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School dropout - a social problem in Romania

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Abstract

With this work we want to draw attention to a social problem that manifests itself with an increasingly strong intensity from year to year in Romania, namely school dropout problem, mainly due to deepening poverty (especially in rural areas but not only). In the elaboration of this work we started from processing and interpretation of statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics and the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection. Analysis of these data revealed that school dropout occurs from secondary education to the post high school and university levels. Develop programs, policies and actions to combat social problems is a goal of social assistance system with implications at the micro and macroeconomic level.

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1. Main text

Before analyzing the school dropout problem in Romania, particularly important social issue, we consider it necessary to explain the structure of the national education system.

Educational level is the stage of making elementary education training, middle or high, according to educational programs. In Romania, the education system is structured like following (NIS, 2014):

1. Pre-school education, the first stage of organized training in education includes children aged 3-6 years and over. As a type of unit it works: kindergartens with extended hours; kindergartens with weekly program; kindergartens with normal; Special kindergartens.

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2. Primary education - education level 1, whose main function is to provide the basic elements of education, with tuition during of four years (grades I-IV); includes children aged 7-10 years and works only as a form of day classes; part of the type of compulsory education;

3. Secondary education - lower secondary education level 2, based on at least four years of training (classes V-VIII) includes pupils aged 11 to 14 years; the type belongs to compulsory education. Works with living forms of education and low frequency.

4. Special education primary of level 1 and secondary (lower secondary) level 2 includes schools where are enrolled children and young people with physical, sensory and intellectual deficiencies for training, educating, correcting deficiencies according to the nature and degree of deficiency and their integration in the active life.

5. Upper secondary education - high school level 3 - lasts 4-5 years of schooling (classes IX-XII / XIII) and provides specialized education of young people aged 15-18 years.

6. Upper secondary education - level 3 vocational qualification - lasts 1-4 years and covers schooling for young people aged 15-18 years. Works with the following types of units: vocational schools (arts and crafts); apprenticeship education; special vocational schools (schools of arts and crafts) special schools of reeducation.

7. Post-secondary education - post-secondary, non-equivalent of the first university level, Level 4 - lasts 2-3 years and covers tuition for young people aged 19 to 21 years. This level of education works with the following types of units: post-secondary schools; foremen schools; Special post-secondary schools.

8. Higher education (tertiary) is level 5, the condition of admission is the completion of upper secondary education. University education is organized as follows: short-term (the period of study is three years) and long term (the period of study is 4-6 years).

9. postgraduate education - education is appropriate to level 6, in which the condition for admission is completion of tertiary education.

Theme of school dropout is one of maximum actuality for romanian educational system through high levels registered by this indicator. According to statistical data and previous research on this issue the highest values of school dropout are recorded when passing from middle school to high school (high school and elementary school).

School dropouts represents the final evasion behavior consisting in ending school attendance, leaving the educational system, regardless of the level reached before obtaining a full qualification or complete professional training or before to end of study began. (Voicu, 2009)

Among all types of school dropout, early school leaving is both an individual problem and of whole society, as it has long term negative effects on social development and economic growth. Innovation and economic growth are based on a qualified workforce. Reducing the average rate of early school leaving by one percentage point would give the economy each year, nearly half a million of young qualified potential employees extra. (Gyon, 2011)

There are many reasons why some young people drop out before completion of studies education: learning difficulties, social problems or lack of motivation, guidance or support. Low levels of education not only have serious consequences for young people concerned, but implies inefficient use of educational expenses, in addition, given current demographic changes, namely aging population, European countries can not afford the waste of talent.

Factors determining giving up education through school dropout can be divided into three different categories: factors in the pupil and family; factors in the community; factors at the school level (Apostu, 2012; Voicu, 2009).

