How the Czech Educational System has Failed the Roma Children and why it Keeps Failing them

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Abstract: Recently the Czech Republic has been widely criticised for segregating Roma children in schools for mentally handicapped children. Originally the main problem was in the special schools where Roma children were disproportionally placed on the basis of light mental disabilities they were supposed to suffer from. In 2005 these special schools were abolished by law, however, in reality these schools have not been closed and only change occurred in fact in their name – thus being named 'practical schools' instead. On the other hand, it would be unfair to claim that the representatives of Czech educational system haven´t done anything that can be seen as an attempt for integrating Roma children as well as children with different special educational needs. In this paper we will show what has been done in order to bring some improvement to educational outcomes of children with special needs and at the same time we will try to analyze why the results aren´t as good as it would have been expected. This analysis will be based on our long-lasting interest in the topic of education of Roma children and on 10 semi-structured interviews with the teachers from the school in Brno, where Roma children are the absolute majority of the pupils. In spite of this school not being labelled 'practical', we will find some unexpected similarities, even though at first glance it can be perceived as any other 'ordinary' school.

Key words: Roma children, segregation, 'Roma schools', educational specifics

1. Introduction

Roma minority is, according to the qualified estimates, the largest minority in the Czech Republic, however, minority rights of Roma people are difficult to claim, because officially only a very small part of this group declared themselves to be Roma. On this basis of informality, Roma people have been constantly discriminated in many spheres of their lives – one of them has been the education of Roma children, which is widely criticised by non-governmental organisations or European official authorities. Main reason for this lays in the importance of education for their prospective higher education opportunities and employability. In this paper we will examine how the Czech educational system just cannot cope with the otherness of Roma children and is punishing them for that by placing them into the lowest-achieving schools. This study aims to explore the ways Roma children have been educated in the Czech Republic and to analyse the underlying causes of constant underachievement of Roma children despite the various efforts on the side of official authorities, law adjustments and pedagogical workers to support these children and intervene positively in their educational outcomes.

2. Specifics of Roma children education and their current position in the Czech educational system

The situation of the Roma in Czech society is characterised by two main features: a) social disadvantage, exclusion and poverty and b) fact of being ethnic and linguistic minority, members of which are visibly different from the non-Roma population. These two features are crucial for the position of Roma children in the Czech educational system and largely influence their educational outcomes.

Poverty, social exclusion[1] and unemployment are dramatically connected with low educational outcomes of children coming from this environment. Herein few reasons can be just briefly mentioned why and how this is becoming true in lives of poor and excluded Roma families. Research undertaken by Ringold (2000) clearly shows that poverty of the Roma population is different from the poverty in the majority: 'Roma poverty' is multidimensional, has deep historical roots and it is constantly being enhanced by the vicious cycle of isolation and stigmatisation. In accordance to this finding, concept of poverty is nowadays almost replaced with the concept of social exclusion which is better describing not only

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[1] As a process of excluding individuals or groups of the mainstream society and hindering in an access to basic services, goods and institutions, which are widely available to all those in the main stream (see for example Walker, 1995 or Young, 1999, 2003 etc.).

vertical, but also horizontal inequalities in societies. Despite of these conceptual differences, living conditions in both situations are very similar. According to the most thorough analysis (Gabal Analysis Consulting [GAC], 2006) of social exclusion of Roma that have been conducted in the Czech Republic, about half of the Roma population lives in socially excluded areas, which usually means that they are living at the edge of poverty – few generations of one family in one- or two-rooms flat, sometimes without direct access to hot water or toilet – with similarly disadvantaged people living in a close neighbourhood. It is clear that under these conditions, especially when parents have more than three children and older children have to take care of the smaller ones, it is not easy to fulfil the obligations of school attendance and home preparation.

Children from poor families can be also more often sick and therefore unable to attend the school regularly. At the same time they usually have worse access to institutions that could help them to eliminate their social disadvantage and therefore they are often starting their school life in special education school instead of mainstream schools. Biro, Smederevac and Tovilović (2009) revealed that poverty also significantly influences the results of these children in intelligence tests (not only the educational outcomes), which are significantly lower than the outcomes of the middle-class children. The main problem, however, lays not only in insufficient cognitive stimuli, but also in the inability of parents to help their children. On the one hand, they don´t know how to help, because they usually have at best finished basic or special schools. On the other hand, in the environment of poverty education never played a crucial role in the story of life success.

