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Supporting the educational development of Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield: The Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET)

by

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**Supporting the Educational Development of Slovak Roma Pupils in
Sheffield:
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Abstract

This study illustrates the development of the Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET) as an analytical model for schools, teachers and other professionals working with newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in the UK. The RoLET is based on the Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET), an analytical model developed by Wilkin et al. (2009b; 2010), combined with the findings of an empirical study conducted in a secondary school in Sheffield, as well as drawing on the broader literature on Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) and migration research.

Based on the findings of the study, this report highlights that the TARGET model designed for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, does not entirely fit the specific situation of newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils when entering the UK education system. It is argued that the situation of Eastern European Roma communities coming to the UK is different to 'traditional' GRT communities and can, rather, be compared with the experience of migrant groups coming from non-English speaking countries to the UK. Therefore, including Eastern European Roma communities under the GRT term is challenged in this study.

A key purpose of this research is to support professionals working with newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils in UK secondary schools by providing them with the RoLET that illustrates influential factors which need to be considered when developing strategies for improving the educational outcomes of Eastern European Roma pupils in the British education system.

Keywords: Eastern European Roma, UK secondary schools, English language acquisition, analytical model, educational outcomes

Contents

<u>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>1</u>
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 RESEARCH AIMS	2
1.3 STUDY OUTLINE	3
<u>CHAPTER 2. REVIEWING THE TARGET MODEL</u>	<u>5</u>
2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	5
2.2 REVIEW OF PRIOR STUDIES	5
2.2.1 THE ROMA FROM SLOVAKIA	5
2.2.2 DISTINCTION BETWEEN BRITISH/ IRISH GRT AND EUROPEAN ROMA.....	8
2.3 APPLYING THE TARGET MODEL TO SLOVAK ROMA IN SHEFFIELD.....	11
2.3.1 FINDINGS COMPRISED IN THE TARGET MODEL.....	13
2.3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE TARGET MODEL	16
<u>CHAPTER 3. STUDY METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>19</u>
3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	19
3.2 MOTIVATION	19
3.3 METHODOLOGY, ONTOLOGY, AND EPISTEMOLOGY	20
3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	22
3.5 RESEARCH METHODS.....	22
3.5.1 DATA COLLECTION.....	23
3.5.2 MEANS OF ANALYSIS	24
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	27

<u>CHAPTER 4. DEVELOPING THE ROLET.....</u>	<u>29</u>
4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	29
4.2 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH INTO GRT EDUCATION	29
4.2.1 STUDIES THAT EMPHASIZE THE ITINERANT CHARACTER OF GRT	30
4.2.2 STUDIES THAT OMIT MENTIONING ANY LANGUAGE BARRIERS FOR GRT	31
4.2.3 GRT STUDIES INCLUDING THE NEEDS OF ROMA FROM EASTERN EUROPE	32
4.2.4 STUDIES THAT SPECIFICALLY FOCUS ON ROMA FROM EASTERN EUROPE	33
4.2.5 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE REVIEW OF PRIOR STUDIES.....	35
4.3 THE ROMA LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION TOOL (ROLET).....	37
4.3.1 LANGUAGE.....	40
4.3.2 TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AS A CONSTRUCTIVE CONDITION	46
4.3.3 KEY CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES RELATED TO EASTERN EUROPEAN ROMA PUPILS	48
<u>CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS.....</u>	<u>52</u>
5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	52
5.2 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	52
5.3 THIS STUDY’S LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS.....	54
<u>REFERENCES.....</u>	<u>56</u>

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The aim of this study is to introduce an analytical model for schools, teachers and other professionals working with newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield to help them identify the needs of these pupils in a holistic way. In this first chapter, we introduce the study by providing background information about the context, we detail the research aims and objectives and then outline the structure of this report.

Our motivation for pursuing this study can be traced back to our various experiences with ‘the Roma’. Prieler gained experience through working with a social charity project in Romania (2004-2010). Working with Roma families and children, she developed a deep interest in the Roma way of life, family structures, culture and customs as well as their values and beliefs. Payne was already working with colleagues at ‘Riverside School’ (the school at the centre of this study) in his capacity as a language teacher-trainer when he first became aware of the Slovak Roma pupils arriving at the school; his interest developed from there. Building on our common interests we worked together on the RAC¹ funded project: “An exploratory study of the linguistic, education and social integration of Slovak Roma pupils and their families in Sheffield” (Payne, 2015)². The aim of the RAC project was to generate ideas about how to improve the curriculum and everyday school life in order to raise Roma pupils’ attainment and attendance in school. As part of this work, we conducted interviews with teachers, pupils, senior school managers, Roma parents and observed a range of lessons.

In conducting our research we learned that the Roma community in the UK is commonly subsumed under the term *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller* (GRT) and that there is a long history of research into the GRT community in the UK. This corpus of GRT research culminated in the *Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool* (TARGET)

¹ RAC = Riverside Academy Chain. Pseudonym of the trust sponsoring Riverside (RAC, 2015a).

² Due to its long title, this project will be referred to as “RAC project” throughout this study.

developed by Wilkin et al. (2009a; 2009b; 2010) through which the authors sought to examine the contextual influences and constructive conditions affecting the achievements of GRT pupils (Wilkin et al., 2009b). The intended use of the TARGET model is, therefore, to provide professionals with a range of factors that influence GRT pupils' educational outcomes and, as a result, professionals working in the educational field can use this for developing strategies to improve the attainment and attendance of GRT pupils in UK schools. This model was used initially as a supporting analytical framework for analysing the findings of the RAC project.

1.2 Research Aims

Having collected data for the RAC project, we started to question the effectiveness and suitability of the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b) for the Roma from Slovakia, since the authors based their design of the model largely on the British/Irish GRT demographic which does not entirely comprise the specific situation of the Slovak Roma pupils, for example, there is no reference in the TARGET to *language*. There certainly are some arguments for including Roma, Gypsy and Travellers under the same term (GRT) due to shared experiences such as frequent change of residence, change of school, or experience of bullying and therefore some elements of the TARGET model can be applied to recently immigrated Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield. On the other hand, some findings of our study cannot be explained with the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010). This report therefore argues that some issues, like the need for acquiring English language skills faced by Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield are rather unique in comparison to other GRT communities; consider when Payne taught GRT pupils in secondary school in the 1990s – the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in his care spoke English.

As a consequence, the categorisation of Roma pupils as GRT is challenged. We argue that in order to adequately describe and understand the present situation of Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield, GRT research findings need to be supplemented with additional factors, which emerged from the findings of the RAC project. Therefore, an adapted and more specific version of the TARGET model is developed: the *Roma Language and Education Tool* (RoLET).

This aim of this report is to introduce the RoLET as an analytical model for schools, teachers and other professionals working with newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield that helps them to identify the needs of these pupils in a more holistic way. In order to meet the aim of this report the following research questions are addressed:

1. In what way is the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010) limited in representing the situation of Slovak Roma pupils in a UK secondary school?
2. What features should a newly developed RoLET contain to meet the unique needs of Slovak Roma pupils in the UK?

1.3 Study outline

Chapter 2 marks the first phase of the study: It consists of a brief literature review in order to give the reader awareness of the field in which the research is situated (Smith et al., 2009). In more detail, information is provided regarding the Roma from Slovakia who reside in Sheffield, followed by a brief discussion of the distinction between the British/ Irish GRT and the European Roma. In the following section, we detail the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010), by illustrating those influencing factors that may have an impact on the “educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils” (Wilkin et al., 2009b, p. 1). A summary of the findings that reveals the need for developing the RoLET concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and methods of this study. We justify our choice of methods, followed by a discussion on our experiences and beliefs that informed the methodological approach of this study, as well as a section addressing ethical considerations.

Chapter 4, representing phase 2 of the study, illustrates the process of developing the RoLET model from the already existing TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010) initiated by the findings of the RAC research project. We begin the chapter by reviewing studies into GRT education since 2004, the year of Slovakia’s EU accession. This is followed by the introduction of the RoLET as an analytical tool

specifically designed for immigrated Slovak Roma pupils in a secondary school in Sheffield. The RoLET is based on the argument that in order to analyse and understand the situation of immigrated Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield, an adapted version of the TARGET model is needed. The focus is laid on illustrating those particular factors which mark the distinction of the proposed RoLET from the TARGET model.

The study is concluded in Chapter 5 by a summary of findings in relation to the key research questions and a brief evaluation of the study's limitations and strengths. Finally, in terms of referencing the data throughout this report, where quotes or other information are reproduced the origin will be provided in brackets, such as 'Family Visit' (FV), 'Pupil Interview' (PI), 'Teacher Interview' (TI) or 'Personal Communication' (PC), along with the participant number.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEWING THE TARGET MODEL

2.1 Chapter Overview

In the first section of this chapter we give a background on the Roma community from Slovakia who reside in Sheffield, to consider numbers of pupils, spoken and written language skills, schooling and associated issues. Following this, we briefly discuss the distinction between the British/ Irish Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) and the European Roma.

In the second section we introduce the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b), which is described as a way of displaying influential factors that may have an impact on the “educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils” (Wilkin et al., 2009b, p.1). A summary of the findings that reveals the need for developing the RoLET as a new model specifically designed for Eastern European Roma in Sheffield concludes this chapter.

2.2 Review of prior studies

2.2.1 The Roma from Slovakia

As a result of Slovakia gaining accession to the EU as part of the *A8 group* on 1 May 2004 together with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia (European Union, 2015) the UK has experienced a large influx of Roma pupils from Slovakia over the last nine years (OFSTED, 2014). It is nearly impossible to find a clear statistical overview of Roma immigration in the UK since “there is no single source that exists for the purpose of measuring migration” (Gillingham, 2010) and as the Slovak Roma are essentially members of the EU, they are free to travel through Europe:

...in 2013 a large proportion (88%) of the 111.1 million journeys to the UK were by British, other EEA or Swiss nationals who have rights of free movement and are not subject to immigration control (Home Office, 2014, p. 43-44).

The reason for the Slovak Roma migration to the UK often lies in their desire to escape from on-going racism and discrimination:

The most common reason given by Roma adults when asked why they had felt the need to leave their homelands was to escape racism and discrimination and to ensure that their children would be able to grow up without having to face prejudice against Roma on a daily basis (European Dialogue, 2009, p. 8).

It is not clear why the Roma from Slovakia appear to be bypassing other European countries and heading specifically to England – many migrants head to the UK, for example, because they already speak English which does not apply to the majority Slovak Roma population. Moreover, it is unclear why Sheffield, suffering as it does from post-industrial economic depression and hosting some of the most deprived wards in the UK (Rae, 2011), is the final destination for many migrants from Eastern Europe. Following the latest report from SFP (2014) which considers Sheffield as a city that is constantly growing, one possible explanation could be given by Blommaert (2010), who argues that it is common for areas of traditional inward migration to become established as migratory destinations, i.e. migrants follow migrants, resulting in “a layered immigrant space” (p. 7).

In addition, it is difficult to determine how many members of the Roma community live in an area in England, since in official surveys, members of the Roma community mostly identify themselves according to their country of origin – i.e. as Slovaks or Czechs – rather than characterizing themselves as Roma, as can be seen in the last UK census from 2011, where 1244 Slovak speakers were registered in Sheffield, whereas no one declared themselves to speak Romani (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Through interviewing pupils and talking to teachers in the RAC project it became clear that whereas most Roma from Slovakia will speak Slovak, their first language will still be Romani. This finding is supported by a Sheffield Council neighbourhood count of Roma pupils in primary and secondary schools, which stated that there were 1843 Roma pupils in Sheffield on 7 April 2014 of which 891 lived in the Page Hall region (Sheffield City Council, 2014).