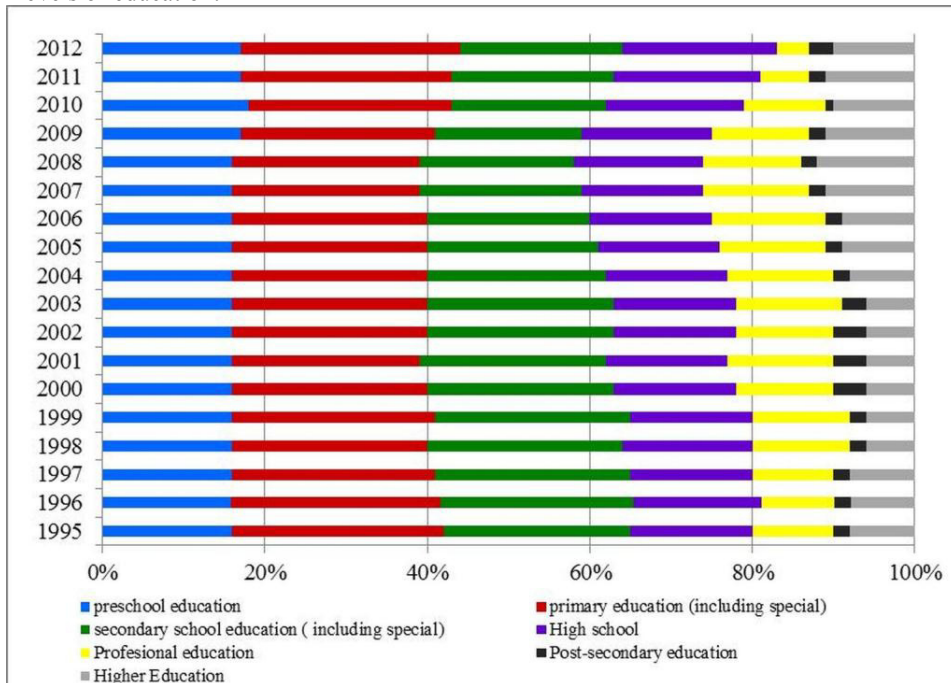
a) factors at the pupil and family level: this category includes those specific elements related to the individual particularities of pupil (health, family income, educational model offered by parents and siblings). The family is the first space education and training of the child, putting here the foundation of what the child becomes, most often, pupils who come to abandon education come from families in which parents have no more than eight classes.

b) factors at the community level: the most important factors in this category are access to employment, early marriage rule and the emergence of a child. These factors are a characteristic of rural communities, where young people are a predecessor example, and teachers do not interact with parents, and lack of communication between them contribute to increased risk of school dropping out.

c) factors at the school level: this category includes not attending kindergarten, poor school performance or repeated grade repetition. Teachers can play an important role in preventing early school leaving, because they are constantly in contact with pupils, identify and diagnose their problems and can attract the attention of authorities or non-governmental organizations competent to intervene when needed.

At the level of Romanian education system, pupils are declared in school dropout and removed from school records after three years of not attending studies, during which the pupil has time to resume and continue their studies. This approach has a number of limitations for understanding real phenomena, and to develop intervention systems to action to prevent and combat early school dropout (Mihalache, 2011).

An important indicator on the analysis of school dropout is the percentage of the school population and its effectiveness on levels of education.



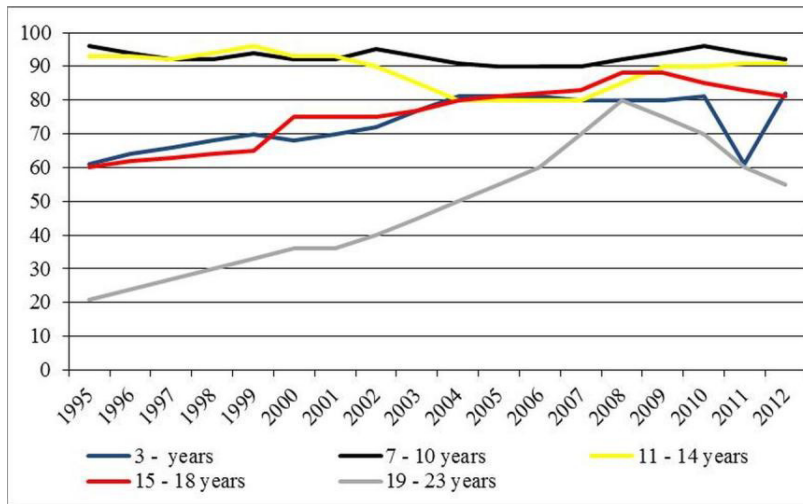
Source: Own calculations based on statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics 2005 – 2012

