Needs Assessment of the Educators of Roma in Greece in order to improve their compatibility with Roma learners

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Abstract

In the education of special groups (Roma, immigrants etc.), the compatibility between educator and learners directly affects the efficiency and the outcomes of the educational programs. This article assesses the type and the level of compatibility between educators and Roma learners in Greece, in order to build an appropriate curriculum for the e-education of educators. The findings suggest that educators have limited knowledge on special characteristics of Roma and that in their vast majority their attitudes towards Roma are dominated by stereotypes and prejudices. In order to improve the compatibility of educators with Roma learners, fostering of their cognitive and affective development is needed.

Key words: Roma; needs assessment; teacher education; Greece

The needs assessment was carried out in Greece in 2008

1. Introduction

In modern multicultural society, diversity is a principal characteristic of all the expressions of life, with the education area unquestionably included. *Educators* and l*earners* of different cultural backgrounds inevitably meet and interact in educational procedures (Brookfield 1986; Knowles 1998; Mezirow 1991; Rogers 2007). In multicultural education it is realized that the teacher plays a major role in empowering or dis-empowering students in the classroom and it is very important to improve teachers' capacity if equal education for all students is to be achieved (Jackson 2007; Nieto 2003; Sleeter and Grant 1991; Villegas 2002). This becomes even more important for educators addressing learners from special groups. In using the term *special group* we refer to the social group whose characteristics (social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, physical etc.) cause social exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization, to its members (i.e. immigrants, Roma, repatriated-refugees, prisoners/ex-cons, ex-addicts, persons with special needs) (Pavlis-Korres 2007).

Additionally, the use of new technologies in education is rapidly increasing and provides further potential for education, facilitating learning and training (Beatty 2002; Conceicao 2006; Friesen 2005; Sadler-Smith and Smith, 2004; Ziegahn 2001).

An essential step for the development of educational material is a needs assessment of the educators in order to meet the determined educational objectives by building the appropriate curriculum. The importance of needs assessment to educational planning is well established in literature (Caffarella 2002; Cross 1983; Kaufman 1979; Moseley and Heaney 1994; Sork and Caffarella 1989; Young 1994, 1996; Witkin 1984). This paper deals with the needs assessment of the educators of Roma[1] in Greece; it analyses the current condition (skills, knowledge and

attitudes of the educators) in comparison with the desired one, in order to plan, design and develop appropriate educational material for them.

2. Related Literature

2.1. Educators of special groups

There has been growing debate about the best way to face the educational challenge of learners' diversity (Coballes-Vega 1992). Some researchers (Wilson 1990) have raised questions about the efficacy of teacher education programs attempting to deal with learner diversity and exploring changes in prospective teachers' roles. However, other researchers (Banks and Banks 1989; Bennett 1990; Gay 2000; Irvine 2003; Sleeter and Grant 1991; Villegas and Lucas 2002) not only support teachers' educational programs but they have also recommended the content that must be included in the teachers' education curriculum.

For the effective education of educators of special groups, as educators are adults, the principles of Adult Education must be followed in the design and development of the educational material, taking into account the characteristics of adults as learners, the effective ways through which adults learn and the role of the educator of adults (Cranton 2000; Jarvis, 1995, Knowles, 1984, Rogers 2007, Jackson and Caffarella 1994).

Educators of special groups must acquire sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of the special group they have to deal with (Gay 2000; Howard 1999; Irvine 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1991). It is equally important that they become aware of their own attitudes towards the group, they reflect critically on these attitudes, and seek transformation and improvement (Allport 1982;

Cranton 1994; Goffman 1963; General Secretariat of Adults' Education, Greek Ministry of Education (G.S.A.E.) 1999; Irvine 2003; Quicke, Beasley and Morrison 1990; Ziegahn 2001).

Therefore, fostering the cognitive as well as the affective development of the educators constitutes the foundation of the content of the educational material which will be targeted at the educators of special groups.

