Educational Measures for the Roma Minority in Romania

The Effectiveness of Integrated and Segregated Education

Introduction

The position of ethnic minorities in education is generally a major cause for concern for those involved at all levels.[1] Their position is characterized usually by low performance levels, few transfers to higher type of education, and discipline problems, drop-out and unqualified school leaving. The problem is approached in diverse ways in different countries in terms of policy and practice, depending on the political and institutional contexts and the broader socio-economic structures. Deficiencies in the education system contribute to massive social problems, like illiteracy and exclusion from labor market entry for many. Educational attainment and labor market are strongly connected, and low attainment in the educational sector may easily lead to precarious positions in the labor market. According to T. H. Marshall[2] educational policy influences future market processes by extending and improving qualifications useful in the labor market.

Conceptually and empirically the separation of the spheres of education and social policy induces deficits at national level. At the level of European integration the English tradition was absorbed and education as well as social security are both seen as part of one policy sphere and thus are no longer conceptually isolated from each other. [3]

In general, the experience of European Roma pupils is one of a climate of exclusion and segregation within the schools themselves. This does not usually take the form of explicit ethnic segregation, but rather, it is expressed as a type of segregation justified by a variety of arguments of an academic, pedagogical, linguistic, ecological or social nature. The stigmatization of the Gypsy/Roma child is

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[1] Reid, I. (1997): Inequality and Education in Britain in the 1990s: a diagnosis and prescription, In: Research in Education, 57, pg: 12-24

[2] T. H. Marshall (1964): Citizenship and Social Class. Class, Citizenship and Social Development. Essays, pp. 65-122

[3] Jutta Allmendinger, Stephan Leibfried: Education and the Welfare State: the four worlds of competence production, In: Journal of European Social Policy, 2003, vol. 12 (1): 63-64

a constant, as the only thing the schools do is reproduce the already existing widespread social and cultural stereotypes found in the broader society.

Theoretical framework of segregation and desegregation

In the USA the civil rights movements often associated concepts as discrimination and prejudice with discrimination in housing and education. Until the 1940s racially restrictive covenants allowed developers to refuse members of specific ethnic groups to live in certain areas of cities, while segregation of schools was universal in the South until the Supreme Court outlawed school segregation in Brown vs. Brown of education in 1954. Following Brown, many cities underwent periods of litigation involving allegations of discrimination and segregation in their schools. The school desegregation movement, fought to break the connection between residential location and school enrollment by integrating public education. Orfield and Yun in a quantitative research in American schools have found a pattern of school re-segregation during the 1990s, despite a slight decrease in residential segregation.[4]

The American literature differentiates "de facto" and "de jure" segregation. By "de facto" segregation they mean racial segregation resulting from the actions of private individuals or unknown forces, not from governmental action or law. "De jure" segregation is a result of governmental action or law. De facto segregation is the result of housing pattern, population movements, population structure and economic conditions often reinforced by governmental policies not aimed at segregation but having that unintended effect.[5]

Since Brown, race has been constant factor for parents in the selection of schools for their children. Brown, F. and Hunter, R. C.[6] reported that, although 95% of white parents surveyed had no objection to their children attending a school in which a few of the children are Black, the proportion of objecting Whites grew

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[4] Orfield, Gary and John T. Yun (1999) cited by Jordan Rickles and Paul M. Ong, Shannon McConville and Doug Houston : Relationship Between School and Residential Segregation at the Turn of the Century, In: Metropolitan America in Transition, UCLA

[5] Raffel, Jeffrey (1998): A Historical Dictionary of School Segregation and Desegregation; Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pg. 232

[6] Brown, F.; Hunter, R. C. (1995): Introduction. Privatization of Public School Services. In Education and Urban Society, 27 (2), pg. 107-113

steadily as a school population became increasingly Black. This resentment led to "White flight", leaving the urban schools primarily minority.

School Choice

One alternative to avoid the segregation – being that of ethnic or spatial – was to offer multiple choices for parents in terms of schooling. The choice options were/are the following: magnet schools, vouchers, privatization of public schools, private, for-profit schools, home schooling.[7] The magnet school is typically a separate school or special program within a school that offers a specific curriculum designed to attract students from an entire district. Originally, magnet schools were created to attract students of different backgrounds in response to racial segregation in urban districts. Magnet schools ordinarily have three major components: a unified curriculum built around a discipline, theme, or method of instruction, an open enrollment policy, and a voluntary student and parent selection process. During the 1970s and 1980s the magnet school movement was seen as an alternative to forced busing in many cities. The vouchers are individual scholarships to parents that can be used to defray the cost of a child's tuition at any school – public or private, religious or secular – so long as that the voucher is awarded on the basis of neutral secular criteria.

Studies examining why parents choose particular schools have identified many important factors. One such factor suggests that some parents actively avoid schools with disadvantaged intakes. Another factor suggests that many parents seek schools where educational standards are perceived to be higher.[8]

Around the problem of school choice option soon started a long debate. The advocates consistently argue that increasing the educational options of the families – particularly poor, inner city families – will create greater educational equity, as well as race and class integration across schools. These researchers reason that choice option will allow disadvantaged students to leave schools of the most impoverished neighborhoods. They also presume that the majority of students, including white and

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[7] Loretta F. Meeks; Wendella A. Meeks; Claudia A. Warren (2000): Racial Desegregation – Magnet Schools, Vouchers, Privatization, and Home Schooling, In: Education and Urban Society, Vol. 33, No. 1, November, pg. 88-101; Timothy J. Ilg; Joseph D. Massucci (2003): Comprehensive Urban High School. Are there Better Options for Poor and Minority Children? In: Education and Urban Society, Vol. 36, no. 1, November, pg. 66-67.

[8] Philip Noden (2000): Rediscovering the Impact of Marketisation: Dimensions of Social Segregation in England's Secondary Schools, 1994-1999, In: British Journal of Sociology of Education, vol. 21, No. 3, pg. 373

wealthier families, will select schools based on their academic quality and not the race or class composition of their student body. They believe that this behavior and the system will reduce segregation. Detractors of school choice make the opposite argument. They contend that allowing greater educational mobility will exacerbate segregation. These scholars theorize that white and wealthier students will take steps to maintain their social status by distancing themselves from groups they perceive to be of lower standing.

This debate on school choice option has also aroused recently in Hungary when the implementation of desegregation policies of the Ministry of Education attracted the attention of the larger public. In the discourses on the mechanisms of school choice ethnic arguments are sometimes verbalized explicitly, but on most occasions, reasons are given around the discourse of the "*good school*". In other words, it is argued that the main objective of families taking their children out of a school with Roma pupils is their search for a school that guarantees to meet all the curricula targets established by law for each stage in the education process. It is certainly true that as well as the racist attitudes and prejudices held by the non-Roma families that instigate the move out of the school, there are also cases where the main worry is the standard of education in the school, regardless of whether or not Roma attend that school. In other cases the arguments about education standards are simply a discourse to conceal radical racist attitudes.

