

MINORITY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHAIR

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1. Minority Conditions

1.1. *The Transition of Macedonia*

Among Eastern European countries, Macedonia experienced a distinct and successful transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Macedonia embarked on a reformatory path.¹ The peaceful transformation of Macedonian society was, however, preceded by an unsteady period of democratic consolidation. The combination of Greek diplomatic pressure and the 1992–95 economic embargo imposed on Macedonia, as well as difficulties stemming from Macedonia's observation of the UN sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, significantly impaired the country's democratic stabilization efforts. During the democratization period interethnic relations and the question of minority rights were at the forefront of domestic political issues. Fortunately, actions taken by the government to solve minority rights problems assisted Macedonian democratization and stabilized the country.²

With the backing of the policies of the central authorities, local governments in Macedonia are able to protect and promote the welfare of ethnic communities. This approach “reduces the presence of the central government in all social fields and enables practical problem-solving and the satisfaction of citizens' needs and interests at an institutionally lower level, in the concrete surroundings of the place where they permanently live and work.”³ In this view, the municipality is the key to successful democratic development in a given multiethnic state. The level of government analyzed in this study is specifically that of the municipality of Chair in Skopje. After a brief discussion of the ethnic make-up in Macedonia and the legal framework for minority

¹ On the general topic and for the understanding of reformatory change of the regime, see Kis, János (1998) “Between Reform and Revolution,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Spring, p. 323. On the democratic transition in Macedonia and Slovenia, see Daskalovski, Židas (1998) “Elite Transformation and Democratic Transition in Macedonia and Slovenia,” CEU final paper for *Political and Cultural Elites*, a course instructed by Prof. András Bozóki, Budapest, Fall 1998.

² Najcevska, Mirjana (1995) “Democratic Local Government and Appropriate Territorial Division Can Prevent Ethnic Conflict,” *Annual of the Institute for Sociological, Political and Judicial Research*, Skopje, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

rights, the paper focuses on the analysis of interethnic relations in the municipality of Chair, concentrating particularly on examples of successful management of minority education and minority representation in local governance.

1.2. *Ethnic Profile*

According to the 1994 census, internationally monitored and organized through the expert assistance of the Council of Europe, Macedonia has 1,945,932 inhabitants, 67% of whom are ethnic Macedonians, 23% Albanians, 4% Turks and 2% each for Roma, Serbs and others.⁴ The vast majority of ethnic Macedonians are Slavic speaking and Orthodox, as are Macedonia's Vlachs and Serbs, while most of the Albanians, Roma and Turks are Muslims. While Macedonians reside throughout the whole country, Albanians are mainly concentrated in the northwestern corner of Macedonia, along the Albanian border. Albanians also reside in the capital city of Skopje and in northern towns along the Kosovo border. Serbs are found around the town of Kumanovo, as well as in Skopje. Other ethnic groups are found throughout Macedonia.

1.3. *The Legal Framework for Minority Rights Protection*

Having declared independence on September 8, 1991, Macedonia was "the only ex-Yugoslav republic to secede nonviolently. It is considered one of the bright spots of former Yugoslavia."⁵ Macedonia's Constitution, ratified on November 17, 1991, ensures the protection of human and minority rights for the country's ethnic groups. The constitution, calling for "much more extensive educational rights and rights for the political participation of ethnic minorities than those established in the constitutions of Albania, Bulgaria and Romania,"⁶ was appraised by international legal authorities as an "act drawn up in accordance with the basic democratic and liberal principles and recent constitutional standards."⁷

In addition to its emphasis on national unity, the constitution explicitly acknowledges the role of the country's minorities. Though not legally binding, the constitution's preamble embraces essential principles, describing the country as a state of the "Macedonian people in which the full equality of citizens and a permanent coexistence among the Macedonian people is to be provided for Albanians, Turks, Romanies, Vlachs and other nationalities

⁴ *Facts about National Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia* (1997) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Skopje.

