

BUONE PRASSI – BEST PRACTICES

THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM AND ITS EARLY
YEARS: AN EXAMPLE OF MULTILINGUAL
AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?
ORIGINS, INFLUENCES AND PROBLEMATISATION

IL SISTEMA DELLE SCUOLE EUROPEE E I SUOI PRIMI
ANNI: UN ESEMPIO PER L'EDUCAZIONE
MULTILINGUE E INTERCULTURALE?
ORIGINI, INFLUENZE E PROBLEMATIZZAZIONE

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In the contemporary context of rising levels of diversity, many policy initiatives relating to intercultural understanding have been undertaken at national, international and supra-national levels. In the European Union context, intercultural education has established itself as one of the main policy tools to manage cultural diversity and promote integration. This paper aims to investigate, reconstruct and problematise the historical origins of this model and the concept of diversity associated to it by focusing on the European School System, a peculiar education system born in 1953 in Luxembourg to meet the educational needs of children of EU officials. From the Sixties to the Nineties these Schools were considered to be a “prototype” (Janne Report, 1973, p. 10); previous research has partially shown their controversial nature due, especially, to the elitist character of those Schools and their encyclopedism. Through a plural methodological historical analysis the story of the early years of the ESs will be reconstructed, bringing also into evidence their possible connection to educational internationalism, peace education, and intercultural education.

Nel contesto contemporaneo caratterizzato da crescenti livelli di diversità, molte iniziative politiche relative alla comprensione interculturale sono state intraprese a livello nazionale, internazionale e sovranazionale. Nell'Unione Europea, l'educazione interculturale si è affermata come uno dei principali strumenti politici per gestire la diversità culturale e promuovere l'integrazione. Questo contributo si propone di indagare, ricostruire e problematizzare le origini storiche di questo modello e il concetto di diversità a esso associato concentrandosi sulle Scuole europee, un peculiare sistema educativo nato nel 1953 in Lussemburgo per rispondere ai bisogni educativi dei figli dei funzionari dell'allora Comunità Europea del Carbone e dell'Acciaio. Dagli anni Sessanta agli anni Novanta queste Scuole furono considerate un "prototipo" (Janne Report, 1973, p. 10); ricerche precedenti ne hanno parzialmente evidenziato il carattere controverso, dovuto soprattutto al loro carattere elitario e all'enciclopedismo. Attraverso un'analisi storica plurale dal punto di vista metodologico e delle fonti, il presente contributo intende fornire uno scorcio dei primi anni delle Scuole europee, mettendo in evidenza anche il loro possibile collegamento con l'internazionalismo educativo, l'educazione alla pace e l'educazione interculturale.

1. Introduction

In the concluding lines of the Italian version of *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* by bell hooks (2022), the following words can be found: «overcoming fear, discovering what unites us and being able to appreciate differences is the movement that brings us together and offers us a world of shared values, and a meaningful sense of community» (p. 236, our translation from the Italian version). We would like to start with them because, in our view, they represent a powerful memo on how to approach difference and construct community. The attempt to welcome various forms of diversity and differences, to create a common School, is at the basis

of the 2007 document *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*¹ which places diversity as a founding paradigm in schools (Santerini, 2016, p. 8) and takes into account the «enhancement of the person, [...], the construction of educational projects that are based on the biographical and relational uniqueness of the student» (MUR, 2007, p. 8, our translation). At least on paper, the Italian school has therefore chosen «to adopt the intercultural perspective – that is, the promotion of dialogue and comparison between cultures – for all pupils and at all levels» (MUR, 2007, p. 8) assuming «diversity as paradigm of the very identity of the school in pluralism, as an opportunity to open the entire system to all differences (of origin, gender, social level, school history)» (p. 9) and based on «a dynamic conception of culture» (p. 9; Balboni, 2002). This attitude, as well as the adoption of an intercultural perspective, is also reflected in the European context (Council of Europe, 2003; European Council, 2008) so much that

intercultural education can be considered the official model for the EU for the integration of migrant students and ethnic-cultural minorities. Furthermore, this approach has been strongly promoted to introduce the new generations to the idea of European integration² (Tarozzi, 2016, p. 23).

However, Tarozzi also clearly outlines the limits of this approach represented, above all, in the distances that exist between the indicated procedures and the real applications and in the differences between individual states (Tarozzi, 2016). Moreover, if we look at the Italian context, according to the author, a further separation can be detected between «the official educational policies issued by the ministry and what really happens in school classes, where intercultural education does not seem to be so widespread

¹ The Italian way for intercultural school and integration of foreign students.

