



School marketing and segmentation: A comparative study in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

Quantitative data stemming from questionnaires sent to the pupils (Czech Republic, 1638; Bulgaria, 375) and interviews with teachers and management teams of schools in the Czech Republic (63) and Bulgaria (91), describe the processes and marketing strategies of education in a post-communist and liberal transition context.

The survey show that the transformation of education into educational market can be seen at several levels in both countries: the distorted evaluations of the student's special educational needs, the big disrepute of pedagogical practices, the liberal management of the schools (empowerment, sponsoring, competition) and finally at the level of the national education policies, without consideration for the specific social and historical context and without adequate evaluation of the concrete problems (segmentation, inequality).

1. Introduction

The paper describes the processes and marketing strategies of education in a post-communist and liberal transition context in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. Its objective is also to describe the main consequences of the growth of school marketing, which is exponential but not regulated in these two post transition countries.

These processes lead, indeed, to an accentuation of segregationist and hyper-bureaucratic educational practices (Maroy, 2010): they are based on the new logic of performance in a hyper competitive educational context (Ball, 2003, 2004) and have a strong impact on renewed school segmentation and inequalities. So, our work contributes to research on this typical phenomenon, linked to a neoliberal and globalized rhetoric of education (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012; Torres, 2009).

Its specificity is the analysis of the post-communist context which is significant because of the heavy and sustainable impact of the totalitarian and bureaucratic past on education but also because of the reluctance of the social actors to analyze their history (Mayer, 2004). The development of the school market in this context is problematic because by blocking educational innovation and the regulating action of the social actors (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002), it prevents the analysis of the links between the global constraints and the local needs inherited from the past. This is seen in both post totalitarian countries compared, renowned for their efforts to get involved in the European educational globalization, for their discrimination against pupils of diverse backgrounds and for their rather unequal school systems in the pre-communist period.

Any concrete educational situation is tightly linked to the specific context in which it occurs. Specific contexts at national, regional and local levels (social background, history, politics, culture and economics) are to be included when we try to 'export' educational or training models and concepts to other countries. This is the price of real success and efficiency to improve educational performance at each national level but also at the European level. Hence it is necessary, prior to presenting the research itself, to inform readers about the context in which these survey data were obtained.

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A brief presentation of the Czech and Bulgarian educational systems will allow a better understanding of the specific role of *gymnasia*, their function and the students they cater for. We shall then specify the main scientific characteristics of the school climate surveys carried out in both countries. The presentation and discussion of the findings are then organized around three key ideas.

Therefore, we would like to show that the development of school markets increases significantly the school segmentation. The second idea is about school marketing and how it leads to a falsified evaluation of the real skills and of the needs of pupils. The third idea shows how school marketing profoundly modifies the status and the educational practices of teachers. The latter questions are about the management of establishments in their involvement in educational projects towards a pursuit of profit.

2. Research in a post-transitional context of education: from totalitarianism towards liberal democracy

Why is a comparison between the Czech and Bulgarian educational situation relevant? How does the global education market fit into the post-communist transition process? These mechanisms have their own context-dependent characteristics, but they are observable in both countries (Le Gloanec & Rupnik, 2008).

The pre-communist socio-economic profile of the two countries is different: on the one hand, a stable Czech democratic republic with a flourishing industry and, on the other, an authoritarian and unstable Bulgarian tsarist regime with an essentially agrarian economy. The end of the communist period also presents differences: on the one hand the Czech ‘Velvet Revolution’ marked a collapse of the regime under the pressure of ancient and determined dissent (Charter 77), while on the other hand there was the Bulgarian ‘Palace Revolution’ representing internal and controlled deconstruction of the Party. The Czech Republic joined the European Union in 2004, Bulgaria only in 2007.

These two countries have, however, similar histories regarding the establishment of communism, their relative distance from Soviet power during the totalitarian period, and a seemingly fluid and rapid transition (Offe, 1992). They both experienced rapid democratic reconstruction, an explosion of the market economy and a high rate of corruption¹ up to the highest level of the state (this corruption has continued). The installation of the liberal model has been complex, giving many former Party executives the opportunity to appropriate the means of production, networks or abandoned businesses. These and other factors make the comparison relevant.