Theoretical framework –Minorities and Roma in the Educational system

Traditionally, European educational systems have not helped the Roma to overcome their social, political and economic marginality. Rather, schools have been sites for assimilation, reproduction of social stereotypes, prejudices, and the perpetuation of social exclusion. Nowadays, schools are still considered as primary site for the transmission of cultural knowledge and of attitudes towards one's own and other groups, as well as public life in general. Including social exclusion issues is a critical part of education policymaking and practice. Recently completed European research shows that various factors inside and outside education contribute to processes of social exclusion. They are intertwined and appear to be mutually

reinforcing but in different ways and at different stages in life. Education has been seen by many national governments as a major tool for tackling the issue of social exclusion.

Historically, European schools were designed to educate a homogenous student body through an educational system built on Western white culture. The diversification of the student body in the last century has created a tension within European education, because the schools and the educational system have not diversified concomitantly with the changes in the student body. Further, teacher education programs are behind these social changes, for they don't provide the knowledge and the special training to manage and teach in diverse classrooms. In this context, ethnic groups that differ from the mainstream white European society are often forced to adapt or fail.[9] This is why public education is one of the most sensitive issues in minority-majority relations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Despite international efforts to make access to education equal, access is still remains a challenge for Roma families. Many times, Roma have seen non-Roma families rallying against their acceptance and have heard schools principals say that school lists were closed to new students, especially if they were Roma children.[10] Moreover teachers' attitudes were operating on the common belief that the Roma have a natural disaffection for education. Generally, these assumptions rely on the statistically proven patterns of low attendance and high dropout rates of the Roma children that inevitably affect student performance and achievement. One recently completed research project has provided an updated analysis of the situation of the schooling of Roma children. Generally, it has been observed that education systems studied mainly in Spain, France and Italy have difficulty dealing with the schooling of the Gypsy children in a positive way. This is shown by the high percentage of absenteeism and dropping out of students who are also failing to gain school results.[11] In the knowledge society, access to the labor market largely depends on academic qualifications. This affects Roma people given their educational history of exclusion.

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[9] Flecha, R. (1999): Modern and Postmodern Racism in Europe: Dialogic Approach and Anti-Racist Pedagogies. Harvard Educational Review, Nr. 69, pg. 150-171

[10] OSCE (2000): Report on the Situation of the Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area. Geneva, Switzerland: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, High Commissioner on National Minorities.

[11] New Perspective for Learning. Insights from European Union Funded Research on Education and Training. Education, Inequalities and Social Exclusion, Issue nr. 6, September 2003, pg. 7

Education is a key factor that permits the overcoming of social, cultural, economic and labor inequality.

Two types of theory of segregation of Roma in Education

We could identify two ways of approaching the segregation of the Roma children in education.

1. The ethnocentric approach

The ethnocentric perspective's interprets the Roma children's underachievement in education with the failure of the Roma in accepting Western values, and their failure to integrate into the mainstream culture in order to succeed. Educational policies that derive from such approach aim at correcting this deficit through assimilation and transmission of hegemonic values that dissolve the difference that is considered to be the cause of student's failure. Social science studies have shown that many educational practices reflect this approach very subtle, as seen for example, in teachers' beliefs or expectations regarding the academic abilities of their Romany students.[12] The problem is identified as the children's culture rather than the school's inability to attend to a diversity of students.

2. Relativist approach

Relativism is defined as the elimination of any fixed principle with which to evaluate; that is cultures are considered neither superior nor inferior, only different. Thus, Roma poverty and lack of access to educational opportunities are only manifestations of their cultural differences. The conclusion of such approaches was that cultural preservation requires that minorities have to be kept away from mainstream schooling. Yet, some educational research has demonstrated that the creation of separate units outside of regular classrooms has actually increased segregation and inequalities in the educational system.[13]

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[12] Cahn, C.; Chirico, D. (1999) A Special Reemdy: Roma and schools for the mentally handicapped in the Czech Republic. Country Report Series. Budapest: European Roma Rights Center.
[13] Elboj, Puigdellivol, Soler, Valls, 2002)

Education of Roma in Eastern Europe

In Bulgaria all-Roma schools were established from the 1950s to the 1970s and were labeled by the official authorities as "*schools for children with inferior lifestyle and culture*". In 1966, the Ministry of Education introduced a special curriculum with strong emphasis on vocational skills for these segregated schools that remained in place until 1992. The quality of education declined due to a combination of continued neglect, under-funding and the practice of employing unqualified teaching staff in these schools. In 1992, the Ministry of Education introduced standard curricula for these schools, thus eliminating the focus on the vocational training component. However, this measure did not improve the quality of education.[14] The schools in Roma neighborhoods were initially seen as a positive development since they contributed to the inclusion of Roma in the educational system. Gradually, however, the quality of education declined because of continual neglect of the educational needs of Roma children, a policy of tracking unqualified teaching staff to these schools, and failure to restore the standard educational process. Despite their formal status as regular schools since 1992, all-Roma schools in fact remain "*special schools*" which offer low quality education and put the overwhelming number of Roma in a disadvantaged position compared to their peers at mixed schools: are overcrowded and lack basic facilities, classes are not held regularly, some Roma students who graduate from these schools can hardly read or write, and in many cases teachers do not have the qualifications required by law. Underlying negative prejudices towards Roma held by non-Roma teaching staff often result in degrading treatment of Roma schoolchildren.

Roma are also experiencing pervasive disadvantages in Hungary due to the substandard education available to them. Both international organizations and civil society groups have been calling attention to the unacceptable education for Roma in countries with substantial Roma communities. In the CEE, discrimination is often manifested through the placement of a disproportionate number of Roma children in

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[14] Evgeni Evgeniev (2002): Case Study: School Segregation in Vidin, Bulgaria, In: Roma Participation Program Reporter, August, Special Desegregation Issue, Open Society Institute

special schools for the intellectually disabled.[15] Indeed, every fifth Hungarian Roma student attends a special school or special classes within a mainstream school.[16] Education in Hungary has never been free from discrimination, and Roma were overrepresented in special schools well before the transition to democracy. Despite parents' right to choose their children's school segregation of housing and social status of families contribute to and amplify these trends. However, social status alone cannot explain the differences observed, and it is clear that racial discrimination must be considered as a possible additional factor.

