

## **The national education system and the education rights of minority groups**

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### **Introduction**

The position and rights of minority groups in nation states across the world is the focus of intense debates. The situation develops that while the world experiences a globalisation of trade and communication, for example, the area of control and power of the nation states are being questioned by groups at a regional level. It is primarily the minority groups, defined by their ethnic and/or cultural base, in the relevant nation states that are seeking to obtain more direct control over their own affairs.

In the debate on which interests should be the responsibility of these minority groups, education is regarded as one of the core responsibilities which should be directly under the auspices of the particular minority group.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to indicate, at a theoretical level, how the internationally accepted rights of minority groups should influence the national education system of those countries that are characterised by the inclusion of identifiable minority groups as part of their citizens. To reach this aim, an overall picture of the internationally accepted rights of minority groups will be provided. It will then be illustrated how these education rights of minority groups should determine the nature and functioning of the education system in relation to its multi-composite target group.

### **Method of research**

Each type of method considered alone is imperfect to ensure that possible biases inherent in one method are eluded (Brewer & Hunter, 2006: 2). The methods that were used to reach the aim of this article can be summarised as follows:

- The literature study: A wide-ranging literature study was performed. Particular attention was given to coverage and synthesis of the collected information (Boote & Beile, 2005:7-9).
- The method of reiterative, critical reasoning: A proficient critical thinker must have four characteristics, namely a knowledge of reasoning; a set of cognitive skills involved in reasoning; knowledge that is relevant to the problem or question that is being thought about; and a set of dispositions to think critically (Bensley, 1998: 5). Knowing about reasoning, possessing reasoning skills, and knowing and understanding a subject area, however, do not ensure that one will be an effective critical thinker. A disposition to think critically is the tendency to use one's critical thinking skills in approaching a situation or question (Bensley, 1998: 6). The iterative process, on the other hand, typically starts with general questions and moves to progressively refined questions in the course of the study (Barbour & Barbour, 2002: 182). The iterative process is inherently flexible and shifts emphasis or changes direction as the need arises (Barbour & Barbour, 2002: 180). The iterative process assisted in answering the question: "What do we really understand?" (Walsch, & Downe, 2005: 210).
- In the application of the method of reiterative, critical reasoning, use is made of the following techniques in an integrative manner, namely:

- The technique of analysis and synthesis: Analysis is the exposition of the parts of a particular whole (the object) with the aim to acquire knowledge about the parts and the whole. Synthesis is the process to combine or cluster relevant parts in order to construct a whole (an object) with the aim of acquiring knowledge about the parts and the whole. One can distinguish, for example, between content analysis and synthesis on the one hand, and thematic analysis and synthesis on the other hand (Stoker, 1961: 85; Lloyd Jones, 2004: 273).
- The technique of induction and deduction: *Induction* refers to the sifting of general characteristics from the particular exemplars and *deduction* refers to the sifting of the particular characteristics from the general appearance of these objects. Induction, deduction and verification are usually in interaction and reference is even made to two kinds of reasoning, namely inductive and deductive reasoning (Larossa, 2005: 853; Bensley, 1998: 15; Stoker, 1961, 76)
- The technique of comparison: Comparison regarding this research problem implies that possible solutions were identified, that these possible solutions were juxtaposed; similarities and differences were identified; strengths and weaknesses were identified; the similarities, differences, strengths and weaknesses were explained; after which the final choices regarding solutions were decided on (Epstein, 1988: 3-25).

### **The rights of minority groups**

#### **Definition of *minority group***

Minority groups can be identified on grounds of typifying characteristics, for example, language, history, traditions, religion and/or certain core values with regard to work ethic or economical positioning, for instance (Southiram, 1995: 3). Other types of minority groups can also be identified, for example the old-age group, homo-sexuals or groups with particular physical disabilities. In the context of this report the focus will fall on the religious and cultural characteristics as identifiers of minority groups.

In the above-mentioned context, minority groups are defined by Lerner (1993: 79) as “a group which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State and in a non-dominant position, whose members possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the rest of the population and who, if only implicitly, maintain a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language”. Minority groups therefore refer to ethnic groups which by means of one or more of the elements of culture, for example language and/or traditions and/or religion, can be distinguished from the members of the majority of citizens of a state. The concept is usually used with regard to groups with a strong feeling of solidarity or who want to develop or preserve the sense of solidarity and unity (cf. Anon, 1995(a): art. 2).