2.2. Compatibility between educator and learner

Educators are not a homogenous group as they have different social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and physical profiles which influence their work in the classroom (Gay 2000; Irvine 2003; Ndura 2006). The educational needs of each educator may vary considerably, even if they have a common educational background or they are teaching the same subject. Some researchers (Bennett 1990; First and Carrera 1988) have focused on the miscues which occur between teachers and students based on misinterpretations, and generalizations, made about their respective cultural background.

There are many terms attempting to describe a variety of effective teaching approaches such as: culturally responsive, culturally responsible, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally compatible, and culturally relevant. All these terms indicate that teachers should be responsive to their students by incorporating elements of students' culture into their teaching. In fact, there is general agreement that teachers should be responsive to all to all learners and the learners' social environment (Cooper 1993; Cruickshank 1990; Irvine 2003; Wittrock 1974). Irvine (2003) also, refers to the phenomenon of *lack of cultural synchronization* when the cultures of African Americans and other students of color are different to that of the teacher and as a result are often disregarded. In other words, educators must be *compatible* with their learners in order to maximize the outcome of the educational procedure. The type and level of *compatibility* of each educator with their learners must be assessed and improved.

With the term compatibility we refer to the level of knowledge and acceptance of, and positive attitude towards, the special group on the part of the educator. The type of compatibility between educators of Special Groups and the respective learners varies in relation with the parameters that define the specific special group itself. These parameters can be social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic or physical. The values for each type of the compatibility are: very low, low, medium, high, and very high. For example a Rom educator has high cultural, linguistic and ethnic compatibility with a Roma group that he is going to teach, in contrast with a non-Rom educator who has never before met a Rom and he is going to teach the same group, the values for whom/her are very low (Pavlis-Korres 2007).

The higher the level of compatibility between educator and learner, the more efficient their approach to the special group will be - regardless of the subject the educator is teaching. The higher the level of compatibility between educator and learner, the more their quality as an educator is improved, a factor which –as many researchers support (Irvine 2003, Wenglinsky,2000, Darling-Hammond,1999)- has a positive influence the success of their learners.

3. The focus, the method and the sample of the needs assessment

The needs assessment was conducted in the framework of a case study in order to develop pilot e-learning material for educators of Roma in Greece. The aim was to collect information concerning the compatibility of educators with learners. The type and level of compatibility dictates the content of the educational material to be produced. The needs assessment also dealt with the learning profiles of the educators (e.g. learning styles, learning

approaches) which will define the presentation of the educational material as well as the selection of the e-learning management system which will be used (Pavlis-Korres et al. 2008), but this is beyond the object of this paper.

Needs assessment can take a variety of forms based on the set of specific purposes and in a specific context. According to Bohnen (1988) the following three variables must be defined in order to effectively conduct the needs assessment: the *focus*, the *method* and the *sample*.

In the case of this article the *focus* was to define the type and the level of compatibility between educators and learners (Roma), which identifies the educational needs of the educators in order to provide them with effective educational material for their e-education. The elements that constitute the type and the level of the compatibility between educators and learners, which were estimated and measured through the questionnaire, were:

- Educators' knowledge of the characteristics of the target group of Roma (ethnic, cultural, linguistic, social)
- Assessment of the educators own stereotypes, prejudices and attitudes towards Roma and other special groups in Greece.

The method which has been used for the collection of the information was a questionnaire which was completed by the educators during individual or group meetings with the researchers (Bell 1993; Javeau 1978; Henerson et al. 1987). In the design of the questionnaire many techniques based on social relations research methods have been used (Bell 1993; Cohen and Manion 1994; Javeau 1978; Kidder 1981; Henerson et al. 1987)) such as Likert-type scale, Gutman's technique, Bogardus Social Distance Scale. Closed and open-ended questions were used, depending on the aim of each question. The purpose of the questionnaire was to measure

knowledge and attitudes in a qualitative manner. As the educator's knowledge of, and attitudes towards, special groups (specifically in relation to Roma) are interrelated, many questions were simultaneously estimating knowledge and attitudes. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences has been used for the data analysis.

