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“NOBODY TOLD US ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED”: THE CURRENT STATE OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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This research study sought to understand the current state of Holocaust education in Romanian classrooms and how sociocultural and institutional forces influence its treatment. By identifying the obstacles, challenges, and successes of Holocaust education in Romania, this study can both disseminate the techniques and conditions that bring about meaningful Holocaust education and provide a generative knowledge base for curriculum proposals, symposia, and other initiatives that seek to disrupt reticence on this topic. Given their recent accession to the European Union, this is a timely study that also examines Romania's educational efforts concerning the development of democratic skills and dispositions, many of which often result from addressing controversial topics and closed areas, including the Holocaust in Romania. Holocaust education is a relatively new phenomenon in Romania and studying its inception can offer insights for other societies and cultures that are working to introduce Holocaust or controversial issues into their middle and high school curricula. As more post-Soviet and post-communist states attempt to build pluralistic, tolerant, and open-minded societies, their treatment of historical silences and the renegotiation of their past becomes a critical feature for the development of democratic citizens. Holocaust education is well-qualified to meet the demands of citizenship education as it helps to promote tolerant societies free from prejudice, racism, and bigotry, while simultaneously promoting the inclusivity of others, justice-oriented dispositions, and commitments to peace (Salmons, 2003).

RELEVANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

Understanding Romanian Holocaust education fits within the established line of inquiry and literature on the challenges and opportunities for authentic, complicated, and substantive Holocaust education in Europe with the end goal of fostering democratic citizens. After the fall of communism, Romanian

society failed to address responsibility for the fate of Romanian Jews and Jews murdered by Romanians in the Ukraine (Weinbaum, 2006). As late as 2003, the official Romanian narrative denied that the Holocaust occurred in Romania (Fleming, 2006) or that the Holocaust affected Romanian Jews, yet at least 250,000 Jews perished under Romanian leadership. The communist and post-communist historiographical paradigm often treated ethnic Romanians as the victims of the Holocaust, rather than the perpetrators, which deflected guilt (Kenez, 2006) and minimized the need to confront this history. Textbooks included exculpatory passages that claimed Romania was one of the few places where the final solution did not occur, mainly due to the lack of native cooperation, and one communist source even asserted that Romania saved Jewish lives en masse (Cioflanca, 2004).

Unlike a number of German occupied countries that experienced native collaborationism, many Romanians acted as perpetrators and engaged in spontaneous pogroms. Ion Antonescu, the Romanian leader at the time, found that “there has never been a more suitable time in history to get rid of the Jews,” (Wertsman, 2004, p. 120) and Hitler remarked that Antonescu was “pursuing much more radical policies in this area [murder of Jews] than we have done so far” (Oldson, 2002, p. 301). As a result of strong communist, nationalistic, and xenophobic currents in Romanian society, this silenced history was prolonged for decades (Ioanid, 2000). The nascent historical work on the Holocaust in Romania has only recently prompted educational initiatives, which explains the limited knowledge most Romanians have of the Holocaust (Wertsman, 2004) and the dearth of empirical studies on what is actually taught in schools. According to a report furnished by the Romanian government, school children now have compulsory Holocaust education (Task Force, 2004a), yet the degree of depth, types of instructional strategies, and specific content addressed is largely unknown.

As Romania adjusts to EU membership, the need for its citizens to competently participate in a multicultural and pluralistic association has become prominent. Part of this preparation involves the development of tolerance, cherishing of diversity, and anti-racist attitudes. Many scholars (Gregory, 2000; Haydn, 2000; Burtonwood, 2002; Salmons, 2003; Shoemaker, 2003; Short, 2003; Schweber, 2004) align the teaching of the Holocaust to the core purpose of social studies education in a democracy: civic competence. The Holocaust was the “defining moment of modern history, perhaps of all time” and surely the most important event of the 20th century (Gregory, 2000, p. 38). It is a vital part of any education (Brown & Davies, 1998), and it contains useful lessons for both individual students and education as an institution (Short, 2003). When properly conceived,

Holocaust education positions students to engage in critical reflection of beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions underlying society (Schweber, 2004), which is also necessary for a democratic education (Griffin, 1942).

