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# RIGHT TO EDUCATION POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES



**Türk Eğitim Derneği**

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**RIGHT TO EDUCATION  
POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

Edited by Emin Karip

**TÜRK EĞİTİM DERNEĞİ**

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## EDUCATION, SOCIAL COHESION AND IDEOLOGY

Stephen P. Heyneman

### Background

Many know that I spent a fair amount of time (22 years, between 1976 – 1998) contributing to the education lending strategies of the World Bank. Those strategies called for empirical substantiation of a general theory of human capital: that investments in education would lead to greater knowledge and skills, and these would lead to greater labor productivity, to economic growth, and in turn, to development. This theory functioned quite well in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and was responsible for a consensus on the importance of education across bilateral and multinational development assistance agencies. The utility of the theory was challenged however, by experience in the former Soviet Union in 1991.

I remember the moment it happened to me. I was in the office of Professor Davidov, the President of the Russian Academy of Education. When I entered his office he was on the phone, and he was literally shouting at someone. At the end of his conversation, he slammed down the receiver in frustration. What is the problem? I asked. He replied: 'We don't know what they are teaching out there'. And that is when it hit me.

Post-communist authorities reduced central control of all kinds. They offered choice to parents and local communities, supported religiously-affiliated schools with public resources, encouraged a flowering of pedagogical specializations based on classical tradition (gymnasia, lyceums), student interests (foreign languages, dance), religious beliefs (Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim), pedagogical philosophy (Steiner, Montessori, Dewey, Schiller) and economic demand (business education and economics). These choices were radical by most standards, and were put into place in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with an enthusiasm and speed similar to that of the privatization of state-owned enterprises. Freeing education from central control was interpreted as a requirement to prevent totalitarian ideology from re-emerging: break it quickly and thoroughly so that it cannot be put back together.

What was Professor Davidov worried about? The Russian Federation is composed of 89 regions (including Chechnya). These consist of 55 oblasts and krajs, two metropolitan areas, 21 ethnic republics and 11 autonomous regions. In 40 of the 89 regions minority populations are so large and important that they generate debates over what language should be used in instruction and what history should be taught. In former Communist countries, minorities had often

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*Stephen P. Heyneman*

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been forcefully moved. Those who spoke German or Korean were moved to Siberia and Central Asia. Jews, Cossacks, Buriats, Poles and many others were re-located to distant and unfamiliar regions. These displaced peoples have had no genuine political voice or authority over matters of what to teach the young. Today, these peoples have both voice and authority, and among their first temptations has been to use the school curriculum to right old wrongs, to teach their children about the oppression to which they had been subjected. The lament, 'we don't know what they are teaching out there' was a sign of danger. It was a sign that some groups could be teaching lessons which might exacerbate ethnic tension and lead to social instability.

Was this fear on the part of Professor Davidov justified? I think so. Here for instance is a passage from a 1994 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook in Bosnia:

Horrible crimes committed against the non-Serb population of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Serb-Montenegrin aggressors and domestic chetniks were aimed at creating an ethnically cleansed area where exclusively Serb people would live. They planned to kill hundreds of thousands of Bosnians. . . The criminals began to carry out their plans in the most ferocious way. . . Looting raping, and slaughter... screams of the people being exposed to such horrendous plights (could be heard). While ....Europe did nothing. Those who ran away out of fear and who were not prepared to join those defending their country deserve every condemnation since to not help the homeland is treason... (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 24).

From the moment when Professor Davidov slammed down his phone, I began to believe that we in the World Bank and in the education economics community generally may have been pursuing the wrong kind of evidence. Instead of collecting monetary evidence on labor market efficiency associated with the acquisition of knowledge and skills, we should have been collecting evidence about the efficiency of school systems in augmenting community social cohesion.

Since then I have been exploring the social purposes of education--what they are, how they are defined, and how they might be measured. Although much progress has been made, I expect this research to carry well into the next decade. The ultimate purpose might be for the public to ask the social purpose educational question in a similar way to that of economic efficiency: how can one tell the difference between a school or system which is effective at raising community social cohesion from one which is not? And to what extent is the public finance of the social purposes of education effective?

