

Sites of National Imagery: Imparting the Dominant Culture through Public Education in Europe

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Abstract. This article analyses relations between state, education and the project of nation building through selection and control of knowledge distributed and imparted in the formal educational setting in four countries: Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands. It is argued in this article that the logic of school organisation is underlined by selectivity and moral order of the schools which is embedded in the organisation of time and space, structural rituals, status hierarchies, membership categories and community life. This structural and organisational functioning lead to cultural conformity to the dominant cultural forms, customs and structures in society, if not reproduce them. The ways in which dominant/official discourses, whether formally stated or not, are communicated through education will be the main focus of this study.

JEL Classification Codes: Z00.

Key Words: Education, project of nation building, dominant/official discourses, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands.

1. Introduction

If one wants to be convinced of the fact that European countries are composed of diverse cultures, different self-imageries and perceptions he should look at relations between state, education and the project of nation building in Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands. This fact becomes clear when if one looks at the nation building projects of these countries as a process involving formal educational settings where a set of specially assembled knowledge is imparted. It is argued in this article that structural and organisational functioning of the education system in Britain, France,

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My thanks go to Volkswagen Foundation of Germany for its generous support and to Thijl Sunier, Sabine Matnitz and Beate Collet for sharing their views with me. I also thank Steve Vertovec, Gerd Baumann, Riva Kastoryano and Werner Schiffauer for their comments on an earlier draft. I would also like to record my gratitude to TDV Center for Islamic Studies for its permission to carry out the research.

Germany and the Netherlands lead to cultural conformity to the dominant cultural forms, customs and structures in society, if not reproduce them.

In order to gain a sense of underlying features of dominant national civil cultures, I analyse official discourses about the aims of education, the organisation of curriculum and, selection and control of knowledge transmitted via school textbooks that are used in Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Such an exercise will enable us to understand the trajectory and repertoire of dominant political discourses and their embodiment in the educational practices to impart a selected set of knowledge and reproduce ideal national civil culture in state schools if one understands education system as 'the sum total of the institutional or customary mechanism ensuring the transmission from one generation to another of the culture inherited from the past (i.e. the accumulated information) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Analysis of official discourses, politics of curriculum making and mechanism of knowledge selection and its control will also yield important clues as to the processes of nation building, codification of national imagery and portrayal of civil culture in the schoolbooks.

2. Education, Civil Culture and the State

There is no doubt that formal education may help promote a particular civil culture. One can argue that formal and institutionalised education have the means and the power to impose an idealised sense of belonging/identity and nation building project through reproduction and distribution of accumulated intellectual and cultural capital. If the school education is an influential agency then a number of questions requires responses to contextualise the functioning of pedagogic action. For the purpose of this article which is to highlight, but not to essentialise, similarities and differences of dominant civil cultures in Germany, Britain, The Netherlands and France as represented in political discourses related to education and codified in selected textbooks, I will briefly address the questions of who controls the knowledge; who decides and selects the knowledge transmitted in schools; what are the forces shaping school knowledge; what is level of state intervention in determining the school knowledge; how sectionalism/particularism is reflected in the accumulated information as distributed in schools?

In order to give answers to these questions we now have to turn to the four countries to see which agencies, forces and sections play important roles in the shaping of curriculum. Here the curriculum is defined as a 'historically specific pattern of knowledge, which is selected, organised and distributed to learners through educational institutions (Kliebard, 1992). The curriculum is an important site to reproduce the national imagery. Therefore as Brint (1988) suggests 'propensities of social actors (such as the upper classes and the state) insofar as they are involved in curriculum making' are among the most important macroforces shaping school knowledge.

Broadly speaking curriculum in Germany is prescribed at the local state (länder) not national level. Since educational structure is differentiated after primary schooling (into academic, general and vocational tracks) not all students will follow the same curriculum in these upper secondary level as they follow the curriculum appropriate to the type of school they attend. In The Netherlands, although national regulation exists concerning the compulsory subjects, curriculum planning, the organisation and content of teaching and form of school leaving examinations, much of the responsibility of its implementation rests at the local level. In France curriculum is highly centralised and teachers are relatively restricted in their curricular activities (Kellagan & Madaus, 1995). As for Britain, the curriculum was nationalised clearly imposing a selected content for compulsory teaching. The National Curriculum in Britain is fixed until year 2000 although some modifications in its contents were made earlier. It is predominantly state controlled in nature.

