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Roma pupils in Slovakia's educational system –
the obstinate transition from segregation to inclusion

A Critical Analysis of contemporary Discourse
about Inclusive Education of Slovak Roma children

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Abstract

This master thesis deals with the discourse on the obstinate situation of Roma children within Slovakia's educational system. Critically analyzing contemporary publications (based on the Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough) of Slovak and international researchers in respect to what obstacles to quality education for Roma children prevail despite of international commitments and conventions it attempts to show the profound inequality of opportunities that Roma children face when trying to escape poverty.

It shows how the mono-cultural and early-dividing system of education together with culturally and socially insensitive diagnostic tools, cause the overrepresentation of Roma (deriving from socially disadvantaged backgrounds) in special education institutions, while official data about their attendance and achievements in special care are unavailable. Moreover, it highlights the incompatible systems of standard and special education limiting reintegration of these children, while attempts to maintain the children in segregated care are visible. This circumstance reveals the influence of the normative financial system that causes special schools to 'fill in' as many Roma children as possible, as well as the pressure of non-Roma parents not to mix their children with Roma pupils. It is argued that these attitudes are mainly based on the prejudice that Roma pupils would lower the quality of education through their dire view of the value of education. However, in disagreement it is argued that the failure of many Roma children is rather caused by bad experience with the Slovak educational system and the developed fear of assimilation that was enforced throughout 50 years in the past, the unsuitable conditions resulting from poverty (bad housing conditions, limited basic working habits, low education of parents, limited attendance of pre-school education), low expectations of the school system, racial discrimination, but mainly methods and curricula not sensitive enough to the specific characteristics of Roma. Moreover, it is argued that the inattention of different Slovak governments to these obstacles and therefore lack of systemic solutions present resilience to positively changing the situation of Roma pupils in Slovakia.

The thesis further renders the amount of various recommendations these publication provide and compares them to the aim of inclusive education to create a system in which all pupil's individual needs would be met and developed to their fullest potential. Moreover, research of Slovak Roma immigrants' education in the UK provides international comparison that gives insight into how changes in the systemic approach (resulting in inclusive education) may serve to enhance the educational outcomes of Roma pupils. It also provides inspiration of how

schools may use the 'index of inclusion'¹ for self-evaluation and thus start changes from within the institutions.

Henceforth, by critically analyzing the discourse about suggested strategies for enhancing the educational opportunities of Roma children this research aims at highlighting recommendations that should be applied within the educational system, if a transition to inclusive education in Slovakia shall be successful. It is a conviction of the author, that equity of opportunities for all children can only be achieved in an inclusive system which values cultural diversity and creates conditions for all children to participate in it, while specialized help is provided within regular classes (in most cases). This requires not only systemic and legislative changes (together with supporting programs such as after-school care and scholarship programs for the poorest), qualified teachers (and their cooperation with other professionals such as special pedagogues) but most of all change in attitude of the majority as well as the Roma themselves. Roma teacher assistants could serve as mediators between schools and Roma communities and thus enhance the involvement of parents in the educational process of their children, positively affecting the attendance and achievements of Roma pupils. Therefore, participation of Roma pupils in mainstream education might not only enhance the opportunities of Roma to escape poverty, but also have a positive effect on the mainstream perception of Roma in Slovakia.

Key words: Roma education, quality education, inequality in and through Slovakia's educational system, discrimination, segregation, special and inclusive education, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough), international comparison

¹ Ainscow & Booth (2002)

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Foreword (or the first personal introduction)

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA²), like other social sciences, “needs to be reflexive and self-critical about its own institutional position”³. Writing this foreword is an attempt of such positioning and explaining the relationship to conducting this research. Besides, it may as well be understood as the first stage of the CDA as in the first illumination of the need for such a topic⁴; The reason for choosing the topic of Roma inclusion into Slovakia’s educational system for my master thesis goes back to my profound interest in recent international developments regarding the special needs education such as the UNESCO initiatives; Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disability. While it may seem that those documents focus rather on the right of access to education for all children in general, they also draw attention to the crisis of quality in education particularly in connection with socially disadvantaged students, as are Roma children in many countries. Since access to education seems to be more fundamental (especially in developing countries) as well as easier to be measured, advanced attention to quality in education has been rather avoided in many international documents⁵. Yet, in connection with socially disadvantaged children in Europe, it is not access but rather the quality of education that prevents children from marginalized groups, migrant’s children, etc. from gaining further opportunities in life. Even though it may seem that Roma children are provided education, the numbers of Roma children attending special provisions or being diagnosed as children with special educational needs especially in countries of Central and Eastern Europe rather suggest segregation (if not discrimination) of certain groups in education. Moreover, these circumstances place Roma children within research on special needs education even though they should be considered within general (inclusive) education.

Another reason for choosing this topic may be found in my interest in comparative research in the area of special needs and inclusive education. As the world is “globalizing” and data from all over the world start to be available, comparative studies are becoming interesting in their potential of providing positive (as well as negative) examples of dealing with a certain issue. However, as some examples already show, ‘good practice’ in one country does not mean

² If not defined differently, this thesis refers to the understanding of CDA as described by Fairclough 2003, 2010; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007.

³ Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 9

⁴ for the stages of Critical Discourse Analysis see Chapter 3 of this thesis

⁵ “Because education indicators mainly rely on quantitative data, they often disclose very little about the quality of the education provided, with the exception of certain skills acquired by pupils.” (Beco, Hyll-Larsem & Balsera 2009, 2)

success in another country, since specific historical and cultural circumstances have to be considered. In my opinion, comparative research has a great potential of being able to provide the necessary background information about countries' specific settings as well as the options of adopting certain practices. This puts a requirement on the researcher in two ways: to be engaged as much as possible to understand the countries specific settings while simultaneously retaining a distance for the needed objectivity. Not growing up in Slovakia and yet being somehow close to it gives me the chance of not being influenced by prejudices against Roma. This will likely provide the much needed objectivity to the thesis. On the other hand, being Slovak and being raised close to Slovakia gives me the advantage of understanding main cultural and historical circumstances. Additionally, by studying in Slovakia for my Bachelor in Special Needs Education gives me the important insight into the specific situation of special needs education in Slovakia. Moreover, understanding the Slovak language gives me an advantage of being capable of analyzing not only English and German but also Slovak documents. This fact constitutes an opportunity to broaden the access to material available for analysis and thus the profound understanding of the issue.

Although it would have been interesting to conduct a research involving interaction with Roma in Slovakia (both qualitative and quantitative interviews) and analyze their experience with the educational system, I propose to review official documents about Roma education. The main reason for this is that those publications will influence policymakers in their decisions to provide educational provisions for Roma children. Thus the intention of this thesis is to analyze to what extend the recommendations included in these documents will enhance inclusion or, in contrary, build further obstacles to quality education of Roma children. In recent years the discourse analysis has shown itself as a useful methodology for this kind of analyses⁶. Therefore, CDA has been chosen as the method of analyzing texts as well as theory of looking at (research and political) documents as tools to influence social practice by identifying the structures of practice as well as strategies of changing them, and, by its explanation and critical interpretation, contributing to the discourse and even potentially transforming social structures⁷.

⁶ c.f. Keller 2011

⁷ c.f. Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 1

1. Introduction

In contemporary international discourse about special needs education discussion is focused on the need to include all children in the mainstream educational system thus transforming conditions of providing opportunities for quality education and social equity to all children regardless of their individual learning needs, their cultural, and social or language backgrounds⁸. Consequently, researchers in individual countries examine the current situation of (special needs) education with the aim of highlighting deficiencies and providing recommendations for policymakers who have the power to change conditions for disadvantaged children. Yet, in many countries these changes appear to be conducted too slowly. Moreover, the initial efforts seem to lead to even greater difficulties in education than intended. Who is to blame? Is it the unrealistic goal of valuing diversity, the unchangeable system of education, the reluctance of teaching personnel, the policymakers or the society? Is it the ill-defined recommendations, research or adopted strategies?

Candlin writes that critical discourse analytical research would be a 'contributive agent for social change', seeing critique primarily as a "seeking of the means of explaining data in the context of social and political and institutional analysis, and in terms of *critiquing* ideologically invested modes of explaining and interpreting, but always with the sights set on positively motivated change"⁹. Thus proposing that through critically explaining and interpreting historical and political context of discourse one is able to understand social order and consequently contribute to changing circumstances for people experiencing injustice. Accordingly, this thesis's aim in analyzing contemporary research as well as political papers on national and international level is to make at least a small contribution to changing the unjustifiable situation of Roma children in and through Slovakia's educational system.

Although Slovakia, as other countries in Europe, has experienced a shift (from entirely segregated provisions) towards educational integration of children with disabilities within the last few years, this change doesn't seem to be too visible within the education of Roma children. On the contrary, not only are Roma children being diagnosed far more often to have special needs, placed proportionally more often into special schools than children of the major population (or even other minority groups), but in many schools throughout Slovakia Roma children

⁸ c.f. UNESCO 2009

⁹ Candlin 2010; cited in Fairclough 2010, ix, emphasis in original

experience separation through a complete division of classes, hallways and cafeterias¹⁰. These provisions indicate a need for change. But what changes will lead to enhancing the situation of Roma children and why is this relevant for their future opportunities in life?

The justification for choosing Critical Discourse Analysis for this master thesis may be found in that “the basic motivation for critical social science [and also the motivation for CDA] is to contribute to an awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives”¹¹. Accordingly, in this research, attempts to make changes in the education of those children should be made visible through the critical analysis of contemporary publications about the education of Roma children. Are the current (as well as the proposed) provisions trying to assimilate them into the major society (to *integrate* them) or to respect their different characteristics and help finding their unique position in Slovakia’s society (to *include* them)? What evidence is there to support these findings? Moreover, what strategies are being proposed by educational researchers to enhance the education of Roma children and what is the outcome? What are the (historical, cultural, social etc.) reasons for a certain resilience (of Roma and the major society) to the proposed strategies for change? Why are so many programs aimed at helping Roma failing? Consequently, the key research questions of this thesis can be formulated as followed:

What are the main obstacles to including Roma pupils into Slovakia’s educational system as identified by contemporary research and political papers? Which recommended strategies for overcoming these obstacles have the potential of leading to inclusive education and thus enhancing the opportunities of these children?

This research question implies the aspiration of not only listing obstacles and latest strategies for overcoming them recommended by various researchers, activists, organizations and policymakers. What is more, the various recommendations should be examined and interpreted in accordance to whether they give the perspective of enhancing inclusion in education or whether the actions proposed will only lead to further segregation. This is to be achieved by analyzing those recommendations from the perspective of the idea of inclusion. By summarizing those positive recommendations, this thesis could possibly provide inspiration for current

¹⁰ c.f. “The court ordered to end segregation of Roma children” (Slovak newspaper SME from January 9th 2012 at <http://korzar.sme.sk/c/6209394/sud-prikazal-skole-prestat-segregovat-romske-deti.html> [9.1.2012]) and Amnesty International 2010

¹¹ Calhoun 1995; cited in Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 4

policymakers in formulating goals for starting the transition to an inclusive education which would provide equal opportunities for Roma children.

Prior to the detailed description of the methodology used in this thesis and some further questions of the proposed research, I shall first address the perception of key principles (such as the already used terms 'discourse' and 'analysis' as well as segregation/ integration/ inclusion) of this thesis as the specific understanding of words and terms (semiotics) seems to be crucial to the further text analysis¹². In the third chapter the stages of CDA shall be presented and characteristics of the further analysis will be elucidated. Afterwards I will provide a closer look at the evidence about the situation of Roma in Slovakia with a specific focus on the position of Roma pupils in the Slovak educational system while embedding it in international initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. This inspection shall provide the basis for showing how the current provisions of education for Roma children in Slovakia produce 'social wrongs'¹³ and why there is a 'need' for addressing them.

Consequently contemporary documents¹⁴ of researchers from Slovakia as well as documents by international organizations about Slovakia shall be analyzed focusing on obstacles to inclusion, strategies for overcoming them and factors of resilience to changing the obstinate circumstances. Within the analysis of documents from Slovak researchers political papers about Roma inclusion shall be considered, too. This is because political decisions (as well as inattentiveness to them) have a strong impact on the circumstances in which Roma education is provided¹⁵. Moreover, within these documents factors might be identified that would help us recognize if there is political will to change the obsolete circumstances. Additionally, some research about experience with (Slovak) Roma inclusion in the UK shall be analyzed to provide an insight of what is possible if certain circumstances change and thus inspire ways to enhance the inclusion in Slovakia with an international comparing view on the subject¹⁶.

¹² c.f. Fairclough 2003; Fairclough 2010

¹³ c.f. Fairclough 2010, 226

¹⁴ Although many difficulties within the education of Roma children may remain the same for many years, within the main research only newest publications (from 2009-2012) will be considered, to show the latest developments and initiatives. Older documents will be considered for the other parts of the thesis.

¹⁵ According to Fairclough there has been a pervasive influence of the economic system on political changes within the last thirty years which affected provisions of social life, claiming that through understanding these circumstances one is able to "contribute to overcoming or at least mitigating (...) obstacles and limits" (Fairclough 2010, 2)

¹⁶ A complete list of the documents to be analyzed can be found in Appendix A.

Finally, if possible, recommendations to the analyzed specific obstacles of the inclusion of Roma children in Slovakia shall be provided. These may not include new (unknown) recommendations, yet through critically analyzing the ones proposed by other educational researchers the recommendations leading to inclusion in the specific context of Slovakia shall be highlighted and a proposal outlined that could provide a starting point for those dealing with changing the educational system. Consequently, these findings might contribute to enhancing the opportunities Roma children in Slovakia may have in their future.

2. Perception of key concepts

As mentioned earlier, within the Critical Discourse Analysis¹⁷ the perception of the meanings of words (semiotics) is considered crucial to discourse, since those are produced (and processed) in context – “locating them within the practical engagement of embodied and socially organized persons with the material world”¹⁸. As a consequence “we must examine not only texts that generate meaning and thereby help to generate social structure but also how the production of meaning is itself constrained by emergent, non-semiotic features of social structure”¹⁹. Hence the aim of this chapter is to locate the used terms into perspective of social relations and to determine how they will be understood for the purpose of this thesis. Firstly, an insight into the theory of discourse and critical analysis (as proposed by Fairclough) will be provided. This shall propose theoretical background for the main analysis of this thesis. Secondly, the terms segregation, integration and inclusion shall be elucidated as their perceptive is considered fundamental for the further analysis of contemporary publications. Especially because this perceptive gives rise to the strategies of educational changes which can either increase well-being of Roma or construct further obstacles to it. But before we do that let us conduct with the question what discourse is and what gain it brings to analyze it.

2.1. Discourse and critical analysis within the CDA

Fairclough positions discourse into a ‘complex set of relations’ including “relations of communication between people who talk, write and in other ways communicate with each other”²⁰. Thus claiming that discourse is not simply ‘an object’ or entity we can define independently: “we can only arrive at an understanding of it by analyzing sets of relations. Having said that, we can say what it is in particular that discourse brings into the complex relations that constitute social life: meaning, and making meaning.”²¹ Yet, this ‘meaning-making’ is only one sense of discourse and often referred to as ‘semiosis’ by Fairclough²². Other meanings include the ‘language associated with particular practice’ or ‘ways of construing aspects of the world associated with a certain perspective’²³. The understanding of discourse as ‘semiosis’ is considered ‘relational’ (‘in relation with each other’), ‘dialectical’ (constituted by

¹⁷ as described by Fairclough and who’s methodology shall be presented in greater detail later on in this thesis

¹⁸ Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2010; cited in Fairclough 2010, 206

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Fairclough 2010, 3

²¹ *ibid.*

²² c.f. Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 230

²³ *ibid.*

each other) and ‘transdisciplinary’ (as it cuts into questions and develops its methodology across disciplines – this is perceived as a form of interdisciplinary research)²⁴. Therefore, these essentials always need to be explored in a ‘dialogue’ with social processes and with each other. Social processes are understood as interplay between three levels of social reality: *social structure, practices and events*²⁵. The semiotic dimension of social practices is *order of discourse* and the dimension of events is *texts*²⁶: “An order of discourse is a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of meaning-making – different genres, discourses and styles.”²⁷ Consequently, discourse focuses on *structures* of social practice and on the *strategies* of social agents for changing them: “This includes a focus on shifts in the structuring of semiotic differences (i.e., shifts in orders of discourse) which constitute a part of social change, and how social agents pursue their strategies semiotically in texts.”²⁸ This shift within CDA, not only considering existing structures but strategies too, may be explained through the failure of proposed strategies to change structures – ‘to transform them in particular directions’:

“While neo-liberal capitalism was relatively securely in place, the priority was a critique of established, institutionalized and partly naturalised and normalised systems, structures, logics and discourses. This is not to say that strategies were irrelevant: it was a dynamic system seeking to extend itself, and it had to face a number of lesser but still serious crises, both of which entailed the proliferation of strategies to achieve particular changes and trajectories. Nevertheless, for a time the priority for critical research and CDA was to gain greater knowledge and understanding of it as a system. To an extent that agenda is being overtaken by events (‘innovations’). (..) But shifting the priorities to strategies does not mean we can ignore the structures of neo-liberal capitalism: they will not disappear overnight, and they may prove to be more resilient than seems likely at present.”²⁹

For that reason there would be the need to move from ‘descriptive analyses’ to a ‘normative evaluation’ of structures and strategies. According to Fairclough this could be accomplished only by a shift from negative critique to positive critique “which seeks *possibilities* for

²⁴ accordingly those three elements are basic properties of this particular CDA

²⁵ c.f. Fairclough 2006; cited in Fairclough 2010, 74

²⁶ c.f. Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 152

²⁷ Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 232f

²⁸ Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 233f

²⁹ Fairclough 2010, 17

transformations which can overcome or mitigate limits on human well-being”³⁰. This seeking of opportunities to overcome obstacles could be achieved through the analysis of discourse according to ‘internal’ and ‘external’ relations with other ‘objects’³¹. These relations as well as their ‘functions of ideology’ (hence serving power and creating factors resilient to change) could be interpreted and explained through textual analysis.

Consequently analysis (and critical analysis as a specific form of it) is perceived in CDA as a form of examining discourse and thus social structures and strategies: “Critical analysis aims to produce *interpretations* and *explanations* of areas of social life which both identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could (in the right conditions) contribute to righting or mitigating them.”³² This statement implies that critical analysis deals with already existing interpretations of other researchers, historians, politicians etc. in an explorative way and thus is able to reveal circumstances in which others seek to govern or regulate the social world. “A critique of some area of social life must therefore be in part a critique of interpretations and explanations of social life. And since interpretations and explanations are discourse, it must be in part a critique of discourse.”³³ But why should one’s own interpretation of discourse be considered superior to other critiques of discourse?

*“The only basis for claiming superiority is providing explanations which have greater explanatory power. The explanatory power of a discourse (or a theory, which is a special sort of discourse) is its ability to provide justified explanations of as many features of the area of social life in focus as possible. So we can say that it is a matter of both quantity (the number or range of features) and quality (justification).”*³⁴

Based on these assumptions of discourse and analysis and their relation, in this thesis research papers (as forms of interpreting social life and recommending ways of change) and political papers (as strategies of transforming social practices) shall be seen as forms of communication and thus constituting discourse. The analysis of them will be mainly a critical analysis of proposed arguments (‘internal’ relations), their historical and political framing (‘external’ relations) to expose their ideological character for justifications and legitimating of practices and recommendations for change compared to the concept of inclusive education.

³⁰ Fairclough 2010, 14; emphasis added

³¹ c.f. Fairclough 2010, 4

³² Fairclough 2010, 8; emphasis added

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Fairclough 2010, 8f

Consequently, the aim of Critical Discourse Analysis and thus of this research is the (re)production and transformation of society by means of constructing social identity, a social relationship between persons and the construction of knowledge and belief systems: "Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning." ³⁵ Therefore Fairclough formulates three basic characteristics of CDA which should define what CDA is and what it isn't:

1. *"It is not just analysis of discourse (or more concretely texts); it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process.*
2. *It is not just general commentary on discourse; it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts.*
3. *It is not just descriptive, it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspect and possible ways of righting or mitigating them."* ³⁶

The methodology of how such a normative analysis should be conducted shall be presented in the chapter about methodology of CDA and the proposed research. Hence, let's turn to the concepts of understanding segregation, integration and inclusion and their influence on the further opportunities of Roma children.

³⁵ Fairclough 1992, 64; cited in Keller 2011, 29

³⁶ Fairclough 2010, 10

2.2. Exclusion – Segregation – Integration – Inclusion

It may seem that terms such as segregation, integration or inclusion may be quite clear as they are used frequently in the present international discourse, yet this assumption may turn out to be quite tricky. Especially the mistaken usage of terms integration and inclusion as equivalents often results in wrong expectations and further in misunderstandings between the parties. Hence, the terms should be closer examined and their perception for the purpose of this thesis made comprehensive. Especially since in many countries the term inclusion is understood within the context of Roma as social inclusion of Roma into the major society. Yet in this thesis the understanding of the term inclusion will be used in connection to education, where the term originates from the international discussion about the education of children with special needs. Although the idea of inclusion is much older, at present the UNESCO with the “Education for All” Initiative (1990), the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which has already been signed by 153 countries³⁷ may be named as the international proponent of inclusive education. Slovakia signed the Convention in 2007 and ratified it in 2010³⁸.

As a result of these initiatives and international commitments a significant change in the education of children with disabilities may have been observed in many countries during the last few decades. The children with disabilities that were previously completely excluded from the educational system were now placed into schools that were set up to fit their specific needs (special schools) dividing them according to their individual disabilities. They should now be educated according to their abilities with methods specifically developed for them, yet the consequence was the social isolation from their families as well as from the major society (“segregation”). Parents of the segregated children started to fight for the right of their children to be “integrated” into public schools at the place where they lived. At the beginning this model of educating children with disabilities seemed to work, some of the first research studies showed promising results of the children with disabilities as well as their environments³⁹. Yet those were mainly strongly motivated teachers and parents who made it work. After laws were passed making it possible for all the children with disabilities to be integrated into any school, the difficulties came in the view. Many teachers felt unprepared for these changes and many parents of non-disabled children feared that their child’s education would be negatively

³⁷ UNESCO (2012): <http://www.un.org/disabilities/countries.asp?id=166> [10.1.2012]

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ c.f. Speck 2010

influenced by the child with a disability. Many children with disabilities experienced renewed isolation, bullying, failure in education and feeling of disappointment. Social participation wasn't possible through a simple "placement" into regular classes and methods used in regular education were not adjusted to fit the child's special needs. Support was limited. The (wrong) assumption that the child would adjust to the majority consequently led to a perception in which a child was the problem⁴⁰. Something had to be changed. Yet, this time the adjustment had to be made within the environment. The postulate of an "inclusive school" was to change in its whole structure, not just by adding supporting measures in a traditionally organized school⁴¹. Thus, the call for inclusive schools may be understood as a claim for a reform of the whole school (and consequently the whole educational system), in which the individual's needs would be valued and supported. Disability, in the same way as socio-economic status, ethnical, cultural, religious and social diversity, should be seen as just one aspect of the heterogeneity of the school⁴². This heterogeneity should be considered as a positive quality, as a resource for all learners⁴³. Consequently the goal of inclusion is not only a complete social participation of all persons; moreover the acceptance and valuing of difference⁴⁴. In order to reach this goal in schools the change is required not only in the learning and teaching processes but also in the organization of schools as such including the values and attitudes that lead to the practices⁴⁵.

