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Does Europe Matter? A comparative study of young people's identifications with Europe at a state school and a European School in England

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Abstract

This article explores the extent to which young people, in predominantly middle-class environments, identify with Europe and considers the influence of European education policy, school ethos and curricula. We compare data drawn from individual and focus group interviews with students aged 15-17 at a state school and a European School in England. The empirical analysis was informed by post-structuralism and found that young people at both schools developed multidimensional, multifaceted identities. Students at the European School, which has an ethos of developing both national *and* European identities, identified themselves more as European than their peers at the state school, which integrated students on the basis of a common British citizenship. The findings suggest that the policy on the European dimension in education contributes towards developing students' identification with Europe and to their knowledge of Europe, though not at the expense of their ethnic and national identities, which were stronger than their European identities. Lack of a European dimension in education (both in and out of school) seems to result in a lack of identification with and knowledge about Europe.

Introduction

Today, national identities are being challenged and transformed by devolution and regionalisation on the one hand, and ever-increasing processes of European integration and globalisation on the other (Guibernau 2007). Academics and policy-makers alike continue to debate questions such as what a Europe is, what content may be ascribed to a European identity, and to what extent it is hybridised by and compatible with other identities (see Malmborg and Stråth 2001, Dinan 2004, Tsoukalis 2003, Triandafyllidou 2012). The idea of developing a sense of European citizenship and identity amongst young people has been promoted by European Union (EU) and non-EU institutions for the past three decades and many projects have been launched in pursuit of this objective, particularly within the sensitive fields of education and culture (Author 2 2010). Research on the implementation of the European dimension in schools and of its influence on students, particularly in terms of their identities, remains underexplored. The first part of this article provides a brief overview of the policy on the European dimension in education, which aims to promote a European identity amongst young people. We then outline the methodology of this study and the rationale for comparing a state school with a European School in England. The third and fourth sections discuss the findings from each school in turn, focusing on students' identifications with Europe and the perceived influence of the school ethos and curricula.

The European Dimension in Education

The European dimension in education is one of the key education policies that has been promoted by both the European Commission and the Council of Europe in order to promote European identity and positive attitudes to Europe and increase young peoples' knowledge about Europe and the EU. The concept dates back to the early 1970s (Hansen 1998) when economic difficulties coupled with a lack of citizens' support for European integration

prompted the European Commission to push for cooperation amongst Member States in the field of education, which had previously been a national matter (Author 1 2009). European policy-makers believed that school education could be used to cultivate citizens' sense of European identity and subsequently gain their support for integration (Theiler 2005, 113). A report was therefore produced in 1973 to look at the implications of working towards a Community policy in education. It stated that education should have a European dimension wherever possible, particularly through teaching about Europe in curriculum subjects, teaching foreign languages and civics, and providing students and teachers across Europe with opportunities to be in contact with one another. Furthermore, at the 1973 Copenhagen summit, the heads of state affirmed their commitment to develop a more integrated approach to international affairs, supported by a strong sense of European identity. The political impulse provided by this summit prompted a chain of initiatives aiming to strengthen and promote European identity and citizenship.

Arguably, the most important inter-governmental agreement on the European dimension in education was the 1988 *Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education on the European Dimension in Education*, which prompted educators to 'strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the values of European civilisation and of the foundations on which the European peoples intend to base their development today' (Council of Ministers of Education 1988, 5). The Ministers' agreement aimed at improving young people's historical, cultural and socio-economic knowledge of Europe and invited Member States to take steps to introduce a European dimension in education, particularly in schools and through teacher training.

Education became a legal provision in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, enabling the EU to become involved in supporting action taken by national education systems. The concept of European citizenship was also introduced in the Maastricht Treaty, and EU policy documents

have since emphasized that European citizenship is meant to complement and not replace national citizenship (see Council of the European Union 1997, 2007).

The 1993 *Green Paper on the European Dimension in Education* sought for proper enactment of Article 126 of the Maastricht Treaty. One of its three key objectives was to educate young people for European citizenship, which should be 'based on the shared values of interdependence, democracy, equality of opportunity and mutual respect' (Council of Ministers of Education 1993, 5). The Green Paper emphasised that education systems should work towards encouraging young people to respect different cultural and ethnic identities and towards combating 'all forms of chauvinism and xenophobia' (Council of Ministers of Education 1993, 6). It also stressed that European culture and citizenship enhance national culture and citizenship, adding value rather than replacing these.