3. Civil Culture in the National Curricular Frames

It is argued that education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture. The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of a legitimate knowledge. The selection of knowledge, design of curriculum, teaching and evaluation are part and parcel of how dominance and subordination are reproduced and altered in the society (Apple, 1996). As we will see later in this article similar principles and ideas about general educational aims can be found in all the four countries, but they are put into practice differently. How are the principles of civil society translated into the curriculum? One obvious aspect of this translation process is how, by whom and on what basis civic principles and ideals are translated in the curricular subjects and how such

mechanism of selection is legitimated. Looking at the curricular contents of particular lessons/courses one can argue that framing regulations distinguishes between subjects creating a 'division of labour' and 'hierarchical order of importance' among the subjects that can be seen in the framing regulations. One can relate this to the purpose of selection so far as it is related to the project of nation building, control of knowledge by the dominant section of the society and transmission of inherited knowledge as the basis of belonging to a community. In order to build a community of educated citizens who absorbed and internalised civic values as defined by the higher echelons of social and political order and distributed in the school subjects such as literature, history and geography (or locally determined other subjects) are given special jobs.

4. Construction of national histories in the Curriculum

Organisation of a subject, selection of its contents and agencies that control the process of selection and transmission of knowledge in Germany, The Netherlands, France and Britain provide us with some indications of the relevance of subjects and the rationale for selectivity that impinge upon projects of nation building and generating shared imagery in the four countries. An analysis of curriculum structure, the mechanism of its creation and implementation and the teaching materials containing selected knowledge will yield important clues as to how the nations are constructed; how the national images are codified; how the 'national projects' are implemented; how civic culture is given its image in the schoolbooks; what the intended/unintended messages and their consequences are; what national stereotypes are and what the ideal type citizen and its image is? It is now time to look at these issues closely in the four countries. As mentioned earlier the four countries have different structures and mechanism to devise legal frameworks and curricular guideline to communicate the special knowledge. This ranges from strictly centralised national framework to locally determined curricular content.

Framing regulations in four countries regarding aims of education and its content differ for their disparate historical experiences and different political discourses. In Germany, the formulation of educational tasks reflects the principle of federalism: they are tasks of the federal German *Bundesländer*, and there is no catalogue of pedagogical aims for the whole country. The decentralised federative structure the most exceptional aspect of the German school system in comparison to the centralised and coherent French organisation or the British system.

The other country where strict central frameworks, control and selection of knowledge and content regulations are actually non-existent is The Netherlands. The Dutch school system is fairly decentralised in contrast to French and British system. There is no normative and overarching curriculum control structure in the Netherlands. What is, however, more or less regulated are the topics for the central examination.

Britain and France are on the other end of the continuum regarding direct state involvement in policy making in education and producing a nation-wide binding regulation. Compared to Germany and the Netherlands Britain has a centrally regulated curricular framework. Before 1988 comprehensive schools were relatively free to determine their aims and curricula although constrained by the requirements of public examinations. Prior to the introduction of National Curriculum, schoolteachers as a section of the population had the power to dictate the aims and content of the curriculum. With the 1988 Education Reform Act (Education Reform Act, 1988), the power shifted to the government. However, 'the shift from professional control to control by a democratically elected government did not prevent sectionalism. It merely meant that a different section now held all the cards (White, 1988).

France has also a centralised educational system. The state holds the power to manipulate, control and select subjects in the school education. French schools, therefore, are obliged to follow the principles of national education (*Education nationale*). All over the country, schools and curriculum are organised in the same way similar to that of Britain.