Household surveys for Bulgaria and Romania - although the data are not directly comparable between the countries because of differences in the definition of education levels, they do illustrate common patterns. In both countries, the share of Roma who do not attend school is much higher than that of the total population; and the share of the Roma who continue education beyond the compulsory basic education cycle is lower then the rest of the population. In Bulgaria only 6 percent of Roma had completed secondary education, in comparison with 40% of the total population.[17]

Education levels vary notably between urban and rural areas, and across different types of Roma communities. In Hungary for example, the 1993 survey mentioned above found that the share of Roma who had not completed primary education was 16% in Budapest, 24% in towns, and 27% in villages.[18]

Minority Education in Romania

The researcher or the policy maker who wants to make a comprehensive, national-level quantitative research in Romania sooner or later will meet one of the greatest problems of the education system, that is the lack of reliable data on the education system in Romania, or that existing data are not always available. More

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[15] Duncan Wilson: Minority Rights in, to and through Education. A critical evaluation of the first results of the monitoring of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 1998-2003, pp. 39-42 and p. 54
[16] Havas Gábor, István Kemény and Ilona Liskó (2002): Cigány gyerekek az általános iskolában. Oktatáskutató Intézet, Új Mandátum könyvkiadó, Budapest, pg. 95
[17] Ringold, Dena (2000): Education of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges, World Bank Report
[18] Puporka and Zádori (1999): The Health Status of Romas in Hungary, The World Bank: Washington DC

than that, the system is not well developed in order to effectively monitor quality and equity in education. There are only a few instruments to do a systematic and comprehensive monitoring, such as curriculum, textbooks, school buildings, equipment, school and class organization, school planning. Nevertheless, these variables can not be enough to describe the present situation of education, and what most represents a problem, these are definitely not enough to measure the effectiveness of education policies.

The budget for education in Romania is established by allocation from the central authorities through the local councils. Although the Law of Education sets a minimum level of 4% of the GDP for education, in recent years the percentage ranged from 3.16% (in 1999) to 3.66 of the GDP (in 2000). According to the new legislative framework on local budgets, the share of local Public Authorities in public funding for education will reach 24% versus 12.5% in 1999. The larger share of local contributions helps decentralize financing but generates inequalities between regions. This means that less developed regions won't be able to better finance education.

Stages of the Education Reform in Romania

The education reform is an on-going process in Romania since 1990. The stages of the reform were the following: the first phase could be named as a *reparatory phase* between 1990 and 1993. In these three years the efforts of those in charge were concentrated on the elimination of the ideological orientation of the curriculum and textbooks, removing all political issues from school. Some of the textbooks (especially history and social science textbooks) were revised. The compulsory education was reduced from 10 years to 8 years. The Ministry of Education and its territorial inspectorates were responsible for implementing the education reform.

The second phase lasted until 1997. During this period the basic goals of the reform were to drastically reduce illiteracy and increase vocational qualifications, to increase enrollment in upper secondary and tertiary education, to expand the programs for social and ethnic minorities. The legal framework for decentralization of the decision making process and the participation of the community in the process of

education still preserves vague, fragmentary and contradictory aspects. A new education reform project started to be elaborated in this period - the K-12 Education Reform Project – it was developed by the World Bank and the Romanian Ministry of National Education, but its implementation and therefore its results appeared later.

The next three years, until 2000 represent the period of systematic change due to this K-12 program. After 2000 we can observe some difficulties again in implementing new projects or reform, especially at the higher education level. On the level of basic and secondary education the provisions of the reform extended communication with external factors, among which we can mention, besides family – whose role in relation with school was much increased – the local council and businesses, community factors, the church and so on. Compulsory education was extended again to 10 grades.

Education Policy in the last few years

In 1999 a *Program for Educational Development in Rural Areas* was initiated. In September 2000 a *National Council for Development of Education in Rural Areas* was set up. In April 2000, the Romanian Government asked the World Bank's support for obtaining a grant for implementing the "*Rural Education*" project, concomitantly the *Anti-Poverty, Promotion and Social Inclusion Commission* has included rural education in its poverty alleviation strategy. In 2001 Ministry of Education started implementing a school consolidation and busing program. Starting with 2001, the Government initiated a program that provides standard packages of student's supplies to students from poor families.

Special programs, positive discrimination

In 1998 a special, positive discrimination program was begun in favor of education for Roma. It included the following measures: 150 places were set aside annually in higher education for young Roma for the purpose of training them as teachers, elementary schools teachers, social assistants, Roma language and culture, law and political science. Moreover, a "*Roma Language and Culture*" department was set up in the University of Bucharest. One of the most important achievements is the

introduction of the function of school inspector for Roma issues in all 41 territorial inspectorates in Romania.

Non-governmental initiatives to improve minority education in Romania

One of the most mention-worthy is the *Open Society Foundation*'s *Education Development Project - Education 2000+*. This project addresses the educational needs of Roma population by facilitating institutional change and building the capacity of Roma people to participate in education and the education reform. In 1999 the Roma capacity building program is made up of different components: support for Roma teachers, educational materials development, vocational training for older drop-outs. In order to implement the *Program Education 2000+* and to follow its methodology a *General Agreement* (no. 10.173/5.04.1999) was signed between the Ministry of Education and the Open Society Foundation in Romania. Two *Special Orders* of the Ministry of Education (no. 4182/4.8.1999; 4231/18.08.1999) were issued in 1999 and they are related to implementation of the general strategy of the *Education 2000+* program, and of the Roma capacity building strand of it in the pilot regions and institutions.

Another mention-worthy educational program for Roma is "*Equal opportunities for Roma Children through School Development Programs and Parents' Involvement*" (*Centre for Education 2000+, Romania and SLO, National Institute for Curriculum Development, NL, 2002*) This project seeks to provide training and support to administrators and teachers in Romanian elementary and secondary schools in order to change teaching practices, curriculum content, and school organization and operation. It is the premise of the program that these changes will improve the educational opportunities for Roma students in schools, will increase the involvement of parents and the community in the development and operation of the school, and mainly will assist Roma students in building a deeper understanding of their own cultural identity. The model was called *triple A* model. This refers to three key concepts: *awareness*, *acknowledgement* and *achievement*. Before communities can deal with problems of inequality, they must first be aware that such inequalities exist, and they must acknowledge the importance of realizing and sustaining a balance between a minority population's full participation into the larger

society and the maintenance of its own identity. At the same time that equality is being attained, members of the minority population must be encouraged to achieve to the same level as the majority of the society. The theory posits that this way, minority populations become competitive for jobs and decision-making positions in the larger society.

The former Ministry of Education issued norms designed to crate a framework for fighting illiteracy.[19] The Ministry also promoted training for Roma teachers, and the publication of teaching aids for education in minority languages, including Romani.

In April 2001 the New Government's Ministry of Education and Research reduced the number of school inspectors for minorities to one per county. Thus in counties where there may previously have been both Roma and Hungarian inspectors, there are no longer the possibility of an inspector representing each community. Reportedly, this has led to the dismissal of some Roma inspectors.

