

# Dropping Out of School – an Issue of Disaffection, Non-participation or Social Exclusion? Analysing School Policies towards Roma Schoolchildren in Lithuania

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**S U M M A R Y :** This paper draws on Ann Hodgson's analysis of how different perceptions of reasons for dropping out of school (disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion) lead to divergent policy proposals for tackling the problem. The reader's attention is drawn to similarities between Hodgson's insights and Ruth Levitas's analysis of social exclusion discourses (moral underclass, social integration and redistribution). Using the framework of these two studies, the school policies towards Roma schoolchildren in Lithuania are analysed. The article concludes with some critical remarks on the analytical framework proposed by Hodgson and draws attention to other possible methods of analysis of the educational field.

**K e y w o r d s :** SCHOOL POLICIES, DROPPING OUT, ROMA SCHOOLCHILDREN.

## Introduction

Until 2008, prevention of early drop-out from school has not been considered an important political issue in Lithuania. The issue of dropping out of school on a national level only recently began to be addressed when the state *Program for returning children that do not attend schools back to education* (hereafter: Program)<sup>1</sup> was approved by the government in 2008. The Program, for the first time on a political level, identified risk factors and introduced policy measures for prevention of early drop-out. Before the Program was introduced, the issue of children leaving school early had been analysed mainly on an academic level. Researchers<sup>2</sup> identified and analysed social, economic and individual causes of leaving school early,

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<sup>1</sup> *Mokyklos nelankančių vaikų sugrąžinimo į mokyklas programa* [*Program for returning children that do not attend schools back to education*], Government of Lithuanian Republic, Decision No. 1261 (24.11.2008).

<sup>2</sup> See Laužikas (1958, 1974, 1981); Bitinas (1962); Dereškevičius (1993-1997); Dereškevičius, Rimkevičienė and Tarmagadzė (2000); Civinskas, Levickaitė and Tamutienė (2006); as well as various researches commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

but rarely focused on the processual nature of early withdrawal from school, therefore school policies, mediating the decision of a child to withdraw from school, have never been analysed before. Yet, as Finn (1989) demonstrated, dropping out of school is rarely a spontaneous decision made by a child or his/her parents, but more often is a process that takes place over years before the final decision to withdraw from school is taken. In this case, policies adopted by a school in dealing with a child that is at risk of dropping out of or is withdrawing from school (i.e. attends school irregularly, does not participate in class activities, etc.) plays an important role in the process. These practices and policies can be analysed in two ways: firstly, how reasons for dropping out of school are framed and, subsequently, what policy suggestions to tackle this issue are made; and secondly, how effective are the developed practices and policies in tackling the drop-out rates. Both issues are addressed in this article. Yet, as the Program had been introduced relatively recently, its impact on local school level could not be assessed at the time when this article was written. Therefore, although the national-policy level is addressed, the primary focus is on local school practices when dealing with children that drop out of school early or attend school irregularly, especially focusing on the case of Roma schoolchildren, i.e. on school practices of working with Roma families in this situation.

The Roma community in Lithuania is rather small (approx. 2,500 people)<sup>3</sup> and is territorially dispersed. Its only compact residency is in a settlement of Kirtimai, Vilnius City, where about 500 Roma live. In other towns and villages, the number of Roma varies from one or two families to several hundred people that are rarely territorially concentrated. For this reason, the number of Roma pupils in individual schools is relatively low and varies from 1 to 20-30 pupils. Even in the city of Vilnius, where the number of Roma pupils is at its highest (146 in the 2007/2008 school year), Roma pupils are dispersed across several schools and their number varies from 13 to 50 pupils per school. With the exception of one class in a school in Vilnius,<sup>4</sup> there are no separate classes for Roma pupils in schools. Although specific research on dropping out by Roma students in Lithuania has not been carried out, general statistics reveal that the vast majority of Roma (71 per cent) do not attain secondary education (Statistics Lithuania,

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<sup>3</sup> The last available statistics on the Roma population in Lithuania is the census of 2001 that indicates that 2,571 Roma lived in Lithuania at the time when the poll was taken (Statistics Lithuania, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> The language of instruction in the school is Russian, but the separate Roma class is instructed in Lithuanian. The class was created in agreement with Roma leaders from the nearby community.

