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# MINORITY NATIONALITY EDUCATION: A TRUE MARKER OF DEMOCRACY

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*"You can judge a society by the way it treats its minorities."  
M. Gandhi*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most burning challenges of new democracies is how to treat their minorities. Hungary's most numerous<sup>1</sup> though still heterogeneous minority group is the Roma/Gypsies<sup>2</sup> who face prejudice, xenophobia and injustice both in public speech and at various levels and forms of institutions. A significant number of Hungarian citizens welcome extreme right ideas (LeBor, 2009) and do not even see those as dangerous phenomena (Hodgson, 2009).

The present paper examines a basic concern of the Roma: minority education. First I illustrate the situation of the Gypsies in education in general from the transition years up till today. Following the overall picture I introduce relevant education policies of the last twenty years and provide examples of some institutions dealing with minority education in the last twenty years. Lastly I summarise the most important features of teaching minority languages, Boyash and Romani, and outline the challenges future minority language teachers may face.

## ROMA IN EDUCATION: GENERAL FEATURES

Before the transition years in Hungary research on Roma education was a rare academic question as even the slightest idea of treating any group of our society differently was not an acceptable part of the socialist ideology. Since 1989/1990 educational sociologists and public figures (Hegedűs 1998; Hegedűs and Forray, 1998a and 1998b; Forray 2006; Kovats, 2001; Liskó, 1996; Choli-Daróczy 1996; Radó, 2001)

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<sup>1</sup> Most educational sociologists refer to research data of 600 000 Gypsy inhabitants in Hungary (Forray, 2006:113).

<sup>2</sup> In the present paper the terms Romani/Gypsy (adj.) and Roma/Gypsies (noun pl.) are used interchangeably without negative connotation.

have described typical relevant challenges and general features of Gypsy children in education:

- law attendance,
- behavioural problems,
- high and early dropout rate from secondary schools,
- unsuccessful results,
- over-representation in special education.

Also these researchers point out possible causes of failures such as:

- anti-Gypsy atmosphere at school and in the wider Hungarian society,
- prejudice of teachers,
- fear of failure to assimilate / fear of losing contact with the Roma micro economy,
- different conceptualisation of useful and important knowledge,
- different conceptualisation of priorities and responsibilities of young family members,
- lack of factual knowledge required by the education system,
- lack of learning skills attainable in pre-school education.

One believing in democratic transformation may suppose that during the last twenty years the situation described above has started to change in a positive way. According to a recent study (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2006), however, the present markers of Gypsies in education have become worse than they had been immediately after the transition. Today approximately 10% of children and youngsters are of Romany/Gypsy origin (Kovats, 2001:113). Due to free choice of schooling segregation has become a crucial issue: whereas in 1993 one third (32%) of Roma pupils learnt in segregated school environments, the relevant percentage had almost doubled by today (61,5%). Kertesi and Kézdi (2006) point out that in Hungary:

- there are approximately 180 schools with dominantly Romany/Gypsy students where the Roma/Gypsies are dominantly represented in almost 3000 classes,
- 1,200 Gypsy pupils learn in homogenous ethnic classes, and
- one third of Romany pupils learn in extremely segregated environments.

Concerning secondary school attendance (Table 1), one can conclude that although the ratio of those who completed primary education by the age of 17 increased by 18% within ten years, secondary school attendance of the Roma is still a lot worse than that of the national average. Out of those Roma who continue their studies in secondary education 18% more study in less prestigious vocational schools and 27% fewer try to acquire A-Level examss than the national average. Although 5% more teenagers of the national average received a secondary education in 2003 than in 1993 the relevant data for Gypsy youngsters has decreased by 4%. All in all the difference in the decade examined worsened 9%—not the result one would accept from a newborn democracy.

## MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

### Legislation Framework

An in-depth analysis of relevant educational policy of the last two decades is beyond the scope of this paper, so my intention is to outline its challenges. If one considers examining minority education policies they have to take into account several elements (Radó, 1999):

- Policy initiatives of Governments targeting the education of Romany children,
- Mainstream educational policies—because of their direct or indirect affection on the education of Gypsy children,
- Ongoing transformation of the systemic environment of education.

