

**Prof. As. Dr. Florinda Tarusha**  
"Aleksander Xhuvani" University  
ftarusha@yahoo.com

**Dr. Ornela Bilali**  
"Aleksander Xhuvani" University  
ornelabilali@gmail.com

## **The Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Situation of Roma Community in Elbasan**

### **Abstract**

*History has shown that human society since its first events is characterized by feelings of interaction between the layers. Despite sharing the wealth class, attention for the strata or social groups in need has had its ups and downs, depending on the systems, the groups that have constituted leadership administration or self social orders in which has passed our social and historical development. Today the development stage of socio-economic has reached unimaginable levels not only in terms of scientific and technical and industrial development, but also a fair conception in terms of human rights that should be individual as a member of this society. In this aspect Albanian society the composition of which there are groups or social layers from all levels, has its own specific problems and common as all other states. The study focuses on a more realistic presentation of the situation socio-economic, socio-cultural relations between social groups of different levels, specifically for Roma to Elbasan.*

*The aim of the study:*

- 1. Identify the current situation in which the Roma community in the district of Elbasan, focusing on all aspects of life, social, cultural, for all age groups of the community.*
- 2. To analyze the factors that have influenced and continue to influence the situation of this community.*
- 3. To provide recommendations about changing this reality that everyone disturbs and that requires a lot of work and many dedicated people.*

**Keywords:** Integration, Roma community, Discrimination, Inclusive, Awareness.

## 1-Current situation of Roman education in Albania

Generally speaking, Romans in Albania have a low level education compared to other part of population by staying fewer years at school than others. Researching the registration level of children in the kindergarten, it is resulted that fewer than 10% of the total number of Roman children have to be registered in kinder gardens, result registered<sup>15</sup>. Roman population has a very lower educational level in reading and writing compared to the average in national scale. Concretely, the average percentage of reading and writing of Romans, who completed the survey in a questionnaire from Pnud, is only 62%; meanwhile the percentage of reading and writing of Non-Roman population is 97%<sup>16</sup>. Roman women educational level is lower than men educational level. 58% of Roman women know how to read and write compared to 66% of Roman men. On the other hand, this level is resulted 96% for Non-Roman women and 98% for Non-Roman men. Education years for Roman population are numbered 3.4, whereas for Non-Roman population 9.8<sup>17</sup>. Roman learners are at a very low number in every level of education compared to learners of other communities. A large number of Roman community children do not attend the school at all or drop it out since in primary education or drop it out in the first months of the first class. This phenomenon is emphasized more for Roman girls.

There are a lot of causes of this low level education. There are analysed some of them that are considered to be the most important.

*Extreme poverty* is one of the causes of the low level education for Roman community and maybe the most important one. The finan-

15 Banka Botërore (2003). Vlerësimi i varfërisë në Shqipëri.

16 Në rrezik: Prekshmëria shoqërore e Romëve në Shqipëri, UNDP Shqipëri, 2006, pg 22

17 Në rrezik: Prekshmëria shoqërore e Romëve në Shqipëri, Undp Shqipëri, 2006, pg 24

cial incomes of Roman community are 3.3 times lower than Non-Roman families. A lot of Roman families live in very extreme poverty.

As a result of this extreme poverty approximately 67% of Roman families could not buy school textbooks for their children and different materials that are needed at the school<sup>18</sup>.

It is exactly this condition that very often obliges Roman children to go to work at a very young age contributing on their families' survival.

*Migration and emigration* of this population are two factors that influence directly in this population education. These factors influence in the registration percentage or school dropping out of Roman children, because a lot of Roman children could not register or drop out the school because their families migrate in other places and do not consider the fact that their children are going to abandon their academic year. As a result, Roman children find it difficult to return at the school to finish the class, after coming in their place. In a lot of cases, Roman population faces out the phenomenon of not registering their children at the school because Romans find it difficult to have identifying documents because of the fact that most of Roman children are not registered after they were born.

One factor that influences in Roman children education is *the low level of Roman parents*. Roman parents have a very low educational level and this is the reason that Roman children prevented from their parents to go to school or are influenced to drop it out. More that 13% of Roman children do not have any level of education because they are prohibited by their parents as a result of parents' low level education<sup>19</sup>.