Bearing that in mind in order to outline the difference between integration and inclusion it should be distinguished between integration as practice of placing children into regular classes and providing support so they are able to follow the majority of the class; and inclusion as a goal (in many countries still only a goal, in some (for example in some schools of the UK) already a practice) of the practice where the differences of children are taken into consideration during education so that social interaction between the parties is enhanced. It is a claim for individualized education and support for *all* children⁴⁶ according to their own possibilities: „The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential.“⁴⁷ At present time, the relation between integration and inclusion as they are being used by various educational researchers can be understood in two ways; inclusion as the consequence of integration, where integration

⁴⁰ c.f. Mittler 2000; cited in Polat 2010

⁴¹ c.f. Biewer 2009

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ c.f. Biewer 2008

⁴⁴ c.f. Lipsky & Gartner 1999; cited in Daniels & Gartner 1999

⁴⁵ c.f. Polat 2010; Biewer 2008, 2009

⁴⁶ c.f. Speck 2010

⁴⁷ UN Convention 2007, 17

is the process, the way how to reach the final goal of inclusion⁴⁸; or inclusion as the only process of reaching the ideal of valuing difference, thus replacing the term of integration and heading for a new goal⁴⁹. The latter option is being considered to be the desired one and yet it includes a danger that in the process of heading for inclusion integration will be mistaken for inclusion as the right method to achieve the goal. This is because the consequence of this may be seen in many schools which rename their integration programs into 'inclusive' ones and thus seek to excuse the status quo of otherwise almost segregating conditions⁵⁰. In view of that, Slee & Allan's claim from 2001 still applies: „[w]e are *still* citing inclusion as our goal; *still* waiting to include, yet *speaking* as if we are already inclusive"⁵¹.

In summary, the present use of the terms may be described often as analogous (especially in the Slovak literature), yet it seems crucial to distinguish between the goals of the practice to see what the outcome will be (adjustment (even forceful assimilation) to the majority vs. appreciating difference and providing all needed measures for participation). Speck argues that the analogous use of terms is not as important as the fact that the beginning process of changing the education system occurs in a way where the pupils with severe learning difficulties [or similarly every Roma child] will be acknowledged their right to education and not become victims of an illusion, in which schools will be left unaided in their tasks and troubles⁵².

Thus, this chapter's goal was to introduce this thesis's perception of the terms integration and inclusion by outlining the importance of how understanding those terms will influence their outcome in practice. Therefore if referring to inclusion in this thesis it should always be in the sense of appreciating all children with their individual (and thus different) needs while heading for an educational system in which every child has the chance to participate. Moreover, inclusive system of education is not to be viewed as better for the children that might need special attention, but rather for all children as they might experience diversity and learn tolerance. When using the term integration it should be understood as a critical reference to practice that might be leading to further segregation of disadvantaged groups and children, because too little respect is given to their individual differences (which might be culture, language, etc.) or sometimes it shall also be used in connection with single (successful) projects

⁴⁸ c.f. Hall 1997; cited in Biewer 2001, 256

⁴⁹ c.f. Polat 2010, 50

⁵⁰ c.f. Graham & Slee 2008; cited in Gabel & Danforth 2008, 81

⁵¹ Slee & Allan 2001; cited in Graham & Slee 2008, 82; emphasis in original

⁵² „ob der nun beginnende (...) Umbauprozess des Bildungssystems in einer Weise erfolgt, dass Kinder und Jugendliche mit erheblichen Lernproblemen wirklich zu ihrem Recht kommen und nicht samt ihren Eltern und Lehrern Opfer einer Illusion werden, indem man die Schulen mit ihren Aufgaben und Problemen allein lässt“ (Speck 2010, 8).

with the idea of inclusion, yet in which it would be exaggerating to talk about inclusion. Having this in mind, within the critical analysis of this research the publications will be examined in regard to whether they enhance inclusion or rather (only) integration and thus maintain an educational system resilient to diversity. Although in Slovakia the topic of Roma inclusion is being generally referred to as “the Roma problem” (or less intimidating “the Roma question”), within this thesis it will be shown that it should rather be seen as a ‘social wrong’ that needs to be addressed accordingly.

Let me present the methodology of the research in greater detail within the next chapter.

3. Methodology of the research

“I use ‘methodology’ rather than ‘method’, because I see analysis as not just the selection and application of pre-established methods (including methods of textual analysis), but as a theory-driven process of constructing objects of research (...) for research topics”⁵³. In this sense the chapter will built upon the theoretical considerations of discourse and critical analysis already presented earlier, and will offer justification for using CDA as the methodology for the research about enhancing Roma inclusion. Yet as the statement above indicates, the methodology of CDA is not based on applying strict methods, neither is it associated with a general method, but rather ‘constructs’ its object of research by converting it into a ‘researchable object’⁵⁴. Accordingly, Fairclough⁵⁵ formulates four ‘stages’ and further ‘steps’ through which this could be achieved (Chouliaraki and Fairclough⁵⁶ formulated a fifth ‘stage’ which is not mentioned again in Fairclough’s later works, however, it should be presented as well at this point):

Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect.

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong.

*Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.*⁵⁷

*Stage 5: Reflect upon the position of the researcher in relation to the problem and the analysis.*⁵⁸

Comparing to earlier versions of these stages⁵⁹ the preferred term has been shifted from ‘problem’ to ‘social wrong’. Fairclough explains this through understanding ‘social wrongs’ in a broader sense involving forms of injustice, inequalities or lack of freedom which “could be ameliorated if not eliminated, through perhaps only through major changes in these systems, forms or orders.”⁶⁰ These stages and their further steps shall be explained in more detail at this point while their application to the topic of this thesis shall be presented in the next chapter.

⁵³ Fairclough 2010, 5

⁵⁴ c.f. Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 235

⁵⁵ c.f. Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010

⁵⁶ c.f. Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007

⁵⁷ Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 235ff

⁵⁸ Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 66

⁵⁹ c.f. Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007

⁶⁰ Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 235

3.1. Stages of CDA according to Fairclough

3.1.1. Stage 1 – Focus upon a social wrong in its semiotic aspect

This stage is focused on better understanding of the nature and sources of social wrongs. The two steps within this stage are focused on constructing the object of research, first by choosing the topic based on its significance to contemporary research as well as its 'implications for human well-being';

*Step 1: Select a research topic which relates to or points up a social wrong and which can productively be approached in a transdisciplinary way with a particular focus on dialectical relations between semiotic and other 'moments'*⁶¹

This drawing upon signification of the topic can be achieved by the second step, the theorization of the topic according to its 'point of entry' in which it will be discussed. Thus it should include theories of semiosis and discourse (this step can be seen as a form of showing the theory/theories that the topic is built upon within its context);

*Step 2: Construct objects of research for initially identified research topics by theorizing them in a transdisciplinary way*⁶²

3.1.2. Stage 2 – Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong

The second stage asks about the organization and structure of social life which hinders it to be addressed. Thus it approaches the social wrong indirectly by focusing on the relation between relevant texts and other semiotic elements in three steps;

Step 1: Analyse dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements: between orders of discourse and other elements of social practices, between texts and other elements of events.

Step 2: Select texts, and focuses and categories for their analysis, in the light that is appropriate for the constitution of the object of research.

*Step 3: Carry out analyses of texts, both interdiscursive analysis and linguistic/semiotic analysis.*⁶³

Although textual analysis is the main focus in the third step, the other steps indicate the need for dialectical approach of various theories and disciplines within the approach. Within CDA textual analysis includes linguistic analysis and interdiscursive analysis (which analyses styles, genres,

⁶¹ Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 235

⁶² Ibid., 236

⁶³ Ibid., 237

discourses and their relations). Thus it analyses social practice through events (actions, strategies) as well as structures and strategies⁶⁴.

3.1.3. Stage 3 – Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong

This consideration is a linkage from ‘is’ to ‘ought to be’ and tries to show how specific social orders naturally initiate social wrongs. By presenting these contradictions of social order it should be moreover shown a desire to change those circumstances. This stage also includes considerations about ideology – it includes the question if the resistance to change isn’t desired for sustaining relations of power and dominance⁶⁵.

3.1.4. Stage 4 – Identify possible ways past the obstacles

The fourth stage focuses on the possibilities of overcoming hindering circumstances for changing the undesired social wrongs. The aim of accomplishing this is through a move from negative to positive critique by challenging ‘dialectical relations between semiosis and other elements’ as well as their organization – ‘its argumentation, its construal of the world, its construal of social identities and so forth’⁶⁶. Accordingly, this stage builds upon findings from the previous stages and tries to distinguish the arguments that might be useful for overcoming the obstacles of inequalities.

3.1.5. Stage 5 – Reflect upon the position of the researcher in relation to the problem and the analysis

Every research, even the CDA with its flexible ways of constructing objects of research, has its limitations. This stage is a reminder of an ongoing process of reflecting one’s own position and relation to the research – the determining aspects of it and the theoretical background one brings in.⁶⁷ My assumption why this stage is not mentioned in the later works of Fairclough is that this stage should not be kept separately from the others, but should be drawn upon in every of the previous stages. Accordingly, this stage will not be considered in this research separately but will mention limitation whenever it will seem important. Hitherto, the first positioning has been already offered within the foreword to this thesis.

⁶⁴ c.f. Chapter 2.1. – Discourse and critical analysis within the CDA

⁶⁵ c.f. Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 238f

⁶⁶ c.f. Fairclough 2008; cited in Fairclough 2010, 239

⁶⁷ c.f. Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2007, 66

3.2. Stages of CDA for the presented research

3.2.1. Stage 1 – Relevancy of the research topic

What are the reasons for researching the education of Roma pupils and why are we bringing this in relation to inclusive education? What is the 'point of entry' for conducting this research? This thesis comes in a time when inclusion in education is being more and more promoted and research papers about Roma inclusion are being published by various activists, NGOs and international organizations as tools for legitimating and even enforcing the transformation of the educational provisions for Roma children. The international discourse about inclusive education in the light of international commitments (as are the Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Decade of the Roma Inclusion) seem to be the driving forces providing the desired changes. Some of these relations have already been mentioned in the foreword and in the introductory chapters, yet through a more detailed view of circumstances of Roma education and the theorization of international commitments towards Roma inclusion this research shall be legitimated and thus the object of research constructed⁶⁸.

The questions asked within this section will be: *What are the main reasons for supposing social inequalities in the education of Roma children in Slovakia? Why is it a social wrong to segregate Roma children (into special schools or segregated classrooms)? Who are the main promoters of change in the provisions of Roma education in Slovakia? What 'implications for human well-being' can be defined? What are the most commonly referred commitments and arguments in the analyzed contemporary documents justifying the need for change?*

3.2.2. Stage 2– Critical analysis of documents

The next stage⁶⁹ – 'identifying obstacles to addressing the social wrong' – shall be conducted through the analysis of contemporary documents⁷⁰ and thus bring together linguistic analysis together with other interdiscursive elements to identify the social order and practice which needs to be addressed to change the provisions of Roma education. Moreover, within the analysis of

⁶⁸ This will be done in Chapter 4 – Roma pupils in Slovakia's educational system - In this chapter it shall be drawn upon sources as are research and political papers – these will not be limited only to contemporary documents, since historic and cultural context seems very important here as well.

⁶⁹ This stage will be divided into two chapters; Chapter 5 - Obstacles to Roma education and Chapter 6 -Strategies for overcoming obstacles to inclusion.

⁷⁰ Some older documents may be considered in this part as well if they recognize obstacles which are not mentioned in more recent publications.

obstacles to the social wrong we shall analyze not only the social practices and structures, but also strategies to overcoming these obstacles. As already presented in the theory of discourse *“CDA has an important role in critical research focused on strategies because strategies gave a strongly discursive character: they include imaginaries for change and for new practices and systems, and they include discourses, narratives and arguments which interpret, explain and justify the area of social life they are focused upon – its past, its present, and its possible future.”*⁷¹ Thus only through analyzing the recommendations of addressing the social wrong (the suggestion for enhancing inclusion in education) the appropriateness of those recommendations can be revealed. This needs to be conducted through textual analysis as well as through examination of dialectical relations between the documents (or rather the promoters) and the social practices.

Thus this stage includes questions about the identification of obstacles to addressing inclusion of Roma children within Slovakia's educational system: *What main obstacles to addressing the inclusion of Roma children are being diagnosed within contemporary documents? How is inclusion (and segregation) understood in the documents? What are the key aspects described that support or hinder inclusion of Roma children into Slovakia's educational system? How are special needs of Roma children defined, how are they being diagnosed and with what effect are they taken care of? In the case of inclusion/integration, what help is provided or supposed to be provided to the children, families and teachers?*

About the role of strategies: *“What strategies are emerging, what are their origins, and what groups of social agents are promoting them?” What are the main actions recommended by contemporary researchers or politicians for enhancing inclusion of Roma pupils in Slovakia's educational system?*

Thus, the data corpus is going to be examined in regard to authors' beliefs and interpretation of the term “inclusion” and their analysis of practice. Those involve their perceptiveness to causes of segregation, poverty and to learning difficulties of Roma children (internal or environment-dependent). The selection of documents for the ‘data corpus’ has been conducted as follows; Since the conditions the Roma live in are always specific in each country (dependent on history, culture and social conditions) the focus of the analysis shall be on the literature from and about Slovakia's Roma children. Nevertheless experience with the inclusion of Slovak Roma children

⁷¹ Fairclough 2010, 18

(immigrants) from other countries (such as the UK) show, that through changes in the educational environment success of those who are formally diagnosed as mentally disabled may be achieved. That is why in this research limited literature about good practice of Roma inclusion in the UK shall be examined, too. The samples of the data corpus have been selected by the criteria⁷² of time relevance and availability⁷³.

3.2.3. Stage 3 – The resilience to change

This stage⁷⁴ is very closely connected to the previous stage, since it builds upon some of the findings from the analysis, yet it conducts its own analysis of ideology. This means that considerations about the 'ought' will be drawn upon and questions about why some strategies are being considered in favor of others shall be asked: *Which strategies are coming to be selected at the expense of others, becoming dominant or hegemonic? Which strategies get to be implemented and actually shape social transformations and, potentially, changes in structure and systems? Why these and not others? What are the power and dominancy relations that influence the resilience to changing the conditions of Roma education?*

Yet, because these are questions of power and dominancy relations within politics, there might be some limitations to results within this stage. Thus there might be further questions or hypotheses given within this stage rather than real answers. Nevertheless, these questions are considered important since they influence whether anything is going to change within the access to quality education for Roma children.

⁷² as proposed in Keller (2011)

⁷³ *Availability*: Although documents in various languages (English, German, and Slovak) are to be examined, the availability is a crucial factor to the process. Slovak libraries (University library as well as the database of the main library connecting all other main libraries), University libraries (the library of the University of Vienna, the Comenius University in Bratislava, the University in Nitra (the university hosting Roma sciences) and the University of Prešov (in eastern Slovakia, the special education department specializes on Roma education), the internet was searched for any available documents on the given topic. Since this is a relatively new topic (not discussed before 1989), there is no surprise available academic literature from libraries was scarce. Most of the documents are from Roma activists, (inter)national organizations concerned with pledging for equal rights and better conditions of Roma (SGI, OSF, REF, etc.) as well as various political papers (from Ministries etc.).

Up-to-date (contemporary): As already mentioned, the topic is quite recent and so is development on this topic. Literature older than from 2000 is very difficult to find, even on topics as the special education of Roma pupils. To show the most recent development only documents from 2009-2012 will be considered for the main analysis.

⁷⁴ c.f. Chapter 6 –The resilience to changing conditions of Roma education

3.2.4. Stage 4 – Recommendations to ways past the obstacle

The final stage⁷⁵ will be a summarization of those strategies for changing the educational provisions for Roma children that were identified according to the analysis to have the potential for overcoming the obstacles of the undesired social wrong where Roma children are placed into segregated educational provisions. This shall be conducted through a positive critique of the arguments for inclusion from the analyzed documents. This includes the question: *Which strategies are, or are not, likely to lead to a progressive way out of segregating provisions for Roma pupils, which strategies can bring real improvement in human well-being, and tackle major inequalities?* Let us turn our attention to the first step of the analysis. What is the current situation of Roma education in Slovakia and why is there a justification for supposing it to produce social wrongs?

⁷⁵ c.f. Chapter 7 - Conclusion & Recommendations for enhancing inclusion of Roma in Slovakia's educational system

4. Roma pupils in Slovakia's educational system

What are the main reasons for supposing social inequalities in the education of Roma children in Slovakia? And what need is there to change these circumstances? Why is segregate education regarded as disadvantaging for these students even if this is done with good intention of providing specialized aid? Consequently, this chapter is to show why Roma education in Slovakia is to be considered discriminative and thus should present the 'social wrong' to be researched. Moreover, it is to examine what declarations and arguments are used most often to justify and promote the involvement of all children in the mainstream educational system. But first there is a need to define who those Roma children are that the research is referring to when speaking about their inclusion. Does this involve all Roma equally? Within this chapter the focus will be set on the specific circumstances of Roma living in Slovakia, even more specifically on their involvement in Slovakia's educational system.

4.1. Roma in Slovakia – a minority group

Although many Slovaks (and maybe even researchers) would say otherwise, it has to be understood that the group of Roma is quite heterogenic⁷⁶. Thus, as in other ethnic groups, within the group of Roma there are all social groups represented. Nevertheless, almost in every country a numerously large group of Roma is emerging from socially disadvantaged settings. This is why the main focus of this thesis is also set on Roma children who have been exposed to poor stimulation surroundings⁷⁷ for a long time or have by any reason been classified as children with special educational needs⁷⁸ and thus been placed in segregating educational settings⁷⁹. Those Roma (children) very often live in poverty with bad housing conditions (often segregated in (il-)legal settlements, municipalities or even ghettos), have poor access to health

⁷⁶ c.f. Horňák 2010; cited in Lechta (Eds.) 2010, 386

⁷⁷ The reason why the term socially disadvantaging background will be preferred to the term socially disadvantaged settings is to highlight the ongoing process of influencing these children in comparison to the majority.

⁷⁸ Or rather disabilities, whereas mental disability with the assigned curriculum for variant A is the most common diagnosis of Roma children; variants B and C are reserved for greater degrees of mental disability. (c.f. REF 2009, 29f)

⁷⁹ "Segregation can be either direct - *de jure* (implementation of rules separating students into categories) or indirect - *de facto* (setting seemingly neutral rules leading to practical separation of students). Both types of segregation are equal in terms of consequences. The following three types of segregation can be found in the Slovak education system:

- *Separated education of Roma students in special elementary schools* (classes or elementary schools for special needs students);
- *Separated education of Roma in elementary schools with a majority of Roma students or strictly Roma schools* (schools in the proximity of socially segregated or excluded areas);
- *Separated classes in elementary schools reserved for Roma students* (classrooms may be located in separate buildings)." (Pauliniová & Tichý 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 164)

care and employment opportunities. Yet, reliable data on all of those factors, as well as the exact number of Roma population in Slovakia, are quite difficult to find. Various reasons for this may be described. First of all there is no agreed definition of who Roma are, since by the Slovak legislation ethnicity and nationality⁸⁰ are considered to be the same thing. Consequently “the government resolved the inability of experts to agree on the definition by introducing its own – the Roma are citizens considered to be Roma by the majority population.”⁸¹ Although a lot of times not defined this description is used in most of the Roma-oriented surveys⁸². Secondly, collections of ethnicity-based data within issues of the major population are very limited, if any available due to the anxiety these information may be abused for racial discrimination⁸³. Therefore most of the data about Roma come from estimations, registers and selective surveys.

When taking into consideration only the official data from the national census in 2001, based on self-declared ethnicity of the respondents having Roma nationality their number in Slovakia would be only about 90 000, representing about 1.7% of Slovak population⁸⁴. This number has not changed much in the latest national census in 2011, where the percentage was 2 %⁸⁵. Yet estimations by various Roma activists divert extremely from this number and suppose up to 800 000 Roma living in Slovakia⁸⁶. More realistic estimations (and the ones mostly referred to in contemporary research) state about up to 430 000 Roma in Slovakia, which is about 8 % of Slovak population⁸⁷. This percentage makes Slovakia a country with the highest percentage of Roma in Europe compared to major population⁸⁸. Since the number of Roma is growing faster than the major population, in only a few years in 2020 the percentage of Roma that will be living in Slovakia is estimated to rise to 10 %⁸⁹. Given the poor conditions most of them live in, and the

⁸⁰ The distinction is being made between a person's citizenship (*štátna príslušnosť*) and nationality (*národnosť*): “Among the reasons why many Roma do not declare themselves as members of Roma national minority we can find social stigmatization and confusion between the terms “citizenship” and “nationality” (as ethnicity).” (OSF 2010¹, 76)

⁸¹ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 5

⁸² c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 5

⁸³ c.f. SGI 2010, 57

⁸⁴ c.f. Slovak Statistical Office 2002; cited in Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 9

⁸⁵ c.f. Slovak Statistical Office 2012: <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=44044> [9.3.2012]; Yet this last survey was not attended by many people, since a few days before the census information was revealed that the forms could be tracked down to person. Consequently many people were afraid to provide correct information about themselves.

⁸⁶ c.f. REF 2011

⁸⁷ c.f. Vaňo 2001

⁸⁸ c.f. Vančíková 2011; cited in Kubánová & Vančíková 2011, 45

⁸⁹ c.f. Vaňo 2001

vicious “circle of failure”⁹⁰, this percentage gives rise to concerns about their further opportunities in life;

According to Atlas of Roma Communities⁹¹ the estimated number of Roma living in poverty (within 1 087 municipalities and 1 575 settlements) reached 300 000 people (out of which about 31 % were children)⁹². Although the collected data were not analyzed in terms of social exclusion, 149 settlements were defined as segregated by not having access to infrastructure⁹³. This circumstance is influencing the health of many Roma, since about one-third of the dwellings are illegal with no indoor plumbing⁹⁴. The results are more common infectious diseases (as hepatitis, poliomyelitis and meningitis) than among the major population⁹⁵. Accordingly the infant mortality among Roma is approximately twice as high for Roma as for non-Roma and life expectancy with about 55 years for men and 59 years for women is about 12 years lower than that of the major population⁹⁶.

