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Training and education of Romani children in Slovakia

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dzinie. Patriotyzm łączy się z ludźmi oraz miejscami, które człowiek lubi, z poczuciem bezpieczeństwa oraz pewności, z szacunkiem, wolnością, poszanowaniem praw swoich oraz innych. W artykule omówiono wyzwania oraz możliwości wychowania patriotycznego oraz relacji wobec regionu w kontekście społeczeństwa wielokulturowego.

Słowa kluczowe: relacje międzyludzkie, wzory do naśladowania, miłość, poszanowanie praw, zachowanie prosojalne, działalność w środowisku szkoły.



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TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN SLOVAKIA

INTRODUCTION

A child comes to the world without any opportunity to choose a country, parents, siblings and he/she cannot choose a level of socio-cultural backgrounds. Innocent of his/her own reasons he/she comes to the conditions in which he/she has to exist and develop. It is a great pleasure if the child is healthy and his/her backgrounds fulfil all assumptions for successful growth and development of



personality¹. Romani child as well as any other child needs to feel that he/she is beloved and respected in his family and in the circle of his friends. Until the age of six the family with its norms and values is everything he/she knows, because only very few Romani children attend pre-school institutions. Suddenly he/she gets into the completely „different world” where he/she is often frustrated. Romani child compared with non-Romani one begins the school attendance with certain handicap in the field of maturity and social relationships. Educational process of Romani children² is very complicated and requires individual approach not only to the children but to long-term educational influence on their parents as well.

STATUS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY TOWARDS ROMANI CHILDREN REALIZED BY THE SLOVAK GOVERNMENT

Gaining improvement in educational level of Romani population in Slovak Republic belongs to the important roles in the field of education. It is possible to increase their versatility in labour market by improving the quality of upbringing and education and in this way establish conditions for improving the quality of their lives.

Charter of the UN Organization about human rights set up requirement that every child regardless on its nationality, race or religious has to have a right to education, aimed on the development of their personalities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child signed in 1989 equally emphasizes that when educating the child one has to remember his/her cultural identity, language and his/her own values as well as national values of the country, where the child lives and the state where he/she comes from. Nowadays in agreement with these documents there are new educational models realized, which are aimed at development of Romani children and pupils. The value of these educational approaches is emphasised by the fact that in the National Programme of Upbringing and Education in Slovak Republic for the following 15–20 years, in Project Millennium, is paid special attention to them.

The situation in education of Romani children, objective examination of their skills and competencies to develop their psychical potential, seems to be alarming. Adaptability to school environment is an important indicator for successful training of the pupil, his/her socialization in classroom environment and for gaining optimal school achievement.

¹ D. Selická, *Muž, žena a deti v rómskej rodine*. In: *Rodina a škola*, roč. 16. (2007), č. 5, s. 10.

² I. Krupová, *Využívanie prírodovedných experimentov na 1. stupni základných škôl v triedach s prevažným počtom rómskych žiakov*. In *Naša škola*, roč. XI, 2007/2008, č. 3-4, s. 44-47.



Several inquiries need to be fulfilled for successful integration of child to school life; within them:

- adequate level of child's school competence,
- readiness of schools for admission children from different ethnic minorities and social groups,
- readiness of teachers for working with children from different socio-cultural backgrounds,
- supporting school educational effort from parents, their cooperation with school by generating conditions for children's systematic preparation for school.

If we compared predispositions for school of Romani and non-Romani children based on researches results and non-official data, we could state that Romani children more often come to school unprepared, with underdeveloped school competence³.

Child's readiness for school is denoted as „child's maturity for school”. It means not only adequate maturity of system nervous structure (brain) of young person, but also proper maturity of all functions of this system (intellect, perception, language, behaviour) in a close association with motivation of the social environment. The process called development is the result of relation between child's internal prepositions and environment influences. The term “child's maturity for school” includes not only the maturation – biologically conditioned event but the development in before stated purpose, too⁴.

In the last few decades in Slovakia, we can observe the attempts to change educational structure of Romani population⁵ and put it nearer to the situation of majority population. After recognition the Romani as a national minority by the Slovak government in 1992, the targets aimed at education of Roma have been frequently occurred in the government materials as the key priorities.

It is very difficult to solve the desperate situation in employing without improvement the state in education of Roma and this is the key condition for complex improvement of social and economical status of Romani community.

