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Yevhen SAVVATIEIEV,
Postgraduate Student at the Department of Pedagogy
and Educational Management named after Professor Yevhen Petukhov,
Kherson State University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

Євген САВВАТЄЄВ,
аспірант кафедри педагогіки та освітнього менеджменту імені професора Євгена Петухова,
Херсонський державний університет (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)
yesavvatieiev@ksu.ks.ua
ORCID ID 0009-0001-6849-1745

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BASIC CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ROMA CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS OF TRANSCARPATHIA

Abstract. The article provides a systematic theoretical and pedagogical analysis and systematization of the conceptual and categorical apparatus for researching the factors ensuring quality education for Roma children in general secondary education institutions of Transcarpathia during the period of 1991–2020. The relevance of the problem is determined by the need to overcome the marginalization of the Roma national community and the absence until now of an integral methodological framework capable of connecting universal standards of learning quality with the regional multicultural context. A logical three-level structure of the terminological system is proposed: from fundamental pedagogical concepts through specialized mechanisms to specific local realities of the region. The first level - general pedagogical - reveals the standards of quality of education (through the prism of approaches by UNESCO, Cedefop, and Ukrainian legislation). Right here, the accessibility of quality education for socially vulnerable groups and the phenomenon of an adaptive educational environment sensitive to ethnic diversity are conceptualized. The second level - specialized pedagogical - focuses on the implementation of inclusive education and overcoming the risks of isolation. The requirements for the multicultural space of the school (from anti-discriminatory design to a culture of intercultural dialogue) are characterized, the meanings of the concepts of "socio-psychological neglect" and "pedagogical neglect" as key factors of students' school maladaptation are distinguished, and the role of socio-pedagogical support is outlined. The third level - contextual - reflects the ethnosocial and linguistic characteristics of the Transcarpathian society. The establishment of the official ethnonym "Roma", the complex ethno-dialectal structure (Lovari, Servitika, Kelderari groups, etc.), and the significant gap between the official census and field estimates of the Roma population size are analyzed. The specifics of linguistic assimilation (the dominance of Hungarian-speaking Roma), three existing institutional models of schools (segregated, integrated, adaptive), the essence of educational segregation, the prerequisites for early school dropout, and the potential of the institution of educational mediation are investigated. The proposed structure of concepts serves as a theoretical foundation for overcoming barriers to the integration of Roma youth into a unified educational space.

Keywords: quality of education, educational environment, inclusive education, Roma children, Transcarpathia, bilingual education, educational segregation, educational mediation.

БАЗОВІ ПОНЯТТЯ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ЧИННИКІВ ЯКІСНОЇ ОСВІТИ РОМСЬКИХ ДІТЕЙ У ШКОЛАХ ЗАКАРПАТТЯ

Анотація. У статті здійснено системний теоретико-педагогічний аналіз та впорядкування понятійно-категоріального апарату дослідження чинників забезпечення якісної освіти ромських дітей у закладах загальної середньої освіти Закарпаття періоду 1991-2020 років. Актуальність проблеми зумовлена необхідністю подолання маргіналізації ромської національної спільноти та відсутністю дотепер цілісної методологічної рамки, здатної пов'язати універсальні стандарти якості навчання з регіональним полікультурним контекстом. Запропоновано логічну трирівневу структуру терміносистеми: від фундаментальних педагогічних понять через спеціальні механізми до конкретних локальних реалій регіону. Перший рівень - загальнопедагогічний - розкриває стандарти якості освіти (крізь призму підходів ЮНЕСКО, Cedefop та українського законодавства). Тут же концептуалізовано доступність якісної освіти для соціально незахищених груп та феномен адаптивного освітнього середовища, чутливого до етнічного різноманіття. Другий