The sustained period of silence concerning the Holocaust in Romania in many ways constitutes a controversial and “closed area.” Similar to other societies, Romanian students’ knowledge about the Holocaust is sometimes incomplete, biased, or cursory. But democratic societies require citizens who can make informed judgments about controversial issues (Engle & Ochoa, 1988) which often involve contemporary public concerns. Addressing controversy pays a democratic dividend by increasing civic efficacy, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and participation in political activity, as well as elevating interest in current events, social studies content, and contemporary social issues (Harwood & Hahn, 1990).

By drawing on an established network of contacts at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, the Ministry of Education of Romania, the Elie Wiesel Institute, and colleagues at the University of Bucharest, I engaged in an ethnographic case study that explored what is currently happening in Romanian schools with regard to Holocaust education and what forces work to advance or undermine its treatment. As an atypical, extreme, and unique case, this study was fundamentally interested in cultural context, societal history, and the attitudes of community members, educators, and policy-makers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative methods primarily because they are well-suited for addressing research problems concerning norms, structures, conditions, and processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), features that are at the heart of these research questions. Moreover, these questions contain normative elements and assume a constructivist ontology, which undergirds qualitative methods and asserts that there is not one reality, but rather multiple interpretations and renderings of the world (Merriam, 2001). In addition to exploring this case study within a qualitative paradigm, I utilized an ethnographic approach, which includes the history of the community as well as the attitudes of community members, parents, educators, citizens, policy makers, and students. Because cultural context also involves shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns that inform what is and what should be (Patton, 1990), an ethnographic case study is supremely well positioned to seek out the constructed meanings of educational commonplaces (Schwab, 1973), including students, teachers, subject matter, and numerous forces within the milieu.

During the course of this research study I collected data in three forms: interview responses, survey responses, and documents. I conducted semi-structured interviews with roughly 20 individuals from the Ministry of Education, the University of Bucharest, the University of Iasi, the Elie Wiesel Institute, and other educational institutions. I also interviewed approximately 20 teachers in middle schools and high schools throughout Bucharest and Iasi and I engaged in informal conversations with scores of students and community members. In addition to collecting interview data, roughly half of these individuals completed surveys on the topics of Holocaust education in Romania and controversial issues in Romanian classrooms. I also collected and analyzed curricular documents, including textbooks, competency objectives, and trade books that serve to inform Romanian teachers on this topic.

FINDINGS

Academic Freedom

One significant advantage that Romanian history and social studies education enjoys is a large degree of teacher autonomy. This autonomy is manifested in numerous ways, all of which contain the potential for releasing coverage and discussion of controversial issues, such as the Holocaust in Romania.

First, teachers now have the option to use the textbook of their choosing and a variety of textbooks for history are available at numerous grade levels. These texts can be quite responsive to innovative practices in the field and the Ministry approves them prior to implementation. This curricular freedom also includes instructional strategies in addition to content. Every teacher and educational affiliate I interviewed agreed that innovative strategies and varied pedagogy was completely within the purview of the teacher and not imposed from above. Second, although a core curriculum exists throughout Romania for history topics, these aims are largely stated as *competencies* that have skill and dispositional components. These core competencies are based on the Bologna process and come from a European Union framework. This progressive approach to curriculum can ultimately minimize declarative learning and uncontested “correct” answers by positioning the teacher as curricularist, who can design units, add resources, draw from activity examples, and make other decisions. Teachers must prepare a general plan for the year, which is aligned with the program of study, yet they retain the day-to-day instructional decision making. In addition, Romanian history teachers have additional curricular latitude due to the reserved aims and goals of the local school. Teachers are free to propose and conduct a special topics course called “optionals” and many have

chosen to do so with a stand-alone Holocaust course, which provides nuanced and in-depth treatment of the subject at any grade level in middle schools and high schools.