² As a matter of fact, on the connection between the intercultural approach and the European integration, the author recalls that «agencies and the Council of Europe had begun to develop and test models for the reception and integration of the children of immigrant workers in schools since the 1970s» (Tarozzi, 2016, p. 23, our translation).

and deep-rooted as the legislation would provide» (Tarozzi, 2016, p. 24). The latter is also connected to teacher education and a lack of “reflection” on the intercultural approach and the promotion of justice (Tarozzi, 2014; 2016). Finally, the last contradiction that Tarozzi underlines – in his opinion the most important one – concerns the presumed ethical and political neutrality of the intercultural approach, which ends up not taking into account the central theme of equality, though not only in cultural terms but also social ones (Tarozzi, 2016). Considering what has been mentioned until now, Tarozzi asks the following consideration:

Formulated in this way, intercultural education appears as an abstract ethical and ideal evocation, which ideally tends towards cultural harmony, but does so in an abstract way so much so that it cannot be converted into real practices or social action. The question then arises whether the intercultural model is a phantom model as it is not yet mature, not sufficiently elaborated from a theoretical point of view and consolidated by practice or whether it is instead a constitutive limit of the model itself, which makes it in itself inapplicable by limiting it only to the evocation of an ideal direction. The question is open, and there is no unequivocal answer (Tarozzi, 2016, pp. 30-31, our translation).

This contribution imagines itself to be in dialogue with the aforementioned question and attempts to answer it by looking, above all, at the possible origins of the European intercultural model while reflecting on its potential constitutive limits. It does that by focusing on the European School System, a specific education system born in 1953 in Luxembourg to meet the educational needs of children of EU officials. In particular, the paper will attempt to answer the following questions: how has diversity been addressed in the context of the European School System during its early years of existence? Which idea of diversity has been vehiculated and how might it have impacted the development of the European Space of Education (Lawn & Grek, 2012), if it had an impact on it at all? A plural methodological historical analysis (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000) will be conducted to reconstruct the story of the early years of the ESs; different sources and documents

will be mentioned; we will be specifically referring to the following: the 1957 Statute of the European Schools; the discourses made by Albert Van Houtte at the Pax Christi International Congress in 1960 and at the Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO held in Chicago from 23 to 26 October 1963; parts of the European Schools' Harmonized Timetables and Programmes (1957; 1963).

2. General History of the European Schools and Literature Review

The European Schools constitute a peculiar school system whose origin dates back to 1953 when what would then become the first European School was established in Luxembourg after the founding of the ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community – to meet the educational needs of the children of ECSC workers (European Schools Website³; Van Lingen, 2012). The first school came into being for practical reasons: the children of ECSC workers did not know the languages spoken in Luxembourg, their parents were supposed to return home after some years of service abroad, and so their children did not have to lose contact with their national education system. A thorough account of the origins and the further developments of the European Schools has been given by Harry Van Lingen (2012). Thanks to the analysis of original documents of that time such as the Draft for a European School by Marcel Decombis (1953) and the Annex Preliminary Concept for a European School by Albert Van Houtte (1953), together with some collected interviews, Van Lingen points out the practical reasons that were decisive for making the first school come into being: as a matter of fact, Luxembourg didn't have any international schools and, although French, German, and part of the Belgian pupils could have been arranged into national Luxembourg schools where French and German were taught, the same possibility would not have fitted for Ital-

³ Available here: <https://www.eursc.eu/en/European-Schools/background> [27/01/2024].

ians, Dutch and Flemish students. Different solutions were considered: bringing «the pupils together in one building with teachers from each of the six countries» (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 31) was deemed the best solution. However, Van Lingen underlines two additional problems and circumstances: the first is the fact that the ECSC guaranteed financial support and consequently the practical and organizational matters were left to the newly born parents' association created with «the wish to arrive at the foundation of a school, partly based on a number of practices in the Luxembourg model such as bilingual tuition» (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 32); the second one is the fact that a private school was not allowed by Luxembourg law and so a special law had to be introduced to allow the existence of the school as «a private entity in the shape of an association without pursuit of profit» (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 33). As a result of it,

at Easter 1953 nursery class began. On October 4, under primitive conditions, 16 German, 11 Belgian, 26 French, 43 Italian, 13 Dutch and 5 teachers started their first day in primary school in 4 language sections - French, German, Dutch and Italian⁴ (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 32).