Rural Education in Romania

Most of the sociological and economical theories related to education agree upon the fact that investment in human capital is one of the most important factors in assuring a level of well-being of any individual or society. The relation between poverty and level of education is a constant one. Each of them might be a cause of the other, but the effect as well. Thus, a low level of education reduces the chances of getting a job in the formal economy. This leads to marginalization, low income, and extreme poverty. A poor family is not able to offer for the children normal living conditions, which in turn reduces the chances of the child to pass to a higher level on the mobility scale. Moreover, this educational deficit is transmitted from generation to generation

According to the last census in Romania (2002), 47.3% of Romanians live in rural areas. 32% of the rural population in Romania has no education or have

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[19] Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3633/14.04.1999 on fighting illiteracy and Order no. 4231/18.08.1999 on an experimental programme to preclude marginalization and social and professional exclusion

graduated the elementary school (4 years compulsory education). According to a research on poverty, this percentage is even higher in poor areas of Romania (35%).[20] A census of rural schools carried out in 2002 by ISE[21] shows the precarious condition of the rural basic education schools. The research shows that household income and regularity of income has a strong effect on school attendance of children. More exactly, children from households with no salaried employees, pensioners are three times more likely not to attend school than children from households with regular source of income. The other problem that schools have to face is the high proportion of unqualified teachers. It has shown that schools with higher percentage of unqualified teachers have lower student performance. The same problem has been certified in schools where the proportion of the teachers who commute is higher than those of living in the same community. One of the most demanding problems of the rural schools is the long-term underinvestment.[22] Demand for education is usually lower in rural areas than in urban areas. A demand-sided research carried out by World Bank and the National Commission for Statistics[23] identified problems that impede school attendance of rural students, low income students and other marginalized or disadvantaged groups. In 1998, 40,5% of persons from rural areas were living below the poverty line. Empirical evidence also shows that there are household constraints on schooling. In rural areas it is a widely accepted practice that children take part in the "subsistence" agriculture as "non-remunerated family workers". This is one of the main causes of high percentage of drop-out in rural areas.[24]

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[20]Manuela Sofia Stanculescu, Ionica Berevoescu (eds.) (2004): Sărac lipit, caut altă viață, Editura Nemira, pg. 290

[21] Rural Education in Romania: Conditions, Issues and Development Strategies, Institute of Educational Studies, 2002

[22] Most heating facilities in rural schools are inadequate, leaving classrooms very cold in the winter. The school furniture in 13% of rural schools is completely unsatisfactory. 5% of the schools lack electricity. Most rural schools have no educational materials, such as maps, dictionaries and other reference books, teacher's guides, reading books, or science materials.

[23] World Bank, National Commission for Statistics, 1999

Education of the Roma/Gypsy Minority in Romania

The Commission of the European Communities defines the three main goals of education as: "the development of the individual, who can thus realize his or her full potential and lead a happy and fruitful life; the development of society, in particular by reducing the disparities and inequities as between individuals or groups; and the development of the economy, by ensuring that the skills available on the labor market match the needs of businesses and employers".[25]

The Romanian Constitution assures general education to all. The right to equal access to education is set forth in both Law on Education[26] and Ordinance 137[27]. The state guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to learn their native languages[28] and to be instructed in these languages. At the same time, according to the Law on Education it is compulsory to learn the Romanian language.

At the beginning of the 90s, the educational process and structures were highly centralized in Romania due to the reminiscences of the communist period. The Ministry of National Education was the only authorized to determine the national and local school curricula, the examinations, the content of the textbooks, the budgets allocated for each department and activity. Between 1990 and 1992 the first steps were made to change the educational system. Compulsory education was reduced to eight years. The structure of secondary education was diversified. Education in languages of minorities was developed. After 1992 the Ministry of National Education renewed the curriculum eliminating the highly ideological content of textbooks. Still, it was clear that the educational system needs a more complex

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[24] 64% of the drop-outs are leaving school before graduating compulsory education because they need to work to supplement the household's incomes.

[25] Comm. Of the European Communities, Report from the Commission: The Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems COM (2001) 59 final (13 January 2001).

[26] Art. 5: "Romanian citizens have equal right of access to all levels and forms of education irrespective of their social and material background, sex, race, nationality, political and religious belonging"

[27] Ordinance 137/2000, art. 15 (1): "denying the access of a person or of a group of persons to the state-owned or private education system of any kind, degree or level, on account of their appurtenance to a race, nationality, ethnic group (…) shall constitute an offense".

[28] Order no. 3638/2001 of the Minister of Education and Research (completed with the stipulations of Order no. 3342/2002 for 2002/2003 school year on the application of framework plans for grades I - VIII.; for 2001/2002 school year stipulates (Art. 3.) the status of the native language. Order no. 3670/2001 of the Minister of Education and Research on the application of framework plans for secondary education in 2001/2002 school year concerning the tuition of the native languages stipulates (Art. 4.): "…native language and literature is part of the common trunk and is studied in a number of lessons equal with the study of the Romanian language".

systematic reform. The reform began in October 1994 financed jointly by the Government of Romania and the World Bank.

In the last few years there were three types of education for ethnic minorities in Romania: educational structures with tuition in the native language for the Czech, Croatian, German, Hungarian, Serbian, Slovakian and Ukrainian minority; educational structures with partial tuition in the native language. (for the Croatian, Turkish and Tatar minorities for whom some vocational subjects are also taught in the native language) and educational structures in Romanian language in which the native language is studied as separate subject. (among others the Romani is being taught like this)

On April 15, 1998, the Ministry of National Education issued an Order no. 3577, which supported with affirmative, real measures the access of students and young Roma to higher education.[29] That year 144 separate places were insured only for the Roma candidates. 85% of the places were occupied.[30] In September 2000 the Ministry of Education issued a new regulation to create framework for access to vocational schools, secondary schools and universities for Roma students.[31] According to this, Universities in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca have to organize admission for Roma students to government financed places in the faculties of social assistance, law, psychology and philosophy.

In localities with population belonging to different minorities or ethnic Roma, the state insures the organization and functioning of education with tuition in the languages of national minorities, partial tuition of subjects in the native language or the study of the native language, the history and traditions of the respective minority. Training of teachers and pedagogues specialized in Romani language and culture began in 1990 with the establishment of three classes for Roma teachers at the Pedagogical schools in Bucharest, Târgu-Mureş and Bacău. This was extended in 1992 at the level of elementary school in two schools.

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[29] In the same year, the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature established and authorized the Department for Romany Language and Literature, as a second specialization, ensuring 10 places for Roma candidates. Through the normative act of April 15, 1998 (as well as similar subsequent orders of the Ministry: order no. 5083/26.11.1999; no. 3294/01.03.2000 and no. 4542/18.09.2000) 150-200 distinct places were given yearly for Roma candidates at different faculties and universities from Bucharest, Cluj, Timişoara, Iaşi, Craiova, Braşov, Sibiu, Constanţa, Oradea, Suceava.
[30] Minorities and Education in Romania, Ministry of Public Information, 2001, pg. 63
[31] Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 4542/18.09.2000

Teaching of Romani language in Romanian schools has increased enormously in recent years. In 1992-1993 Romani language was studied only by 368 Roma pupils. In the school year 1996/1997, 445 Roma students at eight schools were studying Romani, at the request of their parents.[32] In 1998/1999 Romani language was studied by 1747 pupils in 11 counties. The number of teachers was 15 of Roma ethnicity, and 2 persons of non-Roma ethnicity. By the year 2000/2001, according to the Ministry for Education, there were 200 teachers – both Roma and non-Roma – teaching Romani to more than 10.000 students.[33] In 2002/2003 number of schools was 135, the number of pupils was 15.708 and the number of teaching staff was 257.