Official unemployment rates of Roma are not available in Slovakia⁹⁷. Slovak authors estimate their unemployment rate is up to 46 %, or even more “[we] estimate that between 2006 and 2010 about two thirds of the Roma resigned on finding employment”⁹⁸. According to some other authors’ estimations, within some municipalities and even some regions the unemployment rate among Roma is up to 100 %⁹⁹ with “as much as 80 percent of Slovakia’s Romani population [...] dependent on the state’s social welfare net.”¹⁰⁰ Similar results are shown through the survey of UNDP of about 4000 respondents in 2005: “about 73 % of Roma households (regardless of their integration with the majority) generally depend on welfare benefits, but only about 11 % received housing benefits and 6 %¹⁰¹ received school scholarships for their children¹⁰²”. Yet

⁹⁰ “... very common shortcomings of Roma parents (low education, unemployment and criminality) negatively affect the perceived failure of their children raised in inadequate social environment.” (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 3)

⁹¹ c.f. Juráskova et al. 2004; cited in OSI 2010¹, 79

⁹² c.f. Slovak government 2003; cited in Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 11

⁹³ c.f. Juráskova et al. 2004; cited in OSI 2010¹, 79

⁹⁴ c.f. REF 2011, 10f

⁹⁵ c.f. REF 2011, 10

⁹⁶ c.f. REF 2011, 10f

⁹⁷ c.f. OSI 2010¹

⁹⁸ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 5

⁹⁹ c.f. Vančíková 2011; cited in Kubánová & Vančíková 2011, 39

¹⁰⁰ Loran 2002; cited in Vašečka; cited in REF 2009, 39

¹⁰¹ Thus, the most common benefits of Roma is family support (‘the more children, the more money’) and not assistance in material need, since these are tied to having permanent residence, which many Roma living in illegal settlements do not have. This is especially problematic in connection to education, since only those children, whose parents receive assistance in material need, register for the status of a child from socially disadvantaging settings. Consequently many schools can’t apply for supplementary funding (or the funding of teacher assistances) even though a large number of children from poor settlements attend their school (for more detail c.f. Rafael (Eds.) 2011)

these numbers are not surprising at all if taken into consideration that 50 % of unemployed persons in Slovakia have no or only elementary education and the policies are set in such a way that welfare benefits pay more than income from low-quality work: “This is a classic example of creating dependency on the welfare system and creating a poverty trap”¹⁰³. Moreover the factors of low education, unemployment, poor living conditions together with forced assimilation and discrimination based on skin color lead to about one fifth of all Roma committing (even though minor) crimes¹⁰⁴. It seems there is no way out of this vicious circle of created dependency, their poverty and hence the sociopathic behavior.

Although not an instant solution, it might be the only sustainable one – to provide adequate quality education for Roma and thus enhance their opportunities to find employment that would improve their well-being. Especially since unqualified positions in times when employment even for qualified workers is hard to find are even more limited¹⁰⁵. This makes success in education (not only formally obtaining a degree, but rather quality education providing relevant ethnicity-sensitive knowledge and life-skills) more important than ever. Accordingly it may be argued that equal opportunities of quality education provide the basis for “equal opportunities for functioning that is necessary to participate effectively and as equals in society”¹⁰⁶.

However, the current situation of Roma children in Slovakia’s educational settings is daring and much needs to be changed if equal opportunities are to be achieved for them. Consequently the next chapter is to show what numbers of children are being educated in specialized school settings and why this is producing social inequality even if this is done in the best interest of the child.

¹⁰² Filadelfiová et al. 2006; cited in Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 12

¹⁰³ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 18

¹⁰⁴ c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 5

¹⁰⁵ „Unemployment among persons who complete at most primary education is much higher than the national average of eleven percent (100 percent among persons with no education and 44.6 percent for persons with only primary education)” (REF 2009, 39)

¹⁰⁶ Terzi 2010, 181

4.2. Inequity in and through Slovakia's (special) education

Estimated 14 % of the overall number of school-age children in Slovakia represent Roma (and this number is to rise to 16 % until 2030¹⁰⁷) of which 48.7 % were attending special schools in 2004¹⁰⁸ and represented over 75 % of all children attending special schools¹⁰⁹. More recent publications show that the estimated numbers of Roma pupils being educated in segregated setting have not changed a lot, if they have changed at all. That happens only because the children moved to different provisions of segregated education, such as special classes. Although official data suggest that only 5.3 % of pupils in special primary schools are Roma¹¹⁰, field research conducted by REF¹¹¹ on a representative sample indicates a percentage of 59.4 % Roma students out of the total number of pupils enrolled in special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools and special secondary schools between 2008-2009. If we consider only special classes¹¹² in standard schools the numbers account for 85.8 %¹¹³. The numbers may be viewed in the following table:

Table 1: Estimates of the number of Roma pupils in special education based on director and teacher estimates from field research conducted by REF (2009)¹¹⁴

Type of school	Number of all pupils enrolled	Number of Romani pupils	Proportion of Romani pupils
Special primary schools	13,807	8,200	59.4%
Special classes in standard schools	5,590	4,795	85.8%
Special secondary schools	5,114	1,794	35.0%
Totals	24,511	14,789	60.3%

¹⁰⁷ c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 16

¹⁰⁸ c.f. ERRC 2004; cited in Luciak 2008, in Biewer et al. 2008, 42

¹⁰⁹ c.f. Save the Children 2001; cited in Luciak 2008, in Biewer et al. 2008, 42

¹¹⁰ c.f. Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva 2007; cited in REF 2011

¹¹¹ c.f. REF 2009

¹¹² "Within-school segregation can also take place at the level of individual classrooms, or within the classroom. (...) As this study aims to make clear, the combination of spatial segregation between Roma and non-Roma with the placement of Roma in special education is a frequent occurrence in Slovakia, resulting in large numbers of *de facto* ethnically segregated special schools and classes." (REF 2009, 13f)

¹¹³ c.f. REF 2009, 8

¹¹⁴ REF 2009, 8

Experience from other authors (from NGOs and various Roma activists) suggests that these numbers are close to reality or they are even underestimates as in certain special (and standard) schools the percentage would reach 86 % – 100 %¹¹⁵. Accordingly, in the 2007/2008 school year there were 179 special primary schools, 216 special classes in standard primary schools, and 71 special secondary schools serving children with at least mild mental disability in Slovakia¹¹⁶. Yet even if attending standard education Roma children often drop out of school very soon. Comparisons of the highest reached education of Roma and non-Roma show that while about 80 % of Slovaks have higher than elementary school education and 11 % complete higher than high-school education, within Roma about one third don't have even elementary school education, one third conclude only elementary school, 15 % complete high-school and only 0.2 % complete higher than high-school education¹¹⁷. These numbers indicate high inequality in the provided education for children from various social and ethnic backgrounds.

It may be argued that these inequalities start as early as when applying to school (usually) at the age of six. Most schools use an easy test to find out about the readiness of children to attend school¹¹⁸. Not completing the test successfully may result in deferral of school attendance for a year, enrollments in a 'zero grade' or enrollment in special education (all of these options should be decided by a school psychologist after further diagnosis of the child¹¹⁹). Yet, according to Tomatová deferral of school attendance is the least frequent option for Roma children, generally it is enrollment in zero grade classes placed in standard primary schools: "Integrated into the Slovak state education system in 2002, zero grades divide the material from the curriculum for the first year of standard primary education into two years with an eye on preparing children for entry into standard primary school classes"¹²⁰. However, the transition to standard primary school classes happens only rarely. More often children from zero grade classes continue together as special classes and thus never integrate with the other children. Placement of children in preparatory grades in special primary schools for children with mild disabilities tends to lead to continuance of special education, since the material delivered is

¹¹⁵ Tomatová 2004a; cited in Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 21

¹¹⁶ c.f. REF 2011, 20

¹¹⁷ c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 21; The Slovak school system is divided into pre-school education, which is not mandatory, primary school with 9 grades, secondary education with 4 or 5 grades and tertiary education (universities). A more detailed overview with the various school types may be found in Appendix C.

¹¹⁸ The test of school readiness includes the drawing of a male figure, imitating written fonts and tracing of a group of point and is supervised by the class teachers. This is perceived as sufficient for deciding positively about school readiness. In case that the child doesn't manage to pass the test, further diagnosis from a school psychologist is needed to confirm developmental delay (c.f. <http://www.skolskyportal.sk/clanky/orientacny-test-skolskej-zrelosti> [9.3.2012])

¹¹⁹ c.f. Špotáková 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011

¹²⁰ Tomatová 2004a; cited in Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 19

extensively simplified. In later grades (re)-integration to standard classes is significantly limited due to the 'wide gap between standard and special curricula'¹²¹. Possibilities of pupils attending primary education in special schools or even classes are very limited. Either they continue to special technical schools (*odborné učilištia*) or practical schools that are intended for 'mentally disabled students' as preparation for sheltered workshops (*chránené dielne*). The vocational certificate from special technical schools enables only an employment under the supervision of better skilled workers¹²². Yet the lack of opportunities for finding employment for Roma (not uncommonly connected to racial discrimination) motivates them to rely on social benefits rather than attend secondary education¹²³.

These rendered options together with the high percentages of Roma children attending these special provisions show the dire opportunities these children will have in life. They also indicate the 'social wrong' these children are facing simply because not enough help is provided (especially) during their first years in school. Accordingly, it may be stated that "the Slovak education system's early and rigid division of children into educational streams reinforces social inequalities, such that children from low-income families are more likely to end up with lower levels of educational attainment, which in turn make it probable that the next generation of children will be raised in poverty"¹²⁴. Given these circumstances especially non-governmental and international organizations call for equal opportunities in education of Roma children promoting change through drawing on international commitments and declarations. By means of research they try to provide governments with evidence that the current provisions are unsustainable.

Henceforth, what arguments do the main promoters mostly draw upon to justify their call for inclusive education? What international commitments towards Roma inclusion have been signed and how are they being addressed in Slovakia? The next chapter should present some of the main associated international initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and thus bring the topic of this thesis into context of international discourse and comparative inclusive education. Moreover, it should be argued that international legal

¹²¹ REF 2011, 21

¹²² c.f. REF 2011, 21

¹²³ c.f. REF 2009, 38; Accordingly, in the school year of 2008/2009, the percentage of pupils not transferring into secondary education after completing special primary school for mentally disabled was 46.5, indicating an alarmingly high number of pupils with only little hope for further employment.

¹²⁴ REF 2011, 25

provisions are all the more important in the context of Slovakia as domestic legislation is absent or too weak to provide background for real changes in the elimination of segregation¹²⁵.

4.3. International commitments towards Roma inclusion and other arguments for justifying equal opportunities in education

It may be argued that only through the admission of Slovakia to the European Union (EU) the issue of Roma segregation has encountered more attention and encouraged a wider discussion¹²⁶. Through the signing of legally binding documents as well as possibilities to apply for financial support for projects aiming at equal treatment of minorities, rights and opportunities of all citizens were intended to be secured. International organizations and initiatives were founded to monitor and support the agreements: “one of the most important functions international organizations can fulfill is the setting of standards which has at least two advantages over individual national standard settings. Firstly, it ensures comparability between cases and avoids bias to a certain group of people or the unique actor constellation in one country. Secondly, international institutions engage in norm setting as a non-partisan actor who does not pursue its own ethnic interest.”¹²⁷ On the other hand these institutions barely have any enforcing power to implement actual changes “[they] depend on their member states’ willingness to implement commonly agreed conventions, declarations, jurisdictions and policy targets”¹²⁸ Therefore their only way of promoting changes in countries is through research and financing of ‘good practice’ projects.

¹²⁵ c.f. Rafael & Kahátová 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 8

¹²⁶ „...positive changes only started to happen after criticism and pressure from EU members, commissioners and international institutions, which collected materials and analysed the situation of Roma education in Slovakia.“ (Oláh 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 131)

¹²⁷ Agarín & Brosig 2009, 10

¹²⁸ Agarín & Brosig 2009, 10

4.3.1. Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and REF

One of the initiatives for enhancing the specific situation of Roma throughout Europe is the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 signed by Slovakia in 2005¹²⁹. This initiative was originally started by a group of Roma activists concerned with the fact that Roma throughout Europe were facing strong poverty, segregation and discrimination from the major society. Accordingly the main goals of the Decade are to improve socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma by focusing on four core areas; education, employment, health and housing. Additionally, governments should be encouraged to address relating core issues of poverty, discrimination and gender mainstreaming within their countries¹³⁰.

At present the Decade encompasses 12 countries¹³¹ and is financially supported by a number of international organizations, including the World Bank, a number of programs of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE¹³². To assess progress through research the DecadeWatch Initiative was founded and is since supported especially by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank¹³³. Its publications and study findings with concrete measures and suggestions are provided to the national policymakers¹³⁴.

As education is considered to be one of the most important subjects to be addressed in relation to improving the situation of Roma sustainably, the Roma Education Fund (REF) was established in 2005 with the goal “to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs including desegregation of educational systems”¹³⁵ by financing various projects that are designed to meet the goal,

¹²⁹ “Building on the momentum of the 2003 conference, ‘Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future’, we pledge that our governments will work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as identified in our Decade Action Plans. We declare the years 2005-2015 to be the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and we commit to support full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives and to demonstrate progress by measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences in the implementation of the Decade’s Action Plans. We invite other states to join our effort.” (DecadeWatch 2007, 13)

¹³⁰ c.f. Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015: <http://www.romadecade.org/about> [14.11.2011]

¹³¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain – of which all have significant Roma minorities living in rather economically and socially disadvantaged conditions (ibid.)

¹³² OSF 2010²

¹³³ c.f. DecadeWatch 2007

¹³⁴ c.f. OSF 2010²

¹³⁵ Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015: <http://www.romadecade.org/about> [14.11.2011]

especially those that are initiated by Roma representatives as referred to the Disability Movement's statement "Nothing about us without us."¹³⁶

In the same way as other countries the Slovak government has also specified concrete goals in the Slovak National Action Plan of Roma Integration 2005 – 2015. The first monitoring report evaluating the implementation of the Decade Program rates Slovakia exactly in the middle of all nine participating countries. At the same time it also indicates Slovakia made the least progress in 2007. It criticizes the Slovak government for lack of systemic solutions, especially in the areas of education and housing and focusing its activities only on short-term solutions. Even though Slovakia and the Czech Republic would have the best institutional framework to solve Roma issues, they lack 'fast translation into action'.¹³⁷ Moreover, OSF¹³⁸ claims that already half-way through the Decade of Roma Inclusion there are still major gaps within the available ethnic data about the situation of Roma in Slovakia. They assert: "With gaps and unknowns like this, how can policymakers devise effective policies and responsibly allocate resources?"¹³⁹ Similarly other authors claim that "[i]nstitutions and programs focusing on providing help to the Roma suffer from a chronic lack of information about their target group, insufficient monitoring activities and unsatisfactory evaluation of their actual impact"¹⁴⁰ These difficulties make it hard to set specific measures and assign enough finances.

As a result, financial support for projects is not being used: "the extent of coverage of Romani children and youth in Slovakia by REF-funded projects to date is quite small. In the best-case scenario, projects supported by REF have reached two percent of Romani children of compulsory school age and less than two percent of both Romani children of preschool age and Romani youth age fifteen to eighteen."¹⁴¹ One of the reasons for this insufficiency of commitment towards the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 may be explained through the instability of the government in the country when every new government has nominated different people to the offices and they didn't continue in the projects, but have always started from scratch: "the National Coordinator for the Decade is the Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities, implementation of the Decade in Slovakia has suffered from the instability within

¹³⁶ "Roma participation will be central to regular oversight and monitoring of the process over the next ten years." (Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015: <http://www.romadecade.org/about> [14.11.2011])

¹³⁷ c.f. DecadeWatch 2007, 13

¹³⁸ c.f. OSF 2010¹

¹³⁹ OSF 2010², 75

¹⁴⁰ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 13

¹⁴¹ REF 2011, 28

the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary”¹⁴². Hence, the process is stagnating. What different commitments for Roma inclusion does Slovakia have?

4.3.2. Other major legislative measures and arguments for providing equality in and through education

Although the Decade of Roma Inclusion may be seen as the primary promoter of changes towards Roma education, authors of the analyzed publications show other commitments for enforcing equality of opportunities. As such especially Human rights and Rights of the Child were mentioned¹⁴³ to show how mono-cultural segregated education violates the right for equal treatment¹⁴⁴. In connection to human rights several authors (29 %) mentioned the ‘European Court case D.H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic’ in which the discrimination of the educational system was confirmed. Yet in spite of the legal convicting, even after years there is no particular remedial measure ordered to eliminate the discriminatory institutions¹⁴⁵. As mentioned in the introduction, in Slovakia a similar case has been confirmed by court recently¹⁴⁶. Although these examples show overrepresentation of Roma in some settings or even whole schools, they don’t provide an objective picture about the quality of these settings, nor do they say anything about the educational outcomes of the children attending these schools. Therefore, several authors (35 %) used the argument of low results in international comparisons such as PISA in their publications. Even though this testing system is not without its own problems¹⁴⁷, in the relation to Slovakia it shows the strong correlation between education attainment and social status, indicating the reproduction of social inequality¹⁴⁸. Given these conditions many of the authors (53 %) refer to various regulations that should prevent discrimination, yet most of them claim that even though existing legislation prohibits discrimination, there are no measures to monitor it, especially if discrimination is not manifested

¹⁴² REF 2011, 14; more on this matter in Chapter 7 – The resilience to changing conditions of Roma education

¹⁴³ Human rights were mentioned only 3 times (18 %) within the analyzed publications, whereas Rights of the Child were mentioned 4 times (24 %). Although the legislation brings Roma children in connection with special needs, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities was mentioned only once (6 %) within the analyzed literature.

¹⁴⁴ “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups” (Article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); cited in Ivanco (2011); cited on Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 13)

¹⁴⁵ c.f. Kontseková & Košťál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 29

¹⁴⁶ c.f. “The court ordered to end segregation of Roma children” (Slovak newspaper SME from January 9th 2012 at <http://korzar.sme.sk/c/6209394/sud-prikazal-skole-prestat-segregovat-romske-deti.html> [9.1.2012])

¹⁴⁷ Within the topic of this thesis this shall not be discussed further.

¹⁴⁸ c.f. Hapalová & Drál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 65

directly by persons but indirectly through the system of education¹⁴⁹. However, finding excuse for the unequal treatment of certain groups is to be seen as violation of human rights and needs to be addressed immediately¹⁵⁰. Neglecting this circumstance of segregation and inequality of educational provisions in Slovakia has a 'disastrous effect' on the future opportunities in the job market for Roma and thus produces a vicious circle of poverty. This is especially highlighted in the research of Marcinčin & Marcinčinová¹⁵¹ and REF¹⁵² (as well as highlighted in 35 % of the authors) where they try to show the high costs of not providing quality education to Roma children. Even though these considerations might be motivating for policymakers, within this thesis providing equal opportunities in and through education for every child, regardless of its social background, ethnicity or gender, shall be regarded as a human right, rather than a need¹⁵³. Therefore participation of Roma children wrongly classified as having special needs in a special school is to be refused and (systemic or financial) provisions that create equal opportunities are to be justified. Accordingly, quality education is to be perceived as an opportunity for enhancing human well-being by providing capabilities to choose what one wants to do in life.

¹⁴⁹ More on the topic of direct and indirect discrimination c.f. Ivanco (2011); cited on Rafael (Eds.) 2011

¹⁵⁰ "Human rights treaties oblige states to both prohibit discrimination by law and seek to eliminate it in practice. This is not an obligation to be realised over time according to the state's available resources, as is the case with some economic, social and cultural rights obligations, but an immediate obligation." (Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009, 2)

¹⁵¹ c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009

¹⁵² c.f. REF 2009

¹⁵³ c.f. Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009

5. Obstacles to quality education of Roma children: critical analysis of contemporary documents

Within the analyzed publications many obstacles to equal educational opportunities for Roma are described. They range from legislative gaps enabling segregation to the difficult problem of attitudes and are not easy to be described in their interferences and complexity. Therefore presenting all the obstacles within the given conditions may not be possible in the depth they deserve. Nevertheless, as many difficulties as possible were summarized in a table which may be found in Appendix B. Additionally, these chapters provide a more detailed analysis of the most crucial problems identified. Although it's not possible to see them separately, for the purpose of this research they were categorized into: 1. obstacles connected to institutional and legislative problems which show themselves in the provisions and organization of education for Roma children; 2. into obstacles of poverty and the specific characteristics of the Roma ethnic¹⁵⁴; and 3. in the obstacles connected to attitudes, may it be the school managements, governments or more generally the major population.

5.1. Obstacles connected to legislative or institutional aspects

It seems the legislative aspect of education creates a very complex obstacle. Instead of the needed complex approach most of the partly legislative changes that have been made through the New School Law in 2008 led to no enhancement but instead to further segregation and disadvantage of Roma children in education. Some of these obstacles creating inequality of opportunities within the educational system will be presented here.

5.1.1. A monocultural educational system and inflexible curricula

First of all it needs to be argued that rigid Slovak educational system creates the major obstacle to Roma inclusion as it is not inclusive in the approach to students. The monocultural and early-dividing educational environment presents the first aspect that needs to be transformed if real change is to be achieved. This traditional uniformity can be observed in all aspects of the planning and organization of education; whether it is the distribution of classes, the teaching methods or the curricula¹⁵⁵. This circumstance leads to a feeling of exclusion of children from culturally and ethnically different groups with the consequence of low participation in it. Although

¹⁵⁴ These specific characteristics observable among most of the Roma groups in Slovakia may be subscribed to their genetically given personalities, their cultural background or the developed 'culture of poverty'.

¹⁵⁵ c.f. Vančíková 2011; cited in Vančíková & Kubánová 2011, 44

the new School Law of 2008 established multicultural education to be educated at all schools, surveys show that this is only declared in the curricula, and rarely carried out¹⁵⁶. Even if multicultural education is being taught, this involves foreign cultures rather than the ones living in the country and only very limited awareness about traditional minorities¹⁵⁷. Accordingly, knowledge about Roma history or culture is lacking to a great extent causing the development of stereotypes within the majority¹⁵⁸ and anxiety of losing one's own identity within the members of the traditional ethnic groups. Considering this fact together with the teaching methods that don't allow different speed and individual ways of acquiring the knowledge, failure of Roma from disadvantaging settings is quite understandable.

