

PSIWORLD 2012

Some of the Psycho-Sociological Implications of Failure and School Dropout in a Community of Rome Ethnicity

Constantin-Edmond Cracsner^{a,b*}, Erika Botejaru^c

^aEcological University in Bucharest, Vasile Milea Avenue, No. 1G, Bucharest, P.O. 061341, Romania

^bInstitute of Philosophy and Psychology "Constantin Radulescu-Motru", Bucharest

^cElementary School in Bucium, P.O. 607607, Bacau, Romania

Abstract

Failure and school dropout, in the present period, represent major worries and concerns both at the institutional level, governmental and non-governmental, as well as at the individual level. This phenomenon is accentuated within disadvantaged groups, in particular the Rome (gypsy) community. This study aims to highlight certain aspects concerning some psychosocial implications of the phenomenon of failure and dropout at primary education level, identified in a community of gypsy ethnicity. The importance of this study lies in the realization and presentation of a tool for the evaluation of failure and dropout among students of Rome (gypsy) ethnicity.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of PSIWORLD 2012

Keywords: failure and school dropout, disadvantaged groups, review questionnaire, exploratory research, factorial analysis.

1. Introduction

The right to education of all children and young people in our country, regardless of social or ethnic origin, gender or religious affiliation, is guaranteed by the Constitution of Romania. Between the words "insurance" and "achievement" is a significant distance, the reality of Romanian education reflected in various studies (MECTS, 2011, ARACIP, 2012, ISE, 2012) is presented in images less than satisfactory, far from desiderata strategies, programs and Government plans: only almost 80% of children of 3-6 years were in kindergarten in year 2010/2011; approximately 92% of children enrolled in school in 2011 had previously been to kindergarten; in the 2010/2011 school year, the number of students have dropped in both primary and middle school, with almost 30,000 students over the previous year, with the biggest decreases in primary education in rural areas; in the

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +40-722-508-360.

E-mail address: edypsy@yahoo.com.

school year 2010/2011, the rate of dropouts from primary and secondary education level was 1.5%; the school dropout rate continues to be higher in rural schools, especially at the secondary level.

A series of surveys on citizen's opinions about the situation of Romanian Education presents figures which should give food for thought to those entitled to manage the school in Romania. For example: 64.2% are dissatisfied with the current educational system; 84.1% appreciates that there is a big carelessness towards school; among the main causes of the situation are absenteeism (54.2%) and school dropouts (45.5%) (iVox, 8-21.08.2011; 5,724 respondents). Another survey (IRES, 2010) presented data according to which the respondents appreciated that: students today are more poorly prepared (86%), schools have a poor endowment (80%), the overall condition of education as being poor and very poor (61%).

In this context, various studies reveal that one of the categories of population severely affected by the phenomenon of low participation to education is gypsy ethnicity, especially its members from rural areas (Merfea, 1991; Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993; UNICEF, 1999).

2. Theoretical and conceptual boundaries landmarks

The essence of the issue of study centred on operationalizing and translating theoretical concepts (expenses, school flop and failure, school dropouts, economic conditions, social, cultural, etc.) in questions allowing the collection of data and information relevant to specific phenomena research (Jigau, 1998, p. 19; Cristea, 2000, p. 11; Salavastru, 2004, p. 229; Rudica, 2008, p. 213; Stanculescu, 2008, p. 323;). Inadequacy of school, whether it is educational, behavioral, or institutional-organizational, can generate failure and even school dropouts (Jigau, 1998, p. 19; Popescu, 1991, p. 25). As part of the social inadequacy, understood as a set of resilience and difficulties of integration and participation in the social systems and household social obligations, inadequacy of school includes all behaviours of maladaptive type that are not in harmony with the rules of the school environment and may be caused by intellectual disabilities or psychiatric disorder, mental or emotional (Negovan, 2006, pp. 176-177).

A result of inadequacy, the failure school failure can be understood as a continuum of a single phenomenon, which is defined on the one hand, as the failure of cognitive type, as a whole "teaching/learning situations which indicates the impossibility of momentary student for achieving the proposed involvement at different levels of learning" (Cristea, 2000, p. 128) and on the other hand, the failure of non-cognitive type, understood as the student's inability to cope with the requirements of the school environment (Rudica, 2008, p. 213; Salavastru, 2004, p. 230).

