

THE ROLE OF ROMANI STUDIES IN HIGHER
EDUCATION:
A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN
THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS AND THE UNIVERSITY
OF PREŠOV



University of Pécs
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Institute of Education
Department of Romology and Sociology of Education
Romology Research Centre

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This paper provides insight into the current situation of the Boyash language in Hungary. The paper introduces language policy regarding Boyash language teaching in the country and summarises some of the most important issues that should be addressed to improve the situation and status of this language.

Until the end of the 1980s, the Boyash language only had an oral version in Hungary. The actual beginning of Boyash literacy dates back to the end of the 1990s, when the Gandhi Secondary Grammar School of Pécs was established. This unique educational institution taught both of the Gypsy languages spoken in Hungary: Romani (Lovari dialect) and Boyash. The written versions of these languages were needed for this purpose. A small group of researchers and linguists started to build up the components of literacy in the Boyash language.

As a result of the past 25 years of work, the Boyash population that used to exclusively nourish an oral culture has just started to have its language described. However, the shift of Boyash to Hungarian language had started long before among the Boyash language users living as minorities. This tendency shows a varied picture among the different communities.

Although their commitment to the Boyash mother tongue is very strong and they feel the necessity of passing on the language to younger generations, they do not consider this task to be theirs but rather delegate it to others outside the family.

The thesis of this paper focuses on the current linguistic status language teaching development opportunities of the Boyash language in public higher education in Hungary.

Keywords: Boyash linguistic situation, language shift, minority language teaching

Introduction

This study introduces the current situation of the Boyash language and population. Despite developing Boyash literacy over the past 25 years, there are fewer people who speak this language as a mother tongue, and among Boyash communities there has been an increasing tendency of switching from Boyash to Hungarian. This contradiction makes the topic of this paper very relevant. The process of switching from Boyash to Hungarian shows some variations in different communities. In some of the communities it is a closed process because only Hungarian is spoken (ORSÓS – VARGA 2001).

There are several publications on Hungarian Boyash, but only a few of these studies are based on scientific research. The lack of scientific resources and motivation in these communities to find their origin could lead to the publication of unempirical research instead of studies with science-based results. Many of these publications are missing the fundamental criteria of science. During research on Hungarian Boyash communities, in most of the cases the majority is unable to distinguish the different languages of Roma, and so they define them as one language – the “Roma” or “Gypsy language”. Research on Hungarian Roma usually mentions the classification (KEMÉNY & colleagues 1976) that defines three main language groups of Roma. These include the mostly Hungarian-speaking largest group, called “romungró”, who also refer to themselves as Hungarian Gypsies or “musician Gypsies”; the Hungarian and Romani speaking Vlach Roma, spelled as “oláh”; and the smallest group called the Boyash Gypsies who

speak Hungarian and an archaic dialect of Romanian (it is spelled “*beás*”). Despite of the above classification, the majority is still homogenizing the Roma and their languages. This is the reason why there is very little information about Boyash Roma and most of the existing resources on Roma are usually unreliable. Hungarian Roma people generally agree that the “Gypsy language” includes two languages – Boyash and Romani. Hungarian Roma communities mostly accept the “Gypsy” group name. However, the two primary groups distinguish themselves from each other. This is why the Oláh Gypsy group call themselves “Roma”, but the Romungro and Boyash refer to themselves as “Gypsy”. Roma is the officially accepted name for Hungarian Roma, but this word has origins in the Romani language and means “Roma man or husband”. (The feminine counterpart is “romnji”, which means “Roma woman or wife”).

Even though there are still different opinions on the usage of these terms, nowadays usage of both Roma and Gypsy is more and more common in Hungary, which could become an acceptable practice for all Roma groups.

The Boyash population in Hungary

The estimated number of Roma in Hungary is 400,000 – 600,000, while the official number is 308,957 (Central Statistical Office, 2011). According to the above-mentioned research of István Kemény, approximately 8% belong to the Boyash group. They mostly live in the south of Transdanubia region. In this region the Boyash population is 30% of the total Roma population and in two counties (Baranya and Somogy) there is a higher Boyash population than the other Roma groups. In other regions there are only a few Boyash speaking Gypsies.

In addition to this data, it is important to note that the Boyash – just like other minority groups in general – took several elements from mainstream culture, customs, and lifestyle. But they also kept several of those features and cultural specificities that distinguish them from the majority of the population. Based on their traditional woodworking profession, the Boyash are also called “trough makers”, who also live in Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia. However, today there is no need for their wooden crafts anymore because of an increase in using plastic tools instead of wooden tools. This paper will not give a complex introduction about the situation of Hungarian Boyash. However, many books and papers (KAHL-NECHITI: 2019; Boros-Gergey: 2019) about Hungarian Roma are available in English.

Circumstances of the Boyash language

According to dialectic research, the Boyash speak a “temporary dialect” that is similar to Romanian dialects spoken in south-eastern Crișana, north-eastern Banat and south-western Transylvania (Saramandu 1997: 7). The origin and changing dialect of the Boyash language are still unknown. Phonological and grammatical system of Boyash in countries other than Hungary are not yet known. In this sense Hungarian Boyash communities are ahead of Boyash communities in neighboring countries. Primarily because of close borders, Hungarian Boyash mostly are in contact with Boyash living in Croatia (Kutina, Virovitica, Čakovec), Serbia (Trešnjevac), and Romania (Timișoara). Based on experiences with Boyash living in the towns listed above, they speak a dialect similar to Hungarian Boyash.

