



“There is no  
difference, but the  
state should pay us  
more”: Czech  
Teachers in the  
Ethnically Diverse  
Classroom

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# Research Questions

- What are the policies considering education of ethnic minority pupils in the Czech Republic?
- How do the teachers reflect the pedagogical process in ethnically diversified classrooms? Do they consider the official education policies as sufficient?
- What role does the ethnicity play in everyday classroom interactions?

# Ethnic Diversity in Czech Education System

- „Old“ Roma VERSUS „new“ ethnicities migrating into Czech Republic
- Roma pupils educated in segregated schools VERSUS new ethnic minorities educated in public elementary schools
- How does the czech education system cope with new kind of diversities?

# Ethnicity in Official Documents

- **1)** Strong emphasis on teacher's activity and responsibility in managing ethnic diversity in schools
  
- **2)** „Messy“ and contested category of socially disadvantaged pupils

# 1) Encouraging Teachers in Official Documents

- „To meet the needs of children with social disadvantage or from different social and cultural background (including Roma children) and of their parents, primarily **the teachers** have to create friendly and accepting environment. In pedagogical process it is important to enhance the sense of belonging and mutual respect. **Teachers** should pay high attention to the processes of social exclusion in classroom collectives and intervene in such a way to prevent them.“ (Methodical Recommendation, *Equal Opportunities in Education of Socially Disadvantaged Pupils*, 28:1)

## No Need for Special Teaching Methods

„**Researcher:** If you should summarize the differences in educating ethnically homogenous and heterogeneous classroom what would you mention?

**Teacher 1:** I would not find any difference in my practice. Really not. Except the usage of English language.

**Teacher 2:** If there is any language problem it is ...

**Teacher 1:** .... Completely the same.“

„**Researcher:** Do you think are there some special requirements for you to teach in ethnically diverse classrooms?

**Teacher:** Ehm, maybe there should be some special requirements in teaching Czech language but I have not noticed yet. Sometimes I explain something to somebody but it is not happening exclusively with Russian pupils. I would not even mention that. (...) So we were not involved in extra-tutoring of Czech language. They learn it somewhere else. They paid for private language tutoring or courses.“

## No Need for Special Strategies

**Researcher:** Does your school use some strategy to educate minority pupils?

**All teachers:** Rather not.

**Teacher 1:** I would say everybody has some individual strategy. It depends on the teacher's character. How each of us copes with them.

**Researcher:** Do you think it makes sense to have a strategy?

**Teacher 1:** Now I see, we have a common strategy – equal opportunities, right? (...)

**Teacher2:** What a strategy could be? I do not know what to look for.

**Researcher:** Maybe you do not need any.

**Teacher 2:** No, well let's talk about what could be a strategy.

**Teacher 3:** No idea.

**Teacher 2:** Some prospect, some goal? What is strategy?

**Teacher 1:** Evident rules and equal access – this is strategy.

# Elusive and Invisible Ethnicity - Lack of Recognition

- „**Teacher:** It does not matter if the pupil is Roma, Czech, Vietnamese or whatever.“
- „**Teacher:** Our children become used to minority pupils as newcomers because it is happening from the first grade. They accept them fully equally – in the same way, they accept our pupils who move from neighboring villages. This is not a problem at all.



## 2) Socially Disadvantaged Pupils as „Messy“ Category

- Minority pupils →→→ Pupils with special needs →→→  
Socially disadvantaged pupils
- Social disadvantage in the Education Act: a) family background with low socio-economic status, b) ordered institutional upbringing, c) asylum-seeker status
- Social disadvantage in the Public Note: pupil disadvantaged by insufficient knowledge of instruction language

## 2) Social Disadvantage from the Teacher's Perspective

**Researcher:** Why do you think that minority pupils are socially disadvantaged? Why should we consider them as disadvantaged?

**Teacher:** I would not take it like that. According to me they are not more disadvantaged by a language barrier. I do not treat them differently I do not think that if they speak Czech somebody look at them differently or that they are disadvantaged. On the contrary some pupils want to be their friends because it is interesting for them. I do not know how it is in the ordinary life but in the education system if they speak Czech there is no problem in pupils relations. (...)

**Researcher:** Does it make sense to talk about social disadvantage considering minority pupils? What do you imagine under this term?

**Teacher:** I would not see the connection.

**Researcher:** Do you think it does not necessarily relate to each other?

**Teacher:** No, it is not like that. I do not think it is connected. But maybe it is a question of attitude.

## 2) Socially Disadvantaged Pupils as a „Messy“ Category

- Ambivalent nature of this category – it stigmatizes Roma pupils and at the same time it makes other minority pupils invisible
- The category of social disadvantage is especially intended to cover socially and economically deprived conditions in which most of Roma children are raised
- Schools refuse to use this category to register vulnerable groups of pupils

# Summary

- Ethnicity – invisible but support needed
  - Invisible migrant ethnicity x reified Roma ethnicity
  - Paralel with perception of gender in the classroom
- humanist philosophy accent on individual