

THE EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN ROMANIA – THE CASE OF ROMA WOMEN

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Abstract: *The Roma ethnicity is consistently recognized as the poorest and most vulnerable from Romania. The main problems faced by the Roma ethnic people are insufficient incomes, the lack of vocational training, a low level of formal education, unemployment and limited access to public services. The most vulnerable group from this ethnicity is represented by women. The discrimination to which the roma women were subjected, from an historical point of view, within the family (low access to education and employment) has been extended in the society, in interaction with public institutions, with employers - partly due to poor vocational training or lack thereof. Access to formal qualification is subject to completion of compulsory education level (10 classes), and among women's rights, statistics show that school dropouts is very often in the early years of school. The present work contains an analysis of the existing potential of Roma women in Romania, as well as a series of actions and solutions of socio-educational inclusion transferable at European level. The investigation carried out at the registration of the following characteristics of the investigated group: demographic characteristics, environmental characteristics, knowledge concerning the training/education, opportunities for further development of education and vocational training. These data will be included in solutions designed to ensure equal access to education for roma women, integration in an active life and in the society and the best possible use of their potential, essential for a sustainable development in Europe.*

Keywords: *Roma ethnic people, education, socio-educational inclusion*

1. Paper Rationale

The education of ethnic minorities in Romania is defined in two general frameworks: policies for minorities and policies regarding access to education for disadvantaged groups.

The main emphases of educational policies for Roma minority have resulted since 1990. The emphasis has shifted from Roma school mediators, Roma school inspectors, through "positive discrimination measures" aimed at ensuring special places for Roma students in the education system, or through the "Second chance" Program, to emphasize the importance of access to pre-school education. During the process of accession of Romania to the European Union, various European and international institutions have played a major role in defining the policies for Roma people. Multiannual Phare Programs had a special impact, mainly through the allocation of financial resources by the European Commission for social inclusion. Strictly monitored during the accession process, the Romanian Government has worked out a number of general policies for Roma people, which had important reference on education (Ligeois, 2008). The current Education Law, the No. 1 of 2011 includes and promotes education for persons belonging to national minorities. Among the principles set out in the law, it notices: principle of equity — in which access to learning is accomplished without discrimination; principle of recognition of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, the right to preservation, development and expression of their ethnic cultural, linguistic and religious identity; principle of ensuring equal opportunities and principle of social inclusion.

Disadvantaged group approach is a later development in the Romanian educational policy. From 2008, it continues the programs that promote real access to education for vulnerable groups (persons who are experiencing a high rate of poverty, persons subjected to discrimination, etc.), by registering in the educational system of Roma and non-Roma preschool and school children who do not attend, or never attended school and young people and adults from disadvantaged communities for the purpose of acquiring basic school skills and/or acquiring a crafts for the labor market. It has been allocated considerable financial resources for the development of human capital through education and training, mainly through The Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development. One of the specific objectives of the program is to facilitate the access of vulnerable groups to education and the labor market, which in the period 2008-2014 developed a variety of projects for the Roma ethnicity (www.fseromania.ro).

2. The problem investigated and research methodology

The present research was carried out under the auspices of the project Barrabarripen-an interregional model for the inclusion of Roma women, project financed by the The Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development. The general objective of the project was to promote an inclusive society that facilitate access to and integration in the labor market of Roma women. The project aims to contribute to achieving the European Union's objective of increasing the employment rate among women and the general objective POS DRU by facilitating the access of professionally inactive Roma women to education and employment. Through its activities the project has promoted an inclusive model of social inclusion for Roma women professionally inactive provided from three regions of the country through supporting institutions, qualifying programs, support and monitoring, awareness and information campaigns to labor market institutions, and indirectly to the Roma communities and of the whole society, all grounded in scientific studies and research at local, regional, and interregional area. These efforts were supported by a solid partnership between local authorities, research centers, employment institutions and non-governmental organizations specializing in the Roma issue.