One would expect that not all school subjects have equal potential and influence in inculcating civil culture, imparting dominant national imaginary and generating culturally loaded meanings. Technical and science subjects would not compare other subjects such as history, geography, religion, political science for the latter set of subjects are more open to political manipulation, contain culturally, socially and politically significant meanings which can reproduce national images, shared heritage and legitimate dominant cultural orientations as well as boundaries. On these grounds now I would like to look at how subjects that have close relevance to civil culture and construction of national imaginary are dealt with in schools and textbooks. The following section examines how history, geography and other context-based classes are related to civil cultures of the countries concerned. The purpose of analysing the status of these subjects

and their materials is to establish the intimate and insoluble link between state policies, official discourses national educational practices and dominant civil culture. What is expected of this exercise is to yield clues as to how these subjects are situated in the context of state educational institutions; what the status of the subject with regard to 'official hierarchies'; how 'national imaginary' and 'common heritage' are coded in books; how self and others are represented and boundaries are drawn? History is a good starting point as this subject is taught in the four countries either as a compulsory, partly compulsory course.

Let's start with an observation on Germany. If there is lack of interest among pupils in the post-national socialism civic culture project, this is interpreted by teachers as decline of German culture. Decline of culture is indicated by the fact that students are neither interested in history nor in the classical institutions of cultural refinement: they don't go to museums; they don't read "good" books. German history, literature, classical music and museums represent 'high culture', which is upheld by the ruling elite and higher echelons of society in hierarchical power sharing structures. Some teachers at least are subscribed to this high culture which constituted German national identity and they try to impart these inherited knowledge and values.

In the Dutch case however, by teaching how 'our' society evolved, history teaching creates a continuity in the collective imagination of pupils in the making of a Dutch nation state. Past is seen as a common heritage whose knowledge and significance are transmitted to the present. A main implicit distinction is between 'us' (the Netherlands) and 'them' (rest of the world). Although a distinction between 'us' and 'them' is not made explicitly, it nevertheless manifests itself in the way in which themes and issues are discussed and treated.

History is a compulsory subject in British school system. It is one of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Its aims are related to knowledge, identity, sense of belonging, understanding one's own and other's cultures (The National Curriculum, 1995). Through history pupils can achieve an understanding of their family, community and country they belong to. Learning about culture, beliefs, customs and institutions and shared experiences will enhance their sense of identity. It is argued in History Working Group's report (1990) that Britain has a cultural diversity and therefore there should not be an imposition of a standard and uniform cultural package on young people. This seems to contrast other three

countries where more or less a more uniform cultural heritage is transmitted, such as high culture in Germany, republican ideals in France. This diversity which lies in the roots of British identity is expected to generate toleration and respect for other cultures among pupils. More importantly, teaching history is believed to be an effective means of preparing young people for citizenship. However, giving pupils a sense of identity; helping pupils to have an understanding of their own cultural roots and shared inheritance seem to be confusing and conflicting identity constructions for minorities. In debates on the aims of history teaching, frequent references to giving pupils a sense of identity implies a national project. It does not say which or whose identity will be inculcated. If Britain is a multicultural society with disparate cultural identities, then one can not or should not talk of imposing a sectional identity. Black, Asian, Welsh and English national/ethnic identities on the one hand and religious identities such as Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Catholic and Protestant in nature co-exist in modern Britain. Yet, when one looks at the subjects offered in the curriculum and the contents of the currently used book, it is not possible to see the presentation of such an array of cultural, national, ethnic and religious heritage. The question 'whose identity?' that very many people ask is not clearly answered.

What we saw so far is the representation of national projects, shared images and common cultural values in history and the way in which dominant national histories are constructed and dominant civil cultures are codified in the countries under study.

In the striking use of the term "Germany", the history textbook takes sides with the concept of a *Willensnation* or *Kulturnation*: the nation exists before the state in this concept. Its members are bound together with ethnic ties of descent and cultural ties of a common language¹ and the so-called

¹ In the 19th century great effort was invested in the homogenization of languages. Numerous dialects and a couple of other languages than German were spoken throughout the later "Germany". The introduction of "high German" as *the* language was an important drive for the formation of a German nation and it could only be enforced by general education. For a detailed discussion see T. Gogolin, I., *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule*, Habil. Universität Hamburg, Waxmann, Münster/New York 1994, p. 44. The language policy in the Netherlands was comparable: "At school children were taught obligatory Dutch. They did so from the beginning of the nineteenth century and so the origin of the development of one nation in the Netherlands - one language and the beginning of the altered relationship between Dutch and dialect - must be situated here." See P. Boekholt, P., 'The Role of Education in the Formation of the Dutch State', in Hager, F. And P.

