

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING OF ADULT ROMA IN SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION

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The present paper is an outcome of the VEGA project 1/0084/17: The concept of education of adult Roma from marginalized communities financed by resources from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

**Abstract:** The study focuses on second chance education of adult Roma with lower secondary education and outlines possibilities of applying culturally responsive teaching of adults, based on an analysis of relevant theoretical background and qualitative research. Margery B. Ginsberg and Raymond J. Wlodkowski's concept of culturally responsive teaching is used as the main theoretical grounding.

**Keywords:** second chance education, adult Roma, culturally responsive teaching, guidance.

### 1 Introduction

The aim of the project "The concept of education of adult Roma from marginalized communities" was to create a concept of educating adult Roma from marginalized communities, based on relevant theoretical background and qualitative research. The authors based the present paper on the concept of individualisation in the education of adult Roma from marginalized communities (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2016), created within the scholarly discourse of Brian Fay's (2012) multicultural approach to philosophy of social sciences, Pierre Bourdieu's (1997) theory of cultural capital, andragogical theory of critical reflection, emancipatory and critical transformation teaching of adults (Brookfield 1996, 2005; Freire 2000; Mezirow 2000) and the results of ethnographic and other scholarly studies aimed at research into the Roma ethnic group (cf. Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2016).

Individualisation of the education of adult Roma from marginalized communities is an education strategy and approach of one's adaption to the specifics of the target group in the period of education with the aim of social inclusion by means of meeting specific educational goals, defined with the assistance of the members of the target group (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019, p. 6).

When analysing the range of vocabulary and the use of language in adult Roma people who are bearers of the poverty culture, initiatory education was recommended (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2018). Basil Bernstein's (2005) theory of language codes was used as the theoretical grounding. With regard to the level of cultural capital and restricted use of the language code, the main aim of initiatory education of adult Roma is to enhance their readiness to learn thanks to understanding the benefits of education and broadening their vocabulary (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019, p. 165). In its focus, initiatory education is a type of socio-cultural education, preparing adult learners who lack education and those who only completed lower secondary education for further and, primarily, second chance education.

### 2 Culturally responsive teaching of adult Roma in second chance education

In comparison to the non-Roma population in Slovakia, the education of Roma from marginalized communities is at both a qualitatively and quantitatively lower level. One of the reasons, as well as consequences, of this situation is the fact that education, in the excluded Roma community, does not represent a factor of social stratification. The linear education system is determined by the cultural framework of the dominant culture. It is based on mutual compatibility of successful preparation for a profession in the school system, which is a precondition for finding a job.

At present, it is also impossible for the adult education system to create space to compensate for the handicaps in schooling of those who, for various (in the case of marginalized Roma, these are predominantly socio-cultural and structural) reasons, did not manage to succeed in the early stages of their preparation for a profession, even though school legislation provides the necessary scope (*Act No. 245/2008 on Education, Act No. 131/2002 on Universities*). Not only does the system of further education of adults offer an alternative for the uneducated and unemployed, but it also deepens the existing disparities among adults by highlighting the qualification differences between the educated and uneducated.

Second chance education is considered inevitable for adequate social functioning, fulfilling social roles attributed (from the gender as well as historical viewpoint) to adult age, regardless one's ethnicity or social stratification status, especially in adults with little or no education and a low level of basic skills. At the same time, the above premise suggests society (the state) is responsible for creating conditions for all its members to succeed and acquire education in order to enhance their potential and take part in the development of society.

In spite of the constitutional right to education and the legal obligation of schooling, a large group of Roma people from marginalized communities are not receiving education of the same quality and the conditions for their entering the school environment are not the same. The school system pushes out numerous groups of Roma children and the education system of adults is not (organisationally and ideologically) ready to compensate for these shortcomings. Individuals are more or less able to fulfil the visions of the social system, depending on a great number of factors. An important role is played by primary socialisation, where cultural transmission takes place and structural conditions, as well as relationship frameworks, occur in the bounds of cooperation versus conflict among majority society and marginalized Roma communities. That is why it is necessary to perceive the education of adult Roma, similarly to other areas where majority and minority cultural patterns meet, in academic analysis, as a means of inclusion, as well as a means of ideologisation (depriving one of their own cultural uniqueness), as "individuals cannot be studied without a consideration of the multiple ecological systems in which they operate" (Brooks, Gunn et al. 1993, p. 354).

