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THE ORIGINS OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN PEDAGOGY: FRIEDRICH AUGUST HECHT (HECHTIUS) AND HIS *DE RE SCHOLASTICA ANGLICA CUM GERMANICA COMPARATA*

Abstract

This article presents Friedrich August Hecht, also known as Hechtius (1735–1818), hardly recognizable in the international comparatist community, including Poland. Hecht is the author of a treatise titled *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata* (1795–1798), in which he juxtaposed the essential features of English and German education, thus making one of the first comparative analyses in the field of education. The form of this work and the methodical approach Hecht used prompt us to conclude that his work should be treated as pioneering in the field of pedagogical comparative studies. Consequently, the role of the work and study by Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris has been brought into question. This paper presents the key theses contained in Hecht's treatise and describes his original methodological approach, which found followers in the 20th century. A detailed analysis of Hecht's work has also enabled the identification of a potential area of further research, essential for a comprehensive study of his contribution to the development of comparative education research.

Key words: comparative education, school system, school curriculum, textbooks, teacher

Introduction

The search for the roots of comparative research inevitably directs our attention to Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris. Jullien de Paris is considered the father of comparative education,¹ but whether this hypothesis is legitimate is worth questioning. Doubts may arise when we turn to the article by Erwin H. Epstein, who presented the title of his paper on the aforementioned author in the form of a question: *Is Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris the “father” of comparative education?*² As an analysis of works on the history of educational comparativism reveals, humans have been interested in this subject since a long time. The roots of the discipline should hence be sought in earlier periods.

Nevertheless, the *oeuvre* of Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris, author of *Esquisse et vues préliminaires d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée* (*A Sketch and Preliminary View of a Work on Comparative Education*), should undoubtedly be considered a landmark in the field of educational comparativism. This treatise was published in 1817, and its author depicted the reliable source of knowledge about education and learning the facts and observations relating to it. Systematic collection, ordering and juxtaposition of the said facts and observations with each other are aimed at discovering certain principles and regularities constituting the educational system of a country. Jullien de Paris and his work are also noteworthy because the author, together with the team he established, applied a research technique adequate to his inquiries, based on the use of questionnaires to collect data in different countries. The results were presented in the form of tables and charts intended to help those in power to make decisions on matters concerning teaching and education.³

¹ B. Nawroczyński, *Przedmiot i metoda pedagogiki porównawczej*, “Studia Pedagogiczne”, 1972 vol. 26, pp. 5–8.

² E.H. Epstein, *Is Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris the ‘Father’ of Comparative Education?*, “Compare”, 2017 vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 317–331.

³ M. Głazewski, *Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris – od utopii heroicznej do pedagogiki porównawczej*, “Przegląd Pedagogiczny”, 2015 no. 2(13), pp. 27–30.

Given this approach, which is close to contemporary scientific standards, Jullien de Paris must certainly be considered a forerunner of comparative education research, although, by the time his work was published, several ventures had already emerged in this field. The collection of facts and observations about the education and teaching of youth in various regions and countries in Europe was already an area of interest for ancient thinkers and philosophers – for example, Xenophont's work *Cyropaedia*, dated around 360 BC. This novel biography of Cyrus the Great (557–530 BC), besides narrating historical facts and fictional elements, includes remarks on the education and teaching of Persians. The author cites the methods employed by the Spartan contemporaries of the Persians as the backdrop of his reflections.⁴

Due to the military conquests in the period of antiquity, scholars looking to acquaint themselves with educational practices in different parts of Europe had the opportunity to encounter ethnically and culturally foreign people. Julius Caesar's notes on the teaching of the Gallic or Germanic tribes attest to his interest in these issues. Notably, Caesar formulated his narrative in the context of observations of a broader, ethnographic nature, making his account more complete and multidimensional.⁵

First and foremost, however, information on and insights into the educational practices of other nations and communities were colported by word of mouth through individuals whose profession required movement, which also implied contact with representatives of foreign communities. This group consisted mainly of merchants and diplomats.

⁴ W.W. Brickman, *Prehistory of Comparative Education to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, "Comparative Education Review", 1966 vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 31–35. Among the ancient authors addressing the issue of education and teaching in their works, we can also point to Herodotus (484–525 BC), Cicero (106–43 BC) and Tacitus (55–120 BC).