This freedom is enhanced by the difficulty level of removing a practicing teacher. A seasoned history inspector suggested that “I don’t have any tools to get rid of a teacher.” Currently the relationship of the teacher to the school is through the Ministry of Education, a conduit that has vestigial relations to communism. The relationship between community and school is slowly coming into existence and, as a result, local control is gradually emerging as a power center in Romanian education. The optional courses depend upon the school and the strengths of specific faculty and, in order to run, these courses need the support of the teacher, administration, and other stakeholders. Although these courses arise locally, there are also national curricula specifically devised for these Holocaust courses. If teachers exhibit a special competency in this area and/or have local Holocaust history within their town or region that they feel requires extensive coverage, they can also propose a “case study” version of the Holocaust course, which addresses local victims, perpetrators, and rescuers.

However, a history teacher in Iasi (site of one of the worst pogroms during the Holocaust) asserted that there is a limit on the optional courses and that she was only able to teach one, while several classes of students were interested in the course. In addition, a Holocaust teacher trainer suggested that some history inspectors did not approve proposed Holocaust courses because they deemed them as “not important,” but generally this outlook and reaction is anomalous.

Ministry of Education

Unlike some other post-communist societies, for the past five years the Romanian Ministry of Education has been very interested in and supportive of Holocaust education. In many respects, according to one history inspector, this has been “*the* priority” of the institution. The Ministry has contributed significant resources to help teachers engage in training sessions on the Holocaust and travel to Yad Vashem for refined workshops on Holocaust education, and it has put into place incentives that reward those who take part in these experiences.

One Ministry official suggested that most Romanians feel they are not guilty for anything in the Holocaust rather, this topic is limited to what others did. When she went through the program at Yad Vashem and realized the number of Jews deported from Romania, she became quite angry and thought “that’s not true!” The history lessons “put in our heads” during communism

suggested that Romania never wronged anyone. When the topic of the Holocaust came up, there was little reticence, for it was mainly to discuss that “Hitler was a bad guy.” When a more accurate narrative of Romania’s past entered their history books, people reacted defensively. This official suggested one feature of Romania’s success in broaching this history was because it was not compulsory from the beginning, and teacher training worked in concert with the growing place it took in the curriculum. Relationships with Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Holocaust institutions in Paris helped Romanian teachers “see real documents and understand.”

Teacher Training

The process of training teachers on Holocaust education began roughly five years ago. Currently, the core group of trainers have affiliations with the Universities of Cluj and Bucharest. The City of Bucharest now has over 40 public schools that have the optional course on the Holocaust, in addition to the core curriculum that touches on the Holocaust during secondary education. In some cases, the teacher trainings face large cadres of teachers who agree that there was no Holocaust in Romania, because the definition of the Holocaust was one of total destruction and half of the Romanian Jews survived. One prominent teacher trainer indicated that this was a shocking distinction she found; it was shocking as well as for the experts from Yad Vashem who were present for the training. Based on this trainer’s experiences, most teachers come in with limited understandings and they “don’t know what to read.” Although there are many books published on the topic, many of these include anti-Semitic and Holocaust denial variants. Most critically, because many of the teachers were trained under the communist regime, they not only have a cursory understanding of the Holocaust, but they also have misinformation about the subject. These “wrong pieces of information” can have a corrosive effect on Ministerial efforts if teachers’ knowledge is not subjected to historical and rational consideration; the most profitable venture for this reconsideration is teacher training. At least 1,000 teachers have gone through the training, but according to one of the main Holocaust trainers, this number only amounts to 10% of the history teachers in Romania.

Each year, the teacher training program has grown. In the beginning, roughly 20 teachers went through the training each year. In 2007, the expected number of successful trainees is approximately 400. Unfortunately, the funding provided through the Ministry and other sources is now becoming much more difficult to access, a topic to which I return in the policy recommendation section.