2002).<sup>5</sup> According to the 2001 census almost 31 per cent of Roma attained only primary education (first four years of education), while a further 18 per cent did not finish primary school (in the total population this indicator equals 17 and 2.7 per cent respectively).

Analysing the case of Roma schoolchildren in Lithuania, Leončikas (2006) lists social, economic and individual factors influencing early drop out that hardly differ from those influencing their Lithuanian peers (i.e. low educational attainment of parents, poverty, dysfunctional family life, etc.). In their study, Dereškevičius *et al.* (2000) note that ethnicity does not represent a significant factor in early school withdrawal and argue that social problems experienced by ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups largely overlap if the minority group is well integrated into society. Hence, Dereškevičius *et al.* (2000) stress that in most cases socio-economic conditions play a larger role in early school withdrawal than ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> The focus on the socio-economic living conditions of Roma and on social, economic and individual causes of early withdrawal from school could identify similarities and disparities between Roma and Lithuanian drop-outs, yet, in this article the focus is shifted to school-level policies adopted for drop-out prevention, thereby stressing the role of schools in the process of early withdrawal.

The most comprehensive study of Roma in public education to date is the study commissioned by the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad in 2008 (Centre of Ethnic Studies, 2008). Analysing data collected through a survey of 231 Roma respondents and qualitative interviews with social pedagogues, school principles and teachers, the study provides in-depth information on the number of Roma pupils in primary and secondary schools; the average length of school attendance; the age upon entering school; as well as the main challenges experienced by teachers, Roma parents and Roma pupils in schools. During the research, a total of 33 schools were visited and 53 experts were interviewed (sometimes, 2 or 3 people participated in one interview). The interviews followed a semi-structured questionnaire, which included questions not only relating to Roma pupils in school, but also on living conditions at home; quality of housing; size of families; distance from school; migration patterns;

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<sup>5</sup> In the total population, the proportion of people without a secondary education is 36 per cent. (Statistics Lithuania, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Similar conclusions are also drawn in studies carried out in other countries. Kristen and Granato (2007) conclude that for various countries it has been shown that ethnic disparities in education are largely the result of differences in educational and social background and, accordingly are a matter of social rather than of specific ethnic inequalities.

etc.<sup>7</sup> The interviews collected during the study formed the main data corpus for this article. Using qualitative research methods, the interviews were not analysed separately (i.e. discerning one discourse per school), but as a corpus that represented all interviewed teachers from which different discourses were discerned. This method of analysis was chosen because teachers often mixed different arguments in the same interview and no unified discourse could be identified in any single school.

## Naming the problem – disaffection, non-participation or social exclusion?

Silver (1994) notes that to understand policy decisions, the naming of social problems should be first analysed, because “in symbolic politics, the power to name a social problem has vast implications for the policies considered suitable to address it” (3). In the study on education and training policies for tackling social exclusion, Hodgson (1999) develops an analytical framework for considering the link between perceptions of problems that lead to dropping out of school and policy proposals designed to tackle these problems. Discussing the case of the UK, Hodgson argues that three different terms – disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion – are used by teachers to describe groups of people that are impeded in gaining access to, or are unable to maintain themselves within, mainstream education or training. Each of these three terms reflects a different perspective on the reasons behind the decision to withdraw from school:

- (1) disaffected – here the focus is on the individual who does not support societal norms and is thus seen as potentially deviant, or, at the least, has negative feelings about social institutions (including the education and training system) and therefore either participates reluctantly or does not participate at all in education and training (and possibly other aspects of conventional social or community activities);
- (2) non-participating – this is a technical term for describing behaviour in relation to the education and training system. The term only becomes value-laden when associated with the idea of participation as the responsibility of, or even the norm for, all individuals;
- (3) socially excluded – here the focus has moved away from the individual towards an emphasis on what society is doing to individuals or more widely in relation to society as a whole (Hodgson, 1999: 12).

