



Premature school abandonment and its long-term economic consequences in developing countries : A case study for Romania

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Abstract —

The main purpose of this research article is to highlight the global implications of premature school abandonment and its long-term economic consequences in developing countries. Premature school abandonment is a social phenomenon rather difficult to prevent and control, especially in emerging countries. As managerial approach, understanding the underlying cause of premature school abandonment is a priority for strengthening the educational system in developing countries. The demographic survey is focused on the level of education and its economic implications. Moreover, the distribution of education reveals a very heterogeneous behavior across emerging countries. The empirical analysis includes a case study for Romania.

Key words : developing countries, premature school abandonment, educational system, level of education, demographic changes, statistics

Introduction

This research study offers a comprehensive analysis of the premature school abandonment and its long-term economic consequences in developing countries. Moreover, in order to understand how to diminish the negative effects of this social phenomenon, it is important to understand how effectiveness is determined. In recent past, numerous governmental interventions were intended to prevent and control premature school abandonment in emerging countries.



Nevertheless, the short-term results were not conclusive considering the extremely complex implications of this social issue. The growing integration of emerging economies generates significant cultural and ethical challenges, especially in a globalized world.

The theoretical framework for this research paper constitute an analytical tool which includes theories, principles, judgements, ideas and generalizations regarding premature school abandonment. At the same time, the interference of a strictly psychological approach suggests a transdisciplinarity measure of the issue. However, it is necessary to reconsider the etymological meaning of educational system based on formative availability of human personality that usually manifests itself in early childhood. A pressing rhetorical question rises in the current globalized economic environment : what is causing the high level of premature school abandonment in a manner partially unassimilated by previous generations ?

A Conceptual Analysis Of The Phenomenon

Early school abandonment has deep roots in the case of transition countries and it is extremely difficult to eradicate this social phenomenon at the aggregate level. Poverty is one of the main reasons leading to abandonment early school abandonment, especially in developing countries. It is important to perform a complex analysis considering the probable causes of the problem in order to highlight some specific aspects for near future perspective. It is well known that social issues are very much distinguished from economic issues, but their aggregate action constitutes a major influence regarding the development of educational system. It is very important to prevent premature school abandonment by developing, adapting and implementing reliable educational management strategies. On the other hand, another fundamental direction involves effective communication between the parties concerned, ie schools, community and parents. Furthermore, psychological counseling based on emotional development must be perceived as a natural alternative if it is necessary, in order to identify potential problems.

One of the main criteria for inclusion into the category of developing countries is based on the level of development that characterize each country. However, the literature has not established a generally agreed classification criterion. On the other hand, these developing countries are represented by transition economies considering the fact that are basically identified as low - and middle - income countries. Nevertheless, some authors consider that there is a fine line between developing and developed countries, so that the research area regarding premature school abandonment can be considerably extended, even beyond traditional approaches. In this respect,



according to Nielsen (2011) : “when it comes to classifying countries according to their level of development, there is no criterion, either grounded in theory or based on an objective benchmark, that is generally accepted.”

The access to education is guaranteed by Article 32 – Fundamental rights, freedoms and duties, regarding the right to education in the Constitution of Romania which suggests the following aspects :

- (1) *The right to education is provided by the compulsory general education, by education in high schools and vocational schools, by higher education, as well as other forms of instruction and postgraduate improvement.*

- (2) *Education at all levels shall be carried out in Romanian. Education may also be carried out in a foreign language of international use, under the terms laid down by law.*

- (3) *The right of persons belonging to national minorities to learn their mother tongue, and their right to be educated in this language are guaranteed; the ways to exercise these rights shall be regulated by law.*

- (4) *State education shall be free, according to the law. The State shall grant social scholarships to children or young people coming from disadvantaged families and to those institutionalized, as stipulated by the law.*

- (5) *Education at all levels shall take place in state, private, or confessional institutions, according to the law.*

- (6) *The autonomy of the Universities is guaranteed.*

- (7) *The State shall ensure the freedom of religious education, in accordance with the specific requirements of each religious cult. In public schools, religious education is organized and guaranteed by law.*

The demographic survey is focused on the level of education. In this respect, it is very important to answer the following question “What is the highest level of education that a person (individual, subject) have completed?” In general, education is classified in the following categories : pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. However, there is a certain category of people who has no education. A pre-school represents an early stage of education and refers to nursery school, kindergarten. In Romania, pre-school education, both public and private, is optional and is destined for children up to 6 or 7 years. The educational curriculum gradually prove similar amounts of early childhood education. Primary



education (elementary education) in Romania commonly comprises the first four years (from 6-7 years up to 10-11 years) and provides a basic training and fundamental studies.