When the challenge of minority education appears in the horizon of theories and ideology background we can proudly quote the Preambles of two acts:

*“In order to assure the practice of the right to culture and education on the basis of equal opportunities, to ensure the freedom of conscience and conviction and of religion, in order to ensure that the love of the country is provided within the course of general education, in order to ensure the right of national and ethnic minorities to education in the mother tongue as well as the freedom of learning and teaching, in order to define the rights and duties of children, students, parents and the employees of general education and in order to ensure the management and operation of a system of general education which provides up to date knowledge, Parliament makes the following law...”*

*(Act LXXIX of 1993 on General Education)*

*“The language, material and intellectual culture, the historical traditions of national and ethnic minorities living in the area of the Republic of Hungary with a Hungarian citizenship, as well as all other particularities related to their minority existence are a part of the individual and communal identity.*

*All these represent a special value and their protection, sustenance and enrichment is not only a basic right of national and ethnic minorities but represents a vested interest for the Hungarian nation, and ultimately, for the international community”*

*(Act LXXVII on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities)*

The acts (on general education with its amendments) quoted above have been valid for almost two decades, while educational policy-making regarding the Roma has changed several times during this period.

In the 1990s catch-up programmes of those with social handicaps and the Gypsies articulated segregation strategies. Around half of Romany/Gypsy pupils participated in some kind of catch-up education (Kovats, 2001:122), without any significant measurable result in a national level. Today a totally different approach can be traced: integration and inclusion is desirable. Since 2003, the National Educational Integration Network (OOIH) has supported inclusive intentions in public education and since 2007 equal chance experts of public education are supposed to have been aiding the work of municipalities (the most typical maintainers of public education institutions) in order to help them get access to relevant finances from the European Union.

Although both acts (the latter by nature) guarantee equality of opportunity, most of the time the practical realisation of such a guarantee remains nonexistent in respect to Roma/Gypsies. Minorities with a mother country (Germans, Croats), even if their representation is far less than that of the Roma, are much luckier regarding practice of their basic human rights. As mentioned before, in spite of the nature of education policies the segregation of Romany children in schools has been increasing during the last two decades (Kertesi-Kézdi, 2006).

### Challenges of Realising Education Policies

I believe there are two main reasons behind the failures of educational policy intended to provide equal chances for Roma children. These two elements are extremely different in nature: the first is psychological while the other is structural.

Like it or loathe it, there are elements in the last hundred years of the history of Hungary which suggest that our nation supports racist, xenophobic beliefs. Between the two World Wars people of our country accepted anti-Semite acts, chose governments that supported Nazi Germany and cooperated with the Holocaust and Parajamos (Roma Holocaust). The results of the 2009 European Parliamentary Election for Hungary<sup>3</sup> show 14,77% for the extreme right party, Jobbik, whose name can be translated in two ways: a) “better”: probably suggesting a better choice for voters and b) “on the right” (indicating political/ideological conviction), whose popularity and discourse is built on anti-Gypsy propaganda<sup>4</sup>. If we explain this ideological phenomenon with the collective unconscious (Jung, 1949) of the Hungarian society the challenge to governmental policies may prove to be a narrow framework for finding a solution.

If we ignore psychological factors, what remain to be examined are relevant governmental policies. As Figure 1 suggests, educational policy should work within a system of other policies related to the challenges Romany/Gypsy people face. Social, regional, economic, financial and employment policies (Polónyi-Timár, 2005) should each be considered as a structure, as none of the elements can be reformed when the rest are neglected. The State Audit Office of Hungary (ÁSZ) recently carried out a study on the extent and efficiency of supply spent on developing the situation of the Roma living in Hungary since the system change. Researchers found that

- most of the goals policies have set are too general,
- there have been several government departments appointed responsible for particular goals but this complexity has not worked in practice—there have been no coordination and cooperation among departments,
- required finances have not been indicated properly,
- the use of financial sources has not been transparent so it cannot be controlled,
- success indicators have not been applied (Pulay-Benkő, 2008:6-7).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/hungary\\_en\\_txt.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/hungary_en_txt.html) (15/08/09)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.euronews.net/2009/07/04/dehumanising-the-roma-people-in-hungary/> (04/07/09)

In other words, a huge amount of money has been misused during twenty years for “the Roma issue” without significant outcome and no-one is responsible for the waste of this public sum – all in all not a flattering marker of a newborn democracy.

### **MODEL MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The establishing of a system of minority educational institutions has been the declared intention of several governments after the transition years but these policies remained unfulfilled promises towards the biggest minority of Hungary: the Gypsies. The existence of such institutions can be (and is) continuously debated from the point of segregation, although education theory distinguishes between artificial isolation and voluntary segmentation. The latter category stands for any institutions which define themselves as nationality or religious entities. As illustrated below, most of the time the existence of minority nationality schools are not the consequences of generous donations of the state budget.

#### **Gandhi Secondary Grammar School**

The Gandhi School is the best-known Gypsy minority school in Hungary, which is celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2009. As the results of the document analysis I carried out at this institution show, during these years the institution has made it possible for altogether 446 students, most of them Roma<sup>5</sup>, to obtain their secondary-school leaving certificates (Table 2 and Table 3).