I thought I might summarize what I have learned since that moment in the office of Professor Davidov. How the issue is defined and its implications. At the end of this summary I will discuss four of the more common dilemmas: (i) how to tell the difference between teaching patriotism legitimately and teaching obedience to totalitarianism; (ii) how much choice families should have with regard to their childrens' education; (iii) the role of religious and ethnic minorities; and (iv) whether there should be international oversight of education and social cohesion.

### **Social Cohesion**

Social cohesion is an outcome of good behavior (behavior consistent with social norms) and can be recognized *ex post facto*. One can recognize social cohesion by the existence of acts of individuals or groups that are 'autonomous' and support social norms.<sup>1</sup> If an action occurs under the threat of terror it cannot be considered as made under free choice. Prison or exile would greet the Soviet citizen who dared to act in support of a social group; therefore ethnic 'peace' in the former USSR was based on tyranny, not social cohesion. On the other hand, the force for ethnic moderation has been powerful in South Africa even in the absence of terror as a sanction; hence one can say that South Africa is characterized by a high level of social cohesion.<sup>2</sup>

Social cohesion will affect the credit worthiness of the economy and the community's reputation in general. Mature democracies channel social demands into positive directions. Those defeated at the ballot box admit defeat and offer their support to the winning side in spite of the bitter competition. Newspapers which make a mistake, offer an apology. The public adheres to social norms not because they are terrorized by tyranny, such as within the former Soviet Union, but through autonomous self-regulation. For instance, in the case of my own community, there are those who today still hold racist views. But they withhold the temptation to express those views in public because they have learned that they are not polite. There may be political or religious opinions with which they do not agree, but they do not object to their presence. All have a right to be heard. A nation proud of its heritage willingly acknowledge the role of minorities, even those with whom they have had past disagreements. All these are signs of social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> Can social norms be morally suspicious? Yes. In such an instance a free society would encourage the discussion of why certain social norms are suspicious. This questioning is how socially cohesive societies progress.

<sup>2</sup> Will a community like South Africa be characterized by social cohesion in the future? It is more likely, but not certain. South Africa has experienced many pressures since it regained its independence, with some organizations not adhering to social norms. Some businesses have proven to be corrupt for example. To remain socially cohesive over time organizations need to continue to adhere to social norms over time.

Social cohesion is influenced by many factors. Two are particularly noteworthy. (Figure 1). One is *human capital*, the knowledge and skills usually acquired through formal and informal education. The other is *social capital*, the personal and professional linkages. There are two kinds of social capital: *bonding* (the strength of adherence to one's own group), and *bridging* (adherence to groups other than one's own). Examples of the former include one's church or family. Examples of the latter include businesses, and friendship relations outside one's religion and family. Many institutions, such as boy scouts. Sport clubs. Political parties, are responsible for generating bridging social capital. The military is a good example in which youth from a wide variety of backgrounds form a social unit quite independent of prior experience.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes these connections across multiple social groups can be quite powerful and lead to better understanding of citizens from disparate backgrounds.