Following the Green Paper, in 1995 the Socrates programme was adopted, aiming to develop the European dimension in education at all levels in order to strengthen the spirit of European citizenship (European Parliament and Council 1995). The Comenius strand of Socrates, which still runs today, focuses on school education and aims explicitly to promote knowledge and understanding of Europe's cultures and languages and to equip pupils with the skills for active European citizenship (British Council 2010).

The Council of Europe has also called for a more European educational dimension. For example, *Recommendation 1111 on the European Dimension of Education* regarded Europe 'as extending to the whole of the continent and in no way synonymous with the membership of any particular European organisation' (Council of Europe 1989). The document stressed the importance of encouraging the European dimension in teacher training and teacher exchange; giving more emphasis to the teaching of history, geography, civic education (citizenship), and modern languages; encouraging European school links by using the latest information technologies; bringing together those responsible for tourism, information and the

media with the aim of creating European publishing houses for teaching material; and ensuring information exchange on activities undertaken by organisations involved in European cooperation in education. Two years later, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council of Europe, issued a *Resolution on the European Dimension of Education: teaching and curriculum content* which states that 'all areas of the school curriculum can make a contribution to the European dimension in teaching and learning as part of education for international understanding' with the aim of making the younger generation 'conscious of their common European identity without losing sight of their global responsibilities or their national, regional and local roots' (Council of Europe 1991). The document not only refers to the notion of multiple identities and a global and international understanding, but also hints at the necessity of combining a European and intercultural dimension.

Despite these policies and initiatives many schools in Europe have failed to include the European dimension in their curricula, partly because of competing national and global agendas, and partly because the concept remains ambiguous. This article considers these agendas (particularly that of the European dimension in education) at a state school and at a European School in England and their potential influence on students' identifications with Europe.

Research Methodology

Our comparative study draws on data from one state school (which we refer to as 'Darwin School') and one 'European school' both located in England. We chose to compare these schools on the basis of several factors. Firstly, England is an interesting country in which to consider the role and emphasis of national and European education agendas as it is well-known for Euroscepticism and reservations towards the idea of a common European citizenship (Byram & Risager, 1999; Lewicka-Grisdale & McLaughlin, 2002). Despite efforts by

the European Commission and Council of Europe for schools to promote a European dimension in education, this has been approached very differently across educational institutions in England and has been practically excluded from the curriculum (Economou, 2003; Author 1, 2003).

Both schools in our study were seen to have an interest in promoting national, European and multicultural agendas and citizenship issues and encourage the learning of European languages. Darwin School was selected above other types of state school because of its higher socio-economic status, successful achievement rate, and emphasis (according to various school brochures) on multicultural and citizenship issues. We believed that a European dimension would more likely be present at a state school with such characteristics. We decided to compare Darwin with the European School which has students of a similar intake, albeit a different curriculum, in order to highlight some of the similarities and differences that would emerge about their approaches to the European dimension and the influence on students' identifications with Europe. The comparison sheds light on some of the lessons that can be learnt in terms of the influence of policy, ethos and curriculum on students' identifications with Europe. Table I summarises the school profiles:

--- Please insert Table I here ---

We used a qualitative research approach in order to elicit rich, in-depth data for this exploratory study. Using content analysis, we critically analysed school prospectuses, policy and curriculum documents in order to understand the rhetoric on the ethos of these schools and their commitment to national and European policy agendas. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers (four at Darwin School and 16 at the European School) in order to elicit their views on: how far national and European agendas were being promoted

through school ethos and curricula; their approaches in terms of delivery in the classroom; how these agendas and any other factors and experiences were seen to shape students' national and European identities.

The data we mostly draw upon in this article is that collected through semi-structured interviews with students aged between 15 and 17 (four students at Darwin School and four at the European School) and focus group interviews (six at Darwin School and eight at the European School). Students at Darwin School were largely British with some ethnic minorities present. At the European School, students in the sample came from mixed nationality European backgrounds, most of whom were half-English and had lived in England for at least ten years. It was thought that students aged above 15 would be able to articulate their views on the complex nature of the questions asked.

The aim of the student interviews was to obtain broad insights into students' knowledge of and attitudes towards the different political agendas being promoted at their schools and the way in which they position themselves in relation to national, European and other identities. The selected age range of the students also acknowledges developmental psychological accounts that identification with Europe may increase with age (Barrett 1996). The notion of positioning was related to a range of categories including 'national', 'ethno-religious' and 'European' that students drew upon to define their identity.

