APPROACHING SCHOOL DROPOUT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ITS TRIGGERING PHENOMENA

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Abstract: *School dropout represents one of the current most striking society's problems. In recent years, the number to those who choose to drop out from school has grown considerably, the main causes being the precarious financial situation, bad family examples, low interest in completing studies, lack of confidence in the quality of teaching, etc. The investigative process was carried out in Caraș-Severin County and consisted of quantitative research involving the sociological investigation, the technique used to be the opinion poll, and in order to obtain the data necessary for the study, the instrument used was the questionnaire, applied to a number of 100 people from the rural and urban communities of Caraș-Severin county. Results: the phenomenon of school dropout is continuously increasing, in order to decrease the rate of school dropout, measures will have to be implemented to convince the young population that dropping out is not a real solution for reducing the problems they face. In order for this phenomenon to decrease, the involvement of the authorities and representatives of educational institutions is essential.*

Keywords: school dropout, pupils, teachers, causes, multidisciplinary team.

1. Introduction

School dropout is extremely widespread in the current school environment, and it is a major problem of the Romanian education system, but also a problem at the level of the entire society, because leaving school early leads to social exclusion and marginalization.

According to the literature, school dropout means school pupils and students not attending school, regardless of culture, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, social and financial status. Children at risk of dropping out of school are deprived of the opportunity that the educational institution brings to the formation of the future adult, both personally and professionally. (Ekstrand, 2015 :459).

In the author's conception (Neamțu, 2003: 199) "school dropout is defined as definitive evasion behaviour that consists in ceasing school attendance, leaving the educational system, regardless of the level reached, before obtaining a qualification or complete professional training or before the end of the cycle of studies started. Those who drop out of school are no longer readmitted to the same educational institution and are not enrolled in an alternative schooling program".

2. Causes of school dropout

The causes of dropping out from school are diverse and can be generated by:

1. *Single-parent families*, but also tragedies that involve an increased level of stress in the child's life are factors in decisions regarding school dropout.
2. *Material situation of the family of origin* represents a risk or protection factor in the pupil's adaptation to the school environment.
3. *Defective relationship* with the education system, with the teaching staff, the group of pupils, the lack of adaptation to the school environment due to the reduced motivation to

go to classes caused by the bullying received - are elements of the vicious circle that makes up the reasons for dropping out of school. (Cace, 2010: 28)

4. *Pupil's environment*, alcohol and tobacco consumption are risk factors that can be causes of school dropout. Adolescent age represents an important threshold in the continuation of studies, because pupils face contradictory feelings, the interest being placed on the activities carried out within the entourage, on adolescent relationships and less on educational ones. (Bonea, 2019: 387-403)

5. *The pupil's inhibitions, the frustrations accumulated within the family*, the group of pupils, the wrong school orientation, the lack of emotional and moral support from the teaching staff, the low grades obtained, corrections and repetition outline the reasons for dropping out of school.

6. *School phobia*, school pupil and student personality, depression and introversion are factors that lower academic performance.

7. *The ranking of pupils according to their academic performance* and the marginalization of those who do not rise to the level of the collective is a reason for dropping out of studies.

8. *Family pressure for obtaining maximum results* leads over time to frustrations and traumatic experiences, the pupil is attracted to vices, destructive entourages to overcome the desires of the members (Manoil, 2019: 350-354).

3. Concrete measures to prevent and combat school dropout

Considering the multitude of causes that determine school dropout, a solution to reduce this phenomenon would be the implementation of strategies to prevent and combat this phenomenon. There are many aspects that make school dropout a difficult problem to solve.

Dropout prevention has certain limits. No matter how well thought out and scientifically based prevention may be, the limits appear as a result of the many phenomena that influence this phenomenon through their interaction. Drawing the analogy between school dropout and predelinquency, the effectiveness of preventive action is undermined by internal limits and external limits.

An effective intervention of teaching staff through the very educational process they carry out with children, can be a means of preventing school dropout through its intervention at the level of individual, family, school risk factors, those determined by the environment of origin.