As several authors argue, education in Slovakia is still heavily focused on acquiring encyclopedic knowledge and not so much on handling information. The educational methods are basically ex-cathedra teaching and any failure of individuals (or groups) meeting these requirements leads to exclusion¹⁵⁹. The curricula of subjects are prescribed both in content and timing and don't enable teachers to react to pupils' needs in flexible ways. It shall be argued that it is this inflexibility of curricula, the common (yet not universal – in Slovakia there are teachers that use individual approaches, too) uniform methods and the approach of educational staff viewing children's inability to adapt to the system that create the predisposition for certain groups to fail in the Slovak educational system. Without realizing that application of universal techniques and contents is not possible and that individual development of pupils needs to be considered¹⁶⁰, the education will not become inclusive. Moreover, first attempts of the government adapting the curricula to the needs of Roma have only led to further disadvantages and decrease of quality; The introduction of 'practical subjects' sensitive to traditional Roma crafts¹⁶¹ (such as handicraft workshops, cooking, basket weaving, tinkering workshops, etc.) with subjects respecting the cultural specifics of Roma, such as music and dancing show how the "approach reflects the belief that, for Romani people as a whole, more scientific or academic fields of study are inappropriate"¹⁶². Additionally, these adjustments show that modifications in educational content need to be done also in accordance with the employment opportunities that

¹⁵⁶ The author claims that the aim of multicultural education is not entirely understood. This circumstance is shown through the reactions of 82 school authorities arguing that they don't teach multicultural education, since there are no Roma in their school. (Rosinský 2011; cited in Vančíková 2011; cited in Vančíková & Kubánová 2011, 45)

¹⁵⁷ c.f. Gallová-Kríglerová & Kadlečíková 2009

¹⁵⁸ More on this matter can be found in the chapter about attitudes.

¹⁵⁹ c.f. Zimenová & Havrilová 2011

¹⁶⁰ c.f. Petrasová; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 109

¹⁶¹ c.f. Jurová (2005); cited in Pöcz 2009, 21

¹⁶² Petrasová; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 110

the students might have in future, otherwise they are ineffective. Therefore, what needs to be adjusted is not only the curriculum for Roma children, but rather the whole educational system needs to become more flexible and sensitive to the needs of all its students. However, the current legislative and financing measures build obstacles to an inclusive approach” and there is currently no alternative that the schools could use, whether in the form of methods or procedures they could apply if they wanted to take the inclusive education road”¹⁶³.

In view of that it shall be argued that an inclusive educational system needs to enable a variety of educational streams compatible with each other enabling changing them according to one’s capabilities. Yet, these don’t exist in Slovakia, quite the contrary, the different systems are incompatible and their curricula don’t enable any transition between each other.

5.1.2. Incompatible special and standard education

The compatibility of the various educational streams is an important matter, because incompatibility of standard and special curricula creates a wide gap that limits the possibility of (re-)integration from special classes or schools into standard education¹⁶⁴. Even if children are placed into special school with good intention of getting the needed help there, the differences in the curricula hinder a transfer of pupils who caught up in their development and with whom mental disability wasn’t confirmed, thus they have been wrongly placed into special education¹⁶⁵. Even when the official content of education in special schools should cover up to 60 % of the curriculum taught in standard education, interviews conducted by REF show different practice¹⁶⁶, where the gap in education expands to approximately 4 years with no classes in foreign language¹⁶⁷. An argument against the belief of school authorities that Roma children with mental disability could not be expected to be taught a foreign language are shown in the study of Fremlová in which Slovak Roma migrants (85 % of the 52 interviewed pupils have attended special schools or classes in Slovakia) were the fastest out of all the different

¹⁶³ Hapalová & Drál’; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 88

¹⁶⁴ c.f. REF 2011, 21

¹⁶⁵ The diagnostic methods and entry procedures for special education shall be discussed further within the analysis.

¹⁶⁶ “While after first grade of standard school children can read and write all letters of alphabet, in special school it lasts three years in “A” variant and six years in “B” variant. (Director of special primary school); In standard school they learn to count to 20 in the first grade, in special class it is only to 5. (Director of special primary school)” (REF 2009, 29)

¹⁶⁷ „Not only do curricula in special education differ from the ones taught in standard education, but the emphasis in special education is also given mainly on practical aspects of learning, rather than on general knowledge.” (REF 2009, 30)

ethnic groups in acquiring the English language¹⁶⁸. These findings show the influence of a system of education that (contrary to the Slovak system) puts high expectations on the child while simultaneously providing help within the mainstream education to achieve the goal. Contrary to this, the Slovak school system places these children into different educational streams from where there is little to transfer back. Moreover, this practice starts already when first enrolling into school with 'zero' and 'preparatory' classes;

The so-called 'zero grades' were introduced in 1992/1993 but were approved by legislation only in 2002¹⁶⁹. These zero grade classes are intended for children who reach physical age of six but don't fulfill the criteria of school readiness and appropriate maturity, come from socially disadvantaged settings and according to social or linguistic prerequisites are not expected to master the curriculum of the first year in one school year¹⁷⁰. According to the survey of MPC the percentage of children from socially disadvantaged background in these classes reached 79.47 % in 2009 (whereas the overall percentage of children from socially disadvantaged settings in the same year was 32.19 %) ¹⁷¹. The same survey found that the percentage of unattended hours in zero grades reached 82.05 %¹⁷² which makes the efficiency of these provisions questionable: "In spite of the overall positive evaluation of 'zero' grades by experts and teachers familiar with their practical operation, the efficiency of this system and its influence on school results, as well as on further education of children has not yet been analysed"¹⁷³. Although the aim of these classes is socialization of the children and prevention from being placed into special schools, the experience is quite different, showing in most of the cases that due to lack of quality in their education the children are not reintegrated into standard classes but continue as special classes together¹⁷⁴. Paradoxically the establishment of special classes was asserted by researchers to facilitate children from special school a reintegration into standard classes (the so-called 'transition classes'¹⁷⁵) yet this provision has become only a further (and a very 'successful') tool for separating Roma from non-Roma.

¹⁶⁸ c.f. Fremlová 2011

¹⁶⁹ c.f. SGI 2010, 20

¹⁷⁰ School Act § 19 (6); cited in Hapalová & Drál'; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 80

¹⁷¹ c.f. MCP 2011, 9; for the same year Hapalová & Drál' (2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 80) estimate 3,129 children in more than 200 schools attending these provisions.

¹⁷² The number of unexcused hours in zero grades reached 87.41 %. (c.f. MCP 2011, 15)

¹⁷³ Hapalová & Drál'; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 81

¹⁷⁴ c.f. REF 2009, 53

¹⁷⁵ c.f. Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta 2011, 393

Preparatory grades have a similar idea as zero grade classes but are situated in special schools; this is even more to be blamed for starting the career in special education in most of the cases.¹⁷⁶

5.1.3. Lack of data and unclear definitions limiting focused provisions

Several authors claim that the legislation is confusing when defining children from disadvantaging background, since it uses several definitions always capturing groups differently amounted. This makes the various groups incomparable. The most common group is being determined only implicitly through the number of pupils being approved funding for food and school material, these being tied to assistance in material need of their parents¹⁷⁷. As has been shown already in Chapter 4 these benefits are not provided for the poorest Roma who don't have legal housing conditions or those who apply for parental benefits¹⁷⁸. Therefore the definition for children coming from disadvantaged background that has started to be used for developmental projects and has also been adopted for the purpose of official statistics of the methodological-pedagogic center has described five criteria out of which at least three must apply for the given child; at least one parent receives assistance in material need; at least one parent is unemployed; the highest reached education of at least one parent is only compulsory education; the child lives in substandard living or hygienic conditions (the pupil lacks a place for studying, lacks their own bed, the accommodation doesn't include electricity, etc.); the language of instruction differs from the language used at home¹⁷⁹. This definition seems feasible for the purpose of assigning provisions, yet it doesn't say anything about the impact of the environment on the child. Therefore the School Act defines socially disadvantaged environment as such that *“with respect to social, family, economic and cultural conditions is insufficiently stimulating for the development of mental, volitional and emotional characteristics of a child or of a student; does not support his/her socialisation and does not provide him/her with a sufficient amount of adequate stimuli for the development of his/her personality”*¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ c.f. SGI 2010,21

¹⁷⁷ c.f. SGI 2010

¹⁷⁸ Additionally as soon as one member of the family moves to a foreign country the whole household loses entitlement to this benefit. c.f. <http://www.sme.sk/c/6282260/davku-beru-najma-mladi-nie-romovia.html> [1.3.2012]

¹⁷⁹ c.f. MPC 2011, 5

¹⁸⁰ School Act § s i); cited in Hapalová & Drál'; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 78

Similar confusion applies when defining a 'child with special needs', since 'ethnic'¹⁸¹ and 'social background' are aspects of this definition, yet it is not clear which of the above definitions shall be used in this case. Accordingly, there are various data showing very different numbers. The same applies to data about 'ethnicity': "Some data on ethnicity of children at schools are collected, as declared by the parents. However, the data are not processed based on ethnicity, but only on the language in which the education is conducted; there are no schools with Romani as the language of instruction."¹⁸² Therefore, it shall be argued that these unclear definitions limit the accurate collection and comparison of data. Even more, without accurate data there is little monitoring of the progress of the strategies used to enhance the education of Roma with the consequence of not being able to tell which the most efficient ones are. In addition, without data and unclear definitions, financial support for these children is problematic.

5.1.4. The normative funding system and other financial issues

One of the most mentioned obstacles when talking about insufficiency of educational system that affects most of the other obstacles is finances. This is especially important if talking about the education of children deriving from poverty or children with any kinds of special educational needs, since these are most commonly connected to higher expenditures. Therefore the financial aspect has two levels; one is the insufficiency of provisions that would potentially improve quality of standard education (as in material, personnel, etc. provisions) and the motivational character of benefits either from the provider of education (resulting in recruitment of Roma children into special education regardless of their real need¹⁸³) or the Roma themselves.

Besides, unclear definitions and data create difficulties in applying for supplementary provision of children with special needs as this definition doesn't assign children to more financial support, this is only provided for children diagnosed as (mentally) disabled¹⁸⁴. Children from socially disadvantaged settings are assigned much lower provisions; moreover, these don't have their own fixed coefficients, but are set every year *ad hoc*¹⁸⁵. This circumstance provides foundation for inaccurate diagnosis with the effect of common placement of children to special settings only

¹⁸¹ „Slovak politicians have even started replacing the word Roma with the wider term “socially disadvantaged person,” which makes the Roma minority even less visible.” (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 3)

¹⁸² OSF 2010¹, 76

¹⁸³ c.f. REF 2011, 18; this aspect is discussed in more detail in the chapter about resilient factors of change (Chapter 7)

¹⁸⁴ c.f. SGI 2010

¹⁸⁵ c.f. SGI 2010, 46

according to their living conditions or ethnicity and thus limiting their opportunities in life from grounds.

Consequently, the effect of changes in the financing of provision may be seen directly in the rising numbers of pupils attending specialized provisions, which rose in the years 2004 – 2009 after normative financing was introduced (more zero classes because of double finances)¹⁸⁶ and especially in 2007 after the Motivation Allowance (based on attendance, behavior, and scholastic achievement) was assigned to children at special schools as well (in 2006)¹⁸⁷. The last criterion of this Motivation Allowance was canceled in 2008 again, after encouraging Roma parents to enroll their children in special schools, where they met the scholastic achievements for this supplement more often than in standard primary schools. Additionally, the state provides financial support in form of subsidies (for school meals and school supplies) for families receiving assistance in material need, however, “[a]ll three types of benefits rely on the initiative of the school and municipality, which must apply for the benefits in order to receive them and are not legally obligated to do so.”¹⁸⁸ Moreover, as has been shown before, many of the poorest Roma families don’t meet the criteria for this assistance; neither do they receive the status of a child from socially disadvantaging settings. This creates obstacles not only for the children, but also for the schools, for instance in case of difficulties with recruiting teacher assistants.

5.1.5. Non-Roma teacher assistants for Roma children

Teacher assistant, “a pedagogical employee who carries out the educational process in schools and preschools and participates in the creation of conditions indispensable for overcoming in particular linguistic, health, and social barriers”,¹⁸⁹ was first introduced in projects inspired by international experience and after about 10 years they were also implemented into the Slovak legislation. This position is considered to be crucial for helping teachers in mastering not only educational aspects but also aspects of socialization. It is supposed to help overcome language barriers as well as mediate the relationship between schools and the (Roma) community. Research shows the presence of teacher assistants having a positive effect on children

¹⁸⁶ c.f. SGI 2010, 28

¹⁸⁷ c.f. REF 2011, 24

¹⁸⁸ REF 2011, 23

¹⁸⁹ Law No. 408 of June 27, 2002, Article IV.50b.1.; cited in REF 2011, 22

resulting in lower repetition rates and less unattended hours¹⁹⁰. The fact that in recent years this position became more and more deprecated by non-Roma seems especially problematic if they are to help children with language acquisition and serve as role models (for Roma children and the Roma community)¹⁹¹. Moreover, the changes in legislation in 2009 influenced the funding of teacher assistants so that the funds available for hiring a teacher assistant depend on the number of children enrolled in the given school meeting administrative criteria for material need: “This change places the position of teacher assistant at risk in many cases by creating a situation in which the number of pupils in material need which is necessary for funding a single teacher assistant position is far higher than the number of pupils who can be taught by a given teacher assistant.”¹⁹² In pre-school education this change led to complete elimination of the position¹⁹³. Not being allocated to teacher assistants but only to the needs of children with socially disadvantaged settings, these funds have been used for material and operational expenses instead. Additionally, the uncertainty of the funds for each year is reflected in short-term contracts and fluctuation of assistants¹⁹⁴. The same law established a requirement for teacher assistants’ education, stating they should have at least the first degree of higher education (bachelor) or completed secondary pedagogic vocational school, yet the position has not been put on ‘equal footing’ with the teachers’ position¹⁹⁵. Although the requirements for teacher education seem fair, at present they seriously limit the position being available to Roma, with the effect of assistants not being able to support the children in their language acquisition.

¹⁹⁰ The survey compares hours that an assistant spends in class with the amount of unattended and unexcused hours and claims that the more hours an assistant spends in class the less frequent unattended and unexcused hours of Roma children are. Additionally the survey states that especially in lower class the Roma language used by the assistant has a positive effect on success of these pupils (in lower repetition rates of the pupils). (c.f. MPC 2011, 38ff)

¹⁹¹ “Out of the 64 teaching assistants employed in the special primary schools and special classes in standard primary schools included in the survey sample, fifteen were Roma (two in special primary schools and thirteen in special classes). The directors of the schools which employed Romani teaching assistants assessed the assistants’ language skills as being particularly valuable.” (REF 2009, 62)

„The number of Roma teachers in mainstream schools is close to zero, although the Slovak Republic has recently expressed its intention to promote the Roma language.“ (Ivanco 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 15)

¹⁹² Hapalová & Daniel 2008, 26f; Also SGI 2010, where the authors count that 65 pupils would be needed to employ a teacher assistant for 12 months. This obstacle is also stated by MPC, claiming that in many regions the number of children supported by one teacher assistant is more than 95. (c.f. MPC 2011, 40)

¹⁹³ c.f. Oláh 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 131

¹⁹⁴ c.f. SGI 2010, 25

¹⁹⁵ c.f. Oláh 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 131

5.1.6. Pre-schools as a precondition for successful primary education

Although many authors claim that attending a pre-school can mitigate developmental delays in children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, up to now there are no official data on the numbers of these children attending kindergartens, neither is there information available on the language spoken by children attending these facilities. The only numbers available are about children coming to primary school (or the zero grades). These numbers indicate that only about 34 % of children from socially disadvantaging backgrounds in comparison to 84 % of all other children attend pre-school education. Moreover, the authors suggest that those children living in the poorest communities most seldom attend kindergartens (3-year olds: 1.4 %, 4-year olds: 8.8 %, 5-year olds: 13.8 % and 6-year olds: 31.9 % respectively¹⁹⁶). According to recommendations of various experts in 2008 government introduced unpaid last year of pre-school education, yet simultaneously reduced the numbers of children allowed to be placed in one class. This didn't lead to the expected positive results of placing more children to pre-school education, but rather the other way round, to further reduction of available places. This insufficiency of pre-school education together with experience of Roma parents where their children were not accepted to local kindergartens due to ethnic/social intolerance lead to further disadvantage of these children¹⁹⁷. Moreover, reasons such as presence of mother at home, financial expenditures that the parents are not willing to pay¹⁹⁸, high distance of these facilities as well as emotional bond between the mother and her child lead to the decision of Roma parents not to send their child to kindergartens¹⁹⁹. These are only a few aspects connected to the socio-economic situation of Roma. Other aspects shall be presented further.

¹⁹⁶ SGI 2010, 16

¹⁹⁷ c.f. REF 2011, 25

¹⁹⁸ "This malaise is further emphasized by the fact that pre-schools are funded by municipal budgets, and so municipalities often ask parents to financially contribute to their establishment, although the maximum budget defined according to the level of subsistence does exist." (Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009, 6)

¹⁹⁹ c.f. SGI 2010

5.2. Obstacles connected to poverty and characteristics of the Roma ethnic within Slovakia's educational system

Although these two aspects are viewed interchangeably by many authors (and the Slovak legislation), it should be argued that even through similar manifestations they are not to be understood as identical. Rather it is to be distinguished that it is the 'culture of poverty'²⁰⁰ that has developed throughout the last centuries of forced assimilation attempts and that is reproduced among the Roma children being viewed by the majority as the culture of Roma ethnic. Moreover, they are always to be viewed in connection with the specific conditions of traditional Slovak education²⁰¹, which has been described earlier. Therefore, it may be argued that teachers²⁰² (as well as the provisions provided by the system) are not prepared to offer individualized education to children. To succeed the system still expects systematic every-day preparation with supposed help from parents. Yet Roma parents coming from socially disadvantaged settings lack both objective (living conditions not providing space for doing homework) and subjective (either the attitude that the time for studying is at school or their own lack of knowledge due to their low education) possibilities to support their children in the educational process²⁰³. Accordingly it may be argued that many of Roma school failures are not necessarily connected to their mental capacity, but rather derive from the fact that they haven't acquired basic social and working habits which are essential for educational success; these involve basic general knowledge and abilities, language skills and vocabulary, experience with graphic expression, as well as basic hygienic habits²⁰⁴. All these factors make it difficult for Roma children to succeed in Slovak mainstream education which is shown in their repetition rates²⁰⁵. Additionally, their socio-economic situation may in some situations show direct influence on their school attendance (for instance they might not be able to afford transportation

²⁰⁰ "The culture of poverty, short-term living strategies, and value systems typical of socially excluded groups (irrespective of ethnicity) are reproduced among Roma children. They lack opportunities for adopting positive living standards or at least for being exposed to diverse models and patterns of behaviour." (Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 51)

²⁰¹ The analysis shows how all the national authors claim this to be a problem, but none of the governmental documents reflects this in the recommendations for change.

²⁰² Again the majority of national and also some of the international authors claim the teachers are not well prepared to educate children according to their individual needs. Although governmental documents propose to improve life-long learning for those teachers working with children from disadvantaged settings, there is no reference to changes in education of all new pedagogues.

²⁰³ c.f. Pöcz 2009; REF 2011 & Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta 2011

²⁰⁴ c.f. Pöcz 2009, 51

²⁰⁵ According to MPC 2011 the percentage of children from disadvantaged background failing in education and thus repeating classes is 71.16% of the number of children repeating class, which is 15.93% from the whole number of children from disadvantaged background. (c.f. MPC 2011, 11) Most of these children repeat already in first grade (30.18%). (c.f. MPC 2011, 13)

to school, fees associated with education (books, food, etc.), malnutrition of children not being able to focus on education, etc.) Therefore it may be argued that it is the system of education (as well as the people within the system) which is not prepared for accepting diversity and individual differences in the speed and way of acquiring knowledge, and it is therefore not to be identified as inclusive as such²⁰⁶. So what are the characteristics of Roma mentioned within the discourse about Roma education?

5.2.1. Roma characteristics and their perception of education

“Love tutar žar čoren, a’le so džanes, ňiko tutar na lela. “ [Money can be stolen from you, but whatever you have learned, nobody will take away.]

The aspect of the relationship of Roma towards education has intentionally not been assigned to the chapter about attitudes, because it is preferably understood in connection with the aspect of poverty. If asked, the general opinion of Slovak majority would probably be that Roma don't assign high value to education²⁰⁷, since they don't prepare for future. Yet in a survey about preconditions for success in life, 45.6 % of the Roma respondents ranked education among the most fundamental ones²⁰⁸. Therefore, as it has already been argued before, it is the specific conditions of living in poverty deriving from dependency on the state that were created throughout the last centuries²⁰⁹ that is responsible for their ‘traditional’ low priority given to education. As some authors state it is more the fear of failure, discrimination (or forced assimilation) and rejection by their family that leads them to prefer (even low quality) educational settings with the majority of other Roma children²¹⁰. Yet the failure of the system to meet the needs of Roma pupils may be based on the lack of knowledge about this ethnic. What is the environment of Roma families, their structure and status within the community, what is the real Roma culture, what are the stimuli Roma children receive during their childhood?²¹¹ What are the characteristics educators may use to enhance their education? Do researchers have

²⁰⁶ „In schools, Roma children do not mix with non-Roma children, they are not exposed to positive social interaction, no interethnic friendships are formed, members of the two ethnic groups have no opportunity to learn about the other culture and language, etc.” (Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 51)

²⁰⁷ This is not only true within the major population, but also among many professionals, even educational researchers promoting integration of Roma. See for example Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta 2011, Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009 and others.

²⁰⁸ c.f. Kriglerová 2002; cited in REF 2009,57

²⁰⁹ More on the history of Roma causing segregating behavior c.f. Pöcz 2009

²¹⁰ c.f. Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 22

²¹¹ “Roma children are raised with almost unlimited freedom, which in the eyes of the majority makes them look unruly and undisciplined or maladjusted. Learning in a traditional Roma family happens naturally by mimicking and without any correction from adults, with special emphasis on non-verbal communication and intonation. That is why the language of Roma children is not as developed.” (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 22)

answers to these questions? It seems that researchers rather explore the characteristics of Roma from the view of the majority and present initiating failure of Roma children in education through their inherited “faults” (or cultural predispositions). For instance Horňák²¹² summarizes specific characteristics of Roma children from socially disadvantaging backgrounds causing difficulties in education; only to mention some of them, they include slow perception, common hearing and visual impairments, scattered and easily exhausted attention, insufficient memory connected only to practical life, infantile emotional thinking, low generalization abilities, low motivation and intense emotional perception and reactions with an out-bursting temperament²¹³. If successful inclusive education is to be established it seems quite important to distinguish between the characteristics of Roma which create their cultural heritage and should be fostered through education and those which indicate development delay stemming from poverty and should be combated²¹⁴. According to the analysis of this thesis the distinction is rarely researched or even mentioned within the contemporary publications²¹⁵. Moreover, it seems that at present these characteristics are used interchangeably to diagnose Roma as ‘mentally disabled’ and assign Roma children to special education.