After defining what we mean by ‘school marketing’ from its definitions (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012), we wish to show that the commodification of the school is one of the perverse effects of the gradual democratization of schools, which is the objective in the context of liberal globalization. Paradoxically, this democratization transforms the centring on the needs of the child into an opportunity to revive with the pre-communist school segmentation effected by the *gymnasium* (Spilková, 2005). The significant and discriminatory inequalities apparent in school (Jabbar, 2016) most notably for students with special educational needs; and particularly Roma pupils.

School marketing, defined as a set of different strategies developed by schools to respond to the global institutionalization of competition in education – taken in a double movement of globalization and privatization of education – penetrated the educational systems, including the post totalitarian countries of the Central and Balkan Europe. It affects the schools which take in deprived populations and schools for pupils with specific needs (these schools are often state-governed schools and they try to create a more attractive image to attract parents and pupils to the school and to retain those who might leave) as much as the schools – often deprived – which want to appear as excellent (by publicity and promotion which emphasize assets and advantages of these ‘elite’ schools). The teachers are highly involved in these processes because they risk losing their employment in case of disagreement in a very precarious economic environment for this profession.

Although Education is a field less studied in the process of transition in the countries from the former Soviet Union (Central and Eastern Europe), it is rather obvious that the changes that occurred in the education system after 1989 occurred smoothly, in a progressive and relatively moderate way. One of the first objectives of the changes was a quick and radical detachment from the totalitarian communist education system (1989–1993/95). This earliest moment in the educational transformation lasted only a few months just after the political changeover in 1989, and within our common theoretical framework it is called ‘deconstruction’ (Greger & Walterová, 2007). Then, the Czech and Bulgarian education systems developed with punctual thematic projects with no global rethinking of the aims and of the system of values of the country’s Education. The reforms were considered as finished.

The reforms have mainly addressed, in fact, not only the removal of references to Marxism from the *curricula*, granting establishments their independence and the development of a more participative governance but also the restoration of an early and very determined school segmentation. That is why the educational transition of the totalitarian system towards a democratic and liberal system often remains very difficult: “*the liberal wing, particularly influential, emphasizes a maximal liberalization, a privatization and a demonopolisation of the education, by advocating as main instruments of transformation process of the education is the competition of schools and the reform of the financing*”. In this context, a “*big terminological confusion reigns in the educational literature (...). Certain terms are used practically as synonyms, vaguely defined and, often, interpreted in a very different way by the diverse authors. The correlations, the superimposing of meanings and the distinctive lines of the used notions are not cleared up. The “alternative” and “innovative” definition of the terms causes the biggest problems.*” (Spilková, 2005, 26–29).

It is exactly in terms of ‘alternation’ and ‘innovation’ that the reforms generated by the liberal transformation are presented. But in fact, from the social perspective, the transition led to a great economic crisis and to significant impoverishment of the population. The

¹ According to the agency Transparency International, corruption of the public sector in the Czech Republic ranked 37th in 2015 (score 56) on 168 countries (the 168th being the most corrupted) while Bulgaria is classified 69th (score 41).

promises of the emergence of a middle class which would restore a well-balanced society, became a mirage. The economic difficulties brought a loss of the essential social values. The escalation in the practice of corruption is one of the signs of this. The consequences of the totalitarian regime led in certain cases to the fusion of structures linked to organized crime and the post-bureaucratic institutions of the State.

The school increasingly becomes a market subjected above all to the law of supply and demand. This market is closely connected to the European and international economy. The import and the promotion of ‘alternative’ and ‘innovative’ concepts and ‘Western’ ideas, even if they are unsuitable for the analysis of the local situation, promote the radical and rapid break with the previous system and the inclusion of the countries of Central and Balkan Europe in the debates which lead the European and international education systems. Of course, it seems necessary to support the development of democracy in schools and outside schools but the transformation of the school system into a market is not to its advantage, if for example most diplomas can be bought and if all sorts of illegal practices are allowed in the schools and in the education system.