The specific objective of the project - development and implementation of an interregional model including qualification, employment and social support for professionally inactive Roma women - was conducted to a series of researches:

- the information on Roma women's social group, inactive in the labor market: opinions, attitudes, behaviors, aspirations, motivations, knowledge, demographic characteristics, and characteristics of the social environment.
- the qualitative study of official documents and statistics to highlight economic and social situation of Roma women: Roma community history, the distribution of Roma communities in the city: areas and neighborhoods; the demographic structure of the population of Roma in the city, statistics relating to the degree of training, qualification of Roma women in the city, possibilities, opportunities for further development of education and vocational training of the Roma population- measures, local projects etc.
- analysis of the economic environment and the level of employment of the Roma population: analysis of the main economic indicators, jobs with high demand on the labor market in the city; statistics on the level of employment of the Roma people according to gender, age, potential income-generating activities and small business for families and communities of Roma, etc.

The research sample is made up on 860 inactive professional Roma women who do not have a qualification or hold a qualification, had not applied for the job market, it has the following characteristics:

- 51, 3 % women from urban areas and 47, 7 % women from rural areas,
- 30, 5 % unmarried women and 49, 9 % married women. It can be said that 63, 8% of the women have a stable relationship.

- 42, 9% women in the age category I: 16 – 25 years; 29, 4% women in the age category II: 26 – 35 years and 27, 7% women in the age category III: 36 – 46 years.

From the complexity of the data obtained, this paper examines the level of formal education of Roma women, in correlation with the relevant issues of the social inclusion process. In this case, it was examined:

- a. representativeness of our sample with reference to the national level of education,
- b. level of education correlated with the age of Roma women,
- c. level of education correlated with the training field of Roma women,
- d. level of education correlated with the level of knowledge of the Romanian language, foreign languages, Romani language and computer usage skills,
- e. level of education correlated with family income,
- f. level of education correlated with the size of the Roma family, including the number of children.

3. Results of the research

A first finding is supposed to be that the level of education of our sample is consistent with the level of education of Roma population nationwide, finding that it has been confirmed.

National statistics shows that 91360 over 6 years followed an educational level, 42148 (46,1%) were in the primary level, 43346 (46,1%) were in a secondary level, 2552 (2,8%) were in a vocational school and 2747 (3%) were in a high school. 0,6% are found in the higher education institutions of short or long duration. (Population of 6 years and over which are registered in an educational institution, statistical data available on the website of the National Agency for Roma - <http://www.anr.gov.ro/html/Statistici.html>).

According to studies published recently (November 2011) on the Association of Roma women in Romania website, most Roma women have primary education, complete or incomplete, or any kind of studies. (http://www.incluziuneafemeilorrome.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Raport_afrr_final_cccdc1.pdf). This situation is found also in our sample in terms of the level of education:

Table no. 1: Level of education

Level of education	Primary school	Secondary school	Compulsory education (10 classes)	High school (12 clase)	Vocational school	Higher education
Procent	50,9%	36,1%	9,6%	2,1%	0,7%	0,4%

Among the main reasons that led to the abandonment of education, we find: poor financial situation; the lack of interest in school; the marriage. The situation of Roma women is dramatic because 35 % of the married women began their life in the couple less than 16 years and 31 % at 17-18 years. Therefore, approximately 66 % of Roma women, through marriage, lost the opportunity to complete his studies and, further, the chance of obtaining a job. (Duminičă, Preda, 2003, 25). There are cases of women who continued their studies at the age of 30-35 years through the "Second chance" Program. Although the percentages don't differ significantly on the residence environment, it can be observed a tendency of Roma women in the urban area to have high school level studies.

It was also desirable to identify whether there is any significant difference between Roma women of different ages (age category considered were: 16-25 years 26-35 years 36-46 years) and the level of education.

It went on the premise that older women (36-46 years) who had school age in the period of the communist regime could have a larger number of classes, that is, a higher level of education. This suggestion is based on the constant concern that the Communist regime had in terms of education in general, Roma people in particular. Using the χ^2 test, it was observed that there are no significant differences between the level of education and the age category that fits what people responded to the questionnaire ($\chi^2=5,862$, $df=6$, $p=0,439$). In other words, it cannot be said that older women have a higher level of education. Initial assumption proved false. Regardless of age, at least at our sample, the Roma women have a relatively similar education level.

Most of the women in our sample have not any qualification since they don't have completed compulsory education. Among the majors, it can be mention the worker in an industrial-agricultural trade, textile-nonwovens or painter, technician in the food industry, the mechanical maintenance technician, technician in textile industry, tourism. Among the majors, with a certified degree it can be mention: law, accounting, public administration, philology or natural sciences.

