



EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND MINORITIES

Presentation delivered during the ECMI Summer School 2013 by

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KEY ISSUES

- Definition: who are the minorities?
- Perceptions
- Political will
- Language competences
- Funding
- Integration/Separation



EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM & MINORITIES

Tricky questions:

What education is necessary for minorities to succeed?

Would classes in mother tongue be enough for the implementation of the minority education rights?



ROLE OF THE STATE

- States need to take into consideration and implement the FCNM and the Language Charter to prohibit discrimination and encourage minority rights. Transfer of practices from one country to another might not always be suitable
- Priorities of states in the field of education are not always compatible with the priorities of the different cultural groups, which apart from the economic prosperity are also focused on the preservation of their language, traditions, and culture
- ‘Hierarchy’ of languages sometimes is based on pragmatism – usefulness in economic terms and for the labour market. But promoting certain languages over others can create conflicts.
- International legislation protects cultural and linguistic right, but the international education policies are concerned mostly with contributing to the rise of the socio-economic status of people (development of skills, increased literacy, advanced education)



POLITICS & EDUCATION

- **In Turkey** the definition of minority appeared challenging the attempts for creation of a unitary state. Hence many people were afraid of revealing their minority status. This subsequently created an obstacle for registering student in minority schools, because origin should be disclosed
- **In Tunisia** the situation is similar to Turkey - minorities were seen as anti-nationalist force and even many historical monuments were destroyed in the process of building the Tunisian identity
- **In USA** the discussion about minorities is avoided – seen as encouraging separation (fear of division)



CULTURAL & SOCIAL-ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- Educational systems that guarantee the cultural rights of minorities cannot be considered good if they do not guarantee social-economic opportunities and social inclusion/integration in the society.
- Educational systems need to provide both education for minorities, and education *about* minorities (intercultural education, anti-discrimination, overcoming stereotypes)
- States need to develop educational policies that provide simultaneously cultural rights and social-economic opportunities
- Schools need to accommodate the 2 key issues: **Preservation of cultural diversity & Educational/Economic advancement**



POSSIBLE MODELS

- Schools need to ensure that cultural diversity is preserved while students are equipped the necessary knowledge and skills for the labour market and the social-economic environment.
- Bilingual education could be a good model, but:
 - What happen when there are more than two cultural groups present?
 - Would it introduce only language classes or also classes in history, literature, traditions of the other culture? In which language other subjects would be thought (e.g. chemistry)?
 - What curricula/educational system should be followed?
 - Who will teach?
- **Libya:** The education system is in Arabic, but the Amazigh have a number of education and culture clubs, which are active and have influence. This allows that people preserve their mother tongue, but also become bilingual and integrated in the “public system”



THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

- Community/ family/ pupils should be able to decide which form of education to pursue: education in mother tongue or in majority language.
- The state should offer possibilities without making the choice restrictive
- Integration through education should respect the cultural diversity and not enforce assimilation



DIVERSITY VS. ASSIMILATION

- **USA:** language policy for new immigrants – first years a part of the education is delivered in their mother tongue and gradually the instructions become only in English
- **Finland:** about a decade ago, at my high school there were 18 different nationalities. Due to the diversity of languages in the same class an international book was given to be read in the mother tongue of pupils who would thereafter discuss it in English. All languages would have the same status. Today, to have equal opportunities, people have to learn the majority language.
- **Singapore:** due to the numerous nationalities, English was adopted as a language of instruction. Culture classes are provided at school in order to understand diversity and to promote tolerance.



MINIMUM STANDARTS

- Effective implementation of international law
- Education on minorities
- State must respect the decision of the community
- State recognition of diversity
- Adequate funding