⁵ Gajusz Juliusz Cezar, *O wojnie galijskiej*, digital edition: www.zrodla.historyczne.prv.pl, <http://historia.phw.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/Cezar,%20O%20wojnie%20galijskiej.pdf> (accessed: 15/04/2023).

In medieval times, they were also joined by students on their academic peregrinations.⁶

The knowledge accumulated in this way was deficient in terms of being systematic or objective. The accounts were fragmentary and often embellished with various details, hence the doubts regarding their authoritativeness. Throughout history, however, there has also been no dearth of travellers, suitably educated and experienced, whose message was much more structured and in-depth. The written accounts of Ibn Khaldun, Marco Polo, or Alexis de Tocqueville confirm that there was a keen interest in certain social circles at the time concerning issues that we would today regard as the starting point for comparative anthropological or sociological studies.

George Bereday's observation that over the centuries, interest in geographically distant countries and societies, including their educational methods, began to grow as nation-states developed seems interesting in this context.⁷ This process went hand in hand with the reformation and the accompanying spread of national languages in the sphere of religious worship. It was a sort of response to the earlier universalisation of the European political and cultural space with the influence of Rome and Latin. The "nationalisation" of politics and religion was a step towards societies at the time realising the cultural differences outlined between the different regions of Europe. This may also have been accompanied by a desire to accentuate such distinctiveness as a manifestation of one's identity and even national pride stemming from more or less independently developed solutions and practices, *inter alia*, in the field of education and teaching.⁸

It is worth pointing out at this juncture that the interest in education and teaching abroad was not driven solely by cognitive motives. On the one hand, of course, familiarity with these issues facilitated as-

⁶ M. Majorek, J. Wojniak, *Dwadzieścia lat "Erasmusa" – doświadczenia, perspektywy, wyzwania*, in: *Nietypowe migracje Polaków w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. A. Kar-gol, W. Masiarz, Kraków 2011, pp. 133–134.

⁷ G.Z.F. Bereday, *Comparative Method in Education*, New York 1964, p. 3.

⁸ J. Wojniak, *Szkoła – polityka – prawo. George Zygmunt Fijałkowski-Bereday i jego wizja edukacji*, Kraków 2019, p. 150.

sessing the quality or effectiveness of educational practices prevalent in one's country. No less important, and at times perhaps even more important, were more pragmatic premises, as there was an opportunity to imitate solutions already in use elsewhere. Such information, therefore, also came to be of interest to the rulers or clergies, whose ambition was to establish educational institutions, including academic ones. Thus, knowledge of educational programmes or organisational forms of the school system was undoubtedly valuable from their perspective. Moreover, cheaper or more effective educational solutions could contribute to strengthening a country's political or economic position in its relations with its neighbours and even more broadly, in the international arena. Certainly, this refers to times historically closer to us, when we can speak of a gradual widening of access to education and a movement away from treating education as a rationed good, available to only a narrow group of socially or economically privileged recipients.⁹

Hechtius and his achievements: the state of research

As dissertations throughout history have pointed out, threads of a comparative nature relating to the problems of education and teaching have emerged on the margins of their authors' mainstream considerations. It would therefore be difficult to attribute a scientific character to them.

It is, however, noteworthy that a treatise titled *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata* was published a dozen years before the work of Jullien de Paris. It is considered the first scholarly compendium devoted to comparative education¹⁰ by Friedrich August Hecht, who also used the Latin form of his name, Hechtius,¹¹ in his writings.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 151.

¹⁰ V. Lenhart, *The First Treatise in Comparative Education Rediscovered*, "Research in Comparative & International Education", 2016 vol. 11(2), pp. 222–226.

¹¹ V. Lenhart, *Summary of the Introduction*, in: V. Lenhart (ed.), *Die erste Schrift zur Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft/The First Treatise in Comparative Education. Fredericus Augustus Hechtius: De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata (1795–1798)*, Frankfurt a. M. 2015, p. 35. This form also appears in other authors' works analysing Hecht's oeuvre (see, *inter alia*, Ch. Adick, *Bereday*

German educator Volker Lenhart (1939–2023), associated with the University of Heidelberg, was a researcher who focused his interests on Hecht's activities and output. His work on Hechtius is available in both German and English,¹² thanks to Lenhart and his colleagues, who ensured that Hechtius' treatise could be read by a wider audience by translating it from Latin.¹³

