
SECONDARY EDUCATION REFORM

CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN WESTERN EUROPE

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Introduction

Today, secondary education¹ is on the political agenda of several governments in Western Europe. Situated between education for all and an increasingly open system of higher education, *secondary education and training*² is in the throes of an identity crisis.

Context

The economic downturn triggered by the 'oil crises' of the 1970s had widespread social repercussions and strongly affected education and training policies, particularly with regard to secondary education in Europe. The surge in oil prices and the subsequent inflationary spiral launched a restructuring of the capitalist economy,

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which turned out to be lasting and whose impact is far from over (Crozier, 1995, p. 22; Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 286).

However, it was in particular with the decline in growth rates, widespread and accelerating automation and the fresh momentum of capitalist restructuring that unemployment began to rise, having been quite restricted in the immediately preceding decades, and to hit the young hardest, especially women. Gradually, what appeared to be a short-term phenomenon—frictional unemployment or even Keynesian and conjunctural unemployment (Lesourne, 1996)—began to look like a structural social phenomenon.

The persistence of unemployment, which particularly affected young people just entering the job market, had a major impact on secondary education in Western Europe in terms of both supply and demand in the ensuing twenty years, even though the causes were often more or less obscured in political debate. Very frequently, youth unemployment problems were transformed by means of reform measures into educational problems (Tanguy, 1995; Ginsburg & Cooper, 1991).

In the 1990s, the market economy was expanding world-wide almost as an economic inevitability, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the Soviet empire. The market was becoming globalized and developing a leading-edge business sector, one which broadly incorporated the new information and communication technologies and was highly competitive, dominated by the major world industries. At the production level, technological substitution maintained a strong pace, industrial processes were streamlined to cut production costs, and unemployment levels not only became a permanent feature but now also affected even the most highly educated. Furthermore, graduate underemployment grew in step with unemployment and, what with higher education being gradually turned into mass education, this trend was bound to accelerate (Halls, 1994).

For young people belonging to the age group in question, it was becoming increasingly difficult to envisage getting their first job and to imagine how long that job would last, to what extent it would correspond to their specialized training, the nature of the employment contract, how often they might have to change jobs or occupations during their working lives, and the amount and kind of knowledge and skills updating they would have to have during their careers. They even began to wonder if it still made sense to speak of a 'career' in the traditional sense of expecting stability, security, upward progress and continuity. 'What began was an era of change, as a social category of personal experience and social organization' (Touraine, 1997, p. 23).

A new economic mandate

The underlying rhetoric of education policies underwent change in the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s. What has developed since then over the past few years is a significant technical and political approach which, in the light of intense economic restructuring, holds that 'mass production and the Taylorian organization of work associated with it are becoming increasingly dysfunctional owing to their rigidity

and lack of adaptability' (Kovács, 1991, p. 116). The capitalist economy is thus supposedly evolving towards post-Taylorian and flexible systems of production.

This technical-economic approach also predicts that the discontinuous and gradual movement from a Taylorian towards a post-Taylorian production model will be associated with broader and more complex tasks at work, teamwork, independent control of task execution by work teams, linkage of the tasks of design/control and execution, autonomy and greater accountability of work teams, with more reliance on broader technical, theoretical and empirical skills, and the ability of every individual to adapt to constant change.

This dominant approach is particularly optimistic about the impact of capitalist economic restructuring, production patterns and work organization. It is thus postulated that the 'new productive system' is based on the intensive use of knowledge and is a potential way of generating greater human achievement through work, which today calls for a new 'collective intelligence' (Brown & Lauder, 1995).

This new context obviously has implications for employment. The major trends are as follows: (a) a rise in unemployment, which has exceeded 20% of the working population in several developing countries; (b) extensive movement of the workforce into the tertiary sector and a decline in industrial employment; (c) increased employment in more highly skilled jobs and a rise in recruitment of highly qualified professionals; (d) the projection of a great shadow of doubt over employment and career prospects regarding the types of occupations to be exercised during one's working life, the duration and content of each professional activity, and the type of employment contract; (e) increasingly precarious contractual ties, greater flexibility in career management, greater mobility within and between industries; and (f) the gradual development of self-employment and distance work.

Perhaps the most obvious of these trends, and the one with the most powerful social impact, is the growing dualization of the labour market. On the one hand, there are the active elites or the symbolic analysts, the self-programmable and highly productive (Reich, 1991; Castells, 1998); on the other hand, there is non-specific work and an ever-expendable mass of workers who, increasingly insecure, circulate among the available jobs. School education, far from having nothing to do with it, is actually central to this great rift.