The *sample* (information oriented selection) (Flyvbjerg 2006) consisted of 30 educators, half of which will participate in the pilot implementation of the educational material. Sixteen of the educators had already had some experience working with Roma, in this paper we shall refer to them as *in-service* educators. The sample may seem limited at first sight, however it should be noted that the total number of educators of Roma in Greece is very small. At the time of the research there was only one national educating program run by the University of Thessaly, Greece (Integration of Gypsy children in School (2006-2008)) in 8 prefectures in Greece. Ten of our in-service respondents were the vast majority (10 out of 13) of the educators who participated in the above educational program in Attica. The remaining six of in-service educators formed the whole staff who worked in a local program implemented in the Health Center for Roma in the Municipality of Tyrnavos in Thessaly. All of the in-service educators were selected as a representative sample of educators participating in national and local programs addressed to Roma, through which they would be trained on Roma issues. The remaining 14 respondents are a typical sample of educators who do not have any special training or experience of working with Roma, but they are prospective educators who, upon qualification, could have Roma children among their pupils. We shall refer to them as *pre-service* educators. All 14 of them are undergraduate students in the Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Greece. The students of The Nursery Education Department were chosen because they will become the first educators that the Roma children will experience. It was also crucial to detect possible differences in educational needs between pre-service and in-service educators so that these could be taken into account in the design of the educational material.

The needs assessment was conducted in March 2008.

4. Roma in Greece – Some sociological features

In order to understand better the context within which the education of Roma is taking place, the following important sociological features of Roma in Greece, as these have been derived from studies and research (Liegois 1987; Pavlis-Korres and Sideri 1990; Vassiliadou and Pavlis-Korres 1996; Papakonstantinou et al. 1997-1999), are presented:

☐ Roma have more than one of the characteristics which define a social group as special:

- their own oral language "romani"
- their own culture
- common ethnic origin
- their social and educational status in Greek society is primarily specified by social exclusion
- the Greek society carries stereotypes and prejudices towards gypsies

☐ The extended family which is the core of the Roma social and economic life is highly valued by the traditional Roma.

☐ Both men and women often marry in very young age and virginity is essential in unmarried women.

☐ Work patterns of Roma are self-employment and independence. All trades practiced by Roma consist, in one form or another, of selling goods or services to non-Roma.

☐ The socialization of the children takes place in the context of the family and the community.

☐ The concept of school does not exist in Roma society. Schools are institutions of gajes[1], which promote different ideas, behaviors and values from their own, so they are not attractive to them.

☐ Teachers and other pupils are members of the gaje society, bearing stereotypes and prejudices towards them, therefore school is often a place where discrimination and racism appears.

☐ The vast majority of adults are illiterate (around 65% of the total population), a fact that plays crucial role in their social and vocational integration.

5. Results of the needs assessment and discussion

5.1. The profile of the respondents

The vast majority of the sample were women (76.7%) and people aged 20-30 years old (73.3%), while no one was over 55 years old.

A percentage of 53.3% of the sample had a university degree with the rest 46.7% being in their last year before their baccalaureate. Among the graduates, 18.3% had acquired a postgraduate degree too.

More than half of the sample members (56.7%) stated that they already had some teaching experience with special groups (40% with Roma and 16.7% mainly with immigrants and repatriated people), while only 26.7% confirmed they had received training on approaching special groups, mainly through one-day events, seminars and self-training. Among those with teaching experience, its duration had been less than six months for 50% of them, while 25% had teaching experience of one year, 16.7% had similar experience for two years and 8.3% had been teaching special groups for more than two years.