The school was founded by the Gandhi Foundation, a private initiative of mostly liberal intellectuals and organizations in 1992. The Foundation opened the school in January, 1994 in a suburb of Pécs, a cultural centre of the south west of Hungary, as a six graded boarding school. After a few years the state became the main financial supporter of the school and since 1996 it has operated as a background institution of the Ministry of Education: the maintainer since then has been the Gandhi Public Foundation. Besides the government, the Soros Foundation has supported the school with significant finances whenever it was in need.

The institution is a boarding school where today around 230 students study annually—today their training takes four or five years due to a recent structural change in the school. Additionally since 2002 another 200 students have been studying

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<sup>5</sup> The Second Chance Department for Adults has as many Romany as majority citizens among its students. Dezső, 2007:232)

at the Second Chance (Adult) Department in the afternoons and at weekends. This department, as its name suggests, intends to give a second chance to those who once dropped out from the education system or need the school-leaving exam in order to keep or improve their position in the labour market.

The international uniqueness of Gandhi School is that to date it is the only “pure” secondary grammar school established for the Roma as the original idea of the founders was to enable Gypsy students to pursue academic studies—other, similar institutions offer vocational training as their primary goal. Gandhi School was the first to teach Boyash and Romani languages and Romany/Gypsy culture as a part of the curriculum in Hungary. The effectiveness of the school has not been investigated yet<sup>6</sup> though Katz (2005) found that the first cocoons (first graduates) are mostly on their way to success (compared to their original micro economies) in life.

### **Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre and Primary School**

Supported by the Roman Catholic Church of Hungary, in 1988 this institution became the first to target those with social handicap (Kovats, 2001:128). Situated in Kazincbarcika, a large town in north-east Hungary that has faced industrial decline after the transition years, the school provides educational (primary and vocational) activities for the primarily Romany/Gypsy youth in the area, where economic conditions restrict their opportunities.

Since 1995, with the help of donations, a hostel has been operating as an additional service of the school. Although this institution is not a minority school it is well worth mentioning among our target schools. According to their homepage<sup>7</sup> today they have 450 pupils and 120 adult students, mostly Roma. Building on Catholic values, the ethos of the school is to instil its students with self-confidence.

### **Józsefváros Day School (Tanoda)**

Józsefváros is a popular name for a part of the Hungarian capital where the Roma representation of the population is extremely high. Also, the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest is one of the poorest areas: one can find a high percentage of low quality and overcrowded houses there.

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<sup>6</sup> It is one of the main goals of my doctoral dissertation in progress.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.don-bosco.sulinet.hu/> (09/09/09)

This institution, as its name suggests, is not a proper school but a place that offers afternoon programmes for young Gypsies living in the district attending upper four (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) grades of primary or any type of secondary education (Szőke, 1998). The institution has been operating since 1997 with the help of the Soros Foundation, private donations and sponsoring. Pupils and students attending receive subject-specific tutorial help with their studies, become familiar with art, and make and edit journals in order to become exposed to regular activities requiring responsibility.

Similar initiatives have worked nationwide for shorter and longer periods of time in Hungary but due to financing challenges most of them have stopped operating temporarily or closed. Although it was the businessman-founders' original and public intention, Soros's withdrawal from Hungary (January, 2008) meant a serious setback for many working in the social and education sector.

### **Kedves<sup>8</sup> House**

Located in Nyírtelek, a small town in a crisis-area in the north-east of Hungary, since September 1995 a family-like hostel has been operating in close contact with the primary school of the settlement. Families of pupils learning here live far from one another in farming settlements (Krajnyák-Lázár, 1996:145). The institution does not claim any minority-specific curriculum; its students however come from poor Gypsy families.

'For the Children SOS '90 Foundation' maintains the hostel and its related development programmes (Consultation, Trainers' Training) (Lázár, 1998:211), which are "to promote values that serve to improve the efficiency of school education, secure the harmony of the development of the children's personalities, foster their sense of identity, enable them to develop a positive vision of their future and create the basis of their integration into society" (Krajnyák-Lázár, 1996:149).

### **Collegium Martineum**

Another student hostel, situated in the Mánfa valley in the south west of Hungary, between the city of Pécs and the town of Komló served as a unique scenario that provided residential accommodation and educational support to students coming from poor, basically Gypsy families (Dezső, 2007:229). The mission of the institution

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<sup>8</sup> Nice, sweet, amicable, dear, gentle – in Hungarian.



was to enable students to improve their original communities once they acquired knowledge and skills in fields where they prove to be talented.

