

Educational Policies Meant to Stimulate the Participation in Education of Roma Children

Monica ȘTEFAN

“Ștefan cel Mare” School of Alexandria

Abstract

The strategy of the School Inspectorate of Teleorman to ensure access to education for disadvantaged groups is a continuation of the efforts to reform education. It meets the strategic priorities arising from the governmental policies on education, undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Research for Pre-university Education. As inclusive education is concerned, the school is the institution that allows democratic access to education, in compliance with the general human rights and, in particular, with children rights, proving that minorities are respected and protected under laws enacted in this respect.

Keywords

strategies, educational policies, Roma children.

The strategy of the School Inspectorate of Teleorman (SIT) to ensure access to education for disadvantaged groups is a continuation of the efforts to reform education. It meets the strategic priorities arising from the governmental policies on education, undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Research for Pre-university Education. As inclusive education is concerned, the school is the institution that allows democratic access to education, in compliance with the general human rights and, in particular, with children rights, proving that minorities are respected and protected under laws enacted in this respect.

The main educational activities comprised by the program for the implementation of the strategy of the SIT are primarily orientated to secure the access to pre-university education and to eliminate any forms of discrimination based on race, social origin, religious beliefs etc. The teaching-learning process is student-oriented as to meet one's personal needs and learning rhythm. The program aims to increase the quality of education for all students by using a proper curriculum and granting educational support. In this respect, the social facility students system must be strengthen, along with various educational-social programs for vulnerable groups. Moreover, steps must be taken to prevent school abandonment by children from such vulnerable groups. To develop respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, to prepare a child for a responsible life in a free society based on mutual understanding, tolerance, equality, friendship among all citizens, ethnicities or national and religious groups are activities included in the strategy to be implemented at the level of our county.

The implementation of the County Strategy regarding the improvement of access to education for vulnerable groups is grounded on the commitment

undertaken by the schools from the pre-university system in Teleorman and aims to support the right to early education for all children, equal conditions and the creation of an inclusive environment. The SIT sees the implementation of this strategy as a form of prevention against all forms of discrimination in education. The county strategy for better access to education for vulnerable groups and the plan for its implementation represent a coherent and operational model of psycho-individual development and social-professional integration of children and young people from this category. To provide each student, irrespective of their ethnicity, intellectual potential and social-cultural environment, with the conditions to develop their personality is a prerequisite for their integration in society when they leave school.

To implement the strategy described above, several objectives have been set. We will detail some of them below.

The first objective selected by aims to **increase the number of Roma children and young people in all levels of education**. The objective can be reached through several specific measures such as: to stimulate the participation of Roma children in pre-school education in order to prevent the school adjustment difficulties, including those encountered by children who do not know Romanian; to resize the pre-school education system to assure access for every child from Roma communities to this level of education; to develop special programs for Roma children from poor families and to develop alternative forms of education for Roma children in special situations (isolated communities, children who have abandoned school or have never been to school, children from migrant communities etc); to stimulate young Roma people to study at higher forms of education; to diversify the post-mandatory education in order to allow young Roma students to access education facilities.

Another objective concerns **the improvement of human resources from education in order to create an educational environment that is stimulating for Roma children**. It can be done if the number of Roma teachers is increased and Roma language is taught in pre-university schools. Thus, a sufficient number of qualified Roma teachers should be involved in teaching Roma languages in the schools that require the Roma language to be taught in their communities. Moreover, Roma teachers should be promoted in positions within school administration (inspectors, principals in schools that have a large number of Roma students). Teachers and school personnel are required to analyze issues pertaining to school participation, the extent of school abandonment and proper measures should be implemented to improve school participation among Roma students. As well, the human resources could be improved by means of the creation of a network of school mediators within Roma communities.

The educational offer should be designed to promote interculturality. This involves diversified curricula while teaching various subjects to Roma children, such as Roma language, the culture and history of Roma minorities etc, as well as a diversified intercultural approach while teaching main subjects such as language and communication, humanities and arts. The introduction of the Roma culture, history and traditions in the curriculum is made upon the decision of the

schools with Roma students, with an extensive focus on Roma specific crafts in the initial and continuous professional training offers.

Roma adults should be helped to have access to education and training. The results of such access will improve the level of education of Roma population and will help them to develop a more positive perspective on the role and importance of education. If Roma adults are involved, at a higher extent, in different forms of education, their level of professional training will increase, which will eventually lead to a higher level of employment in Roma communities.

Another objective in this strategy attempts to make **schools more open for Roma communities**. Various partnerships will be concluded with community partners in order to stimulate Roma parents to participate in school activities. A better communication and cooperation between schools and local authorities will help a better implementation of programs aimed to Roma children and young people. Moreover, economic operators should be persuaded to participate in school programs. Their participation is highly valuable since companies and small enterprises are the ones that could help designing curricula to help young Roma to find employment after they leave school.

A national system of school participation should be designed to monitor the participation of Roma children and young people in order to be able to implement measures to improve their school attendance. This system should try to analyze the reasons leading Roma students to abandon school and also to collect data as regards such data.