In parallel, at the educational level, the abandonment of communism in the education systems was considered as a democratization process with a focus on children and a more personalized approach towards the special educational needs of individuals. Moreover, this equivalence between the decommunization and the democratic humanization of education has also existed in other education systems in former soviet countries (Spilková, 2005). In fact, following on from 1989, the transformations of the education systems are gradually being linked to a rebirth of research into education which is, in return, progressively opening up to international comparisons and to the concepts of the global education. International assessments were carried out during the 90s with the purpose of typifying both the real school climate reigning in education establishments as well as the initial effects of the transformations implemented. The questions of the individualized pedagogical and educative approach and the place of each individual within the system are at the heart of these democratization processes of education (Walterová, 2004): do we have to practice school segmentation or not; do we have to select the pupils with special educational needs to help them or to choose, in fact, a dominant elite of the socioeconomic point of view (elite constituted by the remaining pupils)? “Branding” and marketing to “affinity groups” are more common practices with credence goods, but such dynamics should cause some concern in a sector devoted to open access and integration.” (Lubienski, 2007, p.135).

The description of the pupils as ‘pupils with special educational needs’ favors discrimination, segmentation and exclusion from the least successful pupils in segregated courses, under the cover of ‘innovation’, of ‘internationalization’, of a new ‘attention on the special needs’ and of ‘humanism’ in education. This description feeds the school market at two levels: there is a market of schools that offers help for underachieving students but also a market to accompany the so-called particularly gifted pupils.

Thus, it is true to selecting for the ‘intellectually talented’ pupils but also on the contrary to legitimize the exclusion of certain populations: the segregation of Roma children, whose sociocultural difference was interpreted for a long time as mental deficiency in particular in the Czech Republic, was denounced for example by the European Court of Human Rights from the 1990s. Violence in school thus became a violence of exclusion (Debarbieux, 2006); this has become an explicit fact since the revolutions. The pupils are ethnically segmented by local education markets, which emerged in large cities after 1989. The most widely discussed topic is the exclusion of Roma children into special schools (for pupils with special educational needs or for mentally disabled pupils) and the policy of deinstitutionalization of these children with disabilities.

3. Methodology and grounds of surveys

3.1. Methodology

A more precise description of the research method used is to be presented with the two specific fields where it has been implemented. After describing the general characteristics of the surveys, the specificity of each national educational system will be outlined. Finally, the place of the *gymnasium* in the education system will be our main focus as we were able to investigate these selective schools, which are a perfect illustration of school marketing.

The surveys of school climate in both countries are based on both qualitative and quantitative data: quantitative data stemming from questionnaires sent to pupils (Czech Republic, 1638; Bulgaria, 375) and qualitative data from interviews with teachers and management teams in schools (Czech Republic, 63; Bulgaria, 91). The design of the study involved two self-completion questionnaires to be administered to staff and students. These questionnaires aimed to evaluate the overall school climate at the time of research (International Observatory of Violence in Schools, Debarbieux, 1996, 2003, 2006). The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and translated by the researchers. They were analyzed according to the thematic frequency and content analyses methods. The research is accompanied by fieldwork observations which has been ongoing (Kohout-Diaz, 2016).

In the Czech Republic, the survey, aimed to be compared internationally and consisted of the completion of the School Environment Index and victimization questionnaires (Debarbieux, 1996) by 1638 first and second level pupils from 15 Czech elementary schools or *gymnasia* in Prague, Olomouc (Moravia) and their suburbs. These data were then compared with French data (sample of 6268 pupils aged 8 to 16 years from primary and secondary schools, Debarbieux, 2003) as part of the European Observatory on Violence in Schools. The survey was also enriched by 63 semi-structured interviews carried out on site with teachers or other members of staff (mainly head teachers) and by ethnological observations. It was the first survey of this type carried out in the ex-Eastern bloc. In Bulgaria, the broad aims of the research were two-fold: to explore the quality of the school climate by the School Environment Index and victimization questionnaires and to identify the enablers and those who block the process for implementing the project (European Charter for Democratic Schools without Violence) in four upper secondary schools (*gymnasia*) in three Bulgarian areas: North East (Rousse), North West (Vidin), and central Bulgaria (Gabrovo) (Kohout-Diaz & Blaya, 2009).

The surveys had comparable objectives. They did not concern specifically school marketing but data concerning this theme appeared massively during the interviews and field observations. That is why our qualitative data (extracted from interviews) will be our focus point. The interviews were audio registered, transcribed and translated by the researchers. They were analyzed according to the thematic frequency and contents analyses methods.