The hostel was run by a foundation attached to the Catholic Church in Germany and also received funding from Soros. Annually around 40 students found shelter in this quiet place, many of whom went to universities. A talented young researcher, Julianna Boros whose secondary studies were helped by this institution is now assistant professor at the University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Social Work and Social Policy.

After 12 years of operation, in September 2008 Collegium Martineum closed for financial reasons. Some of its students were accepted by the hostel of the vocational school of Komló.

### **Little Tiger Vocational School**

Founded by a Buddhist association, the “Gate of the Dharma” (Doctrine), an alternative school, started operating in September, 2004 in the 100% Gypsy populated village of Alsószentmárton in South Hungary, neighbouring the Croatian border. This minority institution provides an opportunity for further study for the villagers and the inhabitants of the neighbouring settlements.

Here the population’s educational level is extremely low: the main objective of the school is to help young people who live in a highly segregated situation to find their way to social integration (Dezső, 2007:230). The institution functions as a catch-up school for those who have not yet completed their primary education – regardless of age, it offers vocational training and academic secondary education too.

In the afternoon adults are taught in their mother tongue, Boyash, and some general subjects. The school works with different alternative models to transfer knowledge to its students. Classes are small, a lot of group work is applied and students are encouraged to search for knowledge on a specific topic on their own. The first graduates (some 20 students) of the school were awarded their school-leaving certificates in June, 2008.<sup>9</sup>

### **Kalyi Jag Roma Minority Vocational Secondary School**

Located in central Budapest the school started its work with a few dozen students in 1994. Its basic goal is to provide vocational education to those who have completed

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<sup>9</sup> Information received from the examinee of Hungarian language at A-level 2008, Ms János.

their primary studies and to arm them with useful skills such as English as a foreign language and information technology.

The school explicitly emphasises its minority nature, running classes in Romany/Gypsy culture and history. (Kovats, 2001:128) According to the homepage of the school<sup>10</sup> their dropout rate is 15-20% annually. Extracurricular activities organised by the leadership of the school contain Gypsy/Roma tradition camps, theatre, movie and museum attendance.

Since 2004, students have been able to attend training where in addition to vocations, the matriculation exam is aimed as a final step in secondary studies. In a town located in the heart of Hungary, Kalocsa and in a city with a high representation of Gypsy population in the north east of Hungary, Miskolc, other institutions of Kalyi Jag have recently been introduced. The founder, supporter and maintainer of the school is a successful artist and Roma musician Gusztáv Varga who feels and acts responsible for his people.

#### **Dr András T. Hegedűs School, Szolnok**

Functioning as a foundation middle school, vocational school, evening elementary school and dormitory and located in the eastern Hungarian town of Szolnok, this institution was established in 1996. At that time the name of the school was the “Roma Chance Alternative Vocational Foundation School”; later on its name was changed to express respect to Professor Hegedűs who passed away as a middle-aged researcher known for his work regarding educational psychology regarding the Roma). The structure of the institution is rather complicated, one can attain practical skills and study on in order to receive the secondary school leaving certificate. Today the school has 260 students.

Although they teach Gypsy minority content-based subjects the policy of the school is to train Roma and non Roma together. This initiative is run by the National Gypsy Minority Local Authority together with Lungo Drom, a Romany organisation (Kovats, 2001:126). The leader of the school, Béla Csillei has received several educational awards and also teaches at the teacher Training College of Jászberény.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.kalyijag.extra.hu/page.php?2> (02/09/09)

**Dr Ambedkar Secondary School<sup>11</sup>**

The 'Jai Bhim' Buddhist association set up this school in 2007 in Sajókaza, a remote village in the neighbourhood of some very poor Gypsy communities in the North East of Hungary. In this region of the country the ratio of people with school-leaving certificates is lower than 1%. Dr. Ambedkar, who was an Indian politician coming from the caste of the untouchables, put the emphasis on self-help when talking about social mobility. His theory is very relevant regarding the "Roma issue" in Hungary.

Even though the school is located in a segregated environment its teachers' long-term goal is integrate their students. The objective of this institution is to show the way out of poverty to local people and make environmental stimuli enjoyable for everybody. In order to achieve its goals the school offers personal student-centred education. Although they intend to radiate modern up to date information to their students teachers also encourage them to realise the values of their own culture and integrate those to the knowledge they are attaining while being trained for their final exams.

