating? Moreover, his attendance at one of these sessions makes us wonder if there were other interactions between the European Schools and Pax Christi and to what extent they might have influenced each other. At this stage, we are not capable of giving further answers, except acknowledging their mutual interest in fostering an education based on a Christian identity (as Van Houtte defined it) and an education attentive to the international dimension whose promotion appeared to be linked to peace promotion. We will now move on to the contact the European Schools had with the UNESCO to understand if this international dimension and a similar discourse on peace and education can also be detected there.

As it emerged from the conference proceeding, Van Houtte attended the Ninth National Conference of the US National Commission for UNESCO, held in Chicago in October 1963. It aimed at exploring the following topic: *The New Europe and The United States: New Directions*⁶⁷. Paying attention to educational, scientific, cultural, political and economic circumstances, the talks and conversations proposed during the conference aspired to scrutinize and deal with the significant changes taking place in Europe and their correlation with the United States. Van Houtte participated in two sessions and, in both of them, reconstructed the origins of the European Schools and their main features⁶⁸. As in the case of the 1960 speech, he also recalls here the origins, the harmonised curriculum born out of compromise and collaboration between the different national traditions and based on multilingualism, the need not to be elitist, the possibility of awarding a recognised diploma; to a certain extent, he repeats what he had said in Geneva in 1960; however, what seems worth mentioning, in our opinion, is the premise from which he starts to do so. Van Houtte sees in this type of school an attempt to respond to pressing issues for Europe, the United States, and the world. As a matter of fact, he states that

The problem of teaching and education is becoming increasingly a problem of prime importance for all countries in the world. The developed countries seek to adapt teaching to the new requirements of the modern world: development of technical, scientific and mathematical knowledge, the learning of languages and, above all, the maintenance of a vast pool of knowledge and of a vast general culture. The developing countries seek to

nocrats predominate. The international Pax Christi movement, inspired by the French bishops, tends to be an elitist mass movement!] (our translation).

⁶⁷ *Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, Conference Proceedings and Attached Documents*, Chicago, 23-26 October 1963, <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/conf_1963_10_23-26_chicago.pdf> (last access: 27.09.2024).

⁶⁸ We could not access the first speech *An Experiment in Inter-Cultural Education: The European Schools* but some comments on it are provided in the proceedings. Conversely, the second talk – *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C.* – was fully included in the Conference Proceedings.

create an educational system and network in which the example and experience of the West play a leading part. Everywhere the problem of educational reform is posed, in the U. S. as elsewhere. It would, then, be extremely desirable for the United States to seize the present opportunity of meeting a local need in Washington to initiate an educational experiment based on a combination of various systems and capable of serving as a 'pilot school' or, one might say, 'pedagogical laboratory' from which both national and foreign educators could draw inspiration⁶⁹.

We mention this passage because it seems relevant to us to recognise how Van Houtte fits into a discourse referring to the theme of development, a development to be pursued in one's own country and area of origin and, at the same time, to be exported and fostered by also proposing educational models⁷⁰. If, on the one hand, development is considered in his words as a process and an element of adaptation to the changes in the world, on the other hand, the western-centric direction that dictates the line seems quite unambiguous to us. As a matter of fact, the idea of (educational) development mentioned by Van Houtte does not seem to leave much room for doubt, in our opinion, since he seems to refer to a development to be exported from the (western) centre to the peripheries⁷¹ through avant-garde experiments⁷². A little further on, Van Houtte invites to educate students towards mutual understanding and to become good world citizens⁷³ and points out the urgent necessity to not make

⁶⁹ Van Houtte, *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C. presented by Albert Van Houtte during the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO*, cit., p. 2.

⁷⁰ On the connections between International Organizations such as UNESCO and the promotion of development see also D. Matasci, *Les organisations internationales et l'éducation en contexte (post)colonial*, «Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe», 2021, <<https://ehne.fr/fr/node/21657>> (last access: 20.01.2024).

⁷¹ For a more comprehensive view on development in the colonial and neocolonial landscape see M. Bandeira Jerónimo, H. Gonçalves Dores, *Enlightened Developments? Inter-imperial Organizations and the Issue of Colonial Education in Africa (1945-1957)*, in D. Matasci, M. Bandeira Jerónimo, H. Gonçalves Dores (edd.), *Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa. Policies, Paradigms, and Entanglements, 1890s-1980s*, Cham, Springer International, 2020, pp. 237-262.

