

BABES BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES

PH.D. THESIS

ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH
EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRUCTURES FOR
DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Scientific Coordinator

PROFESSOR Miron IONESCU , PhD

PhD candidate,
Markus (Chiş) Olga

CONTENTS OF THESIS

PART I: Theoretical and applied highlights on access to education for disadvantaged groups	Page 11
Chapter I: Pedagogical dimensions of education for disadvantaged groups	11
I.1. From the pedagogy of average student to the pedagogy of diversity	11
I.1.1. Multicultural education	12
I.1.2. Intercultural education	22
I.1.3. Education for diversity	29
I.1.4. Inclusive Education	31
I.2. Emphasis on the contemporary issues in teaching and learning	37
I.3. Pedagogy of Critical Thinking	39
I.4. Forms of education in Roma communities	42
I.5. Education and quality of life	47
I.6. Education and disadvantaged groups	48
I.7. Statistical benchmarks related to population and education for disadvantaged groups	54
Chapter II: Education today. The issue of the access to education	71

II.1. Education today - reconsiderations and redimensioning in the sphere of theory and action	71
II.2. Contemporary educational paradigms	74
II.3. National frameworks and inter-country projects. Pedagogical analysis in terms of access to education	83
II.4. Reform measures to ensure access to education	91
II.5. Curricular changes to optimize access to education	100
II.6. Best practices in ensuring and optimizing access to education	103
PART II: Practical approaches	111
Chapter III: The research framework	111
III.1. Research - action projects for education disadvantaged students focused on Roma	111
III.2 Premises of research	115
III.2.1. The general premise of the research	117
III.2.2. Educational ideal and the adaptation of education to diversity	118
III.2.3 Pedagogical premises	120
III.2.4. Curriculum	123
III.3 Research design	127
III.3.1 Research methods	132
III.3.2 The purpose and objectives of the research	139
III.3.3. Research hypotheses	140
III.4 Description of the subjects and content sample	143

Chapter IV Research - action program to optimize access to education for Roma children	148
IV.1. Study 1: Program for qualification of school mediators. Exploratory phase. Analysis of the training needs	148
IV.1.1 Statistical data regarding the students enrolled in the pilot schools	148
IV.1.2. Opinions of Roma parents about student enrollment	155
IV.1.3.The characteristics of school mediators at the beginning of the qualification program	165
IV.2.Study 1: Qualification program for mediators. Formative stage, pedagogical intervention	170
IV.2.1 Curriculum for qualification of school mediators	171
IV.2.2.Implementation of mediators qualification program	178
IV.2.3. Outcomes of the training program. Monitoring, continuous evaluation and final evaluation	185
IV.2.4. Remote evaluation. Case Studies	203
IV.3.Study 2: Teacher training program for the inclusion of Roma students. Exploratory phase	224
IV.3.1.Characteristics defining the group of teachers	224
IV.3.2 Analysis of the teacher training needs focused on optimizing educational inclusion of Roma pupils	227
IV3.3.Training and teachers - roma parents partnership needs	237
IV.4.Study 2: Teacher training program focused on the improvement of educational inclusion of Roma students. Pedagogical intervention stage	240

IV.4.1. Results of the initial questionnaire	242
IV.4.2. Results of the final questionnaire applied at the end of the course modules / training program	247
IV.4.3 Developed and implemented action plans. Focus group session results	258
IV.5. Study 3: Qualification program of Roma teachers in primary and preschool pedagogy	271
IV.5.1. Description of the study program	272
IV.5.2. Monitoring, optimization, evaluation, results	273
Chapter V. Concluding remarks	283
Bibliography	298
Attachments	320

LIST OF ANNEXES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

KEYWORDS: access to education, disadvantaged groups; pedagogical dimensions; training structures, pedagogy of diversity, multicultural education, education for diversity; inclusive education, critical thinking pedagogy, training needs, models of best practices; intervention programs, school mediators, teaching roma students.

ABSTRACT

This paper, entitled: *Educational and Training Structures for Disadvantaged Groups* addresses a topic that has crystallized at our educational department after year 2000. The theme is part of the conceptualization and applications of educational inclusion, or of the inclusive school, concern undertaken by the Department of Educational Sciences of the Babes Bolyai University since 1997, when the Department has engaged in a large international consortium to organize the first program of master studies in integrated education / inclusive school in Cluj Napoca, Bucharest, Iasi and Timisoara. Then, beginning with year 2000, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport launched a *major project: Access to education for disadvantaged groups* and this initiative also integrated the programs and school inclusion results of previous years.

The data obtained through both field research and practical applications of the conditions and activities offered by the three projects / studies incorporated in the thesis was placed in a theoretical analysis of the educational situation of Roma communities. The analysis is followed by the design and implementation of three specific educational interventions specific training structures, such as those concerning the qualifications of mediators, teacher training for school inclusion of Roma children and Roma teacher qualifications for primary and preschool pedagogy.