It also examined the relationship between the level of knowledge of the Romani language, foreign language and the Romanian language and level of

education. It was expected that women with more education to speak foreign languages well, but we were surprised that these women talk worse Romanian language (significant correlation-0,118) and foreign languages (significant correlation of 0,279). Even more surprising is the fact that women with a higher level of education have lower skills of operating computer (significant correlation-0,354). Roma women in the sample, who have less education, know better the Romanian language and foreign languages and have better operating skills of the computer. A possible explanation may be the following: women with less education have developed a range of functional competencies in informal contexts, such as work abroad, social environment, etc.

Table no. 2 Level of schooling correlated with the level of knowledge of the Romanian language, foreign languages, and Romani language and computer usage skills

		Romani language	Romanian language	Foreign languages	Computer operating	Level of education
Romani language	Pearson Correlation	1	,061	-.124*	-.239**	.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,264	,025	,000	,000
	N	338	337	327	327	338
Rumanian language	Pearson Correlation	,061	1	,035	,106	-.118*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,264		,532	,056	,024
	N	337	364	328	326	364
Foreign languages	Pearson Correlation	-.124*	,035	1	.514**	-.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,025	,532		,000	,000
	N	327	328	329	326	329
Computer operating	Pearson Correlation	-.239**	,106	.514**	1	-.354**

g	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,056	,000		,000
	N	327	326	326	327	327
Level of education	Pearson Correlation	.236**	-.118*	-.279**	-.354**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,024	,000	,000	
	N	338	364	329	327	368

*. Significant correlation at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As expected there is a significant correlation (0,230) between the level of education and the level of family income. The women with higher levels of education have a higher level of income into the family.

Table no. 3 - Level of education correlated with family income

		The level of education	The level of family income
The level of education	Pearson Correlation	1	.230**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	368	361
The level of family income	Pearson Correlation	.230**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	361	375

** . Significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The level of Roma women education is inversely correlated with the number of children in the family (significant negative correlation 0,253). As was expected the level of Roma women education has been inversely correlated with the number of family members (significant negative correlation 0,111).

Table no. 4 The level of schooling correlated with the size of the Roma family, including the number of children.

		The level of education	The number of children in the family
The level of education	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 368	-.253** ,000 361
The number of children in the family	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.253** ,000 361	1 361

** . Significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

		The level of education	The number of family members
The level of education	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 368	-.111* ,034 363
The number of family members	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.111* ,034 363	1 363

* . Significant correlation at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Conclusions

As we expected, the Roma woman surprises us. Correlation analysis of quantitative data is showing us that there are links out there where we would have expected less, and where it was assumed a correlation it does not exist. However, we map out important recommendations for the social inclusion of Roma women:

- The establishment of social centers must be a priority of the local social policy. Intervention of social mediators for roma people and experts from Centers will provide support and will also determine disadvantaged people to participate in the programs of social inclusion.

- The programs for social inclusion of Roma people should include in particular qualifying programs. Because of the low level of education, the majority of Roma people do not have a qualification.

- Qualification programs must address all categories of age. It was observed that the level of education is not correlated with the age of Roma women. Areas of qualifications must be different, in line with the demands of the labor market and skills of Roma women. There is not a single domain or area in which Roma women should have inclinations, as was charged by traditional trades.

- It is recommended that qualification trainings of Roma women to be in flexible way, with concrete type activities, learning by doing and experiential learning opportunities, non-formal and informal. It should no longer surprise us, that in the case of Roma women who come from a different culture, the formal education system does not give the expected results

- In any women's family the concern over the problems related to the increase of children conduct to a lower interest and time available for study. The women of Roma community do not make exception. Qualifying programs will have to be designed in such a way that Roma women should be able to allocate enough time for children and family

- Roma Women from better-off families will receive more support for attending classes for professional qualification. The problem that can occur is referring to women with a modest financial statement. These women will receive a lower family support in attending qualification courses and consequently must identify ways of support through Social Inclusion Centres. We recommend supporting the participation of Roma women at qualifying courses by providing scholarships. We can hope that in the future the extrinsic motivations would be converted to intrinsic motivations

We conclude with the observation that, although the majority of Roma women in our sample stated that they felt discriminated at least once (by hospital\medical office, the Town Hall and at school), the fact of being of Roma origin does not affect negatively the access to education. We cannot hide lack of education under the umbrella of tradition and manners.

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