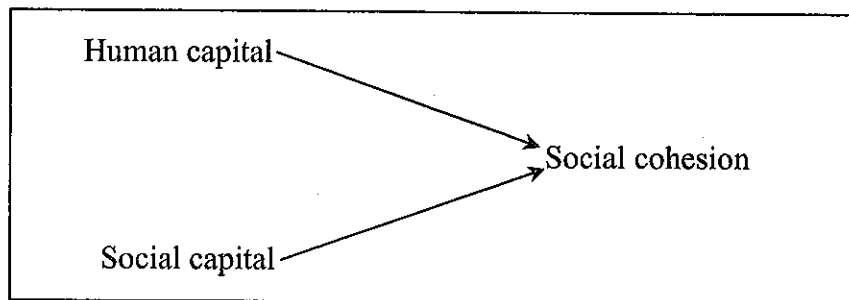


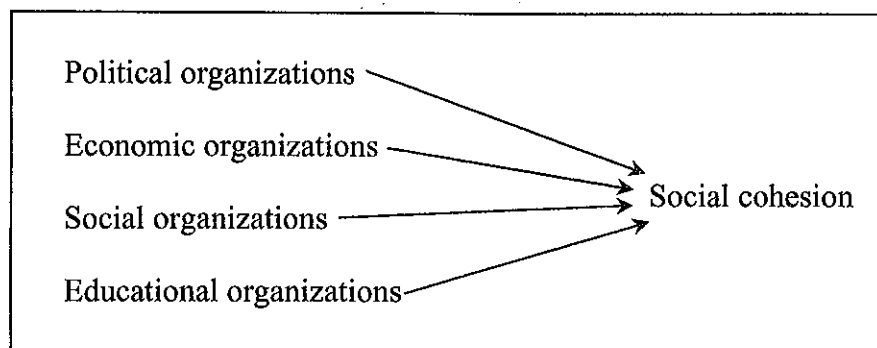
Figure 1. Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is influenced by four types of organizations (Figure 2). *Political organizations* organize debate and establish the mechanisms for public policy. These include parliaments, the civil service, the armed forces, courts, police and the like. *Economic (profit-making) organizations* organize entrepreneurial endeavors and generate income. *Social organizations* (voluntary associations) bind people to moral norms. Each of these types of organizations model behavior which influences social cohesion, either positively or negatively. Honest parliaments and honest courts raise the level confidence that differences can be adjudicated fairly. Dishonest parliaments and courts may have the opposite effect. Companies and firms can contribute to social cohesion through the standards of corporate governance, honesty in paying taxes and adherence to the rules when acquiring or promoting employees. Churches and mosques may raise public understanding of moral behavior, but sometimes they can do the opposite. They can enforce bonding social behavior (loyalty) at the

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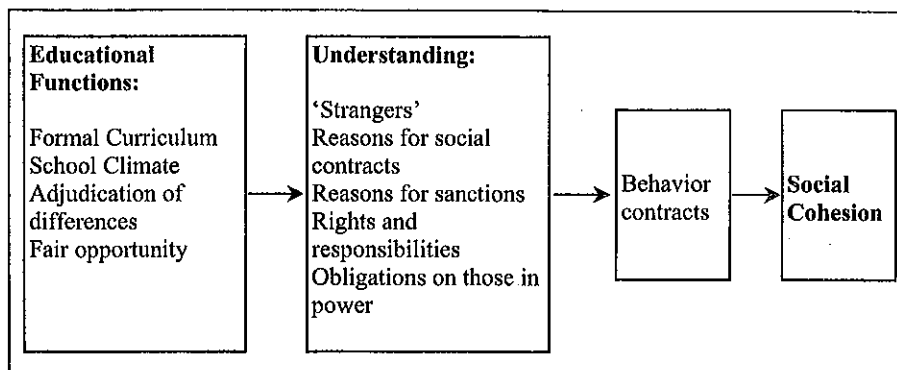
<sup>3</sup> The military is not an example of social cohesion since behavior is without choice. But it is a good example of how bridging social capital can be augmented by having multiple groups adhere to the same rules and regulations and have the same experience.

expense of bridging social behavior (tolerance). And then there are schools and universities. In addition to their role in providing human capital, schools and universities have social capital purposes as well.



*Figure 2. Organizations and Social Cohesion*

School systems affect social cohesion through four mechanisms: (i) through the formal curriculum which adheres to social norms; (ii) by sponsoring a climate within the school which is consistent with those norms; (iii) by successfully adjudicating the differences across social groups on what and how to teach, and (iv) by successfully convincing the public that the opportunity offered to their children is 'fair'.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 3).



*Figure 3. The Contribution of Schools and Universities to Social Cohesion*

<sup>4</sup> Fair opportunity is not necessarily equal opportunity. There may be good reason to endow certain students, such as those with special needs or those selected to enter elite training institutions, with greater resources. The key is whether the public regards the differences in resources as being fair.

If they operate successfully, these four mechanisms lead to a better understanding of: (i) 'strangers',<sup>5</sup> (ii) social contracts, (iii) the reasons for sanctions, (iv) the rights and obligations on citizens, and (v) the obligations on those in power, including the obligation to submit one's tenure to popular vote and to relinquish power when necessary.

These lessons of schools and universities lead to 'behavior contracts' (conventions or expectations). These are norms which govern mature democracies and include the behavior based on the above five principles. These behavior contracts in turn lead to communities behaving in a socially cohesive way.

### Education and Social Cohesion: Common Dilemmas

#### How to distinguish between teaching loyalty and ideology?

It is acceptable, even expected, to teach pupils to honor their country and be loyal, but it is not acceptable to teach them blind obedience to totalitarianism.<sup>6</sup> But how can we distinguish one from the other? Suppose one were to feel that schools in a neighboring country were teaching blind obedience to a totalitarian authority, but that the officials from that country feel that they are simply teaching normal honor and loyalty? The answer may be difficult because there are divergent conceptions of what it means to a good citizen.<sup>7</sup> With such differing concepts, how can one determine who is right?