⁷² As for the idea of pilot schools Van Houtte mentions, it is in our opinion curious to note that Van Houtte does not take into account previous similar educational experiments and experiences, such as the International School of Geneva founded in 1924 and the United Nations International School in New York founded in 1947. On the topic see L.S. Dugonjić-Rodwin, *Les IB Schools, une internationale élitiste: émergence d'un espace mondial d'enseignement secondaire au XXe siècle*, Doctoral Thesis, Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l'éducation, Section des sciences de l'éducation (Supervisors: R. Hofstetter, G. Sapiro), Université de Genève, 2014, DOI:10.13097, <<archive-ouverte/unige:43349>> (last access: 10.09.2024); L.S. Dugonjić-Rodwin, 'A Miniature League of Nations': inquiry into the social origins of the international school, 1924-1930, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 50, n. 1-2, 2014, pp. 138-150.

⁷³ Van Houtte, *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C. presented by Albert Van Houtte during the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO*, cit., p. 3.

such potential International School «an ‘exclusive circle’»⁷⁴. We wonder if this desire to promote dialogue among students and understanding of the world, as well as the need not to be elitist, can be, to a certain extent, traced back to a concept of development linked to the idea of peace, as advocated by Pax Christi⁷⁵. We are not capable of further expanding this line of reasoning at the moment; we will now move to the second source to get potential information and consideration on transfers that took place and affected ‘pedagogically’ the European Schools curriculum.

3. 1971 Nursery and Primary School Reform: influences, circulations and impact

The first version of the Harmonized Timetables and Programmes indicating the main topics of study and the organization of the European Schools was published in 1957; reviewed versions followed in 1963, 1972 and 1977. They are mainly characterized by indications related to the contents to propose to students, even though certain methodological and pedagogical reflections are present⁷⁶. However, we will briefly go back to them at the end of the present part after having specifically focused, instead, on the *Étude préparatoire à une révision des programmes de l'école maternelle et de l'école primaire* of the European Schools presented by the General Inspector F. Christiaens in September 1971. We consider it as capable of enlightening considerations related to the process of revision of the nursery and primary school programs while, at the same time, showing some pedagogical and organisational influences.

At the beginning of the document, we understand that the instance to review the programmes was raised that same year, in February, when modifications to the History, Geography and Science programmes were first proposed. Consequently, national inspectors conducted a study on the status and future development of nursery and primary schools in each member country. Mr Christiaens summarized the findings and proposed a future project for the European Schools, also taking into account input from the European Schools’ teachers previously collected. In our view, this introductory part is somewhat ‘captivating’ as it might shed light on some factors that played a role in the establishment and growth of the European Schools; Christiaens’ statements are also noteworthy in this regard. For instance, he states that gaining a clear

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ De Jonghe, *Pax Christi International: The Role and Perspectives of an International Catholic Peace Movement*, cit., p. 323.

⁷⁶ In this regard, we mention, for instance, the indications provided in the case of French as a first language in Primary school. For further details see the European Schools’ *Harmonized Timetables and Programmes* published in 1957.

understanding of national educational activities and trends was challenging due to his lack of direct involvement in reporting the educational realities in the different countries. Due to the partial understanding he gained from reading the notes of the distinct participating Inspectors, he apologizes in advance for any potential deficiencies and mistakes. He also requests his fellow Inspectors to offer any needed explanations. Additionally, he mentions that this research project demanded numerous days of effort, and he finds it captivating, expressing contentment in being able to conduct it since he hopes it will make a valuable contribution to the growth of upcoming initiatives in the European Schools.

The text shifts to examining the situation in Germany and highlights the increasing acceptance of the notion that successful learning relies more on prior knowledge than on innate abilities, with the help of psychological theories. As a result, it is believed that the learning opportunities provided in the early years should be fully utilized. Furthermore, it is mentioned that the schooling between the ages of 3 and 6 is a crucial period in shaping an individual and should be meticulously organized, nurtured, and seen as a vital step in preparing for primary school. The paper then discusses the setup and arrangement of preschools and pre-kindergarten classes in Germany, highlighting their distinct goals: promoting children's growth by improving their educational chances and addressing any obstacles they may face. They provide children with activities and opportunities for skill development that align with their interests and requirements. They encourage both individual and group learning by emphasizing the importance of children's respect for both individuals and the coordination of group tasks. They make an effort to address and meet every child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical needs. Regarding the structure of the organization, the children are grouped based on their developmental level and are allowed to progress from one group to another as they advance. Additionally, it is important for children to participate in activities that they enjoy, as these activities aim to blend play with learning; in the text the concept of «playing but targeted learning»⁷⁷ is indeed mentioned.