рівень - спеціально-педагогічний - фокусується на реалізації інклюзивного навчання та подоланні ризиків ізоляції. Охарактеризовано вимоги до полікультурного простору школи (від антидискримінаційного оформлення до культури міжкультурного діалогу), розмежовано зміст понять “соціально-психологічна занедбаність” і "педагогічна занедбаність" як ключових чинників шкільної дезадаптації учнів, а також окреслено роль соціально-педагогічного супроводу. Третій рівень - контекстуальний - відображає етносоціальні та лінгвістичні характеристики закарпатського соціуму. Проаналізовано утвердження офіційного етноніма "роми", складну етнодіалектну структуру (групи ловарі, сервітіка, келдерари тощо) та суттєвий розрив між офіційним переписом і польовими оцінками чисельності ромів. Досліджено специфіку мовної асиміляції (домінування угорськомовних ромів), три наявні інституційні моделі шкіл (сегреговані, інтегровані, адаптаційні), сутність освітньої сегрегації, передумови раннього шкільного відсіву та потенціал інституту освітньої медіації. Запропонована структура понять слугує теоретичним підґрунтям для подолання бар'єрів інтеграції ромської молоді в єдиний освітній простір.

Ключові слова: якість освіти, освітнє середовище, інклюзивне навчання, ромські діти, Закарпаття, білінгвальна освіта, освітня сегрегація, освітня медіація.

INTRODUCTION

The problem formulation. A significant number of Ukrainian and foreign dissertation studies and scientific research papers are devoted to the problems of Roma integration into society. The factor of education is identified by researchers as one of the leading drivers enabling full participation of representatives of this community in sociocultural life and opening avenues for overcoming marginalization. At the same time, examining the learning conditions of Roma children in a multi-ethnic region such as Transcarpathia requires a clear conceptualization of the scientific apparatus: the normative content of learning quality, typology of institutions, the essence of inclusive practices, and indicators of educational isolation.

The relevance of the research stems from the necessity to overcome systemic barriers to the integration of the Romani national community into the Ukrainian socio-cultural space, where education serves as a fundamental factor in preventing marginalization and ensuring equal life chances for youth. Existing difficulties are driven by linguistic, institutional, and socio-economic barriers, including high levels of educational segregation, a lack of bilingual programs, and a significant rate of early school dropout. In this regard, an urgent need arises for theoretical reflection and the practical reform of pedagogical approaches to educating Romani children in the region. At the same time, the academic relevance lies in the absence of a comprehensive, multi-level conceptual and categorical framework that systematically integrates general pedagogical standards of educational quality with specific regional realities.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Issues regarding the sociocultural status of the Roma and their integration into society have been studied by Ukrainian scholars M. Zan, M. Horvat, M. Lendel, T. Martseniuk, R. Ofitsynskyi, S. Csernicsky, and others. Historical and pedagogical dimensions of the functioning of primary education and schooling for Roma youth are highlighted in publications by O. Fizeshi, T. Atroshchenko, T. Molnar, K. Labosh, A. Papp, and M. Cherepani. The issues of building a comfortable educational environment, inclusive principles, and support for children with special educational needs are revealed in the works and reference books of I. Kozubovska, M. Kopchuk-Kashetska, O. Tsiuniak, S. Dovbenko and others.

THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Consist in structuring the conceptual and categorical apparatus of the research on factors influencing quality education for Roma children in schools of Transcarpathia (1991–2020) according to a logical structure: from fundamental pedagogical concepts through narrower categories to specific regional realities.

RESEARCH METHODS

Within the framework of the study, theoretical methods were employed, including content analysis, secondary content analysis, systematization, and comparison of multidimensional approaches to the topic. Specialized sources and methodological guidelines were processed and synthesized. The chosen methodology makes it possible to gain a deeper insight into the subject of analysis and build a clear conceptual framework for final conclusions.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The first level is formed by general scientific and basic pedagogical concepts. Fundamental here is the concept of the quality of education. The global glossary of the UNESCO Institute defines quality through the prism of two main principles: the first considers learners' cognitive development as the leading goal of all educational systems, success in achieving which is the primary indicator of performance. The second emphasizes the mandatory role of education in affirming the values of a responsible citizen and developing a child's creative and emotional abilities (UNESCO, 2004, p. 5).

From the perspective of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), quality comes down to the rational optimization of teaching and learning processes in order for learners to acquire sustainable competencies corresponding to educational standards and societal needs (Cedefop, 1998, p. 15). In Ukrainian legislation, this category is delineated as the compliance of learning outcomes with requirements established by legislation, the relevant educational standard, or an agreement on the provision of educational services (Law of Ukraine On Education, 2017).