Class Time and the Macrocurriculum

A pervasive and fundamental challenge Romanian history and social studies education face concerning Holocaust education and the unearthing of controversial issues is time. Simply put, the bulk of Romanian students receive a paucity of instructional time devoted to these issues. First, the mandatory educational system is K-10, which limits the exposure of some students to the rich curriculum available in the 12th grade. But the main barrier stems from the one class per week that students have in history. Although civic education is compulsory in grades 3-8, and history in grades 4-12, the allocation of less than one hour per week of instructional time inhibits the investigation of contested and ill-structured historical narratives. This challenge is exacerbated by the topical selection of each year's curriculum. For example, grades 9 and 10 are a mix of national and world history; grade 11 is the 20th century; and grade 12 is national history in a European context. Given the numerous and laudatory examples of what to teach and how to teach about the Holocaust, which Yad Vashem and the International Task Force on Holocaust education suggest (Task Force, 2004b), it is quite difficult to comprehend exactly how a teacher would teach the topic in a garden variety history course given the demands of other content. Presenting individual narratives, dilemmas, choices, and nuances of victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers—approaches these agencies endorse—is largely chimerical outside of the optional Holocaust course.

When asked what students would actually learn about the Holocaust in the normal curriculum, one prominent history inspector suggested they would learn “almost nothing.” Ministry officials cited pressures of having a small number of course hours, yet society demands for “35 subjects if possible.” As a result of the need to teach multiple languages, a diverse set of math and science courses, and other requirements, history has been marginalized to one hour per week. A fundamental problem with this change, which is a reduction from prior allocations, is that many teachers have been teaching different approved content at a different pace for years. In addition, the more democratic instructional strategies that the Ministry endorses further erode the amount of time available for coverage of topics due to their time-intensive nature. One school principal suggested that this is “the way it was under communism” and that in the past the government “did not want people to have time to think.” Although this system is a holdover of the communist era, it was perpetuated in the early stages of democracy and has now solidified as a legitimate rationale for organizing the macrocurriculum.

Similar to teachers, many students bring impoverished understandings of the Holocaust into Romanian classrooms. Many are armed with information

from the internet, which can be accurate, or they draw from Holocaust denial or anti-Semitic websites. A number of teachers I interviewed indicated that students will “not know anything” about the Holocaust unless their families have personal experiences that are discussed at home or if they employ an initiative to research on their own. Although the matriculation exam at the end of high school includes history, it does not address the Holocaust, precisely because, as teachers in Iasi indicated, it is “a delicate topic.” This delicacy was also true in the communist period, which raises questions about the degree to which these topics are actually taught, if they are not tested. Students can even opt out of the history component of the exam altogether and select another topic. Teachers are still officially required to teach the topic, but there are no mechanisms in place to ensure coverage. As of 2007, Romania does not have educational research tools in place to determine students’ understanding of Holocaust history.

Focus on Content

To some extent, the communist pedagogy still permeates Romanian education. The system of didactic instruction with a primary focus on recitation and recall is the stuff of authoritarian and totalitarian education, but it is also a thread that weaves throughout many schools. One Holocaust lesson I observed in a Bucharest high school involved heavily declarative and persuasive lectures and explication about Holocaust events, how we should judge those events, and what sort of affective lessons we should take from that history. National exams and communist-era teaching emphasize the value of acquiring content knowledge at the cost of skills and dispositions, and these currents exist throughout Romanian classrooms with varying manifestations. The limited instructional time in history only heightens the pressures on teachers to “deliver” the facts, data, and information that pass for an education. A number of university professors commented on how commonplace this phenomenon is in public schools and numerous observations in history classrooms corroborate this finding. Students also underscore this issue, suggesting that teachers should teach in “more interesting ways” and that most lessons are “words, words, words” because they “read from the book in history” and engage in discussions only on occasion. Romania does not have the tradition of social studies education, which is primarily directed toward citizenship competence. Instead, its history curriculum very often avoids contemporary issues, choices, and value-based lessons. Communist-era education did not heavily address present societal issues, which is why history education is a much more natural transition from communism to democracy than social studies education.

