

Educational Measures for the Roma Minority in Romania

The Effectiveness of Integrated and Segregated Education

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Executive Summary

Our *research objectives* were:

- to gain statistical data on the situation of the education of the Roma population (segregated schools, mixed schools, human and material resources);
- to offer a detailed image of segregated and mixed schools using emic and etic approach;
- to offer a detailed image on the accessibility of adequate education for Roma children;
- to determine a synthetic perspective about the Roma education in general;

The proposed *methodology* was a complex one:

- secondary data analysis on quantitative data
- primary and secondary analysis of qualitative data
- observation
- interviews

Stages of the research during 2004/2005

- developing the research questions;
- identifying the possible difficulties and ways of avoiding them;
- identifying the relevant bibliography on the issue of education of minorities, particularly on the education of the Roma in Central-Eastern Europe;
- establishing first contacts with relevant persons, actors in the field of education;
- establishing first contacts with teachers, officials, parents and children on the field;

Educational Measures for the Roma Minority in Romania

- re-formulation of the research problems after the first field visit;
- field work;
- primary analysis of the interviews and research data;
- re-visiting the field, verification of the data;
- final analysis

Difficulties encountered

Our research regarding the analysis of Roma education was hampered mostly by the total lack of quantitative data. We were not able to find any accurate account, neither at the local authority level, nor at the level of Roma organizations reliable data even on the demographic data on the local Roma communities. In some cases, there were limited information about the events and processes that determined settling of the Roma in the locality (see case study of Gheorgheni). This is the reason why in this case the data on the history of the Roma is re-constructed from the collective experiences and collective representations of the local population.

Another factor that questions the reliability of the statistical data regarding the Roma is the “situational identity-defining”. The answer to the question “Who is a Roma?” is often depending on the context and the interaction situation. In everyday life ethnic classification frequently means a social category: whoever is poor and squeezed out to the periphery is considered Roma.¹ Under these circumstances it is questionable if quantitative analysis based on statistical classification and self-definition of Roma could interpret those dimensions of the daily realities which determine the social rules of cohabitation. For example, in Nusfalau there is only one Roma teacher in the secondary school according to interviews taken to Romanian and Hungarian teachers. In fact, that teacher does not identify himself as Roma. He always declares himself as Hungarian.

Based on similar considerations we could not examine the quantitative aspects of Roma education either. During socialism and in early nineties the nationality was not recorded as a separate variable in educational statistics. The only indicator of the ethnic affiliation was the language of teaching, which is absolutely irrelevant for Roma population because the Roma language classes were almost inexistent, as nowadays as well. Nowadays,

¹ At this point we agree with Peter (2004) who argues that in context of reduced circumstances and fight for bounded resources, the ethnicity becomes a social category, the extreme poverty generates ethnicity.

Educational Measures for the Roma Minority in Romania

the variable of nationality is being registered as education data but as we could have seen the inclusion process is highly depending on the social situation of parents, on the ethnic perception of the person who is dealing with the registry and on the level of development of ethnic self-identification of the person. Thus the ethnic inclusion process seems to be multidimensional, beginning with the judgment based on the color of the skin through institutional embeddedness and social integration, to the complex socio-psychological aspects of conformity and labeling. A further analysis concerning the role of the institutional Roma education in determining the patterns of ethnical inclusion would be very interesting.

Due to the quantitative deficiencies mentioned above, our analysis adopted mainly an anthropological approach.

The second major difficulty encountered during fieldwork was caused by the over-mediatization of the Roma communities, particularly those living in Nusfalau and Cluj-Napoca. Over the years, journalists, politicians, social workers and researchers have been constantly present within the communities. In this context the community members have developed techniques meant to help them gain profit from the situation, as a complementary source of income.

Analyzing the situation of the education, we can make the first remark about unsolvable difficulties arising from its being over-regulated and inflexible. For example such is the impossibility of complying with the syllabus because these children have a different socialization background, and in their case for, the development of skills there is need of more attention and oftentimes different approaches and activities. It is more difficult to teach them to be punctual, discipline, and the knowledge demanded by the school system. At the same time, analyzing the different forms of education, we realized that it is difficult to say which approach is better for the effective education of Roma children, which helps their integration without bringing about the destruction of their cultural characteristics (as we mentioned in one of the case studies, the main emphasis should be put on the re-definition of the term “integration”).