18 Ibid, pg 25

19 Në rrezik. Prekshmëria e Romëve në Shqipëri, UNDP Shqipëri , pg 26

*Not speaking Albanian language* is another difficulty that Roman children face when they start to go to the school. This difficulty is increased even from the fact that Roman children miss pre-school classes to learn Albanian language and the fact that there are not Roman teachers in schools that may help and influence more on these children to learn<sup>20</sup>. Language barrier for these children results in other important difficulties as a result there is school dropping out. Approximately 53% of Roman children above 6 years old have not finished the first class and 62% of Romans above the age of 7 have never attended school<sup>21</sup>.

## **2-Recent educational condition of Romans in Elbasan City**

There are 535 Roman families living in Elbasan City in the suburbs neighbourhoods of the city, particularly in “5 May” and “Emin Matraxhiu” neighbourhoods. Fewer Roman children attend the school compared to non-Roman children. There are not correct data about the number of children in school age because most of them are not registered. According to the data taken from Roman association “Roman Voice/Zëri Rom” there are 103 children from 3 0 5 years old and there are 112 who are not legally registered<sup>22</sup>.

To know school attendance of Roman children we were referred to statistics which are prepared by every school at the end of school academic year. In Elbasan City there are four schools which

20 Ibid, pg 8

21 De Soto, H , Beddies S, dhe Gedeshi,I Roma she Egiptianët në Shqipëri. Banka Botërore 2005, pg 55

22 The data for the number of families and children are taken from the association “Roman Voice/Zëri Rom. This association has prepared physical registration of Roman children in pre-school age and unregistered children.

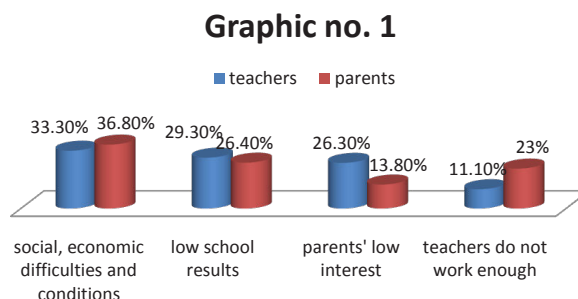
are attended by Roman children: Hamit Mullisi, Qemal Haxhihasani, Xhaferr Kongoli, and Sul Misiri. What is noticed in these statistics is the percentage of Roman children registering at the beginning of the school academic year and the percentage of school dropping out or failing. Roman children distribution according to schools is as the following:

**Table 1 – The results of Roman children improvements**

Schools	At the beginning	Failing	Failing (%)
<b>Hamit Mullisi</b>	80	45	56.25%
<b>Qemal Haxhihasani</b>	39	22	56.41%
<b>Xhaferr Kongoli</b>	25	13	52.00%
<b>Sul Misiri</b>	15	11	73.33%

As it is considered from the tables and graphics, Roman children have a very low attendance compared to Non-Roman children. This low frequency is often justified from the economic and social situation of Roman families, from non improvement at school, from the low level parental support, from low educational expectancy etc. One of the tasks of this research is also to show factors that influence on school dropping out phenomenon. It we show by graphics the causes of school dropping out in two points of views: teachers and parents, there will be:

**Graphic 1 – Graphic of the causes of school dropping out**



An opinion about school dropping out causes was taken from children interviews that have already dropped school out. What is noticed in this perspective is the fact that even the children who have dropped school out have different reasons because of their age.

**2.1 Causes of non-improvement of Roman children at the school**

The causes of non-improvements of Roman children at school could be said that have to do not only with disadvantages that exist together with other Roman children when they enter in the school, but also with school problems. Obviously, as it is explained above, there are a lot of problems in relation to the school, but this research is focussed on teacher’s role. The questionnaires for teachers and parents give these subjects opinions in relation to the causes of non-improvements of Roman children at school.

**Table 2 – Causes of non-improvement of Roman children at school from teachers’ point of view**

Table 2	Teachers
Difficulties in comprehending the lessons	20%
The school is not attractive for them	15%
Language difficulties	13%
Low educational expectancies (low self-esteem)	25%
Difficult textbooks	0%
They are not helped in preparing the homework	27%
Insufficient teachers’ work	0%

**Table 3 – Causes of non-improvement of Roman children at school from parents’ point of view**

Table 3	Parents
Teachers do not work enough with them	40.2%
Parents do not help with homework	29.9%
They are not able to learn	29.9%

What is noticed from the answers is the fact that teachers determine as causes of Roman children non-improvement the difficulties that these children have to understand new knowledge, their low educational expectancies, and the school is not organized in an attractive way for them, and parents' disinterest. Parents think that Roman children are not "capable" to learn, teachers do not work enough with their children and their children lack their parents' help. The parents' opinion is mostly linked with their non-positive experiences (most of them do not have a school experience and in case they have, they do not have good memories such as low assessment, discrimination). Phrases such as "our children are not for school: Roman parents use as a justification for their children low school results.