A minority group can also be determined by the fact that a particular group is in the minority in terms of numbers, compared to the other citizens of a country. However, a particular group can be regarded as a minority group because of its lack of power or skills, although it is larger in numbers than other groups in the particular country (Claassen, 1996:9).

## Religion, culture and ethnicity as identifiers of a minority group

### **Religion as an identifier of a minority group**

Religion has two meanings: on the one hand, it refers to the worshipping of a particular G(g)od and, on the other hand, the concept implies an ideology or philosophy which refers to the way in which the belief in a particular G(g)od determines the whole life of a particular individual. Religion as an identifier of a minority group usually refers to the latter.

A philosophy of life consists of certain main aspects, namely the *view about G(g)od*, the *view about man*, its nature and functioning, and the *view about creation*, its nature and functioning. These views determine the *values* (that which is valued) of a particular individual or group and it forms the basis of the *norms* of an individual or group. The philosophy determines the complete life, in all its facets, of individuals and groups. The philosophy determines, for example, the individual's and the group's social life, political life, economical life and scientific and technological life. The philosophy therefore gives a certain content to these aspects, which implies the existence of differences between individuals and groups. Worshipping is often one of the clear indicators of different philosophies of life. In this sense religion implying philosophy, and religion implying worshipping are identifiers of a minority group.

### **Culture as an identifier of a minority group**

There are several different definitions of culture, but they can all be divided into two broad categories, namely those which define culture in a narrower sense and those which define culture in a broader sense. According to the narrower definitions, culture refers more to the spiritual and intellectual assets of man, while the broader definitions focus on all the work and products of man. In this report, the second view is supported.

Culture can therefore in general be described as the work and product of man's work. Although one can distinguish between individual culture (the work and products of an individual), group culture (the work and distinguishing products of a particular group) and universal culture (the work and products of mankind over the years), the concept *group culture* is important in the education system perspective, because the education system is concerned with a particular group of people. This is also the case in this report, which deals with minority groups. Group culture can be described as the distinctive ideals, aims, activities, interests and behaviour patterns of a particular group under the guidance of a particular view of life, as embodied by the belief, origin, history, art, science, technology, language, politics, economics, industrial life, religion, etc. of that group. The group culture is not only the sum of the work and work product of the individual group members, but points to a definitive unambiguousness between the work and the product of work of the members of the group (Steyn, 1996: 81). It is also clear that language is an element of the culture of a group and a clear indicator of a particular cultural group.

When culture is used as an identifier of a minority group, one usually finds that reference is made to one or more of the elements of culture, for example language, traditions, values, political institutions or economic activities. The elements, such as language, history and political institutions are the explicit elements indicating differences between groups in a clearly observable way, but elements like values, opinions, traditions, interests and behavioural patterns point to the more implicit differences between groups. Although the implicit

differences are more difficult to detect, their differentiating influences are as strong as the explicit differences. Differences in one or in a combination of more than one of the elements of the respective cultures can therefore serve as the identifier(s) of a particular minority group in a country. Minority groups are therefore defined as groups with a sense of unity with the desire to preserve and develop their distinct own culture.

### **Ethnicity as an identifier of a minority group**

The use of the term *ethnic* or *ethnicity* varies widely in the popular and political discourse, so much so that it is difficult to obtain a clear, single meaning (Rex, 1986). It is, however, clear that ethnicity is used to identify a particular group of people, usually a minority group in a particular state, by means of specific characteristics, for example (racial) origin, historical bonds, cultural ties and religious similarities (Korklins, 1986: 23).

Although race, as part of ethnicity, is rejected as an element in identifying differences, it does serve as a differentiator for special provision in some instances. An example is affirmative action, where blacks in the USA and in South Africa receive preference when applying for a career position, for instance (Claassen, 1996: 12)

### **The rights of minority groups: an international perspective**

#### **International instruments**

The rights of minority groups are described in different treaties and conventions of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The following are some of the important examples:

- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)**

Article 27 of the Covenant states that: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.” (UN, 1966: 28.)

By including this article it is realised that the rights of individuals cannot fully be protected by individual rights alone, even not if it is combined with the rule of non-discrimination. Through the rights of well-defined groups, a better harmony arises between individuals, groups and the state (Lerner, 1993: 81).