Programme Declarations of the Government of the Slovak Republic from the year 1998, paid specific attention to the question of training and education of Romani children. The main goal of the government was leading up the tools for long-term programme of training and education of Romani children and for the

³ *Reintegrácia sociálne znevýhodnených detí zo špeciálnych škôl do štandardných základných škôl*. In: <http://home.nexta.sk/vudpap/reintegracia/vychodiska.htm> (3. 11. 2008).

⁴ L. Košč, J. Marko, L. Požár, *Patopsychológia – Poruchy učenia a správania*. Bratislava: SPN. 1975, s. 45.

⁵ B. Akimjaková, 2009. *Education and Training in the Study of Pope John Paul II*. In: Historical and Contemporary Context of Pedagogy and rehabilitation. The Polish-Russian-Slovak collected scientific articles in three parts. Editors: Z. Domzal, S. Lipinski. Moscow: Academy of Professional Development and Re-Training of Educators in Moscow, s. 81–86.



supported employment of Roma, as well as involving the Romani community in improvement the quality of life.

The main document approved by the government, which supposed to determine the reform procedure of educational system was conceptual model Millennium coined in 1999 and a year later by the National Council of the Slovak Republic as National Programme of Training and Education in Slovak Republic for the following 15–20 years. However, in Millennium, there was only little attention paid to the problems of Romani children at school but it referred about creation following material oriented especially on Romani children. This material was Conception of education of Romani children and pupils from 2001. It identified the goals oriented especially for long-term progression:

- increase the number of Romani children attended the pre-school preparation from the age of 3 years,
- achieve the awareness and responsibility of guardians (parents) for school attendance of Romani children,
- legislatively established zero-year classes in the School law and complete the position Romani assistant of teacher into the Catalogue of activities,
- improve the quality of educational process on the basis of effective pedagogical research,
- provide life-long educational programmes for Romani population,
- improve the quality of cooperation with other departments, institutions of state and public administration, international organizations and with non-governmental organizations.

Besides all general declarations about the important priority of solving the situation of Romani minority, The Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic from 2002 specified some concrete steps in the field of education as the part of government program. The government has commit itself to support pre-school education of children as a service for family, at the same time the emphasis will be put on exploiting the pre-school preparation in integration of Romani population and other disadvantaged groups. The government will create conditions for education in their native language for the Romani minority and at the same time, it will ensure the improvement of quality of education in state language.

In the 2003 another key government document, called The Present State in Training and Education of Romani children and pupils, was brought and ratified.

The Conception of Integrated Education of Romani Children and Youth together with development of secondary schools education and college education ratified by the Government of Slovak Republic in May 2004 has been the most complex material dealing with subject of Romani children and pupils. It contained quite comprehensive but rather trivial valuation of actual state of Roma in



educational system, as well as the main tendencies and goals of development on the particular stages of schools and consultancy service.

Certainly, general responsibility for creation and realization of policy in the field of education carries the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. However, most of the questions associated with Roma are solved by the organ oriented on Romani them – Department for Training and Education of Romani communities⁶.

Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic pursuant to §107 subsection 6 of Act, number 245/2008 Collection of Law about the Training and Education (school law) and about the variation and complement of some laws has determined grant for improving the quality of conditions for training and education of socially disadvantaged pupils. It has been realized in schools according to this law by exploitation some specific methods and forms. The Ministry of Education defines the amount of the money for one student from socially disadvantaged backgrounds according to special rule. Allowance for pupil from socially disadvantaged background is provided to pupils from the families, whose average monthly income in last six months is the most in amount of minimum living wages.⁷

Establishment of benefit for food for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, grants for school aids have significant effect especially on Romani children from segregated settlements, who live in families endangered by poverty. Benefits for food have enhanced children's school attendance, what have a very good impact on concentration of some children at school⁸.

SPECIALITIES OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Pupil with special training and educational needs is the one, for whom it is necessary to ensure complementary resources for supporting effective education. Using of other resources enable to create qualitative new surrounding equivalent for needs of pupils who require special approach while educating. School institution for pedagogical counselling and prevention diagnoses special training and educational needs.

By the special training and educational need we understand requirement for modification of conditions (content, forms, methods, surrounding and approaches) in training and education. Special training and educational needs result from health disadvantage, talent or upbringing the child in socially disadvantaged background, allowance of them can enable equal access to education, appropriate

⁶ A. Salner, *Rómske deti v slovenskom školstve*. Bratislava: ADIN, s. r. o. 2004, s. 10–13.

⁷ Vyhláška MŠ SR č. 649 zo 17. decembra 2008 o účele použitia príspevku na žiakov zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia. In: <http://www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Vyhlasky/2008-649.pdf> (24. 2. 2009).