But before Lenhart's studies, a brief mention of Hecht's work was made in an article by the American comparatist William Brickman.¹⁴ Lenhart also refers to this study, drawing attention to the inaccuracies in Brickman's text. They refer to the city where Hecht was active and where his dissertation was published; Brickman mentions it as Freiberg, while it actually was Freiburg in Saxony. Further, Lenhart speculates that Brickman was not directly acquainted with the work he was discussing, as he stated quite authoritatively that *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparatane* evoked interest in the British Isles. However, as Lenhart notes, the work is in the collection of the Scottish National Library in Edinburgh,¹⁵ so, it is reasonable to assume that information about Hecht's work reached there and received enough interest to prompt acquiring the reference item from its author's homeland.

and Hilker: *Origins of the 'Four Steps of Comparison' Model*, "Comparative Education", 2018 vol. 54, no. 1, p. 43).

¹² See footnote 10, and also: V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798) – The Beginnings of Historical-philosophical-idiographic Research in Comparative Education*, "Comparative Education", 2018 vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 26–34.

¹³ V. Lenhart (ed.), *Die erste Schrift zur Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft/The First Treatise in Comparative Education. Fredericus Augustus Hechtius: De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata (1795–1798)*, Frankfurt a. M. 2015. Students of the Institut für Übersetzen und Dolmetschen of the University of Heidelberg also contributed to this text. Seven parts of the dissertation are included, along with the author's commentary. Additional material included in the original, such as invitations to school ceremonies and lectures at which Hecht presented excerpts from his work, has been omitted in the translation. German and English language versions supplemented are by explanatory notes and editorial comments (V. Lenhart, *Die erste Schrift*, op. cit., p. 11).

¹⁴ W.W. Brickman, *A Historical Introduction to Comparative Education*, "Comparative Education Review", 1960 vol. 3, no. 3, p. 7.

¹⁵ V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, op. cit., p. 27.

A concise reference to Hecht's achievements also appears in the article *A Century of Comparative Education 1785–1885* by G. Hausmann and Walter Brewer. However, they limit themselves to quoting only the conclusion Hecht draws in his treatise.¹⁶

Concerning more recent studies, besides Lenhart, the name of Hecht in the already cited work on Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris is cited by Epstein.¹⁷ Epstein analyses the work of the German educator against the background of the achievements, *inter alia*, of Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812) – a philologist, historian, archaeologist and author of the essay *Von den Elementar- und Schulbüchern auf den beiden Königl. Schulen zu Westmünster und zu Eton* on textbooks used in Westminster and Eton schools published in 1780.¹⁸

References to Hecht's works and the research method he employed also appear in a 2017 article by Christel Adick, who refers to Lenhart's then-forthcoming work (already cited here) *The Beginning of Historical-philosophical-idiographic Research in Comparative Education*.¹⁹ At the same time, and referring to Lenhart's findings, Maria Manzon writes about Hecht's achievements in her article *Origins and traditions in comparative education: challenging some assumptions*. This paragraph dedicated to Hecht was titled *New pasts*²⁰ by the author, which, referring to Epstein's article, suggests the need to zoom in on the complex and multifaceted history of the process of crystallising the scientific character of educational comparativism and recognising the contributions of several figures who have been forgotten or marginalised against the achievements of Jullien de Paris.

At this point, it should be mentioned that the name of Friedrich August Hecht appears on Polish soil thanks to the research of Ewa Kula and Marzena Pękowska. These authors pointed out that Hecht's Latin

¹⁶ G. Hausmann, W. Brewer, *A Century of Comparative Education 1785–1885*, "Comparative Education Review", 1967 vol. 11, no. 1, p. 3.

¹⁷ E.H. Epstein, op. cit., pp. 324–325.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 324.

¹⁹ Ch. Adick, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁰ M. Manzon, *Origins and Traditions in Comparative Education: Challenging Some Assumptions*, "Comparative Education", 2018 vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 5–6.

work, published in 1795 and titled *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata*, “can be considered [...] as the first treatise on comparative education”.²¹ Hecht’s work, however, is not referred to in the textbooks on comparative education by Renata Nowakowska-Siuta and Jiří Průcha.²²

The overview of the studies presented above indicates that Hecht and his achievements in the field of educational comparativism have not been explored in depth outside this author’s homeland. Only Lenhart’s texts are devoted to the subject in its entirety, with Lenhart taking on a comprehensive approach to the key texts of Hecht, including editing and translating the aforementioned publication. Other researchers have confined themselves to brief mentions of the subject, relying mainly on Lenhart’s texts.