- **Charter of Paris for a New Europe**

Through the acceptance of the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* in 1990 the EU also supports the protection of minority groups and certain rights which they can claim. The Charter (1990) declares that: “We affirm that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.” The Charter also recognises the rich contribution of the national minorities and undertakes to improve their situation. The EC reaffirm their conviction to protect and promote the conditions and identity of minority groups and accept that the rights of minority groups must be fully respected as part of universal human rights. This indicates that “issues concerning minorities are matters of legitimate international concern and do not constitute exclusively an internal affair of the respective State” (Lerner, 1993: 98).

### **Implications of international instruments for minority rights**

The rights of minority groups as accepted in the various treaties, conventions and international deliberations focus on two main issues, namely the right to an own identity and the right not to be discriminated against (Thornberry, 1991: 137) and can be summarised as the rights (Anon, 1995(a): artt. 1-18; Lerner, 1993: 100):

- to life and physical security;
- to effective equality, including the prohibition of discrimination and incitement to group violence and hatred;
- to identity and to be different, without being forced to assimilate;
- to affirmative action or special measures, for example, regarding language, education, own organisations, freedom of movement, information, the use of government agencies and political representation;
- to determination of the scope and membership of the group, with due regard to individual rights and liberties;
- to establish and maintain institutions;
- to communicate, federate and cooperate nationally and internationally;
- to representation in government, at least on the level of local government;
- to impose duties on the members of the group;
- to self-determination and at least to local self-government; and
- to own educational provision.

It is important that individual rights and rights of minority groups are not confused. The guideline should be: “Each type of right pursues in its own way a common goal: respect for human dignity in its two expressions – that of human beings and that of human communities” (Donnelly, 1993: 136). Minority rights should complement the other types of human rights and imply respect, protection and fulfilment of the minority rights by all involved (Wilson, 2004: 315-316). De Witte (1993: 179) warns that although it is accepted that the rights of minority groups should be respected, not enough is being done to protect the rights of minority groups at international and national levels.

Laforest(1993: x) warns that the vogue of individual rights can mean an estrangement of citizens from their public institutions and postulates that nationalism can emerge in the modern age as a legitimate form of identification. He also claims that justice, in modern terminology, consists of treating equals equally and unequals unequally. Taylor (1993:42-45) reports that group identification is prevalent among emancipated peoples and that the very idea of identification, of having an identity, is modern. People need a group identification. As a result of the influence of individual rights, the earlier forms of group identification – such as religion, traditions and common economic activities – are diversified. The modern form of identification is to a large extent the existence of a common language. Modern people do not necessarily adhere to the traditional culture, but build a new one, with the common language as a major bonding element. Language is regarded as being of great importance because if language is neglected, it risks losing its expressive power in areas like technology, the economy and the arts: sectors highly valued by today’s people (Taylor, 1993:50).

The “new diversified” culture of modern emancipated people develops around a common language and serves as a point of identification to members of these cultural groups. Identity is

regarded as a moral reality. The way in which an individual defines himself is being lived in a particular role in a practise. Identity, therefore, determines the individual's role embedded in a particular practice, and that can define a good life or a life without value. Outside the culture, including a re-evaluation of an own identity, the individual cannot know him- or herself (Taylor, 1993:45; 122).

It is further accepted that systems of rights should be sensitive to unequal social conditions and to cultural differences. Equal rights can only be adequately understood if articulated and justified by members of groups in public discussion (Gutmann, 1994:IX).

Minority rights imply that members of minority cultures are being granted equal rights of co-existence with the majority cultures. According to Habermas (1994: 113, 116, 130), members of minority groups have rights of free association and non-discrimination, which do not guarantee the survival for any culture. Preserving cultures as if they were endangered species deprives cultures of their vitality, and individuals of their freedom to revise or even reject their inherited cultural identities. The broad range of cultures should be respected by constitutional democracies, but they guarantee survival to none. Individual rights, on the other hand, are not the abstract levelling of differences, but differences must be recognised and seen in context-sensitive ways.

Therefore, to understand the relationship between individual and group rights, one must be sensitive to the "universality of particularism" (Taylor, 1993:139). The above-mentioned argument implies that minority groups must take the responsibility to conserve, develop, change or reject their culture, or parts thereof. It is not the responsibility of the government or majority group to develop the culture of the minority group. The minority group should, however, be provided with the opportunities to do it themselves. This implies that the minority group can expect the same opportunities and assistance, such as financial assistance, to develop their culture as that received by the majority group. A balance between individual and group rights is therefore of the utmost importance.