The secondary education (ages 11–18) in Romania, beyond the elementary grades, comprises two different stages : gymnasiums cycle (starts with the 5th grade up to the 8th grade) and high school cycle (starts with the 9th grade up to the 12th grade) which includes phases of both lower secondary education (grades 9-10) and upper secondary education (grades 11-12). However, it is possible to attend post-secondary school, which are non university (academic) education, but it is a short-term educational form. On the other hand, tertiary education or higher education represents the highest level knowledge, information assimilation and advanced skills provided by educational system. According to World Bank official framework, it is important to active sustain the actual implementation of tertiary education reforms, by following certain recommendations, such as :

- 1) Increasing institutional diversification;
- 2) Strengthening science and technology research and development capacity;
- 3) Improving the quality and relevance of tertiary education
- 4) Promoting greater equity mechanisms to assist disadvantaged students
- 5) Establishing sustainable financing systems to encourage responsiveness and flexibility
- 6) Strengthening management capacities
- 7) Enhancing and expanding ICT capacity to reduce the digital divide.

Empirical analysis and final results

The stable population of Romania over a 10-year period and more includes a number of 18.022.221 people. Statistics on demographic phenomena are obtained through exhaustive surveys based solely on administrative data. According to National Institute of Statistics (INS), since 1990, the education system in Romania has undergone a series of transformations due to both national and European regulations, respectively to severe demographic changes in the country which led to the implementation of reorganization and restructuring strategies. In recent past, there was a tendency in increasing the rate of premature school abandonment in Romania.



Table 1. Statistical analysis on educational attainment

Level of education	Number of people
Tertiary education	2.591.021
Post-secondary school	574.043
Secondary education	11.759.627
Primary education	2.556.286
<u>No education</u>	<u>541.244</u>
Total stable population	18.022.221

Source : National Institute of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 2011

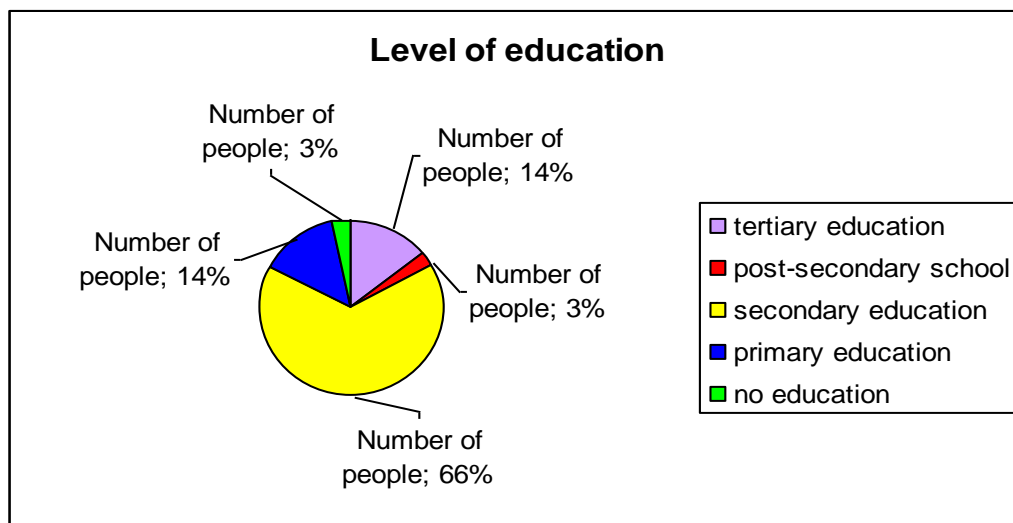




Fig. 1 The distribution of education in Romania

Source : National Institute of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 2011