If to the changes in production we add those arising from the new effects of the accumulation, transmission and use of information and the general impact of the new information and communication technologies, 'what is most important is the general recognition that knowledge constitutes the most important variable in explaining the new forms of social and economic organization' (Tedesco, 1997). As a producer and distributor of knowledge and credentials, the education system acquires a new and 'historically unprecedented' centrality (*ibid.*).

In response to the restructuring under way, an approach is being formulated with emphasis on the role of education and training in producing a corpus of general and vocational knowledge and skills which, traditionally, have not been developed by the educational models providing preparatory training for productive work. Such models were usually too concerned with developing technical qualifications and

focused on job specialization. We call this the 'new social mandate', of a highly economic complexion, relating to the skills required by workers entering the job market and to the corresponding system of education and training.

Before continuing our analysis, we will look at what constitutes secondary education and training in Western Europe.

Reference models

As we know, Western Europe presents a certain degree of diversity in its national education systems, depending on the local social infrastructures and political options of the various countries. Three main models of secondary education and training cohabit in Europe: academic, dual and non-formal. These models are not mutually exclusive. In some cases one of them predominates; in others two may exist side by side; and in still others, all three may cohabit within the public and private sectors of one and the same national education system.

The *academic model* of secondary education refers to institutions whose programme is usually divided into three branches: general/academic, technical and vocational. In this model the curriculum is exclusively, or almost so, based on the location of the school. The Ministry of Education is responsible for this sector, although there has been a recent trend towards sharing this responsibility with other government divisions and social actors.

The *dual* or '*alternate training*' (sandwich courses) *model* involves the provision of initial vocational training, with students alternating between an education-training centre and the business world. The responsibility is shared three ways—by workers, businesses and government. The courses lead to certificates recognized by the latter two parties.

The *non-formal model* encompasses a range of training and employment-training programmes in which both the State and industry have a hand, with courses lasting more than one year and shorter courses. This sector tries to offer an alternative to academic studies and unemployment and is targeted at young people who have already left the school system and who wish to learn a specific skill enabling them to enter the job market. This model is not to be confused with non-formal education, since it refers to organized and systematic training expressly intended to provide specific skills and planned as such, and usually targeted at particular population groups.

Underlying these different models are, *inter alia*, different ways of perceiving the social function of secondary education and training.

Table 1 presents the three models, classified according to the principal goal, the special 'locus' in which the training takes place, the responsibility for and control of what training is on offer, and the type of qualification conferred. To an ever-increasing extent, almost all countries in Western Europe use the three forms of education and training as a way of broadening their educational services and meeting a massive and socially very mixed demand. Depending on the national context, however, either an 'educational' or a 'vocational' culture prevails.

TABLE 1. Comparison between principal models of secondary education and training (16- to 19-year-olds)

Model	Prime training 'locus'	Initiative/supervision	Certification	Principal goal of courses
Academic	Full-time education	Supervised by the Ministry of Education	Academic and sometimes vocational certification	Educational and 'transferable' ^a
Dual	Initial vocational training, alternating between school and industry	Joint guidance by Ministry of Education and industry	Academic and vocational certification	Occupational ^b and final year of general secondary studies
Non-formal	Short vocational training in school and industry for access to employment	Supervision of tripartite organizations and industry	Usually no certification (or an exclusively vocational certificate specific to each agency)	Occupational ^b and final year of general secondary studies

a = Transferable = the education and training methods included here are designed to prepare students to continue their education and training at the post-secondary and higher level.

b = Occupational = when the principal goal is training for immediate employment.

Reform trends in the 1990s

Initial trends in the reforms affecting secondary education and training in Western Europe are the merging of previously separate training courses and branches, the elaboration of new core curricula offered mainly in the first years of the courses, and de-specialization or reduction in the number of special subjects taught in technical and vocational branches (Santos, 1989; Garcia Garrido, Pedró & Velloso, 1992; Leclercq & Rault, 1992; Pedró, 1992, 1995; Papadopoulos, 1994; Williams, 1994; Azevedo, 1998).