Exclusion adds to this problem another dimension: Roma people after being excluded to abandoned neighbourhoods lose almost all the contacts with the Czech majority. This fact enhances stereotypes and prejudices at both sides. Roma exclusion is then supported by different institutional hidden or direct discriminating practices in many areas of their everyday life (Man in need, 2007). The Roma then understand their situation as unchangeable and abandon any values which are dominant in the mainstream society. Říčan states that therefore the Roma developed identity of victims and misunderstood people, identity of being hurt and identity of majority confrontation (2003, p. 84). Schools lead and inhabited predominantly with non-Roma is then understood only as another way of control: 'For the majority of Roma school is still the synonym for the key repressive element, the synonym of hostile, false and non-understandable environment that has one and only aim of assimilation and forced re-education' (Ševčíková, 2003, p. 116). All above-mentioned factors lead to poor educational outcomes and to the fact that many of the Roma children either start or at one point of their educational path continue in special schools or 'Roma schools'. Both types are unable to provide equal education to the mainstream schools or develop children´s individual potential in a way that would make them able to succeed in the labour market competition (Hůle, 2007). Interesting is that at both types of schools teachers and directors are convinced that this type of the education is the best what can be offered to the Roma children.

Poverty and social exclusion contribute to Roma children´s school failure only partly, another quite a big part of the problem is caused by the attributes, which are perceived in scientific discourse as specifically belonging to the Roma as a part of their ethnic heritage[2]. The upbringing in the Roma family is slightly different from the upbringing in family of non-Roma. Smith (1997) found out that there is predominance of the community upbringing that is happening somehow unintentionally while doing all the everyday activities. Roma children are taught only what they need to know in their closest environment, that means community. However, nowadays in the Czech Republic traditional Roma communities have been loosen and therefore the Roma today are not as much a subject of the strong social control that used to be present all the time in villages, where they used to live before moving to Czech towns (Sekyt, 2004). Moreover, children in Roma community have a very important position and are not obliged to any duties as long as there is not any younger sibling to be taken care of. Smékal (2003), in addition to this, claims that the Roma mothers are not goal-oriented and therefore are not expecting this orientation from their children, too. On the other hand, schools are focused on achievement and therefore Roma children are then again disadvantaged.

Another and probably the most serious educational disadvantage of Roma children stems from the language barrier. According to observations, Roma mothers do not talk directly to their children when they are very small as non-Roma mothers do. Říčan (1998) explains this with firmer bonding of mother and child and with their ability to understand each other without verbal communication. In addition to this, almost any Roma in the Czech Republic are not teaching their children Romani language, because they don´t want them to feel excluded. Then they are trying to teach them the Czech language, but the Czech they know is the language of the working class mixed with Roma phonetics, pronunciation and grammatical models (Hübschmannová, 1998). The result of this is that Roma child first coming to school (meaning often

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[2] However, we know that these attributes cannot be automatically connected to all the Roma people.

first close encounter with non-Roma environment) is not able to speak neither Czech, nor Romani, because nobody has talked to them since they were babies. The problem of Roma children is not bilingualism or not knowing the dominant language, but the fact that they do not know any language they can be taught in[3]. In the past, life in their community was accompanied by telling stories and tales, through which children could easily enrich their vocabulary at least in their mother tongue, however, this opportunity has slowly disappeared.

To one of the stereotypically repeated characteristics of the Roma people belongs low importance of education for them. The supposed explanations are various. Firstly, for example, Jakoubek (2009) states that there are three typical signs of Roma family that are in direct conflict with the ability to achieve individual success, therefore individual effort put into higher education is perceived as useless and fruitless. These signs are the absence of privacy, the absence of individualism and the absence of private property. Individual success is viewed as endangering for family solidarity and because of that family is providing almost any support to those trying to get out of the exclusion. The lack of privacy is only strengthening this low value of individual and for a child of school age it means that she/he will never have the adequate conditions for meaningful home preparation. The lack of private property means that every income that one gains is shared among the broad family and the efforts put into education or work are then not adequate to the gains one gets in the end (Steiner 2004).

Secondly, the low importance of education is often ascribed to Roma attitude of living for now. Sekyt (2004) or Hübschmannová (1998) interpret this as a relict of their past nomadic life, when the only important thing was what one could take with himself and making plans for the future was pointless. Attitude of living for the present is also one of the characteristics of 'culture of poverty' (Lewis, 1966), when the poor prefer immediate pleasure to postponing it to an insecure future. It is clear, though, that living for now cannot allow any effort to be put into education.