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<sup>7</sup> The interview contents as well as description of methodology is included in the report of the conducted research (Centre of Ethnic Studies, 2008).

Hodgson argues that the three terms form an analytical background for the policy-making of preventing early drop out in schools, i.e. schools develop different measures aimed to tackle the issue depending on how the problem of early withdrawal from school is perceived.

These three terms can be compared to Levitas's (1998) analysis on social exclusion, in which she discerns three different discourses, labelled as moral underclass (MUD); social integration (SID) and redistribution (RED) discourses. The three discourses on social exclusion differ mainly in "what the poor/excluded are seen to lack" (Levitas, 2003). MUD, arguing that poor/excluded people simply lack a work ethic and strong morals, have many similarities to disaffection discourse in education policies. In both cases, it is argued that moral and cultural causes are the main reasons behind poverty, exclusion from mainstream social, political, and cultural life and/or public education. The main argument in SID is that "paid work is the primary means of integrating individuals of working age into society" (Levitas, 2003). That is, the line of exclusion is drawn between those individuals that have paid work and those that are unemployed. In this case, participation in the labour market, similar to participation in the education system, becomes a responsibility or a norm of all individuals as it is presupposed that there is a societal consensus about the value of participating in the labour market or public education system. Conditions for participating and value conflicts within, or at the margins of, the education system and labour market are downplayed and rarely discussed. Finally, RED and social exclusion discourse highlighted by Hodgson (1999) – although they cannot be overly equated – are similar in their focus not on an individual, but on a societal level. However, the redistribution framework, since it focuses mainly on poverty or lack of financial resources as the primary reason for exclusion, is not as broad (and hence as vague) as social exclusion discourse in education as defined by Hodgson (1999).

Both Levitas (1998) and Hodgson (1999) do not include the social democratic or conflict theory paradigm regarding the monopoly of one class/group over resources in society that is highlighted by Silver's (1994) analysis. This paradigm, which Silver (1994) calls the monopoly paradigm, "views the social order as coercive, imposed through a set of hierarchical power relations" and argues that "exclusion arises from the interplay of class, status, and political power and serves the interests of the included" (13). In this paradigm, economic exclusion (poverty) and unemployment are seen as occurring due to "group monopolies which generate inequality and severe economic exploitation" (Silver, 1994: 31). In the sociology of education, this paradigm is represented by, among others, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Basil Bernstein (1996) who draw attention to conflicting

notions about worthwhile knowledge to be reproduced and the problematic issues of transmitting this selected knowledge and dominant cultural norms to all social groups. Yet, at least in Lithuania, the issue of symbolic violence or middle-class cultural norms in pedagogy are rarely discussed when drafting policy proposals for prevention of early school drop-out or improvement of low achievement levels in public education. This discourse seems to be rather invisible in the UK as well, since both Hodgson and Levitas choose not to include it in their analyses of exclusion discourses. In this paper, the monopoly paradigm, as discussed by Silver (1994), will be used illustratively as one of the (invisible) alternatives to the current explanations of reasons for children to fail at school.

## Analysing school policies – outlining an analytical framework

Hodgson (1999) argues that the three different perceptions of reasons for children to fail at school (disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion) lead education policymakers and educators to highlight different problems that should be tackled when preventing school failure or early drop-out of school. Analysing how the three concepts describe problems faced by different age groups, Hodgson (1999) discerns these main themes used when discussing schoolchildren in compulsory education (in the UK – aged 5-16) (see Table 1):

*Table 1.* Three discourses on early withdrawal from school (Hodgson, 1999: 14).

