

THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE HUNGARIAN ECLESIASTIC EDUCATION IN ROMANIAN IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENT-DAY EDUCATIONAL INSTABILITY

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*Abstract:*In the course of the 30 years since the establishment of the Hungarian confessional schools in Transylvania, there have been a series of changes in the population's expectations of this form of education and fluctuations in their performance.

The high expectations for confessional schools seem to have come from the high level of religiosity of the population in this region. The literature suggests that the success of religious education everywhere correlates positively with the level of religiosity of the population in that area.

However, compared to other post-communist states (Hungary, Poland), where denominational education institutions became schools of excellence and appreciated in public opinion, in Transylvania these Hungarian confessional schools, with few exceptions, assumed the role of being an additional mobility chance for pupils with unfavorable school results. In this paper I will analyze both the causes and the possible consequences of this phenomenon.

*Keywords:*Confessional education, religiosity, school performance

The ideology of the mass education supports the idea of the equality and more precisely that each and every person in the frame of the Democratic system regardless of nationality, system of values and religion has the right to equal chances to learn to teach, and to benefit of all these aspects of these concepts which are related to the equity. By other words to the equality of the chances In the early 1990s in Romania and in general in the ex-communist countries the confessional schools were founded and reorganized with the objective to offer chances of value transmission, meaning the values of the churches. The basic idea which was behind the reorganization of these institutions was to offer an alternative education which not only does transmit information but also has its purpose to transfer the religious values towards the younger generations.

The goal with the confessional schools with Hungarian as educating language was to strengthen the position and the number of the Hungarian schools across Transylvania. In the beginning the restructuring of these institutions in Romania had to face a lot of organizing difficulties legislative difficulties and lack of credibility which were in that time considered to be only a characteristic for the first period. Ever since many of these problems have been solved or the situation has significantly improved or in some cases the problems disappeared completely. Here we referred especially to the problems belonging to the legal issues but what remains as a problem and became even worst was the lack of credibility from the part of the population towards these institutions.

In the researches which I concluded previously I tried to underline the gravity of these problems which we believe that would be solved as the religious values of the population would be more authentic (Szilagyi-Flora, 2011). Taking into account that since the beginning of the 1990s our researches demonstrated the fact that the most important motivation of the parents who sent their children to confessional schools was to offer a chance to their children to get an education which is in concordance with their own religious beliefs.

The more recent researches have demonstrated that this thing is not as simple as it seems to be at first sight (Szilagyi-Gyorbiro, 2014). Our researches have also demonstrated that the problem had a rather different aspect. It seems that there has been an unspoken motivation from the side of the churches to establish a network of educational institutions with the most important purpose to help the people who were traditionally the followers of these churches to get higher positions in the society. With other words we can say that as the typically rural marginalized but strongly religious groups with stronger links to the churches needed a channel of social mobility and the network of the confessional schools was supposed to serve as such a channel.

Typically this would have meant that children from rural areas weed a rather unfavorable social and economic status and weed typically undereducated parents in comparison with the national statistics in that period could have a chance to go to high schools and later on to universities competing with their counterparts who were typically urban better off and less religious social entities.

Following this explanation we can understand easily why the first institutions were high schools colleges and universities. Simply because these were the levels in the educational systems where the children coming from the other above mentioned social entities could not get to be enrolled. Traditionally such children went to professional high schools where do usually received a diploma

which entitled them to be physical workers in blue collar jobs. The only aspects of the mobility were that they probably were not employed in the agriculture as the majority of their parents but could move into cities working in industry, commerce and services. However we cannot consider this a real social mobility because these are rather results of the centralized industrialization and urbanization forced by the previous communist regime.

The fact that the education and the social mobility channels are strongly related to each other is not new at all for the sociologists and for the experts in the educational studies (Durkheim, 1974). An other classical theory which has also been confirmed in a number of empirical research is that the level of education of the parents plays a key role in the educational performance of their children The best and the most comprehensive description of these belongs to the classical French sociologist Bourdieu (1977)

He describes the process how undereducated parents` children suffer when they try to get enrolled into good quality and performing school. He mentioned the hidden role of the social capital and even more in his view the French middle and elite classes created their own code system with verbal codes, ways of behavior and other so called soft aspects which are real barriers for the children coming from lower classes trying to get enrolled in such schools (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu was also rather critical towards the French school system as he claimed that despite all the declared goals and French republican principles like the importance of the equality the educational system simply cannot compensate the various advantages and disadvantages which have social origins

The situation which we find in Romania, more precisely that in the case of the Hungarian confessional schools, is that the performance of the students is significantly worse compared with the state run high schools, Pusztai (2008) shows that in the case of the Hungarians in Romania, except Satu Mare county we can find everywhere worst results in the case of the confessional schools. Such comparisons are possible in Romania at the high school leaving exam results are publicly available and so it is very easy to compare these of results.