Minority rights acknowledge two basic principles, namely the principle of non-discrimination which aims at formal equal treatment of members of the minority and of the majority; and secondly, the principle qualified as the protection of minorities, which implies differential treatment. This second principle is aimed at achieving substantive equality in that these differential measures are meant to ensure the maintenance and promotion of the separate characteristics of the minority group (Henrard, 1996: 13). It is important to note that these measures constitute differentiation and not discrimination. The Belgium community, as an example in the European context, uses the following criteria to ensure that unequal treatment does not constitute discrimination (Veny, 1996):

- The criteria for differentiation should be objective.
- The measures should be relevant to the aims to be reached.
- The purpose of the measures should be a legal one.
- The measures to reach the purpose of differentiation should be those with the least impact on society.

### The rights of minority groups: the provision of education

One of the rights of minority groups, on which there is general agreement, is the right to provision of education according to the specific educational needs of the minority group. In addition to the above-mentioned treaties of the UN and the EC, two specific treaties are relevant with regard to the provision of education to minority groups, namely:

#### **The Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960, adopted by UNESCO**

By adopting the Convention, UNESCO accepted the responsibility to further the universally accepted respect for human rights and equality of educational opportunity. The protection of the educational rights of minority groups was included in the following manner:

- The term *discrimination* refers to the impairing of equality of education provision, including any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth (UNESCO, 1960: art 1).
- The establishment and maintenance, for religious or cultural reasons, of separate educational systems or institutions or private schools offering an education which is in keeping with the wishes of the parents or guardians, shall not be deemed to constitute discrimination as long as attendance to these institutions is optional and conforms to such standards as may be approved by competent educational authorities (UNESCO, 1960: art 2).
- “Not to allow, in any form of assistance granted by the public authorities to educational institutions, any restrictions or preference based solely on the ground that pupils belong to a particular group” (UNESCO, 1960: art 3).
- The right of parents to choose educational institutions, other than those provided by the state, should be respected. The right of members of minority groups to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools, is recognised, as long as these do not prevent pupils of minority groups from understanding the culture of the majority group; if the standard of these educational activities is not lower than the general standards and if attendance to these provisions is optional (UNESCO, 1960: art 5)

#### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990**

In this Convention, the right of the child to receive education, as well as the right of children of minority groups, to receive education according to their religious or cultural needs, was reaffirmed (Un, 1990: artt 28, 30). The right of education and the protection of the child’s own identity are recognised as the main focuses of the Convention (Detrick, 1992:ix).

These rights of minorities with regard to the provision of education should be interpreted in the context of the provision of education as stipulated in the International Bill of Human Rights. In Article 13 of the said Bill (UN, 1948: art 13) the right of education for everyone was recognised. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups. Education should be accessible to all, but the liberty of parents and legal guardians to choose schools for their children, other than those established by the public authorities, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions, are recognised. The

rights of individuals to establish and maintain schools (private schools), subject to the minimum standards of the education authorities, are also recognised.

Dinstein (1993: 229) linked his argument to the last part of the Bill of Human Rights and is of the opinion that the right of minority groups to establish and maintain their own educational institutions is an invaluable right of the minority. However, he expresses the concern that all these agreements only imply that the state should respect the rights of minorities, but does not imply that the state should be actively involved in the promotion of the educational provision to minority groups, for example through financial assistance.

The tension between the common and the particular always prevails in the educational provision for minority groups. The 'common' refers to the common needs of the community at large as perceived by the majority group and the 'particular' refers to the particular educational needs of a particular minority group. This tension is a common feature of every education system and should be recognised and incorporated in educational planning. The type of solution can be found on a continuum between, on the one hand, education that aims at assimilating the minority to the larger majority and, on the other hand, education that aims at complete segregation of the minority from the majority. The debate about the desired balance will probably never be closed. However, it is clear that the natural tendency of the majority of states is to emphasise the common in educational provision, but governments should always remember that the correct course is not to negate the particular needs of minority groups and that they should find the required balance according to the local and current situation (Claassen, 1996: 23).