Contrary to the expectations the status of the Romani language did not change. At the request of the parents in 2003 (synthetic figures from the reports of county school inspectorates) 158.124 Roma pupils attend school , 15.708 Roma pupils (9846 in grades I-IV, 5771 in grades V-VIII, 91 in grade IX) in grades I-XIII benefit of an additional Roma curriculum, formed of 3-4 classes weekly.

The legal framework for teaching minority languages is set forth in the 1995 Law on Education, which establishes compulsory education in Romanian.[34] But this law also allows for the organization of classes in minority languages at both the primary and secondary school levels, upon written request of parents. The law also provides for the publication of textbooks in minority languages.[35] Vocational training is only in Romanian, although some terminology may be taught in minority languages.[36]

The former Ministry issued norms designed to create a framework for fighting illiteracy.[37] It also established a network of school inspectors for Roma issues in all 42 counties of Romania.[38] In 2001, out of the 40 school inspectors within the structure of

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[32] Council of National Minorities. The Education System in Romania: Tuition in the Languages of National Minorities in the 1996/1997 School Year, 1998

[33] Gh. Sarău: Programe strategice ale ministerului Educației Naționale pentru participarea Romilor la procesul de învățământ, 2000.

[34] Law 84/1995 Official gazette 370, amended by Law 151/1999 of 3 August republished in the Official Gazette 606 of 12 December, 1999. Article 8 states that "…education at all levels is in Romanian. In accordance with this law education may also take place in the mother tongue of national minorities and in foreign languages…Learning Romanian as the official language of the state is compulsory for all Romanian citizens".

[35] Law 84/1995. Chapter IX, Arts. 118-120, 125-126.)

[36] Law 84/1995, art. 122.

[37] Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3633/14.04.1999 on fighting illiteracy and Order no. 4231/18.08.1999 on an experimental programme to preclude marginalization and social and professional exclusion.

[38] Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3363/o1.o3.1999 and Order 4219/17.08.1999.

county school inspectorates, 19 were ethnic Roma, and 21 do not belong to this ethnic community.

The third strategic program of the Ministry of Education and Research was the formation of Roma teachers to co-opt young Roma as unqualified teachers to work with classes of Roma children as primary school teachers or teachers for the native Romany language. The program was extended to perform the potential Roma teachers of Romany language following the initialization of short-term intensive summer courses.

The fourth strategic program was collaboration with Roma and non-Roma NGOs. The 5th was the elaboration of the instruments of work in schools (syllabuses and textbooks) with the involvement of the Roma teachers.

In the educational sector, Romanian Roma has low levels of education and high drop-out rates. A recent World Bank report notes that while the education structure of the total population did not change significantly during two survey years, the share of the Roma population that had not completed basic school education grew from 36% in 1994 to 44% in 1998.[39] An estimated 44% of Roma men and 59% of Roma women in Romania are illiterate.[40] Overall, in Romania, drop-out for Roma children attending pre-schools decreased from 3.9% in 2002/2003 to 0.3% in 2003/2004. All counties reported a decrease of the drop-out rates on primary education level (4.8% in 2002-2003 to 2.5% in 2003-2004); secondary school drop-out rates were lower for 2003/2004 (8.5%) as compared to 2003/2004 (9.9%). [41]

A series of researches tried to document the low attendance rate of Roma children in the Romanian educational system. Data from 1996 shows that the majority of the 70.000 persons without education in Romania belong to the Roma minority.[42] According to a study "only 4.5 % of the Roma population graduates from high school; 40% of Roma children (up to age of 8) do not go to kindergarten; and only half of the children aged 7 to 10 years attend primary school; only 7 % pursue a secondary education".[43]

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[39] Ringold, Dena, 2000
[40] Cozma, T.; Cucos, C.; Momanu, M. (2000): The Education of Roma Children in Romania: Description, Solutions, Intercultural Education, 11, pg. 281-288
[41] "Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups, with a special focus on Roma", project report available on www.mec.ro
[42] Than Rromano, Studies on Roma, no. 4-5, 1999-2000, pg. 43.
[43] Cozma, T.; Cucos, C.; Momanu, M. (2000)

According to sociologists Elena Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir, 27% of the Roma population has not attended more than a few years of school – in 1992 an estimated 50% of 7-10 years-old Roma children attended school regularly.[44] The Government explains these low levels as due to a "lack of interest on the part of Roma/Gypsies in going to school and learning a trade"[45] . By contrast others observed that in many schools there is a strong anti-Roma feeling, not only among students, but among teachers as well, so that this discourages parents to send their children to these schools. This is the reason why many Roma children are tracked to special classes with a lower quality of teaching, segregated from majority children.[46] Such classes does not offer prospect for continuing in the higher education system or skilled employment.

Research data from 1998 carried out by the research Institute for Quality of Life revealed that more than half of the schools with over 50% Roma students were situated at a distance of less than three Km from neighboring schools of the same level with predominantly non-Roma children. For the physical distance between Roma and non-Roma schools are relatively small, the authors underlined that the explanation for the continuous segregation of Roma pupils can be found in the social distance between the Roma and non-Roma. It is not the aim of this paper to reveal the factors that contribute to the high level of social distance between Roma and non-Roma, but we should mention one basic factor, which are the socio- economic discrepancies.[47]

Low education levels among Roma reflect also problems of access to education. While the education structure of the total population did not change significantly over the two years in Romania, for Roma the share of the population that had not completed basic school education grew from 36% in 1994 to 44% in 1998. This development reflects decreasing trends in school participation among school age

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[44] E. Zamfir; C. Zamfir (1996): Children at Risk in Romania: problems old and new, Florence, Italy, Unicef Child Development Center, cited in C. McDonald (1999): "Roma in the Romanian Educational System: barriers and leaps of faith". In: European Journal of Intercultural studies, vol. 10, no. 2, pg. 184

[45] Report of the Romanian Government to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Fifteenth Periodic Report on the States party due in 1999, Romania, CERD/C/363/add.1, para. 133 (a).

[46] McDonald, pg. 184.

[47] Statistics show that 62.9% of the Roma lived under the minimum level of subsistence as compared to 16% of the whole population in 1998. Zamfir, C.; Zamfir, E. (1995): Dimensiuni ale sărăciei, Bucharest, Expert Publishing House, pg. 28

children, as the economic constraints to school attendance among Roma children have grown during the transition period.