5.2.2. Culturally insensitive diagnostic tools and the language barrier

“The diagnostic tests used most frequently in Slovakia are not methodologically appropriate for assessing Romani children. This is because they have been composed in Slovak language, standardized on ethnic Slovaks, and assume previous acquisition of a repertoire of knowledge and skills associated with putatively intelligent behavior, as well as vocabulary associated with membership in the middle class.”²¹⁶ Accordingly, as already mentioned, it may be argued that

²¹² c.f. Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta 2011

²¹³ Most of the characteristics of Roma children are portrayed in deficiencies – illustrating what the children lack or are weak in. Only a few characteristics are mentioned as possibilities for a teacher to use in their education [for example: “It is therefore necessary to use all factors that cause and support the upholding of the necessary attention and activity, without which learning is impossible. They are such as motion, color, contrast, variety, novelty, uniqueness, attractiveness, rhythm.”] Yet even then they are used to focus their attention on “correcting” these characteristics (“correctly understand and rectify their specific manifestations and moods”). (Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta 2011, 387ff)

²¹⁴ “Roma children living in segregated setting, especially those living in Roma settlements are bound to be raised in different conditions than children from the majority groups. Due to confirmed dissimilarity in performance of these children deriving from culture, historical experience, familiarity with life in extreme poverty, separation from the majority groups and response to that, the share of particular agents and their interconnection in cognitive development differences is not known.” (Špotáková 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 58)

²¹⁵ MPC research how often the behavior of children from disadvantaged settings is being reviewed positively or negatively through official educational proceedings and found that only 12.97 % were positive whereas 39.74 % of negative measures were assigned to these children. (c.f. MPC 2011, 19) This shows how little knowledge teachers have about Roma children, their upbringing and social structure of communities.

²¹⁶ Bernstein 1971; Ferjenčík, Bačová & Bányaiová 1994, 17; Ferjenčík 1997, 286; Tomatová 2004b, 55; cited in REF 2009, 57

these most commonly used tests are not able to distinguish between failures of Roma children due to mental disability (of psychological origin), developmental delays stemming from the social environment²¹⁷ or 'simply' due to different experience stemming from cultural diversity (which is often mistaken for the characteristics deriving from poverty²¹⁸). Additionally to the fact that inappropriate tests are being used to show the 'low mental abilities' of Roma children, they are often assessed only once to confirm 'mental disability'²¹⁹, although the diagnostic procedures require more than one examination to confirm this²²⁰. Yet some finding indicate an even more discriminatory practice where these controversial tests are being performed only after the child has already been admitted to a special school²²¹. Knowing these differences seems crucial, if proper diagnostic methods for revealing mental disability of Roma children are to be developed²²². At present experience suggests that some psychologists still consider mental disability in Roma to be congenital²²³. Even though a screening method for ruling out mental disability and a new "school readiness test" for Roma children from socially disadvantaged environment have been introduced and piloted already in 2002 by the PHARE project, the government has not claimed the replacement of the tests disadvantaging Roma children, nor has it required the use of the new tests.²²⁴ Diagnostic personnel legitimate the use of the current testing material as follows: "because the tests measure school-readiness, children who fare poorly on the tests cannot be expected to do well in standard primary education"²²⁵. Špotáková argues in agreement with this: "If nothing but the conditions of testing were modified, then, in high probability, in primary schools there would be more students with unsatisfactory

²¹⁷ c.f. Ferjenčík 1997, 286; Tomatová 2004a, 36; cited in REF 2009, 58

²¹⁸ "a shorter attention span and less developed fine motor skills, as well as a different set of experiences than most non-Romani children" (REF 2009, 57)

²¹⁹ Some of the authors even refer to situations where these tests were assessed in groups of children (c.f. REF 2009)

²²⁰ „Despite widely held beliefs, an IQ score lower than 70 (though having been verified by several tests) is not a reason for diagnosing a child with this condition; it is only one element of it. To confirm this condition, it is necessary that the patient displays problems adapting to his/her natural setting and not conforming to requirements and expectations imposed on a particular age group in his/her setting." (Mezinárodní klasifikace nemocí [International Classification of Diseases (ICD)] 1994; cited in Špotáková 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011,56)

²²¹ "In the East Slovak municipality of Pavlovce nad Uhom, for example, an inspection by the Košice Regional School Authority in November 2007 found that of the 28 new pupils enrolled in the local special primary school that year, eighteen had not undergone any form of testing prior to their enrollment." (Tomatová 2004a, 37; cited in REF 2009, 63)

²²² "Insofar as neither of the two diagnostic instruments developed in the framework of the PHARE project can be used to establish mental disability, there is still no reliable test available in Slovakia for diagnosing mental disability in Romani children." (Tomatová 2004a, 36; cited in REF 2009, 58)

²²³ "We all know that mental disability is congenital [...] When the six previous generations are mentally disabled, we cannot expect any change in the next generation." (anonymous Slovak psychologist; cited in REF 2009, 60)

²²⁴ „Only one school director and one psychologist participating in the field research conducted for this study indicated that they used the tests." (REF 2009, 59)

²²⁵ REF 2009, 60

study results.”²²⁶ According to her, tests should be used to examine the ‘structure of abilities’, therefore the strengths and weaknesses of the child should be recognized so that schools are able to adapt to its needs.

One of the important aspects of tests and the particular barriers to Roma acquiring knowledge within the Slovak educational system that should be mentioned is the language aspect. Insufficient knowledge of Slovak language is the barrier most often mentioned if referring to problems with diagnosis²²⁷, yet not as often if referring to their failure at school due to not understanding the language of instruction. According to Slovak legislation the language of ethnical minorities is allowed to be the main language of instruction in schools, yet according to statistics in 2009 there was no school using this language for instruction and only one school providing Romani as a separate subject²²⁸. Statistics about how often the language is used as a supportive language are not available, but mentions of the analyzed publications indicate this is not done sufficiently. The following table from a field research among teachers in special education conducted by REF (2009) shows the exemplified daring situation of the use of Romani as a supportive language.

Table 3: The use of Romani in teaching according to answers of teachers in special education from field research conducted by REF (2009)²²⁹

	Yes	“Some words”	Not at all
Teachers in special schools	2.9%	22.9%	74.3%
Teachers in special classes	19.6%	6.5%	73.9%
Teachers in secondary schools	6.7%	0%	87.5%

Although not an excuse, this may be partly explained by the yet young standardization of the language in 2008. Another difficulty of using the language may be seen in the various dialects of the language where different words from other languages are being used. Kalná²³⁰ states that there are only 260 words in common among all the various dialects, while there are about 20

²²⁶ Špotáková 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 59

²²⁷ The problem of wrong diagnostic methods is mentioned among the most often described difficulties within the analyzed documents causing unequal opportunities in education. This is mentioned 11 times representing 65%.

²²⁸ c.f. SGI 2010, 9

²²⁹ REF 2009, 62

²³⁰ c.f. Kalná 1992; cited in Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta (Eds.) 2011, 391

000 words in the language. Moreover, most of the families speak a mixture of the languages at home²³¹. Research conducted by Pöcz (2009) asking if Roma parents wish for their language to be taught as the first language in primary school suggests that this is not desired as they view the necessity to learn the Slovak language for further employment²³². Nevertheless, it should be argued that if Roma pupils with Romani as their first language attend primary schools this language should be used as the supportive language, if not by the teachers themselves than at least by teacher assistants²³³. The reason for this should be seen in helping the children acquire the Slovak language, but also (not less importantly) in the fact that language means one aspect of their cultural identity which should be fostered.

5.3. Obstacles connected to attitudes

It needs to be said that obstacles deriving from attitudes have many levels and manifest themselves in various ways. They can be obviously identified as discriminatory in the rejection of ethnically different children to certain institutions, cases of bullying, hostility by children, teachers, and other educational staff; but also hidden such as low expectations of teachers that Roma children will succeed (causing indirectly their failure) or inattention of education to certain ethnical groups as an integral part of Slovakia's history and culture²³⁴, thus showing the dominance of the major society. Not being able to describe all the specific circumstances of the past that led to this situation, it should be argued that these negative attitudes developed mainly through continuous residential segregation of this group, their low economic situation followed by sociopathic behavior of many Roma²³⁵. Given these conditions throughout history this attitude has also led to prejudice of Roma themselves towards 'the education of the majority' which prevents them from successful participation in mainstream education. These specific aspects have already been mentioned earlier within this chapter. Since prejudices and attitudes

²³¹ c.f. Horňák 2011; cited in Lechta (Eds.) 2011, 391

²³² The limitation of this research was that it is a small research with only 73 respondents in a town in Western Slovakia where according to different research (REF 2009) much less Romani is being spoken as in East Slovakia. A more representative sample would be needed to either confirm or deny this view. Nevertheless, other authors' mentions indicate this view as reliable even among Roma living in East Slovakia.

²³³ More on this matter can be found in the chapter about teacher assistants.

²³⁴ c.f. REF 2011

²³⁵ According to my own experience (indirect) hostility towards Roma is very much widespread as well as visible among all age and social groups of Slovaks; for instance in internet discussions when an article about Roma appears. Mostly people refer to the unjust conditions of providing free flats and welfare benefits without working as well as their sociopathic behavior. Since there is no reliable survey about this, it's hard to tell how deep-rooted these hostile expressions are. Nevertheless, the survey by Fremlová (2011) brings several mentions of teachers hitting Roma pupils, bullying of Roma by their non-Roma classmates and various other examples of direct manifestations of hostility.

in people are very difficult to measure only little reliable research can be found on this topic. Nevertheless, it is one aspect of Roma education which should not be left out.

What needs to be addressed within this section is a phenomenon called the “white flag”²³⁶ which represents the strong pressure from non-Roma parents on the principals of primary schools to create special classes for Roma children. Unlike special schools these classes wouldn’t be created because of funding reasons but rather with the aim to separate Roma from non-Roma children²³⁷. If the principals refuse to create these segregated classes, non-Roma parents prefer driving their children to schools that are geographically more distant from schools with a larger proportion of Roma children. Although there is no research about the true reasons of this phenomenon, it shall be assumed this is not necessarily because of racist motivation of the non-Roma parents but because of anxiety. Some smaller research about the views of parents about segregating Roma children in special classes indicates that although only 38 % of the asked parents did not have anything against integration, 76 % said it would be inadequate to place Roma into separate classes²³⁸. These numbers point out that it is not the desire to harm Roma children, but rather the anxiety about one’s own children which would be exhibited to bad hygienic habits and the connected health risks. In case of education it is the anxiety that the children wouldn’t receive good quality education due to Roma children negatively affecting it²³⁹. Yet through a research the prejudice that Roma children would have trouble to acquire basic hygienic habits was overruled; the same result was shown for inadequate social behavior²⁴⁰. Similar research on the performance and achievements of Roma children in integrated classes are lacking. Although there are publications showing good examples of integration²⁴¹, there is no representative study about overall achievements of Roma children if placed into mainstream education, nor is there evidence about the factors that influence their success in these mainstream settings. Nevertheless, the worries of non-Roma parents about the level of

²³⁶ c.f. REF 2009 & Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011

²³⁷ “..whereas special primary schools have an unequivocal financial incentive to recruit children diagnosed with mental disability, the establishment of special classes in standard primary schools appears to constitute an attempt to address difficulties posed by the presence in standard classes of children with non-standard educational needs and/or the demands of non-Romani parents.” (REF 2009, 74)

²³⁸ c.f. SGI 2010, 19

²³⁹ “The majority of teachers are not attracted to schools attended by a high number of children from extremely poor or socially excluded families. Moreover, it is much more demanding to work with these students, yet the financial reward is not adequate at all. Teachers are often frustrated and some of them are even skeptical if children from socially excluded setting show any interest in schooling. Schools lack school supplies and personnel, as a result the services provided are becoming of lesser quality. (..) Homogenous social setting and low quality of education in “Roma” schools are among reasons why these schools are becoming totally unappealing for non-Roma families.” (Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 51)

²⁴⁰ SGI 2010, 19 – these results are from a study on pre-school children.

²⁴¹ The Roma Education Fund regularly publishes best practices examples of integration projects.

educational outcomes are not to be swapped away. If education of Roma and non-Roma is to be achieved together, it needs to be enhancing for all of the groups, thus, every child is to profit from it. In case of failed programs and strategies anti-Roma sentiments will only be strengthened further²⁴².

The study on 'cultural diversity and its perceptions by primary school pupils in Slovakia' conducted by Kriglerová & Kadlečíková (2009) examines emotional, cognitive and conative perception of cultural diversity, within which it also examines attitudes towards Roma. These attitudes are further examined as to whether they are influenced by experience or knowledge about this group. Results show that there are strong (negative) stereotypes towards this group among 14-15-year-old pupils in Slovakia²⁴³. Through media and family children are exposed to views they make their own without having experience of interaction with these groups. The authors suggest that although family atmosphere has the strongest influence on the development of attitudes, through multicultural education in all schools openness to cultural diversity could be encouraged that would mitigate prejudices. Moreover, through more knowledge about certain cultures they could perceive them as equals and thus be more open to meeting these groups. This could prevent the development of prejudice, which they define as „holding an *a priori* view (an idea) about someone whom we do not yet know, on the basis of characteristics of a group into which we believe this person belongs without a previous personal experience with such person”²⁴⁴. Although multicultural education is received as the first positive step towards accepting diversity, it shall be argued that a simple knowledge about Roma is not sufficient to prevent the development of prejudice.

According to Matějček the perception of difference develops as early as pre-school between the ages of 3 – 6: “This stage lays the foundations of pro-social characteristics, such as team play, cooperation, having fun together, empathy. It is also the phase when a child is conformed to its environment and accepts what is offered with some degree of authority. The formation of attitudes

²⁴² Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 2

²⁴³ „52 % respondents made negative statements about Romas (...). The most common attributes listed in connection to this category were *dirty, smelly, unfriendly, etc. or such negative phenomena as unemployment, parasitical behaviour, theft*. Additional negative statements included *I do not like them, I hate them, they should leave*. 41 % of respondents were neutral about the Romas. According to most respondents, *Roma is a person of different colour of the skin, member of a minority, a person like us, a person who differs in culture, language, etc..* Ambivalent sentiments were less frequent (expressed by 5.1 % of respondents). This category perceives the Romas in a differentiated manner. There are those who conformed to the majority (*if they are polite, I have nothing against them; not all of them can be put in the same basket*) and those who failed to adjust. Only 1.9 % of respondents offered some positive statement, for instance that they associate the Roma with *good musicians, friends, talent and temperament*.” (Gallová-Kriglerová & Kadlečíková 2009, 40)

²⁴⁴ Allport 2004; cited in Gallová-Kriglerová & Kadlečíková 2009, 88

can therefore include something pro-social, as children's natural curiosity enables them to accept anything unusual and new without major difficulties."²⁴⁵ This view suggests that more than multicultural education at schools it is inclusive pre-schools and primary schools that would enable children to positively experience diversity. At later age it would be more difficult to influence their attitudes, since they are intellectually more developed and their attitudes are less flexible. Intellect in this stage becomes only a support factor enhancing or justifying the existing views²⁴⁶.

²⁴⁵ Matějček 2003; cited in Gallová-Kriglerová & Kadlečíková 2009, 22

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

5.4. Obstacles to quality education of Roma children: summary and comparison of findings

The analysis concluded that the most mentioned as well as most criticized obstacles to enhancing the situation of the Roma were institutional and legislative provisions which enable segregation of Roma and which also negatively affect their education within standard schools²⁴⁷. Within these, the legislative barriers of organizing schools were described in most detail (81 comments representing 63 %), while finances (25 comments representing 20 %) and cultural differences (22 comments representing 17 %) were rather generally portrayed.

Secondly, the aspect of attitudes was described as problematic²⁴⁸, which was divided into direct manifestation (33 comments representing 56 %) and indirect manifestation (26 comments representing 44 %) of discrimination, following obstacles connected to poverty which too presented categories of direct (22 comments representing 48 %) and indirect (24 comments representing 52 %) influences²⁴⁹.

It shall be argued that all these factors negatively influence the efforts for change. Given these complex obstinate circumstances, the recommendations for change are not easy to find. Therefore the next chapter will present the findings of the analysis of recommendations and strategies for change in light of the already presented goal of inclusive education.

²⁴⁷ These include the unavailability of data and unclear definitions limiting focused provisions for enhancing the situation of Roma pupils, the normative funding system motivating the establishment of special provisions and simultaneously limiting funding of Roma teacher assistants crucial to overcoming the language barrier and the insufficient relations between schools and communities. It also recognizes ethnical and socially insensitive diagnostic methods, language barrier, different curricula and programs for Roma further increasing the already existing gap between special and standard education. These obstacles were mentioned by both national and international researchers similarly (67 to 61 comments, respectively; equaling 128 comments altogether).

²⁴⁸ Indirect discrimination involves the difficulty of rigid educational system insensitive to any kind of diversity while the direct attributes are manifested in hostile behavior, lack of expectations that the children will succeed and even the attributed low value of education within the Roma culture. Altogether there were 59 comments about obstacles connected to attitudes, while again little differences were shown between national and international publications.

²⁴⁹ Getting 46 comments the analysis shows a slightly different attributed influence of direct and indirect manifestations of poverty. It shows that while international researches highlight rather direct aspects of poverty (can't afford transportation to school, motivation of parents to enroll child into school with better services as free meals, materials, etc.) the Slovak researchers rather consider indirect manifestations as are unsuitable housing conditions, low school attendance and wrong upbringing methods.

6. Strategies for overcoming obstacles to inclusion: critical analysis of contemporary documents

What are the recommendations of various researchers influencing the enhancement of education for Roma children in Slovakia? How do they correspond with the idea of inclusive education? Are the changes going to provide equal opportunities for all pupils within the system? Within the main analysis of this thesis strategies for overcoming the presented obstacles and other recommendations for enhancing the situation of Roma within the Slovak educational system shall be presented. Moreover, they shall be examined and compared to the idea of inclusive education in which participation of all children is supported while respecting individual background and needs which leads to the enhancement of every child's potential to its fullest and in which social participation and the valuing of diversity (culture, social background, etc.) are supported.

The analysis has been divided into strategies of Slovak and international authors, as well as the category of strategies inspired by experience from the UK. In every section the dominant recommendations are examined and the findings presented, therefore every part has a different emphasis although there might be overlaps of arguments.

6.1. Strategies proposed by Slovak authors

What are the recommendations for change proposed in Slovak publications? The answer to this question is not easy to find as can be seen in the table in Appendix B. Similarly to the obstacles, the suggested strategies are also spread with little consensus. The reason for this may be seen first of all in confusion of terms used in various publications. Although most of the authors refer to inclusive education, many of them still use the term integration (even when speaking about valuing cultural backgrounds)²⁵⁰. In the same way, the term inclusion is used when describing recommendations of integrative nature, as further indirect segregation is being suggested by the authors. Despite this interchangeable use of terms a sincere attempt to positively change the situation of Roma children among the authors can be observed. But what obstacles should be addressed foremost? Is it the long-term goal of an educational system, in which children from various ethnics participate together despite their individual needs or is it the short-term aim of

²⁵⁰ This interchangeable use of terms without explicit defining what is meant in that moment is visible even within publications obviously set on the idea of inclusive education (like in Rafael (Eds.) 2011). The reason may be seen in the contribution of various educational researchers in one publication.

reintegration of those children that have already been placed in segregated provisions? It seems this uncertainty and complexity of the rigid monocultural system is causing hesitations in choosing precedence in proposed strategies. So, what are the main recommendations of Slovak researchers and what priority should they get?

It may be argued that the focus of the changes proposed by Slovak authors lies in legislative modifications. These proposed changes have the aim to ensure educational provisions that would enable Roma children to participate in (mainstream) education with schools being provided sufficient (especially financial) help. Notions of what should be the educational outcomes vary strongly among the authors, yet all are united in that the quality of their educational provisions need to be enhanced so that the numbers of children completing primary education, as well as their numbers in secondary (or even tertiary) education increase. Suggestions how this should be enforced differ among the authors according to their perception of integration and inclusive education and thus reach from fostering more zero classes or boarding schools (thus segregated provisions providing specialized help) through variable educational programs (or education in Roma language²⁵¹) to classes with participation of all children. Therefore, not all the authors claim a complete abolishment of segregation, but rather suggest that through raising the quality of education in 'Roma schools' they would be given opportunities to continue in secondary schools and maybe these schools could become more appealing to non-Roma children as well²⁵².

Accordingly, most Slovak authors assert distinct definitions for a 'child with special needs', for a 'child from socially disadvantaged settings' and 'Roma ethnic' (different from 'nationality') that would enable schools to get supplementary finances for materials and especially teacher assistants without needing to diagnose Roma children with 'mental disability'. This is an important claim as it would enable the children to get specialized help within mainstream education and not only in segregated settings without predisposing them as disabled from the beginning of their school career. Through adequate help (including the right methods and personnel capacities) within standard education they could be provided possibilities of catching up in their developmental delay and continue in their education according to their real abilities. Moreover, segregation on ethnical basis should be abolished through clear legislative definitions

²⁵¹ "On the contrary, we cannot speak of segregation if separate forms of education are voluntary, provided the same quality of education is maintained both in terms of process and outcome, e.g. gained competences and the achieved level of education (i.e. national minority education)." (Hapalová & Drál; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 65)

²⁵² c.f. Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 52

and measures taken against it. In connection with this claim authors of the publication “Answers to Questions on (de) Segregation of Roma Students in Slovak Education System” provide a framework for defining segregation of Roma children that could be used in legislation as follows: *“Segregation in the education of Roma children is a phenomenon that, in combination with their ethnicity (and often social disadvantage), leads to their spatial, organizational, physical and symbolic discrimination or separation from other children. This in turn leads to objectively considerably lower quality of education resulting in insufficient personal development, social inclusion and integration. It is a type of education that is not in the best interest of this target group of children.”*²⁵³ Although this definition describes the current circumstances of Roma education it does not have any normative function, therefore it would also need targeted measures to be used in legislation. Nevertheless, definitions of segregation and discrimination with visible and measurable aspects serve to eliminate not only direct but especially indirect segregation²⁵⁴.

