

# Divided Education, Divided Citizens?

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# Goals of the study

- **To assess the impact that the practice of separate schooling has on the civic attitudes of students attending separate schools with majority and minority language of instruction.**

# Schooling of minority students in Slovakia

- Schools with minority language of instruction (Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, German, English, Bulgarian)
- Schools with both, majority (Slovak) and minority (Hungarian, Ukrainian, German) language of instruction
- Schools with teaching of minority language -as a special subject (1 Ukrainian, 2 Ruthenian, 5 German, 1 Roma)

# Slovak schools (grades 1-12)

- Schools with Slovak language of instruction: 93% of students
- Schools with Hungarian language of instruction: 6 %
- Schools with Ukranian language of instruction: 0.9 %
- Other language: 1 %

# Interest to study in mother language

- is changing at a higher level of schools
- is not changing much for Hungarian students (almost the same number of high school students comparing to elementary and middle school at Hungarian schools)

# Methodology of the research

- Interviews with gatekeepers and students focus groups
- Questionnaires:

Basic schools with Hungarian language of instruction (345 students and 130 teachers)

Basic schools with Slovak language of instruction (350 students and 98 teachers)

# Major findings

- Perceiving importance of minority schools
- Importance of languages
- Relations between ethnic groups
- Society and politics
- School curriculum

# Perceiving importance of minority schools

- The possibility of schooling in mother language is obvious for both, majority and minority students.
- The existence of minority schools is viewed:
  - by Hungarian students as very good (59%) and good (30%)
  - by Slovak students as good (45%) or don't know (30%). Bad is by 25%.

# Perceiving importance of minority schools

- Hungarian students:
  - majority of them (65%) would send also their children to Hungarian schools
  - 80% is planning to continue at Hungarian high schools (11% at Slovak high schools)

# Perceiving of importance of minority schools

- Slovak students:
  - View importance of schooling in mother language, especially at the elementary level
  - In higher grades they can imagine their schooling also in some other language (Czech or English)

# What would happen if all students had to attend only Slovak schools?

- 2/3 of Hungarian students think it would cause loosing of their own cultural identity (considered as a negative consequence by 52%), but also better proficiency in majority language (considered as a positive consequence by 69 %)

# Importance of languages

- Hungarian students:
  - most important language for their successful professional career in Slovakia is:
    - Slovak language (65%)
    - other most important languages:
      - Hungarian
      - English

# Importance of languages

- Slovak students:
  - most important language for their successful professional career in Slovakia is:
    - Slovak language
    - other most important languages:
      - English
      - Other foreign language

# Relations between ethnic groups

- The more friends children of one ethnic group have from the other ethnic group, the more open relation between them exists.
- Slovak students are more reserved in this relation:
  - 1/2 of Hungarian students would not mind to study in one class with Slovak students while
  - almost 1/2 (42%) of Slovak students would mind it (36% would not mind it).

***“How would you feel, if your teacher told you that you would have two Hungarian classmates?”***

- *“If they were normal, I would not mind at all. However, if they started shouting that Hungary is the best and started to enforce opinions we would not like, that would be a little worse.” “Well, we would not condemn them at the beginning, it depends how they would approach us.” (Slovak school students)*

# Relations between ethnic groups

- *“It would be good (if we were learning about minorities), because we are the same people as them. Because we only live in Slovakia, however, we are Hungarians. What shall we do with it?”*
- *“If the Slovaks knew something about our minority, they may understand, why Hungarian schools are so important for us. (Hungarian school students)*