In conducting our research we adhered to BERA (2004) ethical guidelines, ensuring in particular that students and teachers participated on a basis of voluntary informed consent. The names that appear in the interview excerpts are pseudonyms in order to protect participants' anonymity.

The data analysis for both projects was informed by the insights offered by post-structuralist thinking, in particular the idea that identities are hybrid and shifting (see Hall 1992, Caglar 1997, Mac an Ghaill 1999, Rassool 1999, Tizard and Phoenix 2002). The ad-

vantages of this analytical and theoretical framework were that it opened up the possibility of a non-unitary subject with multidimensional identities and also reflected the shifting nature of society. Crucially, identities are not viewed as fixed, static and of a binary nature but are discursively negotiated and renegotiated. The notion of performativity (Butler 1997) was important for the design of the two studies because, from a deconstructionist position, performative suggests that identities are a continual establishment and articulation of binaries. The linking of techniques of the self (Foucault 1988) and performance opens up an exploration of the ways in which the social context, including school ethos and peer cultures, mediates how subjects deal with the lived realities of specific institutional locations (Mac an Ghaill 1999).

Darwin School in London

Darwin School, a predominantly middle-class school in London, opened in 1983 as a mixed neighbourhood comprehensive and has a total of 1,507 students. Around 16 per cent of the students (250 pupils) have English as an additional language although there are few at the most basic level. The largest ethnic minority groups are African Caribbean (10.3 per cent) and Asian (6.9 per cent). A total of 27 per cent of Darwin's students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Walking along the broad streets of the school's catchment area with their grand houses and Edwardian architecture immediately gives an impression of the socio-economic privilege of many residents.

The school ethos and curriculum emphasised national citizenship and identity and the prospectus further highlighted the notion of an inclusive British national identity based on a community of communities:

> The school strives to be a high-performing inclusive community school, fully
> committed to active citizenship and academic excellence. We value all who learn

and work here; promoting a strong sense of community within and beyond the school. (…) Bilingualism is actively encouraged and supported and opportunities offered to be examined in community languages. (…) All students are of equal concern and the school promotes self-discipline and empathy for others, both within the school and the wider community. (…) The teacher cannot be neutral towards those values which underpin liberal democracy. Values such as freedom of speech and discussion, respect for truth and reasoning, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, are the means whereby indoctrination is combated and prevented.

Both teachers and the curriculum at Darwin encourage their students to think of themselves as liberal democratic British citizens living in a global multi-ethnic international community. These messages were transmitted for example through citizenship lessons. Citizenship was both a cross-curricular theme and part of 'Personal, Social and Health Education' (PSHE-Citizenship), which was taught one hour per week.

While the citizenship curriculum sought to shape students' beliefs about action in their local, national and global communities, the school made little effort to integrate students on the basis of common European membership. The European dimension was largely absent from Darwin's citizenship curriculum and did not appear in other subjects typically used to promote a European dimension, such as geography and history (see Table 1). The deputy principal not only acknowledged that the notion of Europe 'is an area we don't address explicitly in citizenship', but she also admitted that Darwin School has done little teaching about Europe:

D.F.: How important do you think a European dimension is in the curriculum here at [Darwin School]?

Ms. Williams: It's not. We haven't done it. We don't do it. I think we address it inexplicitly, through some of our curriculum, but we certainly haven't taken it on board, I think, in terms of citizenship, there are bits that we do very well, there are bits we have yet to develop and one of the areas we have to develop is the whole idea of Europe, and the whole idea of looking at the European community, looking at the European parliament, we don't teach that to our students. Now the citizenship curriculum has only been developed this year and we need to talk about to include that within it. One of the things I'm quite keen to do is, obviously, we've got the election coming up on the 10th June [2004] and I'm quite keen we actually do something within the school around that. I'm going to be using external events to try and kick-start that within school. We don't do that explicitly and I think we should. […] We're going to have a referendum within this country about the issues, and I think that our students need to be able to engage with that information to be able to understand what the issues are.