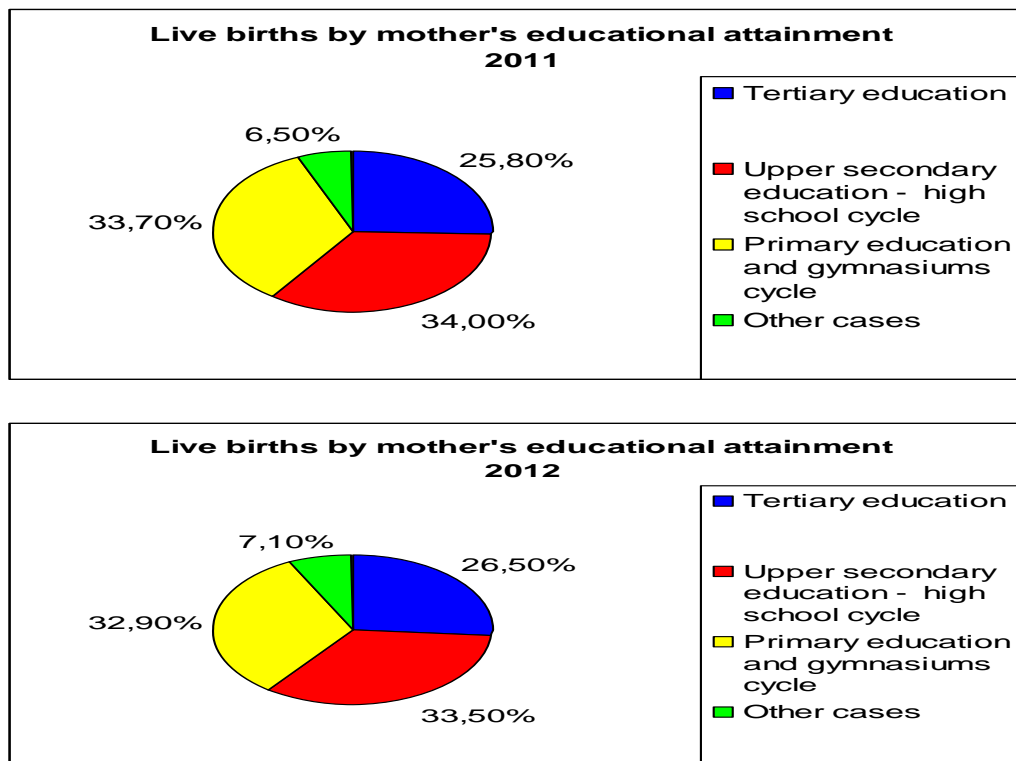


Fig. 2 Live births by mother's educational attainment

Source : National Institute of Statistics, demography in Romania



According to the World Bank official framework, the figure below represents a comparative analysis based on Gross enrolment ratio – primary, where total is the total enrollment in primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary education age. GER can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition.

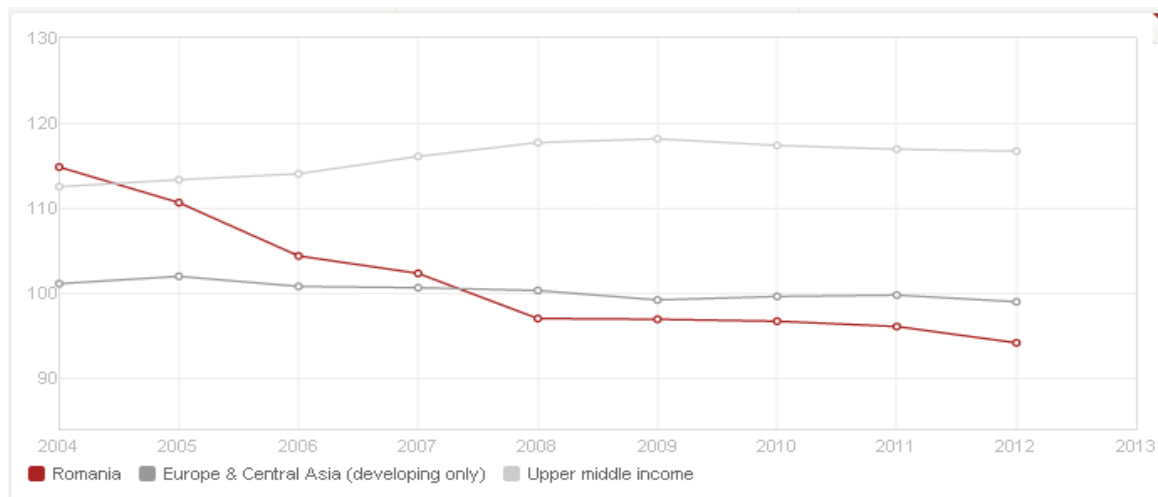


Fig.3 School enrollment, primary (% gross)

Source : The World Bank, UNESCO Institute for Statistics - World Development Indicators