**Lessons of Model Institutions**

With all the examples and initiatives introduced above relating to Romany minority educational institutions one might wonder where the challenge is when such a colorful scenario can be introduced in a country of 10 million people. The essential challenge is in the character of the maintainers of these model institutions: they are churches and foundations although by legislation the provision of equal opportunities in education is a basic, declared function of the state. Most of the models are constantly struggling with financial issues which consume time and energy that could be spent on professional (educational) development. The institutions introduced reach only a slight proportion of those whose equal opportunities are more than dubious, and being isolated educational centers their effectiveness can most probably be traced on a local rather than a more widespread, nationwide level.

**TEACHING MINORITY LANGUAGES**

Minority education consists of two basic elements: teaching the culture and languages of particular minorities. This paper does not detail minority culture education issues,

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<sup>11</sup> Detailed information in English can be found at the website of the school: <http://www.ambedkar.eu/category/front-page/> (10/09/09)

as cultural elements are transferred through language. My main goal in what follows is to emphasise and introduce the current situation of Gypsy languages in education.

### **Status Quo of Gypsy Languages in Hungary**

When talking about Gypsy languages I understand languages spoken by Gypsies in Hungary: Boyash (an archaic version of Romanian) and Romani (an Ind language, internationally recognized as “the Gypsy language”). The legislation of teaching Gypsy languages has been a long process in our country—there are quite a few experts of it, such as Anna Orsós Pálmainé who devotes a chapter to this question in her doctoral dissertation (Pálmainé, 2007). Even educationalists lack knowledge in this field and publish misleading information (see for instance Nikolov, 2003).

The number and ratio of population who speak these languages are quite uncertain: our data are based on the so-called Kemény studies (Landauer, 2004). We can find the freshest data in the latest Kemény study (Kemény-Janky, 2003). According to this, in 2001 people recognizing themselves as Boyash and Romani speakers were altogether 8,5-8,9 % of the whole Gypsy/Roma population. The absolute number of speakers is increasing although their ratio is reducing (according to the 1993 data speakers of Gypsy languages are 105 000 people). Although the third Kemény study (the one published in 2003) is considered to show the most uncertain results due to its sampling technique, we can estimate the percentage of young Roma/Gypsy who speaks either language (Table 2).

One can say that the representation of 10% and 20% of speakers is an ignorable ratio of those Gypsy children who probably speak their mother tongue, yet we cannot violate anyone's basic linguistic human rights approved by our Constitution. Language discrimination, in other words linguisticism is an instrument that legitimizes and reproduces an unequal distribution of social resources and power (Kontra, 2001). Minority language teaching therefore can be considered as much a human right activity as a profession of applied linguists and future teachers.

On an international level Professor Yaron Matras of Manchester University has been carrying out the Manchester Romani Project: he and his colleagues are describing different dialects of Romani. However, the Linguistic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences does not have a linguist dealing with this language as regards conditions in Hungary (although Szalai has done research among the

Kalderash in Transylvania), whereas there are researchers studying and describing Boyash.<sup>12</sup>

Still, the situation of Gypsy languages and applied linguistics in Hungary is much better than in other countries of Europe. We already have essential dictionaries and language books (Rostás-Farkas and Karsai 1984, 1991; Choli-Daróczi, 1988; Orsós, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002; Orsós-Kálmán 2004), although these resources have not been processed according to age-specific learners' needs. Those teaching Romani in Hungary use not more than a dozen of books—they supplement the existing material with their own notes and teaching aids (Lakatos, 2008).

In optimal circumstances, when we talk about the systematic language teaching-learning process we need to consider each of its elements (Figure 2). Once minority languages are officially recognized they must appear in educational legislation and also in the national curriculum. The system of language requirements appears in the curriculum and in the framework of language exams at different levels. First, present speakers of the language, especially in the case of minority languages, may become future teachers of the particular language, in our case Boyash and Romani. In order to train these people we need teacher training programmes, where they learn to create and use teaching material with adequate methodology of the learners' needs. Learners may come from nursery age to adults, and so naturally the way they acquire the language differs in several concerns—in other words relevant teacher training must be aware of its market.

### Sources of Minority Language Teaching Material

Before the political changes of the late 80s and early 90s of the last century, creating education material used to be the exclusive competence of course book writers and experts of Hungarian public education. Today, due to new social and public educational circumstances, these tasks are challenging teachers who may never have been educated in curriculum development. The case of minority languages in this concern is an even more burning issue: teacher training of minority language teachers and teaching minority languages in public education are its basic factors.

Due to the limited number of well-educated experts in Gypsy languages and applied linguists among them, those taking the responsibility of teaching Boyash and Romani need to create their own teaching material out of existing resources. There are

<sup>12</sup> see <http://www.nytd.hu/oszt/elmnyelv/index.html#F6%20kutatás> for details (28/03/09)

a number of collections one can find when taking up the pioneer role of the minority language teacher.