Hecht and his work

Friedrich August Hecht (1735–1818) was the head of a grammar school, a teacher and a classical philologist. The biographical data available on him are rather limited, but as Lenhart points out, Hecht was an expert on European humanism and the educational traditions embedded therein. Oriented to the leading intellectual trends of his era, he was familiar, *inter alia*, with the concept of “English Hellenism” and the achievements of Richard Bentley (1662–1742), a scholar of ancient Greek texts. He was also close to the ideas of German neohumanism,

²¹ E. Kula, M. Pękowska, *Pedagogika porównawcza. Przewodnik programowy dla studentów studiów stacjonarnych i niestacjonarnych wraz z bibliografią*, Kielce 2011, <https://wpp.ujk.edu.pl/wped/inst/dlastud/pliki/ipp.20120109.pdf>, p. 6 (accessed: 24/04/2023). The names of Polish researchers are included in the references to the quoted text by V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798) – The Beginnings of Historical-philosophical-idiographic Research in Comparative Education*. However, the author did not avoid spelling mistakes in the name of one of them and the title of the journal he referred to. The hyperlink he used is also inappropriate (p. 34).

²² See R. Nowakowska-Siuta, *Pedagogika porównawcza: problemy, stan badań, perspektywy rozwoju*, Kraków 2014; J. Průcha, *Pedagogika porównawcza: podstawy międzynarodowych badań oświatowych. Podręcznik akademicki*, Warszawa 2004.

especially in its philological layer, which was represented among others by Hecht's mentor Johann August Ernesti (1707–1781), who taught at the University of Leipzig, and the already mentioned Heyne, whose work on English schoolbooks were used by Hecht too.²³ However, Hecht distanced himself from neohumanism in philosophical-idealist terms, which was in turn represented by Wilhelm von Humboldt.²⁴

Hecht worked and created in Freiberg, mistakenly identified by some researchers with Freiburg. Located in Saxony, Freiberg was a mining town at the peak of its development at the time. In the process of industrialisation in this part of Europe, the changes taking place in nearby England played an important role. England also became for the people of Freiberg a model of innovation and modernity.²⁵ Perhaps these circumstances also made Hecht closely follow the changes occurring in England, including those in the field of education, which probably inspired his confrontation of English solutions with those applied in Germany, which he pursued in his professional activities.

Hecht's treatise appeared in print between 1795 and 1798 and comprised seven parts. Only a few copies of it have survived, one of which is in the Bibliotheca Albertina in Leipzig and the other in the Bibliothek of Princess Anna Amalia in Weimar (Die Herzogin Anna Amalia-Bibliothek in Weimar). Incomplete copies are available at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh and the New York Public Library.²⁶

The reflections contained in Hecht's dissertation referred, as the author himself signalled, to several areas. He mentioned textbooks, which not only formed the basis of young people's education but also made it possible to infer what subjects were considered the most important in a country. Moreover, he was interested in the style and manner of teaching, along with the number of hours allocated to lessons, as well as ways of disciplining young people and shaping their behaviour. He

²³ F.A. Hechtius, *De re scholastic aAnglica cum Germanica comparata*, in: V. Lenhart (ed.), *Die erste Schrift*, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁴ V. Lenhart, *Summary of the Introduction*, in: V. Lenhart (ed.), *Die erste Schrift*, op. cit., p. 36.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ V. Lenhart, *Summary*, op. cit., p. 35.

also undertook an analysis of the features of English schools which, in his opinion, seemed valuable and noteworthy and diverged from German habits.²⁷

Hecht devoted the first two parts of his dissertation, by far the most, to textbook issues. Probably due to his philological training and interests, he made English, German, Latin and Greek grammar textbooks, dictionaries and exceptions from annotated collections of works by ancient Roman and Greek authors the subject of his analysis. He discussed the analysis in part two of his dissertation, including a detailed listing of titles and authors' names, a commentary on the contents of the textbooks and the likely criteria for their selection. In part one, however, Hecht focused on the textbooks used to teach religion, geography and history. With this comprehensive view, the presentation of the textbook issue becomes more multidimensional and the picture of English and German schools that emerges seems more complete. One might ask why Hecht did not extend his analysis to mathematics and science textbooks. He was, after all, working during the Enlightenment, an era that greatly valued this area of knowledge and where several researchers sought to explore it. The answer lies in the specific educational profile that public schools pursued, and only these became Hecht's research area. During the period in question, public establishments followed a purely classical education programme; science and natural sciences were taught in only public schools.²⁸