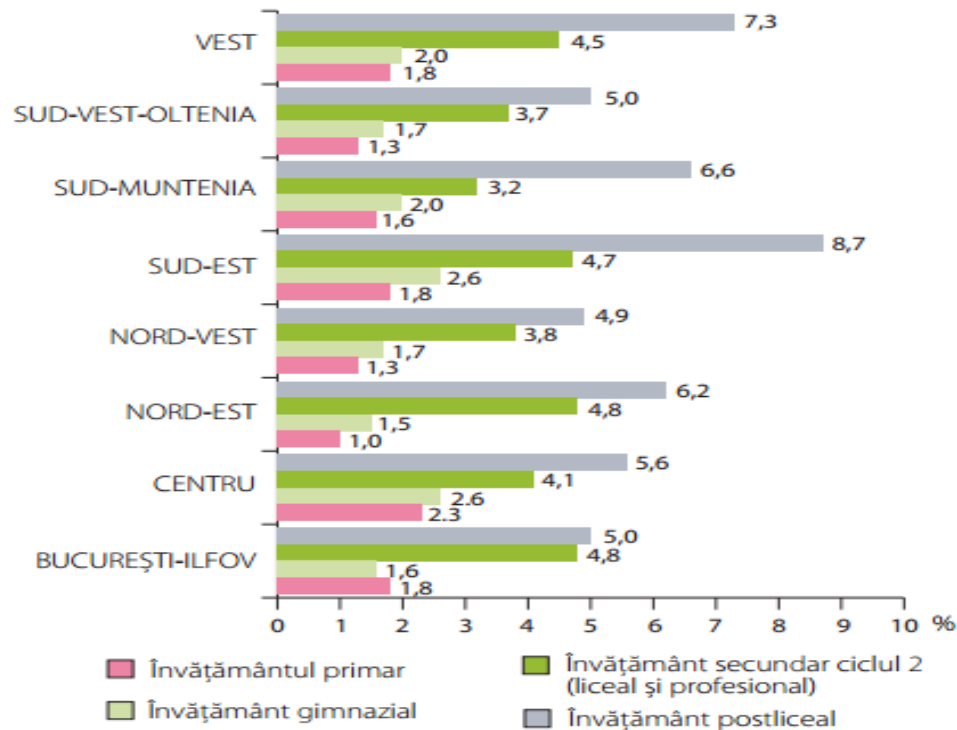


Fig.4 School abandonment rate by development regions in 2011

Source : National Institute of Statistics, Education in Romania, July 2014

According to World Bank official framework, national poverty rate is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line. National estimates are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys. The figure below represents a comparative analysis between certain emerging neighbouring countries, such as : Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Moldavia and Ukraine.

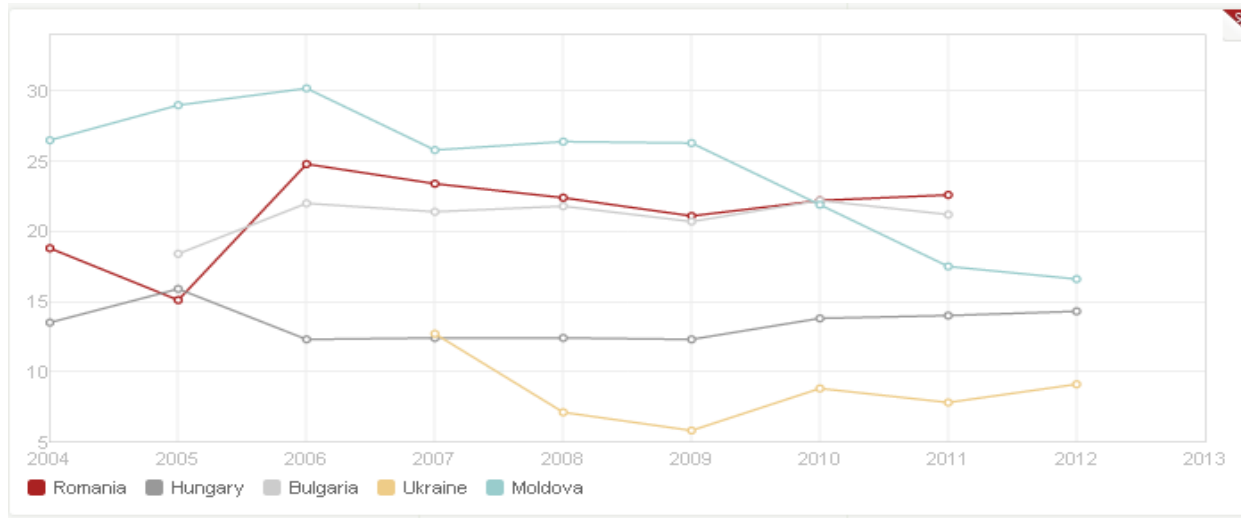


Fig.5 Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of population)

Source : World Bank, Global Poverty Working Group. Data are based on World Bank's country poverty assessments and country Poverty Reduction Strategies

Conclusions

The dramatic long-term economic consequences of premature school abandonment highlight a serious problem of great current interest. The educational system includes certain vulnerabilities in the case of emerging economies and may be affected by a range of factors, such as : poverty, dysfunctional family environment, parental international migration, unequal access to health care, genetic inheritance patterns, family traditions, ethnic identity (ethnicity), inherited habits and prejudices. Additionally, the complex analysis highlighted in this article revealed that certain macroeconomic factors (conditions) such as economic output - Gross Domestic Product (GDP), inflation, unemployment, standard of living, consumption, international investment, economic integration can strongly influence the stability of educational structures and thus the degree level of premature school abandonment. According to the National Institute of Statistics, premature school abandonment still represents a major problem in Romanian educational system. In other words, identifying and analyzing the problem involve different mechanisms at the local, national and international levels based on adequate processes for making and implementing decisions. Moreover, combating premature school abandonment should be a priority for the educational



system and governmental policies considering the long-term economic impact of this negative social phenomenon.

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