### **Conclusion**

Minority groups are identified based on their unique characteristics regarding religion, culture and ethnicity (cf. par 2.2; Grover, 2007: 59; Grover, 2006: 292; Henrard, 2000: 393, 395, 399, 403)). It is clear that the internationally accepted rights of minority groups boils down to the right of an own identity and the right not to be discriminated against (cf. par 2.3.2). The educational rights of minority groups include:

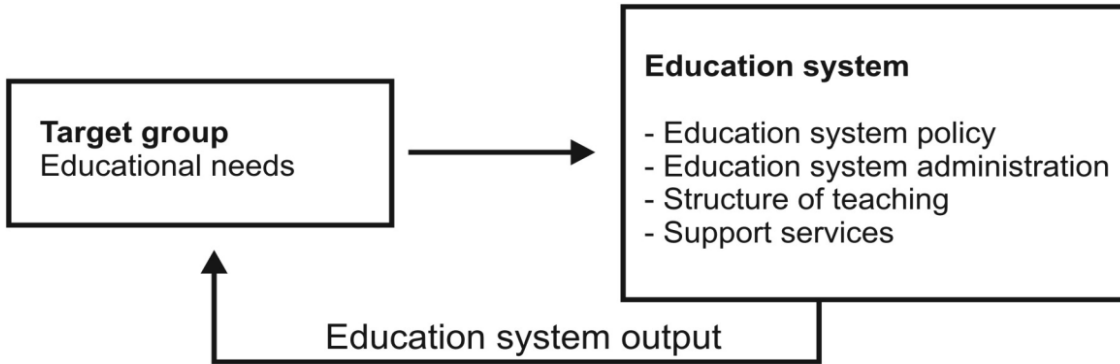
- The right of the child from a minority group to receive education according to their unique religious, cultural and language needs.
- The protection of the own identity of a child from a minority group.
- Education to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all racial, ethnic or religious groups should be provided.
- Education should be accessible to all, but the liberty of parents and legal guardians to choose schools for their children, other than those established by the public authorities, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions, is recognized.
- The rights of minority groups to establish and maintain their 'own' schools (private schools), subject to the minimum standards of the education authorities, are invaluable.
- The state should not only respect the rights of minorities but should be actively involved in the promotion of the educational provision to minority groups, for example through financial and other assistance (cf. par 2.4.2).

**The structure and functioning of the education system based on the influence of the relevant determinants**

The structure of the education system

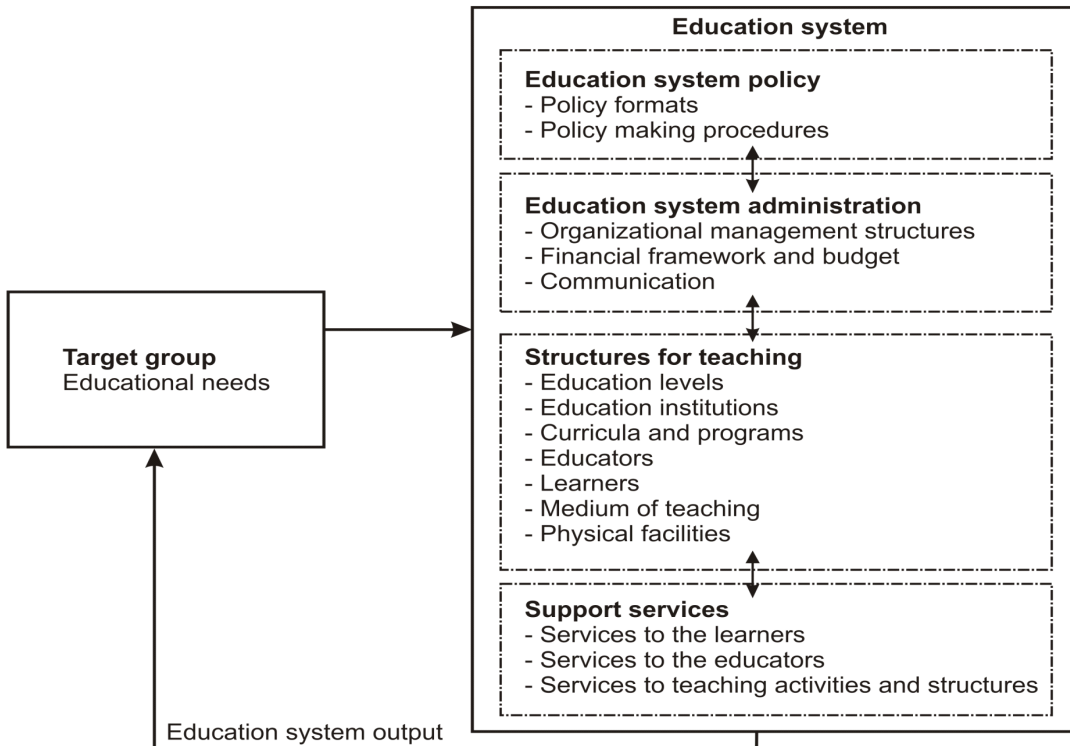
The education system can be defined as a structure consisting of the four components of *education system policy, education system administration, structure for teaching and support services*, for effective teaching to satisfy the educational needs of the target group (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal & Wolhuter, 2002: 43). The education system can be represented as in figure 1.