An important aspect of school dropout prevention is the creation of special success situations for school difficulties, because success and rewards develop the pupil's initiatives and increase his confidence in his own possibilities. The teaching staff can only be the promoter of programs whose purpose is to prevent and combat school dropout.

Another element in combating school dropout is represented by the participation of all children in the educational program, according to their respective strengths and possibilities. The starting point is the premise that every child has value, uniqueness and has a learning potential, regardless of his or her social needs. "For a better prevention of school dropout, the skills and needs of each child integrated into the education system, whether of a different religion or ethnicity than the rest of the children, must be known" (Țoc, 2018: 39).

4. The role of the multidisciplinary team in preventing school dropout

Early detection of cases exhibiting a risk of school dropout is the main solution that can improve the phenomenon. The social worker, the educational counsellor, the psychologist, but also the teaching staff with higher training can manage to recognize the early signs of school dropout and establish an individual and personalized intervention plan to reduce the problem.

Combating and preventing the phenomenon of early school leaving is a topical issue for both specialists and the authorities in Romania and at the level of the European Union.

The well-being of the person and human rights present the importance of equal opportunities for any child in terms of completing compulsory studies, but the reality presents

the ethnic and genetic characteristics of the individual which are discriminatory factors favouring school dropout. Ensuring a future for people in society, assuring compliance with the non-discriminatory principle, but also the moral involvement of institutions are facilitating agents in maximizing efforts to support pupils to have an equal chance at schooling. (Bridgeland, 2006).

In order to combat school dropout, pupils must adapt to the educational requirements, and teachers and their families must provide moral support to help manage risk situations.

Young people who wanted to attend vocational school and were forced to enrol in high school education, later abandoned it due to the demand, requirements and inconsistencies between the pupils' desire and what they receive from an educational and less professional point of view. The main reason given by high school students for dropping out of high school is based on the heavy tasks they receive and the lack of intellectual skills needed to complete them. The difference between school students with intellectual skills and those who want a job must be understood by the Romanian state. Combating the dropout rate can focus on giving importance to the formation of vocational schools, which train professional workers in certain fields. In this case, attending high school and completing secondary education and then, at the young person's desire, the higher ones, can only be focused on those school students who want it, without any obligation (Bonea, 2019: 394-398)

A basic and continuous training of teachers is necessary to be able to prevent and combat the phenomenon of school dropout. Children show certain symptoms in different situations, such as: juvenile delinquency, decreased motivation, involvement and school performance, they may be introverted or have comprehension problems. The attention of the teaching staff must be focused on the pupil's problems and symptoms, in order to succeed, together with the specialists in the field of education, psychology and social assistance, in solving the specific needs. Family problems, social marginalization, prejudice and discrimination, insufficient income are effects that lead to school dropout, effects that a well-trained teacher must observe early (Bonea, 2019: 387-394)

The Member States of the European Union must implement public policies to prevent and combat early school leaving in order to reach the objective of reducing school dropout below 10%. Through prevention, Member States must facilitate the access of school pupils and students to educational institutions equally, without discrimination and social stigmatization. The implementation of programs that want to train teachers for the purpose of exclusively identifying and supporting pupils at risk of dropping out of school is another way of intervention through which the goal is to be achieved. Ensuring the quality standards of Romanian education, the appropriate endowment of schools, the implementation of European projects for the rehabilitation of rural schools, but also the observance of hygiene norms and the educational requirements of children, regardless of their status, is another solution that the Ministry of Education wants to implement (Ministry of Labour, 2014)

Teacher training should include sections on how to address and prevent school dropout. In 2015, the Government of Romania approved the Strategy regarding the reduction of early school dropout, which includes measures to be implemented by 2020 to combat school dropout. Through this strategy, Romania had as its main objective to reduce the dropout rate from 17.3% in 2013 to 11.3% in 2020. Romania acknowledged the problem of school dropout and wants solutions to prevent and combat it, but this solution and these solutions must be implemented from the beginning of the pupil's life. Kindergarten is the first environment in which the child is integrated from an early age (Crosnoe, Crumb : 2007:267-282)

