

Escaping the dilemma of minority students and parents

**Notes on the importance of quality assurance in advocating
educational rights of minorities**

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General points/arguments

- Quality assurance in education is a major tool of minority rights advocacy
- Empirical investigation of educational inequalities should be considered as relevant from a minority and human rights perspective
- Contextual approach:
 - cases where minority language education was internally recognized and institutionalized
 - extended system of minority language education exists

Cases in Europe

- Romania: 2011 Law on Education
- Belgium (with a German language system next to Dutch and French ones),
- Switzerland (with French, German and Italian language systems),
- Finland (with a Swedish language system),
- the United Kingdom (with Gaelic language education),
- Spain (with Basque and Catalan languages),
- Moldova, Latvia, Estonia (with Russian language education),
- Lithuania (with Polish and Russian languages),
- Slovakia and Serbia (with Hungarian language education).

The *dilemma of minority parents and students*

- Minority language exists (and it is substantial) but it is of significantly and systematically lower quality
- Functions of minority language education
 - Language preservation and reproduction
 - Shaping individual life chances
 - Dilemma: when social mobility and desire for language preservation come to odds
 - Minority parents prefer both should chose between (unwanted) linguistic assimilation and marginalization

Argument

- Dilemma = not only research topic but problematic from human rights perspective
- They do not have to institutionalize full scale minority language education but if they did so, they should provide equal opportunities
- Otherwise they discriminate minority students
- Relevant topics:
 - Manuals
 - Teachers
 - School equipment
 - School performances of minority students
 - Opportunities to learn minority language

Best practice: PISA if properly designed with representative subsamples

| Sample type | Countries/linguistic communities | Total number of 15 year old students* | Number of students who had been tested |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Standardised subsample for minorities | Belgium – Germans | 625 | 577 |
| | Italy – Germans | 3915 | 1495 |
| | Switzerland – Italians | 2493 | 325 |
| | Spain – Basque speakers | 3699 | 1123 |
| | United Kingdom – Gaelic speakers | 3863 | 411 |
| | Finland – Swedes | 3647 | 1469 |
| No special standard subsamples; over 500 students tested | Latvia – Russian speakers | 2280 | 904 |
| | Estonia – Russian speakers | 1696 | 715 |
| | Republic of Moldova – Russian speakers** | 5272 | 988 |
| No special standard subsamples; under 500 students tested | Lithuania – Russian speakers | 1250 | 180 |
| | - Poles | 1539 | 180 |
| | Romania – Hungarians | 7033 | 227 |
| | Serbia – Hungarians | 816 | 54 |
| | Slovakia – Hungarians | 3686 | 313 |