The written form of the language started in the 1990s in Hungary and it is still developing today: *“An important question is why do the Boyash speak Romanian. A possible cause could be that Boyash went through a language shift while living in Transylvania and the region of*

Crișana and Banat. So, they changed their original language to the majority's language. The same language shift is happening in Hungary" (Borbély 2001:80). This "temporary" language – considered an independent language – has three dialects in Hungary: *Árgyelán*, *Muncsán*, and *Ticsán*. Among these three dialects, *Árgyelán* is spoken the most by Boyash. It is a dialect of Romanian spoken in Banat before the neologism of Romanian. *Árgyelán* Boyash speak this language in Baranya, Somogy, Tolna, Vas, Veszprém and Zala counties.

In Alósszentmárton in the region of Southern-Transdanubia, Boyash speak the *Muncsán* dialect. This dialect contains many Slavic words because of the proximity of the Serbian border. In addition – such as the third *Ticsán* dialect – it contains several Romanian words. *Ticsán* is primarily spoken in the eastern part of the country in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. Boyash is accepted by *Árgyelán*- and *Ticsán*-speaking Boyash groups as an ethnonym and a name of their languages. However, *Ticsán*-speaking groups consider themselves and their language to be Gypsy, but not Boyash. The Boyash language has probably been in a diglossic situation in Hungary from its origins as Hungarian is the contact language between the majority population and the Boyash minority.

The Boyash language in Hungary

There is no doubt that the Romanian language spoken in Banat is the foundation of the language spoken by Boyash communities. These languages are not in contact anymore, and they are changing independently. Boyash was an oral language until the 1980s, and then in the early 1990s its written form began with the establishment of Gandhi High School. At the beginning of the 1980s, Gyula Papp, a French and Romanian language teacher, tried to write down the language based on data collected in Pécs, Hungary. He conducted a very important study; however, it did not lead to a breakthrough in the history of written Boyash. Boyash-speaking communities did not really accept Papp's version of written Boyash because they did not feel it belonged to them. This is why this written form did not become more widely known and why communities are not using it today.

The beginning of the 1990s was important not just from a linguistic point of view but also for education policy. A group of young intellectuals established the Roma high school mentioned earlier called Gandhi High school. It became clear that there were no books or resources for teaching Boyash language and culture. The written form of the language was required to develop these types of materials.

Along with identifying tasks, ethnographic research started as well. The research focused on the Boyash language corpus by collecting Boyash songs and folk stories. Katalin Kovalcsik and Anna Orsós conducted this research. There was a great need for establishing the standard written form of the language. The first collections of songs and stories were written according to Hungarian grammar along with a detailed description of pronunciation (KOVALCSIK – ORSÓS 1994). These very first volumes from 1994 are the real beginning of written Boyash literacy. After them, the first Boyash language book was published as the first volume that systematized the language (ORSÓS 1994). Today this language book includes Boyash-Hungarian and Hungarian-Boyash dictionaries as well, and other volumes have been published with song and story collections (ORSÓS 1997, ORSÓS 1998, ORSÓS 1999).

The importance of this work is indisputable, even if it was not completed with sound linguistic principles. The past 25 years illustrate the durability and usability of this written form as several linguistic volumes were published based on it. This written form seems suitable and acceptable not just by most of the Boyash intellectuals, but also for others studying the language

based on the written form. Since 2002 the The Roma Language Group of the Research Institute for Linguistics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has had the goal of descriptive linguistic, anthropological linguistic and sociolinguistic research on Boyash and Romani languages. This research could serve the pluralistic description of Romani and Boyash languages complementing the previous results of the disciplines mentioned above.

A volume titled *Boyash Grammar* was published in the spring of 2009 by the Hungarian Academy of Science Linguistic Department. This volume functions as a systematic grammar book that describes the grammatical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic changes of Boyash.

Education policy

Despite the fact that the Roma have the same rights as other officially accepted nationalities in Hungary, the personal and material conditions required for teaching their mother tongue are still inadequate. Roma/Gypsy languages are only school subjects and not languages of instruction in education, and there are limited Romani and Boyash language classes. This fact strengthens the subordinate status of these languages and native speakers of Roma/Gypsy languages. These individuals often feel that the value of their languages is decreased.

Among Hungarian Roma/Gypsies, there are only a few Romani or Boyash speaking teachers and there is no real Romani or Boyash language teacher education system. There is also a lack of suitable teaching materials such as language books and dictionaries. According to European expectations, it is the government's responsibility to produce suitable teaching materials and organize language teacher training programs.

The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities states the following: *"The maintenance of the primary and secondary levels of minority language education depends a great deal on the availability of teachers trained in all disciplines in the mother tongue. Therefore, ensuing from their obligation to provide adequate opportunities for minority language education, States should provide adequate facilities for the appropriate training of teachers and should facilitate access to such training"* (The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities 1996: 7).