Fig. 1 The percentage of the school population by level of education

Analysis of statistical data regarding the percentage of the school population for the period 1995 - 2012 reveals the following:

- preschool population share remained relatively constant;
- percentage of pupils enrolled in primary education, including special was in the range 18-42%, with reductions between 2007-2010;
- percentage of pupils in secondary education of reductions between 2004 - 2012;
- percentage of pupils in secondary education has been relatively constant between 1995 - 2005, registering then slightly increases;
- the percentage of pupils in vocational schools has decreased significantly, especially due to the reorganization of the level of education and dissolution of most vocational schools;
- the share of pupils in post-secondary education remained constant, being reduced;
- the number of pupils registered an upward trend, registering significant increases between 2008-2012.

Rate of enrollment in education is the total number of pupils of a certain age group, regardless of the education level in which they are included, as a percentage ratio of total population in the same age group.

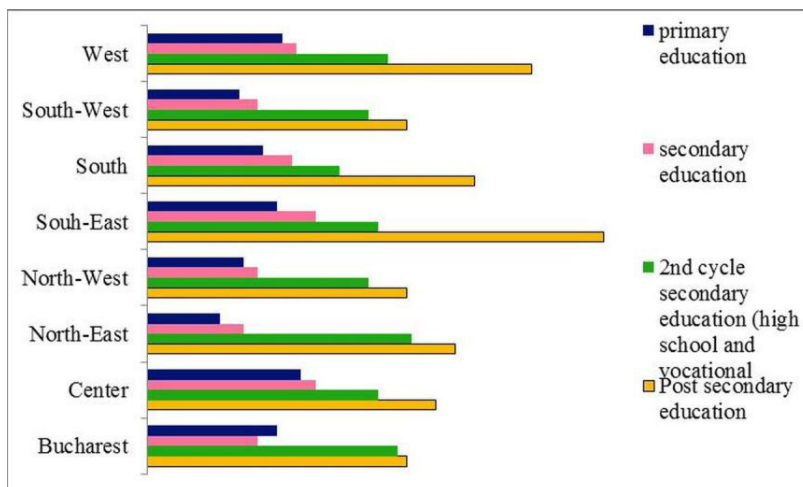


Source: Own calculations based on statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics 2005 – 2012

Fig. 2. Rate of enrollment in education by age groups

Analysis of statistical data on the degree of inclusion in education has allowed us to develop the following points of view for the period 1995 - 2012:

- relating to age group 3-6 years analyzed indicator was registered as a positive trend between 1995 to 2003, then remained relatively constant until 2010; 2011 has registered a significant decrease followed by a return in 2012;
- age group 7-10 years is maintained relatively constant, with slight _;
- age group 11-14 years was relatively constant between 1995-2001, after that, registering a significant decline until 2009, when it registered a slight increase, but with no return to the 1995 level; in this age group was recorded the first attempts of school dropout;
- age group 15-18 years are noted significant oscillations percentage of pupils in this group who are enrolled in the education of 60-80%, with decreases after 2009
- age group 19-23 years have seen a strong upward trend in the years 2008, significant decreases from year to year until 2012



Source: Own calculations based on statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics 2005 – 2012

Fig. 3. School dropout rate by region, 2012

School dropout is different by development regions, because they record different degrees of economic development, which entails varying degrees of poverty.

Analysis on early school dropout on education levels, on each region of development has allowed us to summarize the following:

- the highest level of dropout in primary education was in the Central region and lowest in the North - East;
- for secondary education the highest school dropout value was recorded in the South-East and Centre, and the lowest value in the North - East;
- for secondary cycle two the highest dropout value was recorded in the North - East and Bucharest Ilfov and the lowest value in the South - Muntenia;
- for post-secondary education the highest school dropout value is recorded in the South - Eastern Europe, and the lowest value is recorded by the North - West.