Moreover, in comparison to other languages, Romani takes a special position, since it is a non-standardized language, which means “there is no tradition of literary Standard to which speakers can turn as a compromise form of speech” (Matras, 2005, p.4). Finally, there is not one consistent form of Romani, shared by all Roma

communities, but rather multiple varieties of Romani (ROMLEX, 2013, cited in Payne, 2014, p.10). As a result, many schools in the UK which have been experiencing major rises in the numbers of Slovak Roma pupils in the past three years, face language challenges: One example is Riverside³, the secondary school of focus in this study, where many of the newly arrived Roma pupils have little or no English language abilities (Riverside MFL⁴ Teacher, PC), 22/5/2015). Some of the Roma pupils at Riverside transition to secondary school from feeder primary schools, some from other parts of the UK, and many arrive at a school directly from Slovakia, often outside of traditional arrival patterns, i.e. the start of a new school year or term (Payne, 2014).

To further exacerbate the educational challenge for these new arrivals, whilst many Roma pupils have attended school in Slovakia alongside their non-Roma Slovak peers, some Slovak Roma pupils have had little or no former traditional schooling when entering the UK education system (Brown et al., 2013). Moreover, Roma children in Slovakia (and the Czech Republic) are more likely to attend a 'special school' for children with a designated Special Educational Need; 35-50% of pupils in special schools in those two countries are Roma, from 2-3% of the population (Equality, 2011). Not only are Roma children in comparison to their non-Roma peers in Slovakia more likely considered as having a Special Educational Need but are also often discriminated against by the national school system. According to Amnesty International:

In some parts of eastern Slovakia, 100 per cent of schools are segregated.⁵ Romani children often receive a second-rate education and have a very limited chance of progressing beyond compulsory schooling. In 2006, only 3 per cent of Roma children reached secondary school. (Amnesty International, 2007, para. 2)

In addition, Springer (2013), who reported on a segregated school in Slovakia that was compelled to integrate Roma children, emphasizes the discrepancy between Roma and non-Roma pupils in Slovakia when entering school. He points out that Roma children would often need additional support in order to be able to access the curriculum in the same way as their non-Roma peers would:

³ This is a pseudonym. The school, located in Sheffield, as well as all respondents are kept confidential in line with ethical practices.

⁴ 'Modern Foreign Languages', usually teachers of French, Spanish, German etc. in England.

⁵ Segregation of the Roma in terms of schooling is often a complex issue. For more, see: The Roma Education Fund (2015) *Making Desegregation Work*. Available at: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/desegregation_toolkit__2015_web.pdf

Roma children start school very unprepared. Often they don't have the basic skills that other kids have to be able to go through the education system. [For instance,] many of these children don't speak Slovak – the official language of state schools. (Springer, 2013, para. 25)

This brief outline highlights the three issues – lack of prior schooling, segregation/ persecution and mixed language background – that we feel are important to consider when addressing the situation of newly arrived Roma pupils in the UK educational system.

2.2.2 Distinction between British/ Irish GRT and European Roma

Historically, Roma living in the UK have been classified within the group of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) who are characterized by residing and travelling within the UK, such as those mentioned in the Plowden report (CACfE, 1967), or those portrayed in the social-anthropological work of Judith Okely (Okely, 1983). Interestingly enough, the GRT Okely (1983) and Plowden (CACfE, 1967) refer to are usually English speakers and, apart from Irish-heritage Travellers, born and brought up in the UK (Wilkin et al., 2009a). In both reports, GRT children were associated with deprivation, poverty and a lack of schooling. Plowden highlighted gypsy children as “probably the most severely deprived children in the country. Most of them do not even go to school, and the potential abilities of those who do are stunted” (CACfE, 1967, p. 59). Although the ‘Roma’ community was recognized by being incorporated within the term GRT, the early studies mainly focused on Gypsy or Traveller children from the UK.

More recently, the Department for Children Schools and Families (2010) defined the term “Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families” as a group that encompasses:

- Gypsies inc. Romanies, Romanichals, Welsh Gypsies/ Kaale, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers;
- Irish Travellers, Minceir;
- Roma from Eastern and Central Europe;
- Showmen (Fairground people);
- Circus people;
- Boat Travellers/Bargees;
- New Travellers or New Age Travellers; and
- [Families, where] the parent/carer is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature that requires them to travel from place to place. (DCSF, 2010, p.1)

As the report highlights, the “GRT” label does now include the European Roma. However, although distinctions are sometimes made in the literature, this study argues that in the main, GRT are treated as a homogeneous entity (Bhopal, 2004; DCSF, 2008; Cudworth, 2008; Levinson, 2008; Myers & Bhopal 2009; Wilkin et al., 2009b). Considering the literature on GRT we argue that until now, they have been a minority within the demographic and have certainly been overlooked in terms of most of the GRT research.

When considering the DCSF list, it seems that although all of the listed groups vary in their origins, history and culture, the attribute “travelling” is shared by all of them, thus justifying application of the GRT term. However, Murdoch and Johnson (2007) point out that although all these groups have a travelling lifestyle, it varies significantly: The degrees of travelling range from communities that live in caravans and travel frequently between geographical locations, to communities that no longer have a nomadic lifestyle and are renting houses, as is the case with the Eastern European Roma in Sheffield. Therefore, when critically reflecting on the term GRT, questions arise as to what degree these communities actually share similarities, considering how they differ in terms of their origin, history and ethnicity. Reflecting on the DCSF definition of GRT (2008; 2010), we agree with Parekh (2000) who points out that the term GRT does not describe a homogenous group of people, but is rather an umbrella-term that comprises diverse communities: This reality makes it nearly impossible to find a characteristic that covers the multiplicity of these groups and does justice to their different ways of thinking and perceiving the world (Liegeois, 1986; Kiddle, 1999). Surprisingly enough, despite these vast differences between the communities that come under the term GRT, all of them are still considered to be part of the GRT community (Bhopal & Myers, 2008).

All Slovak Roma families we spoke to in Sheffield do not perceive travelling as an important part of their lifestyle but rather travel out of necessity: One family stated that they moved to Sheffield in the hope of finding a better job, since the job prospects in Slovakia are much worse for Roma community members because of racism (FV: 3). One family argued that their frequent change of residence is caused by the fact that the male head of the family is doing shift work in large factories, or logistic centres, which exposes him to short-term dismissal (FV: 1). Another Roma

mother reported that she and her husband, who had currently found a job in a factory, hoped to stay in Sheffield for the future (FV: 2).

Aside from the fact that the aspect of “travelling” is quite different between Slovak Roma community members and other communities labelled as GRT, the way in which communities perceive themselves suggests that each community considers themselves as unique and different from the others. While some travellers refer to themselves as “Gypsy”, others reject this characterisation as it is considered to come with negative connotations (Clark, 2006). Families working on fairgrounds refer to themselves as “Showmen” and Roma from Eastern and Central Europe refer to themselves as “Roma” (DfES, 2003). In addition, as mentioned in section one of this chapter, the Roma families at Riverside prefer to identify themselves according to their land of origin, rather than their ethnic group, defining themselves as “Slovakian”, or “Czech” (Office for National Statistics, 2011). It can therefore be concluded that the Slovak Roma in Sheffield are not only different to the rest of the GRT community in terms of their origin, history, culture, and travelling lifestyle but also in terms of their identity, considering themselves predominantly as Eastern European.

We argue that the characterization of Slovak Roma in Sheffield as GRT should be critiqued for two reasons. First, we think that the term GRT needs to be challenged since it appears to be based on a concept of “race”: we argue that since race does not naturally exist, but is rather socially and politically constructed (Parekh, 2000), the classification of humans according to race needs to be questioned. Secondly, after speaking with Slovak Roma people in Sheffield, we realized that characterising them as GRT does not do justice to their living conditions, life-style, language and self-understandings. Considering the on-going discussion and development of terminology that is used to define people within the GRT community (Bhopal et al., 2000), we have built this study on the belief that there is a need to treat Eastern European Roma separately from the other members of the GRT cohort. We argue that by characterizing Roma from Eastern Europe as a unique community, it allows educational and social institutions, as well as local councils, to recognize Slovak Roma pupils’ specific needs as possibly distinct from the needs of other GRT

communities. In the following section, the different needs of the Eastern European Roma and other GRT communities are discussed in more detail.

2.3 Applying the TARGET model to Slovak Roma in Sheffield

This report is essentially based on the study “Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils” (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) that introduces the TARGET model as a result of the research findings. The authors carried out case studies in the UK in five primary schools, ten secondary schools and five alternative education provisions⁶, which had a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil cohort. The authors sought to examine which issues were affecting the achievement of GRT pupils and to offer strategies to improve the attainment and attendance of GRT pupils in UK schools (Wilkin et al., 2009b). This was achieved by national data analysis, questionnaires, an extensive literature review, as well as interviews and focus group discussions with teachers, parents and pupils (Wilkin et al., 2009b). The result of the data analysis is visualized in Figure 1, the ‘TARGET’ model, displaying the main themes, which emerged from the data:

⁶ Though the authors did not specify the nature of these alternative sites, the DfE (2013) describes alternative provision as “education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education” (p. 4).

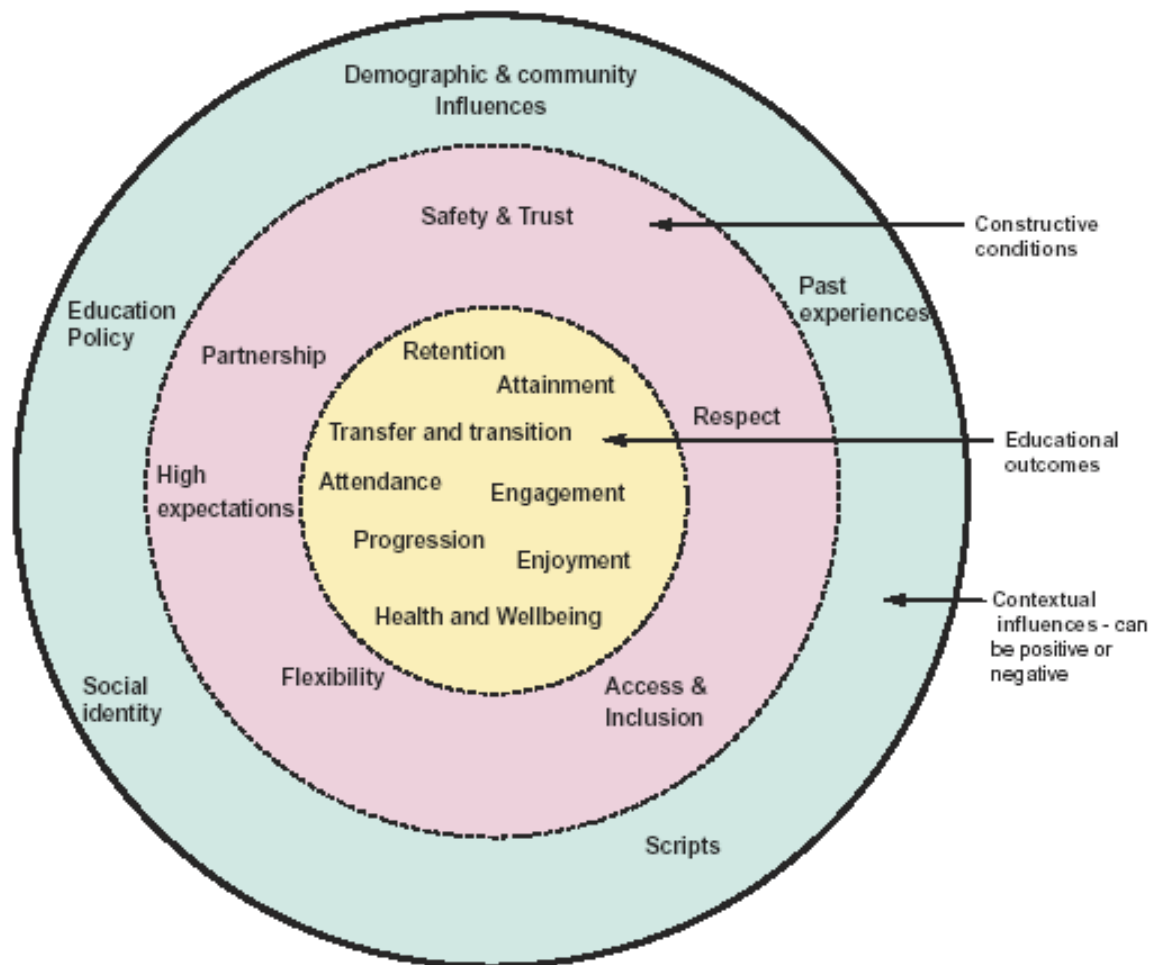


Figure 1. Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET) model (Wilkin et al., 2009b, p.2).