Hungarian laws on the public and higher education system have changed a lot during the past few years. These changes have also had a great effect on Roma/Gypsy nationality education. However, there is not much information about how and to what extent these changes have shaped the development of Roma/Gypsy languages and ethnographic subjects. In Hungary, language and ethnography are core subjects in nationality education. (In Hungary the official term is not "minority" but "nationality".) The Roma/Gypsy nationality education focuses on mediating the culture and strengthening the identity of these groups. Teaching of Romani and Boyash languages provides an opportunity for students to learn about minority languages. In addition, it provides a chance for Roma/Gypsy students to learn or relearn these languages. Roma/Gypsy communities are using their languages less frequently, which is accelerating the process of language shift. This is why the possibility of learning these languages in schools plays a significant role in maintaining these languages. However, teaching these languages could increase prestige and value if it occurred under suitable conditions needed for language teaching. Ethnography as a school subject must supplement what families can provide to create value and maintain tradition. This generates new goals and tasks for schools. Schools with Roma/Gypsy nationality education teach courses on traditions, lifestyle habits and culture according to the National Core Curriculum. Building on these main elements, the different age groups can learn more about

the history of the Roma/Gypsy nationality and their folklore, language and literature. Learning ethnography in school helps students to become more open to diversity and more tolerant. While they become more aware of their own culture, they also become more tolerant of other cultures.

In 2015, research on Roma/Gypsy nationality education (ORSÓS, 2015) examined schools teaching Roma/Gypsy ethnography and/or languages in the framework of the National Core Curriculum in 2014 and 2015. Among 181 surveyed institutions, 22 schools taught Romani and/or Boyash, 10 schools only taught Boyash, 11 schools only taught Romani and 1 school taught both languages. In 2014-2015, 134 schools out of the 181 surveyed taught Roma/Gypsy ethnography. The results of this research show there are several problems on the level of the education system that causes difficulties for the schools. Unsuitable or insufficient nationality teacher education as well as unequal personal and material conditions are proving that in Hungary students do not have access to high quality Roma/Gypsy nationality education. The conditions are simply not suitable for teaching Roma ethnographic subjects and languages. As a result, the goals of nationality education could only be realized partially. In addition, there is a lack of motivation among the parents as few choose nationality education for their kids. The schools apply for this type of education because it is in their interest and based on their needs rather than the parents' motivations.

Among the schools in the study, there was not an example of one with authentic content related to Roma/Gypsy nationality education. Teachers do not have the required knowledge, materials or conditions to make such educational programs successful. In these cases, disadvantaged students including Roma do not have access to quality education.

Methods for maintaining the language

There are different methods for strengthening minority languages and enhancing the process of *language shift*. First, speakers of Roma languages must have a positive attitude about their language. They have to be aware that their languages have the same value as other languages. The appearance of their language must be promoted with the help of the Press, media appearances and by language courses at all school levels. This is a language revitalizing process at the same time because increasing language usage requires new functions. If there are a sufficient number of native speakers, they must be empowered by the revitalisation process to feel interested in teaching new generations. Different strategies for community building and strengthening could also help save minority languages, such as creating supportive and additive educational environments that teach in the given language and not just teach it as a subject. Well- prepared and trained bilingual teachers are needed to teach students how to build on their first language and encourage bilingualism. Improving the adult population's mother tongue usage on institutional levels could also help enhance the value of the language by using minority languages in different TV, radio and online media outlets. Additional strategies include improving reading and writing literacy. Minority language teaching as first or second language teaching could also help create a wider population that is capable of using the language.

Language shift is a process in which a minority language becomes primary in language usage. However, until this process is stagnating, the education system must provide the required resources and help increase overall respect people have for the minority language. It is well known that if a language is not used regularly in education, then unfortunately the language will be in jeopardy.

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A nemzetiségi nevelés-oktatás kerettantervei – Az alapvető jogok biztosa és a Magyarországon élő nemzetiségek jogainak védelmét ellátó biztoshelyettes Jelentése az AJB-3894/2012. számú ügyben, a nemzetiségi középiskolai oktatás helyzetéről. [Framework Curricula for National Minority Education - Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and the Deputy Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of Nationalities Living in Hungary – report with a case number #AJB-3894/2012 on the situation of national minority secondary education

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In this study, trends and snapshots presenting the educational circumstances of the Roma in Hungary over a period of time were explored. Due to the difficulties of accurate data collection, the whole picture could only be examined using fragments. Therefore, general findings should be considered with great care and only in relevant contexts. Overall, the education of Roma has increased at a rapid pace in the last fifty years, but to date this increase has lagged behind that of the non-Roma majority. It follows that there is still a need to facilitate equity programs at all levels of the school system because these initiatives provide equal opportunities and a real chance for disadvantaged Roma students to experience social mobility.

Keywords: Socialisation, education, Kindergarten (preschool) Education, Primary Education. The Roma in secondary and higher education

Socialisation and education

The aim of this study is to introduce key concepts of Educational Sociology that are the most important regarding the education of Hungarian Roma students. Therefore, the first part of this study will focus on defining the notion of socialisation, while the second part will provide data regarding the education of Hungarian Roma students, summarising the latest available results. In the last part of the study, the support programs that promote the success of socially disadvantaged students will be listed briefly.