The following year some students reached the age to attend secondary school and so the request was made to add the secondary cycle as well. However, the financial expense that this required was not conceivable under the initial conditions and therefore greater support was requested from the ECSC and the Member States; this contributed to the opening of the secondary school in 1954 and, above all, to the start of the procedures that would ultimately lead to the signing of the Statute of the European School in 1957, recognizing the latter as an intergovernmental public school controlled jointly by the Member States (Van Lingen, 2012) and to the establishing of the *Baccalauréat européen*, the European Baccalauréate. Scholars such as Swan (1996) and Van Lingen (2012) point

⁴ Van Lingen explains that the school was also open to children of parents not working for the ECSC and, in his view, this could explain the high number of Italians (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 32).

out the historical legal and cultural significance of the fact that the first European School was recognized as an intergovernmental institution in a time when the European project was truly in its infancy.

With the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the establishment of the European Economic Community and the Euratom in Brussels, the possibility of replicating the Luxembourg experiment to deal with the educational challenges faced by foreign civil servants' children started to be discussed taking into account the reservations expressed by some of the Member States⁵. In the end, despite some doubts, it was opted for the creation of a second European School which was inaugurated in Brussels in 1958, The European School Brussels I. Due to new research centres established by Euratom in the other Member States, and then with the expansion of the European Community before and the European Union after, new European Schools continued to be created⁶: in Mol-Geel, Belgium, in 1960; in Varese, Italy, in 1960; in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1962; in Bergen, The Netherlands, in 1963; the European School Brussels II in Brussels in 1974; in Munich in 1977; in Culham, in United Kingdom near Oxford, in 1978⁷; 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.

Today there are 13 European Schools throughout the EU and 23 Accredited European Schools⁸; the former are reserved for the

⁵ In his work Van Lingen highlights the doubts of the Netherlands and Italy: the former were sceptical about the costs that creating a new European school would have involved, the latter instead hypothesized an active role of the Italian Cultural Institute in Brussels in the education of Italian children (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 46).

⁶ With regards to the creation of new European Schools, Van Lingen distinguishes three different periods: the "First Wave and Other Initiatives" till 1964 (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 47); the "Lean Years" from 1964 to 1990 (pp. 48-49); the "1990s and Beyond" (pp. 50-52).

⁷ Due to Brexit, the European School in Culham was closed in August 2017 (ESs Website).

⁸ As explained in the ESs Website, following the 2005 Recommendation by the European Parliament, the ESs curriculum has been opened up to national

children of EU officials, although other students may attend the schools if places are available, but this is quite uncommon and controversial.

As for the structure of the schools, each European Schools was and is still composed by:

- a Nursery School nowadays called Early Education (ESs Website);
- a five-year Primary School;
- a seven-year Secondary cycle ending with the European Baccalaureate; the Secondary cycle consists – since its beginnings – of three parts: the Observation cycle, a *tronc commun* made of the first three years. According to literature, the establishment of this *tronc commun* could be considered quite innovative at that time, in 1957 (Swan, 1984; Van Lingen, 2012); two more years of Pre-orientation Cycle for pupils aged 14 and 15; the final two years of Orientation cycle.

Even though they underwent periods of reform – in particular in 1971, in 1990 and in 2009 – these Schools have been characterized by a multilingual environment since their establishment; the schools language policy aimed at promoting cooperation and exchange is definitely a distinctive trademark since their origins. There are indeed various language sections depending on the children's mother tongue; from Secondary School vehicular languages are used in the teaching of subjects such as History, Geography and Social Sciences, as well as in the communal teaching of European Hours; the latter starts from the 3rd year of Primary school with the aim to foster communications within the various language groups through the means of “incidental learning” (Swan, 1984, p.

schools: indeed, «Accredited European Schools are schools which offer a European education that meets the pedagogical requirements laid down for the European Schools but within the framework of the national school networks of the Member States. Accredited European Schools are thus outside the legal, administrative and financial framework to which the European Schools are compulsorily subject» (ESs Website, <https://www.eursec.eu/en/Accredited-European-Schools/About> [25/01/2024]).

110) through activities such as arts and crafts, singing, painting, etc. All of the above actions apparently appeared to make true the following words by Marcel Decombis, Head of the European School in Luxembourg, between 1953 and 1960:

Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe (Decombis, ESs Website⁹).

