Results of School Competence of Roma Children

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the school readiness of Roma children and the results in individual verified areas. In the first part we will briefly explain the basic monitored areas of school competence, in the second part we will evaluate the results we found by diagnosing preschool children, in the end, we will evaluate the results and point out the impact of identified difficulties on school success.

Keywords: Kindergarten, Roma child, School competence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The child's entry into primary school at the age of six is of great benefit to his overall development, is a step forward in his socialization and cultivation as a human being and is a path to later work. The main condition for a good start is considered to be quality training, in which the kindergarten has an irreplaceable place. In addition to the family, the kindergarten is focused on the upbringing and education of children from an early age to entering primary school. Pre-school and nursery school education also play a particularly important role in bridging the gap between children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the psychological and personal development of our children, pre-school education creates adequate preconditions for them to be able to start compulsory schooling successfully and without serious problems, and to be well prepared to enter school and meet its requirements. School readiness thus creates the preconditions for school success.

II. THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOL COMPETENCE

Under the concept of readiness, we understand the child's ability to take over and successfully meet the requirements imposed on his personality by the school in the stage of initial teaching, during the child's entry into primary school.

We can talk about a child's school readiness when the child reaches such a level of physical, mental, and social development that allows him to successfully cope with the requirements of the school [1].

School Readiness Has Several Components:

1. *Physical (physical, somatic) development:*

- a) depends on the rate of biological maturation and the attainment of appropriate physical maturity and maturity of the nerve pathways;
- b) assesses the height and weight of the child, is in the first phase of extraction, the head no longer dominates, is

small in relation to the body, the limbs are longer in relation to the torso (Filip. Measure), the thoracic and abdominal part is separated, the shaft is visible, the body is more shaped by muscles;

- c) the second dentition begins, the CNS matures continue, the child's movements are more precise, more economical and gentler, it is also assumed that a certain degree of visual motor coordination is achieved as a prerequisite for reading and writing.

2. *Psychological development (development of cognitive processes and emotions):*

- a) perception – we observe significant changes, holistic perception gives way and analytical, differentiated perception begins, the child begins to prefer shape to color.
- b) attention – represents a sufficient level of development of intentional, intentional attention, the child must reach a higher degree of concentration.
- c) memory – the share of logical memorization increases and the child's vocabulary and its content are significantly enriched.
- d) thinking – becomes analytical, while improving the ability to capture the essential features and relationships between phenomena, the ability to reproduce the model. The child approaches the reality more realistically, to the world, which is associated with a relative weakening of the meaning of fantasy. Understands age-appropriate concepts (more-less, bigger-smaller, first-last, ...).
- e) speech – together with thinking they are closely connected with each other; therefore speech support is very important. The speech of a 6-year-old child should be intelligible, without significant pronunciation problems. Age-appropriate vocabulary, ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 words, the child must express himself, grammatically correct.
- f) feelings – the child should achieve relatively emotional stability before entering school – i.e., he should be able to control his emotional expressions to a certain extent,

he should not react impulsively, he should have appropriately developed higher feelings – especially intellectually and adequate self-confidence.

- g) personality traits – are an expression of the level of higher feelings that capture the social, ethical, aesthetic, and intellectual area of personality. We can talk at least about an adequate level of general intelligence and interest in new knowledge and school work.

3. Social development:

- a) the child before entering school should have a developed need to meet other children, peers and is able to obey the principles and interests of children's groups. They must be sufficiently independent and, independently of their age, independent of their parents, they must be able to take appropriate responsibility for their actions and for the fulfillment of learning responsibilities, to take on the role of schoolboy and to integrate well into school teaching [6].

Achieving school competence in all areas of the psychological structure depends on the factors that influence the somatic and psychological development of the child. There are often great contradictions and contradictions between individual aspects and aspects of school competence, there may be disproportions between the physical and mental side, but also disproportions in the physical, mental, or social area itself. Therefore, school competence must be assessed comprehensively [3].

III. MAIN PART

In the Center for Pedagogical-Psychological Counseling and Prevention, we have developed a questionnaire for a comprehensive assessment, which focuses in detail on the above areas. This questionnaire will first be developed by kindergarten teachers who know them best.