⁵ Mickey, Robert W. and Adam Smith Albion (1993) "Success in the Balkans? A Case Study of Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia," in Ian M. Cuthbertson and Jane Leibowitz (eds.) (1993) *Minorities: The New Europe's Old Issue*, Institute for East West Studies, New York. p. 58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷ Frckovski, Ljubomir (1998) *Model of the Multiethnic Relations in Macedonia*, Krug, Skopje. pp. 88–89.

living in Republic of Macedonia.”⁸ Although it may not appear important, such inclusion can be beneficial for a country’s multiethnic relations as an act of recognition which contributes to interethnic tolerance.

The Macedonian Constitution guarantees minority rights in Articles 7 (paragraphs 2 and 3), 8 (subparagraphs 2 and 11) and 48.⁹ Article 7 regulates the usage of minority languages in municipalities where minorities are a significant percentage of the population. Article 8 defines the concept of minority rights with generally accepted standards of international law. This article was elemental in the fact that Macedonia was able to sign and ratify nearly all the main international instruments for the protection of minority rights by 1998.¹⁰ Minority rights are expanded in Articles 44 and 48, which specifically guarantee the right to freely express and foster minority cultural identity, including this right as pertains to education. Additionally, the Macedonian Parliament passed a number of laws related to minority rights.¹¹ Among these laws the most significant are the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Secondary Education (1995), the Law on Identification Cards and the Law on Personal Registry Files (1996), the Law on Ombudsmen and the Law on Religious Communities and Groups (1997).

1.4. *The Law on Local Government*

Although the Law on Local Government was passed by Parliament on November 15, 1995, the law, as was stipulated by Article 97, was not effective until after the upcoming 1996 local government elections. According to the law, local governments have jurisdiction in municipalities, while the city of Skopje is a special unit in which “citizens’ common needs and interests are to be considered in response to the character of the city of Skopje as the capital city of the Republic of Macedonia and as a unique spatial, urban, economic, political and ecological entity.”¹² Article 3 states that citizens may exercise their right to participate in local government directly and through representatives in local government. Article 4 mandates that local governments are autonomous and Article 9 declares they are to be financed from their own generation of revenues. Article 10 states that they may cooperate with local communities of other countries.

Obviously, the law delegates a wide range of prerogatives to local government.¹³ For the purposes of this paper, however, it is chiefly necessary to note the provisions of the

⁸ Mickey and Albion, p. 79.

⁹ Frckovski, p. 90.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹² Article 2, Law on Local Self-Government, *Sluzhben Vesnik na Republika Makedonija* (1995) No. 52, Skopje.

¹³ See Slaninka-Dineva, Mirjana, *Zakonot za Lokalnata Samouprava-Pravna Osnova za Organizacijata i Funkcioniranjeto na Sovetite i Gradochalnicite na Edinicite na Lokalnata Samouprava* (The Law on Local Government: A legal basis for the organization and functioning of councils and the mayor’s office of local government) (1998) in Natasha Gaber et al. (eds.) (1998) *Lokalni Izbori 1996*, Institut za Socioloski i Politichko-Pravni Istrazhuvanja, Skopje. p. 53.

law which relate to education in municipalities. Article 17, as well as other sections of the law, mandate that local government has the right to establish secondary schools, issue opinions on the establishment of primary schools, finance facilities for primary schools beyond the level provided by the state, raise initiatives and offer opinions and proposals for the development of the institutional network of culture, social and child welfare, preschool education, basic health care and so on. Article 17 additionally stipulates that representatives in local government can participate in the work and decision-making of school boards in primary education.

