



European Forum on Educational Administration

NEWSLETTER

Forum Européen des Administrateurs de l'Éducation

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Editorial Note

The editor welcomes contributions from Forum members. These can include letters to the editor, notes of books published on themes of cross-European interest, requests for assistance from other members, or other matters. These should be sent (preferably in English) to the editor preferably by E-mail.

We would be grateful if material for publication could be sent as soon as possible.

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THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jack (Sjek) H.J.M. Derks
EFEA President

The last EFEA Steering Committees meeting, held in Danbury, England in March 2002, lasted about ten hours over three days, combining with cultural and professional input. It showed again how strong is the mutual base of striving for educational ends in the administration of educational institutions themselves. All decisions were taken by consensus and participation was higher than ever: including by correspondence from those national bodies which could not be directly represented.

It feels good to work together on a mutual learning process of professional development. In my opinion there was not one dull moment in that meeting. And of course, it is exciting to look at developments in society and identify their implications for educational leadership, management and administration; and the other way round as well.

As pedagogical leaders and administrators, inspectors, governors and civil servants, trainers and advisers, we have a responsibility to participate in the European debate on developments in educational systems. At European level the EFEA is the only organization that brings together all these various professional people meeting informally. Informally, because we are not interested in national or institutional window-dressing. We want to look at real every-day practice and systematically report our findings.

What is the truth revealed in the working places of our colleagues that derives from the innovations and developments in the educational systems we are talking about?

Participation in what is going on is a main objective in all our activities, internally in a national forum, externally between colleagues of two or more countries. That's why I'm very pleased to again welcome our colleagues from Denmark into our Forum.

The EFEA not only contributes to the professional developments of its members. The annex Leitmotiv of the Forum in our Brochure shows how we in our main activity, the European Intervisitation Programme, are making significant contributions in the observation and analysis of a country's educational system. We have been asked to look at the major societal changes in Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Latvia and to reflect on their consequences for the nature and quality of the management and administration of its educational institutions in all levels of the system. In 2003 the topic will be the contribution of and the implications for the role the educational management structure plays in the peace-making process between the two Irelands. "The Learning Community in a Pluralist Society: Identity and Inclusion" definitely is a topic that the Steering Committee feels is relevant for many more countries.

You don't have to wait till 2003 to experience the Forum's way of learning. In September 2002 you are welcome in Toledo, Spain, to study the European vocational education systems.

Humanism on Baltic Soil: A Reflection on the EIP 2001

Jean-Pierre Helt
France

The Latvians have focussed their educational system on the pupil; a point proposed to the scrutiny of the French delegation who participated, among others, in the XIth Inter-Visitation Programme of EFEA. Indeed, the Latvian Forum of Education Administration, a relative newcomer among the European Forums, took advantage of the 800th anniversary of the foundation of Riga to organize an Inter-Visitation Programme on the theme "The Latvian Educational System on its way to humanistic education". Attractive, though somewhat ambiguous, the theme enabled some sixty delegates, mostly from western Europe, to exert their perspicacity. They visited a number of institutions, using both Latvian and Russian languages, from infant schools to higher education institutions. The organizers, very efficient representatives of a young and committed body of administrators and educationists, wished obviously to hear from their visitors that they had effectively wiped out sixty years of soviet-style education.

The answer, from the different accounts and reports we have heard and read, confirms only partly this evolution. The very concept of humanism, not clearly defined by the highest authorities, is worked out in widely different styles by various persons and institutions. In some cases, humanities and classical education prevail. In others, easy-going relationship between teachers and pupils promotes a spirit in which autonomy still carries strange intimations of collectivist reflexes. Another trend, more practical and easily worked out thanks to low numbers of pupils in classes, is the practice of very individualized education, not forgetting, however, the necessity of socialization. Yet such was not the prevailing tendency, so far as we could see.

Indeed, in this line of education, a teaching method inspired from British educationists, is being vigorously promoted and supported by the Ministry. The only delicate point, in a domain not fully freed from old totalitarian reflexes, is that it could become an official and compulsory doctrine.

At this time the only piece of advice members of the Forum could reasonably offer their Latvian hosts and friends is to keep in mind that class performance and teaching methods do not define a doctrine or a policy. Many ambiguities would be cleared, and the evolution more rapid, if the national policy were more explicit about humanism, and if major lines of action were fully described.

The readiness and commitment to change of the administrators and staff we have met, many of them having perfectly well picked up the cue, as well as the obvious learning achievements among the young Latvians, particularly in languages, enable the visitors to give a positive prognosis. Reluctant to abandon altogether old but well tried recipes, and yet wishing to draw nearer to Western education, cherishing deep at heart the vital necessity to keep up their national identity, they try not to yield to the call of a "pop", American-style culture. The temptation is great.