Ainsworth (2013) characterises second chance education as a way to achieve a higher level of education in a neoliberal atmosphere based on individual responsibility. By that, he alludes to the motivation and responsibility of every person, with regard to self-development, who is, ideally, expected to participate in the professional preparation and self-motivated education of adults. Second chance education is also labelled as 'second chance schools', or 'second way education'. However, the motivation and responsibility of an adult towards self-development is also connected to whether these have been sufficiently supported within the family, community and at school. From this follows whether secondary education is adequate and stimulating for such adults who are bearers of a different culture to the dominant one (such as middle class culture, majority nationality, ethnicity).

#### 2.1 The concept of culturally responsive teaching in second chance education

Raymond J. Wlodkowski and Margery B. Ginsberg, the authors of the concept of culturally responsive teaching, have been researching and publishing on the relationship between culture, teaching and motivating adults for a long time. The target group of their research into education is heterogeneous. Primarily, it consists of adult (part-time) students of high schools and universities in the USA of various nationalities, ethnicities and with varied political views. A substantial number of these students come from families and communities where the

experience of success at school is limited, similarly to the majority of adults from marginalized Roma communities in Slovakia. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski's concept of culturally responsive teaching originated as a reaction to the problem of members of low income groups and certain ethnic groups leaving school early and achieving much lower academic results.

Based on an analysis of procedural and structural components of the system and the organisation of education at universities, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) found out that this system and the organisation of education is, to a significant extent, a model strengthening external motivation. During their studies, the students experience techniques and procedures of teaching, testing, assessment and classification that are competitive in nature. They are based on the assumption that people try to learn and achieve results if they are rewarded for their behaviour. "Strongly supportive of this network of incentives is the implied value that individual accomplishment merits academic and social rewards" (Ginsberg, Wlodkowski 2009, p. 25). Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) follow research results that confirm that, in educational activities that are explicitly focused on the outcomes for a reward, the learners look for a less demanding and more superficial ways to achieve the set educational goals (Brophy 2004) and external goals stimulating teaching bring about a more conceptually superficial and less permanent understanding that occurs when learners are encouraged to learn by means of autonomous goals of education (Vansteenkiste, Lens and Deci 2006).

Second chance (part-time) students at high schools and universities, who come from low income families and ethnically marginalized communities are, in this system and organisation of schooling, mostly unsuccessful, as the expectations and values of the dominant culture function as ultimate judges and the main decision makers on the reward system for learning and also, unfortunately, what 'labels to stick' on those who find learning hard and/or learn in a specific way (Merriam and Associates 2007). Thus, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009, 2017) emphasise the importance of understanding the relationship between internal motivation, learning, and culture.

When creating the concept of culturally responsive teaching, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg applied a multidisciplinary approach and used findings and results of research into neuroscience, anthropology, theory of communication, critical theory, multicultural studies, theory of teaching adults, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Among the theoretical sources in the concept of culturally responsive teaching are:

- The symbolic and interpretative theory of culture (Geertz 1973);
- A critical theory of adult learning (Brookfield 1996, 2005);
- The theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner 2006);
- Experiential learning (Kolb 1984);
- Emancipatory approach to transformative learning (Freire 2000).

According to Geertz (1973, p. 89), culture is a system of passed-on ideas expressed in symbolic forms of meanings by which people communicate, preserve and expand the cognition of views on life. An analysis of culture is not an experimental science that looks for rules, but an interpretive science, or science looking for and understanding meanings (Geertz 1973, pp. 5-29).