The questionnaire contains the following basic questions:

- a) Basic information about the child;
- b) Attending kindergarten regularly, irregularly, not at all;
- c) Adaptation to kindergarten;
- d) Game level;
- e) Speech level - formal page;
- f) Drawing speech;
- g) Lateratilita;
- h) Relationships between and to children;
- i) The child's aggression towards other children;
- j) The child's reactions to the teacher's instruction;
- k) Cultural and hygienic habits;
- l) Movement - motor skills;
- m) Knowledge;
- n) The concept of number – quantity;
- o) Intellectual abilities;
- p) Speech level - content page;
- q) Perception – perception;
- r) Parental care for the child;
- s) Other personality traits and characteristics of the child.

After reading and evaluating this data and information, we can determine which child is ready for school and which needs a more detailed examination.

We diagnosed students in our district in the months of April - May, in 14 kindergartens, a total of 109 children. We were curious about the level of acquired pre-school

knowledge because all kindergartens were closed due to strict measures in connection with COVID-19, so many exercises, tasks, activities in kindergarten were not carried out, children were educated at home under the supervision of their parents. Exercises and worksheets for the development of individual areas were sent to them, and retrospective worksheets did not return to kindergarten. Online distance learning also failed because we have an insufficient internet connection in our district and a lack of quality computers for this type of education.

The results from the individual areas were as follows:

The best results were achieved by those children who attended kindergarten regularly and daily from the age of 3, came from a reasonably stimulating environment, parents had completed university or high school education, they were children living mainly in town or village, their mother tongue is the same as in school. These children had well-developed orientation and discernment skills, excellent speech skills, adequate vocabulary, already developed mathematical skills and the concept of number. The only area in which they lagged behind was undeveloped fine motor skills, there were difficulties with redrawing shapes, imitating shapes, loops, bursts, redrawing the first written shapes of the alphabet. The level of drawing was also at a lower level than in other years. This failure is due to the closure of kindergartens, children did not have enough time and opportunities to practice pencil grips and warm up writing.

In addition to children from the majority, we also diagnosed children from marginalized Roma communities. Roma children grow up in an environment where they lack qualitative and quantitative stimuli, their mother tongue is different from the language used in school institutions, they live in households without basic equipment - they lack water, electricity, they do not have their own work corner, they do not have simple children's toys. Parents are mostly unemployed; they lack the funds to provide for the basic living needs of their families.

We have summarized the findings according to the questions from our questionnaire in more detail into individual areas:

A. Kindergarten Attendance

Their attendance at kindergarten is very irregular or non-existent. The parents enroll the child in kindergarten, but due to the fact that the child's attendance at the kindergarten is voluntary and no sanction is applied to the parent, the child does not attend kindergarten. Even in the last preschool year, when it is really important for a child to acquire the basic school habits, knowledge and skills necessary for primary school.

B. Adaptation to Kindergarten

Roma children, who regularly attend kindergarten from the age of three, are very happy with the school environment, they have no problem being separated from their mother, they take their teacher as their second mother, they listen to her, they like to learn all the new things they learn during class. acquaint. In children who did not go to kindergarten, we also observed great social and emotional immaturity during the examination. The child cried during the whole examination, did not want to stay without contact with his relatives for a minute, threw himself on the ground, did not communicate.

The children had the same symptoms at the beginning of the school year, and since they were crying, their parents did not want to allow it and therefore did not send them to kindergarten not to cry.

C. Game Level

During regular visits to the kindergarten, we also observed the level of play in the children. Regularly visiting children had mastered the game as well as manipulation, thematic, construction, sensory, movement, rhythmic-musical and dramatic. This active participation in various types of games showed much better abilities than children who did not participate in these games.