Socialisation

The human and social sciences have been dealing with the issue of socialisation for decades. Different sciences have studied this process from several perspectives and developed definitions. In the present study, *socialisation* refers to the learning process in which an individual acquires the behaviours, values, skills, competencies, and knowledge required to integrate into a particular community and lead a successful life. This constant process lasts for the entire lifetime of the individual. Socialisation takes place through more than one agent, and it is grouped in a variety of ways by the researchers involved. Tamás Kozma (2001) writes about formal and non-formal agents. The formal agent is the most important in the context of this study, as this is the platform where socialisation takes place through learning and teaching. Anthony Giddens (1995) writes about primary and secondary agents – the primary agent is the family, and the secondary agent begins with formal education. What we definitely know concerning the education of Hungarian Roma is that they are at a disadvantage compared to the non-Roma majority. One of the reasons for this according to researchers in the field of Educational Sociology can be found in differences in primary socialisation – i.e. in the family. This issue logically leads us to theories discussing multi- and interculturality. The question is how can schools effectively and equitably educate children from different cultures and with differences in primary socialisation? In 1975, Adler published his bicultural socialisation theory (FORRAY - HEGEDŰS 2003), which suggested a direct correlation between more effective co-learning and more overlaps between the different agents of socialisation. To adapt this and

put it into pedagogical practice, research on multi- and intercultural pedagogical methods is imperative. This topic is not covered extensively in the study, but more details can be found in Judit Torgyik's study (TORGYIK 2015).

An overview of the education of the Roma in Hungary

The results of any data, statistics, and surveys related to the Roma are determined by the fact that since the change of the regime, the law has prohibited the registration of ethnic and national affiliation in educational institutions; such data can only be provided by parents at school. For this reason, research on the Roma collects data on ethnic and national affiliation in two ways. Some of the research considers someone to be of Roma origin based on the definition of the external environment, while other studies are based on the self-declaration of the target group of the research. This is how Roma origin is determined. In some cases, these methods are mixed, but in our experience surveys on the Roma population are in many cases based on estimates. Therefore, it is difficult to give an accurate picture of the actual number of Roma or data related to their demographic or educational status (See more: LADÁNYI – SZELÉNYI 1997).

In the context of educating the Roma, there is a strikingly obvious difference when compared to educating the non-Roma population. In Hungary, low levels of education are strongly related to social status, family background and geographical location. This has been proven by the results of several recent domestic and international studies. The most important thing for us here is to note that in low-educated social group, the proportion of the Roma is much higher than their total proportion of population in the country. The low level of education of the Roma population is not determined by their ethnic and national affiliation, but by their place and status in society. The second part of this study will try to highlight the possible reasons for this phenomenon.

Kindergarten (preschool) education

In Hungary, the proportion of children attending kindergarten has been steadily increasing in recent decades: in 1970, 51% of the preschool population attended kindergarten and by 1999 the number had risen to 92% (Havas 2004). In addition, it is an important key factor that the three-year preschool period is an essential condition for a successful school career. In 1981, 87.3% of children aged 3-6 attended kindergarten, while only 50% of Roma children of the same age attended kindergarten. The situation was even worse in Borsod and Szabolcs counties, where around a third of Roma children attended kindergarten (Havas-Kemény-Liskó 2001). This is especially true for children of socially disadvantaged families, where even today there is a higher percentage of children not attending kindergarten or starting late around 5-6 years old. According to a study published by Gábor Havas in 2004, in the 2002/2003 school year there were 819 settlements in Hungary where there was no kindergarten at all. Most of these settlements are located in small-village counties with high numbers Roma: Baranya, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Zala and Tolna counties. The study selected the 103 settlements where more than 20 preschool children lived according to the 2001 census. This was then compared with the Roma population and the following results were found: in 56% of the settlements without a kindergarten in the northern region, the proportion of the Roma population exceeded 25%, and in 28% it exceeded 50%. The situation was similar in Southern Transdanubia, where the number of Roma exceeded 25% in less than half of the settlements without kindergartens and 50% in every fifth settlement (HAVAS 2004).

Table 1. The ratio of the Roma population without a kindergarten in the examined settlements

Percentage of the Roma	North N=25	Southern Transdanubia N=40	Other N=16	Total N=81
0–10%	20%	30%	75%	35.8%
10.1–25%	24%	22.5%	12.5%	21%
25.1–50%	28%	27.5%	12.5%	24.7%
50.1%–	28%	20.0%		18.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: HAVAS 2004, 6.

School segregation is cited as one of the main reasons for the lack of success of Roma children in school. Segregation in most cases – especially in the 1980s and 1990s – means (and still means to this day) classifying students into special needs classes, or classes with curricula deviating from the national norm. The aim of these classes is to help students catch up and be integrated into the normal classes when reaching the upper four years of primary school (years 4–8). We now know that such segregated classes are a dead end street for the students involved, and that the Hungarian government acts with legal instruments against segregation. However, it is worth stopping here and examining the reasons for this separation. We know from the results of research carried out in the field that schools most often refer to the fact that children are not school-ready because they do not have the abilities and skills expected by the school. The reason for this is the different processes of socialisation and the lack of kindergarten education.