Teachers, similarly to students, have opinions and values regarding education and the student's and teacher's roles. These are then transferred on by means of history, faith, media, family, mythology, and political affiliation. The ways in which one experiences educational situations are interceded by cultural influences. Such situations are not culturally neutral. In this way, education "represents a distinct set of cultural norms and values that for many of today's learners are at best culturally unfamiliar and at worst a contradiction of the norms and values of their gender or their racial and ethnic backgrounds" (Ginsberg, Wlodkowski 2009, p. 10).

With regard to the tradition of cohabitation and experience with the Roma ethnic group, it can be presumed that lecturers of further education and teachers in second chance education in Slovakia, similarly to the Czech Republic, are bearers of the Gypsy/Roma cultural scheme. According to Doubek, Levínska and Bittnerová (2015), the meaning of the models of cognitive schemes changes in the historic context, the term *Gypsy* can designate such concepts as 'a dangerous element and a bane of the countryside', 'working class at a lower level of evolution', 'defective population', or 'amoral and inadaptible', while *Roma* can stand for a scheme created in the ethno-emancipation movement, which does not follow the Gypsy tradition, or a member of a national minority and a partner of the majority, the victim of the majority, a hamstrung, or abused, citizen. "Three schemes of Gypsy/Roma are given by the metaphors one associates with the words Gypsy/Gypsies or Roma" (Doubek, Levínská and Bittnerová 2015, p. 113) and are "cognitive structures through which people interpret their experience of the world and, even though the basis of cultural schemes is idiosyncratic, the schemes as such are not fixed on an individual (Doubek, Levínská and Bittnerová 2015, p. 42). The cultural schemes 'Gypsy/Roma' often mask the social inequality and individuality of persons and could obstruct culturally responsive teaching, especially if the lecturers in second chance education are not aware of their influence.

As a precondition for the development of the ability to teach in a culturally responsive way, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) believe teachers should be aware of the various meanings of the term 'diversity' and they should find out to what extent they identify themselves with the values of the dominant culture and whether and if so, to what extent, they are able to appreciate the values of alternative cultures. The authors of this concept follow the ideas of Brookfield (1996, 2005), who points out the importance of the cultural perspective in the education of adults, as "the differences of class, culture, ethnicity, personality, cognitive style, learning patterns, life experiences, and gender among adults are far more significant than the fact that they are not children or adolescents" (1996, p. 379).

Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009, 2017) emphasise the importance of experience and experiences in the education of adults and the potential of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning, also in second chance education, the determination of learning styles by the students' culture (Gardner 2006), as well as the importance of awareness of the learners' 'praxis' within various cultures and social backgrounds (Freire 1970).

According to Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009, p. 24) "culturally responsive teaching occurs when there is respect for the backgrounds and circumstances of students regardless of individual status and power, and when there is a design for learning that embraces the range of needs, interests, and orientations in a classroom".

Establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence are conditions for internal motivation in learners of various cultures. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009, 2017) defined the principles, norms and behaviours and recommend methods of cooperative teaching and collaborative learning, peer-teaching, and focus groups for evaluation of education. The principles, norms and methods are means for the development of conditions for learners' internal motivation.

Education and educational activities are contextualised in the learners' experience and observations; the goals of education are achievable regarding the learners' current way of thinking and their behaviour. "The entire academic process of learning, from content selection to accomplishment and assessment of competencies, encourages learners to make choices based on their experiences, values, needs, and strengths" (Ginsberg, Wlodkowski 2009, p. 44).

Culturally responsive teaching requires the educator of adults to possess expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, clarity, and cultural

responsiveness. These are the pillars of culturally responsive teaching. "Our most advantageous approach as instructors is to see these pillars as skills and not as abstractions or personality traits. They can be learned, and they can be improved on through practice and effort" (Wlodkowski, Ginsberg 2017, p. 48). The above skills of an educator in culturally responsive teaching are inseparable; a low level in one of the fundamental skills can lower the overall competence of the educator teaching in a culturally diverse educational environment.