Low importance of education is seen as a main cause of frequent absences of Roma children from school: 41 % of polled directors claimed it to be the main reason (GAC, 2009). Parents often leave the child at home only when he/she doesn´t want to go to school or when they need him/her to take care of younger siblings. In addition to this, if the child is the only one in the family, who has to get up in the morning and leave the house, parents will not try to ensure that the child will really leave and come to school (Kaleja, 2009; GAC 2007). Some schools reacted to this in severer rules about accepting excuses from parents; even then were the parents able to get the official excuse from a doctor. It doesn´t matter if these absences are excused or unexcused, the important is that any absence makes the learning for the Roma child even more difficult.

As we can see, the position of a Roma child in the Czech educational system is not easy. Originally, Roma children were almost entirely educated out of the mainstream schools or classes. Nowadays the situation is slightly better, but the problem of segregation persists with its full consequences. In the 90´s the estimates of Roma children educated in special schools were on about 70-80 % of all Roma children. Balabánová (1999) argued that the main reason therefore lays in the fact that education in this time and during the socialist era was characteristic with the idea of the standard school, which is predominantly inhabited with 'average pupils' and Roma children have never fitted this model. Basic schools have counted with children that had mastered dominant language before entering the school, children that had developed their willing abilities and that had the supportive home environment at their disposal. All the children that could not fit this model have been to some extent disadvantaged, many were even shifted to schools with lower requirements on knowledge and good manners.

At present about half of the Roma children are educated in the mainstream education. About 28 % of them is educated in practical schools and the rest of about 25 % is educated in schools were Roma are the majority. Even those who are the in mainstream education are relatively unsuccessful in comparison to their Czech school-mates: according to the research of GAC (2009, p. 22), only half of the Roma children that started their education in the mainstream school will finish their compulsory school attendance with the same classmates they started it. The rest will either be transferred to special schools, or will repeat one or more school years[4]. This research, however, wasn´t taking into account children that were transferred to other ordinary schools, which in this context could have been 'Roma schools', therefore the final number of Roma children leaving their original class to 'worse' may be even higher. Moreover, the probability that Roma child will start his/her educational path in special school (and then probably never comes to contact with the mainstream education) is six times higher than is this probability for a non-Roma child (GAC, 2009, p. 32).

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[3] Lazarová and Pol (2002, p. 11) estimated that Roma child coming to school possess the vocabulary of 400-800 Czech words, while at the same time Czech child possess the vocabulary of 2000-3500 words. If we considered the fact that Roma parents are not talking to the children much, we cannot expect their Romani vocabulary to be much richer.

[4] The same applies only for one of ten non-Roma children.

As we have mentioned in the beginning, there was some effort put to tackling the Roma education gap in schools by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Firstly, even these special schools and community 'Roma schools' were meant as alleviation for Roma children and their parents. Secondly, special stress has been put upon the preschool education, therefore the last year of kindergarten is free of charge by law and schools with certain share of socially disadvantaged children could have opened preparatory or zero classes for children who are not yet ready to attend the primary school. Thirdly, the function of the teacher´s assistant has been established. Their task is mainly to help children that are not able to follow the regular class work on their own. Probably the biggest and most significant change came with the introduction of *Framework educational programs* for all the types of education. These programs are at present the only given documents teachers and schools in general have to accept, when preparing their lectures and lessons. In accordance with the framework program, schools and teachers are creating their own school educational programs, while following the general framework given. We will get to all of these compensation methods and their advantages and drawbacks later, but now we will look at the specifics of 'Roma schools', which are in general very little reflected not only in the scientific discourse, but also by the non-governmental organisations.

3. 'Roma schools' or 'practical schools'? What´s the difference?

Before we turn the attention of the reader to the characteristics of the 'Roma schools', we should have a look at what is so special about the 'special (nowadays 'practical') schools'. On the one hand, these special schools were meant to help the children to experience at least to some extent the feeling of success, because the curriculum there was abridged and with small number of children in one class it was easier for a teacher to pay individual attention to each child. At the same time, this kind of schools was also preferred by the parents of Roma children, because in these schools they were only little taken as responsible for their child´s education and home preparation, or they themselves could also have their experience with this school (Klíma, 1997). However, both of these statements can be held true also for majority of 'Roma schools'. Special schools (until 2005, when they were replaced with 'practical schools') were not acknowledged as finished primary education, therefore the possibilities of subsequent education for their school leavers were very limited. Practical schools are now by law understood as equivalent and fully acknowledged type of the primary education – this theoretically means that any school leaver can enter any secondary school, not only the vocational training like from the special schools. This, however, really works only on theoretical level and it applies in a similar way to 'Roma schools' as well, because children are often repeating grades and leaving schools even before completing the school or have at best ambitions for the vocational training, because their knowledge in the ninth grade equals to the knowledge of the pupils in the sixth or seventh grade of the ordinary primary school or even lower. The basis of the program in practical schools is not in knowledge, theory or curriculum. This program is oriented on activity in the classes and practical use of acquired knowledge in everyday life. At the same time, successful school leaver should have basic general knowledge, he should be able to express himself clearly in a written as well as in a spoken way and he should be enough manually skilled (Krupa, 1997). At this place we need to stress that special or practical schools are designed as schools for children with light mental disabilities, therefore the expectations from them are so basic.