Likewise, distinct definitions are important for setting up a just system of financing in case of educational provisions. It is especially important here to have a clear goal of which provisions should be financed and which shouldn't. As it has already been shown in the chapter about obstacles to quality education for Roma and the subchapter about the normative financing system, financing of provision has a direct influence on what settings will be implemented at schools. For that reason it seems important to have a clear aim of education – if inclusive education is the goal, how can financing of segregated provisions be legitimated? Moreover, how is it possible that legislative instruments and financing create the basis of key decision-makers (founders of schools, school directors and school self-governing bodies, but also parents of pupils) to make rational choices²⁵⁵ that lead to segregation? It shall be argued that only legislative and financial provisions set on inclusion will provide foundation for school managers to consider heterogeneous classes: „We believe segregation can only be systematically eliminated through increasing of costs (both economic and symbolic) for

²⁵³ Pauliniová & Tichý 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 164

²⁵⁴ „Uniting the terms and filling them with particular meaning, their precise analysis and their definition stemming out of the needs of Roma students and of an intact group are essential for the re-assessment of the current education methodology, its objectives and standards, as well as of the approaches and forms of work with groups of students at schools.“ (Daniel 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 154)

²⁵⁵ “Rational choice is a choice which, to the greatest extent possible, minimizes costs or risks and maximizes profits. These costs and profits do not necessarily have to be primarily economic (i.e. in the form of norms or subsidies), but they can also be symbolic (i.e. in the form of the support from teachers, parents or state representatives). Evaluation of individual alternatives in terms of risk and cost minimization and profit maximization and the choice of one of them results from the decision-makers' specific position and viewpoint, i.e. it does not need to reflect a society-wide benchmark and interest. At the same time, decision-making does not always have to be conscious or intentional, it can also be intuitive and unconscious.” (Hapalová & Drál' 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 63)

segregation and benefits for desegregation alternatives in the education system management and management of particular schools.²⁵⁶ These described measures have been analyzed as foundational for changing the educational system towards an inclusive one.

Yet, how much would an inclusive system of education cost? Can Slovakia afford it? Despite the fact that the Slovak educational system is underfinanced in all aspects (teachers are among the worst paid professions in Slovakia), several of Slovak authors try to show that the current practice of placing high numbers of Roma children into special settings as unsustainable, but only a few go as far as to claim an abolishment of the relevant special schools: “The practice must be stopped immediately, preferably by closing the relevant special-needs schools and transferring their students to standard schools, adjusting the curriculum of standard schools to their needs.”²⁵⁷ If this was done, finances of the special schools system could be allocated to the needs of Roma children in mainstream education: “It is very probable that if the diagnostic methods of Roma children improved, more than half of the special-needs financing could be freed and used to improve the quality of normal schools, including programs for Roma children.”²⁵⁸ Therefore it may be argued that the authors are certain that Roma children in mainstream education will need additional resources to be provided equal opportunities. They also see it as an opportunity for enhancing the quality of the whole school system.

Yet (re)-integrating Roma children into standard schools will require changes within the system so that individual needs of the children are met. These will involve especially diagnostic methods sensitive to Roma²⁵⁹ (and the monitoring of the evaluation procedures – thus creating a just system of diagnosing mental disability). Even if a child was diagnosed as ‘mentally disabled’, reassessments every two years should enable a reintegration whenever needed. Contrary to this claim the governmental documents don’t reflect this call; they only consider reassessments after the first year of education in special schools²⁶⁰. This doesn’t seem enough as the time span is regarded too small to capture all children’s individual development speed.

²⁵⁶ Hapalová & Drál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 64

²⁵⁷ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 28

²⁵⁸ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 28

²⁵⁹ “...research studies can help answer questions such as whether the obtained results are caused by different stimulation of cognitive abilities in the natural setting or by shortage of a particular type of stimuli; whether the differing conditions for development are related to cultural disparity or to dissimilar current living conditions; how and what levels of language disadvantage influence the performance in non-verbal tasks; they will be reflected in developmental programs and in diagnoses which would be culturally relevant.” (Špotáková 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 58f)

²⁶⁰ c.f. Slovak Government 2011, 4

Whatever provisions will be decided on, inclusive or only integrated, some reorganization of the classes and supplementary support within the classes will be essential. Lowering the numbers of children in one class if a child from disadvantaged settings joins in is supported by the National Plans of the Decade of Roma inclusion (which is not implemented yet, it is only in the stage of planning). Yet more importantly there will be a need for professionals working together inside the classes such as teachers, special pedagogues and teacher assistants (interdisciplinary approach). Accordingly the authors recommend the position of the teacher assistants to be strengthened²⁶¹. Moreover, there should be more Roma assistants to support the language acquisition of the students. Romani should be taught as a supplementary language and enable these children acquire better Slovak language abilities (Although there are also authors who claim that there should be schools providing education only in Romani, yet this is identified as insofar problematic, as it could strengthen segregation because Roma children (even speaking Slovak) would probably be assigned to these classes automatically. Schools with a focus on Romani and Roma culture could be established as secondary school (for instance pedagogical secondary schools educating future Roma teachers). Therefore inclusive education should provide good foundation for the language of instruction while building upon the mother tongue of the child: “Children should be taught in their mother tongue for as long as possible, and they should start studying the majority language as the second language as soon as possible.”²⁶²

6.2. Strategies proposed in international publications

It may be argued that most of the international publications strongly criticize the insufficiency of legislation to prevent discrimination and segregation and urge “the introduction of targeted and applicable measures to prevent and eliminate it”²⁶³. Although no specific measures are mentioned, several of the authors claim that predisposition for measuring discrimination, as well as for effectively applied strategies is the availability of reliable data²⁶⁴. Therefore, not gathering of ethnical data is to be viewed as discriminatory and policy should be introduced to collect it appropriately while respecting the rights of the Roma²⁶⁵. Without these data there are no

²⁶¹ c.f. Oláh 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011

²⁶² Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 37

²⁶³ c.f. OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011, 139

²⁶⁴ Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009, 4

²⁶⁵ OSF 2010¹ argues that there is already legislation that sufficiently safeguards personal data collection and its protection: Act No. 428/2002 Coll. on personal data protection; the Act implements Directive 95/46/EC and the Civil Code (Act No. 40/1964 Coll. as amended) sections 11–16. Yet this relies on the permission of Roma to be used and should be gathered in a way that would respect their rights. (OSF 2010¹, 75)

possibilities of adequately monitoring the strategies applied and thus resolve which the most desired provisions are. Neither is there data to monitor the achievements of the targets introduced by the national action plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.²⁶⁶ The authors Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera provide 'Right to Education Indicators' that could serve to monitor the quality of education for Roma children in Slovakia; they emphasize availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability, participation and accountability of education that could serve to identify violation of the human right to quality education²⁶⁷. Yet, as the authors point out these indicators also rely on the availability of (official) data, which could serve to prove discrimination within the educational system and could even hold states accountable for not fulfilling their obligations to provide equal rights to all its citizens²⁶⁸. But what data should be collected? There are some suggestions of recording ethnicity at the time of enrollment into schools²⁶⁹. These data could provide information about the numbers of Roma students attending schools, yet, as already mentioned, data about their educational outcomes in the various provisions should be made available too to evaluate the quality and adequateness of these provisions. What are the skills acquired by Roma children? What are their literacy rates, their numeracy skills and problem solving abilities? No data on these issues were found within the analyzed publications; although most of the authors claim that the segregating provisions with low level of curriculum (and thus low level of their acquired skills) lag far behind those of non-Roma and therefore indicate inappropriateness of the school curricula used for their education and unjustness of the settings. These start already at an early age when the children are most capable of development – with placing them into zero classes. Their low quality practically results in not being able to continue in standard classes. REF indicates that this practice is not consistent with the idea of inclusive education and should not be supported: "Project activities in zero grades are unlikely to receive support because the experience of zero grades is that they amount to education in segregated setting and that dividing the first year of primary education into two years places children at an educational disadvantage relative to

²⁶⁶ c.f. OSF 2010¹

²⁶⁷ „Human rights indicators, on the other hand, aim to assess the conformity of education with human rights standards by focusing on what goes on inside and outside the classroom and the quality of the materials and human resources that go into the equation.“ (Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009, 2)

²⁶⁸ „Updated gross enrollment ratios could for instance show that Roma children continue to be segregated despite such clear-cut court rulings as the one against the Czech Republic, exposing the government's continued hiding behind vague policy statements and intentions that see no follow-up, for fear of challenging the deeply embedded prejudices against Roma people in the mainstream school system and the general population.“ (Beco, Hyll-Larsen & Balsera 2009, 9)

²⁶⁹ c.f. REF 2011

children who attend preschool.”²⁷⁰ Therefore, the government should put more emphasis on supporting children (especially from disadvantaged settings) in attending pre-school education. Moreover, the recommendation is to make pre-school education compulsory for children at the age of five (or, as some authors suggest, at the age of three) or at least give Roma children priority in enrollment²⁷¹.

Additionally, international authors try to show best practice examples where participation of Roma together with non-Roma pupils is already present in Slovakia, or programs (for example after-school programs) aiming at developing skills of Roma which already show success²⁷². In doing this they try to motivate other schools to change. Moreover, through providing scholarship support to children attending these projects international organizations try to motivate the Roma (pupils and parents) to create a school community and experience inclusion that works.

Financially supported by international funds national authors’ research Roma education enhancing the data availability on various aspects which is not provided by official states. This is further used to critique the current circumstances of opportunities of Roma²⁷³. These studies provide foundation for demanding the elimination of Roma overrepresentation in special schools and classes with a clear view set on inclusive education. Moreover, they evaluate some of the strategies within the enhancement of Roma education in respect to international trends.

Consequently they show, for example, that even though multicultural education in Slovakia has been introduced into general school curriculum within the last years with the aim of ‘forming a part of each subject taught at school’²⁷⁴, they also indicate that the implementation has only been formal in many schools. Although this is reviewed as good intention which should be fostered, it is also regarded as insufficient because solitary knowledge about other cultures does not substitute the needed positive experience with the cultures. This can only be provided through intercultural school environment fostered by all participants in positive ways.

²⁷⁰ REF 2011, 31

²⁷¹ c.f. REF 2009, 83

²⁷² c.f. REF 2011, but also other publication by REF not analyzed within this thesis.

²⁷³ One of the most important and most cited researches is the study conducted by REF in 2009 “School as Ghetto”.

²⁷⁴ REF 2011, 22

6.3. Strategies inspired by experience from the UK

The publications of the category of experience with Roma education outside Slovakia were chosen with the intention of providing “good practice” examples of inclusive education. Accordingly the publications were not analyzed from the viewpoint of deficiencies that can be seen within Roma education in other countries. Instead practices were looked for that could be applied in Slovakia’s educational system or provide any kind of inspiration for justifying the enhancement of inclusive education. This indicates selectiveness of certain aspects and therefore shows some limitations. Nevertheless, by choosing research reports of surveys on Roma pupils originally residing in Slovakia who migrated to the UK only a few years ago (from 1990-2011), the findings suggest a strong comparative possibility. This is because it shows the immense influence of institutional circumstances rather than individual deficiencies of Roma adapting to the system. The main finding of this research, undertaken in cooperation with the UK-based organization Equality, is that Roma children previously placed in segregated schools (whether standard or special) in Czech Republic and Slovak Republic are able to make a successful transition to ethnically mixed standard schools in the UK, suggesting that the separation of Roma from non-Roma in Czech and Slovak schools is not justified by Roma’s cognitive or social abilities²⁷⁵.

Accordingly, the analyzed documents show that in situations where Roma were identified and (positively) recognized by authorities, teachers and the (non-Roma) communities as an ethnic minority who need (specific) help in acquiring knowledge, provisions were made to meet their needs in mainstream education settings (collection of ethnical data was not only common – it was considered needed for providing the focused provisions). This was especially successful when Roma were involved not only as translators or teacher assistants, but also as role models and mediators between schools (authorities) and Roma families (or even communities). On the other hand, in cases where Roma (children) were not identified, it led to their segregation even in such country that makes effort to include every child in education.

In view of that, it may be argued that the publications of the practice from UK show a focus on participation of Roma and its influence on achievements of Roma pupils in education: “The process that has had the greatest impact on improving the local situation for both workers and the Roma themselves has been the employment of Roma in supporting roles.”²⁷⁶ The impact of

²⁷⁵ c.f. Fremlová 2011, 62

²⁷⁶ Fremlová 2009, 22

mediators is especially shown in communication of schools with Roma parents thus developing positive relationships with them. These are claimed by authorities to have a great influence on attendance and achievements of Roma pupils. The research by Fremlová also shows statements of Roma pupils and their parents about the reasons why they came to the UK. These were most commonly connected to experience of discrimination from their country of origin: "The most common reason given by Roma adults when asked why they had felt the need to leave their homelands was to escape racism and discrimination"²⁷⁷. It was also interesting to hear Roma parents commenting that "although they still did not feel at home in England, their children have settled well and will not want to live elsewhere."²⁷⁸

Additionally, experience from the UK shows that what especially helped the teachers in educating Roma pupils was the cooperation of various professionals while preparing for education as well as while teaching in class. Hence, not only Roma educators (or Roma teacher assistants) were helpful but also other professionals (such as speech therapists and special pedagogues) and their cooperation helped the child to learn the language of instruction. This proved to be especially efficient when the children were educated in mainstream classes and 'taken out' only for a few hours where specialized help was provided in small classes or individually (short intense courses)²⁷⁹. Moreover, the authors argue that in schools with after-school programs designed for enhancing the interests of the children they showed more positive relations towards the school and thus greater motivation to attend and succeed in it. This was especially visible when the programs were based on communicating with schools about the difficulties of the children²⁸⁰. Furthermore, the schools in the research in the UK show what high expectations are placed on teachers and schools to sustainably improve the quality of education: "If a school creates a new approach that contributes to improving the quality of education, experiences are shared with other schools and even taken into account when developing national guidelines. Assessment, innovation and evaluation of the innovation form a spiral of continuous raise of the standards. This is probably the most important finding when analyzing the examples from the UK"²⁸¹. Moreover, the schools have tools for self-evaluation to show how inclusive they are, such as the Index of Inclusion. With its help school managements are able to discover weaknesses and properly address them.

²⁷⁷ Fremlová 2011, 22

²⁷⁸ Fremlová 2009, 12

²⁷⁹ c.f. Kontseková; cited in Vančíková & Kubánová 2011, 24

²⁸⁰ c.f. SGI 2010, 26

²⁸¹ Kontseková; cited in Vančíková & Kubánová 2011, 25

6.4. Strategies for overcoming obstacles to inclusion: summary and comparison of findings

Summarizing, it may be argued that most of the recommendations provided by the analyzed authors were recognized as leading to inclusion. Rather than explicit segregating measures only certain conditions, including inattention or too vaguely formulated recommendations, were found as possibly enhancing integration or even further segregation. This fact leads to the opinion that generally researchers of Roma issues show the desire for Roma to participate in mainstream education. Despite this, the spread suggestions show that there is little consensus about how this should be done and what concrete course of action should be taken. Yet, as the amount of legislative obstacles has shown, a number of suggestions for changes in the system of education and thus legislative changes have most frequently been addressed (110 of 206 suggestions representing 53 %). This shows not only the high number of issues that need to be resolved, but also the various recommendations that the authors consider important. While recommendations for financial aspects represent only 4 % (9 comments), these do not show that this is no problem, but rather, that the suggestions are more universal ('more money for all the good strategies'). The other important recommendations were summarized in categories of 'acknowledging cultural differences' (59 comments representing 29 %) and 'Roma participation' (28 comments representing 14 %). If combining these two categories together they represent 43 % which means another important factor of enhancing Roma education. Moreover, they show how the other changes (systemic and financial aspects) without a sensitive approach to Roma culture²⁸² and their participation would lead to no positive outcomes. It shall be argued, that these last aspects are inseparable from the other aspects and should be dealt with simultaneously with the other proposed changes.

Yet, what are the reasons for not seeing any changes within the education of Roma children? What are the causes of resilience towards ways past the obstacles? These shall be addressed within the next chapter.

²⁸² If comparing only the obstacles of institutionally acknowledging differences with the proposed changes of how to enhance it, the analysis shows 22 comments on obstacles to 59 suggestions (27% to 73%, respectively).

7. The resilience to change of Roma education

“Recent years have seen little progress in relation to the education of Roma in Slovakia. As a result, many issues remain to be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to bring a reduction in the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.”²⁸³ It seems that despite the ongoing efforts of various organizations and programs addressing Roma not much has changed in respect to the educational opportunities of Roma in the last decade. What are the reasons for this resilience to change?

“Minority integration (...) reflects on particular histories of minority settlement, relations with external states, engagement of international actors, and decisively, the majorities’ perception of “their” national-states.”²⁸⁴ This statement suggests that resilience to change always needs to be examined in the historic context of a country as well as in the light of perception of diversity among the majority. According to the authors this is especially important in the Central and Eastern European countries where the socialist leadership has had a strong impact on the lives of people for a long time. Although much has changed in Slovakia since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, instilled views from 50 years of suppression are hard to erase during only 20 years of democracy. Moreover, since many of the persons in charge of various offices or school leaderships maintained their positions even after the fall of communism the socialistic perception of education still persists. Additionally the acquired freedom of speech during the transition revealed “ethnic tensions, previously suppressed by the socialist leadership”²⁸⁵ while economic transitions caused almost universal unemployment²⁸⁶. Therefore it may be argued that many challenges of Roma integration are a ‘by-product of (post-socialist) democratic transition’²⁸⁷ in which opportunities for positively addressing the circumstances of Roma have not been taken²⁸⁸. So what are the specific contradictions that need to be shown in order to see some change in the social wrong of segregating Roma children? Is there someone who desires the situation to remain the same?

One of the reasons for not seeing any changes in the provisions of Roma is the already mentioned ever-changing political situation in Slovakia: „whereas Slovak governments have

²⁸³ REF 2011, 25

²⁸⁴ Agarín & Brosig 2009, 8

²⁸⁵ Agarín & Brosig 2009, 9

²⁸⁶ c.f. OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011

²⁸⁷ Agarín & Brosig 2009, 9

²⁸⁸ c.f. OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011

produced a large number of strategic documents aimed at the country's Romani population, implementation has often been lacking. Rather than applying a program consistently, Slovak authorities have repeatedly drafted what they presented as new policy priorities and called for new pilot projects to reflect those priorities."²⁸⁹ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová make a similar conclusion: "No systemic approach, limited continuity and thoroughness of programs. Government programs are not based on research, they are incomplete and they are *not a political priority*. They often stay only in the planning stage. There are no budget requirements for the programs and it is impossible to evaluate them. One part of the state administration approaches the education of the Roma with racist prejudice"²⁹⁰. Although there were measures taken to change the situation of Roma before Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004, these were rather 'conditions of membership' than sincere efforts to give Roma opportunities for a better life. "But since Slovakia joined the EU, this external pressure has ceased to have any impact, and Roma inclusion has become a matter of domestic concern."²⁹¹ What's more, "[t]he fact that nationalist populist forces, renowned for their unfriendly policies towards minorities, and preference for ethnic majoritarianism, spent considerable time in government, did not augur well for positive progress."²⁹² After the latest early-elections in Slovakia in March 2012, appointment of the new minister of education Dušan Čaplovič and the reviewing of the governmental program there is only little hope for changes within the educational system that would correspond with the idea of inclusiveness²⁹³. On the contrary, the only "enhancements" the new government is proposing in respect to marginalized groups is their segregation in boarding schools²⁹⁴.

Moreover, due to political changes the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities has not only changed a number of times since it was first established in 1995²⁹⁵, but also even after 12 years this position has no real influence on changes in legislation: Until

²⁸⁹ REF 2011, 12

²⁹⁰ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 24; emphasis added

²⁹¹ OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011, 136

²⁹² OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011, 137

²⁹³ According to the few already presented aims of the new government in the field of education it is clear that the views of the new Educational Minister Čaplovič are very much oriented not towards providing opportunities for every child representatively, but towards building up a system of education where children are viewed only as human capital. Through adapting educational outcomes to the needs of the labor market (or even specific companies) these schools should educate future work-force in specific areas. Although the educational system needs to be sensitive to needs of the labor markets, this direct connections proposed by Čaplovič will not enhance opportunities but rather limit them for a great number of students. (c.f. <http://www.topky.sk/cl/100535/1306360/Caplovic--Viacere-odborne-skoly-by-sa-mali-zmenit-na-firemne> [9.4.2012]) Accordingly his views may be characterized as strongly socialistic and controlling.

²⁹⁴ c.f. SGI 2012: <http://www.governance.sk/index.php?id=1880> [1.5.2012]

²⁹⁵ Pöcz 2009, 22

[the Plenipotentiary] has to beg the particular institutions to be at least heard out and various ministries such as the ministry of education or the ministry of health care don't really have a desire for joint action, he will be helpless.²⁹⁶

Accordingly, the first reason for a certain resilience to change may be the unwillingness of political parties to make radical changes within the system (which are often connected to financial expenses), yet which would show positive outcomes long-term²⁹⁷. Experience from international agents only prove this hypothesis: "Overall, Romani political representation is weak and cooperation with decision-makers poor."²⁹⁸ Especially in projects where one of the criteria was financial involvement of the government, the projects didn't get approved due to this reason²⁹⁹. Yet by ignoring the need for change, the problems only intensify and build even a greater gap between the various social groups. What's more important, it seems that the governments are avoiding taking responsibility for the previous wrongs: It is remarkable that within the governmental documents there is no mention of segregation of Roma as an existing phenomenon. Instead of requiring the desegregation of the Roma minority, the concept of "integration of Roma children into mainstream education" is being used.³⁰⁰ Additionally, as has been shown in other chapters, through the further strengthening of segregating provisions for Roma children (as are special classes and partly zero classes) in legislation it is to assume that the government even desires to maintain the segregation within the education of Roma³⁰¹. This can be additionally seen in the way that the government uses the rhetoric that doesn't indicate any deficiencies of the educational system while describing the failure of Roma children in education³⁰².