Pusztai (2008) has also carried out a research with the same methodology in Ukraine and in Hungary, especially in the border zones and she found surprisingly, that in the cases of these two countries the performances of the confessional schools tend to be better compared to the state run institutions. These results (which were very surprising as they have been first published) seem to be plausible through the theory of Coleman who claims that if we put together a group of children who share the same ethical moral and religious values, such social group would be highly integrative, meaning that it will reduce the distances in every aspect and they are able to raise the performance of the pupils coming from families with disadvantage social and economic status (Coleman,1988).

In the case of Hungary and Ukraine, when the researchers checked for the family backgrounds of the students, they came to the conclusion that about 60% came from middle class families and the remaining 40% could catch up to the level of these pupils right as a result of those common values. So Coleman`s theory proved to be right in this case

In the case of Romania, however surprising it is, we can find a similar process as we mentioned above. The social and economic status of the pupils enrolled into professional education is rather low compared to the national average and even if there are pupils from better educated and wealthier families, Coleman`s theory seems to work again and even if these pupils have a higher amount of social and intellectual capital, in this group where the values are commonly shared their performances tend to get closer to the performance of the pupils with disadvantaged family backgrounds.

It requires an explanation, why can we identify such a big difference in terms of family backgrounds in the case of pupils in confessional education in Hungary and in Romania. These differences could be better understood after the results carried out by Pusztai (2006) which were carried out in Hungary and through the researches with a similar methodology carried out by me among the ethnic Hungarians in Romania.

It turned out that in Hungary the most important factors which convince the parents that the confessional education is the right choice for the pupils was that they believe that it was important that their children have around them classmates with similar ethical and religious values. Beyond this, the parents with a lower socioeconomic status said that they believed that the confessional education can provide their children such a level of knowledge and education which they cannot offer for their children because of their low level of education.

In Romania these two factors also appeared as the most influential priorities but in addition I could identify another aspect which was missing in the case of Hungary. It was a rather widespread assumption shared by the families with lower socioeconomic status that the confessional education and all the professional institutions which are connected to it can also provide financial benefits in the form of free school meals, free books, foreign exchange programs, food packages and many other aspects which could financially help the families and the children.

We could not certainly identify the source of these assumptions but these clearly explains why so many families with disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds chose the confessional education and as a result the number of such families was much higher in these schools in Romania compared to Hungary.

To put into a context the evolution of the social background of the children studying in confessional institutions I carried out quantitative research with longitudinal aspect, checking for the family backgrounds in the case of the Hungarian professional schools in the year 2004 and repeating it on a similar sample in 2014. As you can see in the **table** below the most dominant tendencies are the following:

	Year 1998	Year 2011
Qualified blue collar workers	41.4%	28.1%
Unqualified blue collar workers	28.0%	24.5%
Mid-level intellectuals	6.3%	4.2%
Intellectuals	8.6%	1.6%
Guest workers working abroad	2.4%	33.2%
Employed in other sectors	13.3%	8.4%
Number of families included in the research	318	281

Table nr.1. The distribution of the pupils enrolled in confessional high schools in Oradea, according to the profession of their fathers

- we can find significantly less children in 2014 compared to 2004 whose families or at least one of the parents were intellectual and or had a university level degree
- the number and the share of the children whose parents were employed in the sectors of industry and agriculture was more or less on the same level so we could not even find any significant changes in these values
- the number of children whose parents were unemployed for at least 6 months was somewhat lower in the sample from 2014 compared to the sample from 2004.
- a very sharp tendency was that in 2014 we could identify about 40% or may be somewhat more percentage of children who had at least one parent working abroad which means that almost the half of a typical class doesn't have both parents at home which is likely to affect many aspects of the children's development

This last aspect has raised as series of new questions. There are many things that we don't know regarding the situation and especially the future of the migrants who left Romania to work abroad. There is even a bigger uncertainty as a large share of these migrants work in the United Kingdom and it is not known yet if they will be forced to return or to move to different countries as the United Kingdom will leave the European Union.

We don't know how long these parents will stay abroad we don't know how their system of values will be shaped on the long-term-wether they will keep their original values as it happened in many cases like in the case of the Turks in Germany, or will they adapt to the local culture and assuming that they had a conservative value system maybe it will get someone more liberal.

However there are some things that we clearly now. We know that they regularly send financial aid to their families and as a result we can assume that the financial difficulties of these families are significantly less common. We also know from other researches (Sandu,2010) that the two main purposes over the financial support are the covering of the consumption costs but also plans to invest.

it is a very important new tendency that the confessional schools intend to face the situation and to realize that they should not offer the same theoretical education like the state run institutions do. As a result we can observe a tendency that these confessional institutions put more and more emphasis on the practical education and on the entrepreneurial preparation of their pupils. This could be very useful if the incomes of the parents realized abroad will get to be invested and these children will have the basic management and professional skills to me make this family run businesses successful and sustainable.

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