The other teachers interviewed also said that the curriculum should include more of a European dimension. Mr. Davis, the citizenship co-ordinator, provided a summary of the difficulties of implementing a European curricular dimension, arguing that 'the trouble is that this country [England] has got quite a proud history, and with history as a major subject, history tends to be national history, you know what I mean, and if it's international it's to do with wars'. Mr. Davis perceived citizenship as an ideal subject for promoting European values. But when asked about the European topics he actually teaches, he said that 'we don't [...] look towards the European Common Market'. The main reason for this lack of focus on important European issues, he argued, is 'the tension in this country between Europeanization and Americanization. I think a lot of them would feel more American than European because

of the language, TV programmes and music'. Miss Williams, the deputy principal, also acknowledged that the school has focused more on an inclusive multiethnic national agenda, arguing that 'we're very good on the multicultural, multiethnic identity and, because of that, probably in terms of the national. That's probably fairly implicit in terms of what we're doing with the students but I would argue with the European dimension, we are less strong'.

Interviews with students at Darwin revealed that in their discussions about Europe and the European Union, students rarely argued that Britain is part of the European Union. They generally struggled to talk about the European Union and displayed a lack of knowledge about European issues and politics:

D.F.: What sorts of things do you know about Europe and the European Union?

Anne: Not much!

Victoria: It's really difficult, –

Anne: I don't know anything.

Victoria: – totally out of my depth.

Elizabeth: It's quite confusing cos it changes so much, that people –

Anne: The Euro.

Sophie: There's places part of it [indistinct].

Elizabeth: Oh, isn't there a referendum or coming up for something or other?

Victoria: A what? What's that?

Elizabeth: I dunno. I just heard it, walking through my house and the news was on somewhere, this whole thing about –

Victoria: What's a referendum?

Elizabeth: I don't know.

Perhaps the emphasis at Darwin School on developing an inclusive British national identity and failure to promote a European curricular dimension are partly responsible for this partial and confused political view of Europe amongst students.

When speaking about sense of belonging, identification and affiliation, students' discourses revealed that they developed ethno-national identities based on familiar communities such as family, school and friends as well as London and England. They explained how these familiar or close identities are interlinked and why they are all partly relevant in the construction of their identities. These spheres are all integrated together and not competing:

Adam: School's kind of a duty that a child has to fulfil, erm, I was born in London, which happens to be in England [they laugh], therefore I'm a citizen of London and England, and my school, which is in London, so therefore they're all kind of interlinked.

Charlotte: If you don't, If you weren't in London, you wouldn't be able to go to [name of the school], if you weren't in Britain you wouldn't be able to live in London, because you can't because London's in Britain.

D.F.: So would you say all these things are equally important?

All: Yeah.

Charles: Cos you're a community inside a community inside a community.

However, these 'chains of identities' did not include supranational levels. There were some isolated pro-European tones amongst 15-year-olds at Darwin. For example, Owen described himself as 'partly a European citizen', although he still sees Europeans as different to himself being from England, evident in his reference to Europeans as 'them'. His statement below also suggests that having a common language is an important factor in identity formation:

D.F.: What are you a citizen of? Where do you feel you belong to?

Owen: I would say I'm more a part of London than the rest of the UK. Cos I wouldn't say that I'm particularly well-travelled in the rest of the UK (…) And, as far as Europe is concerned, I would, to a certain degree feel part of it yes. But because, maybe of the language barrier, I wouldn't be able to sort of engage with them as much as I would with a person from the UK. (…) I suppose I'd put it like this: London's in Britain and Britain's in Europe and that's just how it is. I suppose I feel a bit of everything. In a way there's a bit of a political barrier between the UK and Europe at the moment [2004], which I don't particularly approve of but it's not really my choice. (...) I would prefer it if we were a lot closer to Europe, definitely, and as I said, I feel partly a European citizen.

Generally, identification with Europe was conditional and context-dependent (e.g., 'if we had the euro, we might see ourselves more as Europeans'). In many cases, Europe mattered little in the lives of young people at Darwin School. In the following discussion, the students who took part in the mixed-sex focus group agreed that Europe is a rather irrelevant, distant community with which they have few connections. These students defined Europe as a geographical zone and too broad a category to identify with:

D.F.: What role would you say Europe plays in your life?

Adam: Nothing.

Charles: Nothing, whatsoever. [Clara and Olivia murmur agreement]

Adam: Wouldn't really like it to play much of a role either.

Charles: It's got nothing to do with me, it's a bit irrelevant.

Charlotte: You wouldn't say you were French cos that's in Europe.

Adam: It's just a zone.

Charles: You wouldn't say "hello, I'm European"

D.F.: Why wouldn't you say that?