The three differently coloured circles represent the categories – *educational outcomes*, *constructive conditions* and *contextual influences* – under which themes, generated from the findings, are subordinated. In this model the *educational outcomes* (depicted in yellow) can be found at the centre. In our view, this emphasizes the main schools’ interest with a GRT cohort: raising the GRT pupils’ achievement in school, as well as ensuring their personal growth and wellbeing. Whereas the constructive conditions (depicted in pink) are considered as having the potential to raise the educational outcomes of GRT pupils, the contextual influences (depicted in green) focus more widely and therefore display characteristics that may either have positive or negative impacts on the educational outcomes of GRT pupils (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010). Through conceptualizing the TARGET model, Wilkin et al. (2009b) aimed to support professionals working with GRT pupils in reflecting on either established or newly introduced interventions and strategies by considering wider factors that influence educational outcomes. Teachers are therefore encouraged to see the GRT

cohort in their school within this wider context and to “target their [GRT pupils’] efforts on overcoming certain contextual barriers whilst capitalising on other positive influences” (Wilkin et al, 2010, p. viii). In summary, this model can help to create an environment that addresses these influences and conditions and thus helps schools to resolve present difficulties regarding the educational outcomes of GRT pupils.

In working on the RAC project at Riverside that looked at ways of raising the attainment and attendance of the local Slovak Roma pupils, we decided to use the TARGET model as a starting point for thematic analysis. We were especially in favour of providing teachers and other professionals working in the field with an analytical model that supported them in considering a variety of influential factors when reflecting on established methods or developing new strategies for the GRT cohort. Furthermore, the way in which the TARGET data was collected (e.g. individual interviews with members of school staff, focus groups with teachers, pupils and parents) was in line with the way in which we conducted the RAC study, reinforcing our feeling that using the TARGET model in our analysis would help us to consider all important aspects and factors that influence the attainment and attendance of Roma pupils at Riverside. We considered using the TARGET model as a starting point as appropriate as authors build on others’ research or adapt pre-existing analytical models: Kahle et al.’s (1993) introduction of a model on gender difference in Science education, Creemers’ & Kyriakides’ (2007) development of a dynamic model for evaluating educational effectiveness, or Pressé et al.’s (2011) adaption of a sport education model for children with disabilities. The following section therefore focuses on the reasons that make the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b) a valuable foundation for analysing the current situation of Roma pupils at Riverside. The subsequent section then outlines the shortcomings of the TARGET model that resulted in the development of the RoLET (Chapter 4).

2.3.1 Findings comprised in the TARGET model

When reviewing Wilkin et al.’s (2009b; 2010) study on a whole, it can be said that it provides valuable information for professionals on how each factor, illustrated

in the TARGET model, has a huge impact on the achievement but also on the enjoyment of GRT pupils in education.

The elements within the inner circle of the TARGET model, displaying *educational outcomes*, can broadly be classified as either “soft” measures, such as engagement, enjoyment, health and well-being, or “hard” measures, like attainment, attendance, transfer and transition, progression and retention. In our view, the fact that soft measures are included under the umbrella-term ‘educational outcomes’ is very positive: measuring only the hard outcomes of education would fail to acknowledge that schools also need to strive for educating children in a way that they enjoy school and are encouraged to engage in the classroom, as well as making pupils’ well-being and health a top priority. Furthermore, it is stressed that the listed educational outcomes are strongly inter-dependent: Wilkin et al. (2010) argue that there is not only a strong link between attendance and attainment of GRT pupils, but also between the possible retention of pupils and their enjoyment and engagement in school. This is in line with the findings of Gutman & Vorhaus (2012), and Haslinger et al. (1996) who argue that children with high levels of wellbeing, ensured through establishing a caring and stable school community, engage more in school and have higher levels of academic achievement. The importance of ensuring pupils’ achievement in school is further emphasized by Motti-Stefanidi et al.’s (2015) study: the authors claim that low achieving immigrant students in Greece were more likely to play truant to avoid being confronted with academic failure. As a result, this study supports Wilkin et al.’s (2009b; 2010) advice for schools to consider all educational outcomes listed in the TARGET model when tracking pupils’ progress, to be able to identify their needs and to initiate suitable interventions.

By choosing to frame the other themes of the TARGET model with five *contextual influences*, Wilkin et al. (2009b; 2010) emphasize what influence the unique setting and context of each school has when thinking about ways of raising the attainment and attendance of schools’ GRT cohorts. These contextual influences can be constructive, for instance when GRT pupils have been attending a school for a longer period of time. At the same time they can also be obstructive, for example when tensions between different ethnicities are an issue within the community the school is embedded in (Wilkin et al., 2010). Another obstructive condition could be

the fact that many GRT children live in an area with a high percentage of GRT people, with whom they share limited educational resources: Bygren & Szulkin (2010), who focused on Swedish immigrants in their study, conclude that ethnic residential segregation has a negative impact on the educational outcomes of immigrated children. Shapira (2012) and Song & Elliott (2011) draw attention to further contextual influences: Their studies show that disadvantaged family background, low family income and the lack of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) are likely to cause an attainment gap between the citizens of a country with migration and non-migration backgrounds. We therefore consider it helpful for schools to be provided with information on influencing contextual factors, since they not only impact the GRT pupils, but also determine whether schools' actions to raise GRT pupils' attainment and attendance are effective or not.

In addition, the study illustrates six *constructive conditions* – Safety and Trust (e.g. GRT parents trusting the school), Flexibility (e.g. adapting the curriculum), Respect between schools and GRT families, High Expectations (e.g. teachers on the part of GRT pupils), Access and Inclusion (e.g. access to the curriculum) and Partnership (between school and other 'service providers') – that were perceived to have a positive impact on the educational outcomes of GRT pupils (Wilkin et al., 2009b). For each of these "key points" good practice examples are given to show how they can be realized in everyday school practice (Wilkin et al., 2009b, p. 15-17).

While the points are addressed separately in the description of the TARGET model, Wilkin et al. (2009b) emphasize that "their effects are inevitably inter-woven" (p. 14). The authors provide some examples and claim that in schools where good *partnerships* were maintained between parents, pupils and the members of staff, *high expectations* were sustained as well. In addition, the establishment of *safety and trust* was linked to the possibility of further facilitating *access and inclusion* for the GRT cohort of the school. These illustrations go in line with Kiddle's (1999) findings: The author highlights that schools' interest in GRT values – e.g. through inviting parents to school to show their traditional skills in tent construction⁷ (Ofsted, 1999) –

⁷ A further example of some 'traditional' GRT practices contrasting with the practices of the Slovak Roma.

enhanced GRT parents' trust in schools, as well as their children's willingness to learn.

2.3.2 Limitations of the TARGET model

When critically reviewing the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) there are some aspects open to critique, as well as limitations that become apparent when considering the TARGET model for the analysis of the Eastern European Roma in Sheffield.

While examining the conclusions of the study (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) we arrived at the same impression as Thomson (2013) who claims that at times the authors were lacking sensitivity, particularly when it comes to linking current negative issues to possible causes, as it can be seen in their verdict on low attainment of GRT pupils. In this case, Wilkin et al. (2010) draw the conclusion that "overall, the fact that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tend to have low prior attainment, have SEN and are entitled to free school meals is likely to be affected by cultural factors" (p. ii). In line with Thomson (2013) we believe that this statement indicates notions of cultural racism (Helms, 1993), which can also be identified in other conclusions, when for example "cultural factors" such as the attitudes of parents and the GRT community are considered as reasons for low attainment of GRT pupils. Furthermore, an inherent cultural racism can be found in statements suggesting that there is a need to establish non-GRT values which are key to raising the attainment and attendance of GRT pupils:

Scripts underpinning parents' 'cultural' right to take children out of school during term time could also be successfully challenged in relation to protecting the right of the child to education, as well as the potentially detrimental effect on friendship networks and social opportunities that long periods away from school could have (Wilkin et al., 2010, p. 95).

In summary, we believe that despite providing a holistic view on those factors that influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils, some of the conclusions drawn from the study suggest that cultural factors, and therefore the assumption of an incongruence between a GRT and a non-GRT culture, are a cause for the low attainment of GRT pupils.

When critically evaluating the TARGET model's (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) usefulness for the development of the RoLET, and therefore its applicability to the

Eastern European Roma in Sheffield, some limitations become apparent: By building upon the term GRT, the model fails to incorporate factors that were shown to be major issues for Riverside in terms of adopting strategies and developing ways of ensuring the inclusion of Eastern European Roma in school, as well as supporting them in raising their educational outcomes.

There is one issue Roma pupils face in particular when entering the UK school system, which is not incorporated in the TARGET model: language. The fact that new Roma arrivals from Eastern Europe enter Riverside with low or often no English language abilities is currently perceived to be the biggest challenge for all parties involved. The new arrivals' struggle with English language acquisition can be compared with the challenges immigrant pupils face when entering the educational system in Belgium (Leman, 1991), the US (Valdes, 1998; Yeh et al., 2008), or Spain (Huguet et al., 2012). Similar to the immigrants in these reports, Roma pupils at Riverside find it hard to access the curriculum due to their lack of English language skills. In addition, teachers struggle to adjust to the new situation, often being required to take on the additional task of untrained EAL (English as an additional Language) teachers when having Roma pupils in their regular classes. Riverside teachers' perceived pressure to adopt strategies for dealing with the English language abilities of Roma pupils is reflected in numerous teacher interviews, in which an urgent need for supporting Roma Slovak pupils' English acquisition is articulated (TI: 3; 5; 7; 9; 13; 14).

Furthermore, when analysing the data collected at Riverside, it becomes apparent that teachers' personal beliefs towards Roma pupils, as well as the changes in school and in teaching methods caused by the influx of Eastern European Roma pupils, are considered to be another influential constructive condition that does not seem to be incorporated in the TARGET model. Following Alba & Holdaway (2013), we hold the belief that attainment gaps between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds can only be closed if teachers share the same expectations and responsibility for all students. In analysing the current situation at Riverside, we think it is therefore vital to consider teachers' perception of integrating immigrant children since, according to Theodorou (2011), they often unconsciously influence their

practices in school, which may lead to actions and statements that impact negatively on the social inclusion of new arrivals.

In addition, we consider that topics already displayed in the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) need particular attention in case of the Slovak Roma pupils at Riverside. More precisely, this is the case for two contextual influences, *Past Experiences*, and *Demographic and Community influences*. One example is the experience of Roma parents with educational institutions: Kiddle (1999), as well as Derrington & Kendall (2004) point out that parents' limited or negative experience in schooling could have an adverse effect on the development of the relationship between home and school. The authors' findings are confirmed by the data collected at Riverside: Roma parents' prior experience with schooling seemed to be an influential factor in terms of their children's attainment and attendance in school.

In summary, it can be stated that whereas the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) provides a helpful starting point when thinking about Roma pupils and the ways in which their educational success can be supported, there is a need for an amended version of the model specifically designed for the needs and issues of Eastern European Roma pupils. The development of the Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET) is illustrated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3. STUDY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

Following Sikes (2004) and Haraway (1989) the researcher needs to reflect on one's own positionality, i.e. one's ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as thoughts about the nature of human relations, since it greatly influences the research process, such as the choice of methods, or the conclusions that are drawn from the data. Furthermore, by reflecting on one's social and political position the researcher can avoid bias: Griffiths (1998) argues that acknowledging one's ethical and political positions can not only "help to unmask any bias that is implicit in those views, but it helps to provide a way of responding critically and sensitively to research" (p. 133). This chapter therefore describes our reasons for doing the research in the adopted way, the chosen methodology, including the epistemological and ontological approach this study is based on. After drawing attention to the research questions that drive this research work, we illustrate the methods employed. In the subsequent section, the applied method of data analysis is illustrated. Ethical considerations pertaining to this study conclude the chapter.

