

The research project entitled “Cognitive and linguistic functioning of the Roma children attending special and regular primary schools – social contexts.”

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The basic aim of those researches was to answer four types of questions:

- ✓ What is the current situation of Roma pupils attending special and regular primary schools?
- ✓ What types of factors influence the current situation of those children?
- ✓ What activities need to be undertaken in order to change/remove unfavorable factors?
- ✓ What activities need to be undertaken in order to modify the situation in the direction of favorable changes?

In order to answer those questions, six groups of people involved in different ways in shaping the situation of Roma pupils in Polish schools were examined. As a result, the research gave different points of view and had both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (psychological tests) character. The following groups were subjected to the research:

- ✓ Roma children attending regular schools;
- ✓ Roma children attending special schools;
- ✓ Parents of children from those two groups;
- ✓ Roma assistants;
- ✓ Headmasters of schools attended by Roma children;
- ✓ Teachers from schools attended by Roma children;
- ✓ Psychologists and educators from schools attended by Roma children.

77 children between 6-16 years of age took part in the research. The group of respondents was diversified in accordance with gender and consisted of:

- ✓ **Gender:** 33 (44%) girls, 43 (56%) boys.
- ✓ **School type:** 20 (60%) persons from special schools, 57 (74%) persons from regular schools from whom 11 persons had stated decision about mental disability.

The respondents came from three voivodeships: Lesser Poland – 22 children, Opole – 27 children, Silesia – 28 children. Additionally, interviews were made with 54 persons from the educational personnel working in special and regular primary schools attended by Roma children and with 25 parents of Roma children.

The level of intellectual development of the children was established on the basis of nonverbal intelligence test - Raven's Progressive Matrices, whereas to evaluate verbal competences Pictorial Dictionary Test - Understanding (experimental version) created by E. Haman and K. Fronczyk as well as Dictionary Test by E. Haman were used. This decision was made on the basis of diagnostic practice and documentation, from which can be derived that Roma children's verbal results are underrated in the standard intelligence test – Wechsler's Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-R). Moreover, taking into consideration that fact that they are bilingual, the evaluation of their knowledge of Polish language is crucial. Thanks to the usage of two separate tools – one estimating the intelligence and the second one showing the language competences of the pupils – the independent evaluation as well as the observation of relations between those two aspects of functioning can be made.

Results:

From 46 fully capable respondents (attending regular schools) two persons received results suggesting intellectual disability, about 32 (circa 70%) respondents received a result on the level of the full mental ability (a result higher than 5 centiles), while 12 (circa 26%)

respondents found themselves in the section between the lowest rates and the rates significantly over the average.

Among 31 children having stated decision about mental disability 16 respondents (circa 52% of this sub-group) received results that classified them as mentally capable, 6 persons received rates under the ability level, the results of 9 respondents (circa 29%) were in the section from very low rates to those significantly under the general level.

As far as the results of the verbal tests are concerned, the statistical analysis of the result did not show significant differences in the speech understanding and production between children from special and regular primary schools. It should be mentioned though, that both tools that were used were created for children in pre-school age and still some Roma children had problems with them.

The level of tasks performance estimating active and passive vocabulary as high, positively correlated with Roma children's results in Raven's Progressive Matrices Test. The higher the intelligence level measured by the test was, the higher results in verbal tests the children got. The level of production and understanding of the Polish language additionally correlated with the children's age.

Those results point out the fact that children having lower intelligence level have also bigger difficulties with learning Polish. That is why the proper diagnostics should cover also cultural aspects, as it was done during those researches in Raven's Progressive Matrices Test or in Cattell Test that is currently being prepared. Results of such tests can become an important guiding clue as far as the intelligence level of a child, the distinction between their intellectual capabilities and knowledge of the Polish language are concerned.