Among collections in Hungary, first we have to mention the stores of the library of the Gandhi Secondary Grammar School and Boarding, Pécs (Gandhi School). As this institution was the first in Hungary to teach Romani and Boyash, it has functioned as a publisher of several books and teaching material: song books, collections of tales and language books can be found among the publications.<sup>13</sup> There is also an ever-expanding library at the Department of Sociology of Education and Romology at the University of Pécs. This latter is the pioneer workshop of Hungarian Higher Education with respect to Gypsy languages. Being a university center the department functions as a publisher focusing on the works of the department staff (Lakatos, 2004, 2005; Orsós, 2005).

The National Széchenyi Library offers a complete bibliography that helps in organizing classes on Gypsy languages. The collection contains relevant literature both in Gypsy languages and in Hungarian and its items were collected between 1967 and 1999 by Zsuzsa Bódy.<sup>14</sup> Among them we can find dictionaries, language books, studies, folklore series, audio sources, informative papers and literature.

An electronic database can be downloaded from *romaweb*, one of the most recognized sites dealing with Roma/Gypsy issues. From the database link we get to the document store: this is where we find bibliographies—this link offers a list of dictionaries and language books.

Next to the document store one can find the art repository. Here, in the category of literature we have access to poems, folktales, tales, novels, short stories and jokes in divisions by author. In music, again by composer (also accessible from the art repository) we find authentic material both in Boyash and Romani from which we can compile our language classes.

A printed posthumous collection of Romani children's literature (Réger, 2002) introduces ritual games, tales, life-tales, conversation pieces, role plays, dialogue plays and riddles. This database of authentic material is a unique treasure box for teaching Romani for small children.

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<sup>13</sup> As for material published so far see the link „Kiadványaink” at <http://gandhi.dravanet.hu/regi/> (26/10/08) According to a new project a syndicate is set up consisting of the National Gypsy Self Government, the Gandhi School and the Primary School of Darány – seven teachers are working on putting together language books in Boyash and Romani for the first two grades of elementary school. See page 9 for details at <http://www.romakultura.hu/vilagunko9o7tartalom.pdf> (02/09/09)

<sup>14</sup> Ms Bódy passed away in 1999 so the list does not contain items from the 21st century. The collection can be downloaded from <http://mek.oszk.hu/00000/00035/00035.htm> (12/10/08)

Among Hungarian sources we need to mention the best quality Roma children and youth magazine, *Glinda* (Mirror) edited by the Amaro Trajo (Our Life) Association for Roma Culture. This publication started its seventh volume in 2009, although annually (for financial reasons) they only publish a few numbers. The magazine has headings for teachers, language lessons (first Romani only, today Boyash as well) and a series of comics entitled “Genesis”—in Hungarian, for the time being. Adaptation of the heading contents may contribute to Gypsy language classes both as compulsory and supplementary material.

Due to language use specialties of Roma communities in Europe, international sources are exclusively Romani database, mostly of those who belong to Matras’ professional circles. Publication of the first collection of international sources (Bakker-Kychukov, 2004) was supported by the Open Society Institute, Budapest. The authors of the book primarily recommend their work to teachers. They provide their readers with their electronic address and invite them to note mistakes or to place supplementary information in the collection. A short guideline is given to readers, informing them about dialects according to which the items of the collection are structured. The collection introduces several books applicable for school, including ABC books, elementary mathematics, literature and language books.

The freshest rosary (Proctor, 2008) is recommended to everyone who intends to learn Romani. This collection is not only a canon of authors and titles but gives annotation to each of its items. With the help of these comments language teachers (and learners) can decide which aid is the most appropriate for their purposes. The database gives information on printed, online and audio material.

Almost each database introduced has a crucial issue: that is, accessibility. Once they find the most appropriate sources, the readers have to find out for themselves where the items can be purchased or borrowed from. In order to overcome this challenge one may need to consult institutions where Gypsy languages are already being taught. A list of institutions teaching Gypsy languages today in Hungary can be accessed from romaweb, the portal that has already been mentioned.

### **Gypsy Languages in Schools**

According to current educational legislation in Hungary, whoever has a language certificate at C2 level and is trained as a teacher specialised in *any* subject can teach Gypsy languages in the public education system. Should a school employ a teacher

fulfilling these criteria the local curriculum has to provide two forty-five minute long lessons per week—all this, supposing eight (most probably functional illiterate) parents' relevant written requirements are submitted to the school administration. The question is whether parents are aware of their rights in this matter.