Next, the text discusses the reality of Belgian Nursery schools as outlined in the 1951 document *Plan des Activités* and in the ministerial circular released on July 21, 1971, on updating fundamental teaching methods. The clear intention here is to begin with the children and maximize their potential. It is further stated that kindergarten will also aim to address socio-cultural disadvantages and foster the growth of mental frameworks in every child.

France is being focused on next, and it is said that ideals of the «*éducation nouvelle*»⁷⁸ have been responsible for inspiring nursery schools in seeking a

⁷⁷ F. Christiaens, *Étude préparatoire à une révision des programmes de l'école maternelle et de l'école primaire des écoles européennes*, cit., p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

new equilibrium and, as a result, nursery schools strive to adjust to children's psychology, needs, and capacity for development. Additionally, there is a call to individualize teaching while still considering the socialization of children through collective tasks and group activities. Within these activities, there is also a focus on preparing children for primary school by introducing them to reading, writing, and math, as well as experimenting with teaching a second language like German or English promoting the use of simple children's language through various movement and leisure activities such as games, dances and songs.

The discussion then moved on to Luxembourg where nursery schools were currently going through a renovation mainly aimed at improving the overall development of children; such a review was also reflected in the ongoing changes in teacher education and the revision of kindergarten programs.

It is then reported that in the Netherlands efforts were made to prevent the division between nursery school and primary school to have the former as a seamless extension of the latter. Because of this, the nursery schools were structured based on the students' levels rather than age, and they did not have a set end point but continued until certain reading, writing, and counting goals were achieved. The primary goal was to foster children's overall «growth» through a mixture of play and work, while also instructing them in basic «cultural technique»⁷⁹. There is an emphasis on the absence of the European Schools teachers' perspectives on these topics; because of it, Inspector Christiaens explains that a meeting would have been organized to address the issue. He then provides an overview of the gathered materials, outlining the common points found in France, Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium in a table format. Luxembourg was absent due to undergoing reform at that time; no documentation was reportedly received from Italy. The primary focus areas are the following: in every country, emphasis is placed on taking children and their interests as a point of departure; the importance of nursery school is underlined as the place to prepare students for primary school incorporating introductory activities for reading and writing and so smoothing the transition process from one level to another and while, at the same time, favouring, through playing, the individual and communitarian dimensions of each child. The conversation then shifts to elementary schools in the various member nations. As for Germany, the main goal of primary schools seems is to encourage personality growth and provide equal opportunities for all students, sparking their interests; the importance of individualized learning and differentiation is emphasized. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of children being able to navigate the contemporary world independently, leading to the need for going beyond encyclopedic knowledge and teaching. In terms of practical

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

structure, it is then said that German primary schools are organised around three levels: the first one should focus on developing students' aptitudes and desire for learning; the second level should be based on reinforcement and work to meet students' needs, especially those of children with difficulties of any kind; the third level aims at helping choosing the direction to take for the secondary level based on their features and through observation, individualisation, group works⁸⁰.

Moving on to Belgium, the primary school guidelines followed at that time were the 1936 *Directives du Plan d'Etudes* and the 1957 *Plan*, highlighting the importance of beginning with the children, their interests, and needs, while observing the local environment. Indeed, one of the main ideas proposed was that observing, expressing, and being creative had to be prioritized alongside finding a balance between group and individual work, through collaboration between teachers and students. Additionally, even in this case, there is an emphasis on the importance of moving beyond encyclopedic knowledge and developing the ability to learn how to learn⁸¹. Reference to a ministerial circular from June 21, 1971, is made as a document outlining guidelines for a revision of basic and core education. What further emerges is that such guidelines seemed to have been better implemented in the French-speaking region of Belgium but not yet in the Flemish region, despite plans for a forthcoming change. As with German elementary schools, it is also mentioned here that schools should assist in the growth of every student and equip them to handle future challenges. School's role in socializing students is also acknowledged, leading to the idea that school's main focus should be «on teaching how to learn and how to adapt»⁸². Furthermore, teachers and students are encouraged to engage in lively and dynamic activities involving performing, observing, experimenting, and expressing themselves.