For working with religious textbooks, a common method applied in England was to have students learn religious rules and prayers by heart. Similar trends prevailed in German schools, with the main difference being the language used in the textbooks. In the case of Germany, it was the national language, whereas in England, it was Latin. In this connection, Hecht noted that even if students knew the language well enough, an understanding of classical Latin would be insufficient, because the prayers were written in ecclesiastical Latin. This, in Hecht's opinion, meant a rather primitive form. He was also critical of the choice of religious texts, which contained dogmatic nuances diffi-

²⁷ F.A. Hechtius, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁸ V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, op. cit., p. 28.

cult for a young person to understand. The researcher doubted whether the mechanical assimilation of incomprehensible texts by the students and the recitation from memory contributed to the formation of a devotional attitude in them.²⁹

Regarding the teaching of geography and history in England, Hecht pointed out the low level of teaching materials. Concerning geography, he shed light on their haphazard selection and lack of elaboration, comparable to the substantive level of the German textbook by Johann Hübner (1668–1731), a renowned geographer and historian. The result of this approach was a poor orientation of English students in geography, with the English public not recognising this as a sign of ignorance, perhaps surprisingly. Knowledge of geography was not particularly valued in England, and students interested in these subjects acquired their knowledge informally, primarily through their individual studies at home.³⁰

Concerning the teaching of history in English schools, Hecht saw a certain weakness *vis-a-vis* German solutions, namely, an excessive focus on the ancient period, with the omission or significant limitation of issues relating to the present.³¹ The conclusion from this part of Hecht's reflections is that English youth do not use the best textbooks for their education and, thus, do not increase their level of knowledge, in either religion or other areas. The author attributed this to a certain amount of conservatism, manifested in their attachment to archaic educational materials and methods. Hecht credited the English with a belief in the perfection of their educational arrangements and a high level of satisfaction with their teachers, and consequently an aversion to any reform in this area.

Hecht found a similar conviction in the English concerning the level of teaching of Latin and Greek and the methods of working with students, which were no different from those of the disciplines discussed earlier. The key method of assimilation of knowledge was again by memory, followed by the recitation of extensive passages from ancient

²⁹ F.A. Hechtius, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

authors. Hecht described this approach as “less than encouraging” to learn about their work. He also pointed out that English students were forced to perform grammatical tasks inappropriate for their age. English schools, unlike their German counterparts, also lacked tools to facilitate the integration of the content being taught, to make it easier for young minds to absorb.³² In this context, what draws attention is Hecht the philologist’s modern approach to language teaching; he noted that any discussion on language teaching should consider the goals that should have been pursued in this area. A student must indeed be able to understand a Latin or Greek text, but it is equally important that they can express themselves in these languages, both in writing and speech.³³

The author’s remarks quoted here concerning the solutions used in England could be considered rather one-sided, especially since in the comparisons he made, the textbooks and methods of working with students in German lands were clearly considered more appropriate. However, criticisms have also been made of the selection of textbooks for German students. Hecht also noted that the content of some of them, especially concerning exceptions from the works of ancient writers and poets, was not age-appropriate for a young audience.³⁴

Hecht also criticised the organisation of the German school system. On the one hand, he recognised the negative role of the English attachment to tradition, resulting in a reluctance for educational reform; on the other hand, he considered the overreaching tendency of the Germans to reform the school system problematic. He summed it up by saying that in terms of textbooks, teaching methods and disciplining students, if the founders of English schools had been resurrected, they would have found them largely unchanged. The Germans, on the other hand, changed everything, sometimes too much. This applied to all the areas mentioned, including the rules of discipline, which were characterised by increasing laxity over the years.³⁵

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 127–128.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 142.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