⁸ L. Černická, *Zo správy o stave a úrovni výchovy a vzdelávania v školách a školských Zariadeniach v roku 2006/2007*. In: *Obsahová reforma – mimoriadna príloha UN*, roč. LVII, č. 4.



development of skills and the whole personality, as well as achievement of average level of education and adequate integration into the society.

Pupil with special training and educational needs is usually:

- a) pupil with health disadvantage,
- b) student from socially disadvantaged backgrounds,
- c) gifted pupil.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF PUPILS FROM SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS

Socially disadvantaged backgrounds⁹ (disadvantaged by poverty or culture) is defined as backgrounds, which according to the social and language conditions does not effectively stimulate the development of mental, voluntary and emotional facilities of person, it does not support his/her effective socialization and it does not provide sufficient number of adequate stimulus for personal development. It causes the socio-cultural deprivation, deforms intellectual, moral and emotional development of person and so, from the point of education he/she is considered as a person with special training and educational needs.

Socially disadvantaged background for the pupil is family:

- to which is provided expedient in material distress and the income of the family is the most in the amount of minimum living wages,
- in which at least one of the parent (or tutor) belongs to the socially disadvantaged group of employment seekers,
- in which the highest finished education of parents is the primary or one of the parents has not finished primary education,
- which has non-standardized living and hygienically conditions (for instance, if the child has not private place for learning, one's own bed or there is no electricity in the house and so on)

Specific goal in training and education of pupils from socially disadvantaged background is achieving appropriate development in their personalities through the elimination or removing the handicaps resulting from the social disadvantage (communication skills, cultural and social segregation, and insufficient sanitary habits).

Training and education of pupils from socially disadvantaged background is realized:

1. in nursery schools in ordinary classrooms or educational groups together with other children in nursery school.
2. at schools with Zero year classes for six years old children who do not achieve school maturity and for whom the individual educational program is elaborated

⁹ L. Krajčíriková, *Ako chudoba a detská práca vo svete ovplyvňuje slovenskú migračnú politiku*. In. *Sociálne poslanstvo Jána Pavla II. Pre dnešný svet II. Chudoba. Reflexie cez prizmu socialnej náuky Cirkvi, spoločenských a ekonomických vied*. Ružomberok: Pedagogická fakulta KU, 2009.



in cooperation with school institution of prevention and counselling. Pupil's guardian's right become familiar with this program and after finishing Zero year class figure out following educational plan considering results of professional advises based on achieved level of school competence.

3. in ordinary classrooms together with other pupils according to training and educational program, which was elaborated by school and school institution for prevention and counselling¹⁰.

INTEGRATION OF ROMANI PUPILS

Neuralgic point of our school system is assertion of multicultural education in practice and training and education of Romani children, which is an object of continued experimentation and critique especially from the representatives of European Union. Our school system seems to be highly segregate especially from the point of training and education of children with special educational needs and from the point of education of Romani children and pupils that is confirmed by the system of special school for all types and levels of disabilities. Considering the Slovak Republic membership in European Union the priority is to change this segregate system in education to integrate one. It means creating the conditions for education of all children including the Romani in integrate conditions in ordinary nursery and primary schools with appropriate pedagogic approach and support and absolute respect for national, cultural and language varieties of all inhabitants of Slovak Republic¹¹.

Recently in Slovakia there is running the integration of pupils with disabilities, the pupils with special educational needs into the training and educational process in ordinary schools. At the beginning of this process there were many problems, uncertain questions and sometimes not correct understanding of process and goal of integrate education. The process of integrate school preparation has been preceded and followed by the several researches, analyses of foreign experiences, discussions of experts, conception detection of concerned public as well as trial to inform through media.

It is becoming clear that school integration is complicated process based on suitable information, readiness, team work and positive approach of all who are interested – child with special educational need, his/her parents, teachers and schoolmates and society in broad sense. The realization can have various forms and results. The base is to ensure the conditions for child to integrate him to educational process remembering positive development of personality¹².

¹⁰ J. Hauser, Isced – 1. In:

http://www.statpedu.sk/buxus/docs/kurikularna_transformacia/isced1_jun30.pdf (20.2.2009).

¹¹ V. Klein, *Multikultúrna výchova a edukácia rómskych detí v materskej škole*, In: *Predškolská výchova*, roč. LXIII (2009), č. 6, s. 1.

¹² A. Vančová a kol. *Špecifická edukácie mentálne postihnutých*, s. 144.



The comprehension process of Romani child into the culture-social environment of European country seems to be problematic and for Romani child often frustrating and even traumatic. Compared with non-Romani children, they begin the school attendance with certain disadvantage in the field of maturation and social attitudes.