## 2.2 Guidance in the education of adult Roma with no or lower secondary education

There is more unknown than there is known about teaching adult Roma from marginalized communities. The basic legislative framework of second chance education is known and so is the dense network of educational institutions in Slovakia. Thanks to *The Atlas of Roma Communities (Atlas rómskych komunit 2019)* and several research activities, the characteristic features of these marginalized communities are known and, partially, also their inhabitants (at least their life strategies connected to living in the culture of poverty, social and demographic features, etc.). There are enough findings available in scholarly publications (such as Rubenson, Desjardins 2009; Hyland-Russell, Groen 2011; Isaac 2011; Cross 1981; Lukáčová 2014; Dickie 2000; Magro 2006-2007, and others) on the reasons people with little or no education (basic or vocational) do not even think about increasing their level of education. There are a great number of reasons (or obstacles) of structural, situational and individual nature.

From a great number of relevant phenomena, let us mention an insufficient number of education opportunities (geographical marginalization), little or no support by the (family and/or school) environment, family history characterised by a low level of education (a low level of institutionalised cultural capital), a low level of education within the family, the influence of various life situations due to which one left school early (usually prioritising partnership and family life over education), fear of failing in education, negative earlier education experiences, internalised feelings of shame, a lack of confidence in one's abilities, and many others. Shorris (2000) aptly describes the life situation of the poor and associates poverty with limited social mobility that the poor have to face, as powers that came together against the poor and pushed them out of the public world into a kingdom of everyday fight for survival. Such an enforced way of life provides no space for considering an action plan in order to acquire a higher level of education.

In spite of the fact that the education level of the Slovak population has been increasing on a long-term basis, the numbers of early leavers from lower secondary and secondary vocational education has also grown since 2009 (*Education in your Country, Eurostat 2018*). Schools do not sufficiently respond to this trend, the accessibility of education for adults who left their initial education early is not improving. There is no tracking, head-hunting, or active recruitment of adults for second chance education. For this reason, the authors of the present paper carried out qualitative research aimed at the assessment of second chance education from the viewpoint of students of Roma nationality (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019). By comparing and contrasting the research results and the theoretical resources, a concept of educating adult Roma from marginalized communities was created, bearing characteristics of culturally responsive education of adults.

The outcomes of the qualitative research (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019) confirm that Savelsberg et al. (2017) were right when stating that some second chance students, especially those with characteristics of marginalized learners, require supplementary support which is demanding on resources, that exceeds the scope of what most educational institutions are able to provide. Savelsberg et al. (2017) call for more intense cooperation between those involved (schools, educational institutions (in this case, employment agencies), municipal offices, and others) with the aim of providing support by means

of a case management approach as an integral part of the success of second chance educational programmes. What the authors of the paper call for is that any of the above institutions would, in a responsible and zealous way, 'accept the order' and not only attract learners into the process of education, but also guide learners with a low or no level of education on their way to what they themselves call a 'better life'.

The authors of the paper suggested a concept of guidance in the education of adults from marginalized communities. Guidance is support and a form of intervention by people of importance prior to and during education. These people inform and motivate those adults who have no chance of finding out about possible education and/or are not supported by their family and/or community and have a low level of knowledge, skills, key competences (such as language competences or digital competences) and have no, or very limited, experience of employment or an environment outside their own Roma community.

The guidance concept within education requires cooperation at the decision-making level (mainly by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family), at the level of such institutions as the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, schools/educational institutions, and potential employers. This guidance requires the cooperation of career counsellors, education planners, as well as organisers of further education, educators of adults, community workers and the staff of employment agencies, depending on the type of adult education (second chance education or further education).

The research carried out indicates that adult Roma people with lower secondary education (even if motivated) are incapable of independent learning and studying. A proactive approach towards learning cannot be expected by this part of the adult Roma population, which is why facilitation in the teaching of adults with lower secondary education, and even less so in the teaching of adults with no education is not possible. They need and expect support in learning from the educator of adults and others who participate in the management and organisation of education, who can, at the same time, comprehend the needs and problems adults face in Roma families and communities. The authors of the paper drafted outlines of the concept of guided education of adult Roma from marginalized communities or, in other words, outlines of education of adults with no or lower secondary education, specifically 'accepting praxis', 'support of informedness and stimulation', 'dialogue' 'clarity', 'demonstrative and active nature' and 'reinforcing cognition/knowledge' and the 'experience of success' (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019).

