

## Preface

While analysing what it means to be European, Ortega y Gasset pointed out that European culture is defined by human's desire to find the most perfect way of being, a way that must be both firmly founded in history and clearly projected into the future.

Ortega's idea had perhaps less currency when what European unity meant still boiled down to an economic community. Today, however, things have changed, and after a long, complex process, we now face a new scenario ambitiously named *European Union*, one whose foundations, competencies, and aims are no longer simply economic, but seek to foster a life in common without losing respect for the national identities of the member States.

The legend –in fact, Jack Lang confessed that this statement was invented by him, and perhaps is true– says that near the end of his life, Jean Monnet once answered a journalist's question affirming that, if he had to do it all over again, he would start with culture rather than with the economy. Nevertheless, the road actually taken was probably for the best, since the wounds from the Second World War still ran deep, and any initiative that even vaguely resembled meddling in the lifestyles and cultural identity of any of the European peoples would have been rejected immediately. But circumstances today are not the same as those of fifty years ago. For that reason, the project that was started then now requires new ways of thinking that will make it more solid and fruitful.

These ideas help explain how the European Union has gained authority over both culture and educational policy since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Until then, both matters had been dealt with only hesitantly

and indirectly. In no way is it meant to obligate member States to take on a common structure to their educational systems, nor to do away with the diversity found among the various cultural forms that make up the European mosaic. What it does hope to do is to “highlight the common cultural heritage” (*EC Treaty*, Article 151.1) and to contribute “to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation among Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action” (*ibid.*, Art. 149.1).

Ortega’s statement above takes on renewed meaning today, since it provides guidance to uncovering what Europe’s cultural heritage is, shedding light on the fundamental goals of education while also providing criteria for promoting quality education, since quality often depends on the results one expects to obtain. For Europe, Ortega asserts, that *desire to find the most perfect way of being*, is linked to development of an intellect that overcomes ethnic limits and thus gives a common dignity to humankind. This interpretation likely explains why the signing nations of the renewed Treaty of the European Community show themselves to be “determined to promote the highest possible level of knowledge” and also why the Treaty of European Union states at the same time that “the Union is based on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, and basic freedoms” and that “the Union shall respect the national identity of its member States” (*EU Treaty*, Art. 6).

This set of ideas leads us to conclude that it is an urgent task to promote studies that analyze the basic elements underlying the politics of European education, considering both the norms that the States must take into account as well as the spirit on which they should be based and the challenges that need to be met. Such is the intention of this book, which is divided into three main parts:

1. Evolution and normative framework of the European Union educational policy
2. Education for European citizenship and pluralism
3. New trends and challenges for European education systems and institutions.

The first part consists of two chapters analysing the basic elements underlying informed decision-making in educational policy. The Treaty of Union placed subsidiarity at the heart of the European project. Chapter 1, by Gonzalo Jover, looks into the complex theoretical study of such a concept, with all its ambiguities and importance, according to the Treaty of the European Union signed in Maastricht in February 1992 and in its subsequent revisions. The chapter shows the different possibilities of subsidiarity as a political principle and reveals its pedagogic meaning. Art. 149.2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community specifies a series of actions to

be taken by the Community, thus making it necessary to examine the results achieved by the programs carried out to put those actions into practice. Chapter 2, by Gustav E. Karlsen, reflects on the European Union Educational Policy over time, and analyses the most important initiatives in the field of education, its functions and consequences.

Citizenship has been one of the main topics both in Political Philosophy and Pedagogy along the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Treaty of Union itself reinforced this idea by stating “Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship” (*EC Treaty*, Art. 17). Part II examines the educational possibilities of citizenship in relation with concepts of identity and pluralism. In chapter 3, Katarzyna Lewicka-Grisdale and Terence H. McLaughlin engage in a broadly philosophical exploration of these questions and wonder what the notions of ‘European identity’ and ‘European citizenship’ mean and in what senses and to what extent is their promotion and development through education justified. In the coming Europe, education won’t be just a matter of national identity. Necessarily it will deal more and more with difference and multiculturalism. So, Richard Pring approaches in chapter 4 the problem of teaching values in pluralistic societies. From a pedagogical point of view, in order to respond to the tension that arises in those societies, special attention must be paid to the values which enable young people to find their own genuine voices amidst a myriad demands.

The third part of the book takes up some of the specific trends and challenges facing European educational systems and institutions. Chapter 5, by María Elósegui, focuses on the function of the educational system to eliminate any unfair inequality between women and men by reviewing the directives against gender discrimination proposed by the European Union. The Union has also determined that both the respect for liberties as well as the requirements of free development of personality make it necessary to defend freedom in education, but such freedom should fit in with justice when dealing with the most underprivileged. Charles Glenn addresses this topic in chapter 6. He analyses how educational systems manage efficiency and freedom. To do so, examples and issues are proposed from a large international experience. Finally, chapter 7 has to do with the university. Particularly since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, preoccupation with this institution has intensified dramatically throughout Europe. José Luis García Garrido starts from the developments that have occurred in the university in the course of the twentieth century to look into the current tendencies and future in the light of the European Union Policy.

The bibliography about the European Union is overgrowing, but, unfortunately, mainly about economic or organizational problems. The aim of this book is to be a contribution to the discussion on sound educational topics, that, perhaps because they are difficult and contestable, they are ordinarily and mistakenly silenced.

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