Curriculum integration is the principal driving force behind this general trend. The trend takes various forms and is present to varying degrees, depending on each country's social context and educational history. While in some cases integration aims at establishing a single type of secondary school, as in Sweden, in most cases the result is a 'sub-structural convergence' model (Kämäräinen, 1995) where, in fact, the various branches and the different types of education and training institutions coexist and only parts of the curriculum are integrated. This process encompasses a wide variety of possibilities—ranging from the duration of the courses, via the organization of the curricula into identical components for all branches, to the possibility of attending more than one kind of school to complete a single programme of secondary education.

De-specialization is characteristic of the curriculum of initial technical and vocational education and training. Table 2 presents some of these situations.³

TABLE 2. De-specialization in technical and vocational education in Europe^a

Country (main year of the reform)	No. of special subjects before the most recent reforms	No. of new areas of training and specialization
Denmark, 1990	(~) 300	85 (basic courses, with gradual specialization)
Finland, 1991-99	(~) 600 (early 1980s)	26 (basic courses, with gradual specialization in up to 157 specific fields)
France, 1992	7 (general education) 16 (technological education)	3 (general education) 4 (technological education) ^b
Italy, 1992	140	18 courses
Norway, 1994	109	13 courses (with gradual specialization)
Sweden, 1991	(~) 500	16 basic courses
Portugal, 1993	33 courses	11 courses ^c

a = Spain, Netherlands and Switzerland have used other approaches to introduce integration. In Spain, the number of special subjects in the new vocational training system has increased.

b = The vocational baccalaureate (1985) was organized into 32 areas of specialization in 1993.

c = Vocational training schools were introduced in 1989.

There are two main types of integration and specialization strategies:

1. The first strives to achieve structural integration between the forms and institutions of general education and of technical and vocational training, providing young people between the ages of 16 and 18 or 19 years with a curriculum that is as fully unified as possible, combining theory and practice, academic education and vocational training. The strategy also fits in with a policy to establish parity between the more vocationally oriented training programmes and the more distinctly general and academic educational programmes. It should be borne in mind that the unity sought by this type of education policy is far from resulting in the availability of a single curriculum, namely a general and common secondary education curriculum. While increasing emphasis is clearly being placed on the provision of a general and universal core curriculum, each young person is still free to construct their own programme on the basis of the remaining, more optional, curricular choices. Thus, while integration is a clear and undoubtedly growing trend, there is also more freedom of choice and curricular flexibility.

2. The second brings together a broad variety of sub-structural integration measures, leaving aside—at least for the time being—the integration between educational and training establishments, which generally have very different backgrounds. The essence of this strategy is to break down barriers and bring together educational streams previously differentiated and compartmentalized. The goals of the strategy are, in general, to make courses more versatile, to permit movement between the various branches and to ensure their legal parity.

In addition to these rather widespread trends in the recent history of secondary education and training, there are others that are concomitant and shared by several Western European countries:

1. The persistent long-term trend towards longer schooling, which consists of increasing the length of the unified study cycles and the consequent prolongation of the basic cycle, which is common and compulsory, as in the cases of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, including raising the age at which students must choose between various training branches.
2. The creation of new systems for moving freely between the various educational and training branches, both general and vocational, by establishing passageways between the courses. This has been accomplished with varying degrees of difficulty during the transition phase. Countries introducing this system include Spain and France—albeit very rigidly—and Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands and Finland, the latter country being the most flexible.
3. The creation of new core programmes, similar for all branches of secondary education and training, generally lasting one or two years, after which specialization in a particular branch may be chosen, with the degree of specialization varying according to the country. This reformist path was particularly evident in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.
4. The transformation of the secondary education and training curriculum into a model of several components, the first of which is the whole set of general subjects taken by all students, followed by a specific selected course of study, an optional individual course and, in some cases, practical training in a company, which has to be arranged by each school. In Finland, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland students must also complete an individual project or attend a workshop.
5. The actors involved, and employers in particular, are in several countries beginning to play a more direct role in drawing up the secondary education and training curriculum—nationally, regionally and locally. These partners are increasingly prominent in Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain. This trend is frequently associated with the decentralized administration of these segments of education and training and a greater autonomy for schools and training establishments. This is the case, to varying degrees, in all the countries mentioned above.
6. Expansion of the options available to students after they complete their compulsory education through the establishment of a vast range of training programmes and courses and the adoption and forging of links between the academic, dual

and non-formal models, with a view to serving the largest possible number of young people in the corresponding age groups. Most countries are combining the merging of education and training modalities with greater internal diversity of options and courses.