Consequently, another concept crucial for our study is the accessibility of quality education. In the "Dictionary of Terms and Concepts of Modern Education," this term is viewed as the state-guaranteed ability of every citizen to fully satisfy personal educational demands and obtain training that ensures competitiveness in the labor market. In this context, ensuring the accessibility of quality education is a strategic requirement defined also as differentiated support

for specific categories of the population (in particular, socially vulnerable groups and residents of territories distant from major cultural and educational centers) (Dictionary of terms and concepts of modern education, 2020, p. 55).

In the context of our study, accessibility of quality education means providing equal opportunities for socially vulnerable groups, particularly residents of compact ethnic settlements and children experiencing difficulties in mastering the curriculum. K. Labosh cites data from 2021 indicating that more than 60% of Roma are unemployed, about 40% lack identification documents, and only 1% of Roma children obtain a certificate of complete general secondary education (Labosh, 2024, p. 161).

Inextricably linked with the quality of education is the concept of the educational environment. This refers to the immediate context of the learning process and the interpersonal interaction among participants in this process. According to the definition by T. Molnar, an educational environment is an aggregate of social, material, informational, spatial, and psychological conditions that ensure the development of personality, the formation of its value orientations, life competencies, scientific worldview, and social activity. The researcher emphasizes that modern pedagogical science considers the educational environment an important factor involved in personality formation. T. Molnar clarifies that in such multicultural regions as Transcarpathia, the educational environment must be sensitive to linguistic and cultural diversity (Molnar, 2025, p. 161).

Therefore, the second level encompasses specialized pedagogical concepts, among which inclusive education takes on a primary significance for our research. According to the Declaration of the World Conference on Education, inclusion is a continuous process of addressing and responding to the diverse individual needs of schoolchildren through increasing their participation in learning, cultural environments, and community practices, since it is the mainstream general education school that must educate all children, paying special attention to groups with a high risk of marginalization and segregation (Kopchuk-Kashetska, Tsiuniak, Dovbenko, 2023, p. 91). Implementing this principle in practice is impossible without deploying inclusive education and building a corresponding inclusive educational environment that, through flexibility in teaching methods and adaptation of conditions, guarantees equal access to education for children with special educational needs (Dictionary of terms and concepts of modern education, 2020, p. 113), including Roma children.

Accordingly, inclusive education appears as a comprehensive system for ensuring equal access to quality educational services for children with special educational needs through differentiation and the application of student-centered technologies. An inclusive educational environment combines appropriate resources, methodological tools, and didactic techniques that create conditions for equitable collaborative learning work (Ziubin, 2025, p. 193).

The organization of the educational process in the studied region must rely on the principles of multiculturalism. A multi-ethnic region is a territorial space of long-term co-residence of representatives of different ethnic groups, whereas a multicultural environment defines a system of ongoing social communication among representatives of different ethnic cultures in the spheres of daily life, production, and leisure (Kozubovska & Povidaichyk, 2021, p. 30). This principle of a sensitive attitude toward the educational needs of representatives of ethnic communities is transferred to the school level, where the multicultural environment of an educational institution must be shaped. It takes into account both the content dimension of space in the form of institutional decoration free from discriminatory markers, the content-methodological component in the form of curricula reflecting multiculturalism, and the communicative-organizational component, which provides for a culture of partnership and intercultural dialogue (Kozubovska & Povidaichyk, 2021, p. 30).

According to the "Dictionary of Terms and Concepts of Modern Education," one of the key causes of educational maladaptation is socio-psychological neglect, interpreted as the result of a child being deprived of targeted educational influence and appropriate social conditions for full-fledged mental and intellectual development over an extended period (Dictionary of terms and concepts of modern education, 2020, p. 65). The consequence of this is the phenomenon of pedagogical neglect. The compilers of the dictionary emphasize that pedagogically neglected children are predominantly somatically and mentally healthy individuals whose developmental lag is caused by a destructive educational environment or the prolonged absence of corrective-pedagogical intervention, which, in the absence of timely support, leads to behavioral deviations and persistent alienation from the educational process. To overcome socio-psychological and pedagogical neglect, socio-pedagogical activity is deployed and social support is organized (Dictionary of terms and concepts of modern education, 2020, p. 175).