Although the core curriculum is changing from a heavy focus on content knowledge through the aforementioned competencies, the spirit of “getting out all the data, knowing the dates, when he died, when he lived, when we was king, and so on” still acts as a primary fountainhead for instruction. One high ranking Ministry official cited, the most difficult change is the shift from content knowledge where “I will tell you, you will learn, and the next time you will tell me and I will see if you will tell me exactly what I told you last time.” For teachers who have had an affinity to this style, the shift to empowering children and de-centering the teacher within the classroom is a difficult change, one that has dramatic implications for the degree to which students interrogate historical narratives and develop the skills and dispositions required of democratic citizens.

The Teacher

Although there are numerous challenges and contextual obstacles that undermine quality history education in Romania, one recurring theme among all respondents is that instruction very much depends on the teacher. The fact that quality depends on the teacher speaks to the earlier strength of teacher autonomy, but this sort of freedom can work both ways. For example, even though Antonescu is listed in the programs of study, and the textbooks have multiple perspectives of his leadership, teacher discretion can ultimately have a very strong impact on the way in which the controversy is framed. Most of the textbooks do not prescribe what the teacher is to do, nor does the program of study. Teachers can certainly abuse these liberties, as well as those who have limited knowledge of the subject. They can simply devote minimal time to the topic and, given the low pay of most teachers and the additional jobs they must hold, the time to remediate and extend their knowledge in these areas is rather burdensome. Because it is difficult for young teachers to enter the field, the older generation dominates Romanian classrooms and with them come varying degrees of inherited knowledge and pedagogy from the communist era. One history inspector suggested that if a student does not take the optional Holocaust history class or is not able to, then the quality of instruction depends on the willingness of the teacher to investigate the topic. As this inspector noted, he has “very bad teachers as well as those who aren’t interested [in the Holocaust] and I can’t force them.”

Universities

Two additional challenges are located within the universities of Romania, in both the history and education faculties. Faculty members asserted that of all the history departments in Romanian universities, only 2 of 69 contain courses about the Holocaust. If Holocaust courses are offered at other universities,

they are within the departments of Jewish studies or political science, courses that future history teachers are not required to take. When asked why this is, a prominent teacher trainer responded by suggesting that it is “very simple. This is the source of the far right of Romania--the history departments--most of the students and people involved in the far right come from the history department.” This phenomenon is slowly changing with the increase of younger faculty members, but moving from a far right orientation to one that honestly examines Romania’s past is a generational endeavor that will take years to accomplish. Ultimately more teachers take part in the Holocaust trainings each year, but as older teachers retire they are often replaced with new teachers who have not received scholarly exposure to Romania’s Holocaust past.

In addition, a large majority of respondents remarked on the lack of depth, rigor, and democratic teaching strategies within most education departments. One Ministry of Education official suggested that “secondary education moved forward and tried to change and improve itself; much more so than university education.” She went on to say that they “don’t want to change; even when they follow the Bologna model, they are faking it.” By adhering to outdated perennialist and essentialist philosophies, schools of education tend to train teachers who will “fill his head with information.” As a result, the in-service teacher training is often better than the pre-service training, which is “not normal. Universities should be the leader for change and improvement and they are not.”

CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

A prominent legacy of the communist era is the general lack of knowledge about the Holocaust at home. A number of students and teachers indicated that if they learned about the Holocaust, they did so through the internet. One researcher indicated that “in Romania this is the problem of knowing, I think. People really don’t know [about the Holocaust].” Before 1989, Romanians had an idea that Hitler was bad and that gas chambers existed, but, as a Ministry official suggested, “nobody told us about what happened in Romania.” Other societal forces draw on communist-era understandings and actively negate the Holocaust within their discourse, while yet others perpetuate specious Jewish-Communist linkages. Nationalistic publications are the main offenders of negation, and the mainstream media still has xenophobic articles that actively negate the past. A number of teachers suggested a sizeable number of Romanian citizens perceive the Holocaust as an accident in history, a label that makes it easy to dismiss as an aberration. If the Holocaust was an accident and most do not know about it, they tend to not care about it. Yet in the main, the

topic of the Holocaust is not really within the public's consciousness; larger and more contemporary issues ultimately attract much more attention. Because few parents are knowledgeable about this topic, primarily due to communist-era education, they do not like nor dislike—they simply do not know. Even today, suggested students, the focus on the Holocaust is in its general form, not as it occurred in Romania. When students do know about the Holocaust, it is due to their own inquiry and often their knowledge might exceed that of the teacher. If history is supposed to question memory and if memory cannot be erased, history is the tool for reckoning memory to reality (Shafir, 2007). Memories created and sustained during communism often demand this problematizing and complicating, as they are often incomplete, biased, or inaccurate. Thus, the task of unearthing and reconstructing societal memory, through deep and meaningful Holocaust education within the schools, is a task requiring sustained attention, excellent teaching, and quality teaching materials.

Another main issue is the role of Antonescu in the curriculum. A number of students suggested their schools provided limited attention to Antonescu in the curriculum and they simply knew he came “after Charles II.” Another student thought Antonescu “moved the Jews and took back territories--that's why he allied with Hitler.” Others questioned whether he was “a Jew Killer or is this all made up?” Confusion about Antonescu, they suggest, comes from covering only the facts in history. Part of the confusion, suggested a Bucharest history inspector, is due to a mistake made in Romanian education to introduce the controversy of Antonescu, still in much confusion historiographically, into the schools. Because the topic is quite polemical, some teachers express their political opinions that Antonescu was the “savior” who “didn't allow Hitler to make the final solution in Romania.” Others explain away Antonescu as being “under pressure” within a “small country that didn't have so much power; we were very much in the middle and we got crossed a lot.” While allied with Germany, Romania had to “abide by their rules,” this teacher suggested. Not yet ready for impartiality, many teachers are in need of more attention to these controversies in pre-service teacher training programs. But the grey areas of normative decisions and moral relationships as rooted within a country's past is rather inimical to extensive coverage of dates, names, and places.

When asked if they were surprised to learn Romania was involved in the Holocaust, many teachers responded by suggesting “we did also save people.” Conversations such as these often return to how Romanians saved Jews, how it was part of an “accident,” or simply a *fait accompli* resulting from an alliance with Nazi Germany. These responses resemble the spirit of deflective negationism and comparative trivialization (Shafir, 2004). Others added that

“we still suffer from communism” because the country is run by former communists and the political parties are corrupt and self-serving. This somewhat nationalistic spirit, whereby the Holocaust problem is “solved” due to the fact that it is dealt with because the “Jews are gone,” along with the belief that other countries have problems that are worse than the Holocaust, collectively negate and corrode the rationale for its open and deep discussion.

A critical issue in this and other nascent democracies is the degree to which students will confront controversies in their classrooms. This democratic imperative rests upon the teacher’s ability and training to do so. Often, suggested a Ministry of Education official, teachers transmit their beliefs about controversies, but if they are recognized and codified in the program of study, then textbooks will provide multiple perspectives. If not in the program, then teacher discretion and their particular beliefs can undermine a balanced and rational approach to the issue. Other officials cited the intrusive character of the government which challenges topics that seek to deal with communist and other contemporary issues. In one recent instance, parliament questioned why history textbooks included contemporary individuals since “we shouldn’t discuss present times.” Again, this aversion to present issues is a key residual feature of communism, to be sure, but it squarely resides in the classroom as a force which is anathema to democratic citizenship education.