There are several challenges ahead for those who intend to map the present situation of Gypsy languages in Hungarian public education, as well. Data from the last five years show similar results concerning teaching Boyash and Romani.

A research financed by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and carried out by the Department of Romology and Sociology of Education in May-June 2009 (Lakatos, 2009) was designed to find out where educational institutions teach Romani in Hungary. The researchers found that no statistics can be found on relevant institutions. The Information System of Public Education (KIFIR) has no information on schools teaching Gypsy languages at all and the data the Ministry of Education has in this matter is misleading. Consequently, researchers had to operate with information attained in other ways, namely received from present and/or ex-students of Romology at their own department.

Applying the snowball method, researchers discovered that today in Hungary there are 23 settlements nationwide where 27 educational institutions have Romani as part of the curriculum. Altogether 1,325 pupils and students learn Romani in public education: 13% of them are pre-schoolers, most of them (70%) are primary school pupils and the rest of the students have access to Romani secondary school (17%). These institutions mostly employ one (64%) or two (26%) teachers of Romani, while three or four language educators work in a very few places (5%-5% each). Though there is theoretical agreement about the importance of early education concerning minority language education there are altogether two kindergartens nationwide where three or four kindergarten teachers use Romani on a daily basis.

In 2005/2006 there were ten educational institutions (Figure 3) where learning Boyash was a possibility. Altogether eight primary and two secondary schools offer Boyash as a minority language, which meant 1,042 pupils or students (Pálmainé, 2007). There are only two schools where all children attending take Boyash, one of them being the Gandhi School. 53% of the pupils at the ten institutions examined took this minority language in 2004/2005. All in all we can predict that approximately 2,300-2,500 children learn either Romani or Boyash today in Hungary at school.



**Success Criteria of (Language) Teachers**

Although we can find sceptics on the necessity of Gypsy language education (Takács, 2008), the process of teaching minority languages has already started. There is a demand for accredited language exams at each level, both for Boyash and Romani, which representatives of the majority society also choose to take (Lakatos, 2008).

Teachers of Boyash and Romani have a significantly diverse educational background (Pálmainé, 2007; Lakatos, 2008). It is time to synchronize theories and practices applied in minority language teaching nationwide and this process has already started at the University of Pécs. Starting with the academic year 2009/2010 students are able to choose Masters Romology studies. Candidates can choose to be trained teachers of Boyash or Romani Languages or Roma/Gypsy culture. Due to this option the South Transdanubian Region in Hungary is the first in the European Union to train educators of minority languages and culture.

The accreditation material of the course (Pálmainé, 2008) contains the special competencies of the teachers of Romology. As regards requirements, future teachers must:

- have high standard linguistic competences in the target language (Boyash or Romani)—the minimum level is C1 of the European Language Framework,
- apply the most appropriate language education techniques during the teaching learning process they face,
- share Roma/Gypsy history, cultural values and traditions,
- plan the language learning process with the instruments of project and drama education.

Candidates also need to prove their talents as curriculum development specialists who are/have:

- ready and able to create and adapt,
- good communicators, co-operators and coordinators,
- talented diagnosticians,
- unprejudiced decision makers,
- flexible,
- a concept of process analysis and evaluation,
- an integrative approach,
- open in a critical way towards new methodology in and outside their country,
- educational selfreflection - not only as mere theory (Bárdossy, 2002).

Representatives of a new discipline should always have courage. Future candidate teachers of Gypsy languages and cultures may take a double portion of this characteristic. They will need courage to teach content that is debated by colleagues and to speak in public as well; courage to become flexible and easy-going without losing professional values; courage to build respect for a new discipline and to take professional responsibility. However, taking responsibility does not belong to those characteristics that are internalized in Eastern Europe. Learning how to do so is a long journey which will require much personal experience.

### **SUMMARY**

Two decades after democratic changes in the political structure of our country a particularly significant marker, minority education does not show either satisfying or optimistic results. Different educational policies and approaches intending to solve the “Roma issue” have failed and Romany/Gypsy minority education faces more challenges than twenty years ago. Legislation provides opportunities; policy-making, however, has not proven to go hand in hand with a theoretically given framework and real options.

Democracy has to be born in people’s minds, in our ways of thinking, judging, decision-making, and acting in everyday life situations as much as in realising the ideas of those who proclaim equal chances when introducing acts based upon basic human rights. Martin Luther King had a dream in 1963 and the United States of America has an Afro-American president today, in 2009. Shall we have a Prime Minister coming from the Romany/Gypsy minority in another twenty five years?

## TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Educational attainment of the 16-17 year old (Roma: 17-18) population in 1993 and 2003 (per cent) (Kertesi-Kézdi, 2006)

	Completes primary school by age 17 (approx.)	Continues studies in		
		Vocational school	Secondary school	Total
Roma population				
1993	68	33	9	42
2003	86	24	14	38
change	+18	-9	+5	-4
National average				
1993	96	39	48	87
2003	96	12	80	92
change	0	-27	+32	+5
Roma – National difference in differences				
	+18	+18	-27	-9
<p>Note: The category of continuing studies covers those who studied in vocational or secondary schools or completed any of those. Continuing rates are underestimated by dropout rates.  Sources: Hungarian Roma Surveys of 1993 and 2003, and Hungarian Labor Force Surveys of 1993/4 and 2003/ 4.</p>				

Table 2: Daytime Students Attaining A-level at Gandhi School 2000-2009. (Dezső)

	Number of A-Levels
2000	18
2001	22
2002	18
2003	26
2004	25 (7+18)
2005	29 (13+16)
2006	37 (19+18)
2007	35 (19+16)
2008	16
2009	57
sum	283
average	28

Table 3: Adult (Second Chance) Students Attaining A-levels at Gandhi School 2004-2009<sup>15</sup> (Dezső)

	Number of A-Levels
2004	21
2006	36
2007	(59/) <sup>37</sup>
2008	34
2009	(62/) <sup>35</sup>
SUM	163
AVERAGE	32 <sup>33</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Because of a change in the training structure there were no exams in 2005 at the second chance department. Numbers in brackets refer to the number of those who took the exams not the ones who actually passed.

Table 4: Roma/Gypsy aged 7-19 speaking Gypsy languages in 2009 (%) (Dezső)

Age (yrs)	Hungarian only	Romani	Boyash	Other	Altogether
7-14	88,1	8,0	2,8	1,1	100,0
15-19	80,1	12,0	5,0	2,9	100,0

Figures 1: Education Policy in the Governance Structure (Polónyi-Timár, 2005)

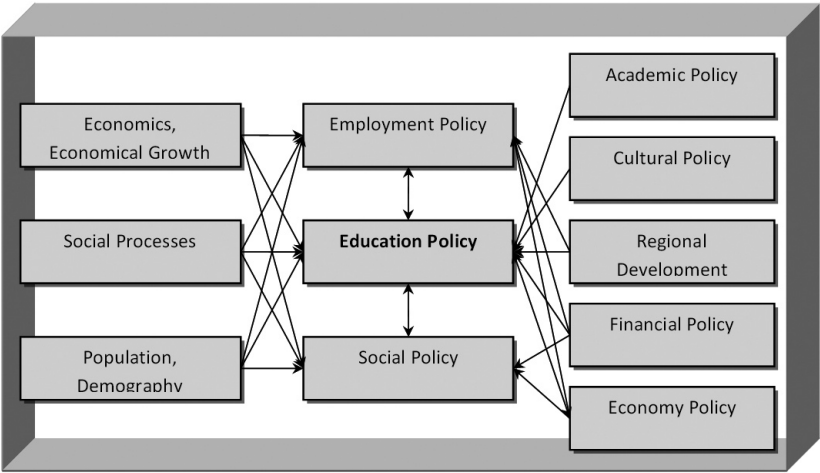


Figure 2: Prerequisites of the Systematic Language Teaching-Learning Process (Dezső)

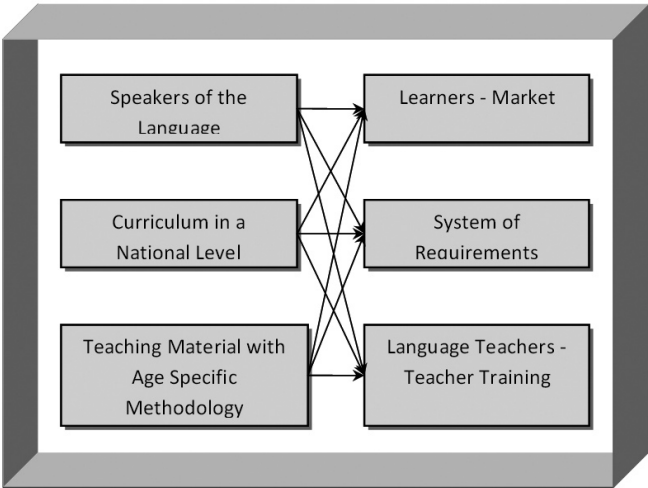


Figure 3: Pupils/Students Learning Boyash at Primary and Secondary Schools in 2005/2006 (Pálmainé, 2007)



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