Research on access to education for Roma children is reflected by the large number of studies and publications, both abroad and in our country. For example, in the source www.google.com, quantitative data are listed as follows: *Access to education for Roma students*, 6,6300,000 Web citations, *access to education for Roma pupils*,

229,000 web citations, *school inclusion for Roma students*, 5,550,000 Web citations and *school inclusion for Roma pupils*, 387,000 web citations (data identified at 08/21/2012). The magnitude of these citations reflects the topicality and importance of the discussion, a certain awareness of the European Community on Roma issues, including on their education and especially on their education.

The theoretical part of the research allowed us to identify and underline specific concepts and principles focused on the optimization of the access to education of Roma children and on the improvement of their educational inclusion.

Research on contemporary education and inclusive education of disadvantaged Roma students cover a wide range of phenomena, most of them targeting the recovery of educational alternatives and of the good experience in formal and non-formal education

Publications on Roma education indices strongly underline learning difficulties, school dropout, illiteracy etc. All these are, in our opinion, causes and conditions of systematic negative educational statistics about Roma pupils. In the theoretical section of the paper we included only a selection of these statistics, but there are examples of the most revealing ones. The same publications offer correlative analysis regarding the schooling of Roma population and their socio-economic status. Our conclusion is as follows: due to long-term correlations between poverty and poor access to education, a circular causal relationship installed. Poor education of Roma pass on generational chain, and the poverty and deprivation chain transmits generational barriers in access to education. Circular causal relationship has effects both individually and collectively. We provide a concrete example of this circular causal relationship, as one of the mediators noted it in a school referred to in a case analysis.

Tutor: What have you done in order to increase school attendance of Roma pupils?

Mediator: I created a walking wardrobe. Installed in a minibus. I dressed students who had nothing to wear in order to leave the house. In the afternoon I went home and took the walking wardrobe with me. As students attend school every day ...

It is hard to accept a situation as the one described above, but among the main causes of non-participation of Roma students to schooling are considered the poverty and early marriage. Then, of course, there is the issue of the teaching conditions that are not sufficiently adapted for the schooling of Roma children.

A closer look to statistical indicators, as the ones offered by the National Institute of Statistics show that the Roma population in Romania is in an obvious demographic progression in bold contrast with the access to education and schooling rate for this ethnic group. The lowest index of the quality of education at all levels Romanian educational system is registered in the statistics on education and school performance of Roma pupils.

An overall assessment, commonly referred to in the studies on the issue emphasizes: the low quality of education existing in the schools with a high number of Roma students. In relation with the complex cases described in the paper, we could emphasize that: school segregation of Roma is obvious and conditioned by multiple social, ethnic, economic and other segregation factors and relationships. Segregation mechanisms are in many cases subtle, difficult to detect and sanctioned by institutional regulations, such as MECTS Order no. 1540 from the 19th of July 2007 that prohibits school segregation of Roma children and approves the methodology for preventing and eliminating school segregation of Roma children.

We believe that there are direct and indirect ways, ways in view and hidden ways for school segregation process. The segregation continues, despite of the official regulations against them. There are a variety of reasons for segregation process. Schools including Roma children and that lack the necessary resources are easily abandoned by qualified teachers, and even by students with higher socio-cultural

status. There are plenty of examples where school refused enrollment of Roma pupils on the false grounds of insufficient space. Schools and teachers are more open to highly performing students; students with difficulties are often sent to special schools or resource centers for inclusive education. Parents of non-Roma students are often making pressures for not including in the class students under certain standards.

Often, forms of school segregation are interdependent, for example, leaving teachers entails leaving students. Some of the schools with Roma pupils or schools from the outskirts including students from families with low socio-economic status are a result of these phenomena. Migration trends, in both groups, teachers and students, are from less endowed schools and human material to schools with better facilities. In rural and urban settings there is a migration towards the 'center' schools, that are considered as offering higher development opportunities for children and teachers. Isolated schools, "the periphery" are, in these circumstances, schools deprived of human and material resources. Not only Roma pupils and teachers are subject to these migration flows, but also some Roma students coming from wealthier families. Migration of school teachers and students within the system are determined by the level of trust invested in school.

We offer in this context an institutional example. It regards a school that has received considerable financial resources to promote the inclusion of Roma students. A school of over 500 students, of which over 50% are Roma.

At the completion of the investment, representatives of the Council of Europe attended the official opening ceremony. Everything was appreciated at its best. An impressive number of Roma pupils were integrated into modern classrooms with other students, in a newly built building. After a few weeks from the opening event, some Roma children were resettled in the old building of the school in segregated classes where free resources obtained by Phare programme were available. Over the next 2 to 3 years, almost all non-Roma pupils were

withdrawn from the school. This fact shows that inclusive practices in school depends to what extent non-Roma and Roma families are convergent with the theory and practice of inclusive education. We consider that the theoretical analyses of the thesis led to the identification of landmarks or anchors for exploratory studies, focused on identifying the intervention needs in order to optimize the school inclusion of Roma students. These needs defined later the pedagogical intervention in the second part of the work associated with empirical data collected from groups of participants in research. A condensed list of these benchmarks for exploratory studies and pedagogical intervention include: concepts valuing diversity, intercultural and multicultural education; contexts and specific conditions of Roma children education, legal system on access to education, learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral difficulties, economic difficulties etc., and the circular causal relationships between them. Research on training structures for education of disadvantaged groups is part of the methodological approach provided by the multinational project Decade of Roma Inclusion, the National Project Access to education for disadvantaged groups, and local and regional programs of the school inspectorates of Mures and Cluj County and of Babes-Bolyai University, Department of Educational Sciences.