Katalin Pik and her colleagues carried out research in seven settlements to find out whether Roma children attended kindergarten, examining duration of attendance, proportion of absences and typical causes of absences. Based on the data gathered during their fieldwork – which also included interviews with local mayors and kindergarten directors, teachers and parents – the team concluded with following findings: kindergarten absences are mostly related to social disadvantages, and many families have difficulty paying per diems and providing adequate clothing and equipment for their children. In addition, a comparison of kindergartens shows that kindergarten teachers can do a lot to reduce absenteeism such as creating an accepting, empathetic and helpful atmosphere to reduce distrust amongst the parents and children of socially disadvantaged Roma families (Pik 2000, Pik 2001).

In his study published in 2004, Gábor Havas reports on the following basic shortcomings: in the 2002/2003 school year, there were 819 settlements in Hungary where there were no kindergarten. Of these, 35–40 settlements were identified where experts thought it would be essential to establish kindergartens. This was justified by the number of children and the fact that the settlements were mostly inhabited by multiple disadvantaged families. In an additional 90–100 settlements included in the study that already had kindergartens, Havas found that there was still a need to increase the maximum capacity of these institutions and provide more effective support for families in need of financial help related to kindergarten expenses. In addition, the author states that there is a need to develop a program that brings the institution of kindergarten and socially disadvantaged families closer together (HAVAS 2004).

Kinga Szabó-Tóth visited 25 kindergartens in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and asked the headteachers about the steps they took to ensure that Roma children attended kindergarten regularly. Her study published in 2007 illustrates that three principles have a significant impact

on increasing the effectiveness of kindergarten education for Roma children: more intensive contact with parents, more openness of kindergartens towards parents, and more involvement of parents in certain kindergarten programs (SZABÓ-TÓTH 2007).

Primary Education

In the three decades before the change of the regime, school enrolment also became common among Roma children. According to a 1971 national representative Roma survey conducted under the leadership of István Kemény, only 25% of the then 20-24 age group completed primary school, and 39% of those over 14 were illiterate. From 1971 to 1994, the proportion of those in the 20-29 age group who completed primary school increased from 25% to 77% (KEMÉNY-JANKY-LENGYEL 2004).

Table 2. The total number and proportion of Roma students in primary schools in Hungary in 1970 – 1992

Roma students in primary schools in Hungary									
1970		1980		1985		1989		1992	
number	proportion	number	proportion	number	proportion	number	proportion	number	proportion
59 595	5.35	69 429	5.98	75 148	5.77	73 637	6.23	74 241	7.12

Source: KERTESI–KÉZDI 1998, 313–320.

At the same time, the difference between the educational levels of the Roma/non-Roma population remained very significant, as can be seen from the comparison of the 1994 national representative Roma survey by Havas, Kemény and Kertesi along with the corresponding data of KSH (HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE).

Table 3. Education of the Hungarian population in 1994

Education of the Hungarian population in 1994		
Level of educational attainment	Non-Roma (%)	Roma (%)
Year 0	0.3	9.1
Year 1-7	11.2	32.6
Year 8	35.9	45.8
Vocation school	19.4	10.7
Matriculation	23.8	1.6
Higher education	9.5	0.2
Total	100	100

Source: HAVAS–KEMÉNY–LISKÓ 2001, 8.

In their 2013 study, Katalin R. Forray and Tamás Híves analysed the conditions in the education system. The 2011 census data on the Roma population was examined and displayed on maps according to counties. The study concluded that 22.3% of the Roma population did not finish their primary school education (i.e. 8 years of schooling). This proportion was only 4.5% among the non-Roma population. The Roma population that has not completed primary school is mainly located in northeast Hungary and in Bács-Kiskun County (FORRAY-HÍVES 2013).

Based on the latest census data, the state of educational attainment of the Hungarian population can be determined, which is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Educational attainment of the population over the age of 15 (%)

Ethnicity	Under 8 years of education	8 years of education	Secondary school, with a vocational certificate but not a high school diploma	High school diploma	Degree attained in higher education
Non-Roma	4.5	27.5	21.0	29.9	17.1
Roma	22.3	58.3	13.1	5.1	1.2
Total	4.8	27.7	20.7	29.6	17.1

Source: Forray–Híves 2013

In the table above, the authors used the 2011 census data in which approximately 315,000 people declared themselves to be of Roma origin, but it is also known from sociological surveys that the actual number of the Roma population in Hungary is two or three times the official estimates. What can be declared based on the data presented in the table above is that the education of the Roma population is still far behind that of the non-Roma population. Researchers examining the differences in more depth have found a number of correlations in this regard.

The differences are due to residential and school selection, segregation, low efficiency of schools (poorly equipped, unsatisfactory provision of educational staff) and the socio-economic crisis in the residential environment.