²⁹⁶ Biháriová 2012 for Slovak newspaper Pravda on April 22nd 2012: http://spravy.pravda.sk/fico-hlada-recept-ako-na-romov-d21-/sk_domace.asp?c=A120422_093206_sk_domace_p23#ixzz1sx6FAG4o [22.4.2012]

²⁹⁷ REF 2009 and the report by Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009

²⁹⁸ REF 2011, 11

²⁹⁹ "The action plan formulates fairly broad objectives, with limited short-term goals (and few short-term deadlines); specific budgetary resources are not clearly defined in most cases." (OSF 2010¹, 77)

³⁰⁰ Pöcz 2009, 35

³⁰¹ c.f. REF 2009, 59

³⁰² "However, if we take a look at strategic documents, we will find out that rhetoric is usually different and the causes of Roma children's lack of success in education are externalised, without any reflection of deficiencies in the system of education." (Hapalová & Drál' (2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 67)

Another reason for the unwillingness to change circumstances may be seen in the dominance of “old structures”³⁰³ or traditional institutions and their interest in maintaining the status quo in special education. This circumstance is reported in the study of REF (2009) where the authors explore the influence of special schools and special pedagogical advising centers in maintaining high enrollment rates of Roma pupils: “the higher per-pupil funding levels for special schools make such schools financially attractive from the standpoint of those who work in them, as well as for those who administer them.”³⁰⁴ Thus they claim that it is the funding system³⁰⁵ that creates resilience of these institutes to change. Rather than lowering the number of students in special schools the conditions together with tradition and strong influence of special pedagogues cause these numbers to rise every year³⁰⁶, while “the setting of [the Slovak] education system is such that it makes the exclusion of children (specifically Roma children) in a special education system a rationally advantageous alternative.”³⁰⁷

Moreover, through the double role of special pedagogical advice centers (who have the aim of helping with diagnosing and integrating pupils into schools) in boarding (and financing) within special schools (with commonly sharing the director and staff for diagnosis) a conflict of interests would be created. This could be solved through the consigning of diagnosis to the differently financed and independent pedagogical-psychological advising centers (which at present share the role of diagnostic institutions with the special pedagogical advice centers). In the present situation this seems like a feasible suggestion if we make sure that proper diagnostic methods are used within these institutions³⁰⁸.

³⁰³ Another example of “old structures” may be seen in the persistence of school inspectors in lurking on bureaucratic accuracy instead of appraising creative and child-centered approaches of teachers and schools. Although not documented through research this is the sad experience of many teachers (c.f. <http://markovicova.blog.sme.sk/c/74654/netarajte-ze-chcete-zmenit-skolstvo.html> [26.12.2006]) and school-leaders in Slovakia.

³⁰⁴ REF 2009, 73

³⁰⁵ “Administratively independent from standard education, special primary schools are founded by regional school offices rather than by the municipal offices which found standard primary schools. This being the case, transfers of pupils between standard primary schools and special primary schools (in either direction) also transfer funding from one level of government to another. This in turn creates a situation in which local and regional governments are in competition with one another for funding.” (REF 2009, 73)

³⁰⁶ According to calculations of Hapalová & Drál’ (2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 85), based on data provided by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education the percentage of pupils educates according to the syllabi of ‘mental handicap’ has risen to 4.38 %, while in 2001 it was 2.88 %: “We think that the data indicate the tendency of the special education system to ‘fill in’ existing capacities, which is often contrary to the declared integration objectives of state policy.” (Hapalová & Drál’ 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 86)

³⁰⁷ Hapalová & Drál’ (2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 86)

³⁰⁸ According to experience many psychologists working in these advice centers still rely heavily on traditional diagnostic methods measuring the level of intelligence (IQ). As current international development concerning the influence of the environment on developing mental abilities show, these measuring methods become heavily criticized.

The last resilient factor for change towards inclusive education that should be mentioned within this section is the Roma parents themselves. As is stated, “members of school staff tend to underestimate the importance of inter- and intra-ethnic relations for Romani parents as they make enrollment decisions for their children. On one hand, the negative experiences of Roma (both children and parents) with non-Romani pupils and staff in standard schools make integrated education less appealing. On the other hand, the presence of other Roma and efforts by school staff to create a hospitable environment in special schools and classes provide positive incentives for enrollment in special education.”³⁰⁹ Moreover, most of the parents themselves attended special schools, or many of other children from the community attend these schools and thus they prefer ‘best known’ places for their children, without being aware of the further (limited) opportunities of their children for higher education or employment options.

³⁰⁹ REF 2009, 80

8. Conclusion & Recommendations for enhancing inclusion of Roma in Slovakia's educational system

This thesis has tried to provide an insight into the education of Roma children in Slovakia and render what obstacles and recommendations for change the different authors provide for contemporary discourse. The chapters have shown the complexity of the obstacles as well as the differences in assigning priority in the proposed suggestions. Moreover it was shown that there is little consensus within the proposed strategies of contemporary publications about what and how it should be done.

The analysis has also shown how Slovak educational system is not focused on educating diverse groups of pupils, especially those from marginalized and excluded backgrounds, suggesting that it is highly segregating despite international declarations about providing equal opportunities for all its children: „It cannot be said that Slovak education system ignores Roma children. However, because of the prevalent monocultural and selective schooling any solutions introduced by the system fail to reach the intended goals.“³¹⁰ Accordingly, it shall be argued that only if the mainstream education in general becomes more inclusive and therefore accepting diversity, Roma children will be granted a chance to succeed in it. What's more, it was shown that it is going to be an obstinate transition towards equal opportunities of all pupils within the educational system and that it will not only require legislative changes, but most of all changes in attitude. It has been suggested that experience from UK may serve as inspiration for addressing these attitudes and thus creating a system of inclusive education.

Viewing inclusive education as the best alternative of creating fair opportunities for all children, at this point some further recommendations to the already presented suggestions shall be provided which could support changes of the Slovak educational system.

³¹⁰ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 23

8.1. Recommendations that could lead to inclusive education and thus provide equal opportunities for Roma children

First of all what needs to be asserted again is the required change of the whole philosophy of the school system. Without assigning Roma the right to mainstream education all changes will only lead to further difficulties. Besides, if interaction between Roma and non-Roma is not possible, the children will have no opportunity to experience (cultural) diversity³¹¹. Yet it is clear that a simple placement of Roma children into standard educational streams will not be enough. What needs to be done is an adjustment of the provisions and organization of education. Hence, legislation will need changes in the classification of disability (creating culturally sensitive diagnostic methods), providing clear definitions for financing the education of children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds; it will need a reform of the methods and curricula used in the general educational system (including teaching material, methods that would reflect their characteristics and knowledge acquisition³¹², smaller classes and a stronger cooperation of professionals such as teachers, Roma assistants, special needs professionals, etc.) but also (and most of all) the need of changing the attitude towards the education of Roma children in the minds of researchers, the government, school leaders, the teaching personnel as well as parents of children from the major society, who would rather send their children to schools with as small percentage of Roma pupils as possible.

Although not the only solution, it may be a starting point to share “best practices” experience among schools. Seeing schools where participation of all children works might motivate and encourage other schools to ‘try it out’. Yet this requires better cooperation between schools (and NGOs³¹³ together with the government) which is very limited in Slovakia. Moreover, what works in one school doesn’t have to work exactly the same way in another school, it always needs to be adjusted according to the specifics of particular children in the school: “While many researches in Slovakia focus on the relevancy and adjustment of programs to the social and cultural specifics of Roma communities, the general conclusion of available literature on

³¹¹ “The segregation of Roma students in an ethnically homogenous education environment has a negative impact on the development of social and cultural wealth. In schools, Roma children do not mix with non-Roma children, they are not exposed to positive social interaction, no interethnic friendships are formed, members of the two ethnic groups have no opportunity to learn about the other’s culture and language, etc.” (Hojsík 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 51)

³¹² “Our main conclusion is that the main reason for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the programs designed to help the Roma is the failure to respect Roma’s social and cultural traditions and their diversity – the evidence for this can be repeatedly found in literature focusing on job market, education system, healthcare system and crime rate surveys.” (Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 4)

³¹³ “To date, coordination among NGOs in Slovakia has been generally lacking.” (REF 2011, 11)

development aid is that “one size does not fit all.” The general approach is the identification of best practices, their regular updating and, mainly, their adjustment to the social and cultural specifics of the relevant target group.”³¹⁴ Experience from UK shows that in this process school inspectors may help not only as the ones who monitor the process (controlling and penalizing insufficiencies as is the case at the moment) but also as mentors providing information and counseling to schools in the process of change. Moreover, the (translated and adjusted) Index of Inclusion could serve as an effective tool for schools to self-evaluate their practices and the involvements of their children in education.

Besides, inclusive education and thus participation of all children needs to start as early as pre-school, at the age where children meet differences without prejudice, where they are more accepting to diversity (which can be fostered through play). Besides, at this age children are more sensitive to acquiring socially accepted behavior as well as communication skills. This makes it especially important that Roma children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are encouraged to attend kindergartens. Although the recommendations at what age compulsory pre-school education should be established vary among the authors, it should be argued that not only the age matters (although it does – as a rule the sooner, the better) but rather the quality of institutions. What is regarded important at this point is that pre-school education should not aim at obliterating the children’s characteristics and culture, but rather aim at learning to accept each other. Moreover, at this age parents need to be taught how to provide the right stimuli for their children. This aspect is the aim of the project called ‘Sure Start’ (developed in the UK, but already implemented in many countries of Europe) that was also launched in Slovakia in 2010³¹⁵. This project fosters the relationship between a parent and a child from zero to six by teaching parents how to stimulate their children’s development: “Parents are taught to carry out their role in the development of their children. Counselling is organised in domestic environment, with the intention of educating parents about how to play with children creatively and how to create a stimulating environment at home (so-called play sessions). The games being taught should contribute to the development of children’s communication skills, their coordination and other skills.”³¹⁶

This example shows the direct involvement of Roma parents in the upbringing of their children while fostering the awareness of their ethnical culture. Similarly, this should be implemented into

³¹⁴ Marcinčin & Marcinčinová 2009, 6

³¹⁵ REF 2011, 15

³¹⁶ Kontseková & Košťál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 26

schools. Experience of researchers show how little knowledge many Roma parents have about the possibilities for the future of their children when attending special schools. Even worse, commonly this placement into special schools has been done without the knowledge of their parents. Although this is protected by law already, experience says this is still a common practice³¹⁷. Therefore, what should be fostered is a better involvement of Roma (parents and the community – and especially involvement of Roma women) in the schools. In this case especially employed Roma teacher assistants could serve as mediators between Roma community and schools (providing them with information about their rights, possibilities of changing their situation, etc.) as well as role-models, encouraging self-esteem for one's own cultural identity (active approach to improving one's own conditions³¹⁸). This has proven to be most efficient especially in cases where the professional has come from the nearby community³¹⁹.

While teacher assistants are considered crucial for helping children in class (especially in language acquisition) and cooperating with teachers (and other professionals), teachers too need to get qualified to work with these children. It shall be argued that teacher education is an aspect that was not discussed enough among the analyzed publications (although it was mentioned as a problem in 53 % of the documents). If mentioned, it was rather their low qualification than suggestions for further education. This may be seen in assigning low importance to the influence of teachers for the educational outcomes of pupils: "In Slovakia, a significant deficiency is represented by the very limited emphasis put on the further education of teachers."³²⁰ However, it is the qualification of teachers that is regarded as the key to successful inclusive education, since the achievements of students largely depend on the qualification and approach of the pedagogues. Thus, positive expectations of teachers show a direct correlation to pupils' positive achievements³²¹. If teacher education was recommended in the analyzed documents it was rather focused on in-service training³²², yet what seems more important is the qualification of all teachers to be able to react to all children's needs, thus also to children with special educational needs. Therefore, it shall be argued that good quality teacher education

³¹⁷ "Slovakia's 2008 School Law stipulates that no child may be placed in special education on the basis of social disadvantage and that no child may be placed in special education without the informed consent of the child's legal guardian, with the director of a special school accordingly required to inform the child's legal guardian of all educational options available for the child that is considered for enrollment in the special school. While it is too early to assess the practical impact of these provisions, early indications show that their effect has been minimal." (REF 2011, 22)

³¹⁸ c.f. OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011, 138

³¹⁹ c.f. Fremlová 2009, 22

³²⁰ Kontseková & Košťál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 39

³²¹ c.f. Rosenthal & Jacobson 2007; cited in Pöcz 2009, 55

³²² c.f. REF 2011, 15

(which is not the case of Slovakia) is regarded as another precondition for successful inclusive education.

The last issue that shall be mentioned is finances. As shown in the analysis finances have a direct influence on what provisions will be chosen by school managers. This definitely needs to be resolved together with the definitions that assign children to these financial supports. Yet what shall be mentioned here is something slightly different. The analysis of the REF 2011 publication suggests that possibilities of financing Roma projects (or personal support through scholarships) are not being fully used. EU Structural Funds, nongovernmental funds, and private donations together with limited local and regional budgets and the state budget (as has been shown in the chapter about resilience factors of Roma inclusion) taken together provide financial sources that might never again be available in such extent³²³. This was also mentioned at a conference on inclusive education of minorities in November 2011 where various activists declared: “We should stop complaining about not having enough financial resources. There have never been more possibilities for funding inclusion (and there will never be more). We should start acting now!”³²⁴

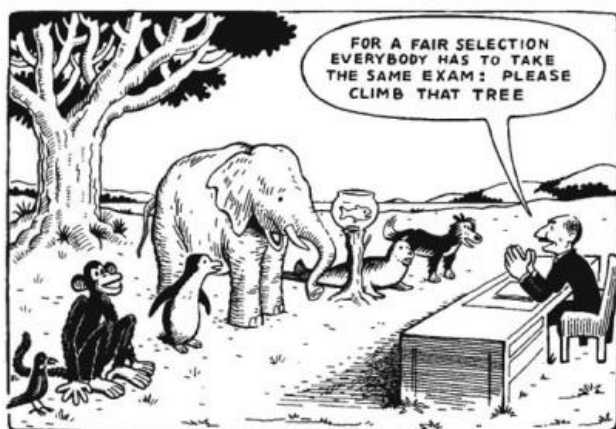
³²³ c.f. OSF 2011; cited in Rorke 2011, 138

³²⁴ Personal attendance of the Conference organized by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities held on November 8th, 2011; paraphrased

8.2. Further research questions

The limitation of this research is that it does not conduct its own empirical research but has to rely on other authors' research which may be often limited itself. Yet it may be argued that through bringing even limited research from other authors together a more complex picture may be presented and recommendations summarized and that taken together may lead to enhancement of educational situation of Roma pupils in Slovakia.

Nevertheless, there are many further questions that would require more attention as well as further research. Some of those were already mentioned within the analysis and some were presented by other researcher. What needs to be mentioned at this point is the question of what differences there are between Roma children coming from disadvantaging surroundings and those who come from well-off surroundings abundant of care and stimuli. What are their specific educational characteristics? It may be argued that these aspects were not found in the analyzed publications, yet answers to this question might provide inspiration for developing ethnicity-sensitive methods and curricula. These are regarded as a foundation of culturally perceptive education respecting diversity of all its pupils. Moreover, research from abroad may be inspirational for the research in Slovakia. Some of the questions explored could be: What are the settlement patterns of Roma in Slovakia? What patterns may be identified in their mobility? Do they travel within Slovakia at all? And what are the reasons for it? How do these patterns influence the education of Roma children?



Although the difficulties rendered show an obstinate transition of Slovak educational system, the goal should always be set on inclusion, because “the quality of education should not be judged on the basis of the results of the best ones, but by the education system’s ability to create equal chances for all.”³²⁵

Table 2: “A fair selection”. Unknown author. Online available: <http://creative-o.com/tag/a-fair-selection/>

³²⁵ Kontseková & Košťál 2011; cited in Rafael (Eds.) 2011, 39

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Appendix A – Summary of documents used for the main analysis

Categories: Slovak authors about Slovakia (1) – research paper by independent author (a), research paper by NGO (b), political papers or official surveys by a governmental office (c); International authors about Slovakia (2), (international) authors about experience from other European countries (3)

For purpose of identification with the table in Appendix B the publications were assigned letters A-Q.

L et ter	Cat eg ory	Publ. Date	English title & genre of publication	Original title (if not in English)	Author/ Organization	Available at:
A	1a	2009	Support to the process of inclusive education for Roma <i>(Diploma thesis – empirical part about the attitudes of Roma towards education)</i>	Podpora procesu inklúzie vo vzdelávaní Rómov	PŮCZ , Ibolya	https://stella.uniba.sk/zkp-storage/ddp/dostupne/PD/2009/2009-PD-CzEMcN/
B	1a	June 2011	To start new quality in education: A variety of training routes in the regional education <i>(Critique comments on the New School Law of 2008)</i>	Štart k novej kvalite vzdelávania: Rozmanitosť vzdelávacích ciest v regionálnom školstve	Zuzana Zimenová & Marcela Havrilová	http://www.noveskolstvo.sk/article.php?534
C	1a	2011	The Roma ethnic <i>(Summarization of characteristics of Roma children negatively influencing their education within the Slovak educational system)</i>	Rómske etnikum	Horňák, Ladislav	In: Lechta et al. (2011): Základy inkluzivní pedagogiky (Basics of inclusive education). Portál, Praha. p. 386-399
D	1b	2009	The Cost of Non-Inclusion The key to integration is respect for diversity <i>(Report on estimations of costs that the current segregation of Roma will bring to the state in the future)</i>		Anton Marcinčin & Ľubica Marcinčinová (OSF)	http://www.romadecade.org/files/ftp/Publications/2_cost_of_non_inclusion.pdf
E	1b	2009	Cultural Diversity and Its Perceptions by Primary School Pupils in Slovakia <i>(Report of a quantitative survey on how young pupils perceive diversity in Slovakia)</i>		Elena Gallová –Kriglerová & Jana Kadlečíková, (OSF)	http://www.osf.sk/kniznica_a_open_gallery/publikacie/2010/cultural_diversity_and_its_perceptions_by_primary_school_pupils_in_slovakia/

F	1b	2011	Answers to Questions on (de)Segregation of Roma Students in Slovak Education System <i>(Complex publication analyzing causes of Roma segregation in Slovak educational system and providing recommendations for change to policymakers)</i>		Vlado Rafael (Eds.) (OSF)	http://www.osf.sk/en/info/publications/de-segregation-of-roma-pupils-in-slovak-educational-system-questions-and-answers/
G	1b	2010	Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in Slovakia and abroad – Comparative analysis of Slovak legislation and statistic data approaches in five European countries Finland / Hungary / Austria / Slovakia / Sweden / United Kingdom ³²⁶ <i>(Analysis of Slovak legislation and statistic data about pupils from disadvantaged background)</i>	Žiaci zo znevýhodneného prostredia na Slovensku a v zahraničí - Komparatívna analýza slovenskej legislatívy a štatistických údajov s prístupmi v piatich európskych krajinách Fínsko / Maďarsko / Rakúsko / Slovensko / Švédsko / Spojené kráľovstvo	Elena Gallová –Kriglerová (Eds.) (SGI)	http://www.skolainak.sk/files/novinky/files/FINAL_Ziaci_zo_znevychodneneho_prostredia.pdf
H	1c	2011	Report on the results of a survey on the status of children from socially disadvantaged background in the school system of Slovakia <i>(Report of a survey)</i>	Správa o výsledkoch prieskumu o postavení žiaka zo sociálne znevýhodneného prostredia v školskom systéme v Slovenskej republike	Methodical-Pedagogical Center Bratislava – Regional Office Prešov (MPC)	http://www.rocepo.sk/downloads/RocPrieskum/Prieskum2009ZS.pdf
I	1c	2011	Revised National Action Plan of the Decade of Roma inclusion 2005 – 2015 for years 2011 – 2015 <i>(Plan of changes of Roma education)</i>		Slovak Government (SKGov)	http://www.romadecade.org/decade-action_plans
	1c ³²⁷	July 2011	The concept of education in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools <i>(National plan of education)</i>	Koncepcia výchovy a vzdelávania v materských školách, v základných školách a v stredných školách	Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR (Ministry of Education)	www.sukromneskolys.sk/files/vlastny_material_koncepcia.rtf

³²⁶ Only the first part referring to education in Slovakia will be considered for the analysis, since the other countries' reports refer rather to children with special needs in general than Roma children coming from socially disadvantaging backgrounds.

³²⁷ This document was not analyzed due to the early-elections in March and the establishment of a new Minister for Education of a different party than before. A new concept of education is not yet available, although first insight into the plans of the new government may be found in their proposed program. However, this does not mention Roma education, or education of children with special needs in any way, nor does it propose any specific plans that could be analyzed, thus it should be mentioned only in brief when referring to political resilience to change.