With reference to France, mention is made of some educational changes related to primary schools during the 1960s that introduced the concepts of «tiers-temps pédagogique» and «activités d'éveils»⁸³. At the same time, Inspector Christiaens states that he has not been able to fully comprehend the tiers-temps pédagogique concept from the documents available to him and hopes that another Inspector – Inspector Grossmann – will offer further clarification during the designated meeting. When it comes to *les activités d'éveil* he explains that they encompass various activities that refer to subjects such as history, geography and science: the main point is not to study them separately since they are supposed to spark children's interests and curiosity and encourage them to explore the surrounding environment. While discovering

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

the world and with their curiosity aroused, children should naturally begin to order the world and develop an attitude of learning how to learn⁸⁴. Before going any further, and at the same time, without wanting to undertake an in-depth discussion – which does not respond to the objective of this contribution – I believe it might be effective to pause for a moment on the concepts of the *tiers-temps pédagogique* and the *activités d'éveil* to try to reflect and better frame them. The *tiers-temps pédagogique* firstly appeared in 1964 in France as an experiment that divided school time into three parts: «the first one dedicated to subject considered 'basic and necessary' such as French and calculus; the second one concerned with 'disciplines of awakening', and the last one for physical education»⁸⁵. In this way, the objective would have been to not only pay attention to the development of the body, but to approach disciplines such as science or history and geography in a radically new way so to turn them into *activités d'éveils* (disciplines of awakening)⁸⁶. As for the latter, it has been pointed out that the 'one-third pedagogical time' and of 'awakening disciplines' in French elementary schools stemmed from a desire to reshape the pedagogical landscape, going against the idea of a traditional encyclopedic pedagogy and towards an educational process produced by the will to research and discover the world – so to get awoken – and follow curiosity and astonishment⁸⁷. In august and september 1969, le *tiers-temps pédagogique* stopped to be an experiment and

l'horaire de classe hebdomadaire est réparti en trois unités temporelles, correspondant respectivement aux disciplines fondamentales (français et calcul: quinze heures hebdomadaires), aux «disciplines» ou «activités d'éveil» (morale, histoire et géographie, exercices d'observation, dessin ou travail manuel, chant, activités dirigées: six heures hebdomadaires) et à l'éducation physique et sportive (six heures hebdomadaires)⁸⁸.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

⁸⁵ A. Prost, *Quand l'école de Jules Ferry est-elle morte?*, «Histoire de l'éducation», n. 14, 1982, p. 36 (our translation).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* See also P. Kahn, *Louis Legrand et l'éveil*, «Les Sciences de l'éducation – Pour l'Ère nouvelle», vol. 51, n. 2, 2018, pp. 59-71; R. Asseman, M. Lethurgez, H. Morteau, *L'expérience pédagogique dite «tiers temps»*, «Bulletin de psychologie», vol. 20, n. 257, 1967, pp. 740-751.

⁸⁷ For further understanding of the topic see Kahn, *Louis Legrand et l'éveil*, cit. Kahn indeed examines the role played by Louis Legrand within the Commission for pedagogical renewal set up by Edgar Faure in 1968. According to Kahn, Legrand's thought can be read in opposition to a traditional pedagogy and in favour of a pedagogy «de l'étonnement», of astonishment not based on encyclopedism but originating from the desire to research and follow curiosity. On that see Kahn, *Louis Legrand et l'éveil*, cit., p. 62; see also L. Legrand, *Pour une pédagogie de l'étonnement*, Berne, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1969; Id., *Une méthode active pour l'école d'aujourd'hui*, Berne, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1971.

⁸⁸ Y. Verneuil, «*Dans le sens inverse de l'histoire?*», *Les résistances aux réformes éducatives de l'après-Mai 1968*, «Histoire Politique», vol. 37, 2019, pp. 1-22. The translation of the aforementioned words on pages 3 and 4 is the following: [the weekly class schedule is divided into three time units, corresponding respectively to the fundamental disciplines (French and arithmetic: fifteen hours per week), to the «disciplines» or «awakening activities» (morality, history

Mentioning the French case and taking note of the *tier-temps pédagogique* and the *activités d'éveil*, the European Schools recognised a different way of organising school time and activities; we will see shortly how this was declined at the end of this preparatory study in 1971.

The last two cases discussed are the ones of Luxembourg and the Netherlands: as for the former, the programs and indications regulating primary schools went back to 1964 and were characterised by an invitation to use new methods and principles, favouring an active and intuitive learning based on observation, discovery and reflection⁸⁹. However, according to Christiaens, the same 1964 Luxembourg document appeared to be still highly focused on separate subjects, and their encyclopedic knowledge still had a decisive role; consequently, the necessity to overcome this need for an «overloading»⁹⁰ knowledge was still very felt.