Providing a permanent and faithful feedback to school pupils and students is aimed at maintaining their involvement in the educational process, preserving curiosity and the desire to attend school, the final objective being the decrease in the school dropout rate. The focus of the educational unit on the pupils' needs, on their development and less on teaching and memorization is a sustainable solution that can bring positive effects in the pupils' lives. (Weerman, 2010: 339-355)

In order to prevent school dropout, educational institutions must train teachers so that they focus on each student or pupil's inclinations to achieve performance in one or more subjects for which he or he shows curiosity and passion. The support offered by the teaching staff must be focused on helping the pupils and students towards a correct orientation towards certain fields of study, the emphasis being on the training of high-performing pupils in the field in which they possess skills and abilities and less on the training of all pupils, regardless of their passions, skills, fields only with the aim being promoted to the next grade. Eliminating the classic and rigid education system can represent a starting point in combating school dropout. (Dianda, 2008)
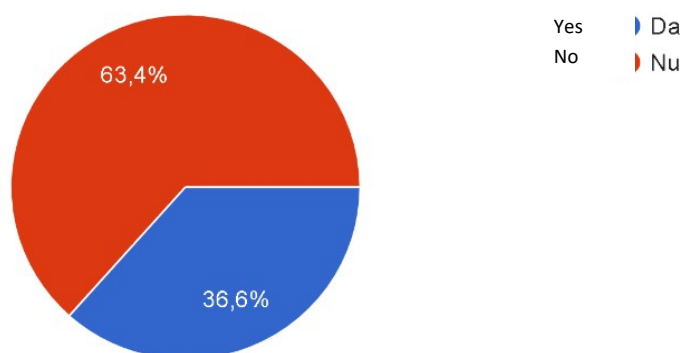
4. Applied research
The investigative approach was represented by a quantitative research. The quantitative survey involved the sociological investigation, the technique used being the opinion poll, and to obtain the data necessary for the study, the instrument was the questionnaire, applied to a number of 100 people from the rural and urban communities of Caraș-Severin county. *The purpose* of this research is to identify cases of school dropout and establish the causes that determined this phenomenon, for each individual, but especially to identify the pupils and students who are prone to this phenomenon. *The general objective* of the research is to highlight the main causes that lead to school dropout, how poverty influences the decisions made by the child.

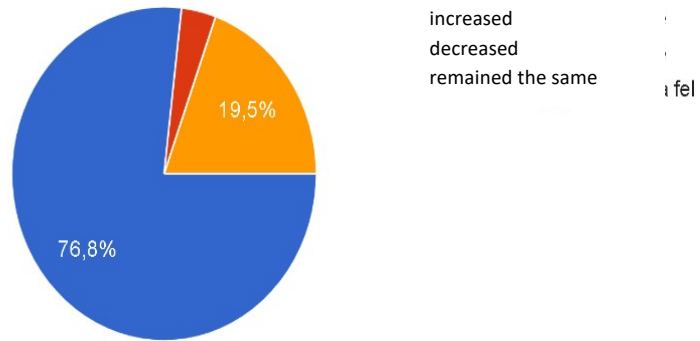**5. Data analysis and interpretation**
In order to reach the proposed objectives, the questions of the questionnaire were aimed at determining the population's perception regarding the phenomenon of school dropout in Romania. The results obtained following the centralization of the answers have the following relevance:

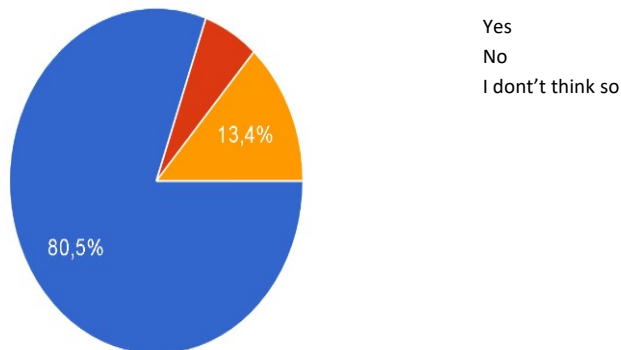**Figure 1 The focus on education in Romania**

Analysing the graph, we can see that 63.4% of the people surveyed believe that emphasis is placed on education in our country, only 36.6% of those surveyed gave a negative answer.