Hochkultur – i. e. exactly the catalogue of cultural refinement that is presented in the history book chapter at issue here. The inculcation of this nation concept does not only suggest a collective German identity; it also defines the prerequisites for participation in society.

Although there is some similarity between the countries with respect to themes treated in history books and history lessons, there is at the same time a considerable difference with respect to the way in which themes and topics are dealt with. In all four countries history is mainly national history.

All four countries have similar general aims for history lessons and similar topics. In all countries there is selected set of historical topics transmitted to schoolchildren. France and Britain have central control over history teaching whereas Germany and the Netherlands have a system of local selection and control. Construction of shared heritage and national identities, however, are codified differently. History in Germany is constructed along the line of 'Hochkultur', high culture, which represents cultural refinement; elite culture which has continuity rooted in cultural descent. Immigration and settlement of millions of foreigners to Germany with different religions, languages and cultural values did not alter the historical construction of German national identity. Definition of German citizenship and its image remained the same, still depending on ethnic descent, whereas especially in Britain the definition of image of being British changed. Dutch history on the other hand centres on an island metaphor, which implies that the Dutch national history had a certain degree of detachment, the idea of independence is an overriding feature of Dutch history. Representation of Dutch history is usually void of oppression. The colonial experience of the Netherlands are used to portray a positive image of Dutch colonial history in general and Dutch nation in particular because moderation is shown as central to Dutch society in contrast to extremism and this emphasised by showing that histories of other nations are usually histories of disputes, conflicts and wars whereas the Dutch society possesses an ability to reach a consensus. This is in a sense a moral history, teaching us good and evil. History lessons in Britain focus predominately on the British past. The histories of other nations are played down. Britain is portrayed as a great imperial power, confining conflict, reducing tension and accommodating diversity. (British media reports on the appointment of a president to European Central Bank conjure up images of Britain as

Jedan, D. (eds.), *Staat und Erziehung in Aufklärungsphilosophie und Aufklärungszeit*, Winkler, Bochum 1993, p. 10.

mediator. BBC reported on 2nd May 1998 that Germany and France had a serious conflict of interest in the appointment a president for the bank. The gap became wider and wider because Germany insisted on a Dutch candidate whereas France wanted the appointment of a French man. The read on that at that moment the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, intervened and through his mediation two sides came to an agreement and a Dutch person was appointed. The compromise was reached through the involvement of Britain). Even the de-colonisation period is used to show the greatness of the British. Britain, it is said in the history book has given India her independence whereas de-colonisation of French colonies is explained as 'gaining independence'. Fair play, traditions of toleration and parliamentary democracy are still shown as the core characteristics of British identity. The modern British identity is composed of nations and communities making this identity supranational. History lessons on immigration from Eastern Europe, Indian subcontinent French historical consciousness centres on the concept of civilisation. French nation is portrayed as the most significant contributor to the establishment of modern western civilisation. Grand civilisational movements enter the imagination of French nation. French colonial experience seems to establish a paradox. Despite French history is portrayed as a contributor to world civilisation, its contradictions are not explained as regards civility/democracy and colonial dichotomy. It seems that in the four countries history is more of an Euro-centric past. Greek civilisation, French revolution, National Socialism, WW1 and WW2 are included in history lessons in all countries. The eastern civilisations do not seem to have similar significance for history classes. We do not learn much for example, about the accomplishments of eastern civilisations, contribution of Japan, China, East Asia and Muslim world to the development of world civilisations. Africa gets less attention in this project.

Before moving on the representation of religions, National Socialism and immigration in schools, I would like draw attention to a different area, that is the national literatures in the four countries. It seems to me that in addition to history and geography one should also mention literature which has a potential power to strengthen the glorious image of a nation in the minds of pupils. Although Britain is always described as a multicultural society, the choice of literary figures in school education is very much Anglo-Saxon oriented, mixed with one or two Irish writers. Shakespeare's plays; G. B. Shaw and C. Marlowe's dramas; J. Austin, C. Dickens, T. Hardy, J Swift, A. Trollope's novels; T. Hughes, W. Blake, M. Arnold's poems do not leave any space to the works of growing number of writers

from different ethnicities. In WHL at least, one can not see the works of S. Rushdie, H. Kureshi, A. Roy and many other contemporary black writers in English literature classes despite the fact they write in English and widely acclaimed for their literary quality. Germany, France and the Netherlands concentrate on national literary heritage. New breed of literary figures from ethnic minorities do not seem to produce 'refined' and 'high cultured' works, therefore similar to the British scene they are unnoticed.