Based on the same structure, so dividing the causes about the disadvantages that Roman children have and school causes that are linked with the teachers in this research, there are shown qualitative and quantitative data.

**Table 4 – The lack of motivation elements**

Table 4	Children
Parents have never bought books, magazines or toys for their children.	100 %
Parents have never bought presents for their children's birthdays	86.6 %

From the interviews it is learnt as well that:

1. Parents have never bought books, magazines for their children.
2. Parents have never gone out with their children to entertain them in theme parks, cinemas or children's theatres etc.
3. Roman children do not know what it is to go on holidays with their family.
4. Roman parents do not play with their children.

From the answers of the questionnaires and children’s interviews, it is concluded that Roman children are grown up in an environment where life experiences are poor, where the child get a little information, in an environment where it is not educated the desire for education, there are not books, magazines, games to develop their creativity which are going to be very necessary in the later process of learning.

**a. Parent – child relationships**

To have an opinion about this topic, there are used questionnaires completed by children. The purpose of the extra questions this questionnaire is to show familiar environment elements especially in parent – child relationship. A stimulating and motivating environment and good parent – child relationship are crucial elements to create self-esteem, initiative, positive evaluation for yourself and all these factors influence in learning process improvement.

**Table 5 – Indicators of parent – child relationship**

Table 5	Children
They are obliged to work often without their will	75.5%
In most of the cases, their problems are solved by their relatives	44.4%
Parents do not buy presents when they take good marks	100%
They take presents (mostly clothes)for their regional celebrations	86.6%
They are never helped by their parents to do homework	82.3%
Parents do not in consideration their opinion	86.6%

Obviously, parent – child relationships are not relationships in which the child could be supported to be helped with what he needs based on the age and everyday life. Roman parents are not a motivating factor to make their children go to school. On one hand, they evaluate that their children education is necessary; on the other hand, a great percentage of them are ready to make their children drop school out if they do not improve. This is a contradiction of roles



between the education importance and practical situation from parents' point of view.

**Table 6 – Educational preferences of Roman children**

Table 6	Children
Learning	13.3%
Friendship	22.2%
Activities	58.9%
Teacher	5.6%

From these results, it is obviously shown that educational preferences of Roman children are entertaining activities that the school organizes, and their favourite subjects are: Music, PE, and Art. Their preferences are oriented in subjects which promote activities. Roman children need to be entertained. Children – school relationships are often determined by their parents' relationship or the community that they are part of. As a cause of school dropping out, Roman children often say justifications which under evaluate their capabilities such as “being stupid”, “we are not for school”. These ideas are rooted by the family or community.

**b. Problems that deal with the school (teacher and psychologist's role)**

To research the difficulties that Roman children face, there are used data from children's questionnaire.

**Table 7 - School difficulties that Roman children face**

Table 7	Children
They do not understand lessons	48.9%
They do not have good relations with teachers	34.4%
They do not have good relations with schoolmates	16.7%

What is noticed is the fact that one of the causes of their no

improving at school is, finding it difficult to understand the knowledge they have at school. As a result of this situation, the school is very difficult. It seems that understanding is a very important issue. In children's interviews, it is noticed that they are unmotivated from this situation; what is more if it is also added an unfriendly climate created from no good relationships between the teacher and other children. Teacher's relationships play an important role in children's improvements at school, especially for such specific children that need warmth, security and faithfulness that they really need. A good job is done by school psychologists who involve these children in activities where children themselves take part showing their talents. Activities in relation to children's rights, against racial discrimination have raised Roman children's consciousness and have positively influenced in raising their self-esteem and faithfulness.

### **3-Conclusions**

The causes of Roman children for no improving at school are very complex. Even though it is widely known that the poverty causes limited abilities, low school results, they are not explained by low mental capacities, but with the unfavourable situation in which they live in.