Adam: Cos you're an individual from many different places, in Europe.

Charles: European is too broad a generalisation to class anyone as, whereas British obviously is much smaller, has less minorities, less groups to put yourself in, so its easier to say "Yes I am British", but even in England, even in London, few people would say "yes I'm British", they'd say "I'm from London", "I'm from Essex", "I'm from Kent", or, "I'm from Oaks", cos people like to give themselves the smallest community to put themselves within, so they can feel more special.

The tension between Englishness (or Britishness) and Europeanness is played out in the above passage. The girls felt that by saying you are from England it is 'kind of more personal, a more detailed answer of where you actually come from' whereas saying you are European could mean many different things. The above extract also indicates that familiar communities (e.g. family, school, London) were preferred over more distant communities (e.g. Europe). This reflects the latest report of the Citizenship Education Longitudinal study (Benton et al. 2008) which argued that young people show greater attachment to closer communities, such as their local neighbourhood and town and particularly the school, than to their country or even Europe. Within the familiar local communities, the voices of young people are heard more than at the national or supranational level where 'we don't really have that many rights in the decision making or anything'.

To summarise, the findings reveal that students at Darwin School developed ethnonational identities based on a common British citizenship that included, in the case of ethnic

minority students, identification with their ethnic country of origin. Identification with Europe was practically absent and Europe was seen to be a distant place that mattered little in their lives. Knowledge of Europe and the European Union was also very thin, as was their knowledge of political issues in general. In a state school that purports to recognise diversity and the globalisation of society by emphasising an inclusive multicultural agenda alongside a focus on common British citizenship and identity, it is rather surprising that the European dimension has been practically ignored. If Europe does not matter in school then it is unlikely to matter out of school, unless other areas of students' lives are influenced by European matters (e.g. education at home; other educational or social experiences with a European dimension; personal interest in languages and cultures etc). We now move on to consider the extent to which Europe matters among young people at the European School.

The European School

The European School investigated in this study is part of a group of 14 intergovernmental European Schools, which are located in seven EU countries. The first European School was set up in Luxembourg in 1953 in order to provide mother tongue education to European children whose parents moved to take up employment at the European Coal and Steel Community. Subsequent European Schools were then established in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s, with the four most recent European Schools opening between 2002 and 2007. These now cater predominantly for children whose parents work for EU institutions and agencies and to bilingual and multilingual children.

The original purpose of these schools was to provide an education that would enable students to maintain their national languages, identities and cultures, as this would enable them to reintegrate into their home countries. However, alongside this national aim and considered of equal importance was the idea that students should also develop a European identi-

ty. This would be developed by educating children of different European backgrounds together in one school, enabling them to learn about each others' cultures, languages and traditions.

The European School in this study was established in 1978 in order to cater to children of employees working for a local European research centre, making it the ninth of 14 European Schools to be established in Europe and the only one of its kind in England. The students come from a range of largely white European backgrounds (many of whom are half-English). Students are quite anglicised compared to those in other European Schools across Europe and that the dominant language and culture in the school is English.

The ethos of the European Schools places a clear emphasis on cultivating both a national and a European identity and citizenship amongst students. This is reflected in the schools' mission statement, which states that '[w]ithout ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans' (Swan 1996, 27). The general brochure of the European Schools emphasises the importance of maintaining students' own cultural identities, which is seen to be the 'bedrock for their development as European citizens' (European Schools n.d., 9). It also mentions the importance of encouraging students to develop both a European and a global perspective.

In order to work towards promoting students' national and European identities, the European Schools are structured into language sections and all follow a common European curriculum that emphasises learning European languages (up to four, including mother tongue). Social science subjects such as history and geography are taught in students' first foreign language from the third year of the secondary school, enabling students from different national backgrounds to be educated together in mixed nationality classes.

The degree to which a European dimension is included in the syllabus content varies across subject and depends on the year of each subject's syllabus. For example, in Geogra-

phy, the final two years of schooling (the Baccalaureate years) focus on European geography, but in the lower years the focus is on physical geography with the choice given to teachers as to which countries they wish to focus on and which perspectives they wish to take. Some teachers therefore avoid focusing on Europe as they know that this will be covered during the Baccalaureate years.