5. Discourses on Religions and National Socialism and Immigration in History Teaching

I explained earlier that some of the subjects and topics that one can come across in the school curriculum are particularly qualified to be used to evaluate prevailing concepts of 'self and other' in each of the civil cultures. In the following analysis, the main emphasis is situated on the level of how these concepts are translated into narratives for education.

6. Looking at Religions in Secular National Contexts

The issue of religion and religious education appear in different contexts in the four countries, based on the grounds of prevailing political cultures. In Germany for example, despite the wide spread image of being a secularised society, the Christian Churches' entanglements in the state and vice versa are quite far-reaching. The German Constitution's Preamble cites that trust in God as the moral basis and ends up with enormous financial support that the state collects and spends for the Christian Churches, religion is actually an important power in Germany. The ranges of privileges that the Christian Churches enjoy seem to be unparalleled with other European countries. There is a sharp contrast with France for example. German case can be likened to the case in England where the Crown is the head of the Anglican Church, giving it power and legitimacy. This recognition is reflected in the composition of the House of Lords where there are a number of seats for the clergy of Anglican Church. Religious and political power in Germany were not separated as early as elsewhere but the Christian Churches, namely the Protestants kept on having a say in public initiatives that would for example in France have belonged exclusively to the sphere of the state; the Churches were especially involved in the construction of the educational system.²

² Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, Arbeitsgruppe Bildungsbericht: Das Bildungswesen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ein Überblick für Eltern, Lehrer und Schüler, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1990, p. 10.

In spite of the process of secularisation that has meanwhile taken place, Christianity still serves as powerful moral reference basis and enjoys privileges in education. Christianity and those movements in society that have been substantial for the development towards humanism, freedom and democracy shall get their appropriate space in educating personalities with a consciousness of their own. Religious education in schools is a regular element and it has to be stressed that it is not inter-religious education but confessional doctrine. The German Constitution guarantees religious education as regular subject in public schools, being put into practice by the churches in the frame of subsidiarity (*Grundgesetz* Articles 7.2 and 140, 141). The Berlin Statutes for example bind the schools to provide two religious education lessons per week and a room for it free of costs. Consequently, the general framing regulations for schools in Berlin name the churches as partners for educational co-operation.

All confessional lessons are subjects of free choice. Islamic religious education does not take place at regular public schools in Germany. Usually, the reason that is given for the absence of Islam in religious education by School Authorities is that Muslims in Germany do not have a common institution like the Christian Churches that could be treated as educational partner according to the principle of subsidiarity. An exception to the negative attitude is the pragmatic development of an Islamic curriculum in the *Bundesland* of Nordrhein-Westfalen that had been initiated by applications of three Islamic organisations to conduct their lessons in public schools. An alternative for Muslim organisations is the foundation of their own confessional private schools.

The status of religious education as inculcation of Christian heritage contrasts to French case where a deeply rooted laicism does not accommodate appearance of religious signs in public place because religion is seen as a matter of individual conviction. One can, on the other hand, draw some parallels with the British case where Christianity, Protestant confessionalism, is seen as a source of British identity/imaginary. Especially at the beginning of the 19th Century the British self image was predominantly 'Protestant' in nature. For many, a century later this conception remained (Robbins, 1993). This image was re-circulated by a leading article in *The Times* on 8 July 1980 which wrote that 'The Church of England is the British national Church'. The Rushdie affair was a test case in Britain, which showed that modern Britain was not as much secularised as imagined. With the Rushdie affair, Islam emerged in the public space as a

powerful tradition, which contested the tolerance at the core of the British identity. As Ignatieff (1998) observes Islam made people realise that civic tolerance, one of the much-praised core of the British identity, was less secular than many people had supposed. He argues that "the almost forgotten Protestantism within the British identity came to the surface. It is the Christian faith, which the Crown is supposed to defend... It was Islam, which broke a key silence in British national identity: why a secular society fails to separate church and state altogether?" As will be seen later in the article, this failure showed up itself once more in 1988 Education Reform Act which made religious education compulsory with a main emphasis on Christianity as an important heritage and source of national imagery.

