

Education of children: access to services, factors and conditions of exclusion

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Abstract

All children have the right to be helped to develop normally, to reach their maximum potential intellectually, but not all benefit from an optimal model of education that meets their individual needs and achieves balance between these and society. There are some issues to be tackled which require reflection: difficult communication/cooperation between institutions or between various specialists, stereotypes and old mentalities, discrimination, rigidity and complexity of Romanian bureaucracy, differences between educational institutions in urban and rural areas, training in professions which are not required on the labour market etc. Risk factors that lead to absenteeism and school dropout can be grouped by a number of variables: a. geographical area, community living and the dropout rate in the area: the level of development, infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, residence, ethnicity etc; b. family: socio-demographic structure, economic and social situation, education level of parents; c. relationships and psychosocial climate in family and community; d. the student performance and school results; e. various situations in which each student can learn. Qualitative research through secondary data analysis performed in this work highlights the problems facing children in Romania, poor development and operation of Social Services support from the disadvantaged communities, lack of specialists on the issue of child involved in preventing marginalization and social exclusion of education. Family, community involvement in the activities of educational institutions and social assistance, teamwork of professionals (teachers, psychologists, social workers, doctors etc.) is a required interdisciplinary approach to the problems of children.

***Keywords:** child education; child social services; school dropout prevention; social policies*

1. About children education in Romania

All children have the right to be helped to develop normally, to reach their maximum potential intellectually, but not all benefit from an optimal model of education that meet their individual needs and achieve balance between these and society.

Education is a key factor in the development of human society and is an area where we must invest continuously, as it is a strong instrument we have to shape the future.

Not infrequently, solving the serious problems the Romanian society is facing we resort to education, the formation of personality or character modelling. Education is an ongoing process in a continuous way with distinct features according to age, socio-

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economic, historical moment or stage of scientific knowledge, as the existence of socio-human as a whole is continuously making.

Education is not a simple extension or continuation of the social system – it is a component of this system that differs qualitatively from other social phenomena through the structure, content, internal logic, and actors. In a socio-political context in continuous motion and change, more frequently solutions for the educational issues and especially the quality of educational services are being required.

With a new legislative framework governing educational activity, the concept of educational management and quality management in education is increasingly being invoked. Through education there are promoted universal values but also those related to our national specificities: the right to education, respect for tradition and national identity, dignity, democracy, equality, patriotism, educational pluralism, tolerance, freedom of opinion etc.

There are some issues to be tackled that require reflection: difficult communication/cooperation between institutions or between various specialists, stereotypes and old mentalities, discrimination, rigidity and complexity of Romanian bureaucracy, differences between educational institutions in urban and rural areas, training in professions which are not required on the labour market etc. “The essential social actions manifestation is communication. Communication is the basis of human understanding and it can facilitate or not the fulfilment of projects that support communication” (Anghel 2012: p. 128)

These problems must be solved by using technocrats, by political will and social policies, by a consistent educational strategy (Nistor 2012: p. 243). All children have the right to be helped to develop normally, to achieve their maximum potential intellectually, but not all benefit from an optimal model of education that meet their individual needs and achieve balance between them and society.

School dropout is found in all education systems, even in countries with well-defined educational systems is not a new social phenomenon, it exists and we are facing it more often. But we made a statement, the causes which generate the phenomenon are many and numerous factors specific to our society are responsible for it. Compared with the EU countries, expenditure on the education system in Romania are undersized, approximately 60% of spending to the levels recorded in other European countries in 2011. In 2010 accounted for 3.53 of GDP, falling to 3.05 in 2011, compared with the European average (EU 27) which they were 5.41-5.25 respectively, of GDP (Eurostat 2012).

Risk factors that lead to absenteeism and school dropout can be grouped by a number of variables:

- a. geographical area, community living and the dropout rate in the area: the level of development, infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, residence, ethnicity etc.;
- b. family: socio-demographic structure, economic and social situation, education level of parents;
- c. relationships and psychosocial climate in family and community;
- d. the student performance and school results;
- e. various situations in which each student can learn.

In recent years, according to data from the National Statistics Institute, the dropout rate in secondary education has increased. Analysing this data can be seen an upward

trend in recent years and in some areas approx. maintaining the same values for the 2011-2012 school year, as can be seen from Table no. 1.

Table no.1: The dropout rate in secondary education 1999-2012 (%)

Form of education	1999 - 2000	2000 - 2001	2001 - 2002	2002 - 2003	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012
Primary and secondary education	0.9	0.6	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.8
Primary education	0.8	0.6	1	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.6
Secondary education	0.9	0.6	1.4	1.5	1.7	2	2.1	2.2	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.9
High school education	3.8	3.5	3.3	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.9	4.2	4.2
Post-secondary education and foremen (instructors)	8.5	7.6	9.5	8.1	7.7	9.2	8.6	4.8	5.9	5.5	6.3	6.1

Source: National Institute of Statistics 2015.