'Roma schools', however, are designed for perfectly able children, who are just accidently coming from socially disadvantaged environment and are predominantly of Roma ethnic origin. Interesting is that according to our research, the expectations of teachers in the 'Roma schools' are at similarly basic level, too. The reason for this may be that teachers understand specifics of Roma children represented by socially-disadvantaged origin, small interest in education and gaining new knowledge and language barrier, as unchangeable and ever-lasting. Therefore their idea of success in educating these children lies in e. g. children respecting at least basic rules such as changing shoes for slippers, when they come to school; when teachers despite all the bad experiences with children still like to go to work; when 'weak pupils' know how to read, write and count at least a little, while the better students know something more, or even try to follow the primary education with some vocational training; when they can take group of children to public and they know how to behave, etc. On the one hand, this definition of success is probably necessary for these teachers in order to feel successful, on the other hand, it forms their expectations and directly influences the way they are teaching the children.

Majority of the contemporary 'Roma schools' started like any other ordinary basic school, the only problem was that they were located in the area with the majority of Roma inhabitants and when the share of Roma children reached about 40 %[5] of the pupils´ population, school experienced 'white flight' as we know it from the American experience in

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[5] This number was often mentioned not only by interviewed teachers, but also from teachers and directors from other Roma schools.

connection to African-American neighbourhoods (Kahlenberg, 2001; Schwab, 1992). It means that only those who can afford to commute with their children to a further place from home or can afford to move out from the neighbourhood completely can leave unsatisfactory school. The rest just has to put up with the changes and try to survive till the child´s compulsory education ends. On the one hand, teachers in 'Roma schools' are complaining about non-Roma children leaving, which is according to them deteriorating the overall quality of the education. On the other hand, they alone claim that they would never put their own child to this school and even when they have the Roma assistants at school they have put their children to other basic school. This means that teachers are aware of the poor quality of education they are offering to Roma children, but still feel that it is not in their power to change it.

'Roma schools' are not only similar to practical schools, they are also similar to so called 'high-poverty schools' (Donovan, Cross 2002; Kahlenberg, 2001) This type of school is 'marked by students that have less motivation and are often subjects of negative peer influences; parents who are generally less active, exert less clout in school affairs, and garner fewer financial resources for the school; and teachers who tend to be less qualified, to have lower expectations, and to teach watered-down curriculum' (Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 47). All these can be held true also for the 'Roma schools' in the Czech Republic. The socioeconomic makeup of schools directly influences the dynamics of the educational process and the goals that teachers set for themselves and for the pupils. According to our research, even that part about under-qualified teachers is happening in the 'Roma schools' – majority of teachers started to teach at this school subjects they were not trained for; for example one teacher had been trained to teach geography, but the vacancy was only for the teacher of physics, so she started to teach physics. Nowadays, she is teaching geography, but in the beginning she was really struggling with physics.

However, there is one major difference between 'high-poverty schools' and 'Roma schools': the problem with lack of finances is not so visible, because 'Roma schools' are usually very well materially and personally equipped – they are using the maximum of possible projects from Ministry of Education, European Social Fund or municipalities (GAC, 2009). Many of these projects are labelled as if they were supporting inclusion and inclusive schools; unfortunately, in reality there is really only little of inclusion in this type of schools. Usually the money received are used not for supporting inclusion, but for employing more teachers, for providing better psychological counselling and reducing the number of children in the classroom. This all may be improving the performance of Roma children at schools, but still has nothing to do with inclusion (at least until the expectations and curriculum will not equalize with those in the mainstream schools). In the Czech Republic there is the campaign called *Fair schools* organized by the League of human rights. Each year they are rewarding primary schools that are including children with special needs with the certificate of *Fair school.* However, this campaign may be working well for physically handicapped children, but still has its glitches for socially deprived children. On the one side, they are teaching regular curriculum in the classroom and they are also adjusting it a little for the children with special needs. On the other side, Roma children from these schools (if they are there only for first four years) are usually continuing their educational track in 'Roma schools', probably because mainstream schools are not inclusive enough and unable to cope with children´s differences.