2. Interethnic relations in the Municipality of Chair, Skopje

2.1. *Ethnic and Cultural Diversity*

The municipality of Chair is one of the seven districts that comprise Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia.¹⁴ Chair, one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, is among the most truly multicultural and diverse municipalities of the city. According to the 1994 census, there were 85,740 inhabitants in Chair: 41,785 (49%) were Macedonians, 22,977 (27%) were Albanians, 12,470 (15%) were Roma and 8,508 (10%) were Serbs, Turks, Bosniaks, Vlachs and others.¹⁵ Macedonian Orthodox and Muslim were the municipality's dominant religious denominations. 43,465 (55%) declared that they belonged to the Orthodox faith and 39,805 (45%) were adherents to Islam.

Although the ethnic make-up of Chair is exceptionally diverse, its interethnic relations remained fairly tolerant during the democratization process. Unlike events in other parts of former Yugoslavia, and despite ethnic tensions, there were no major ethnic conflicts within Chair's local government. Moreover, multiethnic relations in the municipality were stable throughout the refugee crisis, which hit Macedonia during the 1999 war in Kosovo and the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia. Two key elements which preserved peaceful multiethnic coexistence in Chair during this period were the high degree of minority involvement in local government and the municipality's active role in the preservation of minority cultural identity, especially in the area of education.

Clearly, democratic governance in multiethnic societies is contingent upon the evenhanded consideration of the varying interests of different ethno-linguistic communities. Although democracy cannot presuppose equal participation in the government for all social groups, its institutions must be open to the range of minority opinions. The participation of minority political parties and associations in a given multiethnic society's decision-making process affirms the democratic foundations upon which its political

¹⁴ Skopje is a city of 554,228 inhabitants. 365,226 (67%) are Macedonian, 113,328 (21%) Albanian, 20,691 (4%) Roma, 17,345 (3%) Serbian and 11,607 (2%) Turk.

¹⁵ According to the Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia of 1996, a large section of the municipality of Chair was integrated into the new municipality of Shuto Orizari. Hence, today, the population make-up of Chair is slightly different than it was in 1994. For details, see Panov, Mitko and Mladen Ligerov (1997) *Teritorijalnata Podelba na Republika Makedonija* (The territorial division of the Republic of Macedonia) Sigma Press, Skopje.

system rests. Moreover, active, local-level political involvement with ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minority groups enhances the prospects for maintaining the interethnic power equilibrium, even during times when it may become unbalanced at the national level. With such a system the minority population need not feel alienated from the central authorities, nor contest the legitimacy of the state. A stable political process and a tolerant society can exist when democratic institutions accommodate diversity and their decisions meet minority needs on a micro level. During communism Macedonian minorities were denied a proper role in the decision-making process. Although the communist leadership recruited minority members into their ranks, it was neither a democratic nor proportionally adequate exercise. The liberalization of the Macedonian political system at the end of the 1980s and the introduction of multiparty elections offered new opportunities for the assertion of the identity and status of the country's various ethnic groups.

Minority representation in local government promotes the interests of the whole population. One of the crucial concerns of national minorities, in general, and particularly of the ethno-linguistic minorities in Macedonia, is the well-being of their culture and traditions. Given the centralizing effect of the nation-building process, many minorities see the governmental protection of their culture as a necessity. Nation-building is characteristically not overly concerned with minority interests in the educational sphere. However, native language education is often the only way for minorities to preserve and promote their language and, indirectly, their culture.¹⁶ A lack of proper education in minority languages typically creates conflict-ridden situations and endangers interethnic tolerance on a local level.¹⁷ Adequate minority language schooling, then, promotes multiethnic stability and benefits the population at large. The local government in the municipality of Chair has well-established mechanisms for minority participation, as well as a plethora of educational opportunities for its ethno-linguistic minorities.

2.2. *Minority Participation in Local Government in the Municipality of Chair*

Only two local elections were held in Macedonia in the postcommunist period (1990–99), the first in 1990 and the second in 1996. According to the legislation valid in 1990, representatives in local parliaments were elected for a four-year term, which was due to end in 1994. However, because of the prolongation of the preparation of new laws on local elections and on territorial divisions (as a result of party squabbles in the national Parliament), this term was extended by two years.

