

The Mission of Greek Catholic Schools in the most Disadvantaged Micro-regions

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In Hungary during Saint Stephen's state- and church organizational period, the monks belonging to the Benedictine Order opened the first school on Saint Martin's hill a thousand years ago. *"Since then – disregarding the forty years between 1948 and 1989 – the determining role of the Catholic Church has continuously prevailed in training and education."* Referring to Jenő Gergely's (1997) work *The history of the Catholic Church in Hungary between 1919-1945*, the presence of the Catholic Church and clerical people in public education basically expressed itself in three ways: partly the church itself maintained schools and other educational institutions attached to the schools (student hostels, dormitories etc.); partly clerical people, mainly the members of female orders fulfilled the educational tasks in schools which were not maintained by the church and finally the church took part in the management of public education and school inspectorate. A new chapter opened in 1990 in the life of the Hungarian Catholic schools when the church had the opportunity – also reinforced by the law – to maintain schools. The Hungarian Catholic Education System underwent a numerically huge growth, 571 educational institutions had got into its maintenance by 2012. The church in this capacity has become not only a school maintainer, but also a religious community consisting of a powerful, strength-keeping group of people adopting common standards who are responsible for not only the training of the next generations, but their education as well.

According to the census data of 2011, the Greek Catholic Church, has 179,176 faithfuls, many of whom are present just in the northern and eastern parts of the country (Borsod-Abajúj-Zemplén county and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county) in the most disadvantaged regions, therefore the mission formulated by the leaders of the Greek Catholic Church aims to continuously help unprivileged kids catch up.

My study aims to discover the theoretical roots of disadvantage compensatory efforts made in Greek Catholic schools in the XXI. century through the identity and mission efforts of Catholic schools.

Greek Catholic educational institutions in today's Hungarian society

Looking at the educational institutions of the Greek Catholic Church it is needed to have a few sentences of outlook about the framework of the educational institutions of the Vatican in relation to the Catholic schools. For the Vatican, the Educational Congregation takes the highest responsibility for the Greek Catholic schools of Hungary, whose jurisdiction covers three areas: seminars, religious orders and the secular institutions supplying recruitment, universities, faculties, institutions and schools specialized in higher ecclesiastical and secular studies maintained by the church, and eventually church-run schools and other educational institutions. (Pietro Brunori: *A Katolikus Egyház* 2002).

In the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, the educational agencies at the level of the Diocese of Hajdúdorog and the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc monitor the operation of the local educational institutions. In the Diocese of Hajdúdorog there are current trainings at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

St. Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College is the tertiary educational institution of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church which in addition to the training of clergy, catechists, theologians and cantors are also trained in cooperation with the Roman Pontifical Oriental Institute.

The Greek Catholic Seminary is in charge of the training of seminary priests. It has two student hostels. The kindergarten and primary education is implemented in 10 institutions in Hodász, Újfehértó, Nyíregyháza, Hajdúdorog, Debrecen, Kisvárda, Balkány, Nyíradony, Nyíracsaád, Szolnok and some related member institutions. Secondary education takes place in two locations, Nyíregyháza and Hajdúdorog, there is even a vocational school and an educational and further training institution. The Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc operates 10 educational institutions including two institutions providing secondary level education. The kindergarten and primary school education is going on in 7 educational institutions in: Kazincbarcika, Homrogd, Miskolc, Sárospatak és Edelény. Member institutions are attached to them in Selyeb, Miskolc, Felsőzsolca.

In the mission of education policy of the Greek Catholic Church the most preferable area is to continuously help disadvantaged children catch up.

This effort is not only the Greek Catholic Church's own one, in her study: *Expansion, Systematisation and Social Commitment of Church-Run Education in Hungary* (2013) Gabriella Pusztai draws the attention to the fact that denominational schools pay more and more attention to the disadvantaged groups. She states that it really

should be every government's interest to create comprehensive schools in fact which are able to integrate the low status and middle-class children. She points out that the reduction of social inequalities has become one of the most important aims of education policies.

My analysis on the management of disadvantaged children starts in 2 directions:

- Social expectations – the contact of religion and education
- The mission of Greek Catholic schools in the most disadvantaged micro-regions

The relationship between religion and education in today's Hungarian society

Many researchers have studied the relationship between religion and education from several aspects. In his study *Balancing between religion and education in modernity* (2007), Miklos Tomka highlights that it always depends on historical circumstances. By characterizing religious education in the 19-20th centuries, he emphasizes that the spirit of the Enlightenment period and scientific positivism ensured the development of the ideological background of the civil, non-religious education system, which also led to the revitalization of the church and religion. He states that in parallel with the above phenomenon, in the nineteenth-century public education the centralized effort of the state 'disguised' in a nationalist gown appears, which contributed to the fact that the social, ethnic and religious minorities felt discriminated against leading to the establishment of their own group-specific education systems. The 19th century brought strong changes in the life of religious schools – the institutionalized educational systems of specific groups and the development of socio-cultural pluralism which faced the assimilating efforts of the state. Cultural "otherness" became expressed contributing to the pluralism of education. Communism strengthened the role of religion and churches in the sense that social identity was maintained against the state power. The religious communities or parishes were the expressional venues of the individuals' personal autonomy, as social groups against state power.