Given the flexible nature of certain syllabi, the extent to which the European dimension is focused on largely depends on the choices of the teachers and what they deem to be most interesting, relevant and useful for their students' needs. The majority of teachers who were interviewed believe that given the diversity of European nationalities in their classes, it is important to take a thematic approach to the topics they teach using examples and case studies from several European countries to illustrate the points being made. Teachers actively draw on students' knowledge and opinions of their own national cultural backgrounds and experiences in order to facilitate cross-national comparisons of the themes being explored. This enables students to hear multi-national viewpoints and to learn about common European trends, which teachers believe contributes to a broader European dimension to their education:

Mr. Holmes: You're getting students from different countries, […] and […] the backgrounds and the attitudes and so on that the students are bringing to your classes […] they may come with a Dutch view […] or a German view […] The whole seventh year course is about Europe […] and I do try not to be too British, you know I will try and take examples from other countries or ask [pupils] for their view on things […] to try and broaden out their awareness.

By encouraging students to think about and discuss both national and European perspectives teachers are making an attempt to avoid an ethnocentric approach and to promote national alongside European values. Teacher interviews revealed that the most important values were considered to be tolerance and open-mindedness and the ability to look at things from different angles. Teachers did, however, explain that this was rather challenging and that it is easier to focus more on examples from England (as this context was relevant to students) and to teach about the culture, perspectives and literature of their own national country (as teachers are more familiar with their own national perspectives).

Students at the European School have many opportunities to interact with one another both in and out of the classroom. Learning several European languages and being placed in mixed nationality classes from the third year of the secondary school enable the older students (i.e. those who are aged approximately 14 or older) to communicate and to make friends across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The small population of students at the school was also seen to be a factor influencing the forging of friendships across the language sections, especially by students who form an ethnic minority in the school. An Italian student made the following comment:

> There's only one other Italian male other than me so I'm a bit forced to mix with other people. I have friends from the English, Dutch, German, and French [language sections]. Everybody.

This does, however, raise the question as to whether or not students of different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds are forging friendships out of necessity (otherwise they might remain alone) rather than because they genuinely want to mix with each other. Analy-

sis of the findings suggests that overall students enjoy interacting and socializing and that an individual's personality was seen to be more important than their national origins.

There were, however, some reports of nationalistic rivalry, patriotism, and mocking of each others' cultural differences and accents. These were said to be most acute during competitive European sports games and during lively classroom debates about different national perspectives of history. A teacher at the school was concerned that these jokes might indicate that cultural contact with one another was confirming students' stereotypes and prejudiced views of one another, rather than dispelling them. However, most students maintained that this was harmless fun and that they also make fun of themselves. The evidence suggests that students feel they are in a comfortable, safe space in which they are able to test the limits and boundaries of each others' national and cultural views and attitudes. On the whole, peer cultures were congenial with very low level conflict and students believed that their social experiences together enabled them to develop tolerant and respectful attitudes towards each others' cultures.

Despite being in a school in which they are able to explore and learn about each others' cultures, students found it difficult to talk about their own national and cultural identities as they are not clear-cut. Students were uncertain as to how best to describe their identities. Most students identified with either one or two European countries, which were usually based on the countries their parents were from and the languages they speak. In addition, those students who had spent most of their lives in one particular country tended to feel a stronger affinity with that country. Students' identities were largely context-dependent as in different situations their identities would take on varying levels of depth and significance to them:

Penelope: I consider myself Italian, I have an Italian passport and I go every summer, all my family is in Italy so I consider myself Italian.

N.S.: And when you go there do you feel Italian?

Penelope: No that's the interesting thing. When you go to Italy you feel much more English, but when you're in England you feel much more Italian, so it's kind of difficult when you have two nationalities. […] It's also because my culture's mixed and so I can fit into some aspects of their culture but not everything and the same here.

Most of the students who described themselves as having one or two national identities also described themselves as European. Nevertheless, these students' sense of European identity was based on the fact that they come from different countries within Europe, reflecting a rather diluted and 'thin' type of European identity, as can be seen in Susan's explanation: 'I'm English and French and they're both European countries and therefore I'm European.'

There were also some students who did not identify with one particular country. They described themselves as being a bit from anywhere and everywhere and felt that they did not fit or belong anywhere in particular. These students found it easiest to describe themselves as European as it allowed for identification with a wider area rather than with a specific country:

Louisa: I don't feel like I'm from one particular place because from an early age I travelled, and I don't even feel English, although I am English. I maybe feel more Spanish because that's where I lived before and that's where all my friends are. It's really hard, but on the other hand […] wherever you go you can make a home there.