Compared to the levels of education, we can see that abandonment at primary and secondary education level increased continuously until the 2007-2008 school year, and then there was a slight decrease until 2011-2012, where comfort rate remains at 1.8%. At secondary school, between 2009 and 2012, the dropout rate has doubled, from 2.4 to 4.2%, a worrying fact for the authorities that requires action at educational social policies. By age groups and educational levels, dropout rates show (see NIS statistics) that for 2010 and 2012, rate at secondary level (age group 14-18) rose almost 50%, from 2.9% to 4.2% and for secondary schools remains high, by 2% and 1.9% for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. All these phenomena happen due to the decrease of the school population from year to year as fewer children and birth rates amid increasingly lower after the Revolution of '89.

2. Dropout rate in education for Roma children

Dropout rate of enrolment in education of Roma (gipsy) children still remains at significantly higher values than the majority of the population: 78% of Roma children ranging from 7-15 years are enrolled in school compared with 98% enrolment of non-Roma children, emphasizing the high school percentage at school (four times smaller in adolescents compared to the majority population Roma) (UNDP / WB / EC 2011; World Bank 2014: p. 34). Romania has one of the lowest rates of compulsory secondary education for Roma children compared to countries in the same area: 12%

for boys and 6% for girls (World Bank 2014: p. 37). The gap is accentuated, further increasing all efforts in higher education of the Ministry of Education for providing special places for Roma students. Even if the increased number of Roma women who have completed higher education from 0.7% in 1998 to 1.6% in 2012 and the rate of men remained constant (1%) (World Bank 2014: p. 38), the number of those who complete studies remains very low compared with non-Roma population.

Micro data analysis (Varly *et al.* 2014: p.45) showed that “sex, rural income and number of people in the household are factors in early school leaving Roma ... variable is significant even when poverty is taken into account”.

Another study (World Bank 2014: p.56) recommends investing in human capital among Roma women as a vector of change for future generations by increasing opportunities of integration into the labour market, leading to increased incomes and living standards, offering educational models both for girls and boys. Through access to education even early marriage is delayed, improving the health of mothers and children, reducing the number of children, and orienting the family budget towards education.

The low level of development of the community where the family lives, rural, isolated areas or shantytowns, poor supplies of home utilities, access roads and poor infrastructure area, major telecommunications etc. may be other risk factors in access to education, favouring dropout or early school leaving phenomenon. In this sense, the data in the table below are inconclusive:

Table no. 2: Gross enrolment in primary and secondary education (%)

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Total	98.3	97.5	94.2	90.6	90.7
Urban	106.4	105.8	102.8	97,0	97.4
Rural	91.2	90.3	86.6	84.6	84.2
Female	97.5	96.7	93.1	89.3	89.9
Male	99.0	98.3	95.2	91.9	91.4

Source: Analysis of pre-university educational system in Romania from the perspective of statistical indicators. Educational policies based on data (Apostu *et al.*, 2015: p. 25).

Studies revolving around the concepts of success and failure in school also regard the access to education. There is a difference between students from different socio-familial elite and students belonging to disadvantaged social and family environments that do not have access to basic socio-cultural and economic resources to facilitate their academic success. This is the reason why the disadvantaged are often in the situation of school failure, absenteeism, poor school performance, early school leaving or dropout.

The second report of the UNICEF project “Supporting invisible children” (2014) which included the analysis of children in the six counties from North-East (Bacău, Botoşani, Iaşi, Neamţ, Suceava and Vaslui) and two counties from the Southeast region (Buzău and Vrancea) shows a significant representation of Roma (gipsy) children (51%

versus 42% of Romanian children) belonging to numerous poor families and precarious housing.

Distribution of social opportunities is related to school. Differences in social statuses consist of lifestyle, life chances, developed behaviours of subjects etc. (see Table no.3).

Table no. 3: Romanian educational system - place of social reproduction

The level of education of the most educated parent	Total population students
Without school	0.1%
Finished primary school	0,4%
Incomplete secondary school	0.2%
Full gymnasium	0.7%
Apprenticeship school (complementary)	0.5%
Vocational school	6.1%
Unfinished high school	2.3%
Finished high school	35.2%
Post secondary (high) school	10.2%
Unfinished faculty	1.8%
Faculty overseers or college	5.0%
Complete faculty	27.3%
Degree	8.0%
Doctorate	2.3%

Source: The quality of higher education in Romania: an institutional analysis of current trends (Păunescu, Vlăsceanu and Miroiu 2011: p. 22).