Definition and types of segregation

The most complex definition of segregation suggests that two or more groups are separated from each other. Segregation is not a simple concept and that it can be measured in various ways.[48]

Types of segregation

- segregation in schools or classes for the mentally handicapped: Roma children represent the majority in special schools.[49]

- segregation in substandard schools or classes in the mainstream educational system. Even when Roma are taught in normally mainstream schools, they are frequently segregated in Roma-only, remedial classes and in some cases in separate, substandard buildings. Roma children in segregated classes are frequently taught according to an "adjusted curriculum" not de signed to provide education on an equal footing with other students. [50]

- school segregation resulting from residential segregation – *"Gypsy ghetto schools"* - in some instances, Roma children are placed in inferior quality schools as a result of residential segregation: ghetto children attend ghetto schools. In such schools, the overwhelming majority of children are Roma, and although the schools often formally offer a standard curriculum, education is in practice substandard because teachers lack basic qualifications, textbooks are out-of-date, teaching aids are lacking, and school buildings are run-down and ill-equipped to provide for quality education.

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[48] Philip Noden: Rediscovering the Impact of Marketisation: Dimensions of Social Segregation in England's Secondary Schools, 1994-1999, In: British Journal of Sociology of Education, vol. 21, No. 3, 2000, pg. 382

[49] ERRC Country Report: State of Impunity: Human Rights Abuse of Roma in Romania, September 2001, pg. 104-120. Available on http://errc.org. It is not the only place where Roma are disproportionately educated in schools or classes for the mentally handicapped. In Hungary, similar trends were revealed by a research dome in 1998 in Borsod County: 90% of the children in special schools were Roma.

[50] ERRC: State of Impunity, Pg. 110-111

- Exclusion from the school system – in some places, a combination of bureaucratic obstacles and poverty work effectively to exclude many Roma children from the school.
- Abuse in schools, including racially motivated physical abuse.

In our research by segregated schools or classes we mean schools, or classes where they use standard national curriculum and which have over 50% Roma students. Most of these schools are located near a Roma community, are physically separated from the majority schools, and are poorer as compared to other schools.

Residential segregation is considered the most powerful factor which contributed to the appearance of segregation in education. The process of forced settlement of Roma resulted in the appearance of isolated and homogenous Roma communities. These communities are situated at the margins of the localities. Mihai Surdu in his study on desegregation Roma schools proved that the segregated schools for Roma provide lower quality education. The segregated schools are situated in the near vicinity of the Roma communities. Most of these communities show a high level of poverty. These schools proved to be poorer than other schools in the localities. Although there are no formal barriers to transfer the Roma children to other schools, this is not a frequent phenomenon among Roma.

The MER Notification no. 29323/20.04.2004 explicitly stipulates the aim of ensuring equity in education in terms of equal access to all forms of schooling as well as in terms of the quality of education provided to all children, irrespective of their ethnicity or mother tongue. Moreover it points out that in most of the cases of school segregation the local school inspectors did not introduce compensatory measures for the Roma:

"Segregation represents a serious form of discrimination. Within the educational system, except the school/classrooms where all the subjects are taught in Romani language, segregation means physical separation, deliberately or unintentionally of the Roma children of the other children in schools, classrooms, buildings and other facilities, having as a consequence that the number of Roma children is disproportionately higher in comparison with the percentage of the school age children of that unity.

Consequently, segregation represents the unequal access of children to a quality education. Separation in schools or kindergarten leads with no exception to an inferior level of education in comparison to that provided in groups, classrooms or schools with school population represented by the ethnic majority"[51]

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[51] Notificare nr. 29323/20.04.2004, Ministry of Education and Research, State Secretary for Preuniversity Education, www.edu.ro

A significant number of Roma children study in all Roma-ghetto schools located in Roma ghettos (segregated and homogenous Roma communities) or in districts with a large Roma population. In addition to that, de facto segregated schools have emerged due to demographic processes and due to the withdrawal of non-Roma students from schools where the percentage of Roma students is high. Segregated Roma schools almost always offer lower standards of education when compared to schools where non-Roma children constitute the prevailing part of the student body. The physical infrastructure and the quality of teaching in these schools are usually poor.

Roma children are also segregated in separate classes within the mainstream schools, including classes for ethnic minorities and special classes following the curriculum of the remedial special schools for children with developmental disabilities. Although there are no legal obstacles to the establishment of classes on ethnic grounds to provide minority education, when it comes to Roma these classes are most often the result of racial discrimination.

Apart of the mainstream schools, there is a complex parallel system of primary and secondary schools for children with physical and developmental disabilities. Children with developmental disabilities are educated in special primary schools and special classes in the regular primary schools.

Some regular primary schools have also opened special classes for children with developmental disabilities, which follow the curriculum of the special remedial schools. Special classes in the regular schools are abused by some school authorities as a tool of ridding mainstream classes from Roma children. Thus Roma children are transferred to remedial special classes without prior testing and without the consent of their parents.

School officials in mixed schools most often set up separate classes as a result of racial prejudice. The existence of homogenous Roma or non-Roma classes, irregular schools has been justified in a number of ways. Dividing classes allegedly based on the capability of students is perhaps most common. School officials can introduce more advanced classes with special programs for talented pupils.

Conversely, catch-up classes can be established for students who are having difficulties in keeping pace with the regular curricula.

In fact, the segregation of Roma and non-Roma pupils in different classes of the same school rarely has anything to do with objectively measured capabilities of the children. In most cases it is the outcome of racial prejudice, with non-Roma parents refusing to allow their children to be taught together with Roma.

High numbers of Roma students attend inferior quality schools in which the overwhelming majority of children are Roma. Although there is no legal distinction between the Roma ghetto schools and the rest of the schools in each country at issue in this report there is a marked difference in the quality of education provided in the two types of schools. Roma-ghetto schools are generally inferior in material conditions and quality of education – school buildings are run-down and ill-equipped to provide for quality education, teachers lack basic qualifications textbooks are out-of-date, and teaching aids are lacking. In some cases material deprivation at schools is extreme and some barely functions. Roma ghetto schools have emerged as a result of two general factors: residential segregation of Roma and withdrawal of non-Roma from schools where the percentage of Roma is high. The process of ghettoisation of public schools is also influenced by racially motivated denial of access of Roma to regular schools. Also, one natural reaction on the part of many Roma parents to racial prejudice and abuse has been preference for schools where the majority of the student's body is Roma. The emergence of segregated schools based on residential segregation dates back to the years of the Communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe. The segregated schools in the Roma neighborhoods were created as schools for pupils "with a backward way life and a low cultural level". There main goal was "basic literacy and the development of work habits and vocational abilities'

Another process which conditions the emergence of ghetto schools in the rural area is the increase of the percentage of Roma among the local population resulting from the demographic trends and economic emigration from the rural areas. The increase of Roma among the general population is reflected in the student body of village schools, many of which are gradually becoming predominantly Roma in composition.

Ghetto schools emerge also as a result of the withdrawal of non – Roma children by their parents from schools where the percentage of Roma children is

rising. As the proportion of the Roma in the school has been growing the quality of education has been declining. Due to reduced number of non-Roma students, the size of the student body has decreased significantly, which also translates into a reduction of funds allocated to the school by the town council. This fact is reflected in the poor physical conditions present in the school, which has dilapidated furniture and outdated books.