7. Some of the reforms discussed in this paper have introduced into the curriculum compulsory periods of work experience of varying lengths. These are designed for students seeking a technical and vocational diploma. This movement is particularly strong in Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Spain and Sweden.
8. Lastly, several countries have emphasized in their reform policy the goal of introducing greater flexibility in secondary education and training. Flexibility is related to a number of aspects: the possibility of combining subjects from different types of programmes and even schools—Finland being the extreme example; the permeability already mentioned between branches and courses; the need to respond to the diversity of interests and skills of young people and to their needs for guidance—as demonstrated in the cases of France, Norway and Switzerland; the need to bring certain third-cycle and optional course components more into line with the local needs of the productive sector—as in Norway; enabling schools to organize separate courses based on a specific set of criteria—as in the case of France.

A pressure cooker

The crisis in secondary education and training in Europe reflects the—possibly insurmountable—tensions and conflicts breaking out around and within it. Some of these tensions are notable for their contemporary relevance and their links to recent reform trends in secondary education and training.

1. The tension between a *selective function* and a *social function*, relating to the promotion of human development for all young people. From a diachronic perspective, and taking an idea of Martin Trow (1978), the predominant trend in European public education for youth in the 16- to 19-year-old group is the 'lycée matrix' or education traditionally designed for an elite and serving as an introduction to higher education.

As this age group failed to gain access to the job market and the demand for secondary education increased, bipolarization began to grow: on the one hand, education and training viewed as preparation for higher education—university or otherwise; on the other, a more multi-dimensional view of education and training in which preparation for further studies coexists with other relevant social functions and in which secondary education and training finally acquire greater autonomy, with their own educational goals.

This bipolarization may also be analysed as a tension between mass secondary education—a second stage in universal and compulsory education, which brings the secondary level increasingly closer to the organizational goals and configurations of basic education—and a popular but strongly hierarchical higher-education system

which leads to the top-down organization of the secondary level, a regressive structure determined by the goals of stratification and selection of young people in relation to access to the high-level degree programmes.

Nevertheless, this level of education and training has perceptibly developed more as a container expanding in a linear fashion to accommodate the growing demand than as an array of modalities and branches genuinely and qualitatively oriented towards meeting the pressure of socio-cultural diversity or towards promoting the various facets of human development in each young person.

Between the more explicit mission of the secondary level, which is set forth within a promotional, democratic and pluri-dimensional referent (cf. the legal instruments establishing them), and the more implicit and usually unstated mission, there is an enormous conflict which confuses and disorients policy-makers and the occupational circles involved and which, as a result of being hidden and not open to debate, results in a loss of consistency, quality and relevance in the education and training available.

2. The enormous tension between a selective mission and one seeking to encourage the development of each young person is reflected in other conflicts typical of secondary education and training. Noteworthy among them are the conflict between *preparation for working life* and *preparation for higher education*, and the conflict between academic and technical streams: lycées and technical and vocational schools.

Although not readily apparent, the tension between these different poles is reflected in the debate on the selective mission of secondary education and training. In fact, if education and training were to be organized around students' daily life and the development of multiple skills, within a multidimensional perspective, as preparation for free and responsible citizenship and for the exercise of a great variety of social roles (occupational included), and as a means of encouraging the construction of personal life projects, the 'major' question of whether secondary education and training should prepare young people for working life or for higher education, and whether they should go to lycées, or technical or vocational schools, would become completely subordinate and almost irrelevant.

At this stage of human development, where orientation and the quest for personal identity constitute a central educational question, any type of school and all branches of education and training must serve this essential objective.

The predominance of selectivity is clearly visible in the type of differentiation promoted, on the basis of different types of curricular organization and various systems of examination and access to higher education, which necessarily give rise to different kinds of social demand for the different arrangements.

In the end, preparation for working life may even—where such training is not too specialized and dependent on specific job profiles—prove to be a more relevant educational goal than preparing youth for higher education. In fact, such preparation often just means socializing young people into the hidden curriculum and implicit purposes of adaptation to the established social order.

The 'logic' of secondary education as preparation and secondary education as an end are thus confronted within the selective context of secondary education and

training, which tends to occupy the entire arena of the debate, leaving room for little else. Moreover, these same 'logics' continue to keep education locked into an impersonal and collective socializing function.

3. Tension arises between a *unifying perspective* and a *perspective in which branches and institutions are differentiated*. Furthermore, there is a great variety of traditions and situations regarding the time at which diversification occurs, with models of both early and late diversification, and the kind of integration and unification sought and what is actually achieved.