3.2. Main characteristics of the Czech and Bulgarian systems

The most noticeable feature of the Bulgarian educational context is the massive emigration process the country and the education system have had to grapple with. Confronted with great financial difficulties as a consequence of unemployment, parents travel abroad to try to find work and leave their children behind under the supervision of grandparents or other family members. This aspect of social challenge was mostly quoted to explain and describe school disaffection or the lack of motivation on the part of the students. One of the priority goals of Bulgarian schools today is to set up a welfare system offering the children activities throughout the day and not only during class time (see the impact of the UNESCO project: *The school: a desired territory for the student. Good Practices*, Sofia, Ministry of education and science). *Gymnasia* are schools which assert to provide this quality of education. In different but comparable contexts, thus *gymnasia* appear as structures which are real catalysts for the development of school marketing.

Also, *gymnasium* (all the surveyed schools are *gymnasia*) are common to many former soviet countries (Maroy, Hörner et al., 2007), their objective is to select the country's elite in reaction to the former political ideology that was to level education and to promote vocational training. This system contributes to the segmentation of the education offer (Ringer, 2003) and facilitates the emergence of inequalities within the education system (Matějů & Straková, 2006). The *gymnasium* represents the survival of an elitist and hyper selective educational system inherited from the Austro-Hungarian educational system (Walterová, 2004). The communist regime endeavored to limit the influence of these establishments without, however, being able to close them down. Until 1989/93, a child could not apply to the gymnasium until he had completed his elementary schooling (and, therefore, there was no competition). Since then, the gymnasium, which has been partially privatized, offers 8, 6, 4 years of education. Therefore, children can apply three times and can do so not on completion of but during their elementary schooling. Faced with these changes, the image of public elementary schools has deteriorated (these schools seem to be schools for children who have been left behind [zůstávající]) and establishments have put strategies in place designed to keep the best pupils within their walls by calling themselves « specialist establishments », (also called « with options » or « with streaming »: languages, mathematics or technology) or by at least offering specialist classes or systems (for excellent pupils vs pupils with special educational needs). These new approaches have made elementary schools a step in the educational system that is particularly propitious to socio-economic and/or ethnic selection.

In any event, the sketch of the historic, sociocultural and methodological context which constitutes the background of our surveys leads us to make the hypothesis that school marketing is the effect of post-communist excessive liberalization, which was gradually revealed during the post-transition period (Le Gloannec & Rupnik, 2008). In this new and very competitive educational environment, marketing stays a central concern not only for teachers but also for schools (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012). It directs their recruitment strategy and even seems to override the strictly educational concerns in the individual guidance of the pupils. The development of the school market thus encourages school inequalities by distorting student assessments and disqualifying teaching practices as explained below.

4. Findings

4.1. School marketing leads to a biased evaluation of the capabilities and needs of pupils

Survey results indicate that the school selection of the pupils who are either particularly gifted and talented [*mimořádně nadaní a talentovaní žáci*] or with specific needs [*žáci se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami*] is very premature (it starts around the age of 8) and creates a flourishing school market, closely linked to the economic potential of the parents. One of the Czech teachers explains that "the 'good' pupils leave to go to the private gymnasium (...) And in a private school, suddenly, every pupil becomes 'absolutely excellent'! It is because the examinations are not national and are not nationally corrected either. Then, the pupils can obtain the high school diploma in the private sector even though they do not have the level. The examinations are corrected by teachers from their own school or somebody who is co-opted. And, in this way, they can get the high school diploma for 15 000 crowns [approximately 500 euros]." (Teacher, Prag suburb, Czech Republic). In Bulgaria, as in numerous ex-soviet countries, efforts are also focused on the creation of new social elite. The fee paying private schools that took part in the project ESSPD (see above, Kohout-Diaz & Blaya, 2009) are *gymnasia*, that is to say schools which select the so-called 'best students' to train this elite. Thus, one of the Bulgarian headmasters explains that "in this school, children are selected through an exam. Our level of requirement is high. They know that at any time, if something goes wrong or someone complains about them, the management team will deal with the problem." (Headmistress, Vidin, Bulgaria). This Bulgarian private *gymnasium* seems to be a 'pilot' school, mainly for activities fostering foreign languages, democracy and citizenship, as stated below: "Our school claims to be a pilot school, with a democratic school environment and an extra attention paid to its students' work. Our priority is the study of foreign languages and foreign cultures as well as education to citizenship." (Good Practice in Education for Democratic Citizenship, website of *gymnasium*, Vidin, Bulgaria).