School dropout, as the effect of extreme school failure, is a complex phenomenon (individual, social, institutional, economic, etc.) which ends with premature school leaving without getting a qualification or training attested (Popescu, 1991, p. 25), marking the failure of an adaptation seen as reciprocal, interdependent relationships between students and school, which leads to a progressive increase in the number of children who drop out of school (Neamtu, p. 185; Stoltz, 2000, p. 141). In this context, Romania came in 2000 in the European rankings with 70,864 (6%) of illiterates.

3. Ethnic specificity and school education

Gypsies perceive school attendance as being pointless and ineffective, seeing it as a threat to their lifestyle. Perfection through education is not associated with the acquisition of a specific social and economic status and the school appears as something mandatory, linking them to a specific place, certain norms and values that they don't share, the abandonment is considered "normal" and approved by most of the community.

After the Census of 1992, it was found that 50% of the adult population is illiterate, and of gypsy children only 60% attend kindergarten and to school they regularly go only 30-40% of them, reaching out to finish high school just 4.5%. Traditional gypsy communities prefer to maintain as far as possible, outside the State authority no matter what form it would take. Gypsies still prefer their own traditional way to "educate" their children, the main goal is learning specific crafts, denying the use of any state institution perceived to be "biased and hostile to the Gypsy community" (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993, p. 32).).

Also, 22% of the mature generation have not attended any class, 25.2% have abandoned school at the end of 4th grade, plus 5.3% who gave up along the way, 8.5% who leave secondary school before the end of the cycle,

33,7% finishing gymnasium completely and only 3.9% who fail to attend school. The similarities are quite high if we consider that 21.7% of children did not go to school, 22,44% have given up in the first years, attending regular school until the age of 16 years only 42,84% (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993, pp. 94-98). If we add a certain attitude of rejection of gypsies highlighted both society and school institution, one can understand why changes occur deep in the structure of each child of gypsies (Merfea, 1991, p. 106).

Of negative attitudes, most commonly encountered at school level are: the refusal of school managers to accept the registration of gypsy children, arguing that they try to avoid the emergence of problems; the trend of their isolation or in special classes, but especially in the back of the classroom; children and parents from the majority population refuses to accept the gypsy in mainstream classes, considering him a threat (Cucos, 2000, p. 197).

4. Research design

The aim of the research was to build some assessment tools of opinions of various social actors (children, parents, teachers) involved in the strategy of school education of gypsy children in a rural community. The paper presents some elements considered significant in building the questionnaire for the evaluation of gypsy children opinions in primary education on attitudes towards failure and school dropout (CEOCER). The questionnaire was built by us using the expert method.

4.1. The subjects of the research

- Knowing children's opinions towards their own activity;
- The identification of objective and subjective causes of failure and dropout;
- Design measures on prevention of failure and dropout.

4.2. Research Assumptions

- If gypsy children are living in a disadvantaged environment, then they don't have possibilities to participate in the educational process;
- If gypsy children are victims of discrimination as a result of being part of a community perceived negatively in society, then their access to educational process is jeopardized;
- If education of a gypsy child is achieved only in family, then it is considered insufficient for normal development and the evolution of the child;

4.3. Submission of the CEOCER questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 20 questions, covering areas such as: school frequency, the situation at school teaching, family situation, support for preparation of lessons, the degree of understanding of lessons, favourite subjects, free time activity etc. We present some item examples: I3 – Why do you enjoy attending school?; I6: What are the reasons supporting school absence?; I9: Have you ever repeated a year of study?; I11: What is the number of children in your family?; I13: Do you have brothers/sisters that attend school?; I14: Who is helping you out with your homework?; I16: Do you understand everything you have been thought?; I19: Where do you obtain information about your ethnicity?. The answers to the items are either dichotomous (e.g. I2, I9, I13 and I16), whether with forced choice out of a pre-established variable variants (e.g. I6, I11, I14 and I19).

In statistical processing were detained 19 items, because the answers to item I20, relating to the best language spoken, has not presented the variance, relevance and statistical significance, due to all subjects responses, meaning the language best known is mother tongue, the ethnicity's language.