5.2. Knowledge on the characteristics of the Roma and attitudes towards Roma

The results of the needs assessment prove that the sample's knowledge on the characteristics of the target group is limited and mostly identical to the stereotypes that prevail in Greek society

regarding Roma. Similarly, their beliefs and attitudes towards Roma mainly reflect those stereotypes that are dominant in the non-Roma society. More specifically:

Regarding the origins of Roma, only 40% of the sample knew that they come from India (Fraser, 1995; Liegois, 1994), while the rest 60% was divided between ignorance (26.7% answered they just do not know) and confusion as to the place of origin (33.3% think Roma came from Egypt, Spain, Hungary, Serbia etc).

To the questions concerning cultural and social characteristics of Roma in Greece the respondents answered that Roma have their own: language (100%), customs and traditions (90%), social structure (80%), associations (43.3%), king (30%), leaders (36.7%).

Although all of the respondents knew about the existence of the language of Roma (romani) and half of them were working with Roma, when they were asked if they knew of any daily romani expressions, the vast majority did not, and could not, understand simple romani words and expressions such as *goodnight* and *how are you*. None of the respondents knew the expression *how old are you,* only one knew the word for *goodnight* and the expressions *where are you from* and *my name is Maria*, while three knew the expression *good luck*, five knew the meaning of *lacio drom* (a wish for bon voyage)*,* and eight of them knew the expression *how are you*. As expected, it was the in-service educators that knew some romani expressions, while all the pre-service ones knew none. An important point is that even though many of the in-service educators pointed out their lack of understanding the romani language as a major problem, they do not make even one step towards learning any romani expressions, although it is obvious that this would ameliorate their communication with Roma children, ultimately improving their approach and teaching effectiveness. Moreover, as romani is an oral language (Liegois 1987;

Messing 1977; Vassiliadou and Pavlis-Korres 1996), a special approach to Roma learners is necessary (Council of Europe. Conseil de la Cooperation Culturelle 1983). According to Field and Aebersold (1990) the extent to which the literacy tradition of the home and culture closely resembles that of the school must be considered and if there is a strong emphasis in the culture on the oral tradition, then knowledge may be transmitted through *verbal usage* and *memorization* as in the cases of Moroccan and Western Samoan cultures.

As the Roma oral educational tradition is different from the highly literate tradition in the Greek educational system, a problem occurs if the teacher expects certain types of classroom interaction based only on reading text.

Additionally, in keeping with the Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma (February 2000) 'In the countries where the Romani language is spoken, opportunities to learn in the mother tongue should be offered at school to Roma/Gypsy children.'

In the questionnaire there were also questions regarding the meaning of the terms prejudice, discrimination, stereotype, racism. Respondents answered correctly by 90% on racism, 83.3% on prejudice, 80% on stereotype and 66.7% on discrimination.

When respondents were asked if they think there is discrimination towards special groups in Greece today, the vast majority answered positively, that the following special groups face discrimination: drug addicts (90%), ex-convicts (83.3%), Roma (83.3%), Albanians (80%), homosexuals (73.3%), prostitutes (70%), disabled persons (66.7%), Muslims (46.7%), Pontiacs

(16.7%) and Polacks (16.7%). The majority of the educators (76.6%) also agree that any kind of racial discrimination should be illegal and subject to heavy penalties.

On the following table (Table 1) it is obvious that most educators believe that Roma actually face discrimination in Greece.

Table I. Educators' beliefs concerning the existence of discrimination against Roma in Greece

Existence of discrimination against Roma in Greece	Percentage
Some discrimination	43.3%
A lot of discrimination	36.7%
Just a little discrimination	10%
No discrimination at all	10%

To the question "How much of the racial tension that exists in Greece today do you think Roma are responsible for creating?", 43.3% believe that Roma have some responsibility, 26.6% believe that most of the responsibility belongs to Roma and 30.1% believe that Roma do not have any responsibility on the matter at all. The percentage of the sample (69.9%) that puts at least some of the blame on Roma for the current racial tension in Greece is considered very high.

Despite the educators' nearly universal (93.3%) belief that in multicultural societies every group could make a unique contribution, when the question is narrowed down on whether Roma people are as worth as citizens as any other group, only half of the respondents answered *yes*, while 36.7% did not answer and 13.3% answered *no*.