As for the Netherlands, Christiaens also emphasises the desire to give the child a central place in the educational process, thus ensuring that «the teacher and the subject come down from their pedestal»⁹¹. Referring to a preliminary drafted law from 1970, Christiaens then outlines what at that time was going to be the structure of the Dutch elementary school: together with the kindergarten and transition classes to secondary education, it was supposed to foster the mental, physical, creative, ethical, and communal growth of students; students were encouraged to become proficient in their native language and work on their literacy and numeracy abilities, and to begin contemplating the world through studies like geography, history, science, basic knowledge of English and creative activities. Creativity and subjects like geography, history, and sciences seemed to be given an important role in the curriculum, as they are part of what was defined «Wereldoriëntatie (orientation dans le monde)»⁹².

Christiaens then illustrates the point of view of the European Schools teachers and explains that, at that time, several groups were working on the elaboration of a revision to the teaching of certain subjects. Moreover, he points out the lack of clear pedagogical principles that, in his opinion, should have been outlined at the foundation of the European Schools. In this regard, we must acknowledge that, based on the survey carried out on the individual national cases, certain lines to be followed in the elaboration of general pedagogical

and geography, observation exercises, drawing or manual work, singing, supervised activities: six hours per week)], (our translation).

⁸⁹ Christiaens, *Étude préparatoire à une révision des programmes de l'école maternelle et de l'école primaire des écoles européennes*, cit., p. 40.

⁹⁰ Christiaens himself speaks of «une surcharge des programmes qui écrase les enfants», namely [an overload of programs that crushes children] (our translation); see *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 44. We want to point out that this label would then be used for the discipline Discovery of the World, which was included in the primary section of the European Schools in later years.

principles were outlined already at the end of this 1971 document. Later, they would be explicitly expressed in the document *Revision des Programmes de l'École maternelle et de l'École Primaire. Compte rendu de la réunion tenue à l'école européenne de Bruxelles, le jeudi 5 octobre 1972*⁹³; in this last document, it is indeed expressed, among the various points, the will to conceive education as a continuous process transitioning from different stages linked to each other and centered on the idea of considering the students and their interests as focal points, starting from them and their surrounding environment – namely, starting from the world that had to be discovered – and putting an end to a comprehensive and compartmentalised knowledge. While such elements seem to emerge somewhat in all the national cases mentioned by Christiaens in 1971, in our view, they seem particularly significant in the case of the Netherlands and France. In particular, implicit references to the latter example and the model of the *tiers-temps pédagogique* and the *activités d'éveil* can also be found in the Harmonized Timetables and Programmes of 1972 and 1977: in 1972 the precise wording «activité d'éveil»⁹⁴ is present, as it also is in 1977 where again the label «awakening activities» is indeed used⁹⁵. Here, a *General introduction to the programmes of the primary school* is contained⁹⁶: it recalls the pedagogical principles outlined in 1971 and 1972 and the desire to form students, not to inform them, and to learn how to learn⁹⁷ on account of a «pedagogy of interest»⁹⁸ and the use of the environment as «an instrument in the service of knowledge of apprenticeships and of formation. It allows the education of the child in an atmosphere of real life, *joie de vivre* and joy in discovery»⁹⁹. Following this line of reasoning, primary school activities are grouped into the following groups:

- a) mother tongue, mathematics, second language;
- b) prospective activities: observation, expression, history, geography, science;
- c) artistic activities: arts, arts and crafts, music, etc.;
- d) physical education¹⁰⁰.

Before moving to a closure, there is one last element we would like to raise. From the documents scrutinized, it seems to us that the expression «learn to learn» and the concepts associated with it first appeared in this 1971 docu-

⁹³ F. Christiaens, *Revision Des Programmes de l'école maternelle et de l'école primaire. Compte rendu de la réunion tenue à l'école européenne de Bruxelles, le jeudi 5 octobre 1972*, Écoles Européennes, n/réf. 72-D-1210/1.

⁹⁴ *Harmonized Timetables and Programmes*, Bruxelles, European Schools, 1972, p. 91.