Disaffection	Non-participation	Social exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of engagement with the curriculum;</li> <li>– disruptive behaviour;</li> <li>– prioritisation of other/alternative activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– truancy;</li> <li>– persistent lateness;</li> <li>– off-task;</li> <li>– low production levels and achievement.</li> </ul>	Exclusion from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– school</li> <li>– the curriculum or aspects of the curriculum;</li> <li>– achievement and positive relationships or role models.</li> </ul>

Both disaffection and non-participation discourses place the responsibility for failure at school primarily on an individual (child) level, although such social factors as parents' income level, primary language, ethnic or racial origin, gender and social status are often taken into account. Yet, despite the acknowledgement of larger social forces influencing a child's probable failure at school, the logic of the argument follows that the child – not the school – is bringing improper qualities into the learning process. Only in the discourse of social exclusion is the responsibility placed partly at school

level by arguing that children fail at school because of imperfections in the school curriculum or teaching models.

Although Hodgson’s (1999) analytical framework for analysis of school policies provides a good start by separating perceptions of reasons leading to early drop-out of school and policy proposals designed to tackle them, it nonetheless fails to develop critical analysis of the latter. When discussing school policies, Hodgson (1999) takes a normative turn by arguing that measures aimed at tackling early drop-out of school often lack a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional policy approach, and states that prevention of drop-out is only effective when all – individual, social and school level<sup>8</sup> – factors are taken into account. She continues suggesting that it is best “to make use of all three terms – disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion – in conjunction with one another when discussing education policy, particularly since this is the more inclusive or holistic approach” (13). Furthermore, when discussing social exclusion discourse, Hodgson provides a rather vague definition of the term and it is difficult to state whether or not it includes redistribution of financial resources that is central to RED as defined by Levitas (1998). Therefore, in this paper, Hodgson’s (1999) analytical framework for analysing school policies, although largely adopted, is complemented with Levitas’s (1998) analysis of the three discourses on social exclusion. The conceptual framework is outlined in Table 2.

*Table 2.* Conceptual framework for analysing school policies (Hodgson, 1999: 14; Levitas, 1998).

Discourse	Disaffection/MUD	Non-participation/SID	Social factors/RED
Early withdrawal or failure at school is considered to be the result of:	Lack of strong moral values and work ethic (individual or family level)	Non-participation in the education system thereby breaking the responsibility or norm for all (individual or family level)	Various social factors within or outside the school (social level)
Main problems which needed to be addressed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of engagement with the curriculum;</li> <li>– disruptive behaviour;</li> <li>– prioritisation of other/ alternative activities;</li> <li>– lack of parental guidance and support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– truancy;</li> <li>– persistent lateness;</li> <li>– off-task;</li> <li>– low production levels and achievement.</li> </ul>	School-based: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– exclusion from the curriculum or aspects of the curriculum;</li> <li>– lack of teachers’ competencies.</li> </ul> Outside school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poverty, lack of financial resources.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Hodgson (1999) divides the factors contributing to the early drop-out of school into four categories: (1) individual’s position within society; (2) structural features of the education and training system; (3) role of the labour market; and (4) the culture and values of the individual.

The developed analytical framework is applied to study the school policies used when dealing with Roma students in Lithuania that drop out of school early or attend school irregularly, based on the interview material collected by the Centre of Ethnic Studies in 2008.

## Framing the failure of Roma students in schools: Lithuanian case study

In 2008, the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad commissioned a study on the situation of Roma in public education, which included interviews with teachers and school administrators (Centre of Ethnic Studies, 2008). The data collected during this study reveal that the majority of Roma pupils enrolled in schools do not attain basic education and drop out after completion of primary school (first four years) or during the sixth or seventh year of education. Although several exceptions were listed, the majority of interviewed teachers argued that Roma pupils tend to have difficulties at classes and do not demonstrate high achievement levels. When asked about reasons for failure of Roma to complete even the basic level of education (ten years), teachers and social pedagogues commonly agreed that the main reason was irregular attendance at classes. However, opinions as to why Roma pupils withdraw from school early differed in the interviews, indicating that no unified set of school policies preventing the early drop-out could be identified.