Table 1 wishes to present the school dropout rate in primary and secondary education , according to the area of school children. This table aims to highlight the fact that males recorded a higher rate of dropout than females .

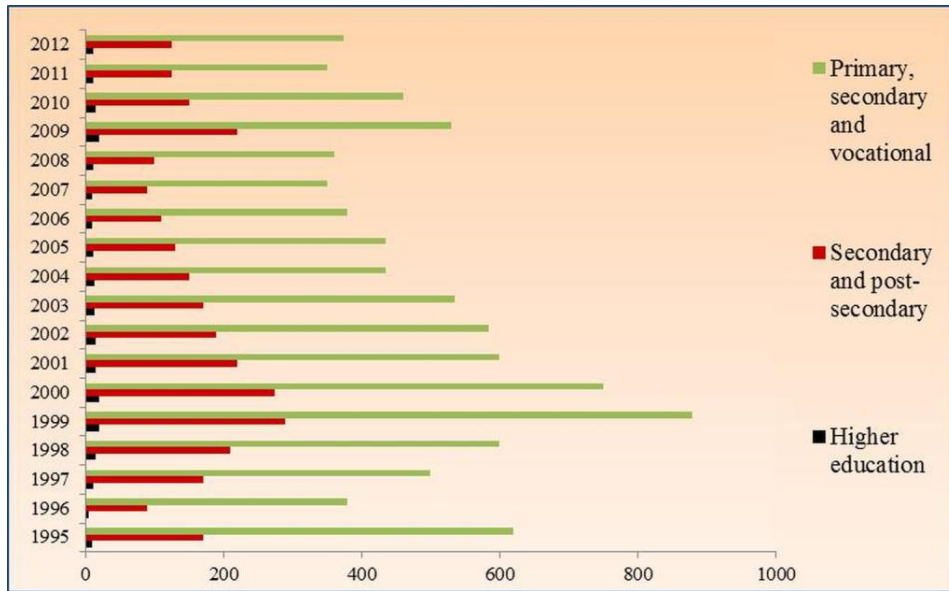
Table 1. School dropout rate in primary and secondary education, by sex and area of residence

School year / residence	area of	Primary education		Secondary education	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
2005/2006	Urban	1,8	1,4	2,3	1,6
	Rural	1,5	1,3	2,3	2,0
2007/2008	Urban	1,8	1,3	2,2	1,5
	Rural	2,1	1,8	2,8	2,4
2011/2012	Urban	1,6	1,3	1,8	1,3
	Rural	1,6	1,3	1,8	1,8

Source: Own calculations based on statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics 2005 - 2012

School dropout rate from primary school is lower than the corresponding secondary education; more boys than girls drop out primary school. On residential area higher values dropout in primary and in urban areas in disadvantaged neighborhoods where the number of cases of abandonment reaches alarming levels each year.

In middle school school dropout rates values are consistently higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. Data analysis reveals significant increases in secondary school dropout, especially girls in rural areas (Apostu, 2012).



Source: Own calculations based on statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics 2005 - 2012

Fig. 4 Registered unemployed by level of training

Because the school dropout occurs more frequently in primary, secondary and post-secondary and registered unemployment by level of education is higher for this level of training, for the entire period 1995 - 2012, on the opposite pole being unemployed university graduates.

2. Conclusion

We believe that the main causes of school dropout on all levels of education in both areas of residence are high absenteeism, learning difficulties, poor school performance and low motivation of pupils for school activities. The main challenges that a student with high risk of dropping out faces are: family income to subsistence level, low parental education, lack of minimum conditions for home study, broken families or single parents.

Romanian educational system after 2000 recorded an increase in cases of pupils who drop out of school courses more frequent, which requires the identification and implementation at national level of alternative systems of action to prevent and combat early school leaving, particularly systems useful for "health" of society. One such possible alternative system must consider issues including supporting families and reducing major risk areas where school dropout phenomenon far exceeds the national average.

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