

# INTEGRATION OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED POPULATION GROUPS IN THE CZECH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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## *Aim of this presentation*

The presentation has two main goals:

- To summarize basic protective and risky factors and conditions of the integration of minorities to majority society in the Czech Republic.
- To provide an outline of inductive hypotheses and topics for further critical researches, as well as suggestions for direct implementation into practice.

It is based on the long-term experience of studying and surveys among the Gipsy minority members and other respondents from socio-culturally disadvantageous environment. It also summarizes the findings of diploma theses published in the Research Institute for the personality development and ethnicity at the Faculty of Social Studies of Brno Masaryk University as well as the conclusions from expert discussions and the results of studying secondary sources.

If we intend to form basic skill at teachers and adult students, we have to be aware that there is the double bind: On one side skills of teachers, on the other personality structure of learners. Teachers should take into considerations personality characteristics of their learners, learners should adjust to didactic skills of teachers. But teachers are managers of training and education, their task is to understand to trainees.

Important characteristics on the side of trainees are their temperament, intellectual abilities, learning skills, past experience, motivation and expectations. We will review some of these personality aspects of learners, especially from the minority groups.

## *Outline of topics*

- Explication of temperamental and life-style personality characteristics of minority people
- Explication of main cognitive and academic achievement characteristics
- Explication of important recommendations for treating minorities

## **The Temperament**

Our observations of the behavioural dynamics lead to the hypothesis about more frequent occurrences of temperamental impulsivity and behavioural instability and about vacillation in energy output mainly in case of the people from the Romany minority.

In case of inadequate educational interaction on the part of teachers and majority members these temperamental characteristics can vicariously facilitate the development of social reactions and attitudes that the majority did not use to tolerate and that are interpreted as non-culturality or even aggressiveness by the majority.

- The temperament has however mainly been reflected in the specialities of expressive movements that are manifested in the behaviour like so called etiquettes, some of which can lead to serious misunderstandings.
- For example the noisiness and rich body expressions of the Gypsies has been interpreted as aggressiveness, but for them it is a necessity of living out their emotions.
- Or when the Vietnamese laugh, they express that they are ashamed and the Czech majority interprets it as an expression of contempt and/or irrelevance.

### **Cognitive Styles of life situations**

Orientation to here and now

*Gypsies say: „The time bids only to gadjee.”*

*Roma children even in the age of eleven do not orientate themselves according to clock (watch). They do not like regularity in their life style.*

Nomadic perception and orientation.

Centuries of persecution and oppression of Roma people influenced their feeling of helplessness and fear. For the mentality of travellers and yet more for the mentality of refugees is typical to escape the obstacles, because they do not know how to cope with them, how to win or to guard themselves. It may be the reason why they do not live for the future perspective, but only for nowadays, why they strongly rely upon their families and family line (gender), which ensures them security.

All these feelings and experiences became content of tradition and archetypes. In the past this continuous persecution inhibited the **will for education**.

On the other side persecution was softly agreed by state power - in the past century - and this fact led to strongly negative attitude to all state institutions. It may be that the generalisation of this impression still puts a negative light also to school and education. Roma minority is afraid of school as of something restrictive. Gypsies do not understand demands and duties that are enforced by school representatives.

### **Culturally Historical Factors and Tradition**

This is a set of conditions that include much more serious and variable subset of factors forming the personality. They exist in the form of **opinion** on what is desirable, allowed and forbidden. In an ontogenesis, they are gradually transformed into family, social, cultural and other scenarios

Some anthropologists think that the negative role in forming ethnic identity of Romany can be caused by an absence of patterns with which they can identify themselves – historical personalities or mythic heroes – s. c. „archetypes“.

A positive factor, on the other hand, is an **inter-group solidarity**, consistence of family bindings, however bound to descend, which pays for most of the minorities coming from Asia.

### **Family life style and care in early childhood**

Romany children are expressively fixed on their mothers. They are thus strongly negatively influenced by their mothers depressions, alcoholism and interpersonal conflicts influenced by it.