### Disaffection/Moral underclass discourse (MUD)

When teachers applied disaffection/MUD to explain failure of pupils at school, the responsibility for failure was attributed to the individual qualities of a child and/or his/her family, arguing that a child lacked interest or did not have the discipline required to succeed in education. Often, families were blamed for not supporting or disciplining a child enough, while teachers were portrayed as incapable of helping such children. Excerpts from the interviews with the teachers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Interviews with teachers – disaffection/MUD

	Interview data (excerpts from interviews with Lithuanian teachers)
Lack of engagement with curriculum:	<p>So I say, '[Boy's name], now you have to write' – he writes one letter and puts his pen into the mouth ... He sits, watches ... If I stand by his desk and tell him – 'Write, [Boy's name], write, look, what you have to write here? What is this number?' He answers. 'Good, so write that.' If I stand by him, he works, if I don't – he does not work ... [The boy is a 10-year-old Roma student, who remained in the first grade for two years, and at the time of the interview was repeating the second grade].<sup>9</sup></p> <p>One pupil that is much older than his classmates is bored at school. He sits in the classroom, but does not hear the teacher at all. He daydreams in the class. Although he skips a lot of classes, we cannot expel him from school. He can attend as much as he wants until he turns 16 years of age.<sup>10</sup></p>
Disruptive behaviour/prioritisation of other activities:	<p>We can keep them in the classroom for 30 minutes, no more; they start leaving classroom after half an hour ... [a normal class is 45 minutes]. I ask them, 'Where are you going, why are you not in your classroom?' 'No, that's it, we cannot stay any longer' – they answer. Sometimes [it happens] even after 15 minutes. We cannot force them to stay because they start ... There is no use anyway in forcing them to stay. They cannot stay longer than 30 minutes at their desks. [The teacher talks about a class of eighth grade Roma pupils, studying in a separate Roma class, with instruction in Lithuanian].<sup>11</sup></p> <p>They view school as a form of entertainment, a sort of leisure ... And it is not a bad thing, but a good one. It is just that they do not want to study, but to interact; they come to school to interact ...<sup>12</sup></p> <p>They come to school, but they don't want to go to classes. They ... spend time somewhere in the building, sitting on staircases, avoiding going to the classrooms. It is not for the whole day, they go to some classes, but miss quite a lot of them nevertheless. They come to school to meet with friends; they walk around in the building ... I think one of the reasons for this is that they have big difficulties studying and they just don't want to go to a class where they do not understand anything. They fall behind in their studies, very far behind ...<sup>13</sup></p>
Lack of parental guidance or support:	<p>In general, these children do not differ from unmotivated Lithuanian pupils, but Lithuanian parents force their children to study, work with them more. Parents must participate in the education process, it is very difficult for teachers – there are 20 children in a class, they [teachers] do everything they can ...<sup>14</sup></p>

<sup>9</sup> Interview with a primary-school teacher in Varėna Region, 04.12.08.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with teachers in Panevėžys City, November 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a Vilnius secondary school, 03.12.08. The language of instruction at the school is Russian, but the separate Roma class is instructed in Lithuanian. The class was created in agreement with Roma leaders from the nearby community.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a Vilnius secondary school, 03.12.08. The language of instruction in the school is Russian, but the separate Roma class is instructed in Lithuanian. The class was created in agreement with Roma leaders from the nearby community.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a secondary school in Vilnius City, 02.12.08.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a secondary school of Vilkaiviškis Region, December 2008.