Successful people from Roma communities should be promoted through national and European educational programs and projects as it is important to make such people more visible in Roma communities and to exploit their experiences and success for the benefit of Roma students.

The School Inspectorate of Teleroman will also continue its activities carried out in this respect, in compliance with the Management Plan in order to support children from vulnerable groups. Proper conditions will be created so that Roma students will be able to attend mandatory forms of education, as well as forms of long life learning. In this respect, the relation school-local communities/authorities will be strengthened with the implementation of a new project – “Prevention of school abandonment and a second chance for people who left school too early” - ID 140564, a project developed in collaboration with SIVECO Romania SA and the Association of French-Romanian Friendship (ROMFRA).

The general objective of the project is to prevent and fight phenomena of school abandonment for a number of 360 people (the approach in this case will be to make them come back to school) and another 610 people (with focus on prevention) through strategies, actions, modern IT approaches and integrated educational programs meant to teach basic competences and skills in an open and inclusive system.

The project target comprises 970 people, both from the urban and rural communities from South Muntenia. The structure of the target group includes:

- 360 students who are at risk to leave school early;
- 100 parents/guardians of such students;

- 360 people who have left school early;
- 150 personnel involved in the development of programs against school abandonment.

The project will carry out two types of activities: corrective and preventive activities. They involve, on the one hand, the reintegration in different forms of education (and, subsequently, the integration in the employment market) and, on the other hand, increased and constant access of students who are at risk to leave school early, to a good quality education, council and guidance services both for children and their parents.

The implementation of the project concerns the elimination/decrease of the risk for students to leave school. In this respect, parents/guardians must be informed/counseled on the importance of primary education for acquiring and developing the skills and competences required by the employment market. The said project also aims to develop and implement programs regarding school abandonment in order to decrease the number of people who haven't finished mandatory forms of education from the areas of implementation. Another component of the project is designed to ensure social inclusion of people from Roma communities with the help of several specific measures such as:

- To fight social exclusion through social policies focused on measures concerning people from vulnerable groups;
- To develop a social economy to ensure school participation;
- To continue measures regarding the access to education of children from vulnerable groups, families with many children and to support them through specific social measures;
- To support the employment of people from vulnerable groups.

References

- Voicu, Mădălina et. al, *Nevoi și resurse în comunitățile de rromi*, Fundația Soroș România, București, 2007.
- Zamfir, Elena et al., *Țigani – între ignorare și îngrijorare*, Editura Alternative, 1993.
- Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, Institutul de Științe ale Educației, Institutul de Cercetare a Calității Vieții, *Participarea la educație a copiilor rromi – probleme, soluții, actori*, București, 2002.
- Inpsectoratul Școlar Județean Teleorman, *Istrategia ISJ TR – Acces la educație 2006-2010*.

◆ REVIEW ◆

Emilia PARPALĂ and Leo LOVEDAY (Eds.), *Contextual Identities: A Comparative and Communicational Approach*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, viii+ 228 p.

by Andreea Raluca CONSTANTIN

Book reviews are generally written for two reasons: to promote a book and increase its sales and to praise the academic, scientific, cultural or artistic value of the writing. This review falls into the second category, and aims at describing and popularising the contributions of a group of dedicated researchers from various countries.

Contextual Identities: A Comparative and Communicational Approach, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing is a collective volume consisting of selected papers presented at the international conference *Comparativism, Identity, Communication* (2013–2014), organised by University of Craiova, Romania. The academic event was established in 2008, is organised annually and has resulted ever since in several conference proceedings. What makes the current issue special is the unceasing effort of Professor Emeritus **Emilia Parpală** to assure the quality of the articles by collaborating with Professor **Leo Loveday** for professional reviews and guidance. Moreover, this is the first volume, and for sure not the last, published by the independent British publisher Cambridge Scholars Publishing, a further confirmation of the editors' and contributors' professionalism.

The keywords in the title *Contextual Identities: A Comparative and Communicational Approach* are not accidental, the volume "inviting a reinterpretation of these defining concepts for postmodernism, a style which considers art as contextual(ized) and constructed" (1). Contextualising the words "comparativism", "identity", and "communication", the authors employ comparative methods at linguistic and literary level, in order to emphasise the importance of current identity issues which trigger or are triggered by communication processes.

The volume is divided into two parts, Part I. *Plural Identities and Comparativism*, comprising eleven chapters, and Part II. *Communication and Discourse*, comprising six chapters. However, at a closer look, the editors identified several sub-parts in terms of the topics analysed in the respective articles. Focusing on the academic connections and the contributors' international background, this review represents a brief presentation of the articles, the authors' biographies and their ideas.