**Figure 1: The structure of an education system**



Each component of the education system in turn consists of different elements (sub-parts) (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal & Wolhuter, 2002: chapter 3). These can be illustrated as in figure 2.

**Figure 2: The elements of an education system**



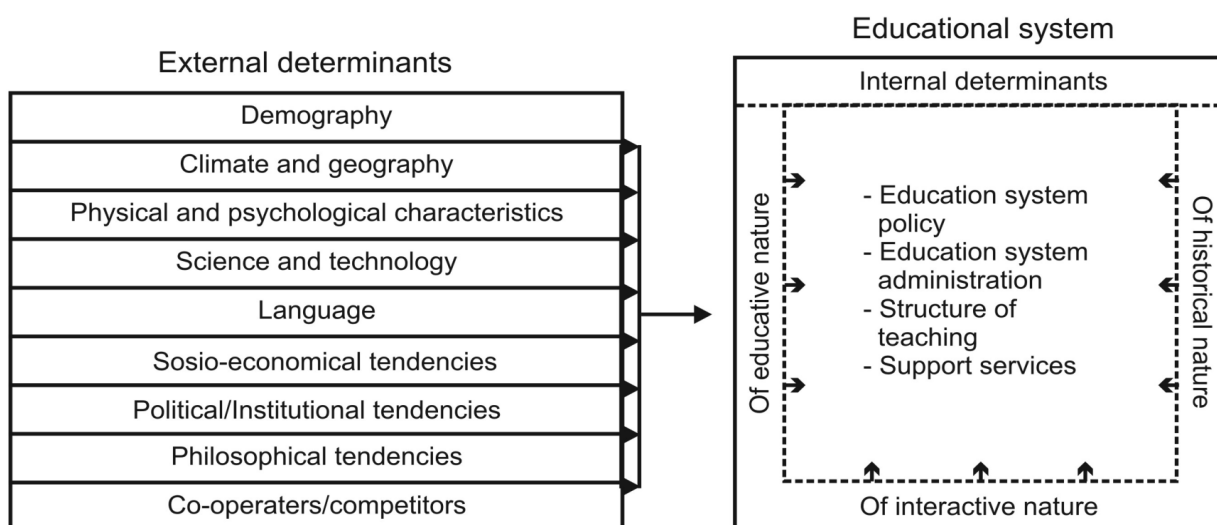
These components and the elements of each component are individually identifiable in the education system and serve a particular role to enable the successful functioning of an education system. However, the different components and elements are all inter-related and function in unity to realise the aim of a particular education system.

Different types of education systems can be identified (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal & Wolhuter, 2002: 44-45), but for the purpose of this article, reference should be made to the national education system and the mini-education system. The national education refers to the education system that is meant to provide for the educational needs of all the inhabitants of a particular country, and it is this type of education system that should provide education according to the unique needs of a minority group that is included in the target group. The mini-education system serves the needs of a particular target group not similar to the target group of the national education system. In many cases the educational needs of minority groups, such as religious groups or cultural groups, are served by such mini-education systems.

### The determinants of an education system

The structure and functioning of a particular education system is determined by several influences from the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’ of that education system. Therefore, external and internal determinants of an education system can be identified. The external determinants emanate on the outside of an education system and relate primarily to the particular characteristics of the target group. The nine external determinants represents an organised list that includes all aspects related to the target group and the external environment that influences an education system. The internal determinants primarily refer to the different elements of an education system have on each other and represent a full list of internal aspects that determine the structure and characteristics of a particular education system. Figure 3 is a visual presentation of the complete list of different external and internal determinants of an education system (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008: 9-12).