The Latvians take advantage of every opportunity to evince their deep attachment to an original culture and identity which has resisted centuries of foreign occupation. This is undoubtedly a token of success on their way to an original, specific system of education. They would thus combine the wish to "occidentalize" along with fidelity to their identity, bred on lively music, vast melancholy countryside, old many-coloured medieval cities topped with glittering golden steeples, and the presence, distant at times, still always intense, of the Baltic mother Sea.

The next European Inter-Visitation Programme, September 2003

The Forum's next inter-Visitation programme may be one of its most ambitious ever. The theme is ambitious: 'The Learning Community in a Pluralist Society: Identity and Inclusion', which aims to explore the meaning of learning in diverse and sometimes divided societies.

The organisation of the programme is ambitious. Two national societies are joining to plan and develop the programme and to ensure it happens in both an intellectually rigorous and an enjoyable manner. The British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society [BELMAS] representing the four systems of the United Kingdom and The Society for Management in Education in Ireland [SMEI], representing the Republic of Ireland, have joined forces. So far, we are getting on very well together and are making good progress.

The programme is ambitious. We shall begin in Dublin with a reception and some time for orientation during the weekend of 20-21 September. As usual in the Forum's inter-Visitations, there will be a programme of small group study visits to schools and other educational establishments during Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday we shall leave Dublin for Belfast, visiting some historical sites on the way. In Belfast, similarly, we shall engage in a programme of study visits. All of our visits will explore aspects of the programme theme, through the curriculum and ethos of schools, colleges and places of learning in the community. The programme will end officially in Belfast, but for those who need to return to Dublin, transport will be provided.

In both countries we shall meet students, teachers, education professionals, academics and politicians: and, we hope, some key community figures who have played a significant part in working for the cause of education, sometimes in difficult circumstances. Already one school has invited the whole party to an arts entertainment, specifically designed around our theme of identity and inclusion! As usual, we aim to produce a publication arising from our experiences.

The European Forum's inter-Visitation programmes have developed an enviable tradition of working together, learning together and celebrating the achievements of students and their teachers: all in a spirit of international co-operation and understanding. The 2003 Inter-Visitation Programme will be no exception. Everyone has heard about Ireland. Now is the time to come and see what happens, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland, in real life education as it happens on a daily basis.

Details about registering for the EIP will be sent via your national correspondents and your national organisations in due course. Meanwhile, if you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Professor John Heywood or Rosalind Morton via rmorton48@aol.com.

Humanisation Of Education: Demand of the Times

A. Slavinskis

*President of the Latvian Educational Forum
Head of Ventpsils Education Department*

[This paper was presented as part of the EIP 2001 in Riga. Editor]

With the new social and economic relations in Latvia, a new system which corresponds to the needs of our society and interests of a personality's self-realisation is starting to replace the unified and strictly regulated—in ideological, organisational and contentual senses—education. Educational institutions have obtained the right of creative search, autonomy and self-dependency in solving many problems; they actively acquire formerly unknown functions, establish new relations with founders, sponsors and individuals. Not only has this widened the range of state requirements but also the needs of different social groups and layers, as well as ethnic, territorial and professional communities, religious confessions, institutions of higher education etc. These changes affect also relations between generations. Today into life comes a generation which is new in many aspects, the values and ideals of which have formed mainly during the years of Latvia's independence. This generation is to a certain extent pragmatic, it supports the views of the philosophy of individualism, it is active and has a critical attitude towards many traditional values. In such circumstances the experience of the previous generations starts losing its value; it does not always help young people to understand what is going on: while the young gain a common experience which did not belong, and could not belong, to elder generations. Elder generations, in their turn, will never see in the lives of the young a repetition of their own experience of unprecedented changes. Therefore increasing is the level of requirements concerning the quality of education and responsibility of teachers for the provided educational services, as well as personal interest of students and their parents in acquiring good education which would improve the competitiveness of the young people in the labour market and ensure a better life quality in their future.

In spite of the unfavourable social and economic situation, the profundity and scale of educational processes in Latvia are a sign that these changes are sustainable, and new trends will loom out more and more clearly in our educational system, allowing us speak about its transition into a better quality. Among these trends are the strengthening of culturally creative function, its openness to innovations, changes in the general stance of students, their gradual transformation from an object to a full-fledged study subject. By becoming a central cultural phenomenon, education more and more focuses on the formation of the essential basis for personality development in every student.