A numerous and prosperous school markets are fed by the specific needs for the pupils: markets of the excellence and markets of the school troubles. While among the pupils with special educational needs, the so-called 'gifted and talented pupils' [*nadaní a talentovaní žáci*], those in trouble at school or with disabilities, those from economically advantaged families represent targets of

choice for school marketing, the reception of the Roma pupils crystallizes tensions in both countries. The liberalization of the education system since 1989 has contributed significantly to an increase in their segregation due to confusion between socioeconomic and cultural levels, difficulties at school, mental handicap and inclusive deinstitutionalization. The progressive closure of the reputedly segregationist specialized institutions in both countries results not in the inclusion but in the new processes of exclusion inside school.

In this context, it is necessary to consider that the schooling and education of ethnic minorities such as Roma people is a particularly sensitive problem within the Czech and Bulgarian education systems. It is also interesting to focus on the Roma pupils (who have been designated “pupils with special educational needs”), whose schooling has been of concern to the European Commission since the 1990s (see particularly the case of D.H. and others examined by the European Court of Human Rights in 2007² regarding the placement of 18 Roma students in “special schools” for disabled children).

The optional classes sometimes have these discriminating vocations. The ordinary schools generally welcome few foreign or Roma pupils. Moreover, these pupils try as often as possible to hide their origins (to be Roma with white skin protects from the discrimination). This is for example what a teacher from Prague city center is saying: “*In this school, there are optional classes with artistic orientation. (...) There are socioeconomic differences between the pupils and especially with the foreigners. There is for example an Ukrainian pupil, her mother is here illegally. His mother works illegally in a pizzeria. They both risk eviction. There are also three Russian pupils and a Chinese pupil. The Roma do not get noticed and anyway there are few Roma in this school. There is a Roma in my class, but he is white.*” (Teacher, Prague city center, The Czech Republic). According to the neo-liberal theory of economics, we would underline the notion of “choice” here which is based on socioeconomic and cultural capitals. The liberalization of education should lead to a gradual desegregation, thereby making it possible for children from poor neighborhood to access quality schools outside poor locations. However, surveys have shown the exact opposite. First, there is a deepening segregation, but also clearer hierarchy between schools. Free choice of school is in practice becoming available only to certain sections of the population: some are excluded from it for lack of resources or social competence.

As for other pupils with specific educational needs (due to *dyslexia* and other “*dys...*” troubles for example), they allow schools to benefit from additional subsidies. However, there is a limit: if the school takes in too many pupils with specific educational needs, it will no longer be seen as an excellent school and its recruitment will fall. Moreover, teachers say that it is necessary to avoid being a school-waste [*spádová*] that pupils will frequent by default. There seems to be a double speak, illustrated by a suburban Headmistress of Prague: “*There is a particular sum which is given to us for every pupil “with dys”. Thus it “dys” is a magic formula. More exactly, if the pupil is in a “dys” class, we shall receive specific funding but not if he is integrated into an ordinary class. (...) At present, here, we are rather afraid that we will have to integrate fifty Roma children from the special school. Here, there are problems with the Roma.*” (Headmistress, Prague suburb, The Czech Republic). Pupils with special educational needs are welcome only if they bring subsidies. If their schooling does not bring subsidies or gives bad publicity for the school, they are rejected out of hand. For the schools and their teachers, the crucial question in this context is: how can we make an attractive offer and at the same time benefit from the advantages of the special subsidies? As shown in the following chapter, this has major consequences on educational practices, directed sometimes above all by the desire not to displease the children and their parents, who are the customers of the school.

4.2. School marketing profoundly modifies the status and educational practices of teachers

For many teachers, the post-communist social and economic situation is thus critical: they express regret about the consequences of the changes undertaken and profound disappointment about the hopes of social, economic and political modification, aroused by the changes of 1989. We can doubtless speak of a kind of educational “*ostalgia*” (Blaise, 2006). The letter written by Havel to the Soviet writer Brodsky summarizes this feeling: “the post communism was a nightmare of the democratic world which takes the place of the totalitarian nightmare” (Havel and Brodsky, 1994, p. 10). The author translates here the feeling expressed by many teachers: during the communist period, things seem to be simple, direct and effective. Violence, discrimination and social inequalities would seem to have arisen with the possibility of living according to so called “Western” liberal values: have to choose values which are based on the principles of choice, negotiation, discussion and making compromises. This peak in violence distinguishes itself (without opposing it necessarily) from an approach which places the causality of the current violence and social exclusion among the tragic consequences of communism. Thus, there are two theses and they are not mutually exclusive. This liberalization of schools has contradictory consequences represented in the discourse of the teachers: that is both the desire to rule out the intervention of the State but also to strengthen its functions (Večerník, 1994) to return to the *status quo ante* (Greger, 2005). The same teacher may regret communism while at the same time seizing the new freedom to operate in a private as he/she wishes.