Hecht devoted the next part of his reflections to the organisation of student work in both countries. The fundamental difference he found here was that for young Englishmen, the condition for progress in learning was fluidity in the transition between different activities, such as memory learning, reading, or physical exercise. Consequently, they spent less time in the school classroom, unlike the Germans, who spent most of their time during the day on school activities and the rest on games and recreational activities. The author recognised the consequences of the German approach, pointing to the boredom of young people who tried to “get out of lectures” at every opportunity.³⁶ The continuous, strenuous teaching led to little progress, and the knowledge German students acquired was fragmented and incomplete due to insufficient focus of attention and too little balancing of work in the school classroom with independent study. Competition, which characterised English students and “stimulated the spirit of young people”,³⁷ was also an important motivating factor for learning. Outstanding achievement was considered an honour, and the English set up rewards for students in recognition of the work put in to achieve above-average results, in line with the belief that “glory has great appeal”.³⁸

Another element of school organisation highlighted by Hecht is also indicative of his modern approach to the issue. This author was aware of how important it was for the development of young people and the effectiveness of teachers to maintain an appropriate balance between school effort and rest. He pointed out the relatively large number of school holidays in England: five weeks in August, a further four following Christmas and another three during Easter. Often, these periods were extended by an additional week or two, as well as occasional days off, such as the king’s birthday or coronation ceremony. Hecht saw a different trend in German schools, stressing that the extended learning period and lack of longer rest breaks did not serve the quality of teachers’ work either. This was because they required constant physical and mental exertion, exacerbated by teachers engaging in private tuitions

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 147.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 148.

³⁸ Ibidem.

besides their school work, compelled to do so by their insufficient salary at school. The remarks on the workload of German teachers sound quite up to date even today, with the author listing their many responsibilities, which consisted of not only preparing for lessons but also correcting students' work, organising school events, making work plans and drafting the various texts that their profession required. Moreover, a teacher responsible for education in different disciplines had to have knowledge of a group of academic disciplines, which required not only adequate preparation but also constant reading and reflection to improve their working methods. Here, Hecht pointed out the pitfall of the "cycle of endless work".³⁹

Besides the teaching workloads mentioned in Part VI of *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata*, Hecht also raised the issue of differences in salaries in English and German school systems. In the case of English teachers, unlike in Germany, he described salaries as very high, which was accepted by English society. He also drew attention to the career opportunities for English teachers who, given sufficient seniority, could apply for prominent ecclesiastical positions, including but not limited to episcopal dignity. Teachers in lower positions also enjoyed favourable financial conditions and were able to leave teaching or move into the academic sector at a relatively young age. German teachers, on the other hand, were forced to "grow old in one lifestyle and profession".⁴⁰

In the final, seventh part of his dissertation, Hecht addressed the key educational ideals of both nations. He noted that the English, unlike the Germans, did not look for rules on child teaching in books. They did not even value Locke's work enough to turn to it for guidance on educating youth. Instead, in the process of teaching, "more than any other nation", they adopted a strategy of following nature, on the principle that human beings are distinguished by their intellect and that the natural drive directs them to the life path right for them. It is therefore important to listen to nature's cues and not resist them. Thus, if a young person has manifested certain aspirations, teachers

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 153.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 154.

and parents should not suppress or extinguish them, but rather tone them down or guide them in such a way that the young do not stray under the influence of the “passions of their age”.⁴¹ Moreover, in an English family, young men were almost always allowed to make their own decisions, and in the case of misjudgement, parents refrained from criticism and allowed their sons or daughters to learn a lesson from something that seemed unwise or undesirable. Parents did not intervene to help repair the damage caused by their child’s poor choice. The author perceived that through such practices, English children were learning to be prudent in their actions and interactions.

It is difficult to unequivocally state whether the realisation of such ideals and educational practices would have been readily seen by Hecht in German society. Nor should he be credited with a tendency towards direct educational borrowing from England, as the English system was not a point of reference for him, nor was the German system.⁴² This author was far from considering the German school system perfect, a fact he explicitly mentions in the treatise under review.⁴³ However, he was far from formulating demands to model himself on specific solutions and practices in English schools, and such content is not present in the dissertation under review. While he acknowledged several positive developments in the domestic school system, he also noted their shortcomings, largely due to the differences in the wealth levels of the two societies. Germany, at the time, was not a country as rich as England; yet, as Hecht condemned, in some quarters of society, resources were recklessly squandered instead of being used for purposes that served the general good. The author also identified a weakness of the German school system as a greater tendency to finance newly founded schools than existing ones. He also felt, despite his criticism of too frequent and far-reaching changes in the school system, that there was room for reform in this area in Germany, but any actions had to be performed methodically and with a degree of caution, avoiding radical moves that could only make the existing situation worse.