Diversity: Racial, ethnic and collective identity proposes five articles, focusing on the construction of identity from a social perspective and the processes of change. In Ch. One, Claudia Costin, Ph.D., from "Ștefan cel Mare" University, Suceava, Romania addresses the ever problematic notion of the Other in "Diversity: An Image of the Difference Regarding the Other". Ch. Two is covered by one of the plenary speeches, "The Negotiation of Authenticity: Hybrid Naming

among Japanese Nationals”, combining the two passions: Japan and sociolinguistics of Leo Loveday, Ph.D., Graduate School Professor of Linguistics at the Faculty of Letters of Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. Oksana Lykhozon, Ph.D. Candidate at “V.N. Karazin” Kharkiv National University, Ukraine discusses “The Comparative Imagology of European Identity: Central, Eastern and Western on the Way to Union”. Ch. Six, “Jean Toomer: *Cane* and Racial Identity” presents the deconstructed racial identity in Toomer’s prose by Amada Mocioalcă, Ph.D., University Center of Drobeta Turnu Severin, University of Craiova, Romania. In “The Otherness of the Moor in Elizabethan England”, Liliana Tronea-Ghidel, Ph.D. from the University Center of Drobeta Turnu Severin, University of Craiova, Romania focuses on the evolution of the concept of race from the sixteenth century to modern times.

The Australian keynote speakers Rosemary Lucadou-Wells, Ph.D. and John F. Bourke’s article fits a second sub-category, *Role and gender identity*. “*What Do I See in the Mist Beyond the Trees?* Reflections on the Role of the Pound Keeper in Colonial Van Diemen’s Land, Australia, and Harpswell, Maine, United States of America” is a comparative work, connecting the two authors’ background as Barristers and Solicitors. Remina Sima, Ph.D. Candidate at the Doctoral School of Letters, University of Craiova, Romania, proposes the article “Work and Intellect in Women’s Lives”, focusing on women’s private and public lives, that can be included within the same topic.

In Ch. Eight, Cătălina Ioana Petre, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Bucharest, Romania discusses virtual identity and hybrid bodies in her contribution, “The Human Body: Are We Becoming a Hybrid?”.

The last sub-category, entitled by the editors, *Spatial identity: discourse on cities* comprises three more papers, whose keyword is city. In analysing two novels by Graham Swift, Alexandra Roxana Mărginean, Ph.D., Romanian-American University, Bucharest analyses “the suburb as a space of ritual and retreat, a ‘heterotopia’ which can neither be defined in Marc Augé’s terms as ‘non-place’ nor ‘anthropological place’” (5) in the article entitled “Revisitations of the Suburb in the Context of Identity Construction Via Use and Abuse of Space”. Another plenary speech was delivered by Mariana Neț, Professor and Senior Researcher at the “Iorgu Iordan–Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics in Bucharest, Romania. Her article, “Cities Speak by Making Noise” impresses by the comparison of two cities by means of their acoustical indexes. In “Urban Metaphors and Identity in Postmodern English-American and Francophone Literature”, Alina Țenescu, Ph.D. at the Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova, Romania conceptualises as well the urban space.

Moving on to the second part of the volume, *Communication and discourse*, the remaining six articles can be divided into two, based on the directions of research they propose: communication (four articles) and terminology. The undersigned’s paper, Ph.D. at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, Romania reviews Canadian author, Margaret Laurence’s presence in Romanian and international research and her reception by critics, literary academics and readers. Ch. Fourteen presents “The

Poppy and Carnation Communicate Life and Death” by Jamila Farajova, from Azerbaijan, Ph.D. Candidate as an ALRAKIS Erasmus-Mundus Action II grantee at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. “Argu[ing] that poetry is a powerful reflection of intercultural relations” (7), Farajova connects two national symbols and two poems, belonging to different cultural contexts. Alexandra Roxana Mărginean’s second contribution to the volume “Grotesque and Abject Bodies in Graham Swift’s Fiction” brings to the fore “the human body, language and the transmission of double meanings” (7). In “Speech Acts in Postmodern Poetry”, Emilia Parpală, the co-editor of this volume and Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova, Romania optimistically reflects upon postmodern poetry in Romania, in the ‘80s and its rhetorical values of performativity.

The part following into the category of *Terminologies*, as a modern scientific interdisciplinary discipline comprises the final two articles. In “Trendy and Cool Terms in the Digital Age”, Mariana Coancă, Ph.D., Romanian-American University, Bucharest, proposes an interesting perspective on terms such as *selfie* or *selfy*, *bitcoin*, *phablet* and *BYOD*. Elena Museanu, Ph.D., from the same Romanian-American University, Bucharest focuses on the incredible dynamism of the economic terminology in “Theories on Lexical vs. Textual Terminology for Economic Terms”.

Last but not least, we have to remark the incredible variety that these researchers invite us to discover and the food for thought they offer to academics, critics, professors or students. Employing the editors’ words, we want to emphasise that “this collection demonstrates unity and coherence with regard to [the] triple banner of comparativism, identity and communication” (8). We would like to conclude by reiterating the support, encouragement and incessant penchant for detail and professionalism of the editorial board. Moreover, these intellectual efforts have already been fructified in a second volume to be published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2016.