Furthermore, a percentage of 73.3% agree that Roma must be assimilated in the Greek society, 10% disagree and 16.7% do not have any opinion on the matter. To the question "Do Roma want to change their way of life?", 50% believe that Roma do not want to change their way of life, 20% believe they do, while 30% have no opinion on this. It is obvious that throughout the educators' training, issues on assimilation, integration and multicultural societies should be extensively studied.

The following table shows the beliefs of the respondents about Roma (favorable and unfavorable), which in most cases coincide with positive or negative stereotypes towards Roma.

Table II. Educators' beliefs concerning Roma in Greece

Beliefs of educators concerning Roma	Percentage
Roma are merchants	96.6%
Roma are getting married very young	93.3%
Roma have many children	90%
Roma are beautiful	73.4%
Roma are dressed in colorful clothes	73.3%
Roma are artists	73.3%
Roma are nomads	70%
Roma are very good musicians	70%
Roma are very good merchants	70%
Roma are very good dancers	66.7%
Roma are original	63%
Roma are uneducated	60%
Roma are dirty	56.7%

Roma are mercenaries	50%
Roma are religious	30%
Roma are thieves	23.3%
Roma are dirty by nature	13.3%

Interestingly enough, there are quite a few respondents that do not express an opinion on many questions such as if Roma are thieves (36.6%), if they are religious (60%), or if Roma are dirty by nature (20%).

Not all of the above stereotypes are unjustified. Many of the characteristics the educators accredit to Roma are true group characteristics. As Allport (1982, 192) supports 'we can distinguish between a valid generalization and a stereotype only if we have solid data concerning the existence of (the probability of) true group differences'. Therefore, the knowledge of the social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic characteristics of Roma, in Greece, could help the educators distinguish the true characteristics of the Roma group from the stereotypes, thus substantially improving their compatibility with the Roma learners.

To the question "Are Roma family oriented?", 40% of the sample answered positively, 20% negatively and 40% did not express an opinion on the matter. According to many studies and researches implemented in Greece (Papakonstantinou et al. 1997-1999; Pavlis-Korres and Sideri 1990; Vassiliadou and Pavlis-Korres 1996) the extended family is the core of the Roma social and economic life and is highly valued by Roma. The socialization and education of children takes place in the context of the family and the community. Therefore, it is very important for the educators to be aware of the significant role of the family in Roma communities and in children's education and socialization (Gustaffsson 1973; Liegois 1987).

On the matter of education, 60% of the sample consider that Roma do not attend school and are uneducated. All of the respondents believe that Roma must be educated, 90% believe that Roma children should attend Greek schools and 73.3% that Roma ought to speak and write Greek. A matter of discussion that could be further researched in the future is the meaning the educators give to the term *uneducated* and if they are aware and take account of the different ways of learning in Roma societies. According to the study *School provision for Gypsy and Traveler Children* which has been undertaken by the Commission of the European Communities, in European society *schooling* has been transformed into a synonym for *education*. As Liegois (1987, 46) states,

> We speak of the educational system when we mean the school system; we delegate total
> responsibility to the Minister for Education or Department of Education. If this is the case for
> many, it is not so for all, and we must emphasize that there are those –including the Gypsies- for
> whom schooling is only a part (and sometimes not even that) of the education of their children.

Those of the educators that have had teaching experience with Roma, state that the main problems they faced while teaching were: disobedience, irregular attendance, children and parents alike having negative attitudes towards school, insufficient children's knowledge and experiences, lack of interest in learning, absence of parental support with homework, inexistence of appropriate teaching material and, finally, teachers' incomprehension of the students' vernacular. Furthermore, some educators reported that they had not been trained to deal with this specific group, and found this to be a major problem. On the other hand, teachers thought they benefited by teaching Roma students because it "changed their attitudes towards this special group", Roma people eventually "treated them wholeheartedly, with love and respect", they "felt

they contributed", Roma were "straightforward to them", they had "good cooperation with Roma adults", and considered "Roma children to be far more mature than non-Roma children of the same age".