The study of Roma child´s educational trajectory (GAC, 2009) states that Roma children in 'Roma schools' tend to repeat the grade less often than Roma children in the mainstream schools and it explains this with higher motivation of the teachers to work with this kind of children: they want to devote their time and effort to these children, cooperate with non-governmental organisations and support the activities which are eliminating their handicaps. Some teachers in our research also felt that the education of Roma children is some kind of a mission in their lives, but at the same time they argued that the grades the children are getting in their school are better than they would get for the same educational achievement in the mainstream school (because teachers are satisfied, when children know less than is usually expected of children of the same age). They are not looking for the ways of eliminating social handicap, but instead of this they are downsizing taught curriculum and own expectations according to supposed children´s abilities. This is probably the cause, why children are repeating the grades less often in 'Roma schools' than in the mainstream schools.

Teachers in 'Roma schools' are convinced that they are providing the Roma children with the accepting environment that is allowing them to experience the feeling of success and being majority for a change. In addition to this, events supporting and strengthening the Roma culture, such as dance and singing performances are more frequently organised in 'Roma schools' than in the mainstream schools. Teachers are often to some extent providing the parents with basic social guidance. Despite this, the self-perception of the Roma children, feeling of their own importance and meaningfulness of gained knowledge would have been strengthened, if they had a chance to get to know something more about their origin or even learn the Romani language. According to Mann (1992), Roma children are at school taught about alien history, alien writers and alien cultural norms and values and therefore they cannot be interested in what they are learning. Now, when we have shown where lies the main problem with educating Roma children in 'Roma

schools' we can get back to general level of education in the Czech Republic and try to understand, why we are still not able to provide Roma children with a decent education.

4. Why the Czech educational system cannot ensure success for Roma children?

The main problem in educating Roma children probably lies in the wider setting of the educational system. As Balabánová (1999) states the mainstream Czech schools are expecting 'average children' and everyone who is deviating to any side of this average is understood as disadvantaged. This does not necessarily mean that the talented children will face some serious difficulties in the mainstream school, even though it can happen that they will be bored and punished for any disturbances they cause; for sure it means that their potential will not be fully developed, unless they meet a teacher, who is willing to prepare special tasks for them. The truth is that every child with special needs needs some kind of a special care, which can be provided for example by the assistant, or a second teacher in a classroom, if one teacher is not capable of preparing two or three types of lectures.

Many teachers, who are taking part in the forum about *Framework educational programs*[6], are persuaded that inclusion can be beneficial for those who were segregated, but there are not suitable conditions to take any action in the direction of inclusion. Most often mentioned challenge is the lack of money for the special teaching materials and lack of qualified teachers and assistants. Under current circumstances teachers are convinced that the inclusion would be of no good not only for included children, but also for average pupils. Teachers claim that if they had another teacher or perhaps an assistant to help them, fewer children in one class and the support of the school management and parents, the inclusion of children with special needs would be possible. However, parents of non-Roma children do not feel very relaxed, if their children should attend the same class for instance with Roma children. Kahlenberg (2001), on the other hand, found out that parents of the 'average children' are more willing to integrate among their children disadvantaged children on basis of social deprivation than on the basis of race, therefore it is quite complicated, when it comes to the inclusion of the visibly different Roma children.

A big part of the Roma educational failure plays also social construction of the school failure: Roma children, especially those coming from socially disadvantaged environment, are in general perceived as uneducable similarly to African-American children in the USA (Clark, 1965). Many researchers (Donovan, Cross 2002; Kahlenberg 2001; Paige, Witty 2009) are also convinced that social construction of school failure is stemming especially from the teacher´s expectations. According to McDermott, 'we have organized an elaborate apparatus for pinpointing the failures of our children, when we could have put all that energy into organizing more learning' (1987, p. 363). In this point of view the solution to the educational inequality is easy to find: stop to organize failure and start to organize learning instead. Paige and Witty (2009) showed in their study that it is enough for a failing child to meet a teacher that is not supporting his failure and has high expectations and then the child can be a successful student. As we have shown, the teachers in the 'Roma schools' rather lower their expectations and by that indirectly lower their children´s achievements.