We might be able to distinguish between teaching for good citizenship versus loyalty to totalitarianism on the grounds of what kind of citizen the community wishes to create. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe three conceptions of

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<sup>5</sup> 'Strangers' is a term from psychology. It means people and cultures that one does not know well.

<sup>6</sup> A system might be considered *totalitarian* if it is authoritarian and autocratic. Often totalitarian states have a government in which one party or group maintains control under a dictatorship and either bans other groups or makes it impossible for them to compete for power.

<sup>7</sup> *Traditionalists* emphasize the core workings of governments and the constitution. *Progressives* emphasize civic participation and adherence to progressive principles. *Advanced progressives* may emphasize the inherent tensions between cultural identity and assimilation, and point out the importance of the former over the latter. *Social activists* may emphasize the need for cultural and structural change to address differences in wealth and status. And then there are the *character activists* who will emphasize the need to solve societal problems by building stronger moral characters – diligence, honesty moral development (Westheimer and Kahne, 2006).

the "good" citizen. First there is the citizen who is *personally responsible* – one who picks up litter, gives blood, recycles, obeys laws, and helps the less fortunate. Then there is the *participatory citizen*. This is one who actively participates in civil affairs, scouting, interest and community groups. And lastly there is the *justice-oriented citizen*. This is someone who seeks the opportunity to analyze the interplay of social forces and brings them to bear on issues of injustice. Personally-responsible citizens give food to the poor. Participatory citizens may organize the food drive. Justice-oriented citizens ask why people are hungry and act on how to solve the problem.

Civic educators often go wrong when they attempt to teach for justice-oriented citizenship. They may highlight issues about poverty, but bias the discussion of possible solutions by limiting them to those which they personally approve, ignoring others. They may claim boldly to know which "solutions" support the rich and powerful and which benefit the poor and powerless. In essence, this is a distortion of the purpose of public schooling because it provides ready-made solutions instead of encouraging the student to find them on his own. We know precious little about which poverty alleviation strategies are effective at helping the poor; the jury is still out on such varied mechanisms as the reallocation of property, tax cuts, and public housing. Schools are excellent only when they effectively cover the full range of possible solutions without *ex ante* bias.

#### **How much freedom of choice?**

One reason school choice is so worrisome in environments of low social cohesion or in political environments new to democracy is that, if not carefully controlled, schooling can be misused. Schooling can be employed by those with dangerous sectarian grievances and can exacerbate social tensions. Even in environments where social cohesion is high, such as in Western Europe, the dangers of school choice are manifest. The Netherlands and Sweden long ago worked through the tensions associated with Catholic and Protestant schools. But in Northern Ireland, where publicly funded Catholic and state systems teach antagonistic versions of the same history, this consensus has yet to occur. Throughout Europe the main challenges to school choice today come from the debates over whether Muslims have the same right to their own publicly-funded schools as do Jews, Protestants, and Catholics. Private Muslim schools are monitored by the state. Public muslim schools (financed by the state) are required to be formally recognized and required to teach the national curriculum (in France, Sweden, England, and the Netherlands).

Today Muslim schools in Europe constitute a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, school choice should give precedence to the authority of the family. But

what if the values of the family are contrary to the values which the general community wishes citizens to learn? There are disagreements in Sweden, for instance, between the general community and some Muslims over the position of women and the primacy of state over religious law. There are social differences too, as to whether physically punishing students or the wearing of religious symbols (such as a headscarf) in school should be allowed.

Fear of ethnic and religious extremism is so great that it may influence policy toward school choice. In terms of foreign policy, some advise against subsidizing school choice in countries with low social cohesion. Teaching historical heritage in areas such as Israel and Palestine, where there has been past conflict, is always problematic for public education. The key issue is the degree of acceptable risk.

What is commonly held about school systems in North America may be true: Administration is often stultifying. Classroom climate is disruptive. Teachers are not rewarded for performance. Expectations of curriculum content have been thinned to accommodate rival interest and consumer/user groups. And many might feel that it is reasonable to utilize a child's religious obligation as a normal motivator for religiously-affiliated students.