3.2 Motivation

When reflecting on our reasons for developing a model that can help professionals working with Roma pupils in Sheffield, it became clear to us that our experiences resulted in the desire to contribute towards a better understanding and cooperation between the established majority society and the Roma community. Having witnessed the often non-inclusion of Roma pupils and animosities between the Roma and the non-Roma pupil cohort in everyday school life, as well as having encountered racist statements and complaints from both teachers and Roma community members, we felt the need to write about and do research on the newly arrived Roma community in the UK. We are convinced that a change of this often tense situation between the Roma and non-Roma community can only be brought

about by providing information about a specific group of migrants that enables professionals working with them to act differently based on a deeper understanding. It is our strong personal belief that members of different communities living together should respect each other. In summary, it is therefore our hope that this study will play a small part in forming a truly intercultural society that celebrates unity in diversity.

We agree with Sikes (2004), who points out that while conducting a study a researcher should always be “aware that research is inherently a political activity in that it affects people’s lives, however lightly and tangentially” (p. 32). In our opinion, this “political” notion of research does not only call on the researcher to pay close attention to the impact of one’s research work on those being researched, but also hints at power relations between the researcher and the researched. Given the fact, that we are doing research with members of a marginalized community, we believe that a critical theory approach can help us address power relations and to take on a rights-based perspective which, according to Ebrahim (2010), is defined as seeing research partners as agencies throughout the research process. Based on the belief that one main consideration of research should be to ask oneself how the project can contribute to secure the rights of the research partners’ community, a critical educational research paradigm is followed in this study.

3.3 Methodology, Ontology, and Epistemology

Following Bryman (2012), Sikes (2004), and Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), the researcher’s explicit and implicit preconceived notions about the nature of the world we live in, and about the ways in which it should be explored, guide one’s research process. When looking for a suitable paradigm that goes in line with our ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs, we realized that while there are many different theoretical frameworks represented in the field of educational research, three paradigms are regularly included: positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (Crotty, 1998; Lather, 2006; Cohen et al., 2011; Wellington, 2015).

Following Cohen et al. (2011), the critical education research approach provides an alternative to the positivist and interpretivist accounts. Its goal is to

transform individuals and society towards social democracy (Oliver, 1996 cited in Goodley, 2011, p.12; Habermas, 1984). Furthermore, critical theory takes the view that it is impossible for the researcher to be neutral in regards to one's research topic (Cohen et al., 2011). Considering the many hours we spent on the RAC project, which led us to feel part of the school community, we realized that we could not have a neutral stance towards the study's participants. We therefore chose a critical research approach that allowed us to critically reflect on the influence of our positionality on the research project (Cohen et al., 2011).

A further reason for choosing a critical research paradigm lies in its central focus on power relations: Habermas (1984), one of the most famous representatives of critical theory, claims that few authorities have the social and positional power in society. Critical educational researchers are therefore interested in the relationship between school and society, the ways in which power gets (re)produced through education, as well as the role of education in maintaining inequality in society (Cohen et al., 2011). This study embeds the critical educational research paradigm by critically thinking about power relations when analysing the perceptions of teachers, pupils and families in relation to the current situation of recently arrived Roma pupils at Riverside. Due to the fact that the Roma community has been the victim of various power constellations in many European countries since coming to Europe in the 12th century, often suffering from segregation, stigmatisation and marginalisation, we think it is vital to be aware of the society's impact on this specific group. As a result, in this study we aim to investigate power relations and to incorporate them into the development of the RoLET. However, at this point it needs to be considered that this is a small-scale research study with data collected in one secondary school. We think that it would therefore be presumptuous to claim that this study could accomplish critical theory's goal of bringing about social change and contributing towards transforming individuals and society towards social democracy (Oliver, 1996 cited in Goodley, 2011, p.12; Habermas, 1984). Nonetheless, by adopting a critical theory approach this study aims to develop the RoLET as an analytical model, fully aware of the conditions and circumstances it is embedded in, as well as its limits.

3.4 Research Questions

As related in Chapter 1, the information gathered while collecting data in the RAC project resulted in the impression that the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010) has its limitations for analysing the current situation of Roma pupils in Sheffield and that consequently, there is a need to question the categorisation of Roma pupils within the term “Gypsy Roma and Traveller” (GRT). It is argued that in order to adequately describe and understand the present situation of Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield, an adapted and more specific version of the TARGET model is needed that takes into account the findings of the RAC project. As a result, a revised analytical model is developed: the *Roma Language and Education Tool* (RoLET).

This study’s aim is to introduce the RoLET as an analytical model for schools, teachers and other professionals working with newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in UK secondary schools that helps them to identify the needs of these pupils in the best possible and most holistic way. In order to meet this aim the following research questions are addressed:

1. In what way is the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2010) limited in representing the situation of Slovak Roma pupils in a UK secondary school?
2. What features should a newly developed RoLET contain to meet the unique needs of Slovak Roma pupils in the UK?

3.5 Research Methods

In the following section we present a “grounded in the data” approach with an initial framework that comprises the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b) and the knowledge and beliefs we had had prior to engaging with the research topic. First we outline our approach of analysing the data before justifying why we opted for balancing *a priori* with *a posteriori* knowledge (Wellington, 2015) in this study.

3.5.1 Data collection

The overall purpose of the RAC project was to critically examine the implications of Eastern European Roma's immigration to Sheffield. The particular focus was on understanding the education, social and linguistic integration of Roma pupils in a secondary school in Sheffield. In order to gain a holistic view of the Roma pupils' experience, school policies and practices in relation to the Roma were examined.

In her role as a research assistant, Prieler spent a total of 20 days over a period of four months at Riverside for the purpose of data collection. During this time she investigated the work of individual curriculum departments in relation to subject-specific integration and education issues by conducting focus groups with staff members of ten different curriculum departments. In these meetings, the challenges and issues of each department regarding the Roma pupil cohort, as well as good practice examples, were discussed.

Additionally, interviews were held with members of the Senior Leadership Team, and specialist non-teaching support staff, such as the Family Liaison Officer, or the Extended Service Coordinator of the school. Apart from gathering information about the views of key staff, she also observed a range of lessons across the school in order to further investigate the progress children were making in terms of integration and progress. To ensure that Roma parents' voice also got heard in the project, Prieler went on three family visits and spoke to parents with the help of the school's Roma Support Worker. In addition, she conducted semi-structured pupil group interviews with Year 7 pupils. Through these interviews the intention was to gather information on the issues and challenges Roma pupils were facing in school and how to provide targeted support for them. In general, the overall goal of the project was to facilitate improvements for future immigrant Slovak Roma pupils at school and to provide an example for other schools with similar demographics.

To ensure that the project was conducted according to the ethical standards of the University of Sheffield, an ethical review was approved via the university department's ethics review procedure (Ethical Application 002799). In addition, all participants were provided with an Information Sheet. Furthermore, we took

particular care that all participants understood that participation was optional and that withdrawal from the project was possible at any time. Finally, all participants were asked to sign specifically designed Consent forms, before the interviews and lesson observations. Following Wellington (2015) and Cohen et al. (2011) the trustworthiness of a study depends on whether the research was done ethically or not. In our view, the ethical measures that were implemented in the RAC project ensured that the research was conducted in the best possible ethical way. We therefore consider that the data utilized in this project are trustworthy.

3.5.2 Means of Analysis

In this section we describe our approach for analysing the collected data to develop the RoLET as an analytical model.

Following Wellington (2015), before starting to analyse data the researcher needs to address whether one is going to bring already established categories to the data, or the categories are derived from it. While choosing to work with *a priori* categories signifies that they are already established before the actual analysis of the literature, *a posteriori categories* are derived from the data themselves (Wellington, 2015). In this study we opted to steer for a middle course between those two extremes: This means that some categories of analysis were pre-established (*a priori*), as they were derived from the already existing literature around GRT. At the same time, some categories can be described as *a posteriori*, since they were not established before, but rather emerged from the notes taken while collecting data in school. Developing *a posteriori* categories can also be described as an inductive analysis, which is “based on the assumption that inferences can be developed by examining empirical data for patterns” (Roulston, 2010. p. 150). According to Roulston (2010), an inductive analysis has the advantage of including the participants, by considering topics that are brought up by them.

Choosing a mixed approach that enables the researcher to establish *a priori* and *a posteriori* categories when analysing the data gave us the opportunity to consider and do justice to the information within the data in an appropriate way (Wellington, 2015). In this study, our perspective from the observations was

triangulated with the perspectives of teachers, pupils, and parents to identify the themes (categories) that emerged from the data. In order to develop the RoLET from the collected data, we followed the consecutive analytical stages as described by Wellington (2015, p. 267):

In the first step – *Immersion* – we listened to the recordings of the interviews and made transcripts of them; in a second round we read through the notes and highlighted and annotated passages that appeared to be significant. The same was done with the field notes of the lesson observations. According to Riley (1990), as well as Rubin & Rubin (1995) this first step gave us the opportunity to approach the data open-mindedly by focussing on the data as such, refraining from comparing or evaluating it with other data or theories.

The second stage – *Reflecting* – emphasized the importance of allowing oneself to step back from the data in order to reflect on what one had perceived so far from a distant viewpoint (Wellington, 2015). John Dewey (1933) was one of the first social scientists who identified reflection as a specific form of thinking and purposeful inquiry that results from hesitation or perplexity caused by an experienced situation. In order to experience reflective thinking that, according to Dewey (1933), could move us away from routine thinking towards a critical consideration of taken-for-granted knowledge, we scheduled a one-week break in between the completion of step 1 and the start of step 3 when planning the timetable for this study. Although sceptical at first, whether this “week for reflection” would actually have a positive impact on the data analysis, it proved itself as highly valuable for the following third step: By reading through the material a second time we became aware of hitherto undiscovered aspects.

The third stage – *Analysing data* – marked the actual analysis of the data: By adopting a thematic analysis, we selected and filtered topics and themes out of the interview transcripts and the field notes of the observations. We read through the data and highlighted passages, which seemed to be significant. In a next step we tried to group themes under headings. The chosen categories were either influenced by the literature (*a priori* categories), or else emerged from the data (*a posteriori* categories). Following Geertz (2003), Roulston (2010), and Kelle (2005) we ensured that chosen

categories stood in close relation with the actual data and that data was not forced to fit certain codes.

We experienced a smooth transition from the previous step, to the fourth stage – *Recombining/ Synthesizing data* – in which we examined the data to find themes, regularities and patterns, as well as possible irregularities, paradoxes, or contrasts within the transcripts and field notes (Delamont, 1992). Following the author, we closely examined the categories, relocated certain passages to different categories, merged similar categories or formed new categories where necessary. In addition, we adapted the categories by creating sub-categories, but also made the decision to omit some paragraphs or categories, as they appeared to be superfluous or to bear no relationship with the aim of the study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). While the previous step of data analysis sought to take pieces of data out of their context, the aim of this stage was therefore to put data into categories that provide a new, suitable context (Wellington, 2015).

In the fifth stage – *Relating and locating data* – we slightly deflected from Wellington (2015) and compared the categories from the data, not with additional literature, but rather with the factors listed in the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010). This step proved to have a significant impact on our decision of how to develop the RoLET: When matching the RAC project findings with the categories in the TARGET model, we realized that most of the findings were congruent, with the exception of four categories. As a result, we made the decision to focus on these four categories, to emphasize the difference between the TARGET model and the RoLET.

According to Wellington (2015) the final stage – *Presenting data* – is the most important step of any study, as there is the need to present the data “as fairly, clearly, coherently and attractively as possible” (p. 265). In this step we therefore needed to decide which verbatim quotes to choose to illustrate and reinforce the four chosen categories, and whether we would present short, succinct passages, or rather longer anecdotes (Woods, 1999). Furthermore, decisions had to be made in terms of structure and the presentation of the findings, such as the best way of positioning the RoLET within the text. The result of this stage can be found in Chapter 4.