If the mother as a model person acts impulsively, does not plan how to get on with money, if she does not create task situations suitable for the child's age and does not motivate her child in the preparation to school attendance, a risky factors are accumulated to demonstrably undesirable network of forces that support the genesis of academic maladaptation and many other negative social exposures.

When compared to children from similar socially weaker families in the majority, it however does not seem that these risky factors would be more frequent in Gypsy families.

In the families of Vietnamese minority, on the other hand, the children are brought up to achievement-oriented behaviour.

The mothers of children from minority environments, who reached full basic or higher education, seek to develop an interest in education in their children, even if they are unemployed. This applies to Romany mothers too. This attitude rapidly decreases the influence of many risky factors with which their children are confronted.

### **Intellectual Potential**

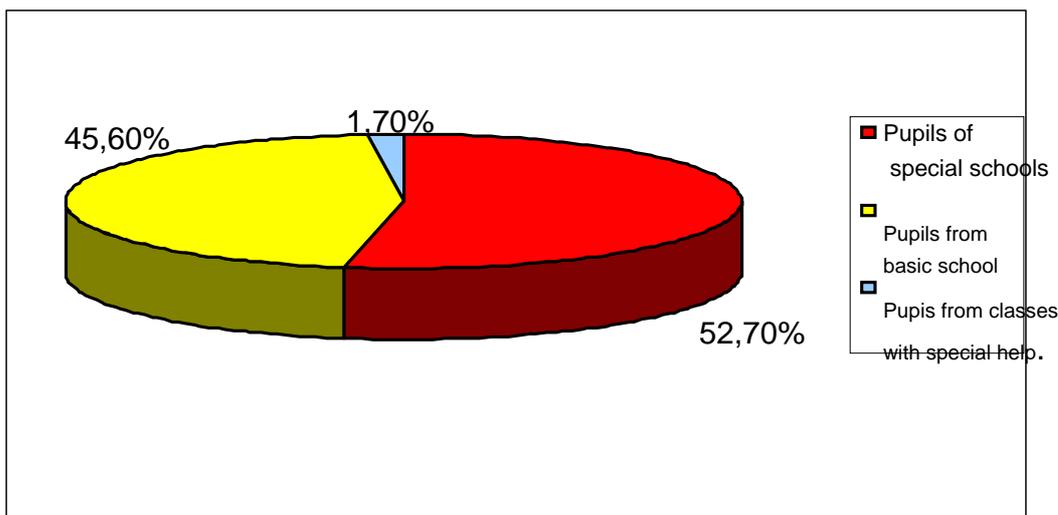
As far as cognitive operation is concerned, A. Dvořáková (2000) proved that the level of understanding concepts by Romany children is influenced by the socio-economic status of the family, mother's education, father's employment, level of promoting the child to solve tasks, and the type of habitation, but mainly the **regularity of attending kindergarten** by the child.

The results levels in the Raven's test of colour progressive matrixes correspond with the **educational level of the mother**. Taking into consideration that the education of current Romany mother was strongly dependent on the possibility of regular school attendance and not on their gift, these findings can also be interpreted as an information about the influence of environmental factors even on forming intellectual prerequisites that are thought to be strongly determined from the genetic point of view.

### ***Factors of school education and upbringing***

Significant is quotation from Viktor Sekyt, expert of Czech Government Council for minorities, who wrote: *"I have refused superstition that Roma minority is not educated. Even from early childhood all Roma children are educated to share implicit rules and laws of Roma community. It is realised through telling stories, people songs, family history and mythology, Roma "Who I Who" and last but not least in communication skills among Roma society and with majority. In every Roma family girls learn to cook, to do the washing, to do household works, to take care of younger relatives and bring them up. In some Roma families boys learn father's craft. The second common skill of Roma is music. Gifted Roma children develop their music abilities."*

A little descriptive statistics (based on the sample 421 Roma pupils)



### Reasons for choice of school

Reason for selection of school	Basic school	Special school
Distance from home	41,7%	33,4%
Decision of Counselling centre	11,7	11,1
Together with relatives or neighbours	10%	29,6
Better education	30%	
Better kind of life	3,3	
Lower academic demandingness		25,9
Other	3,3	

### Intellectual level and academic achievement

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mother was strongly dependent on the possibility of regular school attendance and not on their gift, these findings can also be interpreted as an information about the influence of environmental factors even on forming intellectual prerequisites that are thought to be strongly determined from the genetic point of view.