**Figure 3: The external and internal determinants of an education system**



## Education rights of minority groups as determinant of an education system

### **Introduction**

The rights of minority groups relate to the manner in which society should be organised in order to ensure a safe and sound community that provides maximum life space for all its members. Such an environment provides a space where the members of minority groups can prosper according to their own unique characteristics within the mutual support of all other individuals, (majority) groups and institutions in that society. Thus, it is clear that the rights of minority groups resort within the political domain of a particular society (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal & Wolhuter, 2002: 132). The rights of minority groups can be categorised as an external determinant of the education system and are more precisely included under the external determinant of 'political and institutional tendencies'.

The educational rights of minority groups will be the guiding aspect in this regard. The educational rights of minority groups include their right to (cf. par 2.4.3):

- quality education to develop their own identity according to their own religious, cultural and language needs;
- own (private) schools with standards not lower than those of public schools; and
- the active support of state in providing education according to the unique needs of the particular minority groups.

It is the duty of all signatories of the international treaties and protocols on the rights of minority groups and educational rights to actively promote these rights: therefore, these rights will influence the education systems of the signatories with regard to several of its components and elements. The educational rights of minorities should influence the education system in a similar manner as human (individual) rights determine the structure and functioning of those education systems where the human rights are enshrined in the constitution of a particular country.

However, it is often experienced that majority groups do not automatically recognise the rights of minority groups and provide for the unique education needs of minority groups (cf. Jenne, 2004: 732, 734). It is the responsibility of the minority groups to promote their rights in the international and national arena; they should even go beyond that and provide their own education according to their unique education needs, if they are in a position to do it. Without it, learners from minority groups will always suffer from an underdeveloped identity and be 'sentenced' to inferior education achievement.

## **The influence of the education rights of minority groups on the education system**

### **Introduction**

The way in which the educational rights should determine the national education systems, of at least the signatories of the international treaties on the rights of minority groups, can be illustrated by referring to the components and elements of the national education system in the following paragraphs.

### **Education system policy**

The education system policy can be described as the statement of intent of the way in which the identified needs of the target group are to be solved. This component usually consists of the following *elements*, namely the *mission, aims and objectives* of the particular education system and the publicised education system policy in a particular *format*.

If the target group of a particular national education system is serious to promote the educational rights of the minority group(-s) included in the target group, it is obvious that:

- this intention should be clearly stated in the mission, the flag indicating the overall characteristics of that education system;
- the intention to provide in the unique education needs of the minority group(-s) should be included in the aims and objectives of that education system; and
- the way in which the unique education needs are going to be provided in, should be clearly stated in the relevant policy formats.

### ***Education system administration***

Through the education system administration, the education system policy is determined on the one hand, while on the other hand it is ensured that the accepted policy is implemented. This component usually includes the following *elements*: the *organisational structure* of functionaries and agencies responsible for policy formulation and implementation, the *financing* of the education system, and the *liaison arrangements* (communication) in the particular education system and between the education system and the interest groups in the community.

In the national education, particular provision should be made in the education system administration to assure the minority group(-s) of the credibility of the majority group to provide education according the minority group's unique needs and expectation. Therefore:

- Members of the minority group should be appointed in the organisational structures of the national education system, without degrading these appointments to tokenism, and they must be provided with real power to look after the interests of the particular minority group(-s).
- The annual budget of the particular national education system should reflect the intension of the majority group to provide for the education needs of the minority group(-s).
- The liaison arrangements should particularly be planned to actively and positively communicate with the minority group(-s) and thus to support the development of informed members of the minority group(-s).

### ***Structure for teaching***

The structure for teaching is usually recognised as the core of the education system and indicates the structural combination of the education institutions and education programmes. The structure for teaching also refers to the possibilities of pupil movement, on a horizontal and vertical level, within and between the different institutions according to their differentiated educational needs. The following *elements* are usually referred to and are influenced by the education rights of minority groups in the following manners:

- *The structure for education programmes*

The *structure for education programmes* consists of the following sub-elements, namely the *education levels, education institutions, curricula and differentiation*, which imply the movement of learners on their education career path through the structure of education programmes according to the abilities, interests and aptitudes of the individual learners.