⁴¹ Ibidem, pp. 154–155.

⁴² V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴³ F.A. Hechtius, op. cit., p. 148.

Hecht's methodological approach

Regarding the materials necessary for the analysis, Hecht gained access to the content of English textbooks by reading a study by German philologist Heyne.⁴⁴ Heyne received some 80 textbooks from King George III of England in the 17th century. The textbooks were used by students at the royal schools at Westminster and Eton. The king requested that Heyne, as an expert, analyse these materials from the viewpoint of their usefulness in improving the quality of Latin teaching in schools in the Electorate of Hanover, an area that was part of a personal union with the Kingdom of Great Britain between 1714 and 1837.

Using this material, Hecht collated English textbooks with those held by the library of the school he managed. He used accounts by German travellers to supplement his analysis with information on school organisation, curricula and teaching methodology.⁴⁵ Some of these travellers were Carl Gottlob Küttner – the author of *Letters from Ireland to Saxony (Briefe aus Irland nach Sachsen, 1785)* – and Gebhard Friedrich August Wendeborn – who wrote, *inter alia*, *A Journey through Some Provinces of Western and Southern England (Reise durch einige westlichen und südlichen Provinzen Englands, 1793)*. Hecht had never personally visited England and thus had no opportunity to compare the information and data collected with the state of affairs in the country under study, but his teaching experience greatly helped him in interpreting them.⁴⁶

In Hecht's treatise, we can find several passages that can be regarded as attempts to interpret phenomena he analysed with reference to a historical or cultural context. For instance, to explain the reluctance of the English to learn geography, Hecht presented a rather interesting notion: he traced the reasons for this to the experiences and lifestyles of the English. Here, he drew on the insights of Wendeborn, who

⁴⁴ C.G. Heyne, *Von den Elementar- und Schulbüchern auf den beiden Königl. Schulen zu Westminster und zu Eton*, "Göttingisches Magazin der Wissenschaften und Literatur", 1780 vol. 1(4), pp. 429–467.

⁴⁵ V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

spent many years in England and pointed out that the English had limited contact with other nations. This hypothesis may seem somewhat risky, given the mobility of this nation and its success in expanding the borders of its colonial empire. However, if one considers Hecht's contention that the international contacts of the English were limited to trade or military conquests, such pragmatic objectives of most foreign expeditions left no room for interest in culture or educational practices abroad.⁴⁷ Thus, the expeditions of the English to even the farthest corners of the globe were intended to serve a purely practical, even commercial purpose, rather than to broaden the intellectual horizons of their participants, gathering knowledge about other countries, continents and their inhabitants, or popularising this knowledge among a wider audience in their own country.

To explain the peculiarities of educational practices in the English school, Hecht also referred to attitudes, in his view, characteristic of that society. He emphasised the English people's attachment to freedom of expression, pointing out that they are primarily guided by their judgement in their assessment of reality, disregarding authority. Youngsters were also praised by their parents and teachers for the same, albeit with some leeway; students were not allowed to express their opinions on lessons, the way they were taught, school rules, or disciplinary measures. The English considered freedom of expression and the courage to present their views as a fundamental way of protecting English freedom. In English society, "not who speaks, but what is spoken" was crucial. Thus, neither age and social position nor the office held was considered a natural source of authority, as it was determined by the weight of the arguments used in the discussion: "Common sense, as they call it, is considered the highest mental virtue, and this attitude explains why so many of this nation's representatives have the capacity for sober judgement in both public and private matters".⁴⁸

According to Hecht, the liberal socialisation he characterised, with its commitment to freedom of speech, translated into the attitudes exhibited by the English in various spheres of their daily functioning.

⁴⁷ F.A. Hechtius, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

From this viewpoint, therefore, Hecht's analysis can be seen as one of the first works to include a national character perspective in the interpretation of educational phenomena. This is because the author was referring here to the culturally conditioned set of factors determining certain attitudes and behaviours observed in a nation and how these influence the shape of the institutions the nation creates, including but not limited to the institution of the school.

Summary

In light of the analysis of the treatise *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata* by Friedrich August Hecht, it seems difficult to maintain the thesis that the origins of comparative studies in education are closely linked to Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris and his achievements. This author's work is certainly ground-breaking, but the genesis of a systematic, scholarly reflection on the different education and teaching solutions in individual countries can be found to precede the publication of *A Sketch and Preliminary View of a Work on Comparative Education*.