Secondary education in Western Europe is generally diversified; there are, nonetheless, increasingly insistent and controlled movements to bring the various branches and courses more closely together, thereby reducing diversity. This is true, for example, of the reforms already mentioned that seek to reduce the number of special technical and vocational courses and to increase the general academic education subject range.

Attempts at integration and unification very often achieve little more than better juxtaposition of the various branches and courses, either by nominal grouping or through convergence between the study programmes, without significantly altering the relations between the different branches and types of schools and, above all, between different types of diplomas and the status associated with them (Kämäräinen, 1995).

Furthermore, in several Western European countries, as the integration and unification—both curricular and institutional—of this segment of the education system progress, diversification tends to be transferred to the next higher level, post-secondary and higher education, where new forms of training and diplomas are being introduced.

Integration and unification are looming larger politically, moving into the forefront of the bid to legitimize secondary education reform. This trend rests on three main foundations:

- (a) Politically speaking, more emphasis is being placed on the economic contention that the widespread use of the new information and communication technologies calls for an increasingly skilled workforce. And such is the speed and scope of the changes occurring in production systems, what is being produced, markets and the organization of work that it is essential for initial education and training programmes to move increasingly in the direction of general, multi-purpose training capable of promoting the acquisition of 'general and transferable skills' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1989). Training of this kind, it is asserted, is the only way to prevent knowledge and skills from becoming obsolescent during the course of the unpredictable careers that are taking shape today.
- (b) This economic argument tends to be reflected in educational reforms seeking to reinforce what is known as 'general' (more precisely, academic) education, or the socio-cultural training of young people. This is seen as a means of ensuring the multi-faceted skills and adaptability that future professionals need in order to enter the job market.

- (c) In response to the shrinking of the first-time job market and the attitudes of employers and their specific recruitment strategies,⁴ there is an increasingly strong social demand (notably in Germany, where the 'dual' model prevails) for a greater number of general or academic programmes, not because they are more educationally relevant but, more precisely, because they lead more directly and rapidly to the highest academic credentials, which are indeed the main bulwark against unemployment and the key to social mobility.⁵

This line of reasoning has been given tangible form in what some authors call 'neo-professionalizing reforms'. 'Neo-professionalism' is a recent movement in European education policy which is based on the four lines of emphasis already mentioned, which can be encapsulated as follows: (i) fewer special technical and vocational subjects; (ii) the introduction and strengthening of universal core training curricula and a significant increase in general academic education in all those branches; (iii) the establishment of new systems of equivalent rating and the creation of passageways between courses and branches; (iv) the development of a vast range of courses and forms of secondary education and training, creating a new and extensive education market for young people aged 16 to 18 or 19 years.

Likewise, neo-professionalism is credited with instilling a belief in the potential of curriculum flexibility and in new interchanges between the general and vocational components, either as an antidote to a certain technical determinism, opening up a new understanding of work and its ethical, cultural, political and economic configurations or bringing a more socially diverse group of young people into an education system with a broadened scope.

The neo-professionalist ideology shares with traditional professionalism two important characteristics: (a) it is entirely optimistic as to the capacity of technical education and vocational training and of all training for work and careers to bring about change, while keeping the education system in a functional and occupationalist milieu; (b) it also maintains the dichotomy between general education and technical and vocational education, using various policy mechanisms to diminish the separation between the general and the vocational sectors. In a sense, it might be said that, what with a post-Taylorian production mode and new forms of organization of work, neo-professionalist reforms are in a state of tension; yet, on the other hand, they seem to keep the academic and the occupational arenas apart. In Europe, less social stigma attaches to the kind of secondary education that is related more closely to the world of work. There is a move to create 'clean' secondary education and training, without offices, without professional specialization, greaseless and without mechanical lathes, serving as a prelude to further study and designed to keep young people out of the job market for as long as possible.

The promising ambiguities of the reforms: from neo-professionalism to meta-professionalism

Another concept that is related to the previous ones and strives to resolve some of the dilemmas posed by them is 'meta-professionalism'. Meta-professionalism corre-

sponds to another phase in the evolution of education systems, where the 'student/trainee' is no longer regarded as the central focus of the interplay between the economy and the production of skills, but rather as the subject who wants and is also able to construct his or her social status and other types of relations between those social arenas. The meta-professional perspective questions and casts doubt on neo-professionalism, including its bid to bring vocational education closer to general academic education, using a more realistic framework to analyse the relationship between education and economics.