The educators refer to the problems they face during the educational procedure with Roma children, without relating those problems to the way Roma teach their children, or to the fact that this way is obviously ignored by the official educational system (Smith 1997).

As Liegois comments (1987, 163),

> …it would be easy to measure the importance of the gap between two education systems produced by the presence in school of Roma children who are products and bearers of an educational system radically different from- and often opposed to- that of most schools. If we were to picture the systems as two circles, we would see that they hardly intersect at all. Or, if we were to represent the elements conveyed in the two systems (organization of space and time, attitudes to various types of behavior, degree of initiative, of independence etc.) as two parallel columns, we would see that the parallels conform to their definition, that is, they do not meet- even less so, as most of the elements are in an opposition which is difficult to reduce.

Therefore, it is essential for the educators to study the way knowledge is passed on in Roma communities, as well as what school means and represents to Roma people, so that they are able to better understand their pupils. This would reduce the likelihood of them considering their pupils to be *culturally and socially handicapped* and, simultaneously, to realize their own prejudices, stereotypes and attitudes towards Roma.

According to Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe, it is important that future teachers

should be provided with specific knowledge and training to help them understand better their Roma/Gypsy pupils.

To the question regarding their attitude towards a fourteen year old Roma schoolgirl of their class quitting school to get married, the educators' answers prove that most of them examine the incident according to the predominant cultural standards of contemporary Greek society, and not those of the Roma society. In doing so, they either advise her to combine attending school with having her own family (63.3%), or try to persuade her family not to give her to marriage(33.3%), or try to convince her not to get married yet (10%). A fairly large percentage of the respondents (53.3%) also states that on the occasion of such an event, they would initiate an in class discussion on the topic *getting married at a very young age*. This raises the question as to whether the educators would engage in such a topic open-mindedly and ready to learn, understand and respect a culture different to their own (Irvine 2003; Larkin and Sleeter 1995; Villegas and Lucas 2002).

The teaching-effectiveness research literature informs us that a responsive teacher is sensitive to the needs, interests, and abilities of students, their parents and their communities (Gay 2000; Villegas and Lucas 2002). It is obvious that when the level of cultural compatibility between educators and Roma is low, the teachers are not responsive and the phenomenon that Irvine (2003) calls *lack of cultural synchronization* is evident.

To the questions regarding educators' attitudes towards existing special groups in modern Greece (including Roma), the groups that were more widely accepted were disabled people

(96.7%), Pontiacs (95.4%), Armenians (76.7%), Polacks (73.3%) and Roma (73.3%). There is a percentage of 13.3% though, that express a low acceptance of Roma.

In a variant of Bogardus Social Distance Scale, which is an indication of how close the educators want to be with the social group of Roma, the answers reveal that although the educators accept Roma as citizens, as colleagues, as neighbors and as kinsmen, the greater their distance from Roma, the more comfortable they feel. It is important to note that no respondent wants Roma to be deported. A considerable number of respondents (33.4%) also claimed that they would allow their children to marry a Rom/Romni[2], an act which consists of the closest relationship they could have with Roma, on the Bogardus scale.
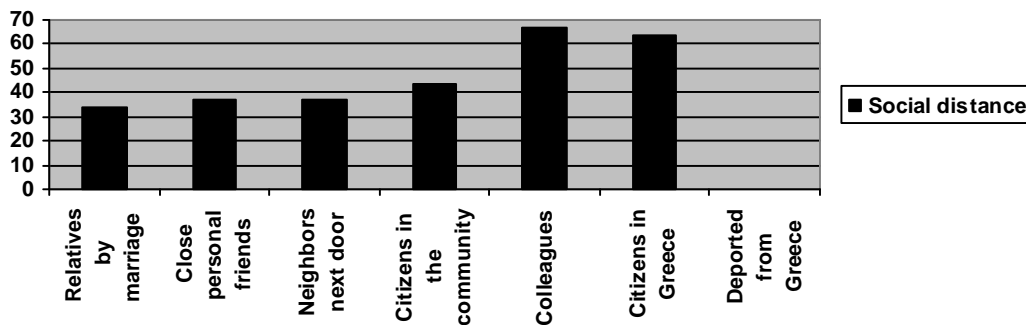

Figure 1. Social distance between educators and Roma.