## Non-participation/Social integration discourse (SID)

In this discourse, as in disaffection discourse, the main responsibility for failure at school is placed at the individual/family level, yet there is less moral judgment and more administrative concern with truancy and violation of the school rules. Teachers often argued that if a pupil attended school regularly failure at school could be prevented. Some teachers openly stated that Roma parents and children simply did not want the education that a school could provide and argued that schools could do little or nothing about it. Although teachers would often acknowledge that there was a value conflict between parents and teachers regarding the education of their children, schools were not held responsible for addressing the issue. Excerpts from the interviews with teachers are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Interviews with teachers – non-participation/SID

	Interview data (excerpts from interviews with Lithuanian teachers)
Persistent lateness:	They are usually late about 5-10 minutes – they often sit in the canteen ... I find them, ask why they are not in their classroom, and encourage them to come with me. I must find them, talk with them, lead to their classrooms ... One day I tell them what their classes are, show them their timetables, explain where they have to be and at what time, but the next day it is the same – they wander around the school again. ‘What is your grade, why are you not in your classroom?’ It is tiring ... <sup>15</sup>
Truancy:	[Roma pupils] do not cause any big problems at school, only truancy. But it is a bigger problem for them, than for us – they do not want to attend, so they don’t ... <sup>16</sup> They do not want education; school is not important to them. They only come for the free lunch, if they receive it. <sup>17</sup> Parents take good care of their children; the only problem is truancy. If Roma pupils attended school regularly, there would be no problems at all. <sup>18</sup> A boy, a first-grader, was left to repeat a grade because he did not attend school at all. It is his family’s fault. He does not want to come to school – he walks half way, breaks his shoe and goes back home. [But] there is a fourth-grader that attends school more or less regularly – she has already learned to read and write, although she has learning problems. <sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a Vilnius secondary school, 03.12.08. The language of instruction in the school is Russian, but the separate Roma class is instructed in Lithuanian. The class was created in agreement with Roma leaders from the nearby community.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with a school principal in Jonava Region, 02.12.08.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with primary-school teachers in Anykščiai Region, 12.12.08.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in Jonava Region, 02.12.08.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with a primary-school teacher in Varėna Region, 04.12.08.

Furthermore, low production and achievement levels of Roma pupils were often emphasized by the teachers. Although the 2008 study did not collect data on the academic record of Roma pupils, in the interviews, few pupils were described as advanced, dozens were said to have satisfactory grades, while the majority were failing at school. Teachers argued that academic progress is closely related to school attendance and learning capabilities, yet some acknowledged that Roma pupils need extra support in studying, especially due to language difficulties.

## Social factors/Redistribution discourse (RED)

Even if the majority of interviewed educators used two previous discourses when talking about the failure of Roma pupils at school, some also acknowledged the influence of various social factors within and outside the school. Some teachers noticed that Roma pupils had learning difficulties and that additional pedagogical help would be beneficial to them (i.e. language classes, help with homework, etc.), yet they admitted that schools were unable to provide such support because of the lack of financial resources. A limited number of other teachers admitted that they lacked competencies to help children that were unable to catch up with the class. Poverty of Roma families was also commonly mentioned among factors that influenced school attendance, but many educators that were interviewed pointed out that schools had little possibilities of addressing this issue (even though some teachers were said to have supported Roma families with clothing and food). Excerpts from the interviews with teachers are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Interviews with teachers – social factors/RED

	Interview data (excerpts from interviews with Lithuanian teachers)
– Within school	
Exclusion from the curriculum or aspects of the curriculum	<p>They don't understand a lot in the classroom. They have fallen far behind with their studies. It is difficult for them to sit in classes, because they do not understand [what is happening] – it is like they were listening to a person speaking in an unknown language.<sup>20</sup></p> <p>The most difficult [lesson] for them is a language class. They often do not speak; do not understand Lithuanian. In one class, we have three first-graders, two of them do not understand Lithuanian, so the other one, a bit older, translates for them from Lithuanian to Romany.<sup>21</sup></p>

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a secondary school in Vilnius City, 02.12.08.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with a primary-school teacher in Varėna Region, 04.12.08.