The history of secondary education and training in Western Europe is a long social process in which innumerable questions and answers have been formulated about the usefulness of this level of education and training, in a constant quest for multiple supporting arguments. Technical-economic functionalism, linked today with the rhetoric of globalization and a new economic mandate, remains as the principal referent of educational reform at this level.

There is, however, in addition to that referent, a significant cultural referent subsumed within a humanistic rationality emphasizing the personal development of young people, more all-round training and the strengthening of 'general' education, and essentially endorsing functional support for secondary education and training.

In this context, the logic is closer to a cultural mandate whereby various social actors (parents, teachers, decision-makers, reformers) attribute to secondary education and training a multi-dimensionality which is an integral part of a humanistic referent, incorporated into European culture, which assigns to education the fundamental goal of human development. This does not make the neo-professional reforms, as educational policies incorporated into this humanistic and necessarily multi-dimensional matrix, any less ambiguous. The 'new general culture' referred to by Jean-Marie Domenach (1989, p. 143)—and the question of who should profit socially from secondary education—is not based on or reflected in a specific curricular 'corpus' depending, for example, on its productive and economic utility, but is justified as an educational platform seeking to promote human development as the ultimate end of development (Delors et al., 1996). It is for this new general culture to achieve the higher goal of bringing out the authenticity in every individual and to educate creators rather than subordinates (da Silva, 1990).

However, to the extent that the renewed recognition of 'general' training is equivalent to a defensive reinforcement of education and training around academic education and a more integrating form of specialization (Young, 1993), the humanistic approach of the neo-professional reforms does not actually mean the establishment of a new culture, but rather a better pseudo-cultural educational accommodation and adjustment, both to a post-Fordist sector of the economy and to the new social demand. The dichotomy between general and vocational education remains. General academic education, with its traditional elitist profile, as the product of a powerful general abstract consensus, apparently without paternity or place, emerges as the best way to carry out the new vocational training and develop the new skills.⁶ This was probably not the intention of the reformers, but these seem to

be the practical directions, as demonstrated moreover by many empirical analyses carried out since the 1970s (e.g. Foster, 1978, 1992).

What these neo-professional reforms confront, and only resolve in a very limited way, is the need to reorganize the actual pattern of educational institutionalization, traditionally linked to academic rationalism and economic rationality, redefining the place of ethical, aesthetic, general, technical and vocational training in the development of physical and personal expression, and the place of preparation for leisure and for business (non-leisure). The reorganization of this pattern of institutionalization will, it seems, have to take place—locally, nationally and globally—within a rationality that calls for the renewal of political thinking in all those respects.

At the fortieth session of the International Conference of Education (1986), it was already being recommended to the Member States of UNESCO that they restructure their secondary education systems, going beyond their traditional academic orientation, and linking, in a new balanced, harmonious and diversified system, the general, technical and vocational education that together formed the education for every individual. As Roland Paulston put it in 1992, we need an ecumenical rather than a separatist spirit. But it is perhaps necessary to go further, that is to adapt education to the diversity of interests, talents and social expectations of youth, restructuring processes, methods and places, ensuring that each and every individual is integrated into the system and making room for their differences, and taking into account individuality to achieve true integration so that each person has, in the school or in the vocational training centre, the possibility of studying and learning, and the opportunity to construct personal life projects.

Notes

1. The term 'secondary education' is used in this text to mean upper-level secondary education or second cycle secondary education, as defined in most European countries.
2. The concept of 'secondary education and training' is a more accurate description of the education available today for 16- to 18-year-olds. It encompasses the entire traditional academic education and initial vocational training, either within the framework of work/study programmes or through academic programmes.
3. In some cases, for example in Spain and Portugal, the range of special subjects remains available in secondary education, except that it is transferred from regular education to the new methods of initial vocational training (e.g. vocational modules in Spain and vocational schools in Portugal).
4. Cf. the studies on Portugal (Azevedo, 1991 and 1999) with regard to the actual recruitment practices of employees.
5. Here it would be appropriate to introduce more detailed reflection on the crisis in credentials taking place in Europe, given the unemployment crisis among higher education graduates, which, in some countries, is already affecting many thousands of young people looking for work.
6. I defend the standpoint that this abstract general consensus arises from the functioning of the world education system and that the world education system tends to homogenize policy-making.

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