The replies to this question confirm that the educators are against any institutionalized form of discrimination: they do not think that it would be fine if Roma were expelled from Greece; actually, the vast majority (76.7%) was strongly against such a measure. It is also noteworthy that quite a few respondents would feel at ease with Roma colleagues, a thing easily explained by the fact that when educators have a Rom as a mediator to the Roma community

their work becomes easier (G.S.A.E. 1999). There was no statistically significant difference between the answers given by the in-service and the pre-service educators.

To the question "Which of the following expressions have you used?", 66.7% have used the expression "The Gypsy rejoiced when he saw his clan", 60% the expression "Don't be a Gypsy", 50% the expression "You act like a Gypsy" and 46.7% have used the expression "You are posing like a Gypsy hack". The above expressions are used in Greek society, either in a kindly mocking way, or with highly negative meaning, and their frequent use by the educators shows the level of internalization of the stereotypes against Roma (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia 1964)

The questionnaire also contained paintings and photographs that educators were asked to look at, and express their thoughts and feelings upon.

The following five paintings, showing a mother and her child, were under a question asking the respondents to choose which of the paintings they thought best corresponded to the title "Romni with her child":

1. *Gypsy Woman and child*, by Anonymous painter

2. *Three ages of a woman*, by Gustav Klimt

3. *Gypsy Woman with Baby*, by Amedeo Montigliani

4. *Woman and child*, by Pablo Picasso

5. *Young Gypsy Woman with her baby*, by Paulette Dybaquier-Panagos

There were three paintings (no.1, no.3 and no.5) that truly depicted a Romni woman with her child. These were chosen by 73.3%, 13.3% and 70% of the sample respectively. The two

most chosen compositions had indeed visible marks relevant to Roma, like skin color, jewellery, colourful dresses and the tambourine. These visible cues mark out Roma people who can be identified as such by appearance alone. This explains why the second painting, which did depict a Romni with her child, got only 13.3% of the correct answers: it did not present any obvious stereotypical Roma characteristic. Allport (1982) supports that prejudiced people are better able to identify members of the disliked out-group than are non-prejudiced people, as they grow observant and suspicious, and they develop sensitivity to all the signs that may indicate members of the disliked group.

Remarkable also, is that 13.3% replied positively for painting no.2 which does not show a Romni but depicts the naked figures of mother and daughter. These educators are obviously ignorant of Roma customs, were women are usually wearing long skirts over long underwear.

On the other hand, the photographs[3] were Roma portraits and snapshots of their everyday life. The respondents were asked to express with a single word (verb, exclamation, noun or adverb) the emotion they felt on seeing each photograph and briefly justify their feeling. For the evaluation of these answers the feeling vocabulary of M. Rosenberg (2003) was utilized.

The snapshots depicting the living conditions of semi nomadic Roma in compounds caused the majority of the respondents (60-91% of the sample) negative feelings: sorrow and wrath prevailed among the answers. The picture that triggered negative feelings for most of the respondents (91%) was the following:

Figure 2. The picture that triggered negative feelings for the most of the respondents.

More specifically, 91% of the educators declared that they felt sadness, disgust and anger for the miserable existence of the child, while 9% expressed tenderness for it. With their comments, educators verbalized their need for social equality, and improvement of living conditions and chances, for all the groups present in a multicultural society (Rosenberg 2003).

The photographs that do not focus on the difficulties of life but instead show everyday moments of joy and carelessness along with cultural aspects of Roma life (e.g. a Rom singer, women dancing with bread on their heads, a mother braiding her daughter's hair, children swimming in the river) caused pleasant feelings to the respondents (66.7-93.4%) and excited their interest in Roma customs and traditions.