The civic aim to educate young adults capable of recognizing a common sense of belonging apparently going beyond a purely national dimension seems to be quite present since the beginning. However, research has problematized and questioned this feature, in particular with regards to the development of a shared identity (Finaldi-Baratieri, 2000; Savvides, 2006a, 2006b; Savvides & Faas, 2016). An examination of previous literature focused on the history and general functioning and curriculum of the ESs, their language policy and ability to foster a sense of European identity in its students has been conducted to give a brief overview of the state of the art. Previous research has shown the centrality of language learning and the use of vehicular languages for subjects such as History, Geography and European Hours. However, many critical points have been stressed. For instance, in terms of pedagogical views, Swan (1984) pointed out the lack of «aims envisaged for education as residing in the individual pupil rather than in the politic, or based on a rounded concept of the pupil as a person» (p. 20). He also mentioned the not homogeneous pedagogical approach within the different language sections together with other “organizational” matters such as the lack of adequate textbooks. Teachers’ and students’ perspectives, the selectivity of the Schools, the

⁹ Available here: <https://www.eursec.eu/en/European-Schools/principles> [12/02/2024].

isolated positions of the Schools, the not always sufficient preparation of the teachers and the lack of properly developed pupil support services are underlined, too (Swan, 1996, p. 120). Finaldi-Baratieri's work (2000) reveals a certain problematic nature and a particular emphasis on the preservation of national traditions and languages and a sense of the indefiniteness of what it means to be European; a sense of identity also complicated by the elitist character of these schools, mainly attended by students homogeneously socially despite their cultural differences (Finaldi-Baratieri, 2000) – differences that usually did not include ethnic minorities (p. 32). The focus on “social selection” is present also in the work carried out by Leaton Gray et al. (2015, p. 15) where the current curriculum and its shift from a content-based approach to a competence-based one following the EU policy on Key competencies (2006; 2018) are described. Leaton Gray et al. also reflect on the role of languages in European Schools and highlight «the lack of a European Schools' overarching language policy document» (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto, 2015, p. 52) which sets clear goals and standards of language and content learning in all classrooms. According to Leaton Gray et al., this lack is also a lack of supporting educators in understanding the peculiarities of their work in a bilingual educational context (Leaton Gray et al., 2015, p. 52). Furthermore, the definition of terms such as culture, multilingual and multicultural – often used in the ESs context – is also missing (Leaton Gray et al., 2015, p. 55), as it is missing an explicit definition of the desired intercultural competencies (Leaton Gray et al., 2015, p. 58). We believe that the last critical point, just mentioned here, is particularly relevant: Leaton Gray et al. point out, in a certain sense, the lack of reflection on critical pedagogy and intercultural approach: then, how could these Schools be considered foundational of the latter at a European level? First of all, we believe that even though these Schools lack today explicit references to the intercultural dimension codified in an “official manner”, they have contributed to ensuring that in general, at a European level, greater attention was paid to some practices now considered intercultural such as the teaching of foreign languages and the curiosity and

openness towards other cultures: we will try to better demonstrate this in the next section, by referring to specific historical documents. Before moving on, though, it seems relevant to make one final consideration: even if it is difficult to quantify the impact of these Schools on the more general European level and even if studies such as that of Finaldi-Baratieri (2000) believe that it was marginal due to the elitist nature of these Schools, we believe that it is significant that they were mentioned in the Janne Report – the first report that hypothesizes a common educational policy at European level (Grek & Lawn, 2012) – where they were considered to be a «prototype with regard to the conferring of the European baccalaureat and the use of several languages in teaching» (Janne, 1973, p. 10). We believe it can be an example of the influence of flows and networks and of the soft power that contributed to the Europeanisation of the education space (Grek & Lawn, 2012), a process also and above all achieved as a «cultural strategy of creating a common identity, fabricated through cultural symbols and exchange» (Grek & Lawn, 2009, p. 32).

3. A Curriculum Based on Language Teaching and (culturally) knowing the Other

In order to prove our point, we will now move to the sources and focus on their analysis. The first document to be analysed is The Statute¹⁰ of the European School signed at Luxembourg on 12 April 1957. Signed as an agreement between the Kingdom of Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Italian Republic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this is the legal act establishing the official foundation of the European School at the headquarters of the European Coal and Steel Community

¹⁰ We will refer to the version published in 1963 in the volume n. 443 of the United Nations Treaty Series (UNTS) and registered there by Luxembourg in 1962; in this type of publication, it is possible to find the Treaties and international agreements registered or filed and recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations.