Conducted studies lead us to the idea that we have developed various programs such as Second Chance educational model, which enables those who have dropped out of school to resume training even if they are over chronological age for enrolment in that class (Minister of Education Order no. 5735 on 2005).

According to Oreopoulos (2006), “in Canada and the US, an extra year of school has a significant effect on reducing benefit dependency” (Varly *et al.* 2014: p. 64). The same study showed for 2012 (after different methods of analysis: a) family budgets and b) the EU survey on income and living conditions) that “a person with higher education can expect to earn 1.36 times more than a person with secondary education, which in turn can earn 1.17 times more than a person without secondary education” (Varly *et al.*

2014: p.56), and there are differences in lifespan, those with higher education increase with the time, while those with secondary education no longer grow.

A survey conducted in 2014 (Save the Children 2014) on a sample of 100 schools of 250 that implemented the program "Second Chance" revealed that there are few schools that have implemented this program compared with the large number of children who dropout, only 29% of students being involved. According to this report, there were out of the approximately 222.000 children aged between 10 and 17 years who were not attending school, were enrolled in this program in the school year 2012/2013 a total of 2.384 children (in total 10.166 persons). According to the legislation, a school can develop programs for both primary and secondary schools but not all can develop a program except only those accredited. Thus, for the school year 2012/2013, courses were accredited and conducted in a number of 254 schools, including 168 schools held classes for 176 primaries and lower secondary education. Referring to these positive aspects of the program, most of the respondents mention aspects connected to graduating the compulsory education and certain connected aspects that would offer no other possibility of social integration. The general appreciations towards the program highlight its utility for the targeted group. The difficulty that was mainly identified by most of the respondents refers to the school abandonment and class missing. The necessity of partnerships with social protection institutions is highlighted, and that would lead to support in monitoring children and offer social services that would contribute to keeping children in schools (Save the Children 2014: pp. 2-6).

Access to this program was done by promoting the school mediators in the community. Teachers' opinion for attending these courses refers to the awarding of material and social support for these children and young people, including social scholarships, school supplies, transportation etc. Over 85% of the teachers highlighted this need, which shows poor social and economic condition of the family and community that organizes courses.

Labour migration generates socio-economic and cultural changes, often causing significant changes in the adult personality, the way of life of the project life and relationship of those who leave, but also of those who stayed home. Migration affects the family, and primarily children, changing not only the structure but also some of its great features: lifestyle quality, emotional security and protection, logic of spatial, temporal attachment. Children left "home alone", whose parents left to work abroad, develop a series of social, behavioural or psychological problems, which in time can become chronic and/or lead to early school leaving and dropout, in psychiatric pathologies, sometimes extending to suicidal behaviours. Existing statistics show that the phenomenon of temporary labour migration, "euro-commuting" and one of its consequences, temporary separation, in the best case, of children and parents, is real and growing, requiring the adoption of social and educational emergency measures in order to reduce the effects of the system, as well as the individual or group.

Table no. 4: Children with parents working abroad on 31.12.2014 at: (a) national level and (b) Bucharest and North-East**a. National level**

The total number of families working abroad	62057
The total number of children whose parents are working abroad	82339
Families with both parents working abroad	15956
The total number of children left at home with both parents working abroad	22050
Families with one parent working abroad	37733
The total number of children left at home with one parent working abroad	49855
A single parent family, working abroad, who supports the family	8368
The total number of children left at home with a single parent family, working abroad	10434

b. Bucharest and North- East

Region/County	The total number of children whose parents are working abroad, of which:			
	with both parents working abroad	with one parent working abroad	With a single parent family, working abroad	Total
Total (national)	22050	49855	10434	82339
North-East	8606	17975	3227	29 808
Bacău	2224	3602	892	6718
Botoşani	382	928	129	1439
Iaşi	940	2298	442	3680
Neamţ	1418	3328	617	5363
Suceava	2682	5704	826	9212
Vaslui	960	2115	321	3396
South-Muntenia	2349	4701	1372	8422
Argeş	390	1016	335	1741
Călăraşi	45	70	34	149
Dâmboviţa	1204	1624	510	3338
Giurgiu	48	136	30	214
Iaomiţa	139	445	136	720
Prahova	321	1214	264	1799

Teleorman	202	196	63	461
Bucharest-Ilfov	67	222	127	416

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection for the Elderly-ANPDCA with data from General Department of Social Work and Child Protection.

Based on regions, we notice significant differences: for example in the North East there are registered 29 808 children compared to, 8422 in South Muntenia, and we must not forget that these figures represent the number of children known by the Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection of Bucharest.