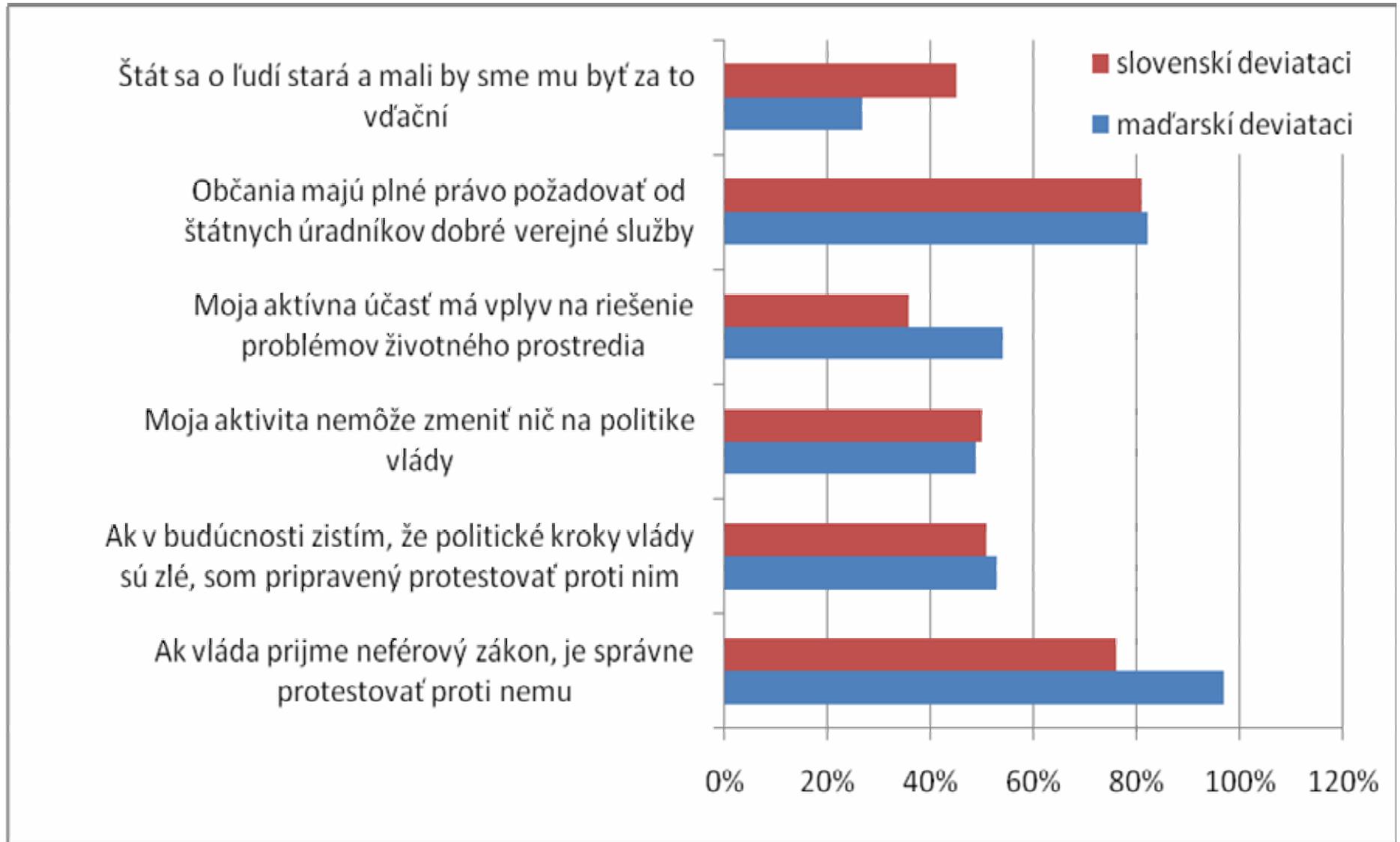
# Relations between ethnic groups

- Focus groups with majority students confirm certain distrust or even hostile attitude towards the larger ethnic minorities, especially those, whose ethnic group had once dominated the empires in which the current majority lived in a minority status, such as Romanian and Slovak students towards Hungarian majority (or Estonians and Latvians towards Russian majority).

# Society and politics

- Both, Slovak and Hungarian students have similar attitudes to general questions regarding the role of a state.
- Most of them do not view state as “a guardian” or “a baby sitter”, they rather prefer an active, participatory citizenship and view natural to require good services from public officers or to protest against unfair laws.

# To what extent do you agree with the following statement?



# Society and Politics

- In some countries involved in the study, minority students and teachers feel less politically empowered than majority students and teachers. According to this study, this is not the case in Slovakia. Hungarian students feel equally, or even more politically empowered than Slovak students. Hungarian teachers are, though, more pessimistic than Hungarian students.

# Society and Politics

- *“So when they live in the Slovak territory, because, as you are saying, they were born here, they should also observe some Slovak rules, government. But they do not respect anything. Neither our government.”*

*(Slovak school student)*

# The attitudes differ in viewing participation of minorities in politics:

- Most of Hungarian students (92%) considers good, if Hungarian political leaders are in government and they do not think (72%) that Hungarian minority has too strong influence on politics.
- On the contrary, 41% of Slovak students considers bad if Hungarian political leaders are in government and 46% think that Hungarian minority has too strong influence on politics.

# School curriculum and ethnic stereotypes

- Different view on how ethnic groups are represented in history textbooks and official curricula:

59% Hungarian teachers doesn't think it is balanced and fair (6% think it is)

48% of the Slovak teachers think it is balanced and fair

# Ethnic stereotypes

In creating opinions on other ethnic groups, both students and teachers are not limited with history textbooks. In focus groups they expressed that they are more influenced by events that happen around, by internet or TV (“The Neighbors” soap opera)

# Hypothetical situation for teachers:

- **What would you do, if a history textbook contained a very prejudiced interpretation of a historical event?**
- Only 4% Slovak teachers would teach it from the textbooks. All other would prefer some other form of presentation.
- More than half Hungarian teachers (comparing to less than 20 % Slovak teachers) would present students the view they consider to be correct and adequate.

# Using of textbooks from other countries

- Hungarian teachers use textbooks from other countries more than Slovak teachers
- 80 % Hungarian teachers besides Slovak textbooks use also Hungarian (73%) and Czech (16%) ones.
- 54 % Slovak teachers uses also Czech (36%) and English or US (23%) ones.

# Conclusion

- From the above information and descriptions of mutual relations it is evident that both ethnic groups approach the other one with lack of respect, trust, and understanding. However, majority of students (90% Hungarians and 70% Slovaks) wish equality among people in the future with no regard to of which ethnic group people are. 60% students of both ethnic groups do not consider correct to view people by their ethnicity.

# Thank you!

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