With regard to the structure for education programmes as an element of the national education system, it should be assured that learners from minority groups have the same opportunities in their education career path as those of the majority groups. Particular care should also be taken to include relevant content for the learners from minority groups in the curricula, so that these learners experience real differentiation and not any discrimination in education.

- *Learners*

This element refers to the demography, namely the *numbers, settlement and movement* of the learners in the education system. For example, the numbers in the education system, in the schools and in the learner-classroom ratio and the learner-teacher ratio will be described and prescribed. General arrangements with regard to the learners will also be expressed, for example the admission requirements and learners' conduct.

In terms of education to minority groups, specific measures should be taken to ensure that the statistical demography of learners from minority groups is carefully noted in order to assess the progress of these learners. Special attention should also be given to the admission requirements and regulations regarding learners' conduct in order to ensure that the unique needs of members of minority groups are met.

- *Educators*

This element includes the description and prescription of all educators in the particular education system. It will therefore include the details and requirements with regard to the numbers, settlement (distribution) and movement of educators. This element will also, for example, include the requirements of pre-service and in-service training and the codes of conduct of the educators.

Effective education is to a large extent dependent on the quality of the educators. This is particularly true of the educators of learners of minority groups. These educators need special training and competencies in order to effectively support the learners from minority groups. Furthermore, it is a big advantage if at least some of the educators responsible for the teaching of minority learners are members of that particular minority group. These educators will be in a position to really understand the needs, aspirations and fears of minority learners and will also serve as role models for the minority learners.

- *Medium of instruction*

Here, the medium of instruction – the language that is being used in teaching – is described and prescribed. It includes the prescription of the language of instruction of the so-called general subjects as well as the language that is being used to teach the language subjects that is part of the curriculum.

In the case of the education of minority groups, and especially if the particular minority group is defined by cultural and language differences, it is very important to use the mother tongue of these learners as a medium of instruction if it is at all possible, considering the level of development of the language or the number of minority learners in the particular national education system. At least, the mother tongue of the minority learners should be taught as a subject in the curriculum of these learners. These learners should never get the impression that their language is regarded as inferior by the majority group.

- *Physical facilities*

This means that the provision of and requirements for physical facilities are described and prescribed. Physical facilities refer to aspects like the classrooms, furniture, curriculum material such as handbooks and writing material, and the educational media, such as overhead projectors and televisions.

The physical education facilities for learners from minority groups should compare favourably with those of the majority group and should support efforts to provide for the unique education needs of the minority group(-s). There should never be a perception that the physical

educational facilities provided to the minority group(-s) are inferior to those of the majority group.

### ***Education support services***

Education support services refer to specialised non-educational services needed to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activities. The following *elements* are usually referred to: *support services rendered to educators, support services rendered to learners and support services rendered to teaching activities and structures*. Commonly known support services include library services, educational media services, school transport services and feeding schemes.

Quite often, support services are the neglected component of national education systems. Although 'structure for teaching' as a component is the nodal point of any education system, the support services provide an indispensable service to ensure quality education. Learners from minority groups are often labelled as slow learners or trouble makers. They are often in this position because they are not equipped with the required competencies to profit from the education provision. Especially in these cases, the support services can deliver a valuable contribution to enable learners from minority groups to fully benefit from the available education provision.

### **Summary**

The aim of this article was to indicate at a theoretical level how the international rights of minority groups should determine the educational needs of minority groups. It was demonstrated that according to the internationally accepted rights of minority groups, one of the most important rights of minority groups is education according to their own unique educational needs. It was also pointed out that the educational rights of minority groups boil down to:

- The right of children from minority groups to receive education according to their unique religious, cultural and language needs.
- The protection of children's own identity should be actively supported by statutory institutions in a particular country.
- The rights of minority groups to establish and maintain their 'own' schools (private schools), subject to the minimum standards of the education authorities, are invaluable to the provision of quality education.

Finally, it was explained at a theoretical level how the rights and educational rights of minority groups act as a determinant of a particular national education system. If statutory institutions are serious to recognise these rights, it should influence all the components and elements of a particular national education system. It was indicated that provision of education to minority groups should be a particular focus of statutory institutions and should at least be on the same level of that of the majority group.

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