D. Speech

The kindergarten is regularly attended by an expert – speech therapist, who together with teachers and parents develops the formal - pronunciation side of the child's speech. These speech therapy exercises gradually improve children's pronunciation and their speech is clear, understandable, and richer in content. During the year-round training, children who attend kindergarten regularly gradually improve their pronunciation and also their articulatory dexterity, there is a better understanding of speech in the written language, the vocabulary is enriched. For children who do not attend kindergarten, speech is formally neglected, there is a mispronunciation of several sounds, the mispronunciation persists in primary school, speech comprehension fails, vocabulary is defective. These children do not have developed phonemic discrimination, which can cause reading and writing failures.

E. Drawing Speech

Roma children still lag behind in the development of fine motor skills, especially in the field of writing and drawing. Due to the environment in which they grow up, they do not have adequate opportunities and opportunities to draw and work with writing instruments. In all children, we found incorrect grips of the writing means, while writing, they are constantly under strong pressure on the pad. Their drawing lags behind the age – the figure has no details, not even the basic parts, children cannot name parts of the figure and body, in some places it is only an imperfect circle, the shape of a cephalopod. In all diagnoses, the drawing of the figure corresponded to the achieved age level of a 4-5 year old child. In most cases, only a scribble, a stereotypical circle, appeared.

F. Relationships between and to Children, Aggression

Children in the same class who are in school regularly have a friendly relationship – whether playing, exercising, eating, walking. They help each other, they know how to use the basic words "please, thank you, sorry", they know how to share toys, crayons. If a child arrives who is new and does not know the rules, does not have an established relationship with the children, hostile reactions appear. Either they don't talk to him, they are not friendly to him, and there are also aggressive manifestations, a battle without giving a reason. The child will also not come to school the next day.

G. The Child's Reactions to the Teacher's Instruction

For the most part, children obey and calmly follow the teacher's instructions. It also depends on their level of

understanding of written language. Teachers in Romani kindergartens also know the Romani language, so in case of ambiguity they can also use their mother tongue, and in this way, they learn mutual understanding.

H. Cultural and Hygienic Habits

As mentioned above, many Roma families lack water and electricity connections. For the first time, children come into contact with water and the toilet in kindergarten. Hygienic habits must be learned from day one, because they have no experience how to turn the tap so that water flows, how to close it, they do not know how to use soap, do not know the correct procedure for washing hands, face, teeth, do not know how to rinse the toilet, use toilet paper, use scissors to nail trimming. These common activities for us are constantly explained and practically implemented in kindergarten. Children who do not go to kindergarten require teachers to assist in these simple activities. Other children are looking forward to washing their hands with fragrant soap and are already able to do these tasks on their own.

They need the same help with all the other children of the majority when getting dressed and wearing shoes.

I. Movement – Motor Skills

While observing the movement, we noticed that these children are restless, wiggling in a chair, kicking their legs, looking around, disturbing others, clearly marked and inattentive. When writing, they stick out their tongues, sigh deeply, tap their fingers on the bench, need constant guidance and guidance. We found out about all the children – regularly and irregularly attending kindergarten.

J. Mathematical Skills and the Concept of Number

In this area, we found marked differences between children who are in school regularly and between children who are rarely in school. A child with regular school attendance can count a number range up to 20, can choose a specified number of subjects, can compare two groups with different and the same number of subjects, can show the correct number of fingers, begins to understand a simple example of addition and subtraction. In children with irregular or no attendance, mathematical skills are not developed at all. They do not know how to count, they do not choose a specified number or a single object, they do not understand the comparison, they do not know the numbers, they do not know how to show the number on their fingers.

K. Intellectual Abilities

In this area, too, there is a significant difference in knowledge between children attending and not attending kindergarten. In addition to children regularly attending kindergarten, they have mastered communication skills and comprehension of speech in written language, they can answer basic questions and identify species of forest and domestic animals, they know their meaning, they can identify and name them in pictures, they know basic types of colors, they know what color we draw the sun, grass, sky, nuts, hearts, they have mastered orientation on the body, they know parts of the body, they have mastered right-handed orientation, they know how to determine direction according to instructions, they know when they get up and when they go to sleep, they even know days in weeks, months of the

year, seasons. On the contrary, children who do not go to kindergarten do not have this basic knowledge. They do not even respond and do not respond in their mother tongue.