The institutionalisation of religious education (RE) in general and Islamic education in particular took place differently in Britain than Germany. As the Constitution ensures Christian religious education in German public schools, not the Constitution (because it does not exist), but The Education Reform Act 1988 enforces religious education in public schools. The nature of religious education must be dominantly Christian though other religions in Britain should also be taken into consideration.³ It is the responsibility of local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to advise the authority upon matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the religious education in public schools. Concerning the content of RE a different picture emerges in contrast to other compulsory subjects in the National Curriculum. In contrast to the centralisation of the education system through the National Curriculum, RE was decentralised, acknowledging the diversity of religious traditions in Britain.

The formation of SACRE's led to the production of agreed syllabus that also accommodated diverse religions in addition to Christianity. An agreed syllabus is required "to reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain". The content of the agreed syllabus is influenced by the religions of ethnic communities. Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism were also included in the study of religions. The most significant aspect of religious education in

³ The 1988 Education Act requires that all new agreed syllabuses 'must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (section 8(3)).

relation to civil culture is expected to promote peace and toleration which fits well with the general image of Britishness being tolerant. One can argue that religious education which represents religions as beliefs systems rather than cultural and political belonging has a potential to stimulate a better understanding of "others", leading to mutual respect and acceptance. This rather contrast to the Dutch tradition where other religions are portrayed as 'far away' cultures. A research report by Verma, Zec and Skinner (1992) lends support to this observation in the British context. The research results indicate that pupils are most likely to learn other's cultures, religions and discuss these issues in an open manner, building friendship and countering prejudice.

Muslims in Britain as elsewhere in Europe are getting organised to provide Islamic education for their children in their own schools as well campaigning for more Muslim teachers in public schools (Nielsen, 1989). The daily act of collective worship and the content of religious education have become important concerns for Muslim parents. One of the responses of Muslims to the recent developments in the area of education was to establish their own private and independent Islamic schools where not only the National Curriculum subjects but also cultural and religious subjects would be taught. Muslims also wanted to make use of state funds, which are presently available to denominational and Jewish schools. In order to become voluntary-aided schools the Zakaria Girl's School in Batley and the Islamia School in London, for example, made applications in 1982. However, Zakaria Girl's and the Islamia School failed to receive recognition as a voluntary-aided school (Dwyer & Meyer, 1995). After the Labour Party's rise to the government, Muslims increased their pressure on authorities for recognition, which is completely unthinkable in France. Despite earlier rejections of its application, the Islamia School persisted in its effort to receive state funds. In a letter published in the education supplement of a national newspaper (The Guardian, 1997) leading figures campaigning for this state funding appealed to the Secretary of Education and Employment, David Blunkett, for Muslims to be treated equally with others in Britain. It is argued in the letter that Government backing of Muslim schools would promote shared values and good citizenship for all communities equally. In response to Muslims' demands, the Government decided on 9 January 1998 to grant state funding to Islamia School in London and Al Furqan School in Birmingham. The same day, two more Jewish Schools, Mathidla Marks Kennedy and Jewish Progressive primary schools were also given grant-maintained status.

In the Netherlands on the other hand, there is no compulsory explicit religion (Christianity) lessons in public schools. There is, however, an implicit emphasis on the Christian world in history lessons. This emphasis on Christian world echoes the dominant position of Christian establishments in Germany and Britain representing a shared past. All chapters in history books dealing with 'our' world and 'our' civilization also make references to aspects of Christianity. As far as explicit aspects of Christianity are concerned, it is a typical history subject.

What Britain and The Netherlands have in common is the fact both countries made available state funds to Muslim schools. It seems that Muslims in the Netherlands achieved their goals more easily. Despite local opposition, Muslims in The Netherlands succeeded in opening state-funded Islamic schools in Rotterdam and Eindhoven in 1988, and over the last six years, the number of Islamic schools has steadily increased in this country to six in 1989-1990, 22 in 1991-92 (Shadid & Koningsveld , 1992) and 29 in the 1993-1994 school-year. All of these are primary schools (Dwyer & Meyer, 1995: 40-41).