Figure 2 School dropout rate in Romania

increased
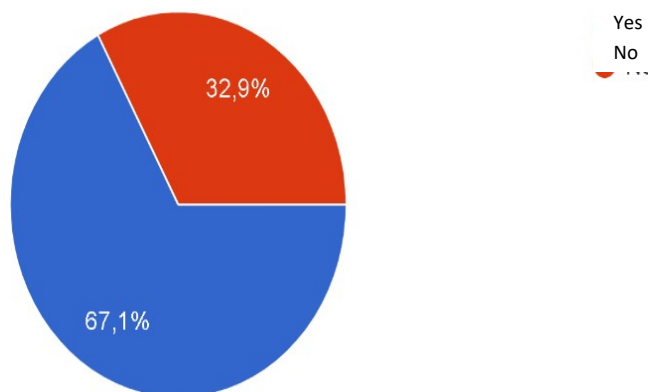decreased
remained the same   fel

19,5%

76,8%

76.8% of the people surveyed believe that the school dropout rate is on an upward curve, 19.5% conclude that it has remained the same, and 3.7% agree that the school dropout rate is decreasing.

Figure 3 Predisposition of children from disorganized families to school dropout

Yes
No
I dont't think so

13,4%

80,5%

80.5% of the respondents opted for the Yes option, because in their opinion children from disorganized families are prone to dropping out of school. 13.4% of the subjects chose the option I don't believe, and 6.1% of them said that it is not because of disorganized families that they are prone to drop out of school.

Figure 4 The importance of the counsellor in preventing school dropout

Yes
No

32,9%

67,1%

The people surveyed answered the question related to the *importance of the counsellor in preventing school dropout,* as follows: 67.1% considered that the school counsellor plays an important part in preventing school dropout, and 32.9% concluded that he does not have an important role in combating school dropout.

6. Research conclusions

The results of the present study demonstrate that the school dropout rate is on the rise, and this is due to the low importance that pupils and young people attach to education, many of them believing that it will not help them much in the future. From the applied research, it emerges that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with a poor financial situation, as well as children from disorganized families, who, in the absence of worthy role models, choose to drop out of school are much more prone to drop out , considering this as normality.

An important aspect that the present study promotes is the importance of counselling among children and adolescents. The role of the school counsellor is a particularly important one, because by monitoring the pupils' situation, he can identify the most vulnerable , those who register low academic performance, who encounter difficulties in adapting and learning. Early identification of these children can prevent school dropout. Therefore, school dropout in our country is an alarming phenomenon, which can be prevented by involving several social stakeholders, teachers, parent , school counsellors etc.

7. General conclusions:

Dropping out of school has major implications on the personal development of the individual, and short-, medium- and long-term consequences on human resources and the development of communities in general.

The improvement of this phenomenon undoubtedly depends on the measures that the school will adopt. The teaching staff, through their personal input, contributes to making the school an attractive environment, thus reducing the school dropout rate. In order to decrease the number of those who drop out of school, it is necessary to use teaching methods and techniques aimed at triggering the motivation to learn, both at the micro-social and individual level. Teachers can stimulate in pupils the development of empathic skills and the feeling of belonging to the group. Also, the involvement of parents is essential, they should carefully monitor the school situation of their children, communicate permanently with the teaching staff, pay attention to the needs of the children, spend time with them, follow the circles that the children frequent. Children who exhibit an inappropriate behaviour in the school environment, have low learning outcomes, they are introvert, apathetic, they need specialized support to be able to overcome crisis situations. Children and youth counselling is vital because the school counsellor may identify the causes that generate certain behaviours of school pupils and students, and can offer the support that children and young people need . For the counselling sessions to be successful school pupils and students to show significant progress, will, motivation, involvement and flexibility are needed, both from the part of the school pupils and students, as well as from the part of parents. Therefore, the multidisciplinary team from educational institutions, together with families and children and youth, can contribute to the reduction of the school dropout phenomenon.

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