N.S.: Would you say that you're European?

Louisa: Yeah definitely. I don't feel English, I don't feel French, I don't feel Spanish, I don't feel Polish, I just feel European. […] I lived four years in each

country in Europe, nearly, so usually home is where you've spent more time and I just don't have a home that I come back to each time.

There were only two students who specified that they did not see themselves as Europeans. Andrew was Dutch by nationality, was born and lived in England and had roots in Asia and America. He had lived in America for a year and spent time in Singapore with relatives. He said: 'I wouldn't consider myself European because I can't really because I've got roots outside of Europe, I've got roots in Asia and in America [so] I'm from earth'. Another student, Tim, had lived in Tunisia for 12 years and had also lived in France. He had only been at the European School in England for three years (in the French language section) and identified most closely with Britain, which he attributed to having British parents who brought him up as English:

> **Tim:** I'm not anti-Europe, but I don't see myself as European.
>
> **N.S.:** Why is that?
>
> **Tim:** I lived for 12 years in Tunisia in North Africa, and I've always felt quite English […] I feel more British than European.
>
> **N.S.:** Do you have British parents?
>
> **Tim:** Yeah yeah. A lot of people have parents from different countries and obviously they will feel more European. But I don't, I've been brought up English.
>
> **N.S.:** Would you say that you feel any sense of belonging or attachment to Europe?
>
> **Tim:** No definitely not, but that's cos I consider myself British and I haven't really lived in European countries […] I've kinda moved about, I've been in Africa, so I haven't really experienced much here.

In their discussions about Europe and the EU, unlike the students at Darwin, most European School students were able to talk about their knowledge and opinions on European topics. Issues that they discussed included what 'European' means (with references to values, attitudes, people and cultures); the UK as a Member State (which was often seen to be one of the least European countries in the EU and much closer allied to the US); the eastern enlargement of the European Union; whether or not Turkey should join the EU; the Euro; and the rise of Islam in Europe. Overall, despite recognizing some of the problems of the EU and highlighting some of their concerns (for example, some students felt that further enlargement would be economically draining), students had positive and idealistic attitudes towards it and most associated being European with certain values and attitudes such as tolerance and respect for others, equality, human rights, and the ability to travel:

> **Billy:** I can see Turkey joining.
>
> **Joe:** I think it's really hard to explain cos I mean Europe is I suppose, most people would regard it as the United Nations.
>
> **Lucy:** Or united countries together.
>
> **Joe:** But I think Europe is in my view a good thing because it keeps the peace and brings people together I suppose and makes it all, everything, a lot easier than if we are all foreign.
>
> **Lucy:** Yeah […] I really like the idea of Europe […] I think it has quite a big power, kind of plays a big part in the world, which is good.
>
> **Joe:** It plays a big part, but I think also there is the fact that people are generally brought together by us, Eastern Europe and stuff.

As well as the idealism in the above dialogue around the concept of the EU as uniting nations and keeping the peace, it is also clear that students see the EU as a superpower that plays a significant role in the world. There is a hint of superiority and of Western Europe taking the lead and paving the way to a united and peaceful Europe. What is also interesting is that in almost every discussion on Europe, students would automatically talk about the EU, showing that their conceptions of Europe are dominated by this limited definition. Nevertheless, the very fact that students were able to talk about a variety of European topics and that they could discuss their multifaceted identities, suggests that the European School is providing a structure and environment in which these students from all over Europe are able to develop their knowledge and attitudes towards Europe and to negotiate and mediate their multiple national and European identities.

Conclusion

In this article, we have compared students' identifications with Europe at a state school (Darwin School) and a European School, both located in England and both with an intake of British or half-British students from middle-high socio-economic backgrounds. We have also looked at the extent to which these schools have national and European agendas as this might be a factor that influences student's identifications. The majority of young people in Darwin School developed ethno-national identities, which were based around familiar communities (e.g. London) instead of distant membership groups (e.g. Europe). Students did not identify with Europe and Europe did not seem to matter in their lives as it was seen as a distant place that had little to do with them. In addition, students were not really able to talk at much length about European issues. This may be attributed to the fact that Darwin School did not actively pursue the European dimension in education, preferring rather to emphasis British citizenship and the recognition of a diverse, multicultural society as part of that. Student's knowledge of

general political issues, however, was also quite poor, indicating perhaps a lack of personal interest in both national and European dimensions of citizenship and political issues. Despite the lack of the European dimension at Darwin School, some students (such as Owen in the example presented) partly identified with Europe simply because of the fact that Britain is in Europe and is part of the EU. This rationale indicates more of a cognitive recognition of one's 'status' (Osler and Starkey, 2005) rather than an affective sense of belonging or identity.

