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Efficacy of learning has to prevail over efficiency of teaching

The intergovernmental co-operation in the field of education – the European Union having no legal or institutionalised competence in education – in the European Schools has led to achievements which are invaluable to the parents of the children enrolled in the European Schools: the European Baccalaureate allowing its holders admission to any university in the member states and the recognition in all member states of the years of study completed (table of equivalence).

The rightful success of the education in the European Schools is on the formal level due to the direct involvement of all ministries of education of the Union. The Boards of Inspectors develop the common curriculum of the schools and devise the common programmes for all subjects. The quality of the education provided by the European Schools is their common responsibility. The teachers' qualifications are recognised in their member state of origin for the subject taught and the level taught.

On the educational level, the success is due to the fact that the teachers are native speakers of the language in which they teach. Through their own language they teach the pupils not only a high standard curriculum but implicitly their culture. The access to tuition in and of the mother tongue for children of all European languages is the core characteristic of the European Schools system. This comes to its full effect because pupils are obliged to take a number of subjects in languages other than their main language. As a consequence, pupils acquire not only a thorough knowledge of their own language and culture but also a broad awareness of the cultural diversity of the European Union.

Next to these key factors, a number of other elements have proven to be of importance for the inclusive education provided by the European Schools and the accessibility of the curriculum for the great majority of its pupils: classes with a pedagogically justified pupil-teacher ratio; provisions for pupils with Special Needs, provision of Learning Support and provision of Language Support. The European Baccalaureate as every modern exam for university entrance is based on the continuous assessment of a pupil's achievements and the results - written and oral - of the formal exam itself. Pupils with Special Needs are not excluded from the exam due to the availability of special provisions.

The founding of the European Schools system dates back fifty years, yet an element which has been an integral part of the system right from the start has proven indispensable for the success of education: parents are recognised as partners in education as individuals and on all formal levels up to the Board of Governors. As users and contributors they rightly have access to all information and, in the future, should be given full voting right.

Parents agree with the European Parliament and the member states of the European Union that access to the European Schools and the availability of the European Baccalaureate should continue not to be restricted to children of staff of the European institutions. Consequently, new

ways of financing the schools in connection with the opening up of the system have to be found maintaining the achievements described above and at the same time increasing transparency and the democratic nature of the system. Expanding on the use of articles 28 and 29 (current main contributors are the Commission of the European Communities, the European Patent Office and Eurocontrol) of the Convention defining Statute of the European Schools and an economically sound policy for school fees definitely are core elements of a renewed financing policy. This would pave the way to initiatives within the individual member states both in the public and private sector. One of the basic principles of the European Union, though, has not yet been given the attention it deserves: the principle of subsidiarity. The European Union has no official competence in education, yet it has such a competence – through the Directorate General for Education and Culture - in promoting European co-operation in education. Funding of this "European Value Added" - education in and of the mother tongue, contribution to European Union diversity, increased mobility - would enable new opportunities for locations where children of staff of the European institutions are very low in numbers or altogether absent.

May 2006



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