In the autumn of 1990 Macedonia held its first multiparty elections. Citizens voted both for representatives in local government and in the national Parliament (*Sobranie*). The 1990 elections resulted in a clear-cut power balance among the parties in the *Sobranie*, but the results of the local elections in the municipality of Chair were less unambiguous.

¹⁶ See Kymlicka, Will (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, on the danger of assimilation and loss of cultural distinction which building a nation typically poses to minorities in multiethnic societies.

¹⁷ See Tamir, Yael (1993) *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton UP, Princeton, on the importance of culture and its particular relation to nationalism.

VMRO–DPMNE (The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) won a majority in the local assembly, taking 25 out of 40 seats. The party of the reformed communists, SKM–PDP (The Alliance of Communists of Macedonia–Party for Democratic Change), won only two seats; the Socialist Party took three; PCER (The Party for Complete Emancipation of the Roma) six; the Liberal Party one; and PDP (The Party for Democratic Prosperity), the Albanian party, won three seats.¹⁸

The ratio of the number of seats the two minority parties—PDP and PCER—won in the municipal elections to the total number of representatives in the assembly did not correspond to the ratio between the minority population and the whole population in Chair. As a result of the electoral system Albanians won proportionally fewer representatives than the number of their population in the municipality.¹⁹ While PDP's share in the local parliament was 8% (three seats out of forty), Albanians constituted 27% of the population of Chair. There was no such disproportion for the Roma community. They accounted for 15% of the municipality, exactly the percentage of seats their party won. Finally, none of the other minorities (Turks, Serbs, Vlachs and Bosnians) of the municipality were represented by their own parties.

Ideally, the composition of the local government would reflect the population of the whole community. Under such conditions minorities have a greater opportunity to generate understanding for and responsiveness to their concerns. Moreover, they have increased prospects for effective participation in the local government's decision-making and the implementation of its decisions. The local government in Chair, which resulted from the 1990 elections, did not exactly reflect the ethnic make-up of the municipality. Nevertheless, the two main national minorities in Chair were represented in the local parliament by their parties, PDP and PCER. Consequently, in the period between 1990 and 1996 minorities were able to voice their concerns to the local government and have them heard.

The most recent local elections in Macedonia were held in autumn of 1996 according to a set of new laws: the Law on Local Elections, the Law on Local Government and the Law on Territorial Divisions of the Republic of Macedonia. According to these laws, the municipality of Chair was reduced in size and population.²⁰ Correspondingly, the number of representatives in the local assembly was also reduced, from 40 to 23. In 1996 seven parties managed to win seats in local parliament. VMRO–DPMNE won seven seats; SDSM, the reformed and renamed communists (The Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia), won five; LDP (The Liberal Democratic Party) four; the Socialist Party two; and VMRO–DP (The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party) captured one. The two parties representing Albanian interests, PDP and the newly founded PDPA (The Party for Albanian Democratic Prosperity), won two seats each. Given the fact that the

¹⁸ The information on the results of the 1990 local elections in the municipality of Chair was given to the author by the *Ekspertska Sluzhba na Opština Chair* (The expert official group of the Chair municipality).

¹⁹ For the particularities of the old electoral law, see Jovevska, Aneta, *Zakonot za Lokalni Izbori od 1996—Nov Normativen Model na Lokalnite Izbori vo Makedonija* (The Law on Local Elections 1996—new normative model for local elections in Macedonia), Gaber et al. (eds.) (1998).

²⁰ Two new municipalities were founded with territory that had been part of Chair: Shuto Orizari, with a predominantly Roma population, and Chucher Sandevo, inhabited mainly by Serbs.

Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia carved a large section out of Chair where Roma lived and added it to the newly formed municipality of Shuto Orizari, PCER's electoral strength was significantly reduced and it failed to win a single seat. The issue in Chair's 1996 elections was that the votes of the remaining Roma electorate were split not only among PCER and DPPR, (The Democratic Progressive Party of the Roma, a newly founded Roma party), but also among other main parties like SDSM.²¹

The number of representatives from PDP and PDPA (Albanian parties) together constituted 17% of the total number of parliamentarians. The number of Albanian representatives insufficiently reflected the ethnic make-up of the municipality, according to the 1994 census's data on the Albanian population in Chair (27%). However, on the local level, one of Chair's Albanian parties, PDPA, participates in the coalition government with VMRO–DPMNE and LDP, which does lend credence to the idea that Albanians are well represented in local government. It should also be taken into account that population statistics from the 1994 census are not relevant for the new territorial divisions which resulted in the reduction in the size of Chair. Therefore, the discrepancy between the share of the Albanian parties in the local parliament compared to the number of their whole population in Chair might be even smaller.

In the past three years of local parliament no sessions have been dedicated solely to interethnic relations in the municipality. Indeed, there was no such need because “the multiethnic coalition of VMRO–DPMNE and PDPA has functioned well on a local level since 1996, and since 1998 on the national level and, so, interethnic relations in the municipality have been stabilized.”²² Individual members of the local assembly representing minority parties raised issues of concern for their ethnic group. The local government took the problems of Chair's various ethnic groups into consideration individually, as they occurred. Usually, these problems had to do with infrastructure improvement in various localities of the municipality, which, as stated by the Law on Local Government, is a prerogative.

In recent years, as far as multiethnic relations are concerned, the biggest concern for the local government in Chair was the case of Dizhonska Street. The street is mostly inhabited by Albanians, who, in the decades after the catastrophic earthquake that hit Skopje in 1963, built numerous dwellings that disregarded standards of urban architectural design.²³ During communism, the national and city authorities handled the development of “Dizhonska” with negligence. No actions were taken to stop the illegal construction, nor were there efforts to add the new buildings to the infrastructure plan of the municipality. Consequently, at the beginning of the 1990s Dizhonska was basically a slum in which standards of safety were regrettably low. Naturally, Dizhonska was high on the agenda for Albanian party members in the municipality. Through cooperation with their coalition partner, VMRO–DPMNE, the representatives of PDPA asked the local parliament

²¹ See Dragovic, Anica (1998) *Odrednici na Izbornata Odluka na Izbirachot* (Motives for the electoral choice of the voters) in Gaber et al., p. 119.

²² The author's Interview with Vene Tasev, Legal Advisor to the Mayor of Chair and president of *Ekspertska Sluzhba na Opshтина Chair*, conducted on September 28, 1999.

²³ See Acevski, Ilija (1996) *Skopje, Vizija, Realnost*, Filozofski Fakultet, Skopje, especially pp. 224–231.

to do something about the problem. The local parliament took action and improvement of the electricity, sewage and plumbing infrastructure was underway.²⁴ Dizhonska, a serious concern for Albanians in Chair, was improved through the participation of the Albanian minority in the local government. As this example illustrates, minority participation in local government can contribute to the welfare of the ethnic groups in Chair. If real problems and issues pertaining to minorities in a given municipality are addressed, there is no need for the aggravation of interethnic relations, strikes or illegal activities. Minority participation in local government is an important aspect in the functioning of the municipality of Chair.

2.3. *Minority Education in Chair*

In addition to minority participation in local government, minority education is an integral part of a tolerant multicultural society. Education in at least one of the municipality's minority languages is organized at ten primary and two secondary schools.²⁵ At Petar Zdravkovski-Penko Primary School, for example, attended by 560 Albanian and 115 Turkish pupils, there are twenty-one classes in minority languages with seventeen in Albanian and four in Turkish.²⁶ At Vasil Glavinov Primary School, out of 956 students, 56 are in one of the four minority language classes. Out of 1,614 students at Dvaeset i Shesti Juli Primary School 920 are instructed in Albanian in 36 classes. Classes are also taught in Roma, provided there is enough interest. A similar situation exists at Nikola Vapcarov Primary School where 24 classes, consisting of 729 of the school's 858 students, are in Albanian. At Zhivko Brajkovski there are fourteen native-language classes, at Aleksandar Urdevski there are ten, at Rajko Zhinzifov sixteen, eight at Panajot Ginovski and four at Indina.²⁷ At Sveti Kliment Ohridski Primary School all classes instructed in Macedonian, while at Ljiman Kaba Primary School all 348 students are taught in Albanian.