⁹⁵ *Harmonized Timetables and Programmes*, Bruxelles, European Schools, 1977, p. 103.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

ment and had never been mentioned before within the context of the European Schools. We consider its mention, at this time, significant because, in these same years, the work to draft the *Faure Report*¹⁰¹ was ongoing. The report was indeed published in 1972 and vibrantly stressed the topic of lifelong education as a response to contemporary major social transformations¹⁰². Even though the emphasis on social changes is mostly absent in the 1971 document of the European Schools (but it will appear later, as, for instance, in 1990, in the *Guidelines for Nursery and Primary Education – Nursery and Primary School Reform*¹⁰³), we intended to point out the presence of this same emphasis on the concept of learning to learn since it will also reappear in subsequent documents and will become central to European educational policies and discourses, whereas with not always favourable implications¹⁰⁴.

4. *Conclusions and further prospects*

In conclusion, what have we achieved in trying to adopt a transnational and entangled perspective on the history of the European Schools, and in particular on their early years of existence? We would suggest that it made possible to observe the European Schools through a diffractive gaze, revealing some of the threads that contributed both to their exchanges with the outside and their internal organization. As a matter of fact, firstly, we have noted the contacts, albeit sporadic as far as we know, between the European Schools and international associations and bodies such as Pax Christi International and UNESCO. At the present moment of our research, we do not have sufficient insights to formulate final and definite statements about the features and nature of such relationships and understand if they were only sporadic or much more solid and long-term. However, acknowledging their existence serves, in our view, to show how the educational aspects of the early European integra-

¹⁰¹ International Commission on the Development of Education, *Learning to Be: the World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, Paris, UNESCO, 1972.

¹⁰² For further information on the *Faure Report* see M. Elfert, A. Draxler, *The Faure Report: 50 Years on – Editorial Introduction*, «International Review of Education», vol. 68, 2022, pp. 637-654; R. Locatelli, *Faure's New Social Contract Fifty Years Later: Promises and Evolutions*, «International Review of Education», vol. 68, 2022, pp. 731-746; S. Smythe, *The Faure Report, Sylvia Wynter and the Undoing of the Man of Lifelong Learning*, «International Review of Education», vol. 68, 2022, pp. 773-789; B. Hake, *Mapping Our Way Out? Critical Reflections on Historical Research and the Faure Report*, «European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults», vol. 13, n. 2, 2021, pp. 137-138.

¹⁰³ *Guidelines for Nursery and Primary Education – Nursery and Primary School Reform*, Bruxelles, European Schools, 1990, ref. 90-D-68.

¹⁰⁴ See M. Simons, J. Masschelein, *The Learning Society and Governmentality: An introduction*, «Educational Philosophy and Theory», vol. 38, n. 4, 2006, pp. 417-430.

tion project involved various actors, discourses and practices that had, in turn, mutually co-constructed each other. This network vision is characteristic and well present in some works on Europeanisation, especially in terms of educational governance¹⁰⁵. Nevertheless, from our standpoint, it had never been openly made explicit in the case of previous studies on the European Schools. In doing so, we also wanted to try to highlight the discourses and concepts that were precisely co-constructed and addressed in such contexts and that were interwoven through such interactions: in the specific cases seen, we are referring to the intertwined topics of education, peace and development and we admit that there is still much to be reflected upon and investigated as to what kind of discourses on development and peace were promoted through education thanks to the conjoint work of the various organisms involved.

On the other hand, as far as the circulation of pedagogical principles, practices, and models is concerned, through the close reading of the 1971 document on the revision of the curriculum, we were able to map some threads of national influences active in primary school education – based on the idea of a pedagogy of discovery and awakening – that influenced the curriculum of European schools. Even in this case, we believe it might be fruitful to further address this dimension in the future, especially with reference to the French case.

Finally, we would like to conclude with an open perspective. In a recent study investigating the *Faure Report* and the shift from the paradigm of continuing education to the one of lifelong learning, it is suggested the necessity to find «a more sound empirical basis for a critical historiography which makes it possible to disentangle the history of past political struggles from the distorting myths»¹⁰⁶. Drawing on the work here presented, we wonder if keeping a transnational and entangled focus on the European Schools on these two strands – namely, their relationship with international bodies and the borrowings and influences from the different member countries – while filtering phenomena from the ESs experience and position (more or less decentralised) might serve as such empirical basis fulfilling this purpose and producing fertile results in that sense. Currently, this is only a suggestion that takes us off the path taken so far; nonetheless, it might indicate the several open avenues still to try and pursue.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, S. Grek, M. Lawn, *Europeanizing Education. Governing a new policy space*, Oxford, Symposium Books, 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Hake, *Mapping our way out? Critical reflections on historical research and the Faure report*, cit., pp. 137-138.