France can be singled out regarding religion-state relations. Religious education is not a matter of concern in French public schools at all. The principle of *laïcité*, as understood neutrality towards religious convictions, means that there should be no religious signs in public schools. There is no religious education and crosses or other religious symbols are not allowed in public schools. The wearing of headscarves in most public schools has been forbidden in the name of this principle. Religious education in French public schools is not even imaginable. Religious questions in the public school are not treated as a matter of culture or merely as a belief system but as a matter of civilisation and historical knowledge.

Issue of religion appears for example when foundations of modern civilisation and the influence of oriental civilisation on the western world are discussed. However, Christianity is represented as a strong marker on Western civilisation. Books in the French schools refer 'our language', 'our customs', 'our cultural past', 'our environment' that carry the imprint of Christian traditions. Implication of this narrative is, though the French society is secular, Christianity marks the repertoire of French discourse despite the calculated distance shown in the books.

7. Diverse approaches to religion in education as a public sphere

This article shows that there is a striking difference in the position of religious education and in the extent to which religion is present in the curriculum in Germany, Britain, France and the Netherlands. These differences are to a large extent related to the different political cultures and dominant discourses in the respective countries. In Germany and Britain religious education is more or less a standard ingredient of the curriculum. In both cases religious moral issues are considered to be essential to educate citizens and build up identity, yet in Britain religious education is compulsory, although religious education is mainly on Christianity, other religions are also respected and taught, whereas in Germany the idea of Christian genealogy shines through. In the French case there is no religious education in public schools because French political culture separates state involvement in religious inculcating and nurturing spirituality for religion is a matter of individual conviction that should not interfere in public sphere. In the Netherlands the situation is somewhat different and although there is no compulsory or formally prescribed religious education. Despite the fact that there is no provision for religious education in these two countries, religions nevertheless appear in other subjects. Christian values and influences appear to be the dominant religious heritage whether it is explicitly codified or implicitly implied in the narratives.

On the other hand there is an interesting similarity in the German and French approaches as opposed to the British and Dutch ones. Whereas both Germany and France place one moral standard applicable to all citizens above others, i. e. Christianity in Germany, rationality in France, as it appear in compulsory philosophy lessons, Britain and the Netherlands seem to relate moral standards to the religious and cultural diversity in society. The Dutch political culture establishes a system, which implies that one should teach one's own morals in their own pillar within an overarching (universal) system of equality and non-discrimination. The British political culture on the other encourages the education of morals that should be organised in accordance with the multicultural and multi-religious characteristics of society because British society is composed of communities of values rather than a community of origins as it is the case with Germany.

8. Reading National Socialism as a Breakdown of Civil Society

In all four countries studied, National Socialism, WW2 and their consequences form an important part of history curriculum. National

Socialism can be seen as *the* crisis of civil culture in Europe in the 20th Century which enforced a redefinition of values in all the four countries during the post-war era. On the basis of how Nazi-Germany is presented in schools, the redefinition of values is to be analysed. The ways of covering National Socialism are considered expressions of civil culture as well.

National Socialism and fascism are topics, which are dealt with extensively in each of the four countries. The pedagogical agenda, however, differs considerably. In the Dutch case the main aim is to teach pupils about National Socialism as an example of intolerant political thinking. Much of the material presented deals with the dangerous attractiveness of fascist thinking, especially among young people. It draws parallels to contemporary forms of racism and fascism. Racism, discrimination and fascism form the typical keywords in much of the material. At the political level National Socialism is described much in accordance with the proverbial image of the Netherlands as an island. Dealing with the Hitler regime was a matter of the great powers of the 1930s in which the Netherlands did not play any significant role. The country itself has been disturbed in its political development by the invasion of the Nazis, implementing a racist political system causing the death of many compatriots. After the war the Netherlands politically picked up the pieces and continued as it did before the war.

The German treatment of National Socialism is of course much more complex. In general there seems to be a tendency in teaching material to put things aside as if present-day Germany has nothing to do with the Nazi era. History is cut into slices, which are not related to each other. For the rest national socialism is treated as an era in modern European political history and in that it looks much like the way in which French and British history books deal with national socialism: how did the crisis in the 1920s and 1930s work out in several countries and how did Hitler come to power. French history sees the rise of National Socialism primarily as a result of economic crisis and moral confusion in Germany which may be formulated as the failure of rationality leading to a civilisational crisis. In contrast to the Dutch French admits its role in expulsion of Jews and internment camps. British history on the other hand views the deepest crisis in 20th century civil society largely as a result of fragmented German political system.