### ***Main risky and protective factors***

One of the most important factors in development is a **need to control self-development**. This need is formed in the period of adolescence, but it is not realised if not supported by encouraging. Mainly the members of Gypsy minority are not systematically lead to self-forming, and they accept the pressures and opportunities from outside in a passive way. They then adapt reactive lifestyle. The experience with Romany secondary school pupils prove that in the places where this need of self-control was awaken and kept, has been an important agent in the development of healthy self-respects and starts the effort for achieving dignified life position.

#### **Risky factors**

The risky factors in the personality development of the minority members, whose parents do not take into consideration their leisure time activities and leave them to spend their time in an unorganised manner on the street, are forming an opportunity for meeting **drugs, gambling**, sexual promiscuity. Of negative influence is **non-structured environment** and older fellows who represent identification patterns for their peers. The same applies, as our researches show, to the members of majority families with similar lifestyles.

Another serious risky factor has been a **boredom** that leads either to full passivity or to destructive activities. The observations show that in places where there are opportunities of valuable spending leisure time (institutes offering the possibility of doing productive activities), the occurrences of negative factors are significantly lower.

### ***Educational recommendations***

For upgrading conditions to education minorities it is necessary to fulfil the following:

- Improve didactics of teaching Czech language from early childhood.
- To support learning mother language.
- To enable improving skills in Czech language also for parents.
- To encourage minority children by positive stimulation.
- To find the tools for supporting positive motivation to learning and to education (to use motivating games, drama education techniques etc.).
- To develop abilities for future job by specific training program.
- Recommendations
- To take into consideration disadvantageous social environment and look for the ways how to compensate its negative influence.
- To attract parents for cooperation through information and arguments about significance of education (for economic improving, for better quality of life etc.).
- To accept the idea that only one democratic way for the solution of economic, political and social problems of minorities are investments into projects oriented to discovering how to educate minority members with respect to cognitive and personality specificity. Also elaboration skills of effective learning are related to this goal

For upgrading knowledge and skills of teachers, other educators and parents is necessary:

- To inform them about children's rights, rights of minorities, Chart of Human Rights.
- To offer lectures about culture, customs, history, religion etc. of minorities living in the Czech Republic.
- To introduce Citizen Education among mentioned themes into the curriculum.
- To develop cooperation among schools and families of children (it means to use ideas of community school system).

### **Other suggestions:**

- To cooperate with citizen volunteer associations which are helping to minorities
- To respect differences in tradition and values. We have to be aware that integration does not mean identification or assimilation.
- Immigrants perceive some aspects of our life style as danger or unacceptable.
- We have to be patient and provide foreigners with time for adjustment.
- We suppose that among anthropological universalities belongs the text written by R. Dreikurs (1973) that could form a suitable program for educating majority and minority children in families and schools:

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of criticism, it learns to deprecate the others;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of grudge, it learns to hate;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of mockery, it learns uncertainty;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of reproaches, it learns to feel guilty;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere tolerance, it learns to be patient;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of encouraging, it learns to be high-hearted;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of pricing, it learns to positively value the others;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of fairness, it learns to be fair-minded;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of security, it learns to believe the others;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of appreciation, it learns self-belief;*

*When a child lives in the atmosphere of friendship and love,*

*it learns to look for and apply love in the world.*

### **Continuous problems**

There are big problems in our knowledge about optimal state quality of life of minorities.

- Among most serious is how to transform research discoveries into preventive and intervention programs (As Aboud, F. E. claims – it is typical for social sciences in general).
- We have collected lot of facts and descriptions of relationships but we do not know exactly why implementation into everyday life is not effective.

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