(ECSC). As already noticed, this European School was not born completely unexpectedly but represented the synthesis and formalization of an experiment undertaken in the previous four years, since 1953. As explained in the preambles, in fact, account is taken of the fact that in the ECSC headquarter, there were children of the employees from the different member states to whom it was necessary to provide an education in their mother tongue (Statute, 1957, p. 224). A nursery school had already been created on the initiative of the Association for the Educational and Family Welfare of the employees of the European Coal and Steel Community, and, over the years, this experiment had expanded – also in terms of infrastructure provided – up to and including secondary school. Furthermore, account is taken of the

complete success of this experiment in providing a common education to children of different nationalities, on the basis of a curriculum reflecting as broadly as possible the common features of the national educational traditions and the different cultures which jointly make up European civilization (Statute, 1957, p. 225).

It is also underlined that «it is in the cultural interest of the participating States to continue and consolidate an undertaking which is in keeping with the spirit of co-operation by which they are guided» (Statute, 1957, p. 225). Starting from the preambles, the idea of a «common education for children of different nationalities» and the organization of a curriculum similar as much as possible to the national ones of origin are immediately mentioned. From the sources collected, we have understood that these curriculum instructions were then concretized in the Harmonized Timetables and Programs published in 1957 and, in subsequent versions, in 1963, in 1972, in 1977. Moreover, while the different national origins and background are underlined, reference is also made to the various cultures that together constitute a European civilization (Statute, 1957, p. 225). Moving forward to Article 4, we observe that the principles to which teaching in the School must adhere; they are the following:

The teaching provided at the School shall conform to the following principles:

(1) The fundamental education, as determined by the Executive Board, shall be provided in the official languages of the Contracting Parties;

(2) Teaching in all the language sections shall be based on uniform curricula and time-tables;

(3) In order to promote the unity of the School, as well as understanding and cultural interchange between pupils in the various language sections, classes at the same level shall be taught together in certain subjects;

(4) To this end, a special effort shall be made to give the pupils a thorough knowledge of modern languages;

(5) In the process of teaching and education, personal beliefs and convictions shall be respected (Statute, 1957, p. 226).

In addition to the fact that the school was organized into linguistic sections and the proposed curriculum was uniform (or at least tried to be so), what, in our view, seems relevant to be underlined in this document is the reference to the promotion of a cohesive school dimension which took shape through the understanding and cultural exchange between students in the various linguistic sections, made possible thanks to the efforts to give students a complete knowledge of modern languages. The value of linguistic knowledge – not only of one's national language but also of foreign languages to understand one another and communicate with others – can also be found in the Harmonized Timetables and Programmes (1957; 1963; 1972; 1977). Already in the first version of the Harmonized Timetables and Programmes the teaching of the second language – the *Langues Vivantes* – was advised to be in all classes «*educatif, pratique et culturels*»¹¹ (HTP, 1957, p. 21). In particular, the focus on the practical aspects of the language and the linguistic elements would have been provided during the first three years, the common trunk, while in the following years, much attention would have been given to the cultural teaching with notions

¹¹ educational, practical and cultural.

on the way of living of the foreign country and people. Methodological considerations and reflections are also given: speaking of methods, it is said that the natural and direct one should be favoured (HTP, 1957, p. 62); as for the methodological guidelines, it is advised that

at the first level, teaching must be oral, intuitive and active. The teacher must, therefore, take care of her language, speak clearly and use very simple constructions. The program must follow the child's experience and focus directly on accessible resources in the environment (HTP, 1957, p. 63, our translation).

The following teaching techniques as effective in promoting language learning and teaching in Primary school are indicated:

Quelques techniques pouvant être utilisées: a) [c]onférences faites par un enfant; (un élève d'une classe à ses condisciples – un élève d'une classe française aux élèves d'une classe allemande, etc.); b) théâtre de marionnettes (dialogues composés par les enfants); c) théâtre d'enfants; d) disque, radio-scolaire, sonofil; e) clubs d'enfants (on y parle alternativement l'une, puis l'autre langue); f) bibliothèques de classe - clubs de lecture; g) imprimerie scolaire: le journal de l'école (articles en différentes langues); h) échanges et correspondance interscolaire (entre différentes classes de l'école et une école étrangère)¹² (HTP, 1957, p. 64).