The most important thing we could conclude is the fact that not all the children who have economic and social disadvantages have low results at school or drop it out. Factors which reflect in Roman children low school results could not be seen as isolated. The research has aimed to show that factors of this situation are a combination of problems or the disadvantages that Roman children and problems linked with the school. Research results show the importance of teacher's role for these children educational improvements and to contribute in reaching the research purpose which is:

- 
- Understanding processes and mechanisms that take these children away from the school
  - Understanding what makes these children to improve

In this perspective, the research discovers the role of the family, school and concretely the teacher in educational process of Roman children and issues rose how these factors must function in order to improve educational situation for Roman children. As a conclusion, we could say that problems of Roman children are:

- Such elements in Roman children as: Parents – child relationship, culture, environment do not reflect positively in forming their personality characteristics that are needed to face learning process.
- Roman parents do not know the right culture or customs to bring up their children.
- Living in a poor environment has prevented Roman children to have experiences which are important in learning process.
- These children lack experiences, advice from their families because parents cannot help or advise their children as most of them are not educated.
- As a result of their culture, Roman parents grow up and look after their children in a way that is against school success.

Roman children have low school aspirates, which mean that social class influences in choosing their job and career. In relation to education, familiar culture and social class are important factors in Roman children improvement. Knowing social and cultural factors are important because they help us to properly understand decisions

that Romans take and the way they consider the chances they are offered as well as gives a clear idea about different, cultural practices.

## 5-Recommendations

### Schools should be more sensitive for Roman children

- It should be respected students' diversity in school environments.
- The school should organize supportive, continuous and effective mechanisms for Roman children as well as guided programs to prevent academic failure. Previous support of pupils is effective to prevent their failure.
- To raise awareness of Roman population and other part of Albanian population in relation to education in general as an only way for a normal lifestyle for all social classes.
- Ministry of Education should take over the creation of a bilingual Primer ABC book, as an important step to attract Roman children at the school.
- It is important to create specific programs for this contingent of children.
- For settled groups of Romans, it is needed to organize specific classes with Roman children and Roman teachers, with well-oriented programs, which will attract these children at the school and then their orientation and integration in an open, civil and society. The first two or three classes of primary education should be the bridge with the other part of children.
- Local and central government should program places in their organics to have representatives of Roman community especially in integration and employment directories.
- It is important to have special structures for civic administration, to deal with problems of Roman community in order to integrate this populatio

**References:**

UNICEF-Dhuna Kundër Fëmijëve Në Shqipëri(2005)

ISP-Kurrikula dhe Shkolla[2002)

Hasantari A., Dervishi V.-Praktikat më të mira Historitë tona

Orstein Allan C., Hunkins Francis P.-Kurrikula

Musai B.-Psikologji Edukimi (Tirane 1999)

CRC-Konventa mbi të drejtat e fëmijës

Fullan M.-Forcat e ndryshimit

Gardner H.-Mendja e pashkolluar

Llambiri S.-Braktisja e fshehtë “Nga fundi në fillim...”

Save the Children-E drejta për zhvillim

Ajdukovic D.-Aftësimi I fëmijëve

MPÇSSH-B-Plani I veprimit I strategjisë kombëtare për fëmijë (2008-2010)

Adler-Psikologjia individuale në shkollë dhe psikologjia e edukimit

Duka R.-Studim I politikave për minoritetet dhe strategjitë e financimit në Shqipëri

Buscaglia L.-Të jetosh, të dashurosh, të kuptohesh

Save the Children-Konceptimi dhe organizimi I punës me klasat kolektive

MPÇSSH-B-Strategjia sektoriale e mbrojtjes sociale( 2007-2013)

Raport progresi për strategjinë kombëtare “Për përmirësimin e kushteve të jetesës së minoritetit rom”, (Tiranë, 2007)

Strategjia Kombëtare për përmirësimin e kushteve të jetesës së minoritet rom (OSCE),( 2003)

Studim i politikave për minoritetet dhe strategjitë e financimit në Shqipëri, Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit në Shqipëri,( 2007)

www.bktf-coalition.org. Alba J, Sabina T, Enkelejda L, dhe Sabina Ç, Botim i Koalicionit “Bashkë për kujdesin Tërësor të Fëmijëve” në kuadër të zbatimit të projektit MARIO