The facts are as follows:

- 60% of Roma children study in classes where the majority of their classmates score low on reading tests, and their results cannot be considered satisfactory in critical reading;
- The majority of pupils from a disadvantaged and/or multiple disadvantaged background study in schools with a very high proportion of similarly socially disadvantaged students;
- In schools with Roma children, the proportion of Roma children increased between 2004 and 2010;
- The number of Roma-majority schools has increased since 2004;
- In 2009, there were almost 300 public schools where students from multiple disadvantaged backgrounds represented the majority.

It can be concluded from the above facts that a significant proportion of disadvantaged and multiple disadvantaged students, some of whom are Roma children, study under segregated conditions. School segregation is associated with lower standards in schools and a much lower

chance of these children continuing their education in secondary institutions that provide a high school diploma or a vocation valuable in the labor market. Of course, this also means that they will have a much lower chance of finding employment, entering university, and being successful in their adult lives.

For a positive change, it would be necessary to provide socially disadvantaged people with the opportunity to break out of this situation. One condition for this to occur would be to improve the quality and efficiency of public education, though this action by itself would not be sufficient.

The Roma in secondary and higher education

Statistical data show that the participation of Roma children in secondary school education has increased since the mid-1990s. Unlike the period before, they are more likely to complete primary school and significantly more of them enrol in secondary schools (primarily vocational schools).

Table 4. Number of Roma students attending vocational training and high school/vocational secondary school/technical school per school year.

School year	Vocational school	High school/Vocational secondary school/technical school	Total
1981/82	3539	528	4061
1982/83	3855	502	4357
1983/84	3663	517	4180
1984/85	3759	497	4256
1985/86	3781	487	4268
1986/87	3872	510	4382
1987/88	4298	553	4851
1988/89	4458	579	5037
1989/90	4337	536	4873
1990/91	3949	523	4472
1991/92	3418	535	3953
1992/93	3336	581	3917

Source: KERTESI–KÉZDI 1998, 454.

Table 5. Educational attainment by age group in 2003

Age group	Educational attainment	%
15–39	General (maximum of 8 years of primary school)	78
	Vocational training	18.6
	Secondary level with final examination (minimum)	3.4
40–59	General (maximum of 8 years of primary school)	85
	Vocational training	12.3
	Secondary level with final examination (minimum)	2.8
60–99	General (maximum of 8 years of primary school)	93.1
	Vocational training	5.8
	Secondary level with final examination (minimum)	1.1

Source: KEMÉNY–JANKY–LENGYEL 2004, 93.

There are several differences when comparing Roma to the non-Roma population. Although the educational expansion that started after the change of the regime also affected Roma students, it was not nearly as much as it was for non-Roma students. Ilona Liskó's research in 2001 showed that 3.2% of non-Roma students did not continue their studies after 8th grade of primary school, but this proportion among Roma students was 14.9% in 1998. Furthermore, while 56.5% of Roma students continued their studies in vocational schools in 1998, only 36.8% of non-Roma students did the same (Liskó 2001). If we examine more recent data, the following can be determined based on Forray and Híves' studies: almost 30% of the non-Roma population had high school diploma in 2011, compared to only 5% of the Roma population (FORRAY–HÍVES 2013).

Thus, the gap between the majority non-Roma population and minority Roma population is fundamentally reflected in the pathways to education, which can be an obstacle to successful placement in the labor market. With regard to higher education, in 2011 we can say that 17.1% of the population over the age of 15 in Hungary had a degree. Within the same group, 1.2% of the population claiming to be of Roma origin could say the same. Geographically, the more educated Roma population is concentrated in Budapest, where the proportion of graduates is 6%, while in Csongrád county rate is only 2.4% (FORRAY–HÍVES 2013).

From the second half of the 1990s, the number of Roma children getting educated increased, along with the likelihood of completing their primary school studies. Ilona Liskó's 2001 study was conducted among 10th grade high school students who had reached the beginning of their vocational training. She examined 177 vocational schools. These Roma students usually attended a village school and continued their studies at a nearby urban high school. Some of them went to special schools for the first four years of primary school. Roma students finished primary school with a 3.2 GPA average. Roma high school students were the weakest in their foreign language studies.

When choosing a career path, Roma children typically should not expect adult help. Usually adults in their families have not experienced academic success, therefore Roma children often do

not have learning strategies or knowledge to build on in their homes. They do not know what is required in order to get into the school of their choice, and parents do not even know the schools that can be considered. Often, primary school teachers cannot be expected to help with this topic either. As a result, the school choice of Roma high school students is determined by traditional and ambiguous childhood plans, as well as local school choices. They usually choose professions that are less common.

Of the high school students surveyed in 2003, 67% participated in schools offering a high school diploma and 33% in vocational training schools. In the case of Roma students, the proportions were reversed (LISKÓ 2001). Situational decisions influenced by the supply of schools, professions and chance very often lead Roma children to schools and professions that do not correspond to their abilities or enable them to prosper in the labor market. This is the reason why Roma high school students often change professions and schools one after the other. It is also common that they discover after their vocational school years that it is only possible to get a permanent job and earnings with a high school diploma. Due to the above factors, Roma high school students who are determined to continue their studies often have to delay their plans, and getting back to their original career paths takes more time and requires more effort. Enrolment in secondary school is a significant change for all children, but it is especially difficult for Roma students. Most Roma students come to the high school from villages, and it is in the high school environment where they get acquainted with the new conditions, people, rules and methods.