Religion and the church meant the social realization of "otherness" in the ideological and political background of communism. As both religion and the Church have a high prestige, in Eastern and Middle Europe, the religious and non-religious groups wanted the reopen of religious schools. He added that the new ideology of expressing freedom and democratic pluralism reduced interest in church schools in Western European countries in the second half of the 20th century. The growing recognition and acceptance of the social, national, ethnic

and religious diversity of the multi-cultural society meant the adoption of a pluralised educational system. Prof. dr. Tamás Kozma interpreted the educational role of churches. In his study *Transformation of Religious Education in the 1990s*, published in 2005 he considers the educational role of churches as not only home affairs, but also as much more as a 'corollary of the migration reorganizing the world,' which helps Europe to fit in the world economy and "world society". He emphasizes the fact that the Church does not pursue a policy of grievance, but rather seeks mission.

During the transition, Richard Korzenszky represented the Catholic Church in the Ministry of Education, he worked as a Ministerial Commissioner from 1991, and then in 1991 he became the Executive Chairman of the Authority of Catholic Schools. From 1996 as the Vice-Chairman of the School Committee of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference as a school politician he had a decisive role in the restart of the Catholic school system. In 2004, in his work *Szünet nélkül (Without a Break)* he analyzed the individual atmosphere of Christian schools of the turn of the millenium:" In the world of the millennium the man of Christ is missing or only sporadically appears. The one who can live for the others, and has the ability to share. However, the communities consisting of such people mean contrast in this society.

They exist as warning signals for those living differently. I believe we will have future only if the development of the man of Christ occurs in the center of all our activities. Our schools may be the staff of a more human world where man does not live for itself.

Peter Erdő emphasizes in his study *The need for Catholic education in today's Europe – from a Hungarian point of view* that despite many difficulties there is a growing social demand for Catholic schools. He points out that it is not the religious motive why many parents take their children to Catholic schools but because of high quality, caring, loving education. Moreover, also because the loving atmosphere of the school can protect students from dangers around them. He positively mentions that there is great emphasis on the talent, catch up, music, sport and arts in education, and great attention is paid to the catch up of disadvantaged children. In his article he points out that keeping values belongs to the essence of Catholic schools, they try to transfer complete knowledge. It shapes personality, conscience, and trains for taking responsibility, commitment. Last but not least, he mentions that in the order set up based on the added value, in the first place and even among the top 10 institutions four Catholic schools are present.

The mission of Greek Catholic schools in the most disadvantaged micro-regions

In relation to the mission of the Catholic Church – which is about the education of disadvantaged children – a number of international researches have been conducted which are based on the statements of the document "Declaration on Christian parenting" (1965) of the Second Vatican Council. *"Anyone belonging to any race, social class, being at any age, because of their personal dignity, they have the inalienable right to an education that meets the goal of life, which is tailored to the individual's abilities, gender, to that specific culture and national traditions, but at the same time they are open to fraternal relations with other nations, by serving real unity and peace on the earth. True education develops personality – the ultimate goal of a person as a directing principle – but at the same time they mean benefit for the society to which the person belongs and will take an active role in its life as an adult."* In Stephen J. Denig, C.M.-Anthony J. Dosen's study: *The Mission of the Catholic School in the Pre-Vatican II Era (1810-1962) and the Post-Vatican II Era (1965-1995): Insights and Observation for the New Millennium* published in 2009, the authors describe the changes in the missions of Catholic elementary and secondary schools – by pointing to the prevalence of marginalized groups – in the light of the Second Vatican Council. According to the documents of the council the Catholic Church has to turn to the outside world, too. This fact contributed to the fact that the mission of Catholic schools has changed. They aimed to educate not only Catholic young people but also a much broader target group. The aim of it was not only primarily apologetics, but also to help the poor. Catechesis has become a religious and moral instruction, with a great emphasis on evangelism, community, education of holistic approach and on prayer. The schools were committed towards social justice and service. Timothy J. Cook, Thomas A. Simonds, S. J's study: *The Charism of 21st-Century Catholic Schools: Building a Culture of Relationships* published in 2011 focuses on a framework that shows students' contact nets. On the basis of their relationship to themselves, to God, to local communities, the creation of the world takes place the approach while developing their critical senses through the lens of faith. Special emphasis is given to the examination of the contact with marginalized social groups, the disadvantaged, and people with disabilities. This intention was confirmed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), who set the following objectives for Catholic schools in 2005: they have to create such an atmosphere, in which the message of the Gospel is expressed, and such a community in which Christ can be experienced, and where thanksgiving and prayer can take place.

In summary, we can say that the Greek Catholic Church, similarly to other denominations, is facing a big challenge in relation to the expanded school system. The direction is clear because of the geographical situation of this Church – it is present in the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary. It is appropriate to carry out empirical studies that will help to find proper educational methods for the development of disadvantaged students.

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