Young people at the European School, which explicitly promoted both national and European values and perspectives, developed ethno-national identities as well as European identities. Respondents had particularly close ties to countries in which they had lived for a significant time in their lives and to countries their parents were from. Some students expressed a desire to learn more about their 'home' countries. As such, students' European identities were usually either based on the fact that they had ethnic and national roots from European countries or because they had lived in several European countries. This reflects a diluted or 'thin' type of European identity. Those with backgrounds from beyond Europe struggled to a greater extent to identify with Europe. The majority of students were able to discuss European issues at quite some length and engage in discussion about Europe and the EU. Their views sometimes reflected an elitist and superior concept of the EU as a superpower.

The findings suggest that curriculum input and school ethos play a role in influencing students' identifications with Europe, since students at the European School, with a clearer European agenda, identified with Europe whereas students at Darwin, where a European dimension was largely absent, did not. Nevertheless, few students identified strongly with Europe and identification with ethnic and national roots was more dominant. In line with this, the findings also reveal the importance of other educational and social factors such as family background (ethnic/national roots) and the experiences that children have lived with their

families, particularly in terms of where they were born and where they have lived. In addition, it seems that exposure to and experiences with other Europeans is also an important factor contributing to identification with Europe as students at the European school have had more opportunities to be in contact with people from other European countries both in and out of school.

The fact that a European identity is not replacing students' national identities, even at the European School where the European dimension in education is emphasised, will be a very comforting thought to those concerned about the potential loss of national sovereignty and allegiance (even though the EU asserts that this has never been the intention). It also reveals that incorporating the European dimension in education (and through it promoting a sense of European identity) is a very complex and slow process and there is still a long way to go towards achieving this.

The findings also reveal some of the benefits of a European dimension in education such as students being able to engage in intellectual political debates about European issues, being able to think about and challenge stereotypes, and being comfortable around people from different European cultures and communicating in different European languages. These advantages suggest that the European dimension in education is a positive policy that should continue to be pursued. This is an important point given that policy agendas, particularly in England, have largely been turning away from the idea of the European dimension in education in favour of both national and broader international policy agendas (such as the global dimension in education). However, the value of the European dimension in education should be recognised and not ignored or forgotten. Both researchers and practitioners have quite rightly expressed concerns about the formation of a Eurocentrism and of course this must be avoided, but this does not mean that the policy on the European dimension in education should be avoided.

The findings do hint at some of the potential problems of the European dimension in education such as the potential development of Eurocentric and overly positive views about Europe and the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes and prejudice. This is not, however, the intention of the European dimension in education, and it seems as though policy-makers and practitioners need to be reminded of this and of the fact that these are challenges that need to be tackled directly by approaching these issues with students in the classroom. It is important to underline that the European dimension in education must be an inclusive policy, not a Eurocentric one.

There is still a need for a clearer policy on the European dimension in education at the national level and teachers need to be provided with training that will enable them to understand and think critically about how to incorporate the European dimension in their schools and classrooms. If teachers cannot recognise the value of the European dimension in education (as was clearly the case at Darwin school), then it is likely that students will not understand why Europe matters in their lives.

Given the development of European integration with all its ups and downs over the past decades and clear evidence of its impact across Europe and the world, especially with the current European financial crisis, it seems as important as ever that young people are able to engage critically with European affairs, in addition to national and broader international and global issues. The European dimension in education should therefore be placed more firmly on the curriculum agenda and balanced alongside national and international education agendas.

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Table I: A summary of the school profiles

	Darwin School	**European School**
School population	1,507 students	832 students
European curricular issues		
Languages	French, German, Spanish	English, French, German, Dutch, Italian
Geography and History	One unit on Europe (Italy or France) in Years 7 and 8 (years 12-14)	Both subjects taught in first language from age 13, entire Year 7 on Europe
Extra-curricular activities	Exchange visits and school trips to France, Germany and Spain but no school partnerships; several language magazines	Model European (Youth) Parliament; school trips to Italy and Czech Republic; celebration of cultural and Europe day