Accepting praxis of adult Roma learners is expected in those persons who design, organise and carry out the education of adult Roma in understanding the motives of behaving, acting and the way of communication among adult bearers of the culture of poverty. Understanding is fundamental in accepting the unique nature of an adult and, at the same time, in adapting the contents of education, organisation forms and methods of education, as well as diagnostic and evaluation methods designed for this target group within adult education in a way that adult Roma from marginalized communities find comprehensible and meaningful. In general, adults need to know why they are supposed to study and what benefits education can provide them with (cf. Knowles et. al 2005). Adults who think and act in the context of poverty (Payne et. al 2010) need to be given a chance to understand that there is a purpose to getting an education in adult age. They live 'here and now', without thinking about the future. In the culture of poverty, there is no place for proactivity, planning and setting goals (Payne et. al 2010, p. 59), which impedes the understanding of the added value of learning and gaining education for the future. Such ideas and expectations are neither good nor bad. They are a reflection of long-term social and cultural conditions of the life in poor, isolated communities grounded in ethnicity and poverty.

Support of informedness and stimulation requires intervention by people who organise and carry out education in the informedness and motivation of adult Roma with no, or only secondary lower, education. Such intervention is especially needed by those adults who live in detached and segregated Roma communities. In the present concept, the intervention should not lie in 'giving lectures', but rather in providing specific information regarding the possibilities of education directly connected to real-life situations and problems adult Roma experience in their communities. The aim is to explain to adult Roma how to approach such situations and solve the problems differently so it is more favourable for them and their family. Should the low level of basic competences require so, helping a client/an adult learner when filling in and acquiring the necessary forms and documentation is also considered intervention.

Dialogue is manifested by means of an equal-partnership approach on the part of those who organise and provide education to adults/educators in further education towards adult learners. Such approach disapproves of patronising lectures or rephending adults, as well as complete mutual acceptance without justified or specific criticism. One does not show respect to an adult learner/participant of education by accepting everything they say. "Respect demands that we hold others to the intellectual and moral standards we apply to ourselves and our friends" (Fay 2012, p. 239). The ability, on the part of the educator of adults/teacher in further education, to lead dialogue manifests in conversation, appropriate use of dialogical methods, providing adult learners with opportunities for self-presentation, the ability to use methods or cooperative learning, and the support of collaborative learning.

Clarity means that the content of education and its transformation must follow the existing level of knowledge, skills, experience and, at the same time, follow the level of the language competence and the way adult Roma use language, which requires a reduction in the education content to basic information and skills connected to the type and the subject matter of education. That is, "if the learning tasks are well beyond their current skills or prior knowledge, people will not be able to accomplish them, no matter how motivated they are" (Wlodkowski, Ginsberg 2017, p. 7). In methodology of education, it is necessary to strengthen the role of informal diagnostics and prepare diagnostic methods in an oral form, or innovated methods in a written form, completed by visualisation of objects, phenomena, activities, and processes.

Demonstrative and active nature is connected to the way of thinking and restricted, or missing, cognition of objects, phenomena, and procedures which adult Roma have not encountered in the community environment and, thus, are unable to name. It is necessary to complete the explanation of information and demonstration of procedures using images, models, and audio-visual recordings. The way of thinking of and the teaching style to adult Roma from marginalized communities is affected by the types of intelligence that are developed and considered as important in Roma families and communities (cf. Gardner 2006). Adult Roma work manually at home and within their community. Those who are employed or work 'under the table' also perform manual labour. In this context, adult Roma learn best in an active way and by means of activating methods, appropriate to their level of cognition.