The picture that provoked the most positive feelings (93.4% positive feelings against 6.6% negative ones) is the one below, showing the *dancing of the breads*, a Roma wedding custom. It is indicative of the educators' lack of awareness of Roma culture that none of them knew anything about this custom, but it is optimistic that quite a few were eager to learn more about it.

Figure 3. The picture that provoked the most positive feelings to the respondents.

The results of the survey show that the educators have low cultural, ethnical, social and linguistic compatibility with Roma. They lack vital knowledge about the Roma culture, a fact that influences the formation of their attitudes towards Roma. On the other hand, there are no extremely negative viewpoints or attitudes towards Roma. This means that there is room for

improving compatibility between educators and learners through educating programs. To do this, it is necessary to foster the cognitive and affective domain through the design, development and implementation of E-learning material for the educators of Roma.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions of the needs assessment show that the compatibility level between Roma and their educators is low in all compatibility types applicable. Educators' knowledge on the origins, living conditions, culture, customs and traditions of Roma are limited. The beliefs and attitudes of the educators towards Roma are dominated by stereotypes and prejudices. It is hopeful that no extremely adverse attitudes and beliefs have been traced, and a considerable number of educators show significant interest in learning more about Roma and their culture. The respondents have also shown considerable concern regarding the living conditions of Roma and how these affect the Roma behavior, as well as about the chances of Roma having equal access to social goods. The needs assessment found that, surprisingly, there is no significant difference between the compatibility of in-service and pre-service educators with their Roma learners, although the in-service have participated in national and local programs which have included special training on Roma issues. This poses a question on the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing educational programs.

In order to make the educators of the sample more compatible with Roma their cognitive and affective domains should be enhanced. To achieve the cognitive enhancement, sound information and knowledge about the history and characteristics of Roma, as well as about the

nature of prejudice, are necessary (Allport 1982). This, however, is not enough as Pendry, Driscoll and Field (2007) support "prejudice is often based on incorrect information, but the idea that it can be stopped merely by providing the prejudiced with accurate information has been shown to be naive. Prejudice is underpinned by positive or negative emotional reactions (i.e. a strong affective component) and biased interpretation of information and experience, both of which serve to maintain or strengthen entrenched stereotypical beliefs in the face of contrary evidence. Within the attitudes literature, merely providing factual information has been shown to be often ineffectual as a means of evoking attitude change, especially where the attitudes concerned are affectively based."

Cognitive development and affective development are interrelated. Therefore realization of the specific characteristics of Roma could help educators to better understand Roma and positively affect their attitudes towards them. The educators' awareness and transformation of their own prejudices, stereotypes and attitudes towards Roma can have a positive influence on the Roma education (Liegois 1987; Vassiliadou and Pavlis-Korres 1996).

The most appropriate instructional strategies concerning the cognitive and the affective domain will be selected for the educators' education (Leshin, Pollock and Reigeluth 1992; Nadler and Nadler 2003). Additionally, as educators are adults, the main principles of adult education must be followed (Cranton 2000; Jarvis 1995; Knowles 1984; Rogers 2007).

It is expected that the pilot implementation, using educational material corresponding to the findings of the needs assessment, will confirm the efficiency of educating processes resulting in the improvement of compatibility between educator and learner. Furthermore, this needs assessment could be useful to people involved in planning, development or implementing educational programs for educators of Roma in Greece or elsewhere.

Endnotes

1. In their slang gajo (plural gajes) is a term that they use referring to non Rom

2. We use the name Rom, Romni, Roma instead of Gypsy man, Gypsy woman, Gypsies, as this is a name commonly accepted for all members of the Gypsy origin in Greece while the name Gypsy is often used by non-Gypsies with contempt and several negative meanings.

3. The photographs are from the Book «Τσιγγάνες» [Gypsy Women]. Pavlis-Korres, M., Spanouli, R., Kaloudi, K. (1990). Athens: Olkos.

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