This economic interpretation conflates with the policies of schools and their new educational practices (Havlík, 2000; Průcha, 2002) even if they are not the ultimate explanation for the difficulties. In both countries, the teachers complain in particular of not being able to punish the pupils as they risk to be considered as “poor teachers” and being dismissed. It seems that when problems occur, the teachers involved tend to leave the school and as a consequence, the situation is considered as being due to the individual and not as part of a whole school ethos. An interview with a Bulgarian headmistress of a *gymnasium* confirms the testimonies of the Czech and Bulgarian teachers:

“- **Researcher:** Have you ever had the case of a teacher who could not cope with behavior difficulties with his student groups?

- **Headmistress:** Yes, we have but these teachers have left. I think that when there is a problem with discipline, the problem is due

² The case of D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic: <http://www.errc.org/article/dh-and-others-v-the-czech-republic/3559> (11/2017).

to the teacher and not to the students. The teacher is not skilled enough to attract and maintain their attention. I do insist since our students are highly motivated, they are eager to learn and if there is a behavior problem that means that the teacher is not able to teach properly and keep their interest.

- **Researcher:** If I understood correctly, teachers do not have the possibility to receive professional development to become more skilled and be able to face difficult situations?

- **Headmistress:** What do you mean? Thanks to seminars or pedagogy practice? Yes, each year we have a training scheme for teachers, but we cannot provide all what is needed. Of course, teachers need to refresh their skills in pedagogy and teaching methods, but the school cannot offer this type of training. It is very difficult to free them from teaching so that they can get trained.” (Headmistress, gymnasium of Rousse, Bulgaria).

Professional teaching development is needed and identified but because of organizational obstacles, they cannot be met. It seems that no specific professional training was provided during the social and political changes the country experienced. Today, important financial obstacles remain to be solved so that the Bulgarian education system can answer the difficulties of the teachers not by excluding them but rather by providing professional development training.

In terms of the educational practices in the classes, premature selection encourages elitism: “*self-reliance and autonomy allow one to defend oneself*”, says a Czech teacher to his pupils. The social model which presupposes this definition is insecure and highlights the disinvestment of the State in education and the lack of confidence in social cohesion. It is not possible to rely on others, it is not possible to trust. The same Czech teacher also tells us the secret behind the smooth running of its elite-class. This one is indeed managed as an autonomous company where gifts from the sponsors are widely encouraged: “*we no longer collaborate too much with the school; I set the following tone: that the parents pick up, it will be for their children.*” The school becomes a kind of flat shape for these autonomous micro companies. Following such a plan, the collective project becomes incomprehensible: “*before, with parents’ money, the school could buy textbooks for every pupil. But why is it not used directly for their own children? I do not want to give this money to all the team ... because if we give it for all, it’s useless, the money is wasted on a number of little things and we see it nowhere*” (Teacher, Prague city center, The Czech Republic). The teacher thinks that when the money is split between the pupils, it becomes invisible. The school is no longer the place of a fair sharing of the financial resources.

Studies have shown the real involvement of teachers in school marketing (Ball, 2003, 2004; Oplatka et al., 2002; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012). Our findings confirm this: in both countries studied, their status, their educational and teaching practices depend very closely on the need for competition and selection in the global school market because for them it is a question of subsistence (employability, sustainability of contracts and level of salary). From this point of view, their pedagogical choices (but also educational even ethical choices) are mainly dictated by diverse customer satisfaction criteria (employers, children, parents). The increasing devaluation of their educational expertise, the exacerbation of the dilemmas and the uncertainties inherent in their profession are very dependent on strategies of the school which recruited them (Ball, 2004) and which is part of the global educational market.

5. School marketing affects the management of schools and their involvement in educational projects

What are the consequences of school marketing on the management of schools, on communication and educational projects?