Measures required primarily for these children are based on a clear concern in the number of children who should be at school offered by the Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection at county level. Also other measures include closer supervision from the school by teachers, head teachers of classes, the school performances, and behavioural changes. Any change in schools, behavioural, social plan of the child must be known to the school counsellor or by other specialists and counselling programs to be initiated, and/or therapy, where appropriate.

Even if progress has been made in the development of preventive social services at community level, lack of resources or specialists hamper their operation (Pop and Stanculescu 2013: p. 16). Thus, in the Public Social Services (PSSAs) there is one social worker to 4,300 inhabitants, compared to Sweden where the ratio is 1 /300 or Italy, 1/1600 (Preda 2011 in Pop and Stanculescu 2013: p. 16) and the activity is based more on offering service benefits, only 24% of children receiving services, the rest receiving benefits, which can lead to a dependence on financial resources, or only partial resolution of psycho-social problems. The development of community social services is required, and we remember here the pilot project supporting children "invisible" funded by UNICEF in the poorest areas of the country (Bacau, Moldova region), which will provide a model for operating social services offered to families with children in need and activating communities in finding solutions, knowing that beneficial development of child in family is more beneficial and less expensive than in the social protection system, and consistent with children's rights.

Continuation and expansion of pilot programs that have had good results can lead to significant improvement of social conditions and occupational Roma (gipsy) children, the adult of tomorrow. We highlight here some of the studies and impact assessments of projects developed that should be continued and receive further support:

- Training school mediators, Ministry of Education, Phare Program 2002-2006;
- Program Monitoring to prevention and health status of Roma children, training of community health workers, health mediators Roma (gipsy) (Ministry of Health 2002; 2006; 2008);
- Inclusive education programs for preschool children: Ministry of Education, OvidiuRo organization, which included the 12 counties of the project 83% of the preschool population age; Ministry of Education, European Social Fund, "All in grander everyone in class" summer garden"school parents"; Ministry of Education, the World Bank, developing educational documents on social policies, good practice guides, guides methodological quality standards in inclusive preschool education child 1-3 years and 3-6/7 years (ECP pre-school);

- Educational programs “second chance”, school dropout prevention and early school leaving, which enables those who have dropped out of school to resume training even if they are over chronological age for enrolment in that class (Minister of Education Order no. 5735/2005); Statistics show growth of approx. 3 times in the number of those enrolled in these programs (more in the secondary than primary, source The World Bank 2014) and their further development;
- Programs to increase/stimulate employment nationally and internationally through various institutions, the National Agency for Roma etc.;
- Programs for the development of public policies on social inclusion: develop community services for social assistance programs for experts in social work which are aimed at Roma and in particular Roma children; incentive programs for social inclusion of those who have been deprived of their liberty; restorative justice programs;
- Supporting partnerships with civil society or conducted by civil society in various projects to prevent school dropout, gender discrimination, ethnicity, training professionals who may be involved in these activities on the long term: UNICEF, ESF, World Bank, World Vision, Save the Children saddle.

The school must provide a favourable environment for learning activity and development of children and adolescents, where young people are prepared for social life, to understand the world they live in, to acquire a system of desirable moral values, capacity to adapt to change, skills and problem-solving skills, all of which will contribute to reducing social balance and social dysfunctions.

The development of every society lies in the fact that we are constantly dealing with observation and it becomes imperiously necessary to wonder why a society developed in a certain way and why others shifted directions in their strive to deal with social issues. The human behaviour and individual emotions, basically all human manifestations, were transformed and conducted in a certain pathway due to self or extrinsic constrain (Anghel 2015: p. 105).

Family and community involvement in the activities of educational institutions and social assistance, teamwork of professionals (teachers, psychologists, social workers, doctors etc.) is a required interdisciplinary approach to the problems of children, based on mutual acceptance, communication, cooperation, for developing intervention strategies in child policies.

3. Conclusions

In Romania, there are important differences between the developing regions, among the counties of these regions and among localities of these counties. An important differentiation criterion from the development point of view is the residential area. There are certain specific characteristics that, in Romania's case, emphasize the importance of such differentiation. This is targeting multiple aspects such as employment, education, and access to health services and the health and standard of living.

Overarching principles of non-discrimination, survival and development, protection and participation, have to be considered as a matter of priority. Vulnerable categories of children – children deprived from parental care, children that abandoned school, Roma children, children from poor families, children with disabilities, rural children – are particularly vulnerable and their situation requires examination and analysis. Finally, policy formulation and decision making processes in the areas of child

and family interest should be addressed. In that sense, the study is aimed to provide comprehensive analysis and evidence-relating respect of children's rights with particular emphasis on marginalized and socially excluded children and their participation in society.

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