Teacher competencies	<p>Who could work with them individually? There are 15 children in a class, three of them Roma. Children that come to school today are much more emotional, less gifted. A lot of them have no motivation to study, many are hyperactive, it makes teachers' work complicated. We were thinking of getting a teacher's assistant ... But the school lacks the financial resources.<sup>22</sup></p> <p>I have one Roma pupil in my class studying from the first grade. He is a third-grader now, but he only knows a couple of Lithuanian letters, he is constantly repeating the course of the first grade. He is a bit better in maths, but still, he is not able to complete the first-grade course ... I have given him so many exercises, I do not know what else could work. He is receiving help from a speech therapist, a special pedagogue, but it does not seem to help.<sup>23</sup></p>
– Outside school	
Poverty, lack of financial resources	<p>We have accepted eight new pupils, but six of them do not attend the school at all. I don't understand why parents do not bring their children to school. Cold weather can sometimes be an issue – Roma pupils often do not come to classes during wintertime, as parents do not have warm clothes and shoes. Their attendance is usually better in springtime.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>If you want children to stay at school, maybe you should work with their parents. Parents are struggling financially and children are willing to help them. If they could receive money for staying in school ... More money is needed as children get older. They don't finish school because of difficult financial situations.<sup>25</sup></p>

## Conclusion of the Lithuanian case analysis

Though three discourses could be identified in the interviews with educators, different arguments were often mixed in the same interview, indicating that no unified discourse on early drop-out of school by Roma pupils existed. Teachers often used different arguments in the same interview explaining reasons for children to drop out early:

Free meals at the end of the day might be helpful in keeping them at school longer. But we should also work with parents, talk with them about the value of education, they must understand how ashamed a grown-up should be if he/she cannot read or write.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, no agreement existed on which measures for tackling early drop-out would be the most effective. These findings conform with the statement of national *Program for returning children that do not attend*

<sup>22</sup> Interview with a school administrator in Šiauliai Region, 08.12.08.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with primary-school teachers in Anykščiai Region, 12.12.08.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a secondary school in Vilnius City, 02.02.09.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with teachers in Kėdainiai Region, 28.11.08.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with teachers in Panevėžys City, November 2008.

*schools back to education* (2008) that no system of prevention of early drop-out or returning children to schools exists in Lithuania. Measures were implemented on an *ad hoc* basis and were often viewed as ineffective by the interviewed teachers: “We don’t see any progress, regular attendance remains the biggest problem. Free meals haven’t helped to solve the issue”.<sup>27</sup>

School-level practices developed to apply the issue of early drop-out were systemised in the table below (Table 6). Yet, while situations differed slightly in schools regarding effectiveness of one or other kind of measure, there was a general sentiment of disappointment among the teachers. None of the measures applied seem to be effective enough to keep Roma pupils at schools (with few exceptions) and teachers felt incapable of changing the existing situation: “Support is worthless to those desolate children. When parents do not value education, there is little a school can do. Parents say that it is enough that a child learns to count and to form his/her signature. Even those Roma families that care for their children, do not push them into studies”.<sup>28</sup>

Table 6. School-level practices developed to prevent early drop-out (Lithuanian case analysis)

School-level practices developed to address the problem (Lithuanian case)	
Disaffection/ MUD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lowered academic expectations;</li> <li>– disciplinary, not academic, achievements are emphasized;</li> <li>– stricter disciplinary measures of parents required (some schools contact juvenile inspectors and social workers).</li> </ul>
Non-participation/ SID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– calls/visits to families or flexible treatment of child’s non-attendance (no strict measures taken);</li> <li>– attribution of child’s non-attendance to perceived unwillingness of Roma to educate their children (no measures taken);</li> <li>– low achievement levels attributed to non-attendance or lower intellectual abilities of children (modified programs assigned).</li> </ul>
Social factors/ RED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– free meals at school;</li> <li>– cooperation with social workers for purchasing of school supplies;</li> <li>– occasional individual support of teachers to families;</li> <li>– rarely – additional pedagogical support (mentioned in one interview).</li> </ul>

The national Program was approved in 2008, the same year as the interviews with teachers were conducted. Contrary to the interviewed teachers, the Program stressed social factors within and outside the school as playing the major role in early withdrawal from school, hence drawing more on social factors/RED than on disaffection/MUD or non-participation/SID. Two of the four listed reasons for children to drop out early underlined problematic issues within schools, such as failure to provide timely pedagogical support and