J	2	2009	SCHOOL AS GHETTO - Systemic Overrepresentation of Roma in Special Education in Slovakia <i>(Estimations on basis of qualitative and quantitative study)</i>		Eben Friedman (Eds.) (REF)	http://www.romadecade.org/files/ftp/School%20as%20Ghetto.pdf
K	2	2009	The Right to Education: Human Rights Indicators and the Right to Education of Roma Children in Slovakia - Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010 Reaching the Marginalized <i>(Propose of quality indicators of OHCHR for evaluating education)</i>		Gauthier de Beco, Peter Hyll-Larsen and Maria Ron Balseira (UNESCO)	http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186604e.pdf
L	2	2010	No Data – No Progress: Country Findings – Data Collection in Countries Participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 <i>(Policy paper on monitoring progress of implementing changes in education of Roma)</i>		Open Society Foundation (OSF)	http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/no-data-no-progress-20100628/no-data-no-progress-20100628.pdf
M	2	2011	Country Assessment Slovakia <i>(Analysis of education and the ongoing education reforms of Roma children)</i>		Eben Friedman (Eds.) (REF)	http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_ca_2011_sk_english_screen.pdf
N	2	June 2011	Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmaps for 2020 – Priorities for the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies <i>(Policy paper on target strategies of Roma inclusion - Recommendations)</i>		Bernard Rorke (Eds;) & OSF Bratislava (OSI)	http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/General%20Resources/Beyond%20Rhetoric-final.pdf

O	3	Nov 2011	<p>From Segregation to Inclusion: Roma pupils in the United Kingdom – A Pilot Research Project</p> <p><i>(Report on research of Slovak Roma immigrants in the UK's educational system)</i></p>		Lucie Fremlová (Equality & REF)	http://equality.uk.com/Education.html
P	3	Nov 2011	<p>Best Practices of Inclusive Education in England with Special Attention focused on the Education of Roma Children</p> <p><i>(Report on best practices of Roma education in the UK)</i></p>	Dobré príklady inkluzívneho vzdelávania v Anglicku so zreteľom na vzdelávanie rómskych detí	Katarína Vančíková & Martina Kubánová (Eds.) (SGI)	http://www.governance.sk/assets/files/publikacie/dobre%20prikladyin%20inkluzivneho%20vzdelavania%20v%20VB.pdf
Q	3	2009	<p>New Roma Communities in England: The Situation of Roma coming from new Member States of the European Union and the Role of Local Authorities in their Settlement and Inclusion</p> <p><i>(Analysis of the situation of Roma in the UK)</i></p>		Lucie Fremlová (European Dialogue)	http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/strategicguide.pdf

Appendix B – Tables of findings of the main analysis

1. Table of inclusiveness and it's legitimization

Author	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q		
Year	2009	2011	2010	2009	2009	2011	2010	2011	2011	2009	2009	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	2009		
Category of Publication	1a	1a	1a	1b	1b	1b	1b	1c	1c	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3		
1. Argument for legitimating inclusive education (=equal opportunities) for Roma (or to claim segregative education to be a social wrong)																			
UN Convention on Human Rights						1					1				1			3	18%
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities																1		1	6%
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	1					1								1			1	4	24%
Additional rights of prohibiting discrimination (direct or indirect)/Slovak Constitution prohibiting discrimination					1	1					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	53%
According to PISA results (OECD)	1	1		1		1									1	1		6	35%
Mentioning the European Court case D.H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic				1		1				1	1				1			5	29%
special education limits further options of children for employment			1		1	1				1					1	1		6	35%
Promoting Inclusion/Integration																			
multicultural education					1													1	6%
referring to inclusion and meaning inclusion	1	1				1					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	59%
referring to integration and meaning integration																			0%
referring to inclusion and meaning integration																			0%
referring to integration and meaning inclusion						1												1	6%
no clear reference but propagating inclusion							1			1								2	12%
no clear reference but propagating integration								1										1	6%
interchangeably using both terms with the result of no possibility of definite assignment			1	1					1									3	18%

2. Table of obstacles to Roma education

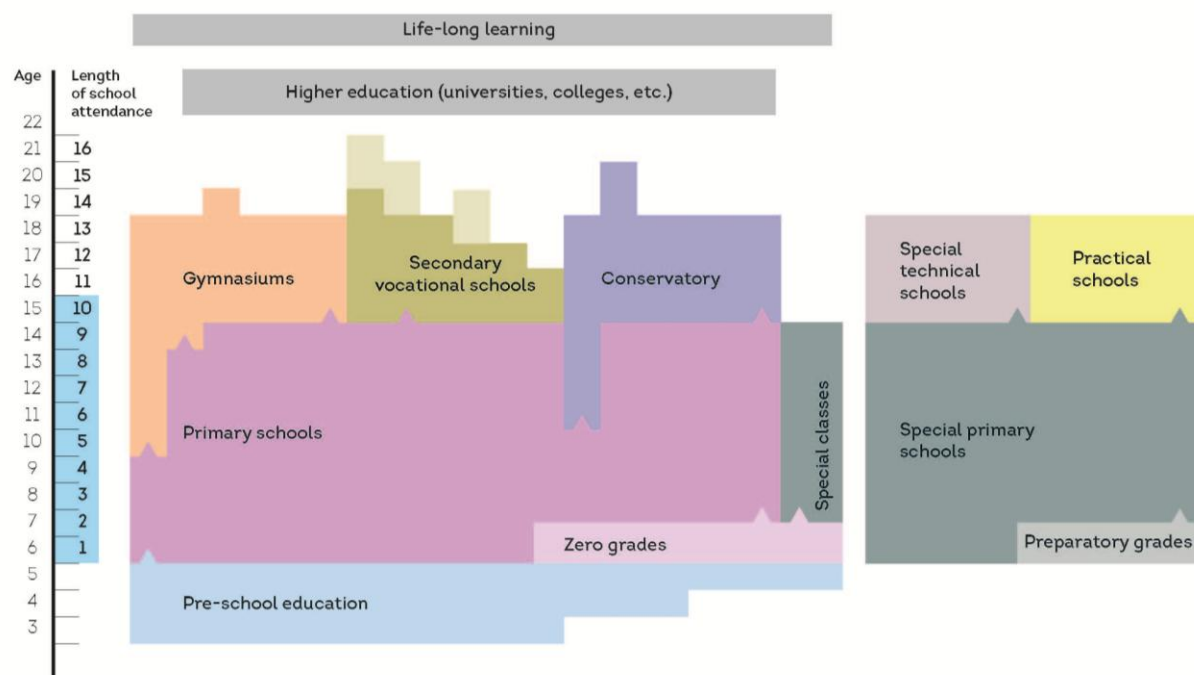
Author		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Year		2009	2011	2010	2009	2009	2011	2010	2011	2011	2009	2009	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	2009
Category of Publication		1a	1a	1a	1b	1b	1b	1b	1c	1c	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
2. Obstacles in acquiring quality education																		
<i>obstacles connected to poverty:</i>																		
their socio-economic situation /no specification	1			1	1						1	1				1	1	5
can't afford transportation to school	1				1		1				1	1				1	1	6
high mobility of Roma families	2															1		2
costs for school uniforms, meals, school fees, etc. (accommodation if secondary schools attending in cities further away)	1				1		1				1					1	1	5
malnutrition of Roma children	1			1	1													2
unsuitable housing conditions and bad (or non-existent) hygiene habits	2	1		1	1		1											4
low education of parents (not able to support their children in the educational process)	2	1		1			1	1			1					1		6
low school attendance	2	1							1			1						3
early drop-out because of low school performance	2	1	1				1											3
children did not acquire basic work habits	2	1	1	1			1				1							5
motivation of parents to enroll children in special education because of services (free school meals, materials, etc.)	1										1	1				1		3
motivation of parents to maintain children at home (after compulsory education) so they can get social benefits	1										1							1
wrong upbringing methods	2			1														1
<i>obstacles connected to attitudes:</i>																		
prejudices (school authorities making choices for them)	3						1				1	1				1	1	5
lack of recognition of ethnicity through the school system	4				1	1	1									1	1	5
low expectations of schools (that the child will succeed)	3						1				1						1	3
lack of positive relationships between schools and parents (resulting in poor communication)	3	1									1					1	1	5
lack of knowledge about Roma issues	3				1											1	1	3
mainstream perception	3				1													1
hostility of other children, teachers, officers, headmasters, etc. (transfer to special school because of bullying in standard school)	3				1	1					1					1	1	5
if integration in standard schools, non-Roma students are preferred, as are students with physical rather than mental disabilities	3						1							1				2
no information about placement of child into special school provided to legal guardians	3				1									1				2
Segregation between Roma and non-Roma in standard as well as special education, whether resulting from residential segregation or decisions by school authorities	4				1		1				1			1			1	5
Inattention to Roma in general education and teacher training curricula as an integral part of the history and culture of Slovakia	4	1			1	1	1							1			1	6
difficulties in acquiring knowledge of Roma in standard education /not closer defined	4			1					1		1							3
" white flight "	3						1				1							2
input-oriented education (not respecting social and cultural differences)/inflexibility	4	1	1	1	1	1	1									1		7
different attitude of Roma towards education, family upbringing, cultural patterns	3			1	1		1											3
specific characteristics of the Roma ethnic	3			1			1											2
<i>obstacles connected to institutional issues:</i>																		
poor understanding of the educational system by Roma parents/ lack of information about possibilities	7				1		1				1	1		1			1	6
lack of/or inadequate training (of teachers, officers, etc.)	6		1		1	1	1	1			1			1			1	9
undersizing of funds from governments	5	1	1															2
the normative financing system - creating possibility of recruiting Roma children into special education regardless of their need /interest of special schools in keeping these children	5		1		1		1	1			1			1				6
Continued systemic overrepresentation of Roma in special education/ placement of Roma classes in separate buildings/hallways (architectonical segregation)	6						1		1		1	1		1		1	1	7
insufficient/wrong diagnostic methods (not considering language, culture, social background or other characteristics)	7		1		1		1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	11
wide gap between standard and special curricula (limits re-integration)	6		1		1		1	1			1			1		1		7
insufficient financing of Roma assistants	5		1				1	1	1					1				5
insufficient measures to address language barriers faced by Romanes-speaking Roma	6	1		1	1	1	1	1			1			1			1	9
Motivation Allowance criteria that motivate pupils to attend special schools in order to get better grades	5				1		1	1			1			1				5
lack of accurate data on Roma children attendance in schools	6	1			1		1		1			1	1	1				7
early and rigid division of children into educational streams /selectiveness of system	6		1		1		1				1			1		1	1	7
classes with large number of students	6				1		1	1			1						1	5
lack of measurements against manifestations of discrimination	6	1					1				1				1		1	5
motivation of relevant institutions to enroll children in special schools and classes	5						1				1				1			3
inconsistent policy (socially disadvantaged environment/Roma ethnicity/mental disability)	6						1	1			1							3
geographic proximity of special school to Roma communities	6										1	1				1		3
unclear legislation while defining child with special needs/Roma	6						1	1					1					3
no data about educational outcomes of Roma	6						1	1				1	1					4
<i>other difficulties</i>																		
no parental-cooperation programs	6				1											1		2
no day programs	6				1				1									2
no specialized help for teachers in mainstream schools/multi-professional cooperation	6				1		1								1	1		4
insufficient proximity of secondary schools to Roma communities	6										1							1
presence of other siblings or a large group of other children of the community in the special school, or own attendance in the past	7										1							1
<i>Preschool education:</i>																		
Limited access of Roma to preschool education as a result of fees associated with attendance	5		1		1							1		1				4
lack of information	6													1				1
insufficient space	6						1							1				2
resistance on the part of preschool authorities	7				1		1	1						1				4

3. Table of recommendations for Roma education

Author		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Year		2009	2011	2010	2009	2009	2011	2010	2011	2011	2009	2009	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	2009
Category of Publication		1a	1a	1a	1b	1b	1b	1b	1c	1c	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
3. Suggestions for promoting inclusion of Roma																		
<i>Training/teacher education:</i>																		
wider understanding of Roma culture	10	1					1				1					1	1	1
wider understanding of Roma problems	10	1									1					1	1	1
understanding of language background	10						1				1					1	1	1
unspecified -qualified teachers	9	1	1	1		1												4
<i>Awareness-raising:</i>																		
events to inform wider society	10														1	1	1	1
reduce prejudice	10					1				1					1			4
multicultural education in ALL schools	10	1	1	1	1	1	1			1				1	1		1	10
materials for non-Roma parents - to limit prejudice	10																1	1
Positive attitude of teachers	10	1				1	1									1		4
<i>Legal, financial, and administrative changes:</i>																		
Clear and explicit distinctions made in relevant legislation among mental disability, social disadvantage, and ethnicity/ proper diagnostic	9	1	1		1		1			1	1			1	1		1	9
policy on Roma inclusion	9						1			1	1		1		1		1	7
system of monitoring	9		1		1	1	1		1	1		1	1		1		1	11
integrated quality preschool education for all children (compulsory from 5/3years on)	9	1	1	1	1		1			1	1			1	1			9
sustainable transfer to standard education of Roma children wrongfully placed in special schools	9		1		1		1			1	1			1	1			7
Improving Roma's transition rates from primary to secondary education and from secondary to higher education	9									1				1			1	3
recording the ethnicity of all pupils/students at the time of enrollment (data may be made anonymous)	9				1		1				1			1		1	1	6
individualized programs - identify good practice and adjust to specific conditions	9			1	1		1								1	1		5
revise the school funding system (normative financing of students)	8	1	1				1			1	1							5
Eliminate language barriers in education/ education in Roma language	10				1		1			1					1			4
Eliminate language barriers in education/ Roma language only as supplementary language	10	1		1			1									1	1	5
adjusting the curriculum of standard schools to needs of Roma/ overcome monocultural system	10	1	1	1	1		1								1		1	7
after-school support/programs (aiming at maintaining good experience of Roma with schools and thus ensuring better attendance)	9	1		1	1		1	1	1	1					1		1	9
clear definition of "child from disadvantaging background"	9	1					1	1	1	1								4
lowering the number of children in one class	10	1					1			1						1		4
higher number of special pedagogues in mainstream schools	9	1	1				1			1								4
abolish special primary schools for children with mild mental disabilities	9		1		1		1				1							4
restructure the system of advising centers	9		1					1		1	1							4
re-assessment of children in special schools every two years (only after first year)	9		1				1			1	1				1			5
maintaining/creating more zero classes	10			1														1
variable educational programs with focus on key competencies	9									1								0%
Roma/ teachers assistants	11	1		1			1		1	1						1	1	7
supplementary financing for meals and school materials	8	1								1								2
<i>Involvement of Roma:</i>																		
trained Roma stuff (outreach workers, school assistants, etc.)	11			1			1							1	1	1	1	1
involvement of Roma community	11	1				1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1	10
advice on their rights (as well as entitlements and obligations) and consequences of special education for future education and employment	9									1	1			1			1	4
active engagement of Roma women	11													1		1		2
involvement of Roma parents in pre-education	11									1						1		2
Translators (for communicating with parents)	8																1	1
<i>Other:</i>																		
Interdisciplinary approach:																		0%
cooperation of various offices	9				1					1						1	1	4
cooperation of teachers with other specialists (special educators, etc.)	9		1		1		1						1	1	1	1		7
unsorted																		0%
encouragement and financial reward for teachers	8						1											1
build upon their creative potential in education	9			1			1								1			3

Appendix C – The Slovak educational system

Table 4: Scheme of the Slovak educational system



Compulsory education: Education in Slovakia is compulsory for 10 years; lasting maximum until the end of the school year in which the student reached age 16. In general the students start compulsory education with 6 years in grade 1 of primary school and finish in grade 1 of secondary school.

Continuing studies after secondary vocational schools are possible in supplementary and graduate studies in these schools; lasting generally up to two years.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der prekären Situation von Roma-Kindern im slowakischen Bildungssystem, das trotz internationaler Verpflichtungen und Konventionen große Unterschiede in den Bildungschancen dieser Kinder aufweist. Basierend auf der Diskursanalyse von Fairclough (2010) werden gegenwärtige Publikationen von slowakischen und internationalen (Bildungs-)Forschern in Bezug auf Hindernisse und Empfehlungen zur Entwicklung einer inklusiven Bildung untersucht. Inklusive Bildung wird demnach als die beste Möglichkeit betrachtet, den Roma -Kindern qualitativ hochwertige Bildung zukommen zu lassen. Im Gegenteil wird die derzeitige Situation der segregierten Schulen und folglich Ungleichheit von Bildungsmöglichkeiten als diskriminierend angesehen, da sie die Kinder daran hindert der Armut zu entkommen und so die Situation der Roma in der Slowakei, die sich durch Arbeitslosigkeit, Abhängigkeit von Beihilfe, Rassendiskrimination und Isolation auszeichnet, nur verschärft.

In diesem Sinne versucht die Arbeit darauf aufmerksam zu machen, dass gerade das monokulturelle Bildungssystem der Slowakei, zusammen mit frühzeitigen kulturell und sozialschichtunsensiblen Diagnosemitteln die Überrepräsentanz von Roma (vor allem solcher, die aus sozial benachteiligten Verhältnissen stammen) in Sonderschulen verursacht. Darüber hinaus wird aufgezeigt, dass die Regierung diese Überrepräsentanz offiziell nicht anerkennt, da keine genaue Anzahl von Roma-Kindern in den Sondereinrichtungen, wie auch deren Leistungen, erforscht wird. Weiterst wird argumentiert, dass die Inkompatibilität von Standard- und Sonderschullehrplänen die Wiedereingliederung der Kinder entscheidend beeinträchtigt, während der Versuch diese Kinder in segregierten Sondereinrichtungen beizubehalten sichtbar ist. Dieser Umstand lässt den Einfluss des normativen Finanzierungssystems, wie auch der traditionellen Stellung des Sonderschulwesens, welches Widerstandsfähigkeit gegenüber jeglichen Innovationen aufzeigt, erkennen. Diese Beibehaltung des Sonderschulwesens für Roma wird zudem von dem Wunsch vieler nicht-Roma Eltern bekräftigt, die die Ansicht vertreten Roma-Kinder würden im wesentlichen die Qualität des Unterrichts beeinträchtigen, da sie im allgemeinen der Bildung gegenüber eine negative Haltung hätten. In der Arbeit wird jedoch darauf hingewiesen, dass dieses Scheitern vieler Roma-Kinder eher den schlechten Erfahrungen mit dem slowakischen Bildungssystem und der Angst vor Assimilation zuzurechnen ist, wobei über viele Jahre hinweg die mieseren Bedingungen von Armut

(schlechte Wohnbedingungen, fehlende Arbeitsgewohnheiten, niedriges Bildungsniveau der Eltern, begrenzte Teilnahme an der vorschulischen Erziehung), geringe Erwartungen des Schulsystems auf positive Leistungen, die Rassendiskriminierung, wie auch die Methoden und Lehrpläne nicht sensibel auf die spezifischen Merkmale der Roma, zu einer Abneigung dieser gegenüber dem Bildungssystem geführt hatten. Darüber hinaus wird argumentiert, dass das Ignorieren der dargestellten Hindernisse der Regierungen und somit das Fehlen von systemischen Lösungen, die Widerstandsfähigkeit für positive Veränderungen der Lage der Roma-Schüler in der Slowakei verursachen.

Auf diesen Erkenntnissen aufbauend werden Empfehlungen für Veränderungen analysiert und gegenüber den Zielen eines inklusiven Schulsystems abgewogen, in dem kulturelle und soziale Verschiedenheit als Gelegenheit zum Lernen von Toleranz und Partizipation angesehen wird, wobei auf Bedürfnisse aller Kinder eingegangen werden soll und deren individuelles Potenzial bestmöglich gefördert werden. In diesem Sinne soll die Aufzeigung von wissenschaftlichen Forschungen aus Großbritannien, die Bildungsleistungen von Roma-Migranten aus der Slowakei und der Tschechischen Republik in deren Bildungssystem untersuchen, einen internationalen Vergleich bringen und zur Argumentation dienen, indem systemische Veränderungen in Form einer inklusiven Schule Erfolge bringen könnten und gleichzeitig die verbreitete Meinung vieler slowakischen Psychologen, alle Roma wären „intellektuell behindert“ widerlegen. Außerdem bieten die internationalen Forschungen Anregungen, wie die Schulen auch ohne legislative Änderungen anfangen können mit Hilfe des „Index für Inklusion“ die Inklusivität ihrer Einrichtung selbst zu evaluieren und so beginnen, die Situation von Roma-Kindern lokal zu verändern.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass die Arbeit den Diskurs über Empfehlungen zur Verbesserung der Bildungslage von Roma-Schülern in der Slowakei kritisch analysiert und versucht solche Strategien hervorzuheben, die nicht nur zur Integration führen könnten, sondern das Potenzial zur Inklusion haben – also zur Wertschätzung von kultureller Vielfalt durch gemeinsame Partizipation aller Kinder an der Bildung. Die Autorin dieser Arbeit ist der Überzeugung, dass der Aufbau eines inklusiven Bildungssystems in der Slowakei nicht nur legislative Änderungen (wie auch Förderprogramme für Roma aus sozial benachteiligten Verhältnissen) beansprucht wie sie von den verschiedenen untersuchten Autoren empfohlen werden, sondern auch einen viel stärkeren Fokus auf eine bessere Ausbildung von qualifizierten Lehrern die über individuelleren Zugang und neue Methoden (wie auch deren Zusammenarbeit mit Sonderschullehrern, Heilpädagogen und anderen Experten) alle Kinder fördern lernen. Was

aber im Umbauprozess am bedeutendsten erscheint und von der Arbeit hervorgehoben wird, weil es Empfehlungen für neue Strategien und Programme, wie auch deren Erfolg beeinflusst, ist die Einstellung der slowakischen Majorität gegenüber gemeinsamer Bildung von Roma und nicht-Roma, wie auch der Einstellung der Roma der Bildung gegenüber selber. Hierbei wird der Einsatz von Roma-Lehrerassistenten empfohlen, die als Vorbilder für Roma-Kinder und vor allem als Mediatoren zwischen Schule und Roma-Familie dienen könnten und so die Kommunikation und Einbindung der Eltern im Bildungsprozess ihrer Kinder verbessern könnten. Diese hätte wiederum positive Auswirkungen auf Teilnahme und Leistung der Kinder in Schulen. In diesem Sinne wird die positive Partizipation von Roma-Kindern in Standardschulen nicht nur als Möglichkeit gesehen der eigenen Armut zu entkommen, sondern auch der Majorität die Möglichkeit geben positive Erfahrungen mit Roma-Kindern bereits in frühen Kinderjahren zu machen und so die Entstehung von negativen Einstellungen diesen gegenüber vorzubeugen. Gemeinsames Lernen wird jedoch nicht nur als Prädisposition für zukünftiges gemeinsames Zusammenleben erachtet, sondern vielmehr als derzeitiges Recht der Roma-Kinder auf Chancengleichheit angesehen.

Curriculum Vitae

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Date of birth: September 23, 1985
Nationality: Slovak

EDUCATION

- 2009 – 2012 **Master in Educational Sciences, University of Vienna, Austria**
Specialization in Special Needs and Inclusive Education
(expected completion in Autumn 2012 with the title MA)
- January – June 2010 **Master in Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway**
(Exchange student)
- 2005 – 2008 **Bachelor in Special Needs Education, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2009, 2010 **Assessing projects for persons with health disadvantages through the charity fund LION**
Assessment of requests for purchasing compensational or rehabilitation aids, surgery or severe medical activities for improving the quality of life of physically, mentally or sensory handicapped children or young people under 25.
SOCIA – Social Reform Foundation, Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2004 – 2010
2011- current **Leading Christian youth group (for teenagers and young adults)**
Several years' experience with creating programs and meaningful past-time activities for teenagers with a team of co-workers on a weekly basis. Being part of a team organizing conferences for up to 300 people each year with own responsibilities (leading a smaller team)
Free Evangelical Church, Bratislava, Slovakia
- August – October
2007 **Co-worker for children and adults with special needs**
Experience with daily living in a house with 6 physically and mentally disabled people, daily care of a woman with mental impairment, personal care, hygiene, help with feeding, individual support at work, participation in the various therapies for the severely disabled people of the community
Camphill Community Glencraig, Northern Ireland
- April – Mai 2007 **Participating in the TEACCH program (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children) for children with autism**
Therapy for a child with autism under the direction of the therapist during the TEACCH program, invention of learning materials
Andreas Centre, Bratislava

March – June 2007	Co-therapist in horse therapy for children and adults <i>Hipony Center, Bratislava</i>
November 2007 – April 2008	Volunteer in the Son-Rise programme for a child with autism Play therapy in a specially furnished room, learning the rules of the program (including the intensive interaction), creativity, responsibility for the programme <i>Private, Bratislava</i>
2004 – 2010	Organizing summer and winter adventure camps for teenagers Organization and coordination of activities and games, leading small groups, <i>Bible study, various locations</i>
2006, 2007, 2008, 2009	Participating in the Free Evangelical Church mission to Ukraine including work in a children's nursing home and street work, each year two weeks in summer, <i>various locations in West Ukraine</i>

CERTIFICATES

June 14th, 2008	IELTS Academic English Language Certificate (overall score 7 “good user”)
2007 – 2008	Certificate for work with children and youth, New hope, Slovakia
2007	Certificate in Behavioural Support Strategies – Level 1, Camphill Community, Northern Ireland

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Languages	Slovak (native speaker), German (fluent), English (fluent), French (basics)
PC	Usage of most standard programs like e.g. MS Office, Internet
Social skills	Several years' experience in working with teenagers and people with disabilities, good team-work abilities as well as abilities to work independently, good managing skills, patient, if needed persistent and yet understanding and tolerant, learned to deal effectively and communicate problems, high self-organizing skills