But it would be a mistake to assume that school choice implies that a family should have sole authority over educational decisions. It has long been recognized that in democracies public and private (and home) schooling is a balance of legitimate interests of the state, the family, and the profession (Gutmann, 1987). If the state community were to have a monopoly over the others, it may lead to ideological oppression and a lessening of professional integrity, as occurred under communism. If the family community were to have a monopoly, it could lead to the teaching of ethnocentric interests and create multiple professional standards (such as over science). Were the professional community to have a monopoly it could lead to schooling becoming divorced from its applications and utility.

Using economic criteria to drive public policy has a limit. There are more expensive problems than an inefficient and cumbersome public education system. In the absence of effective regulation, considered normal elsewhere, it is possible for ethnic, religious, and racial groups to teach disrespect for the rights of their neighbors. In so doing, it is possible that schools may make a contribution in exactly the opposite direction from their stated public purpose. That is, instead of contributing to a civil society, they may be used to exacerbate social tensions. Instead of helping to create a consensus over public welfare and the public good, they may contribute to civil unrest and social instability. In these circumstances, schools can lay an intellectual foundation which leads to social breakdown and, in extreme cases, civil war. It is certainly true that parents

in Yugoslavia may have more school choice than do parents in the United States, but that is not necessarily a virtue.

**Education and Social Cohesion: the Case of Religious and Ethnic Minorities**

Schools reflect the communities in which they are situated. Communities are imperfect and so too are schools. But communities can change. Citizens can decide to teach tolerance even when many do not feel tolerant. They can decide to broaden definitions of citizenship to include those who have newly arrived, even though historical roots might be more narrow. And they can adhere to social norms even if the bases of those norms have to be imported.

But tolerance requires trust. And trust works in two directions. It requires adherence to norms on the part of the majority. Most concerns of the European Court on Human Rights have to do with the obligations on the majority to protect the rights of minorities. But should it not also work in the opposite direction? Should not minorities be expected to adhere to the same obligations which pertain to the majority population?

Religion has never been separate from public education in Europe; hence Christian Europeans are comfortable with Christian schools but uncomfortable with Muslim schools. They feel that some Muslims would be less likely to adhere to the norms of tolerance which are supposed to pertain to all schools. But what if Muslim schools did adhere to the same norms of tolerance as Christian schools? What if minorities generally adhered to more general norms? If that were the case, then there would be less reason to mistrust minority citizens, less reason to be suspicious of minority religions, and less justification to make 'common blood' the criterion of being a citizen.

**Education and Social Cohesion: should there be international oversight?**

International organizations have mandates of many kinds. Some monitor and report on issues of 'slavery', child labor and human rights. Should there be some oversight with respect to education and social cohesion? Since WW II, France and Germany have benefited from a commission which oversees each country's history textbooks and how each treated WW I and WW II. Similar functions might be commissioned through regional organizations such as the European Union and the Council of Europe. A country which voluntarily agreed to be open to such commissions would receive an analysis of the social cohesion functions of its school system. This analysis could prove useful for educational reform. Such reports might be expected to inform all sides. Such openness to external examination would, in itself, be a sign of community social cohesion.

### **Summary**

If the basic principles of society include minorities as normal citizens and history as a mixture of multiple experiences, and if minorities adhere to the basic principles of the wider society, then the social cohesion task of the school is comparatively simple. It is to reinforce the three main principles of being a good citizen – personally responsible, participatory and justice-oriented. But schools should not bias the solutions to the major social problems, for that would be teaching ideology and not nationalism. If the wider social principles do not include minorities as normal citizens, or if the concept of citizenship excludes minority religions, cultures and ethnicities, then the school will not be able to fulfill its social cohesion responsibilities.

In the end Professor Davidov was right. We should be worried about what they are teaching out there. But we should not jump from that to assume that teaching good citizenship is a matter of uniformity of view. There are different solutions to social problems and schools which teach differently do a disservice to democracy.

In the end whether in Turkey or in Britain, schools should all teach the same thing – that citizens of all kinds are welcome; that all religions are welcome; that all ethnic groups are welcome; that in addition to the national languages all languages are welcome. But they should also teach that the obligations on minorities are exactly the same as the obligations on the majority, that is to adhere to social norms. In this way schools can effectively add to every nation's social cohesion.

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