4.4. The subjects of the research

The questionnaire was applied to a number of 50 gypsy students from I-IV grades, with ages between 7 – 16 years, representing the experimental group 1. Also there are all other research groups: control group (Romanian

children of Romanian nationality, of the same age group); experimental group 2 (parents of gypsy children) and experimental group 3 (teachers of gypsy children).

4.5. Analysis and interpretation of results

For analysis of the results of the questionnaire we used the method of exploration factor analysis (EFA), through which we sought to establish a number of common factors for a set of variables and identify their psychological nature (Sava, 2011, p. 151; Popa, 2010, p. 295). For this we created the database with the selected variables, which were "surface attributes" or manifest variables: absenteeism, second examinations, grade repetition etc., and we tried to postulate the existence of internal attributes, latent variables or factors that may have a real construct or can be only theoretical constructs.

In the factorial analysis, were taken into account the dispersion and the covariance results due to common factors, and in an attempt to determine the explanatory factors we used the main components analysis through managing statistical design. Analysis of linearity issues was carried out based on Pearson linear correlation. Given the reduced number of subjects in the research, we've tested the adequacy of the batch by the number of items of the questionnaire, applying the statistical method KMO, and careful consideration on the diagonal of the matrix of correlations indicates that a series of correlations have the following values: items I3 (.452), I5 (.475), I7 (.457), I8 (.407), I14 (.402), I15 (.457) have lower values of 0.50; items I12 (.399), I18 (.361) have lower values of 0.40; items I17 (.231) and I19 (.286) have lower values of 0.30. This important issue can lead us whether to proceed with removing items or to change them for calibration and improvement of the questionnaire, in a future stage of the research.

Further, we intend to verify the multivariate normality problem, through the study of inter-correlations and lack of multicollinearity. For this, we used the statistical procedure KMO and Bartlett's Test. The index of adequacy of the batch to the items has the value .521, but, however, the value at Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at $p < .001$, which eliminates the problem of multicollinearity.

Another very important aspect in exploration factor analysis, was represented by inspection and analysis of commonality. We noticed that some of the items, reported by the Anti-image method as less suitable experimental batch volume, appear as having small commonalities in relation to the extracted factors both initially and after turning them, so: I12 (.207, .032), I14 (.419, .283), I18 (.439, .100) I19 (.397, .124). Even so, given the exploratory research phase, we proceeded to keep those items in statistical analysis.

The exploration factor analysis continued with the study of the factors in the factorial matrix and with the rotated factors matrix through Varimax method. In terms of extracting factors, we opted for the version with 5 factors, saying that a variance of 53.43% is sufficient to explain the influence factors on variables. In essence, surpassing a simple labelling and trying to discover some profound psychological meanings for a set of variables integrated into common factors, we named the factors removed, as follows:

- Psychosocial factor (Factor 1: I1=.931, I11=.859, I13=-.843, I16=-.613) describes itself as the expression of a social status and as some roles derived from it. It defines the individual as a person adapted socially and familial. The person with a suitable level on this factor can meet a number of obligations, but to attend training courses.
- Motivational-affective factor (Factor 2: I2=.850, I4=.537, I5=-.476, I6=.752) is constituted as a motivational-affective system, centred, on the one hand on natural curiosity, impulses to competence, need of competence, empowerment and, on the other hand, on emotional support, reduction of anxiety and fear, stimulating the pleasure to attend school.
- Cognitive-intellectual factor (Factor 3: I10=.947, I9=-.866, I19=-.310) is centred on achieving an adequate perception of the role of the school in the process of training and education, supporting cognitive mobilization efforts, supporting and inducing some effective learning styles, stimulating the activity of storage and updating of knowledge.
- Failure/dropout factor (Factor 4: I7=.861, I8=-.798, I3=.530) expresses the severe form of school failures generated by the disastrous combination of, on the one hand, the objectives, purposes and responsibilities on the medium and long term and, on the other hand, the excessive concerns for the activities of the family environment and community.

- Educational support factor (Factor 5: I17=.591, I14=.475, I15=-.397) is expressed by the absence both of a parental control permanently, and by the existence of inadequate support in the family environment.

The items I12 – Do your parents have a job? and I18 – What are your preoccupations during your free time? not participating in the construction of any factor. It must be said that in the analysis were taken only correlations greater than 0.30 thresholds, which expresses a common cluster of 9%, thus meeting the requirement that items saturation structure to be simple, meaning that in only one factor to be predominant. We remembered these values because we tried to respect another common condition, to have at least three items in each factor extract (Sava, 2011, p. 176).