<sup>27</sup> Interview with a social pedagogue in a secondary school of Vilkaviškis Region, December 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with a school administrator in Šiauliai Region, 08.12.08.

incompetence of teachers when working with unmotivated children. The other two reasons were poor socio-economic conditions of families and personal psychological characteristics of a child and a conflictive relationship with teachers and peers. The identification of the problems, led policymakers to design rather different measures for tackling early drop-out than the ones applied in schools at the time of the interviews. For prevention of early drop-out, the Program aimed to increase competencies of teachers and other specialists working with children; ensure availability of pedagogical assistance; and encourage greater responsibility of municipalities, schools and parents regarding the early withdrawal of children from schools. Hence, unlike school-level practices that focused on individual or family level, the national Program targeted school structures that were considered responsible for the failure of children to succeed at school.

## Concluding remarks

The conducted analysis of interviews with teachers showed that although teachers listed many different reasons for Roma pupils failing at school, they never questioned the merits of the education that school can provide. That is, rephrasing Levitas (2003), the uncomfortable questions of the kind of education system into which pupils were to be included, were not addressed. Participation in the education system was seen to be compulsory, important and rewarding for all children, ignoring possible value conflicts within or at the margins of the system. Even when the existence of such conflicts was acknowledged (“parents do not value the education a school can provide”), schools were not held responsible for addressing this issue. Instead, parents were accused of failing to encourage and motivate children to continue with their education.

The question of a value conflict is easily dismissed as unimportant, arguing that education is the key to labour market success and, hence, to successful integration into society. Yet, such framing of the issue ignores decades of debate on symbolic violence in education and issues of transmitting selected knowledge and dominant cultural norms to all social groups. To be able to acknowledge the importance of this conflict, it might be more useful to look at the education system as one of the *fields*, that is, as “a social arena in which people manoeuvre and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Looking at parents, children, teachers, school administration, national policymakers and others as actors in one field, struggling to achieve their own goals would enable a more critical insight into the school-level practices and national-level policy measures as well as into what is considered to be a blatant ignorance of parents to educate their children. In this case, the three discourses –

disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion – could be analysed not only as framing particular policies, but also as discourses used to silence or marginalise conflicts within the education system.

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## Iškritimas iš mokyklos – nusivylimo, nedalyvavimo ar socialinės atskirties problema? Mokyklos lygmens praktikų dirbant su romų moksleiviais analizė

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**S A N T R A U K A :** Straipsnyje remiamasi Hodgson (1999) atlikta analize, kaip skirtingas ankstyvo iškritimo iš mokyklos priežasčių suvokimas (įvardijamas kaip nusivylimas, nedalyvavimas ir socialinė atskirtis) veda prie skirtingų prevencinių priemonių kūrimo. Straipsnyje konstruojant tyrimo modelį, skirtą analizuoti Lietuvos mokyklose taikomas praktikas su iš ugdymo proceso beiškrentančiais romų (čigonų) moksleiviais, atkreipiamas dėmesys į panašumus tarp Hodgson (1999) pateikto modelio ir Levitas (1998) atliktos socialinės atskirties diskursų (moralinių skurdžių, socialinės integracijos ir persikirstymo) analizės. Šie du analizės instrumentai straipsnyje yra sujungiami, pasiūlant iš dalies naują analizės metodą, kuris yra pritaikomas Lietuvos atvejui. Straipsnio pabaigoje pateikiamas ir kritiškas tokio analizės metodo įvertinimas, atkreipiant dėmesį į kitas švietimo lauko tyrimo galimybes.

**P a g r i n d i n i a i ž o d ž i a i :** PREVENGINĖ POLITIKA, ANKSTYVAS PASITRAUKIMAS  
IŠ UGDYMO PROCESO, ROMŲ MOKSLEIVIAI.