L. Speech – Content Page

The level of acquired knowledge is closely related to the acquisition of comprehension of speech in the written language, which we perceive as a significant deficit and barrier in further education in primary school for children who do not attend kindergarten.

M. Perception

Visual perception is underdeveloped, and we observe different results in children attending and not attending kindergarten. Perception was distorted, inaccurate, insufficient, incomplete.

N. Parental Care for the Child

Parents strive for adequate care for their child, but they are determined by conditions, financial means, employment opportunities. However, children come to kindergarten relatively clean, tidy, combed, washed, have clothes to change, for the gym, for a walk, they have pajamas to sleep on, their parents have paid fees at the kindergarten. Based on the above information, it is clear that parents try and want to provide their child with sufficient and appropriate pre-school care so that they are sufficiently prepared to enter primary school within their means and abilities.

IV. CONCLUSION

After evaluating the results of school eligibility, we found that 45% of children are not ready to start the first year of primary school and were recommended a postponement of compulsory school attendance or entry into the zero class, which prepares children for full entry into the first year of primary school.

We identified impairments and underdeveloped basic skills that can cause learning difficulties and child failure at school. These areas are and their impact on school performance:

- visual perception – causes slow reading, confusion of letters, graphic characters in all subjects, poorer orientation in the text, on the map, difficulties in geometry and arithmetic in performing mathematical operations, difficulties with orientation in the textbook.
- auditory perception – causes difficulties in writing dictations, the area of speech comprehension, misunderstanding of the teacher's interpretation, incorrect use of the learned curriculum, which involves verbal learning, is affected.
- speech and communication skills – result in poor acquisition of oral and written language, weakened expressive skills, dysgrammatisms, poor stylization, limited vocabulary, poorer comprehension of the text, insufficient selection of important information that the student obtains from the interpretation the teacher, the poorer processing and comprehension of the text, which the pupil reads himself, needs to be memorized and finally formulated with his own thoughts.
- mathematical skills – their non-development causes difficulties in applying mathematical judgment, resorting to simple visual counting with the help of fingers,

difficulties in solving word problems that require an understanding of the assignment and understanding the meaning of mathematical terminology.

- spatial and right-wing orientation – causes difficulties in subjects of a technical nature, mathematics, physical education, overall orientation in space.
- memory – weakening of short-term memory causes difficulties in writing dictations, writing words, applying grammar rules; when the long-term memory is weakened, the pupil has shortcomings with the recall of selected words, multipliers, learned poems, lessons, learning material.
- concentration of attention – impaired attention affects memory, visual and auditory perception, which causes increased error and incorrectly performed tasks.
- graphomotorics – insufficient automation of graphomotor movements shows difficulties in writing, in mastering the correct shapes of letters; difficulties also appear in the subject of geometry.

We found all these areas of underdeveloped Roma children, which would cause significant difficulties and failures in primary school children, which are not a good motivating factor for them and create a negative attitude towards school and learning in general. By changing and adapting educational programs and determining the appropriate content of the curriculum in kindergarten, we will achieve the development of children's basic skills, which are necessary for successful entry into primary school. However, it is not enough just to adjust the content of the curriculum, the presence of children in kindergarten is necessary so that teachers have someone to teach. Therefore, it is necessary to educate parents within community centers to understand that education is the way to a better social situation.

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Alena Leščáková was born in Levoča, 1970. She completed her university education in Bratislava at Comenius University, Faculty of Education, Department of Teaching for Schools for Youth Requiring Special Care. She worked as a teacher for students with mental and multiple disabilities in Levoča. In 2006 she joined the Center of Pedagogical-Psychological Counseling and Prevention in Levoča as a special pedagogue and speech therapist, where she still works today. In 2014, she passed a rigorous exam at the Catholic University in Ružomberok and obtained the academic title of PaedDr.

In 2016 she performed the first attestation at the Methodological and Pedagogical Center in Bratislava and in 2018 the second attestation as a special pedagogue at the Catholic University in Ružomberok. In 2019, she began her doctoral studies at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, in the social work program.

In 2005, she was awarded a commemorative medal on the occasion of Teachers' Day.