Admittedly, concerning Hecht's work, it would be difficult to speak of the development of a coherent methodology for comparative research in the modern sense. The author has limited himself to compiling the similarities and differences observed in English and German schools. He derived common features and similar solutions, including those in terms of teaching subjects, from European humanist traditions to religious teaching from the Christian tradition. The substrate for the differences, in turn, was the aforementioned cultural background elements, located in the extracurricular reality. Lenhart points out that Hecht even developed detailed comparative criteria for his analysis of textbooks.⁴⁹

The critical assessment of Hecht's text may also be due to the title of his treatise being too broad and thus, too general. It is also difficult here to speak of a comparison between two different educational systems; when Hecht's work was written, no fully stabilised, systemised educational solutions were available. Moreover, Hecht focused only on

⁴⁹ V. Lenhart, *The First*, op. cit., p. 224.

a certain slice of school reality, referring neither to lower elementary schools, church schools or institutions organised by craft guilds. Information on girls' education is also missing here. The English schools at Westminster and Eton that he analysed were elitist establishments for male youth from privileged families, a kind of forging ground for parliament and state offices. Lenhart concludes that Hecht, due to his inability to personally ascertain the realities of education in the British Isles, may have mistakenly considered these schools to be representative examples of the English school system and was consequently unaware of what teaching was like in the average institution. The accounts of German travellers to which the author referred as essential sources of information were also not entirely authoritative. One of these studies was written in the form of fictional letters, popular during the Enlightenment, making the phenomena and events described difficult to verify.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Brickman notes that Hecht's work has set the stage for further comparative research in education.⁵¹ Moreover, according to some researchers, the roots of the methodological perspective described as interpretative can be found in the treatise *De re scholastica Anglica cum Germanica comparata*. Hecht is credited with initiating an explanatory approach referred to as *historical-philosophical-qualitative*.⁵² This is because, unlike Jullien de Paris, Hecht's focus was not on the collection of data but on their interpretation. He adopted, as the aim of his intellectual pursuits, an understanding of the historical and social contexts and significance of education in England and Germany of his time. Jullien de Paris, on the other hand, sought to discover and clarify the role of the variables that guaranteed the smooth functioning of the national educational systems taking shape in his time.

Given the method of argumentation Hecht used to explain the educational phenomena he analysed that were characteristic of the English school, it should also be stated that this author was the forerunner of the concept developed in the 20th century by Michael Sadler (1861–1943), according to which the nature of a given nation determines the specif-

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, op. cit., p. 26.

ics of a national educational system. Sadler's focus was on what creates a broad socio-cultural background for the school system and provides the study of educational systems with a multidimensional character.⁵³ His approach is characterised in the literature as historical-comparative, combining intellectual and methodological aspects, complemented by a context in the form of the social environment. He attributed a fundamental role in the formation of the latter to the spiritual strength of the nation, applying terms such as "national temperament", "national character" and "national goals and ideals".⁵⁴

Notably, Hecht made comparisons of educational phenomena and facts not only geographically, as the title of his dissertation on English and German school systems indicates. Although the author emphasised the importance of comparing the educational conditions of different nations, he also pointed out the need to describe the development of the school system within a nation, at different stages. He considered the study of education and teaching throughout the history of a nation to be "certainly beneficial"⁵⁵ and advocated the same. He thus saw a common starting point for research in comparative education and educational history.⁵⁶ However, this aspect of Hecht's work and the writings addressing it constitute a separate area of research that deserves in-depth analysis.

⁵³ A.M. Kazamias, *Forgotten Men, Forgotten Themes: The Historical-philosophical-cultural and Liberal Humanist Motif in Comparative Education*, in: R. Cowen, A.M. Kazamias (eds.), *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, London–New York 2009, p. 44.

⁵⁴ M.E. Sadler, *How Far Can We Learn Anything of Practical Value from the Study of Foreign Systems of Education?*, in: G.Z.F. Bereday, *Sir Michael Sadler's Study of Foreign Systems of Education*, "Comparative Education Review", 1964 vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 309–310.

⁵⁵ F.A. Hechtius, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–121.

⁵⁶ V. Lenhart, *Hechtius (1795–1798)*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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