9. Immigration, the State and Dominant National Identities

Immigration, settlement of ethnic communities in the four countries, multiculturalism and the way in which these issues are presented in books

are related to the civil cultures and political discourses of Germany, Britain, The Netherlands and France. Analysis of these issues will show how nation and national imagery are constructed in the face of immigration and settlement of 'others' who pose challenges, if not threats, to the dominant culture.

Germany presents a clear case where the dominant political discourse is translated into educational policies. One can see no contradiction between political discourse of state and practice of education in relation to immigration to Germany and its socio-cultural effects. Contents and goals of curricula have not been modified in accordance to the presence of immigrants in Germany. The emphasis still is on local history, geography and German language as agents to promote German cultural traditions. Not the fact of immigration or cultural and ethnic diversity has led to adaptations of learning objectives but the unification of the two German republics effected revisions of the curricula. Changes in curriculum took place just five years after the unification. In contrast, the presence of immigrants for up to 35 years has not led to any re-formulation of what should be taught in German schools. Evidently, orientations that support traditional bonds of an ethnically constructed nation prevail in Germany.

Unlike Britain, immigration is not an aspect that is connected with Germany in the curricula. As far as immigrants in Germany are concerned, the push-factors that have led to emigration from their countries are presented, but no pull-factors that have caused the policy of recruitment here are named. Immigration into Germany is not a topic per se whereas in Britain there is special topic in history classes dealing with migration to Britain. The official political credo in Germany still is to ignore and deny the status of being an immigration country. The content of the curricula implies that the school's role is to legitimate the prevailing political order. For Germany the inclusion of immigration and immigrants' perspectives in the curricula would question the constructed German self-definition of being one ethnically homogeneous nation. Although the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity in Germany is not exclusively a concomitant of immigration it does become most visible when dealing with immigration. To conclude, there can be no doubt that education in Germany promotes the idea of ethnic, cultural and lingual homogeneity in the German nation.

A contrasting case to Germany regarding immigration in school curricula is Britain where the issues of immigration and settlement of ethnic

communities with their social, cultural, economic and cultural dimensions are given a large space in history books. This is clearly a reflection of British political discourse on immigration, nationality, citizenship and the concept of British identity which is like an umbrella identity that accommodates Scots, Irish and Welsh as well as people from different other ethnic origins who came to Britain. This contrasts to the German case where citizenship is defined on ethnic lines and it is officially rejected that Germany is a country of immigration. Hyphenated identities are used commonly in Britain and it seems that for many it is a source of pride. One can frequently hear the self-definition of people in daily conversations referring to a feeling of, or desiring to belonging to a larger community. Terms such as Black-British, British Pakistanis/Hindus/Bangladeshis are now used in everyday language. One can even hear of religiously defined British communities such British Muslims and British Jews.

As far as migration is concerned, we see again striking differences among the four countries. In Germany and France it is treated as a topic which bears no relation with the actual societal situation in the these countries. Migration is mainly a socio-economic phenomenon. Economic problems cause population movements all over the world. Ethnic and religious diversity is apparently not related to the immigration of people from other countries. In the French case immigration is mainly a demographic topic. Germany still considers itself not as an immigration country. These approaches clearly reflect the dominant political culture in the respective countries: France being the country of individual (republican) citizens, Germany being the country of (ethnic) Germans.

The harmony between dominant political culture, state and education shows that the school has a production sub-system as to the process of selecting, organising, evaluating and distributing the formal knowledge systems of the curriculum. The type of knowledge selected, and the way it is organised and evaluated, gives us a clear indication as to the concept of ideal person informing educational practice (K. Lynch, 1989). In the Dutch and British cases on the other hand, immigration is mainly and sometimes only connected to multiculturalism in the society. Immigration to Britain leads to cultural diversity in society. In the Dutch case issues around multicultural society can become a separate exam topic. Thus we see that both in Britain as well as in the Netherlands immigration and multiculturalism are specific civil society topics.

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