3.6 Ethical considerations

First, as a result of our personal interest in ethnographic research – especially collaborative ethnographic research (Lassiter, 2005; Campbell & Lassiter, 2015) – we made the decision to refer to all research participants in the RAC project as “research partners”. Although the term is closely linked to a collaborative ethnographic research approach – striving for modes of collaboration at every stage of the research process, starting with the conceptualization of the research project, the fieldwork itself and finishing with the writing up of the research report (Campbell & Lassiter, 2015) – which was incompatible to the fixed outline of the RAC project, we still decided to stick to the term since we considered that it fits best to express that all people involved in the research project were considered to be equal. In general we have the strong belief that, when it comes to conducting research together with research partners, whether they are school teachers, children or parents and whether they are members of a marginalized group or not, it is important as a researcher to strive for a responsible research approach. Thus, we strived to be tolerant towards different perspectives (Hammersley, 2005), to have the willingness to negotiate ethical dilemmas according to the context and specific situation (Kvale, 1996), and were honest with the research partners in the sense that we reflected the influence of our experience on our shared understanding of reality (Rosaldo, 1993).

During analysing the data for developing the RoLET, we made sure that we were aware of the influences the choice of a critical theory paradigm had on the interpretation and analysis of the findings (Sikes, 2004). Furthermore, we were alert not to make the mistake of considering our writing-up as “a neutral vehicle for transporting the ‘truth’” (Usher, 1996, p. 33). Following Usher (1996), we therefore made sure that our analysis did not create the impression of displaying one true reality, which dismisses other possible interpretations of the data.

Finally, in terms of presenting the data, apart from ensuring that all research participants’ anonymities were sufficiently protected, we carefully selected the quotes for illustrating the findings of the research, in order to avoid portraying an informant in a harmful way (Sikes, 2004). After we finished the writing-up process, we thought through all eventualities that could happen after data dissemination, and made sure

that we had “taken all possible precautions to avoid harming and doing wrong to anyone” (Sikes, 2004, p. 32).

CHAPTER 4. DEVELOPING THE ROLET

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analytical work that has been done in the development of the *Roma Language Education Tool (RoLET)*. In the first section we consider studies into GRT education since 2004, the year of Slovakia's EU accession. Subsequently, a presentation of the RoLET diagram is followed by the discussion of four key factors that mark the deviations of the RoLET from the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010).

Drawing on the definition of GRT conceptualized by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF, 2008; 2010) and discussed in Chapter 2.2, we refer to the “traditional” GRT grouping as encompassing all groups listed by the DCSF *apart from* the Eastern European Roma. Therefore by referring to “GRT” we address Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Welsh Gypsies and Travellers, Scottish Travellers, Showmen, Circus, and Bargees. The terms “Eastern European Roma” and “Slovak Roma” are used (by us) to identify the relatively newer Roma arrivals from Eastern Europe in Sheffield and particularly from Slovakia who are, as it was argued in Chapter 2, incongruous with the GRT as defined by the government (DCSF, 2008; 2010).

4.2 Review of previous research into GRT Education

This review spans the period between 2004 to present and consists of 14 items including government reports, academic studies, and one conference talk that addresses GRT education in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this review is to situate the current study in the wider GRT research field and to reinforce the argument that there is a divergence between traditional GRT research and the research with the new arrivals from Eastern Europe; much of the literature reviewed focuses on British/Irish Gypsies and Travellers, or some combination thereof. For this review, in the first three sections – 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 – examples are selected from the literature

and synthesized around different types of approaches taken by the authors to classify their participants as part of the GRT community. In the subsequent section – 4.2.4 – studies specifically addressing Eastern European Roma in GRT research are presented to elucidate the shortcomings of GRT research that fails to incorporate the specifics of the Eastern European Roma. A summary of the conclusions drawn from the literature review completes the first section.

4.2.1 Studies that emphasize the itinerant character of GRT

Some studies and reports focus on the itinerant character as a feature that is shared by all GRT communities. However, these studies appear to draw conclusions based upon data taken from Gypsy/Traveller cohorts only, not the Eastern European Roma, yet extend the findings to cover all GRT groups. We argue that these studies wrongly assume the GRT to be a homogeneous cohort.

Bhopal's (2004) study, which focuses on low attendance and achievement of GRT pupils and on shifting attitudes towards school education by the GRT community, provides an example of our argument: His study not only emphasizes the need for schools to work together with families in order to foster positive attitudes towards education, but also highlights the problem of interruptions to education through the itinerant lives of GRT (Bhopal, 2004). However, while the author addresses issues and problems of GRT, data were only collected among members of Gypsy and Traveller communities, with Roma communities not actually being part of the study.

The DCSF (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008) document provides another example where the nomadic lifestyle of GRT communities seems to be taken as an argument to consider GRT as a homogenous group: Whereas the document refers to GRT, it solely addresses families who live a nomadic lifestyle, i.e. are engaged in a business that requires them to travel from place to place, and advises parents, carers, schools and local authorities on how to deal with raising school attendance of children from nomadic families. We argue that by referring to GRT throughout the paper, the DCSF holds the belief that all members of GRT communities frequently travel, which is not true for all Roma families (FV: 3).

Finally, Cudworth's (2008) paper on the policy, pedagogy and education of an East London GRT cohort claims that there is a need for schools to recognize the itinerant life of GRT. Similar to the examples above, the author sees the nomadic lifestyle as one key feature of all GRT communities. This can be seen in Cudworth's claim for a flexible curriculum that should not only be based on a settled mode of existence. Similar to Bhopal's (2004) study, Cudworth does not consider the Roma community, only collecting data in a London school with a significant Gypsy and Traveller cohort.

In this study we argue that although Roma families do sometimes have a nomadic lifestyle, it is narrow to apply conclusions of GRT studies which only consider members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

4.2.2 Studies that omit mentioning any language barriers for GRT

In this section we further emphasize the point that studies on GRT often have limited application to the experience of Eastern European Roma pupils in the UK school system. As will be further discussed when presenting the RoLET, language barriers are the main challenge for Eastern European Roma pupils. Whereas the following GRT studies focus on different aspects that influence educational outcomes of GRT pupils, language challenges are not mentioned.

Levinson's (2008) ethnographic in-depth study focuses on English Gypsy participants. The author argues that schools need to acknowledge that the Gypsy's context-rich learning, which can be characterized as learning by observing, is different from the decontextualized and abstract nature of structured formal school learning. Though the author emphasizes the need for schools to validate the cultural capital of English Gypsy children, no language issues are mentioned in this study.

Myers and Bhopal's (2009) study focuses on the importance of building up relationships between GRT communities and schools: the authors offer insights into community understandings of 'safety' and argue that school absence is mainly caused by experience of bullying and racism in school, which in turn leads to GRT pupils' underachievement in school. Whereas low educational outcomes are discussed in this

study, the findings only apply to the situation of Eastern European Roma to a certain degree, since language barriers and their impact on achievement are not discussed.

Both Wilkin et al.'s (2009a) study of 15 schools focusing on GRT pupils' attainment, attendance, exclusion, transition, retention and educational outcomes, as well as Wilkin et al.'s (2009b) in-depth study exploring GRT pupils' engagement in school, also do not consider language challenges Roma pupils face when entering the school system in the UK. This can again be explained by the fact that mostly Gypsy Traveller communities were considered in the data collection. The only section devoted to Roma focuses on their present economic and educational situation in Romania and fails to address the specific issues they face when migrating to other countries, such as the UK.

Whereas the above-illustrated studies bring forward important aspects that are often relevant when thinking about the Roma community, they fail to consider immigrated Roma pupils' struggle with language acquisition when entering an unfamiliar education system.

4.2.3 GRT studies including the needs of Roma from Eastern Europe

There are studies that focus on the traditional GRT demographic but explicitly include the Roma from Eastern Europe, such as the EU report "National Roma integration Strategies" (2014). This report builds on the "EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020" (EC, 2011), which sets up a long-term process until 2020 to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. The EU report (2014) highlights positive changes since a comprehensive and evidence-based framework for the inclusion of Roma was developed for the first time. It emphasizes that although the framework was developed together with all member states, there is a need for tailoring the approach for Roma inclusion to each member state and to each national situation. Since 2011 a number of provisions were made specifically for Roma in the UK, such as the development of a Roma educational support programme, the implementation of Roma welfare officers, or the planning of an online curriculum on Roma culture in Wales (EU Report, 2014). Although the report explicitly highlights

Roma and not GRT integration strategies, we argue that by addressing all EU member states, it considers issues for Roma more broadly and is therefore not entirely sufficient when referring to the situation of Slovak Roma in the UK.

In comparison to the EU report (2014), Lane et al. (2014) specifically review the UK progress made regarding the EU framework for Roma integration strategies (2014), but surprisingly conducted their research within the UK GRT communities and not the Roma-only community. We argue that the authors' decision to apply the EU framework for national Roma integration also to the Gypsy and Traveller communities provides another example of the misunderstanding in the UK of Eastern European Roma being an integral part of the GRT community. Finally, whereas Lane et al. (2014) recommend the inclusion of GRT culture and history in the curriculum, and the need for rigorously tracking GRT pupil progress by educational services, the report provides little information on the educational experiences of Roma children in the UK.

Some additional information on the educational experience of newly arrived Roma children in the UK can be found in Reynolds' (2008) report that is broadly focused on migrant children. While the author does discuss Roma pupils, she still considers them as an integral part of the GRT community when arguing that all migrant children, including GRT, need to be recognized as a group with specific educational and social needs (Reynolds, 2008).

In summary we argue that while the above-illustrated studies do take the Roma community into account when doing research on GRT communities, they do not consider them as explicitly different from Gypsy or Traveller communities, making it difficult to assess the Roma community's specific needs.

4.2.4 Studies that specifically focus on Roma from Eastern Europe

For the development of the RoLET, we consider literature that focuses primarily on the Roma from Eastern Europe or Slovakia as particularly relevant: Známenačková (2008) addressed the migration of the people from Slovakia to

Sheffield for the first time in her conference paper: “Roma New Migrants”. In her brief report, the author provides background information about Roma families’ difficult living conditions in Bystrany, the Slovakian hometown of the majority of Roma residing in Sheffield.

While there is no other research work published on the Roma in Sheffield, we consider Clark’s (2014) work on Eastern European Roma communities in Glasgow very interesting, as it aims to understand their integration and stigmatisation by examining welfare provision, empowerment and identity. In our view, the report’s claim that there is a need for considering the social and economic situation of the Roma community when thinking about strategies to include them into the wider community, is also valuable for schools like Riverside and their strategies to enhance the engagement of Roma families in the school community.

New’s (2014) study which focuses on language policy in the Czech Republic points out the difficulties Roma face in terms of their language, since Romani is considered to be deficient in relation to the standardized national languages in the Czech Republic. New (2014) concludes that the lack or limited ability of Roma to speak the national language excludes them from society: “Speaking this ‘ethnolect’ [Romani] instead of proper Czech was a primary component of social exclusion, and an obstacle to the integration of Roma children in Czech schools” (p.166-167). When connecting New’s (2014) argument with our earlier claim that a lack of English language skills is an issue for newly arrived Roma families in the UK, we conclude that some Roma families in Sheffield might already be familiar with being outsiders due to limited language skills.

Sime et al.’s (2014) study of the Roma in Glasgow provides insights into the current situation of Eastern European Roma in the UK. Both Romanian and Slovak Roma were considered in the study. The findings show that Roma pupils have low levels of prior schooling and/or poor experiences of schooling when entering the educational system in the UK. Furthermore, it is reported that after living in the UK for some months, there is a raise in Roma parents’ aspirations for their children. In general, more than 62% of secondary Roma pupils in the study are classified as NTE (New to English), or considered to be at the “early acquisition” stage (Sime et al., 2014, p.26-31). One of Sime et al.’s (2014) findings mirrors a focus of this study –

language issues: The authors conclude that “attainment is clearly linked to Roma children’s developing English language skills” (Sime et al., 2014, p. 48). In our view, this is important for our study since it provides up-to-date information on one Roma community in a UK city, making it possible for us to compare it with the findings of the RAC study.