One clearly controversial element of Romanian society that does not receive curricular devotion is the Roma issue. When I asked students in Iasi what it means to be a Romanian, one responded by saying “not a thief on the street.” This prompted a protracted conversation in which students expressed the schism of Romanians and Roma. Often, students and community members believe the Roma to have such distinct values, heritage, and history that they are irrevocably incongruous to that of Romanians. Many suggested that the Roma could never become Romanians even though other nationalities could through intermarriage or assumption of cultural and linguistic characteristics. Even though Romania has instituted inclusive, proactive, and affirmative action policies that seek to advance Roma life, most people outside of academia who I spoke with clearly articulated beliefs and attitudes involving prejudice, dislike, and other non-inclusive attributes. Although 40% of Romanians claim to experience ethnic diversity, prejudices and discriminatory attitudes towards Roma, homosexuals, and other groups is still widespread (Institute for Public Policy, 2003).

From the beginning of Romanian statehood, being Romanian was about not being something else, such as a Hungarian, Jew, or Roma (Shafir, 2007). This organic nationalism is found within a history of forced assimilation, exclusions, anti-Roma measures, and other phenomena. As a result of this long

history of discrimination, generally many Roma do not declare themselves as such. They also experience poor school enrollment, high dropout rates, and low participation in higher education. As one Ministry of Education official put it, participation of Roma in the universities is “zero point zero zero something.” Although there are desegregation efforts, there are de facto “neighborhood schools,” which create homogeneity and make it difficult to attract and retain staff as “teachers are running from these schools” and Roma families are generally unsupportive of their children’s education.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

More time: Change of Macrocurriculum

Similar to other post-communist countries which are attempting increased instructional devotion to Holocaust education, Romania’s history classrooms suffer from a relative dearth of instructional time and curricular pressures that undermine teachers’ ability to devote more attention to this topic in the general school experience. Therefore, agencies should provide resources and support to Romanian policy makers through schools of education and other collaborative partnerships with curricularists to conduct an evaluation and needs assessment of the public school curriculum. By working in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, education policy experts in parliament, and other agencies, new discussions and considerations could develop that offer various options for curriculum enhancements and improvements that are allegiant to the aims and goals of democratic citizenship education.

Augmentation of the Curriculum & Cross-Cultural Experiences

Although the optional Holocaust courses in Romanian schools include substantive teacher training and a good provision of content resources, a number of history inspectors, teacher trainers, and teachers indicated that cross-cultural experiences with other Holocaust educators would be invaluable for their instruction. In addition, because many Romanian teachers have yet to fully integrate democratic teaching into their classrooms, a partnership with teachers of the Holocaust outside Romania would offer a two-fold benefit: a partner who is deeply engaged in this history could bring new and fresh ideas to Romanian schools and offer suggestions for democratic and powerful teaching and learning. Therefore, summer partnership events in cross-cultural settings could augment Romanian teacher efforts in both content and methodology. These partnership experiences could include evaluation components to determine what sorts of specific democratic citizenship benefits emerge in Romanian classrooms and society.

Strategies for Broaching Controversy

Similar to the cross-cultural partnership, a summer institute that focuses on knowledge of, and strategies for, addressing controversial issues within classrooms could be highly beneficial. Often, pre-service teachers are confused about the role of controversy in their teaching and are uninformed about the nuances of particular issues (Misco & Patterson, 2007). Given the great variety of democratic benefits derived from addressing controversies, including increased civic participation, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, interest in current events, social studies, social issues, and increase the development of tolerance (Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Goldensen, 1978; Curtis & Shaver, 1980; Remy, 1972), linkages between educators, curricularists, and professors of education from a variety of democratic settings with those in Romania could help increase and enhance the exploration of topics and histories that position students to become active, tolerant, and informed citizens. This cross fertilization of ideas and research could provide a generative substructure for democratizing effects in Romania with a center of gravity within Romanian education institutions.

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