Table 1. Minority Languages in Chair Primary Schools

Primary School	Petar Zdravkovski	Vasil Glavinov	26th Juli	Nikola Vapcarov	Zhivko Brajkovski
Classes in a Minority Language	21	3	36	24	14
Number of Students in the Classes	675	56	920	729	324

²⁴ Interview with Vene Tasev on September 28, 1999.

²⁵ All information regarding minority education in Chair was given to the author by the *Ministerstvo za Obrazovanie, Podrachna Edinica Chair* (Ministry of Education, Local Unit of Chair).

²⁶ See Table 1.

²⁷ See Table 1.

Primary School	Aleksandar Urdevski	Rajko Zhinzifov	Idnina	Panajot Ginevski	Kliment Ohridski	Ljiman Kaba
Classes in a Minority Language	10	16	4	8	0	12
Number of Students in the Classes	162	529	67	232	0	348

Obviously, education in minority languages in Chair primary schools is well-established; ten out of the eleven primary schools have classes in one of the minority languages of Macedonia.²⁸ In the whole municipality minority language classes are held for 4,042 out of the 8,894 students. The 4,042 constitute 45% of all the students, which corresponds to the 51% minority population in the municipality. If we take into consideration that for various reasons not all minority parents send their children to schools which offer education in minority languages, then the number is particularly high. We can conclude that the minority education in Chair primary schools is provided at a level that meets the municipality's needs. This is supported by the fact that, nationally, minority education is not as developed as in Chair. Data for the 1996–97 academic year show there are a total of 1,045 schools, 283 of which have classes in Albanian, 55 in Turkish and fourteen in Serbian.²⁹ Altogether, 352, or 34%, of the schools offer education in at least one minority language. Correspondingly, 31% of all Macedonian pupils are taught in a minority language. This percentage is comparable to the number of minorities in the whole population, which amounts to precisely one-third. These statistics in comparison with those of the municipality of Chair show that minority education in Chair primary schools is more than satisfactory. Furthermore, opportunities for minorities to be educated from a young age in their own language and culture ameliorates the prospects for interethnic harmony in the municipality.

In addition to mother tongue education at the primary level, instruction in minority languages is provided at the municipality's two secondary schools. At Arseni Jovkov, the economics secondary school, there are eight classes in Albanian. They were first held in the 1994–95 academic year, due to demands for them made by the students' parents. Of the school's 1,854 students, 249 receive instruction in a minority language. Similarly, at Cvetan Dimov, the secondary school of trade, 335 students attend ten classes in a minority language. The total number of secondary school students who study in a minority language is 586, or 19%, which is significantly less than the proportion of the minority population in the municipality.³⁰ While the primary school a child attends typically depends on where the parents live, secondary education does not. Many pupils decide to go to a specialized school (i.e., medical, engineering and so on) outside of Chair's borders. Some may decide

²⁸ For this and subsequent information please consult Table 1.

²⁹ See *Statistichki Godishnik na Republika Makedonija* (Statistic annual of Republic of Macedonia) (1998) Zavod za Statistika, Skopje.

³⁰ See Table 2.