Finally, we consider the OFSTED (2014) publication “Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education” as significant for the development of the RoLET: It represents the first attempt by OFSTED to assess the specific needs and challenges of the Eastern European Roma community, while focusing on barriers to pupils’ engagement and attainment. Moreover, it assesses the challenges for local authorities and schools, as well as successful transferable strategies to support Roma pupils (OFSTED, 2014). Key findings highlight good practices in relation to integrating and supporting the NTE children and progress in the learning of those pupils who settle rapidly into schooling and have uninterrupted provision. Negative findings include NTE pupils with little prior schooling, who have difficulties engaging with school routines, local authorities and schools struggling for resources and a shortage of specialist EAL (English as an Additional Language) teachers. These findings are considered to be significant for this study because they emphasize the language aspect: Based on the findings of the Ofsted report we conclude that Roma pupils’ successful English language acquisition is not only positively linked to their attainment in school, but also to their integration and attendance.

4.2.5 Conclusions drawn from the review of prior studies

When reviewing the prior studies it seems that many researchers overlook the need to clarify the way in which the GRT cohort is conceptualized and classified in order to encompass the Roma from Eastern Europe. If research is undertaken with a GRT community that does *not* contain Eastern European Roma (i.e. non- British/Irish), we argue that the researchers’ findings cannot be fully applied to the ‘Roma’ situation. First, this can be seen in studies by Bhopal (2004), Cudworth (2008), or the DCSF (2008), which suggest that an itinerant character shared by all GRT communities justifies the application of research findings based on one GRT

community to the others. In addition, studies such as Myers & Bhopal's (2009) work on the importance of establishing links between the GRT community and school, Wilkin et al.'s (2009a; 2009b) work on raising attainment and attendance of GRT pupils, or Levinson's (2008) ethnographic study which emphasizes the importance of learning by experience in the Roma community, present their findings as relevant for all GRT communities, whereas research is mainly done within the Gypsy and/or Traveller communities. Finally, we argue that even studies that explicitly consider the Roma cohort – such as Reynolds, (2008), the EU report (2014), or Lane et al. (2014) – still fail to acknowledge their differences to the Gypsy and Traveller community by applying their research findings to all GRT communities.

In comparison to the above-mentioned studies, up-to-date research work (Clark 2014; New 2014; Sime et al., 2014; OFSTED 2014) that particularly focuses on the Eastern European Roma is considered to be valuable for the purpose of this study, as it discusses their specific struggle with English language acquisition, when entering the UK.

When comparing the findings of the RAC project with the GRT literature it can be said that the Roma in Sheffield share some similarities with Gypsies and Travellers. The Roma in Sheffield can be seen as marginalized and impoverished, with Roma children often experiencing forms of interrupted schooling (FV: 1; 2; 3; PI: 1; 2; 3). However, beyond these similarities we would argue that the Eastern European Roma in Sheffield have more in common with other migrants, such as members from the Polish or Pakistani communities living in the UK. They do not live in caravans or trailer parks, do not undertake seasonal work nor share many other characteristics of the traveller lifestyle. In addition, Roma pupils are often a challenge for schools due to their unpredictable arrival and departure patterns, often lack of prior formal schooling and language-related issues (Payne, 2014).

In summary, we conclude that whilst Eastern European Roma are subsumed under the label “GRT” (DCSF, 2008; 2010), they are distinct from British/ Irish Gypsies and Travellers primarily in the sense that they do not speak English, at least not usually on arrival. Challenging this assumed homogeneity is one goal of this study.

4.3 The Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET)

This chapter introduces the Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET) as the result of supplementing the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) with findings from ongoing research into newly arrived Slovak Roma families and pupils in Sheffield and at Riverside. At first, the elements of the RoLET are described. Subsequently, the categories added to the TARGET model are illustrated through examples of the data collected in the RAC project and complemented with relevant literature around each theme.

Aligned with the TARGET model, the main aim of the RoLET is to function as an analytical model, providing a visual representation of factors, which may be significant influences on the educational outcomes of recently immigrated Eastern European Roma pupils in the UK.

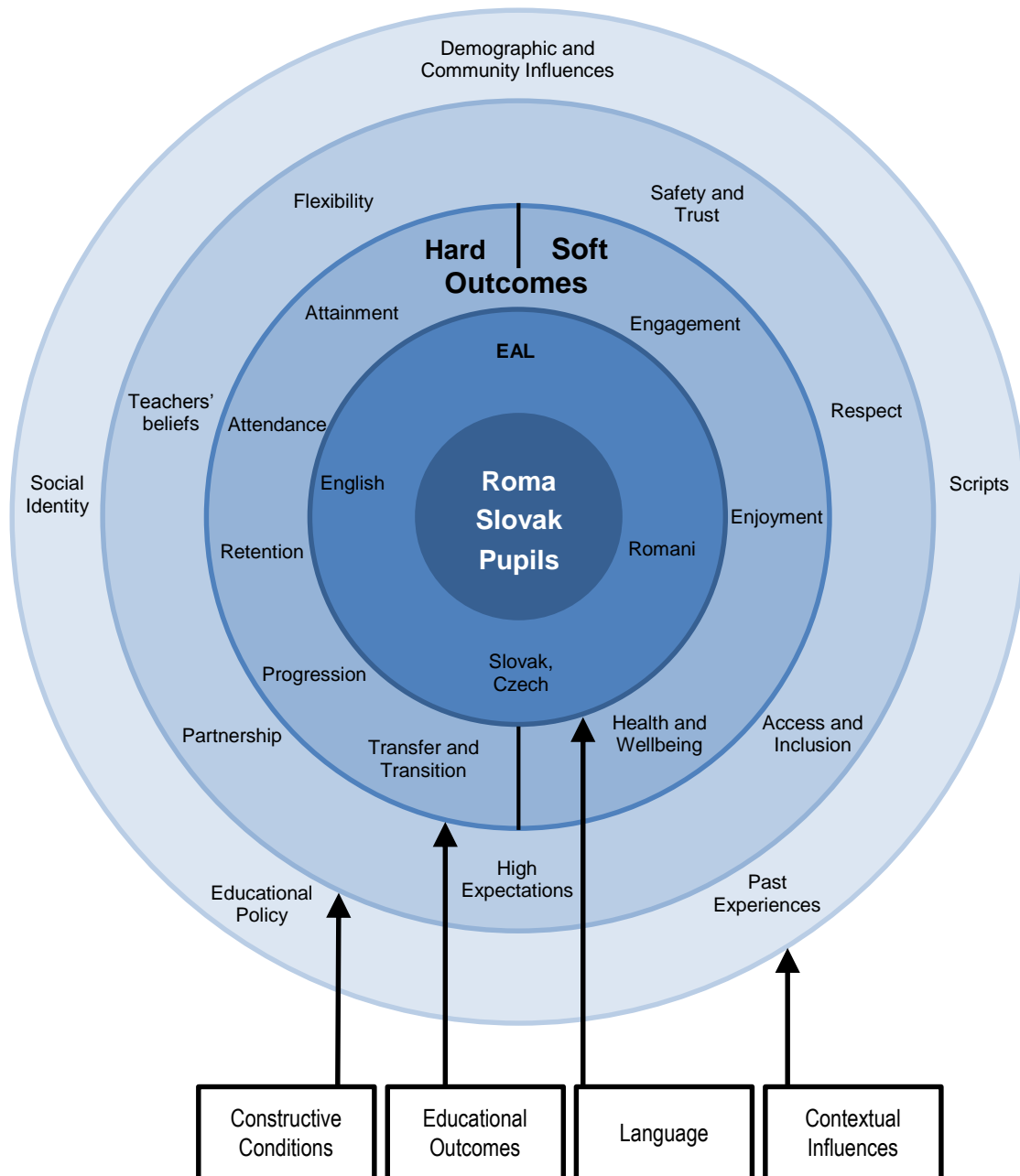


Figure 2. Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET) model.

As can be seen in Figure 2 illustrating the RoLET, the outline model was adapted from the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010). Each circle represents a category under which themes are subordinated. However, in contrast to the TARGET model, there are four instead of three concentric circles, which are all arranged around the centre illustrating recently immigrated Slovak Roma Pupils in Sheffield. Putting them in the centre of the model is significant for two reasons: First, this prominent position is chosen to emphasize that whereas all other factors also interrelate with each other, they primarily refer directly to the Roma pupils themselves. Secondly, the model is intended to remind professionals working with

Roma pupils, that while improving pupils' measurable educational outcomes, or upgrading schools' league table results might be the motivation to use the RoLET as an analytical tool, we believe that supporting Roma pupils in their individual growth to become independent and confident members of society should always be in first place.

The categories, each illustrating factors that need to be considered when analysing new Roma arrivals from Eastern Europe, are represented in four concentric circles. Three of them were carried over from the TARGET model, whereas one category is newly introduced:

- **Language:** This category is added to the RoLET, since language issues are not addressed in the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010). Themes grouped around the category highlight issues in relation to the language acquisition of newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils, including the special characteristic of Romani being a non-standardized language, pupils' language skills, and schools' reactions to address these issues. In the model the key languages are displayed – *Romani*, *Slovak or Czech*⁸, and *English* – as well as the school's way of addressing these languages issues, putting them into the context of *EAL (English as an Additional Language)*.
- **Educational Outcomes:** This circle embedding *Language* displays general educational outcomes that not only Roma pupils but rather all pupils should achieve during their time in school. Whereas the outcomes are identical to the TARGET model, a clearer distinction between hard and soft outcomes was made in the RoLET. Whereas the hard outcomes, which can be characterized in terms of measurable 'hard facts', outweigh numerically the soft outcomes (themselves similar to the themes from 'Every Child Matters', 2003), the RoLET considers them as equally important.
- **Constructive Conditions:** In line with the TARGET model, the RoLET lists constructive conditions and considers them either supportive or obstructive of educational outcomes of Eastern European Roma pupils. To the already existing

⁸ Although the majority of pupils at Riverside are Slovak Roma, there are a few Czech Roma. Therefore, the RoLET extends to both groups.

six conditions – *Flexibility, Safety and Trust, Respect, Access and Inclusion, High Expectations, Partnership* – the RoLET includes *Teachers' beliefs* as a vital additional constructive condition.

- **Contextual Influences:** As suggested by the TARGET model, the outermost concentric circle illustrates contextual influences that also need to be considered when holistically analysing the situation of new arrived Roma pupils in a UK school. However, these influences have the distinction of being not under the direct influence of the school or other educational or professional groups and could, similar to constructive conditions, either have a positive or a negative impact on Roma pupils' educational outcomes. Whereas the contextual influences – *Educational Policy, Social Identity, Scripts, Past Experiences, Demographic and Community influences* – are adopted unaltered from the TARGET model, the RoLET puts an emphasis on the latter two themes, complementing them with key findings from the collected data.

In the following sections, rather than discussing all aspects of the RoLET, we focus on the features that mark the difference between the RoLET and the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010). In the first section, we explore the newly added category *Language*, by illustrating each of the subordinated themes with examples from the collected data. In the subsequent section we argue the need for adding *Teachers' beliefs* as a constructive condition. Finally, the focus is laid on the two contextual influences *Demographic and Community*, and *Past Experiences*, and the reasons for considering these two when analysing the situation of newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in school.

4.3.1 Language

Already the chosen name of the analytical model – *Roma Language and Education Tool* – conveys the message that language and issues around the acquisition of language play an integral part when thinking about the Slovak Roma pupils in Sheffield. The decision to consider Roma pupils' issues around language falls in line with Sime et al. (2014), who claim that newly arrived Roma children's positive educational outcomes in the UK education system are strongly linked to their

development of English language skills. As a result, *Language* occupies the second concentric circle of the RoLET model.

When consulting literature (e.g. Geraghty & Conacher, 2014; Moskal, 2014; Rasinger 2010) on the challenges recently immigrated pupils from non-English speaking countries face in terms of their English language acquisition, it becomes clear that Roma pupils are facing similar issues. Those issues and challenges around language not only influence pupils' access to the curriculum, but also have a large impact on the education system and the way in which it reacts to the fact that large numbers of Roma pupils enter school with little or no English language abilities (Geraghty & Conacher, 2014; Rasinger, 2010). When analysing the data that illustrates language issues, it can be seen that RAC project participants' struggle with *Language* is comparable to the situation in other schools, which face issues concerning their newly arrived pupils from other non-English speaking countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, or Poland (Moskal, 2014).