Problems identified and which should be taken in to consideration for further educational policies

Proper textbooks

Obtaining appropriate textbooks for minorities' education seemed to be a problem in most countries and for most groups. The main issues centre on the language or the content of the materials. While many minority groups have achieved the right to some form of education in their own language, their efforts are often hindered by a lack of approved textbooks. Some classes are forced to rely on textbooks that are significantly out of date. In some cases, classes have been able to use textbooks from countries where their language is the main state language. Elsewhere this solution has not been available because the government requires that all texts be approved by the Ministry of Education.

Another problem is the content of the textbooks. A common difficulty is the portrayal of minority groups, particularly in history and geography subjects. For example in the widely accepted and used Romanian national history textbooks the history of Roma hardly is mentioned.

Teacher's Training

Appropriate teacher training is a core need to ensure the development of multicultural and intercultural education. Two main areas need to be addressed: first, ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of trained teachers for education in minority languages; second, that teachers should promote a positive environment for intercultural education in their classrooms. Some communities experience difficulties obtaining enough teachers for minority language education.

Language

Roma pupils in school do not use the Roma language, Romani, frequently out of a wish to protect the integrity of the family, as the vast majority of children realize that their language forms part of the private world and the intimacy of the family. On occasions, Roma children use it amongst themselves as an element of coded conversation to prevent non-Roma from understanding them, and hence the language becomes a means of protection for the group. The number of teachers, pedagogues who speak and teach Romani language or hold classes in Romani is much lower than the necessary.

Teachers Attitudes

The ethnographic studies carried out reveal that teacher's attitudes, their teaching styles, their ability to communicate and their pupils' success all improve in context of positive co-existence and the two parties get to know each other in the Roma pupils' family and social setting. This coexistence helps in better understanding of the children's culture, values and social strategies. This information is also can be efficiently used in the classroom, as the teacher knows the context the pupils come from and is able to establish closer, quality communication. Knowledge of Roma culture favors the Gypsy/Roma pupils' socio-educational integration.

Most striking problems of the education of Roma

Enrollment

Although there are detailed quantitative data regarding the compulsory education system, data regarding Roma is scarce.

The most recent data[52] show the total number of students enrolled in the 2002-2003 school year.

Grade	Romanian	Hungarian	Roma	Total
I.	218782	12705	12537	246342
II.	217937	12646	9946	242789
III.	218848	12108	8599	241773
IV.	226024	13445	8778	250663
Total	**881591**	**50904**	**39860**	**981567**
V.	243153	14344	8006	268230
VI.	265984	15225	6949	290489
VII.	290910	16225	8017	315392
VIII.	291406	15950	4508	314585
Total	**1091453**	**61744**	**24441**	**1188696**
T	*1973044*	*112648*	*64301*	*2170263*

Disparities in enrollments between Roma and non-Roma suggest that the gaps in education attainment will persist into the next generation.[53] The enrollment rates however do not show the number of those students who will graduate, as in some cases, students may enroll at the beginning of the year, but may not actually attend school. Many Roma students are tracked into special education programs on the basis of ethnicity and socio-economic conditions, which are considered cultural deficits.

In Romania, national statistics on the number of Roma in schools for children with disabilities or special educational needs are not publicly available, but local sources suggest that this tracking pattern holds. Roma are labeled as disabled almost directly as a result of their ethnicity and perceived incompetent, and the educational policies associated with special education relegate them to special schools that afford no opportunity to advance in social or economic standing.

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[52] See: Învăţământul primar şi gimanzial la începutul anului şcolar 2002-2003; the National Institute of Statistics.
[53] 0.31% of Romanian Roma versus 10.44 % of the non-Roma population in Romania, higher education. Revenga et al, 2002, pg. 24

For example, the mentally handicapped school in Cluj-Napoca serves about 200 children, of which over 70% are Roma children.[54]

One of the dynamics that fosters the concentration of Roma pupils in certain schools is the resistance to Roma pupil enrolment. These processes take place both subtly and unofficially and in practice; result in Roma families being denied the possibility of choosing which schools they wish their children to attend. The racist prejudices that underlie these attitudes in schools are also justified by the fear that if Roma pupils are accepted into the school, it will trigger the beginning of a non-Roma pupil exodus process. This fear that non-Roma pupils may abandon the school is a variable that must be carefully taken into account in these processes. The non-Roma pupil flight can take place on a large scale, to such an extent that it may even culminate in the closure of the school, since the numbers of pupils remaining could be so small that the school would have to close its doors.

Absenteism

One of the areas that have received emphasized attention in the context of the education of Roma children is that of absenteeism. The tendency amongst Roma families is that in small towns and villages absenteeism is lower, but increases with the town size. It has been verified that the levels of marginalization and the precarious housing situation endured by the Roma minority are much greater in cities than in the small towns and villages in country areas, and that, as we all know, the relationship between absenteeism and precarious housing is particularly strong. It is obvious that absenteeism, regardless of population size, is always higher amongst the Roma minority than amongst the population in general.

Irregularity of school attendance

The irregularity in Roma pupil school attendance in the school contexts studied is perceived as a serious conflict and the main cause of poor or non-adaptation and of the failure in the education process of these children. Irregularity in Roma pupil attendance is also an effect produced by causes outside the school (employment

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[54] Cahn, C.; Petrova, D. (2001): State of Impunity: Human Rights Abuse of Roma in Romania (Country Report Series), Budapest: European Roma Rights Center

niches, population mobility, social segregation etc.). We define the non-attendance for reasons other than the wishes of the pupil and the family as "absence". Non-attendance also occurs for internal reasons such as ideologies, teacher expectation, socio-affective relationships and cultural interactions, amongst others, and in this case, they are classified as absenteeism.

Age also affect the regularity of attendance amongst Roma pupils. Attendance is more regular in the youngest age bracket (elementary school). Absences of varying lengths are directly related to the initiation of the young persons' working life alongside his or her family, a question we have particularly studied in the case of the casual agricultural laborer, but which doubtlessly affects other groups to a greater or lesser extent. The concept of absenteeism is referring to non-attendance for non-justifiable reasons. Clearly, there are numerous causes, but influencing factors include failure at school, ethnic pressure, discord between school and family norms and values.