By their own admission, half of those students (53%) studying in vocational training achieve their academic results without studying much. Roma students who have managed to continue their studies in high schools offering a diploma are required to make a serious effort to meet the requirements of their schools, and to keep up with students from more favourable circumstances. In vocational training schools, Roma students have difficulty learning foreign languages. As a result, they consider the time and effort spent with learning language completely unnecessary and a waste of time (LISKÓ 2009). However, the successful integration and mobility of Roma high school students depends not only on their individual abilities, determination, ambition and diligence, or on the support of the government, but also on the inclusive skills and openness of majority members in society. Roma students who want to integrate into mainstream society often find even more resistance in secondary schools. A higher proportion of Roma students attend secondary schools that lack funding, materials and resources such as libraries, gyms and internet access. These institutions also hire more part-time teachers and their level of education and professional training tend to be lower.

In the 2000/2001 school year, 16% of 9th graders failed the school year but were able to pass their promotion exam at the end of summer, while 9% of them were retained and repeated the same grade. Among 10th graders this ratio is 13% promoted after grade level exams and 4% retained. Interestingly, the proportion of failing students was lower while the proportion of Roma students was higher in both grades. The most important failure rate indicators in secondary schools are drop-out rates. The research revealed that 36% of Roma students entering the surveyed schools drop out of school in 9th grade and 29% in 10th grade. Thus, drop-out rates are very high in proportion to the total population, despite the fact that their GPA in these first two years is usually not worse than the school average. It can therefore be concluded that the reasons for dropping out are not only to be found in academic failure, but also based on school environment and family reasons (LISKÓ 2005).

What is the reason that Roma students are generally more vulnerable in educational environments than their non-Roma counterparts? They arrive with an array of disadvantages: problems with first language use, incomplete understanding of material culture, lack of conditions for home study, poor housing conditions, less motivation, insufficient parental expectations, and

difficulty adapting to the rules expected by the educational institution. These reasons are all characteristics arising from poverty, so in the case of secondary education lower levels of educational attainment and higher drop-out rates are related to the socio-economic circumstances and social status of the students.

At present, very little scientific data is available on Roma students attending university or college. One of the common characteristics of full-time Roma university students is their relatively older age than a typical university student, which is related to the fact that many of them start their studies after having started a family. Their environment often does not recognise young, talented Roma people, and they often end up in vocational training schools. Researchers addressing this issue are interested in the specificities of the school life of Roma students in higher education. The results of the studies can be summarised as follows.

In many cases, their family backgrounds are characterised by extreme poverty or difficulties in state care, so students from the traditional Roma community they can only gain access to higher education with great effort. The socio-economic background of Roma families is characterised by low employment, with only one-third of fathers being employed (FORRAY 2013). In terms of education, three-quarters of the fathers of students in higher education have an educational attainment above the first 8 years of primary school. More than one-third of these students have a sibling with a successful career in higher education, which is an indicator that if the process of schooling begins in a family, younger children are more likely to follow.

Every second Roma studying in higher education today does not enter higher education the usual way: they do not bring the skills and routines of becoming an intellectual with them from home. But it is also worth emphasising that today – after two decades have passed since the change of the regime and the ratification of the relevant laws – every second Roma student enters higher education in a similar way as the majority of students (SZABÓNÉ 2013). Three-quarters of students do not speak the Roma language, but a sense of belonging to the Roma community is very important to them, suggesting an increase in ethnic self-awareness (FORRAY 2013).

Anna Kende's in-depth interview study with a sample of twenty people divided them into three groups based on their life paths and patterns appearing in them: those whose parents consciously considered learning and breaking away from Roma traditions to be an ideal medium for school careers; the first generation of Roma intellectuals who had major turning points in their lives on their way to university; and the second generation with parents assigned the Roma intellectual career to their children (KENDE 2005).

Educational policies and support programs

In this study the history of educational policy changes concerning the Roma nationality begins with the change of the regime. The reason for this is only the size limitation of this study, so it is essential to emphasise that the aforementioned sources provide very important information for understanding the educational circumstances of the Roma. The reader is strongly encouraged to study and use these sources.

The most important measures of the two decades after the change of the regime can be described in two very different directions in relation to the education of the Roma population. In the 1993 law on the rights of national and ethnic minorities, the state ensured the opportunity for all nationalities and ethnic groups to practice their language and culture even in school institutions. It also provided remedial and talent programs for Roma children. Thus, in the present case, the programs established for cultural self-awareness and overcoming disadvantages are

applied simultaneously, in the same target group, thus confusing an ethnic group with a group described by social characteristics (VARGA 2012). As a result of this process, the public opinion has emerged that if a student is socially disadvantaged they must also be of Roma origin. This is of course not true; based on sociological research, approximately one-third of the 700,000 people living in deep poverty belong to the Roma minority.