The one religious institution in Prague city center shows how it joins in the national school market: the headmaster addresses a private company (created by the former member of the communist Ministry of Education) to evaluate the quality of its establishment. This company sends him standardized questionnaires aimed at the pupils, the teachers and the parents. It proposes its services at the national level and thus has a large quantity of comparative data that it provides to its customers. The objective is to be able to pronounce “scientifically” on the quality of the school, compared with the other schools which have also taken this test. The provider supplies the statistical analysis of the data to the customer. Their local and comparative interpretation is left to the judgement of the manager of every school: he/she can or cannot take them into account. We had for example access to the data for this religious school: they showed significantly bad relations between pupils and teachers – but the manager did not wish to comment on them.

In Bulgaria, the objective is also to keep students in schools as long as possible so that they are properly supervised by adults, as already specified (his educational project is also linked to parental emigration). However, this process is not financially supported at the national level to train management staff. According to the Regional Inspector in Vidin, as the participation in European projects does not provide any extra wages for the participating teachers, they would be less motivated and committed since they’d rather dedicate their time to private tuition which brings in extra income. As a consequence, the main challenge for the projects implementation would be the free dedication it requires. According to this interviewee, economic difficulties also give rise to aggressiveness and alcohol drinking at the students’ level. However, during the interview, too much money and a lack of education were also put forward as factors facilitating violence and feelings of unfairness: “*Difficulties are as follow: All this [referring to activities linked to pedagogical projects] is extra time on top of teaching. For instance, teachers are paid for 20 teaching hours; they teach their time and then leave the school. If they wish to work only to earn money, to teach courses, they do not wish to take part in this type of project because they are not paid for it. This is where the main difficulty lies, and these projects can only be implemented out of the classroom when teachers opt to work for their professional reputation or for the children. We have some very good teachers who do not wish to work on these projects since they are outside of their teaching time. They prefer to teach some private tuition. For this they earn much money, for this private tuition. But for the children, these European projects are very good; they are a means to obtain skills, even more if they visit other places, to make comparisons. They are then able to make comparisons and assess the place where we live.*” (Regional Education Inspector, Vidin, Bulgaria). It is true that during the interviews that were completed, the main obstacle to the implementation of European projects from the adults’ point of view was a financial one: “*The biggest problem is finance. (...) There is no problem of motivation. (...) Please excuse-me, I am always upset*

when I start talking about these money matters since it is very difficult to work with no money.” (Coordinator European safer school partnerships through education for democratic citizenship, ESSPD, Rousse, Bulgaria). Nevertheless, efforts are being made at the European level so that the specifically difficult financial situation of countries such as Bulgaria is taken into account. However, these efforts do not seem to be sufficient.

As a consequence, if in both countries, the criticism of the school market ends either in the report of a lack of financial means, or in the report of the easy money, wasted and illegal practices, the central question seems to be the one of a sensible distribution of means.

6. Discussion: the development of the school markets increases school segmentation

Among the emerging countries in Central Europe, the Czech Republic benefits from the most developed economy. Bulgaria is not in the same economic situation. However, in both countries the educative liberalization is the determining argument to explain the deterioration of the school climate, the decline of authority and the development of harmful marketing strategies. These strategies transform the parents into real customers of the school. In both countries, the teachers notice and regret some pedagogical laxness which they associate with the pursuit of profit. It should be emphasized that their interpretation must of course be put into perspective with the representations of the educational authority during the communist period, which was rather directive and reduced to an obedience of principle (Kohout-Diaz, 2016).

Our surveys tend to support the hypothesis of a tension between, on the one hand, reproduction mechanisms, at/by the school, of a totalitarian conformist habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) and, on the other hand, ultra-liberalization, segmentation (Matějů & Straková, 2006) and the corruption of the education system (Prokop, 2003) after 1989. The general atmosphere in the Czech and Bulgarian schools appears to be rather positive – except with regards to the relations between pupils and teachers or other adults at school (see Kohout-Diaz, 2010, 2016). The aggressive tension contained in this relationship can be considered as the main characteristic of the Czech and Bulgarian primary schools, according to the pupils.

This is apparently due to a very selective system based on very heterogeneous groups in the second level of primary schools. They are made up of pupils who were left out after the selection process or who came from early selection in order to compensate for the so called “best students” leaving for the *gymnasium*.