Part II of this paper includes three studies, having complementary components: school mediators qualification, training of teachers who teach in classes with Roma students and Roma teachers qualification in primary and pre-school pedagogy.

Two broad groups of data were obtained, data that ascertain the necessity of the role of school mediator and the training needs of teachers who teach in classes with Roma pupils. Data collected are rich and diverse.

Exploratory research data led to the definition of the characteristics of schools that have a significant number of Roma students, among which:

The school population is ethnically diverse, the percentage of Roma

students from the total number of students is systematically close to 50% and even more than 50% in some schools.

- Difficulties in school associated with emotional, behavioral troubles affect school attendance and performance.
- Non-participation and drop out rate is high since kindergarten or primary school. Then, at the end of secondary school there are very few Roma with an option to continue their studies in high school.
- Teachers are characterized by a high index of mobility. The stability in the same school and department is affected by the large number of non-qualified teachers employed in schools experiencing difficulties in insuring the access to education. It is clear that to a large extent these schools are not attractive to teachers who want performance and didactic devotion.
- Schools and classes with Roma children often are poorly equipped and lack of pedagogical resources. These schools and classes are neither attractive for Roma pupils and parents.
- The school that needs to optimize the access to education for disadvantaged groups is itself socially and economically disadvantaged. Thus, there is a negative inter-conditionality relationship between educational needs and socio-economic needs of the community.

In the three case studies becomes obvious that mediators assume roles and responsibilities and take multiple and composite actions, often very individualized. From simple tasks at first glance, as morning visits to the homes of Roma children for bringing them to school, to complicated maze of bureaucracy involved in accessing the legal rights, school mediator always try the impossible. They are sometimes successful often beyond barriers. Sometimes they need to leave or approach things differently.

It is an obvious fact. The statistical results of the mediator's impact are important, as they say, sometimes officially, that mediators may have contributed to the reduction of Roma students drop out by 50%. The contribution is a contribution in pedagogical and human resources above all. The school mediators send direct messages to Roma children. Mediators give to students a day by day-oriented education, offering them a choice school, instead of street or lack of choice.

Mediators systematically send messages to Roma families and support them to assume the role of responsible parents. Messages are sent so frequently that sometimes Roma communities rejected the mediators from the community. These are messages discreetly incorporated into direct and honest self-assessment exercise of mediators.

Data analysis regarding the training program and contingency plans used by teachers in classes with Roma pupils show a complete repertoire of educational restructuring, diversification and adaptation of curriculum content decisions and actions, associated mainly with the use of active and interactive strategies. By this, we consider that the training program has achieved its goal, which is to develop flexible and structured approach to teaching in order to improve the indicators of school inclusion and participation of students and parents in the school. More results in this respect were identified by analyzing data from the focus group session conducted at the end of the program and teacher certification.

Analysis, decanting and grouping the main reflections provided by teachers on educational intervention program, classroom and school, reveals a set of considerations useful for optimizing educational inclusion of Roma students.

Teachers have taken positive attitude, initiative and involvement in the training program and intervention in the classroom. Their expectations on changes in educational status of Roma students are optimistic.

Teachers who are afraid that they will continue to face difficulties in classes with Roma pupils do their best but they think they will ultimately fail to improve their educational situation. In particular, a single teachers has kept opinions that may be deeply rooted in prejudices about Roma children, options according to which students are destined to have difficulties: students do not attend school, students will gain learning and behavioral difficulties, students will abandon school early. The general opinion, shared by teachers is that schools are not prepared for new approaches to the school inclusion and therefore hesitation and lack of convergence in implementing inclusive measures, such as those promoted by the project Insetrom appeared.

We note the responsiveness, willingness to learn and disposition of

teachers to focus on modern pedagogy applications, such as school integrated activities, interactive activities, adaptation and diversification of curricula, etc., without which inclusive education news can not be achieved. For example, the content of intervention plans developed and implemented in the classroom shows with regard to the proposed strategies that from 39 teachers, 21 are focused on working in school - family partnership and most of them organize extracurricular activities, integrated, interactive activities.

Based on qualitative analysis of the components of the training program for teachers who teach classes with Roma pupils, we believe that the major objectives of our action research project were achieved, among which we mention the following:

Increasing the teachers awareness of the role of families and of a close cognitive awareness of teachers on the realities of Roma communities for the school attendance of Roma pupils

Development, on this grounds, of the communication availability of the teacher with Roma parents.

Training of teachers in the use of alternative pedagogies for education of Roma children in the context of school inclusion.

Raising teachers' experiences and reflections on Roma communities socio-economic, cultural and educational specific

Interrupting, at least for a short term teaching routines daily and involving teachers in exercising the flexible didactic response to the diversified educational context.