The educational success of disadvantaged students is supported by several programs in Hungary. Impact studies have been carried out on their effectiveness, but as their operations have only lasted for 10-12 years, it is difficult to evaluate them (see for example: Kézdi-Surányi 2008). Ilona Liskó's study published in 2006 examined the educational interventions that started after 2002, summarising them by arguing that educating socially disadvantaged students is a distinguished responsibility of the state. She divided the results into three groups:

1. Political tools:

- Establishment of a ministerial commissioner and office (2002)
- Government measures against exclusion (eg. the Jászladány case)
- Amendment of the Education Act: prohibition of school segregation (2003)
- An amendment to the law prohibiting primary school admission selection (2005)
- Prohibition of the admission procedure and preference for disadvantaged students from outside the school district (2002);

2. Financing procedures:

- The category “disadvantaged” is introduced in the distribution of benefits (parents only have primary education and child protection benefits)
- Additional funding (“integration quota”) for primary schools
- The National Network of Integrating School (NNIS) established in 2003 to promote inclusive education and to stop segregation by establishing 45 institutions and appointing regional coordinators
- Introduction of scholarship programmes: HEFOP, Bursa Hungarica, Macika, Romaversitas;

3. Pedagogical procedures and programs:

- “Útravaló” scholarship programs: grant schemes (2005)
- Expansion of the János Arany Talents Management Program with a dormitory-based sub-program (AJKP) designed to help even more disadvantaged students (2004).

Since the programs described above, several “expansions” have been implemented. The János Arany Talents Management Program has been extended to vocational training schools, and in the higher education system the Christian Roma Special College Network was established by the government in 2011. The establishment of Roma vocational colleges is not new. In 1988, the “Invisible College” of the Romaversitas Foundation (also known as “Romver”) was established, followed by the Wlislöck Henrik³¹ (Roma) Special College (WHS) organised by the Department of Romology³² and Sociology of Education at the University of Pécs in 2001. With regard to the support programs, it is worth noting the

31 For more information visit: About the WHS | University of Pécs (pte.hu)

32 For more information visit: Department of Romology and Sociology of Education | University of Pécs (pte.hu)

Department of Romology and Sociology of Education, which has been operating independently at the University of Pécs since 2002. This workshop collects scientific data, processes and conducts research regarding the Roma population, and tries to convey the cultural values of the Roma ethnic group (i.e. languages, traditions, customs) to its students.

For Roma vocational colleges, it is important to state that this initiative fills a gap as this type of organisation did not exist specifically for Roma students in higher education before. These vocational colleges support their students through their studies all the way to graduation, and try to compensate for the disadvantages of public education by various means (i.e. competence development, foreign language learning, vocational and community programs). There are currently eleven such Roma vocational colleges in Hungary, all located in different university cities. A number of articles were published about the Pécs vocational college in connection with Roma vocational colleges, which mainly examined the members and membership, the operation of the organisations, and their pedagogical programs (Varga 2013; Forray-Galántai-Trendl 2015; Trendl 2015). In order to examine the efficiency of the vocational college in Pécs, the employees also carried out important action research (VARGA 2015).

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This study first discusses the various aspects of the topic of equal opportunity, including specifying the legal basis, analyzing the different aspects of the contents, and clarifying the concept of equity. The next part focuses on the determining role of the social mechanism of acquisition and perpetuation of different forms of capital, touching on the issue of schemes of social perception and bias and illustrating its relation to the context of social coexistence strategies.

Then variations of interconnected inequality factors (acquisition or lack of capital and social perception) are located between two axes of a graph in which the vertical axis shows the degree of access to goods while the horizontal axis reveals the rate of investment in obtaining goods. The causes and the impacts of these relationships are demonstrated through examples of Roma minority.

Keywords: Educational inequalities, family, school, social capital

Introduction

The members of Roma/Gypsy communities in Hungary continuously confront social prejudices and experience inequalities while being unable to escape the vicious circle of poverty and social stigma. The low educational attainment, exclusion from the labor market, insufficient living environment and health conditions are accompanied by deep-rooted prejudices in society, which affect Roma people without exception, regardless of their social status (Csovcics, 2002, FORRAY-PÁLMAINÉ 2010, CSERTI CSAPÓ-ORSÓS 2013). Despite legitimized international legal decrees going back many years, there has been no remarkable breakthrough in the living standards and social perception of the Roma population. In the next parts, different approaches towards equal opportunities are explored, and the preserving and prevailing mechanisms and historical conditionings of social inequality are identified. In the last section of this study, the way social factors influence the coexistence strategies of different groups in society, especially with Roma and their communities, is discussed.

Equality and equity

The democratic principles and fundamental human rights of the Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) have formed the basis for all issues and interventions related to equality throughout the world for 70 years. The Declaration guarantees and proclaims the equal and inalienable rights in 30 articles³³, bringing attention to the need to offer compensation for inequalities.

All of this rests on historical experiences rooted in Hammurabi's law and ancient democracies, which were later embodied in the ideal of "Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood" of the French Revolution. After dismantling the inherent natural rights (aristocracy) during the European revolutions in the middle of the nineteenth century, granting of "acquired rights" (meritocracy) emerged as a general social expectation. By the middle of the 20th century, equality became a

³³ https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/uhdr_translations/hng.pdf
(downloaded: 2021.04.16.)