The third level includes narrow-specialized and contextual concepts in the study of Roma education in Transcarpathia during the period of 1991–2020. According to the Descriptive Glossary of the Council of Europe, the designation "Roma" is an umbrella term encompassing groups of Roma, Sinti, Kale, Travellers, and related communities, whereas the outdated term "Gypsies" has been removed from official documentation due to its persistent negative connotation (Council of Europe, 2012, p. 8).

In Ukraine, the ethnonym "Roma" began to be used in the 1990s alongside the development of Roma activism and the emergence of the first public non-governmental organizations (prior to that, the term "Gypsies" was more widespread in public and scholarly discourses). The transition from the use of the ethnonym "Gypsies" to "Roma" occurred particularly actively in the 2010s, when the term "Roma" was widely used in official documents (Panchenko, Kyuchuk, Homanyuk, 2025, p. 31). In our study, the ethnonym "Roma" recommended by the Council of Europe is used.

A diverse ethnic structure is represented in the territory of the Transcarpathian region, divided into five ethno-dialectal groups: Hungarian Roma (Ungrika Roma or Lovari Roma), Slovak Roma (Servitika Roma), Kelderari (Kotlyary), Maramureș Roma (Gadjikane Roma), and Romanian-speaking Vlachs (White Gypsies). The Carpathian area is primarily represented by Hungarian and Slovak Roma, as well as Vlachs (Horvat, 2026, p. 81). An analysis of demographic data demonstrates substantial discrepancies between statistics and field research. According to data from the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census, the Roma population in Transcarpathia was recorded at 14 thousand individuals, or 1.1% of the region's residents (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2001). However, researchers note that the actual size of the Roma population reached at least 32 thousand citizens. Such a discrepancy is caused by the practice of forced masking of ethnicity, as a result of which more than 60% of Transcarpathian Roma identified Hungarian as their native language, nearly 20% indicated Ukrainian, and only a fifth named Romani (Fizeshi, 2023, p. 72).

Data from the Roma Women's Fund "Chirikli" allow identifying three institutional models in the Transcarpathian region: segregated schools affiliated with compact settlements with a 100% Roma student body; integrated schools providing joint instruction alongside students of other ethnicities; and adaptive primary classes serving as transitional links to overcome language gaps and subsequently transition children to mainstream classes (Roma Fund Chirikli, 2018). According to the definition of the Council of Europe, educational segregation is physical, institutional, or spatial separation of Roma children on ethnic or socio-economic grounds, manifested in their concentration in separate schools, special remedial institutions, or isolated Roma classes (Council of Europe, 2020).

To bridge learning gaps and establish a connection between the community and institutions, school/educational mediation is applied as an institutional mechanism for fostering trust and communication with the participation of school mediators who facilitate regular class attendance and resolve interethnic misunderstandings (Council of Europe & European Commission, 2011). It is also aimed at preventing the phenomenon of early school leaving / dropout, the structural causes of which encompass child labor in households, early marriages, economic hardship, language barriers, and feelings of alienation within the peer group (European Commission, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

In this article, the structure of the most frequently used concepts has been substantiated and arranged, allowing for an integral investigation of the problem of accessibility and quality of education for Roma children in the multi-ethnic space of Transcarpathia: from general scientific standards (quality and a safe environment) through specialized pedagogical mechanisms (inclusion, multiculturalism, social support) to specific regional realities (language barriers, ethno-dialectal diversity, segregated educational models).

It has also been proven that quality education for vulnerable communities is inextricably linked to creating an inclusive, non-discriminatory environment, preventing pedagogical neglect, and taking into account the sociocultural context of compact settlements.

In addition, key factors hindering the realization of the educational potential of Roma students in Transcarpathia in 1991–2020 were outlined, namely: language gaps due to the lack of systemic bilingual training, institutional preservation of isolation in segregated schools, and high rates of early dropout. The operation of adaptive transitional classes and the deployment of the institution of educational mediation to establish a partnership between the school and the community were identified as effective tools for overcoming these barriers.

A number of concepts related to the study of factors influencing quality education for Roma children in schools of Transcarpathia require further exploration. Future scholarly inquiries lie in the practical development and verification of models of socio-pedagogical mediation and bilingual support for Roma pupils with the aim of their unhindered integration into general secondary education institutions.

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