Reinforcing cognition and the experience of success stand for reinforcing newly-acquired knowledge and skills by multiple repetitions. It is paramount that accurate understanding of presented knowledge and techniques, or a finished product, are followed by praise. Experience of success at school can be motivating for further education in those adults who have not yet experienced it. "Learners who complete a learning experience feeling positively motivated about what they have learned are more likely to have a continuing interest in and to use what they have learned" (Wlodkowski, Ginsberg 2017, p. 6).

The answer to the question which type of adult education the concept of guided education should be a priority was discovered in the findings of foreign research and the research carried out by the authors of the present paper. Adults with no or little education, moreover living in a Slovak environment stigmatised by ethnicity and poverty, have no, or a very small, chance to succeed in the job market. The above claim is also supported by the fact that a majority of marginalized Roma communities are localised in less developed regions of Central and Eastern Slovakia. At the same time, the results of the present research can be used, in which a majority of adult respondents were studying to acquire a certificate in order to find a job (Pirohová, Lukáč and Lukáčová 2019).

### 3 Conclusion

Second chance education of adults is a poor relation within primary and secondary schools in Slovakia. It is replaced by activities of further education or other measures taken for marginalized communities. It is important to address such issues as the availability of drinking and supply water in Roma communities, negotiating the plots and housing for Roma from marginalized communities and educating their children but, at the same time, it is equally important to provide education for those adult Roma who lack it or only acquired a low level of education.

Intervention by means of career counselling is considered a key part of the concept of guided education. What is, however, problematic is the way further education and balance counselling is carried out, which does not adapt to the specifics of the target group. Those adults who are unable to read or write, or whose basic competences are at a very low level, tend to misjudge their attributes or the ability to understand words whose meaning is unknown to them.

The authors of the paper are convinced greater support is necessary at the decision-making, management, and executive level of second chance education of adult Roma from marginalized communities in the system of primary and secondary schools. At the same time, based on the research results, it can be assumed that adult Roma who lack education are not ready to be taught in general. Some of them cannot read or write, or their reading, writing and numeracy skills are at a very low level. They live 'here and now' and they use strategies of survival in poverty.

Further vocational or retraining education, achieving, at least, secondary vocational education, is considered beneficial for (Roma as well as non-Roma) adults, as this type of further education requires a certain level of basic competences from its participants. Programmes of further retraining must, however, be primarily designed with the requirements of the job market in mind and in such an extent and quality which produce course leavers who can succeed in the job market.

It is possible to apply the concept of guided education in the programmes of social-cultural courses, community education for adult Roma from marginalized communities. Nevertheless, if educational programmes are not designed with the identified needs of the 'praxis' of adult Roma, living in communities, it might be ineffective.

The processes and activities in designing and organising the education of adult Roma from marginalized communities in the concept of guided education require the creators, organisers, and educators of adults to be trained in andragogy. The concept by Freire (1978), a teacher, is inspirational in understanding what a second chance teacher should be like. A guiding teacher is an accepted authority for adult learners thanks to his or her expertise and partnership approach who, however, does not abuse their authority and qualification to manipulate the adult participants of education who bear different cultural capital.

In the concept of culturally responsive teaching (Wlodkowski, Ginsberg 2017; Ginsberg, Wlodkowski 2017), the process and

practice of increasing the awareness of educators of adults in recognising there are other, alternative, cultures present in society, different to the dominant one, whose views of work, family, and priorities in the life of an individual can be stimulating for second chance and further education lecturers. Finding out to what degree educators of adults identify with the dominant culture should be the first step in this process, as "understanding of others is deeply interrelated with understanding ourselves" (Fay 2012, p. 229).

The authors of the present paper realise the need for further research aimed at second chance teaching of adults at primary and secondary schools from the learners' perspective, as well as from the viewpoint of the teachers actually involved in second chance education. It is impossible to apply the concept of culturally responsive teaching in the historically and culturally distinct system of second chance education in a complex way. Further research is necessary to outline the model of culturally responsive teaching of adults who lack, or only achieved a low level of, education for the social and cultural environment of Slovakia, localised in Central Europe.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AM**