From the analysis of the matrix transformed common factors, we identified if and to what extent they correlate significantly. There are a few important correlations between psychosocial factor (FPS) and motivational-affective factor (FMA), where $r = 0.539$; motivational-affective factor (FMA) and cognitive-intellectual factor (FCI), where $r = 0.691$; cognitive-intellectual factor – (FCI) and school failure factor (FES), where $r = 0.851$; school failure factor (FES) and motivational-affective factor (FMA) where $r = 0.591$; at the same time, we noticed that the educational support factor (FSE) did not correlate significantly with no other factor, having however a load/own special saturation (0.976).

5. Conclusions

Analysis of failure and school dropout in gypsy communities must target a wide range of aspects of psychological, sociological, economic, educational, cultural institutions etc. Identification of the causes and strategies for management of this phenomenon involves the complex and building of appropriate assessment tools. This study has identified a possible questionnaire, which can be improved through various methods and techniques, including analyzing specific scientifically investigated population sampling. This first pilot phase of the exploratory research has identified some relevant sociological and psychological dimensions, which can be founded in explanatory constructs of causality failure and school dropout in some gypsy communities.

References

- Agentia Romana de Asigurarea Calitatii in Invatamantul Primar. (2012). *Note pentru calitate. Jurnal al educatiei din Romania*. Bucuresti: ARACIP, nr. 4, mai 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/17497>
- Calificativ.ro (2010). *Sondaj despre situatia invatamantului din Romania*. Retrieved from <http://www.calificativ.ro/>
- Cristea, S. (2000). *Dictionar de pedagogie*. Bucuresti: Editura Litera International.
- Cucos, C. (2000). *Educatia. Dimensiuni culturale si interculturale*. Iasi:Editura Polirom.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2012). *Situatia romilor in 11 state membre ale UE*. Retrieved from http://fra.europa.eu/fra/Website/attachments/FRA-Factsheet_ROMA-RO.pdf
- Institutul de Stiintele Educatiei. (2012). *Raport asupra starii sistemului national de invatamant*. Retrieved from <http://www.ise.ro/>
- Institutul Roman pentru Evaluare si Strategii (2010). *Perceptia publica a scolii romanesti*. Retrieved from www.ires.com.ro/
- iVOX. (2011). Retrieved from <http://ivox.ro/Sondaje/stare-invatamantului-din-romania>
- Jigau, M. (1998). *Factorii reusitei scolare*. Bucuresti: Editura Grafoart.
- Merfea, M. (1991). *Tiganii – integrarea sociala a romilor*. Brasov: Editura Barsa.
- Ministerul Educatiei Nationale. (2000). *Raport. Invatamantul rural din Romania: conditii, probleme si strategii de dezvoltare*. Bucuresti.
- Ministerul Educatiei, Cercetarii, Tineretului si Sportului. (2010). *Barometrul calitatii educatiei din Romania*. Nr. 3 (2009-2010). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/17497>
- Negovan, V. (2006). *Introducere in psihologia educatiei*. Bucuresti: Editura Universitara.
- Popa, M. (2010). *Statistici multivariate aplicate in psihologie*. Iasi: Editura Polirom.
- Popescu, V. V. (1991). Succesul și insuccesul școlar. *Revista de Pedagogie*. 12. Bucuresti.
- Rudica, T. (2008). Esecul la invatatura si prevenirea lui. In Cosmovici, A., Iacob, L. (coord.). *Psihologie scolara*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Salavastru, D. (2004). *Psihologia educatiei*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Sava, F. (2011). *Analiza datelor in cercetarea psihologica*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura ASCR.
- Stanculescu, E. (2008). *Psihologia educatiei - de la teorie la practica*. Bucuresti: Editura Universitara.
- Stoltz, G. (2000). *Esec școlar. Risc de esec social*. Bucuresti: Editura Victoria.
- UNICEF Romania (1999). *Roma children education*. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/romania/children_1602.html
- Zamfir, E., Zamfir, C. (1993). *Tiganii intre ignorare si ingrijorare*. Bucuresti: Editura Alternative.