Today it is hard to predict further developments of education in Latvia; however, it is obvious that in the new situation the traditional educational conceptions have become unacceptable, and we need a new look at education, developing a new educational paradigm, creating a new educational environment, which is able to ensure a new culturally educational and socially pedagogic way of thinking. The necessity for a qualitatively new educational conception is caused by different negative phenomena in education, such as soullessness and a value crisis; insufficient or excessive professionalism; insufficient or excessive specialisation; exaggerated work-load students have in the study process; inability of graduates to adapt to the social reality after the specific life conditions of the school; as well as the urgent need to overcome the 'technocratic paradigm' created by contradictions of the scientific and technical processes, which nowadays have fed through all spheres of human activity. Technocratic ways of thinking—which does not give a complete picture of the world in its diversity and discrepancy—increases formalisation of social relations; depersonalisation and estrangement. It manifests itself in an increase in consumerism, ecological dangers, dehumanisation, mental incompatibility and constant confrontations within society, as well as its segregation.

Obviously a constructive alternative to this technocratic challenge can be the so-called "humanistic paradigm", which announces a person to be the highest value, "a measure of all things" and brings forward a new

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

European Conference on Vocational Training, sponsored by the Forum européen des Administrateurs de l'Éducation de Castille la Manche and the Forum européen des Administrateurs de l'Éducation de l'État espagnol. It is to be held in Toledo, Spain, from the 18th to the 21st September 2002. Conference languages will be Spanish, French and English. For further information contact, urgently, the organizer : Juan Gracia López, Avenida de la Estación, 6-2^o-A, 02001 Albacete, Spain ; *Tel.* +34 967 59 63 10 ; *Fax* + 34 967 21 63 20 ; or *Email* : jglopez@jccm.es.

Annual Conference of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society, to be held on the theme "Leaders and Leadership: Leadership Teams, Team Leaders and Middle Managers" in Birmingham, England, from the 20th to the 22nd September 2002. For further details see the BELMAS web site, <http://www.belmas.org.uk>; or contact the BELMAS office, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, S10 2PB, England, *Tel.* +44-114 225 2328, *Fax* +44-114 225 5649; *Email*: info@belmas.org.uk.

approach to solving a problem of people's attitude towards nature, towards society and towards themselves.

Interest in education, which acknowledges that the personality and its creative and free development is more important than political, ideological and other values, is natural to our society, that is tired of a negligent attitude to a man, towards their life today in the name of some mythical future. It is not likely that in Latvian schools one can find a teacher who will doubt the importance of establishing humane mutual relations in schools as well as in society in general. Teachers understand well that the humanistic values form a solid base which determines not only the quality of school life but also the new style of the human life and work. However, gradually many teachers start to realise that humanisation is also a quite complicated problem, which is widely discussed but hard to solve. A certain ambiguity in this sphere and lack of its comprehension often creates abstract definitions of the humanistic education, such as "formation of a personality's human trends", "development of a students' creative abilities" etc. Undoubtedly behind such dispositions, which in no way can be controlled, we can hide pedagogic activity of any kind, or even its non-existence. This situation to a large extent can be explained with the fact that humanistic education has not yet fully become an object of methodological reflection, and in most parts of scientific work and mass pedagogic consciousness it is reflected at the level of everyday conceptions. Usually it is reduced to its socially psychological aspect—interrelations of teachers and students—or to innovations in the field of study programmes, plans etc. It is evident that without detailed perusal of humanistic education at the theoretical level it is impossible to make a transition to a new paradigm in the development of projects on training and education.

Under the current circumstances one cannot hope that people's new mentality, which is based on humanistic ideas, will develop as if by the wave of a magic wand. It is bound to undergo profound transformations in a mass society, and the necessity for changes in a person's self-esteem and ways of thinking is the most painful of these transformations. Against this background, these changes cause the main difficulties in implementation of the most important ideas of humanistic pedagogy. The main problem for people working in the field of education, and willing no more to conform to old stereotypes but to acquire the new humanistic approach to organising their activity, is not renewal of educational techniques and methods, but changes in their own way of thinking and style of working. These cannot be passed on to the teacher from the outside; similarly, their self-esteem, reflections, empathy and a system of self-identification cannot be developed from the outside either. It is up to him/herself, by gaining appropriate experience, becoming aware of it, reflecting upon and analysing it.

OECD PISA REPORT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

inland is the top performing country in a new OECD survey of reading literacy among 15-year-olds, while Japan and Korea are the top performers in mathematics and science. All three countries are also among the countries with the narrowest gap between the highest and lowest performers, based on tests involving 265,000 high-school students in 32 countries.

The OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* assesses the extent to which students approaching the end of compulsory education have the knowledge and skills needed for full participation in society. Data published today are based on a first round of assessments that took place last year. Similar reviews at three-yearly intervals in the future will make PISA the most comprehensive international survey of student knowledge and skills.

In addition to covering student performance, PISA also reviews student attitudes and approaches to learning. The result is a series of internationally comparable indicators that give insights into the factors influencing the development of literacy skills at home and at school and how these factors interact. These indicators provide policy makers with a unique benchmarking tool on which to base future policy choices. Among other findings, the survey shows that:

- On average, 10% of 15-year-olds in the world's most developed countries have top-level reading literacy skills, being able to understand complex texts, evaluate information and build hypotheses, and draw on specialised knowledge. In Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the figure is between 15% and 19%.
- At the other end of the scale, an average of 8% of 15-year-olds—and in some countries more than twice that proportion—fall below Level 1, PISA's lowest level of reading proficiency. A further 12% only make it to Level 1, which requires students to complete very basic reading tasks such as locating a simple piece of information or identifying the main theme of a text. Young people in these categories show serious gaps in the foundation of literacy skills needed for further learning, impairing their ability to benefit from further educational opportunities at school or beyond.
- Japan and Korea are the top performers in mathematical and scientific literacy—defined as the capacity of students to use the mathematical and scientific knowledge acquired in school in a world that increasingly relies on technological and scientific advances.
- High overall performance can go hand in hand with an equitable distribution of results. Performance averages in the three subject areas show some countries—notably Finland, Japan and Korea—maintaining a comparatively narrow gap between the highest and poorest performers while still attaining high average levels. In Germany, one of the countries with the largest gap between the highest and lowest performing students, the average performance is below the OECD average, with much of this variation accounted for by differences between schools. Overall, variations in student performance and the extent of variation between schools tend to be greater in countries that differentiate at an early age between types of programme and school.
- In many countries, boys are falling far behind in reading literacy. In every country surveyed, girls were, on average, better readers than boys. Significant differences between countries reflect the varying abilities of countries to provide a learning environment or broader context that benefits both genders equally. In all participating countries, males are more likely than females to be at Level 1 or below in reading—in the case of Finland, the best performing country, over three times as likely.
- In about half of the countries surveyed, boys perform better than girls in mathematical literacy. Much of this difference is attributable to the fact that there are more boys among the better performers, while the number of low performing boys is equal to that of low performing girls. In the case of scientific literacy, differences are smaller and tend to even out among countries.
- About half of 16-year-olds consider mathematics important in a general sense, but only a few see mathematics as important for their future.
- Students show wide differences in their general engagement with school, including big variations in attitudes to reading and even more so to mathematics. In 20 out of 26 countries, more than one in four students consider school a place where they do not want to go. The proportion of reluctant students is highest in Belgium (42%), followed by Canada (37%), France (37%), Hungary (38%), Italy (38%) and the United States (35%). The relationship between student attitudes and results is complex and some countries perform well despite below-average attitudes. Nonetheless, a positive disposition to learning is an important outcome of schooling in itself and therefore merits

attention. Higher average spending per student tends to be associated with higher average performance in the three areas of literacy, but does not guarantee it. Students from privileged social backgrounds tend to perform better, but differences are less pronounced in some countries than in others. Canada, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Korea and Sweden display above-average levels of reading literacy and a below-average impact of social background on student performance. In the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Luxembourg, it's the other way round.

- Results vary widely across schools but there are countries in which the large majority of schools achieve high standards. In countries where differences among schools are widest, a significant part of these differences tends to be associated with the socio-economic composition of schools.
- There is no single factor that explains why some schools or countries have better results but there are some school policies and practices that tend to be associated with success. For example, the extent to which students use school resources, to which specialist teachers are available, and to which schools have a role in decision-making tend to have a positive impact. Performance also tends to be better where teachers have high expectations and morale, and where classroom relations and discipline are good.

Knowledge and Skills for Life. First Results from PISA 2000. Paris: OECD, 2001. 322 pages, ISBN 92-64-19671-4 .

Source: <http://www.oecd.org/>

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WELCOME TO A NEW JOURNAL

We are very pleased to welcome a new Forum journal, *Revista do Fórum Português de Administração Educacional*, published by the Portuguese Forum on Educational Administration: the first issue appeared in June 2001. The editor is Professor Natércio Afonso who can be contacted at the Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação Universidade de Lisboa, Alameda da Jniversidade 1649-013, Lisboa, Portugal. The ISSN of the journal is 1645-2240. Congratulations to the Portuguese Forum: we wish their new enterprise every success.