The research shows that school marketing tends to strengthen and reproduce social inequalities in education, for example between Roma and non-Roma schools. The researchers note that since the nineties gradual ethnic segregation on the part of primary schools has been observable. We can even point out a divide by the social positions of the different actors, in this case based on ethnic categories. The school production of ethnic segregation appears on three levels: the spatial, the institutional (strategy of schools) and the parenting strategies (from both Roma and non-Roma). In describing the strategy of various schools, the research points out that some schools focus on acquiring non-Roma pupils and others on acquiring Roma pupils. Both segments operate relatively separately in this “competition” for pupils and progress within each separate ethnic segment, which are gradually becoming more and more separate. School segregation seems to be a problem related to the political organization of society. The requirement for Roma inclusion met with resistance by the application of market principles in education. The school system seems to practice selection with the objective to put certain pupils (Roma but also Ukrainian, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese immigrants) aside in specialized schools, under the pretext of bringing them more support.

There are exactly three possible ways to go on to further education after lower secondary school: to apply to a *gymnasium* offering specific courses, to a vocational or technical *gymnasium*, or to go to an ordinary *gymnasium*. *Gymnasias* with specific courses, whether state-run or private, cater for students from the age of 8. It is during the lower secondary education that students, in accordance with their academic record, can start studying in a *gymnasium* with specific courses. Intake for ‘specific *gymnasias*’ are selected on their academic achievement as well as on their socio-economic background since the high level of entrance exams quite often requires some private tuition and steady family support. Students from “ordinary” *gymnasias* feel left out by the selective system. We shall however stress that “ordinary” *gymnasias* also resort to strategies such as offering special courses in order to prevent students’ exodus to more prestigious schools. As in numerous ex-soviet countries, efforts are focused on the creation of a new national elite. It is in this historic, socioeconomic and educational context that school marketing has increased and strongly influenced the school climate.

Some pupils end up being pushed out of the school system on socio economic and ethnic grounds as a result of this selection process with the aid of medical and moral interpretations of their behavior. No valid scientific methods are used to counterbalance this stigmatization process. On the contrary, the “wild”, uncontrolled liberalization of school favors these inequalities. In other words, there is in the school systems increasing of market logics which leads to the exclusion of the pupils considered to be weak or to the instrumentalization of their difficulties.

In summary, a strengthening of selection, discrimination and school segmentation, both for the so called ‘good’ pupils (the ‘talented’ pupils) and for the pupils with special educational needs (the Roma pupils, the disabled pupils) feeds the school market which in his turn favors the development of early segmentation. This strengthening is supposed to indicate a break with communism but reveals a hard liberalization of the post totalitarian education systems.

7. Conclusion

The work presented here responds to the need to develop research on the implications of extending school marketing (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012). It deals with some of its specific contextual factors (democratization of the educational systems of transition, relation to the socio-historical past, post-totalitarian liberalization) and the consequences generated. Although the growth of

marketing and the adoption of a market-oriented approach can be presented as benefits for the development of education (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012) with no negative effects for the school culture (see for example the poor perception of promotional films about the school by the public, James & Phillips, 1995), we show on the contrary limits, convergent in both countries.

School marketing has an impact in four educational areas: pathways for pupils with special educational needs, teaching practices, school management and school segmentation. It has emerged that the definition of the special needs of pupils is largely oriented by the neo-liberal logics of education (Torres, 2009). The new democracies have not so far succeeded in placing the singular pupil (considered as a future citizen) at the center of the education system, but have moved from a standardized (and therefore unequal) totalitarian school system to an inegalitarian system, which is openly segregated, liberal, elitist under the guise of pedagogical differentiation. “Reforms succeed in causing schools to behave like private entities, this has the ironic effect of limiting the overall choices available to families, both in terms of institutional type and (...) program options.” (Lubienski, 2006, p. 340). In spite of the changes (democratization of education), school segmentation remains a constant, be it hidden or proven. Teachers and head teachers who play a central role do not seem to be able to place the fight against school inequalities at the top of their agenda. Insofar as they are themselves subject to the dilemmas of competition and the law of the educational market, they are reduced to a certain ambivalence (Ball, 2004).

Our surveys emphasize the points of convergence, however the distinctive characteristics of education, linked to the pre-communist socio-historical and economic context, such as parental emigration and deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria or the segregation of the Czech Roma pupils in specialized schools, should be explored further.

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