The predominance, at least in the suggestions, of “active” techniques, which put the child at the centre, can be found; furthermore, practices such as interschool correspondence and shared reading seem to represent an approach that recalls the efforts to

¹² Some techniques that can be used: a) lectures given by a child; (a student in a class to his fellow students – a student in a French class to students in a German class, etc.); b) puppet theater (dialogues composed by children); c) children's theater; d) disc, school radio, sonofil; e) children's clubs (one language is spoken alternately, then the other); f) classroom libraries - reading clubs; g) school printing press: the school newspaper (articles in different languages); h) inter-school exchanges and correspondence (between different classes of the school and a foreign school).

educate for international understanding and peace through linguistic educational practices¹³, as described by Schneuwly et al. (2021). With regard to the latter point – the relationship between linguistic teaching practices and the attempt to promote peace education and mutual comprehension – we believe it is relevant to point out how this is especially present in reference to the teaching of German language. As it can be seen in the *Harmonized Timetables and Programmes* (1963), it is indeed indicated that at-the-time emerging Europe would have included many states different in their way of living, traditions, and cultural, social and political perspectives. It was then highlighted how, in the past, these countries had fought each other too often due to propaganda dictated by ignorance, mutual lack of knowledge, or due to unfounded prejudices. However, it was argued that «ignorance and misunderstandings almost always derive from not understanding each other, from not speaking the other’s language» (HTP, 1963, p. 24). For this reason, one of the main tasks of the European Schools was

therefore to make their students master German, one of the main European languages. Through knowledge of this language, the student will be put in contact with their classmates from another nation, to respect them and to see them as companions and, why not, as friends. In this way, they will acquire practical knowledge of the social and political problems of neighbouring peoples and their development; students will also be able to vigorously defend the idea of a united Europe against all prejudices, half-truths and political slander (HTP, 1963, pp. 24-25, our translation).

Also significant in this regard is Albert Van Houtte’s¹⁴ speech for the International Pax Christi Congress (Geneve, 1960) during which he said that these schools were

¹³ These practices can be reconsidered within the scope of what has been defined as educational internationalism. For further information see also Andreasen & Ydesen, 2015; Boss & Brylinski, 2020; Hofstetter & Schneuwly, 2020.

¹⁴ He was the first “Registrar of the European Court of Justice, the first President of the Parents’ Association of the European School Luxembourg and

a new manifestation of cultural relations between European countries since each of them contributes its national character and, by common experience, benefits from the cultural values of the others (Van Houtte, 1960, p. 5).

In the present work, we do not intend to go into too much detail about this speech, but keeping it in mind and also mention those given by Van Houtte on the occasion of the *Ninth National Conference U.S. National Commission for UNESCO* held in Chicago from 23 to 26 October 1963 we remember that, on this last occasion, the European Schools were represented as an experiment in Intercultural education (Proceeding, 1963, p. 55) carried out through the collaboration of various governments; moreover, in the *Note on the Creation of a Primary and Secondary International School in Washington D.C.* – again pronounced in Chicago (1963) – Van Houtte underlines how educational discourse was connected to the development paradigm «in which the example and experience of the West play a leading part» (Van Houtte, 1963, p. 2).

4. Conclusion

What emerges from the analysis conducted so far? In our opinion, we can say that in the European Schools it is possible to trace, since their first years, some elements which today can be traced back to the intercultural perspective even if they are not so explicitly codified; we are referring, for example, to the teaching of other cultures and languages aimed at promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. As a matter of fact, we have shown how language teaching can be inserted within a discourse of promoting peace expressed through openness towards and understanding the other, an Otherness who, however, almost always seemed to be European and/or Western as seen in the discourses by Van

the first Representative of the Board of Governors of the European School (1954-1964)” (Van Lingen, 2012, p. 19).

Houtte. Taking this last element into account, a first limitation of this discussion seems to emerge here. Furthermore, although – as we have already said – it is not easy to be able to quantify the impact of the European Schools on the European Education Area, it seems important to us to reiterate what was highlighted by Grek and Lawn, that is, the fact that the process of Europeanisation in the educational field was also achieved through a cultural strategy that placed at the centre the openness towards different cultures, cultures of which the European identity would be composed (2009); so the emphasis on cultural diversity, reread in the light of the aim of promoting a composite but at the same time “unique” European identity, leads us to suppose that, in a certain sense, the intercultural perspective may have been affected by this intertwining and, therefore, the hypothesis that this model has constitutive limits does not seem too far-fetched to us. While on the one hand the need to continue working on its practical applications remains true and felt, perhaps also focusing specifically on teacher training, on the other hand we are convinced that further actions of deconstruction and reflection are equally necessary.

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