NTE classes as one intervention strategy for EAL

The language category of the RoLET is intended to indicate that schools may take different approaches in order to support newly arrived Roma pupils in their English Language acquisition. One intervention strategy that is carried out at Riverside is providing special NTE (New to English) classes for all EAL (English as an Additional Language) pupils entering school. With Riverside traditionally having a diverse community with the number of pupils whose first language is not English being over twice as high as the national average (RAC, 2015b), the school has had long experience of dealing with pupils with either low or no English language abilities and supporting them in accessing the school curriculum. However, since the large influx of Slovak Roma pupils in 2011 (Riverside MFL Teacher, PC, 22/5/2015), the school changed its approach, arguing that the large numbers of pupils with hardly any English language abilities forced them to take action: When entering Riverside, all Roma pupils have to sit an English test and are then sent to separate NTE classes according to their age group. At the time of the study there were three NTE classes at Riverside, each combining two year groups, e.g. in NTE3 year 9 and year 10 were taught together. Apart from two PE lessons per week, in which the NTE classes

joined their year group peers from their “regular” classes, and two Maths lessons, the new arrivals were taught English only. NTE pupils are assessed approximately every four weeks and depending on their progress, proceed into the regular classes, where they join their year-group peers.

Challenges with Romani being a non-standardized language

When observing lessons and talking to teachers, probably the most obvious challenge in language terms that can be seen at Riverside is the struggle with the fact that Romani is part of an oral Roma tradition and therefore a non-standardized language (Matras, 2005). For Roma coming to the UK, the negative implications of having a non-standardized first language are already familiar to them, as they also face problems in their countries of origin because of Romani being seen as deficient in relation to standardized national languages (New, 2014). This essential characteristic of Romani, its non-standardization (Matras 2005; Payne, 2014), is incorporated in the RoLET because it marks the language’s difference to other languages spoken in the school. This could represent a challenge for some schools, in a way that already established arrangements and strategies designed to support pupils with low English skills cannot simply be applied to Roma pupils. At Riverside for instance, teachers pointed out the fact that there is no Romani/ English dictionary available to use in the classroom (TI: 4; 11).

One example of dealing with this situation can be found at Riverside: Since most of the Roma pupils in school have Slovak as their second language, teachers help themselves by using “Google Translate”, or Slovak dictionaries during lessons to translate English key words into Slovak. However, whereas all Slovak Roma pupils asked (PI: 1; 2; 3) said that they could speak Slovak, their reading and writing ability depends on whether they attended school in Slovakia and for how long (Riverside MFL Teacher, PC, 22/5/2015). Therefore, as pointed out by one teacher in an interview, providing Roma pupils with the Slovak translation of an English keyword is not an ideal solution, since it is not guaranteed whether they know the meaning of the Slovak word (TI: 8).

Another example of the school struggling with the features associated with Romani is revealed when taking a closer look at the Roma speaking Teaching

Assistants (TA) working at Riverside. After the school experienced a great influx of Eastern European Roma pupils three years ago, the school decided to employ Roma-speaking TAs (Riverside MFL Teacher, PC, 22/5/2015), but finding suitable candidates for these positions proved to be problematic. Although the Roma TAs meet many of the requirements of a TA position, and can deal with behavioural issues and conduct basic oral translation duties, they still need to be able to render letters home into written Slovak - not always a straightforward task.

Roma pupils' thoughts on their language skills and related issues

The interviewed Roma pupils who attended the NTE 3 classes (Year 7 and Year 8) enjoyed going to school in the UK and said that they liked the fact that they were now able to learn English (PI: 1; 2; 3). All of them were convinced that their English had improved since they started going to school at Riverside and they felt supported by their teachers. The pupils interviewed also approved of the fact that they were attending the NTE classes before joining their Year cohort in the regular classes, because they felt that they would need to learn English properly before being able to access the curriculum in regular classes. Furthermore, nearly all of the pupils mentioned that they felt secure in the NTE classes practising their English, because they attended the class together with their Roma friends who were in the same situation (PI: 1; 2; 3). The fact that there were Roma speaking members of staff in school was also rated positively by the students who said that they could ask them for help, in case they did not understand the English instructions, or had a question.

On the other hand, some Roma pupils were worried in relation to their transition to regular classes: In all interviews (PI: 1; 2; 3) the fear of being bullied by their non-Roma peers was expressed as a concern. One girl, for instance, stated:

I do not want to leave here [the NTE class] because the others will laugh at me when I don't know the answer or do not understand what the teacher wants (PI: 2).

Teachers' thoughts on Roma pupils' English language abilities

When asked about their thoughts on language issues in relation to teaching Roma pupils, teachers' reactions diverged. One group of teachers cited new Roma arrivals' low English language abilities as problematic and pointed out the struggles

with assisting them to access the curriculum, whilst another group of staff perceived Roma pupils' shortcomings in articulating themselves in English as not a major issue.

Teachers (TI: 4; 6; 10) who expressed their worries about dealing with Roma pupils' low English language skills mainly did not feel trained to adjust their lessons in a way that made them accessible for EAL pupils, and felt that they would need more support from school. One teacher, for instance claimed:

Ever since the big influx of Roma pupils I feel like an EAL teacher during lessons. The problem is that I do not feel confident when doing so, because I was not trained to be one. ... I just do not know how to deal with [the Roma pupils]... there needs to be a consistent approach in school. (TI: 4)

Teachers' insecurity in reacting to the Roma pupils' English language abilities can also be seen when they reflected on interventions they introduced in class. When talking about allowing Roma students to use Romani in class for helping each other, one teacher expressed his doubts about whether he had chosen the right intervention:

Even if I let a good student explain the word to the others Roma pupils in Roma, I can never be sure, if they understood it themselves (TI: 8).

Another issue raised by teachers was the fact that Roma pupils were speaking to each other in Romani during lessons. This factor was not only seen as running contrary to the school's efforts to improve Roma pupils' English skills, but was also perceived as having a negative impact on the classroom community (TI: 5; 7; 8; 11). When talking about her experience of teaching a Y7 group with 14-15 Roma pupils, one teacher, for instance, stated:

Their language is the main issue: Once they do practical work, their conversation is in Roma/Slovak and the other students feel excluded ... School should encourage them to talk English only, in order to practise it (TI: 7).

In opposition to that, other teachers did not perceive Roma pupils' language abilities as a major issue. One pointed out that she simply shows them what she wants them to do, instead of only giving them verbal instructions (TI: 1). This was observed in several lessons: Teachers explained tasks slowly, using basic vocabulary and short sentences. Some made sure that Roma pupils knew the keywords and otherwise provided explanations. Furthermore, a lot of gestures were used (TI: 3; 7; 9; 11). One

teacher pointed out that apart from showing Roma pupils what to do, he believed in letting them speak Romani during class, in order to explain tasks to each other:

In Y9 three Roma kids are quite good, so what I do is, I explain the task to the whole class and make sure that those three understand. Once they have understood, they function as ‘ambassadors in the classroom’; it is then their task to support the other pupils by explaining it to them in their language. (TI: 8)

Furthermore, some departments took initiative, sought collaborations with other departments and developed strategies in order to ensure that Roma pupils can access the curriculum: The science department for example, reacted to the sudden influx of low ability English speakers in the class by introducing a new curriculum, that was worked out in collaboration with the Language department, which was more task based and comprised a key word system (TI: 2).

In addition to restructuring the way in which lessons are taught in order to facilitate the needs of the newly arrived Roma pupils, four departments changed their exams to make them more accessible and to ensure Roma pupils’ chance of getting a qualification, despite language issues:

In Dancing, the Roma pupils’ language skills are not really an issue. Their practical work is brilliant and so what we do in terms of exams is that we give them some which are not so language heavy, or written work heavy, so that we can give them some qualifications. (TI: 7)

In summary, it can be said that *Language* is a topic that needs to be considered when looking at newly arrived Roma pupils from Eastern Europe in a UK school. Newly immigrated Roma pupils typically have hardly any English language skills (Sime et al., 2014) when entering school and teachers potentially face problems assisting Roma pupils with already established methods, particularly since Romani is non-standardized (Matras, 2005). Therefore, schools need to adjust their curriculum, by deciding on the best way of helping Roma pupils with their English language acquisition. In addition, entering a new school system, in which the lessons are taught in an unfamiliar language, represents a huge challenge for Roma pupils, impacting the self-confidence of some students, who are concerned about having negative experiences because of their English language skills (PI: 1; 2; 3). Whereas some teachers’ reactions and opinions on teaching large cohorts of Roma pupils with low English skills are positive (TI: 2; 7; 8), supporting Roma pupils’ adjustment to being taught in a foreign language is a challenge for the majority of staff members.

By situating *Language* next to the centre of the RoLET model, we argue that it forms one of the main priorities for newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils and is key to success in the UK educational system. We therefore conclude that considerations about educational outcomes of recently immigrated Eastern European Roma inevitably need to incorporate *Language* and all its associated challenges and issues.

4.3.2 Teachers' beliefs as a constructive condition

In line with the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010), examples of the constructive conditions *Flexibility, Safety and Trust, Respect, Access and Inclusion, High Expectations, Partnership* could also be found in the data that was collected at Riverside. However, in the course of the research work at school it became apparent that *Teachers' beliefs* form an important factor, which can either be obstructive or supportive towards Roma pupils' success in the UK education system. The importance of including teachers' beliefs in the RoLET is also based on Gutman & Vorhaus (2012), and Haslinger et al. (1996), who claim that pupils' educational outcomes depend on whether there is a supportive atmosphere in school. Furthermore, we think that teachers' beliefs need to be included into the RoLET model because they influence teaching practices in school (Theodorou, 2011). Therefore, following Alba & Holdaway (2013) this study argues that attainment gaps between Roma pupils and their non-Roma peers can only be closed, if teachers share the same expectations and responsibility for all students.

Drawing on Riverside teachers' statements regarding their opinion on the changes that had happened in school since the sudden and unexpected arrival of large numbers of Roma pupils, we want to show how some teachers' beliefs can be considered to have a supportive impact on the pupils, whereas other beliefs can be rated as having the potential to negatively impinge on Eastern European Roma pupils' educational outcomes.

One group of Riverside teachers could be characterized as very open and positive towards the Roma pupil cohort in school, which is indicated in their

statements about different topics: More than half of the interviewed teachers (TI: 1; 2; 5; 8; 9; 11; 12) pointed out their enjoyment of teaching Roma pupils. In addition, teachers' statements hinted towards cultural tolerance and an actual refusal to think of the Roma pupil cohort as problematic in comparison to pupils from other ethnic minorities:

Sometimes when they are walking down the corridors they are singing, but this is just how young people are... I would not say that there are big differences between the Roma and other migrants, they are just like any other new cohort being new to the British school system (TI: 2).

Further examples of supportive teachers' beliefs were statements showing that members of staff believe in Roma pupils' positive attitude towards learning: two teachers stated that many Roma students work very hard and want to proceed to college in future (TI: 2; 7). Adding to that, the Careers Advisor at the school pointed out that Roma pupils were grateful for their opportunity to attend a school in the UK (Staff member Interview 1).

Finally, another teacher supported the argument of this study that positive teachers' beliefs towards Roma pupils had the potential to beneficially impact on educational outcomes, by stating:

It is important that they realize that you appreciate them and enjoy working with them. Once you have earned that trust, they are working hard because they know that you care. (TI: 5)

In opposition to these teachers, there was another group of staff members who could be viewed as holding more negative beliefs towards the Roma pupils. Most of these beliefs were reflected in negative and/or generalising comments on the new arrivals, based on the argument that Roma pupils were different from other ethnic groups and needed to change their attitude towards learning and school in order to fit in (TI: 4; 7). These teachers also emphasized how difficult it was to teach Roma pupils, due to them essentially 'being Roma', and their consequent inadequacies, limitations and deficiencies in relation to school and learning (TI: 4; 6; 7; 10). The two comments below provide examples of teachers' beliefs that are considered to be obstructive in terms of the school's aim to raise Roma pupils' educational outcomes:

The problem with the Roma pupils is that they do not value education and do not see the importance of getting a qualification (TI: 4).