Table 2. Minority Language Education in Chair and Macedonia

	Number of Primary Schools with a Minority Language	Total Number of Schools	Students with Instruction in a Minority Language	Total Number of Students
Municipality of Chair	10	11	4,042	8,894
%	90	100	45	100
Republic of Macedonia	352	1,045	79,882	258,151
%	34	100	31	100

to continue their education in the Macedonian language. Also, many minority children have various economic and cultural reasons, among others, to opt not to continue their education beyond the legally required primary school level. All these factors account for why the number of minority secondary school students in the municipality should not be seen as unusually low. This is confirmed when opportunities for minority language secondary school education on a national level are compared to those in Chair. Nationally, there are 2,619 minority secondary school students. 345 of them, or 14%, have classes in a minority language. From this perspective, Chair has an above-average standing in secondary minority education.

One-fifth of the secondary school students in the municipality are minorities. This attests favorably to their participation in the Chair educational system. More importantly, the fact that they are taught in their mother tongue helps to satisfy minority cultural needs. As was previously mentioned, minorities, which are satisfied with the state of their culture in a given society and who have good reason to believe that they will be able to maintain it, are less likely to protest against the political establishment and disturb multiethnic relations. Due to its diverse educational opportunities, the municipality of Chair is such a place.

The local government in Chair has positively influenced minority education. As the data presented here show, there are adequate opportunities for minority education in the municipality. Also, upon public demand for additional educational facilities, Chair's local government is able to initiate the opening of new primary or secondary schools. Alternatively, the municipality may allocate financial resources to already existing schools to expand their programs and add new classes. It is fortunate that Chair is able to offer enough educational opportunities for the local population, including those of minorities.³¹

The Law on Local Government sets limitations on how local government may directly influence the educational system of its municipality. The national Ministry of Education is responsible for drafting curricula for primary and secondary schools. All classes, including those taught in a minority language, have a unified curricula. The ministry also appoints school principles and the main members of school boards. Local government

³¹ Interview with Vene Tasev on September 28, 1999.

Table 3. *Minority Language Secondary Education in Chair and Macedonia*

	Number of High Schools with a Minority Language	Total Number of Schools	Students with Instruction in a Minority Language	Total Number of Students
Municipality of Chair	10	11	4,042	8,894
%	90	100	45	100
Republic of Macedonia	352	1,045	79,882	258,151
%	34	100	31	100

also appoints representatives to school boards so that it may participate in school boards' functioning and decision-making. Chair's local government has appointed such representatives and their expertise has greatly contributed to the management of the municipality's schools, in particular to primary schools where there is a high demand for minority language education.³²

3. Conclusions

The work of the local government is tremendously influential in preserving healthy interethnic relations in multicultural countries. During Macedonia's difficult democratization period the strength of the local government was particularly important in relaxing tensions that arose between the majority ethnic group and the numerous ethnocultural minorities. Two vital aspects of smoothly functioning local government are minority participation and the existence of education opportunities for minorities. This case study has analyzed how these social phenomena allow peaceful problem solving to thrive in a multiethnic environment.

The municipality of Chair has a very diverse ethnic make-up, one in which interethnic tensions and conflicts could develop. However, the municipality has managed to preserve communicative interethnic relations throughout Macedonia's democratization. A major factor in maintaining such relations is the unrestrained participation of minorities in local government. Chair's minorities have contributed to the decision-making processes through their representatives at the local assembly. So far, minority problems and concerns seem to have been adequately addressed and there has been no need for radical solutions or extra-institutional activities. Minority participation has been a key aspect in the successful democratization of Chair.

The municipality has also found peaceful solutions and preserved multicultural society through opportunities for minority participation in the educational system. The native

³² Interview with Mr. Tasev.

language of a large number of children in Chair is different from Macedonia's official language. It goes without saying that education in a child's native language is of paramount importance. If it were not for the well-developed network of minority educational institutions in the municipality of Chair, minority dissatisfaction resulting in interethnic conflict could occur. Fortunately, the municipality is able to maintain a network of primary and secondary schools that offers classes in minority languages, thereby alleviating interethnic tensions. In sum, Chair has been able to enhance the nation's democratic development and multiethnic relations in society by being an exceptional example of a well-functioning municipality contributing to the successful decentralization of the central government in the areas of minority participation in local government and opportunities for minority education.

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