 On the national level, theoretical and official basis of inclusive education is nicely elaborated. We have the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education and all those *Framework educational programs* are offering solid basis for the integration. However, segregation is faced only officially and somehow it is not possible to fight it for real. The first part of the problem probably is that we have not defined properly what we mean by inclusive education; therefore 'Roma schools' can gain a lot from the projects supporting inclusion. Can we speak of inclusion when Roma children are attending the same school, but separate classroom? Can we speak of inclusion if the minority children are not attending the same school like majority at all? Or is the important part that the 'Roma school' is not practical and that is enough to be included in mainstream education? It is possible that Roma children could even benefit from solely Roma environment, but only to some extent and definitely not if there are only poor and excluded children attending.

Another major issue is that Roma children are not offered the same conditions like non-Roma children in terms of the educational content – they are never taught anything about Roma history, culture, writers, therefore this kind of education is not offering them anything interesting and of value. In addition to this, when we take into account the language barrier they are facing when attending the school for the first time, it gives them really only almost impassable obstruction in successful learning. All the systematic efforts we undertake such as compensatory preschool education, teachers´ assistants, early check-ups at psychological counselling centres etc. are just falling short to minimize the achievement

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[6] Their ideas and opinions can be found at http://diskuze.rvp.cz/viewtopic.php?f=367&t=12573 (in Czech only); retrieved September 4, 2011.

gap between Roma and non-Roma children. Psychological counselling is doing more harm than good, because these tests are only labelling the children as lightly mentally disabled and not helping to eliminate causes of these poor results at all. Even culturally neutral tests should not be considered as the pure truth, but only as some kind of advisory mechanism that can help us to identify areas where the child needs more help and special attention. Preschool education and preparatory classes are definitely facilitating the start of the compulsory school attendance. The serious insufficiency, however, lies in a fact that only of about 40 % of all Roma children are attending preschool education and preparatory classes are usually established in Roma or practical schools which means that even if children improved their skills and were able to enter a mainstream school without serious difficulties, they continue at the same school where they were attending preparatory class. GAC (2009) shows that preparatory classes are advantageous for their pupils only in the two first years of the school attendance and their achievements are slowly equalizing with children, who did not attend preparatory classes. This may well be due to the fact that children in the first class of Roma or practical school are coming from three different environments and backgrounds – family, preschool education and preparatory classes. It is quite understandable that the most of the teacher´s attention will be aimed at children coming directly from the families and whole classroom slowly gets to one level – the lowest one. I will finish with the position of teacher´s assistant: originally the idea was the one of a Roma assistant, who would facilitate the transition from Roma environment to the non-Roma school environment and will help the child mainly to overcome the language barrier. Gradually, however, the schools were facing problems finding qualified Roma assistants who would have good position in local Roma community as well. Because of that, there are now more non-Roma assistants than the Roma assistants in the schools and they are not functioning the way they were originally meant to – as a good example of someone who succeeded and is coming from the same environment like the children.

It is clear that in connection to the education of Roma children we are facing many challenges, but to no doubt they have to be tackled and the sooner, the better. Otherwise the position of the Roma in the Czech society will only deteriorate and their confidence in possibilities offered by education will be slowly vanishing.

5. Concluding remarks or what can be done?

We have shown where the most serious difficulties in educating Roma children come from. It is for certain, that the part of the educational failure lies in the small importance of education for Roma in general, however, the bigger part of this issue is dependent on the Czech educational system and the opportunities that Czech society offers to Roma as a whole. A lot can be improved with uncompromising approach to segregation of any kind, especially the segregation in 'Roma schools' which is in general considered as not harmful. As we tried to stress, the 'Roma schools' are not offering any better opportunities in next professional carrier than the special or practical schools. It would definitely be helpful if Roma children had the opportunity to be educated in their own language or at least had a real chance to improve their Czech to the level so that they can be educated in it. Firstly, to be able to exercise any changes, we have to stop constructing the educational failure of Roma children and try to understand the way they feel in our schools which for them are usually completely strange and new environment. Secondly, there should be some respect for their cultural specifics not only in what they are taught, but especially in how they are taught. Thirdly, if we are not able to change the Roma and practical schools into inclusive schools we should at least stop to expect less from these children, because the majority of them is able to learn as much as the non-Roma children, maybe they need only little more time or different teaching methods. Finally, individual approach to each child and his family as a whole is probably key to success, because then we can concentrate on any specifics that are needed to be resolved and educate the child in a responsible and a meaningful manner.

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