

## **Minority Schooling in the CEE Countries 2000-2003**

Most of the studies and researches on minority schooling in Europe are focused on the government policies. Since education is usually organised at the national level, minority education looks like a responsibility of the relevant national government. Studying minority schooling and educational policy means therefore studying the educational policies of the European governments from a special viewpoint.

This study approaches minority schooling from a different starting point. Minority schooling, for the authors of this study is an issue of the minorities themselves, Minority educational policies, therefore, are policies applied and implemented by the minorities (their communities and their leaders) to pursue their educational opportunities.

Ten minority communities and their educational institutions have been studied in Central Europe. the region.

They were: the Polish community in the Vilnius region (Lithuania); the Gagauz community in Gagauz-Yeri (Moldavia); the Hungarian communities in the Carpathian region (Ukraine) and in the Komarno region (Slovakia); the Slovenian community in the Karinthia region (Austria); the German community in South Tirol (Italy); the German-Polish community in the region of Frankfurt am Oder and Ślubice (in Germany and in Poland); the Hungarian communities in the regions of Oradea, Odorheu-Seculesc and Miercurea Ciuc (Romania). Field studies have been prepared on the official policies of the national governments and their effects on minority educational opportunities; the organisational structures and the political cultures of the minority communities with a special stress on their political strategies in human rights, language and education issues.

Thirteen educational establishments (mostly institutions of higher education, vocational training and lifelong learning) have been visited in those regions.

The Baltic branch of the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (Latvia), the Universitas Studiorum Polona Vilnensis in Vilnius (Lithuania), the State Gagauz University in Comrat (Moldavia), the Invisible College in Komarno (Slovakia), the Hungarian Teacher Training College in Beregovo (Ukraine), the Teacher Training College of the Babes-Bolyai University in Odorheu (Romania), the Romanian branch of the Hungarian Modern School of Business Administration (Odorheu, Romania), the Hungarian University of Transsylvania in Miercurea Ciuc (Romania), the Christian University of the Partium in Oradea (Romania), the Vasile Goldis Western University in Arad (Romania), the Hungarian Institute at the University of Maribor (Slovenia), the Free University of Bolzano (Italy), and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt-Odera (Germany) together with its counterpart, the Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice (Poland).

Histories of births, changes and restructurings have been collected by semi-structured interviews with the “change agents”. Institutional statistics have been gathered and visual data have also been collected during our on-campus visits. The histories on institutional narratives have been analysed to define typical roles and actions and to understand the on-going power struggles behind them. The following lessons have been learned.

The political transformation of 1989/90 marked a clear division between the “old guards” and the “new generation” of minority political leaders. The new generation (the generation of the consolidation) which stepped into the position of the “old guards” has been trained under the new political conditions and realities. The minority leaders of the new generation understands the new realities of free market and parliamentary democracy. They support the partnership of their national states with the Euro-Atlantic structures in the hope that those structures may offer international publicities for their minority problems. The new generation of the minority leaders drive for parliamentary representation. They interpret the problems and demands of their minority communities as issues of the parliamentary politics (as party politics).

The educational policies of the new generation of minority leaders are characterised by the followings:

- a local /regional /language identity of the (minority) community must be developed;
- minority issues are interpreted as parts of the economic and social disadvantages of the given regions;
- minority education has the central function to strengthen the local identity of the community by relevant vocational training and employment opportunities;
- minorities need their autonomous systems of education within and as part of the relevant national system of education;
- the strategic goal of the minority education and schooling is integration into the majority society via separation from it.

This policy of education is characterised as instrumental. It interprets the minority issues in an instrumental way (minority problems and demands as outcomes of regional stagnation or democratic deficits) and looks for the solutions by the instruments of economic development or political democratisation.

The educational policies of the “new generation” has already been described in the literature as strive for more political autonomy and regional decentralisation. In the present study, however, we have found a third generation of minority politicians between the above mentioned two (old guards, new generation). This generation (the generation of the transformation) started its political career in the late 1960s under the influences of the turbulent years of that decade (Hungarian revolution, Vietnam war, Paris student unrest, the spring of Prague) and became silent oppositions within the totalitarian regimes. They have been trained under the political conditions of those regimes and developed their political skills and competencies under they years of the the Pan-European Picnic at the Austrian-Hungarian border, the Velvet Revolution (Czechoslovakia), the fall of the wall in Berlin.

They have alternative visions for the recent economic political developments in Central Europe which go back to the long histories of the XXth century oppositions in the region (civic movements, self-governance in the economic as well as the civic spheres, socialist democracy, the socialisation of the production, “third-way movements”). Their educational policies are characterised by the followings:

- the minority community must be identified historically (as a nationality); its cross-border cooperations have to be built on the traditional sub-national (rather than trans-national) ties;
- the central function of the minority education and schooling is strengthening the cultural and political identity of the local community;
- the educational institutions must be multicultural in order to form shelter to the various local communities living in the region;
- the educational institutions may not necessarily be state sponsored; they could be supported locally and governed also by the local minority communities.

All these are elements of a “symbolic” educational policy. It is symbolic in the sense that it is presented by symbolic phrases and needs a kind of “hermeneutics” to understand their hidden messages. It is symbolic also in the sense that minority education is an arena for civic political actions. The educational establishment favoured by the third generation is called regional or community minority education. It is an institution established by civic initiatives and under local community demands in the years of political vacuum after 1989/90.