Roma are different to other ethnic groups, especially in terms of their wrong attitude towards education (TI: 10).

In summary, we conclude that it is important to incorporate teachers' beliefs into the RoLET, not only because they impact on teaching practices (Theodorou, 2011), but also because the attainment of Roma pupils can only be raised within a positive and nurturing school environment (Haslinger et al., 1996; Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Alba & Holdaway, 2013). By incorporating teachers' beliefs into the RoLET we want to encourage schools to address prevalent teachers' beliefs regarding Roma pupils, in order to reveal possible obstructive factors that counteract schools' efforts to raise Roma pupils' attainment.

4.3.3 Key contextual influences related to Eastern European Roma pupils

The outer circle of the RoLET is dedicated to the context schools are working in, which impacts on their endeavours to improve the educational outcomes for Eastern European Roma pupils. It is distinctive in comparison to the other circles since it displays external factors which lie outside the schools' range of influence but are nevertheless powerful in terms of supporting or obstructing the schools' aims to raise the outcomes of newly arrived Roma pupils (Wilkin et al., 2010). Following Wilkin et al. (2010), we believe that knowing these contextual influences displayed in the RoLET can support schools in their attempts to hurdle certain contextual barriers, and to derive benefit from the positive influences when it comes to developing strategies for raising Roma pupils' educational outcomes. In the following sections the emphasis is laid on two contextual influences displayed in the RoLET, which appeared to be significant in relation to newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils at Riverside. By providing examples from the RAC project we want to encourage schools with a Roma cohort to especially consider these two influential factors.

Demographic and Community as a contextual influence

In their study on GRT pupils, Myers & Bhopal (2009) point out that there is a chance of a school developing close relationships with GRT communities, if it is located close to these communities. The authors emphasize that the cooperation

between communities and school might be further deepened if the percentage of GRT pupils is rather high. Whereas both of these factors apply to Riverside, with a high percentage (approximately 15%) of Eastern European Roma pupils in school and with their families living in the immediate neighbourhood (Riverside MFL Teacher, PC, 22/5/2015), the school struggled to establish relationships with Roma parents.

Furthermore, despite Riverside employing Roma TAs directly from the community, which is claimed to positively support relationships between schools and families (Padfield, 2005; Robinson & Martin, 2008), teachers (TI: 6; 7; 13; 14) mentioned problems in terms of reaching families and encouraging them to get more involved within the school community. One of them claimed:

I have spent a lot of time writing letters to the Roma pupils' parents asking them to come to school so that we can have a chat, but I never got a response (TI: 13).

The Extended Service Coordinator from school, who organizes adult education evening courses held at Riverside, illustrated a similar point (Staff member interview 2): While she would have loved to support the Roma community and especially Roma women by providing them with basic courses in English, Maths, Crochet or Pottery, they did not react to translated invitations sent out to them.

Evidence of lack of close relationships between school and the Roma community was also found in the statements of two Riverside pupils' families: Whereas they were happy that their children were attending Riverside, both did not seem very interested in having more contact with the school (FV: 1; 2). According to Derrington & Kendall (2007) school-home relationships are often strained because of sanctions that were imposed by the school in the past, for example following a behavioural incident in school, and which were considered to be unfair by Roma families. One father (FV: 1) put another reason forward, claiming that his search for work prevented him from getting into contact with his daughter's school. However, when one mother was asked whether she would be interested in attending an adult education evening course, she and her husband signalled interest and said that it would be beneficial for them (FV: 3).

In summary, these examples show how difficult it can be for a school to build up relationships with the Roma community. Nevertheless, by displaying demographic

and community influences as contextual influences in the RoLET, this study wants to highlight the importance of building trust and establishing relationships between Roma parents and schools in order to overcome issues that are potentially based on lack of communication (Kiddle, 1999; Derrington & Kendall, 2004).

Past Experiences as a contextual influence

In the TARGET model, Wilkin et al. (2010) defined the contextual influence *Past Experience* as “the attitudes (and expectations) held by all members of the school community” (p. 91). In the RoLET the focus is especially on the past experiences of Roma families with education institutions as it is considered to be one key contextual influence on Roma pupils’ educational outcomes.

All interviewed Roma pupils’ parents stated that they left school at an early age, due to lacking financial resources:

[Going to] school was good because I learned how to read and write. But the school and the teachers were not good, it was a school only for Roma. I left school when I was 15, I needed money and had to find work. (Parent Interview: 1)

Furthermore, Roma parents’ experiences with education in Slovakia are often characterized by racism, segregation and limited access to vocational training and further education due to their ethnicity (European Dialogue, 2009), which has a potential negative effect on the development of relationships between home and school (Kiddle, 1999; Derrington & Kendall, 2004). All interviewed Roma parents (FV: 1; 2; 3) reported that they went to segregated schools for Roma pupils only.

Roma parents’ experience of segregated education is often shared with their children (Amnesty International, 2007). This is supported by the Roma pupils, who all stated that they had experienced schools where there were “no white pupils, only Roma” (PI: 2). Furthermore, Eastern European Roma pupils’ past experience of schooling does not only involve experience of segregation in Slovakian schools, but in many cases frequent school changes (Payne, 2014): Six out of eight Roma pupils interviewed attended at least one other UK school before coming to Riverside. Furthermore, all of them had experience of alternately attending school in Slovakia

and the UK, with some of them likely to leave Riverside in the next few months (PI: 1; 2). One girl who came to Riverside during term time said:

When we came to the UK I went to primary school for one year, then we moved back to Slovakia. After one year we moved to Wales, where I finished primary school. Now my father has a job in Sheffield so I am here now. But we are going back to Wales in September. (PI: 2)

In summary, incorporating past experience as a contextual influence into the RoLET is considered to be important, since it is likely that newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils and their families have experienced segregation and racism in educational settings (Amnesty International 2007; European Dialogue, 2009), which has an impact on their perception of schooling (Kiddle, 1999; Derrington & Kendall, 2004). Furthermore, Roma pupils' experience with the educational system is often characterized by frequent changes and the need to quickly adjust to a new educational context, knowing that it is highly likely to be temporary. In our view, by addressing these issues in the RoLET, schools are encouraged to investigate their Roma communities' past experience of schooling and to incorporate the information into the development of intervention strategies aiming to raise Roma pupils' educational outcomes.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter summarizes the key findings of this study and presents concluding thoughts and recommendations in respect of the research questions. Subsequently, regard is given to the strengths and limitations of the study.

5.2 Summary of the key findings and conclusions

The primary purpose of this research was to support local professionals working with newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in school by providing them with an analytical model that illustrates influential factors which need to be considered when developing strategies for improving the educational outcomes of newly arrived Eastern European Roma pupils in the British education system. As a result, this study introduced the Roma Language and Education Tool (RoLET), which is based on the Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET), an analytical model developed by Wilkin et al. (2009b; 2010). The following conclusions can be drawn, regarding each research question in turn:

1. In what way is the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) limited in representing the situation of Slovak Roma pupils in a UK secondary school?

When analysing the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010) in terms of its applicability and suitability to the present situation of newly arrived Roma pupils in a secondary school in Sheffield, it became clear to us that although the model provides a sound base, with a comprehensive assembly of influential factors that need to be considered when looking into ways of improving educational outcomes, it does not fully cover all influential aspects linked with the Slovak Roma cohort at Riverside. As shown in Chapter 3, the main reason is that the TARGET model is built upon a particular ‘homogeneous’ Gypsy Roma Traveller demographic. In this study, we argued that including Eastern European Roma under the term GRT needed to be

reconsidered, since there are fundamental differences between them and other communities subordinated under the term GRT, making the term limited in applicability to the situation of Eastern European Roma. In this regard, we illustrated in the review of previous studies that research findings of studies that were based on the ‘traditional’ GRT could not be fully applied to Eastern European Roma in the UK, although the term comprises Eastern European Roma by definition (DCSF, 2008; 2010). In conclusion, this study argued that there is a need to consider Eastern European Roma as distinct from the GRT demographic: By characterising Eastern European Roma as an ethnic community separate from the other travelling communities, we hope that their specific circumstances in the UK are seen more clearly, resulting in a perceived necessity for more research on Eastern European Roma in the UK.

2. What features should a newly developed RoLET contain to meet the unique needs of Slovak Roma pupils in the UK?

We developed the RoLET as an adapted version of the TARGET model (Wilkin et al., 2009b; 2010), including those influencing factors that characterized the specific circumstances of an Eastern European Roma pupil when entering the educational school system in the UK. One of the findings was that limited English language abilities represent a huge challenge for Roma pupils. Secondly, it also proved to be a struggle for the school to facilitate large numbers of new arrivals with adequate conditions, ensuring that Roma pupils were able to access the curriculum. Furthermore, we pointed out that some of the already established measures taken by the school to help new students with no or low English language abilities, could not be applied to the Roma pupils, because of their first language, Romani, being a non-standardized language. In addition, Roma pupils’ struggles with acquiring English language skills in school had an impact on their self-confidence and caused concerns about being accepted by non-Roma peers in school.

After analysing the data from Riverside, we felt it necessary to add *Teachers’ beliefs* as a constructive condition to the RoLET, since there seemed to be two groups of teachers at Riverside representing opposed views: Some members of school staff expressed beliefs which were considered to have a supportive impact on the

educational outcomes of newly arrived Roma pupils, talking about their enjoyment of teaching Roma and showing initiative in developing ways to help the pupils. In contrast, other members of school staff expressed a negative attitude towards the sudden changes in school caused by the unexpected arrival of large numbers of Roma pupils, which was rated as having the potential to negatively impinge on Eastern European Roma pupils' educational outcomes.

Finally, it was shown that when looking at Eastern European Roma pupils, two of the contextual influences already illustrated in the TARGET model – *Demographic and Community Influences*, and *Past Experience* – needed particular attention: First, building up relationships with the local Eastern European Roma community proved to be a struggle for Riverside, partly leading to misunderstandings in terms of the community members' perception and interest in the school community. In order to achieve a better understanding, it was suggested that schools should try to reach out to the Roma community in order to achieve collaboration by mutually exchanging expectations and wishes. Secondly, we argued that it would be helpful if schools acknowledged past educational experience of Eastern European Roma families and pupils as a contextual influence: Both pupils' and parents' educational experiences in Slovakia were characterized by some form of segregation, which might foster the intrinsic expectations of having an outsider-status. Furthermore, Eastern European Roma pupils' educational experience was characterized by frequent school changes, often occurring during the school year. We therefore suggested schools to be aware of Roma pupils' possible reluctance to fully engage with the school community, knowing that the length of their stay in one school could be uncertain.

5.3 This study's limitations and strengths

In order to ensure the trustworthiness (Wellington, 2015) of the study, it is important to point out the key limitations: this research work was designed to provide an updated version of an already existing analytical model to adequately display the current situation of newly arrived Slovak Roma pupils in a secondary school in Sheffield. Since the data was only collected in one school, situated in one specific

area of England it would therefore be unreasonable to claim that broad generalisations could be made from the data. It was the aim of this study to develop and justify the RoLET as an analytical tool that highlights the challenges and issues of Slovak Roma pupils and their educational outcomes that at some points differ from the challenges other GRT communities face in the UK, and the schools working with them.

The RoLET could therefore be seen as a tool for professionals working in the educational field with the newly arrived Roma pupils in Sheffield, supporting them in terms of a better understanding of influential factors that impact the educational outcomes of pupils belonging to this cohort. However, it could also be applied usefully we feel in relation to other Slovak and Czech Roma in other school settings in the UK, bearing in mind contextual variations. Finally, we hope to prompt further research explicitly around the educational challenges of recently immigrated Eastern European Roma in the UK.

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