This phenomenon is caused by the following sources:

1. Romani child does not understand Slovak language which is educational language, but often even their native language because the vocabulary in Roma language is insufficient,
2. under-stimulating or pathologic social and educative environment which does not stimulate effective socialization of child in all categories: adopting sanitary and working habits, absorbing the knowledge and skills, recognizing philosophical and aesthetic systems and build up value scale, adopting suitable forms of social behaviour corresponding with the norms of society,
3. lack of stimulus from the environment does not provide sufficient number of impulses for developing child's personality, his physical and psychical development,
4. the process of maturity progressing on the base of internal changes is not sufficient for appropriate psychical development and motor skills of the child and so the Romani child in the age of six or seven does not achieve essential level of motor skills, because the maturing process is not supported by the stimulus from the environment,
5. the school is often perceived as repressive institution, where the Romani child is facing only failure, problems, inferiority, fear of contempt, because the things valued in his community (temperament, noisiness, freedom, decision making, and so on) becomes the problem at school. At the same time theoretical content of education (especially on secondary schools) differs from the life necessities of Romani living on the outskirts of society,
6. individual responsibility for one's actions, behaviour and oneself is underdeveloped because the decisions are made collectively by community (family) and are obligatory for all members. Here is the influence of school in contrast with the family's influence and this is very difficult situation for child who is not able to solve it by himself,
7. Slovak children have prejudice against the Romani and vice-versa, from which the denying of contacts between children raised up,
8. Romani child can very good orientate in human relations, he/she feels out kind heart of adult and he/she does not separate if it is Romany or Slovak, he/she is very active, vivacious and requires constant attention from adults, what can make teachers feel negative sense and curtness,



9. Romani child in ordinary classrooms is rather unpopular and often is accepted predominantly by problematic schoolmates to whom he conforms and this is followed by production of unacceptable behaviour for which he is often punished and refused¹³.

CONCLUSION

Integration of Romani children should take place from the early childhood through the system of symmetrical integration. When children begin school, every child should be up to standards of school readiness:

1. physical age of 6 years,
2. physical maturity,
3. psychical maturity: cognitive, emotional and operational¹⁴.

„The term school competence refers to the sum of psychical, physical and social skills, that enable the child become of pupil and is a criterion for graduation of training and educational program provided by primary school”¹⁵.

Basic principles for integrated education of Romani children:

- to modify the training and education to every child,
- to give the children right to choose and support the tendency for learning and discovering,
- to integrate children into active learning,
- to form good relations between families and promote their involvement in training and education of child,
- to ensure application of frame State educational program in nursery and primary schools according to the conditions of the school and children,
- to specify the amount of financial resources (national budget, EU funds) for grants in researching programs aimed at integrated programs,
- to ensure financially continuous education and specialising innovative education for teachers who work with Romani children, including acquisition of Romani language (as supportive educational language).

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¹³ I. Pavlov, *Pracovný materiál pre nultý ročník – 1. časť*. Prešov. Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove. 2005, s. 5–6.

¹⁴ V. Klein, Integrované predškolské vzdelávanie rómskych detí. In: *Predškolská výchova*, s. 12.

¹⁵ Zákon č. 245/2008 – §2 Základné pojmy
http://www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/245_2008.pdf (22.2.2009).



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SUMMARY:

Training and education of Romani children in Slovakia

This article brings nearer the stage of educational policy towards Romani children realized by the government of the Slovak Republic. It puts the emphasis on the factors that influence the process of integration in our educational system, it analyses new educational law from the point of care for the pupils with special learning and educational needs and at the same time it suggests on complexity of educational process in the term of integration at primary school.



Key words: educational policy, pupil with special learning and educational needs, integration, socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

STRESZCZENIE:

Wychowanie oraz edukacja uczniów romskich na Słowacji

Artykuł ten przedstawia stan polityki oświatowej wobec dzieci romskich realizowanej przez rząd Republiki Słowackiej. Podkreśla czynniki, które mają wpływ na proces integracji w naszym szkolnictwie, analizuje nową ustawę o szkolnictwie z punktu widzenia troski o uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami wychowawczo-edukacyjnymi, a jednocześnie pokazuje złożoność procesu wychowawczo-edukacyjnego w warunkach integrowanych szkoły podstawowej.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka oświatowa, integracja, środowisko społeczne, uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami wychowawczo-edukacyjnymi.



Leon Lewkowicz, „Cyganie”, 1929, olej na płótnie