Socio-economical context as factor and outcome

Poverty and education

Children from poor families are more likely not to attend, or to drop out of school than other children for a range of reasons, including: financial and opportunity costs, imperfect information about the benefits of education, limited choice and poor quality of educational services, substandard housing conditions at home that impede learning and studying, and poor health status. The economic context of the transition has increased the cost to families of sending children to school. The increasing prevalence of both official and unofficial fees for education has threatened the ability of families to send their children to school. These developments have the greatest impact on poor families, who are ill-positioned to pay for additional school related expenses, as well as basic necessities such as clothing and food. Families may require children to work either in the home or outside in the informal sector. The mobility of the casual laborer family is the economic factor that underlies the irregularity in school attendance of these Roma children. The various ethnographic studies confirm that children from Roma casual laborer families are dispersed in the most unlikely living conditions. These could range from huts or farm outbuildings in the fields

where their families are working, to improvised camps in the middle of nowhere or abandoned houses in the country. Difficulties often arise in terms of their socio-educational integration. These children come from very diverse backgrounds: they may have arrived from a big city ghetto area or a small village. Their experience, and therefore their perception of school is too heterogeneous for them to be able to adapt to and settle into a new school in the normal way, unless the school is particular aware of these factors.

Overcoming the situation - Policies

A great number of policies were developed and introduced with respect to the position of ethnic minorities in education. These were aimed at preventing and reducing educational disadvantage among minorities; these policies also had a number of cultural, socio-psychological and emancipatory objectives. At the beginning of the 1990s, the balance was drawn up with respect to this policy.

Matthew-effect[55]

It would appear that the disadvantages suffered by minorities have not got any less over the years: they are already considerably behind when they enter primary school, and they do not catch up throughout the course of their school career.

Bilingual education

One of the greatest debates aroused regarding the bilingual education. There is a great deal of discussion about the extent to which this kind of education is useful and whether it does not in fact reduce educational opportunities and result in segregation instead of integration.

Additional resources

Only several schools dispose the necessary human and financial resources to apply for additional material and financial resources from other institutions then the Ministry of Education. Applying for example for a Phare educational fund schools would need a

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[55] The differences that exist between minority and majority children at the start of primary education increase throughout their subsequent school career.

complex infrastructure and professionals. Most of the rural schools don't have access to Internet.

Pre-school education

Preschool activities with parents and children as well would help that the minority and majority children overcome the cultural differences and to develop and learn basic attitudes and skills for living and communicating in multi-ethnic context. This requires additional staff on the basis of the socio-economic and ethnic composition of the school population.

Trainings for teachers

Rural teachers has less chances to participate in different training opportunities since these do not suit well to the needs and possibilities of them: lack of information, isolation, the distance to training centers, lack of transportation, lack of financial support. Moreover, in most cases there is limited liaison and cooperation between a school and its local community. This is also characteristic for urban schools as well.

Another problem that rural schools have to face is the high percentage of fully, but not appropriately qualified and/or is non-qualified teachers.

Government has devised policies intended to attract well-qualified teachers in rural schools by providing bonuses of 5-80 % of their salaries for accepting a place in a rural school. However, the impact of these measures has been modest, so far.

Physical environment

The substandard facilities in rural schools (such as lack of heating possibilities, lack of electricity, lack of water supply etc.) create health risks contributing to problems of school attendance, degree of teaching effectiveness and learning achievement.

Relation with the local community

Parent's influence on educational decisions at local levels is minimal, although they are represented in the School Councils. There is also a weak cooperation between schools and local authorities. The support of local authorities for schools can be said as irrelevant in proportion to the needs of the school. Communes often lack the

organizational structures and skills needed to enable broad participation of the community, lack the professionals in discussing and debating local education issues.

Compulsory schooling

In the different countries different strategies have been employed in the various education policies aimed at encouraging school attendance amongst Roma pupils. These include social measures in the form of financial help for families, or grants to meet the costs of school lunches or books. These intervention policies have been aimed in particular at the most underprivileged Roma families, in an attempt to palliate serious situations of poverty and marginalization. The efficacy of this intervention model is questionable at a structural level and this is borne out by our data on attendance irregularity. The various case studies undertaken indicate that these are *ad hoc* measures which on occasions can take on a coercive character, but their failure is due above all to the fact that they do not form part of an integral intervention programme that tackles the problem of irregular school attendance as a cause of many other internal and external conflicts experienced by Roma children in the school. Irregularity is first and foremost an effect of a series of social, economic, cultural and educational factors that cannot be resolved through coercion or financial subsidies of varying amounts.

"Compulsory" attendance at school is a coercive strategy carried out in many of the contexts studied. The most common strategy used is to link the payment of social benefits to the Gypsy/Roma families to the circumstance of their children attending school.

Conclusions

The failure of the education system to provide for the Roma child is due to a complex interaction of political, socio-economic, ideological, cultural and institutional factor, all of which have a dynamic nature that changes depending on the context is being dealt with. In segregated schools or classes the quality of education is much lower compared the rest of public education system. The number of students who pass in the secondary education is extremely low; the number of functional illiterate is higher than the national average. However, it has been found that, within

the whole population in general and in the Gypsy community in particular, grouping students in school according to cultural differences or learning levels does not facilitate school success nor help to overcome inequalities (see case study on Nusfalau). The best educational experiences begin within the school context and ripple out into the community. Equal participation in the community and in schools is the driver for community development and contributes to educational quality.

It has been documented that during the education process teachers do not encourage the cultural recognition of the Roma child in the school environment. This absence is expressed at different levels within the education systems. This all has an effect on teacher training and the training of all professionals in the education sector. Likewise, the lack of recognition manifest in the absence of specific curricula content on the Roma in school material designed for all pupils has also been confirmed. In general, a process is seen to take place in which Roma culture as a positive enriching reference for all pupils is made invisible.

The problem of education for Roma children is considered one of the challenges the political, economic, social, cultural or civic sphere in Romania must confront with. The ministry initiated a significant process of elaboration of strategies at national level for the education of children who are socially excluded.

1. The physical environment is a vital component. Can be directly linked to attitudes about school amongst teachers, parents and educational leaders.

2. Social/Relational: students are sharing the same educational environment and contributing to its improvement, students are involved in common activities, relationships at the level of the community are reflected in the way children relate to each other at the school level.

3. Relationships between students and teachers: are better if teachers live in the community since they can share more activities, they know students' families, they spend more time together. This was demonstrated where the presence of Roma teachers was reported to have improved the motivation for education and the emotional support for Roma students.

4. There is a relationship between the unstated attitudes of teachers and their relationship with Roma students. Although teachers themselves may be unaware of their own biases, values, and expectations towards Roma students,

the implicit discourse that occurs because of these sentiments has an effect on the relationships between students and teachers at schools.

Inevitably, the above mentioned patterns result in low Roma participation in higher education. The lack of access to professional degrees closes the social inequality circle, leaving the Roma out of most social, political, and economic decision-making processes.

Education policy initiatives will have only limited success in removing barriers to inclusion if they are not consciously articulated with policies that address wider economic inequalities. Greater attention has to be given to the ways in which inequalities are produced in the complex interactions between the cultural, social and material sites of home, school and policy – to the interlocking of inequalities. Finally, it has to be re-thought the whole policy-making process, as one of the reproached characteristics of the current policies and in general of the educational system in Romania is that it overestimates the power of Law and that over-generalize the implementation of policies. Practically it was put under question the deep-rooted practice of making upper-down strategies and projects, instead of investigating the needs at grass root level.

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