Impacts of educating disadvantaged and Roma youth during a pandemic

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The role of the education system in the reproduction of social inequalities

An education system is a multifunctional system that is capable of performing multiple social tasks or functions simultaneously. Its important functions include the reproduction of culture, the shaping of the personality of individuals, the promotion of reproduction or transformation of social structure, and the provision of social integration. Functions can interact with each other, inhibit, and reinforce each other. The school system is based on skills and abilities that children acquire during their primary socialization. The school is in line with the principles, norms and values of the middle class, so it presupposes the existence of a language and a culture that is only provided by a specific way of learning. The requirements are seemingly objective, they make the weaker ones believe that their abilities are really worse and worth as much as the grade shows. The reproduction of the social hierarchy is ultimately legitimized by the education system by transforming the social hierarchy into a school hierarchy, i.e., social inequalities are transformed into inequalities between school levels.

Fundamental problems with the education system have been exacerbated by the existence of a sharp gap between schools and an increase in the segregation index since 2010. The long-term disadvantages of segregated education include deficiencies in vocational schools due to low educational attainment, a high rate of further education, the devaluation of the professions acquired in the labor market, and deprivation of weak bonds for successful success, which can lead to long-term social exclusion.

Integrated education has been shown to improve children's personalities, increase the rate of further education to higher prestige secondary schools, create opportunities for heterophilic relationships, and social integration of disadvantaged and roma young people may be more successful in the long run. In a segregated educational environment, in the long run, a "counterculture", a subculture that opposes the values of the middle class, can also develop, which is difficult for educators to resolve. The norms mediated by the teacher are confronted with the norms and values accepted in the group, and teaching and upbringing also become more difficult.
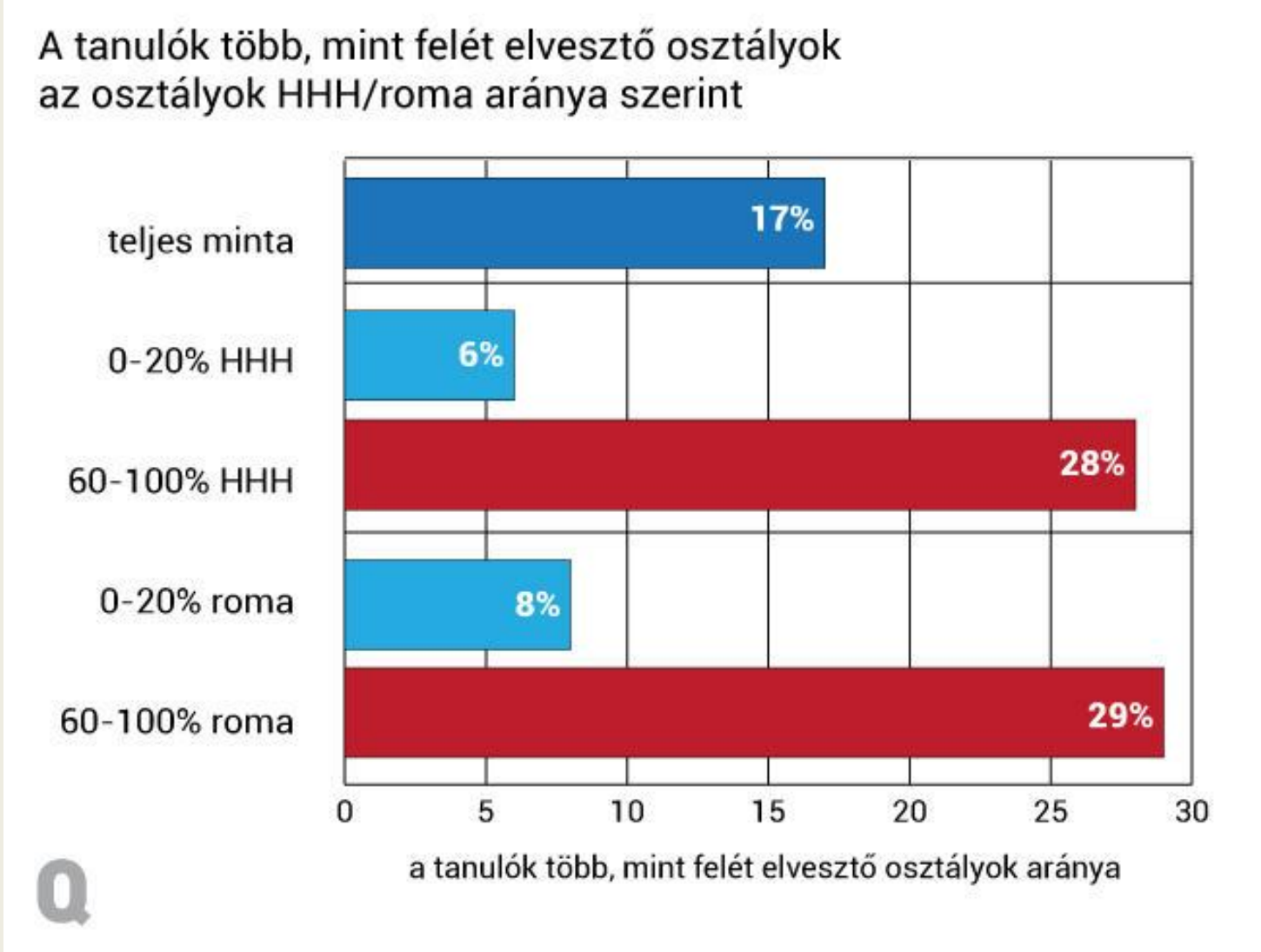

In integrated education, a lot of work, energy and sacrifice triggers a process of collaboration between families, school and children. In many cases, this process has come to a halt with the Covid-19 epidemic, so the harmonization of needs, values and educational principles in schools with disadvantaged and roma children must begin again.

Differences in the educational principles and values of roma families are often in conflict with the values of school education, even if there is no epidemic, this generally helps to keep the educational level of roma low. Most of the literature highlights that roma are always the goal of everyday survival, they do not plan ahead, the role of learning at home is minimal. Parents often feel that the school is alienating their child from them, raising the child aside. For families, it is enough for the school to teach the child basic skills and the rest to be acquired in the community, so parents are not interested in grades. It is hard to bear that the "reduced adult" is treated by the school as a child. The school requires a minimum level of personal emotion, while the roma community is characterized by a personal, loving relationship.

The quarantine by the coronavirus has significantly transformed and shaped family and friendships. Fear and hopelessness, online education has presumably loosened human relationships, the effects of which we will only feel from autumn, when everything can return to personal forms of encounter.

As I have already mentioned, disadvantaged and roma people, young people need much more to compensate for their modest social capital, the primary field of which is the school as a network. The results of the Hungarian network research since the change of regime show the tendency that young people, students, those with a job and people with higher education have a wider social network compared to the rest of the population. With the
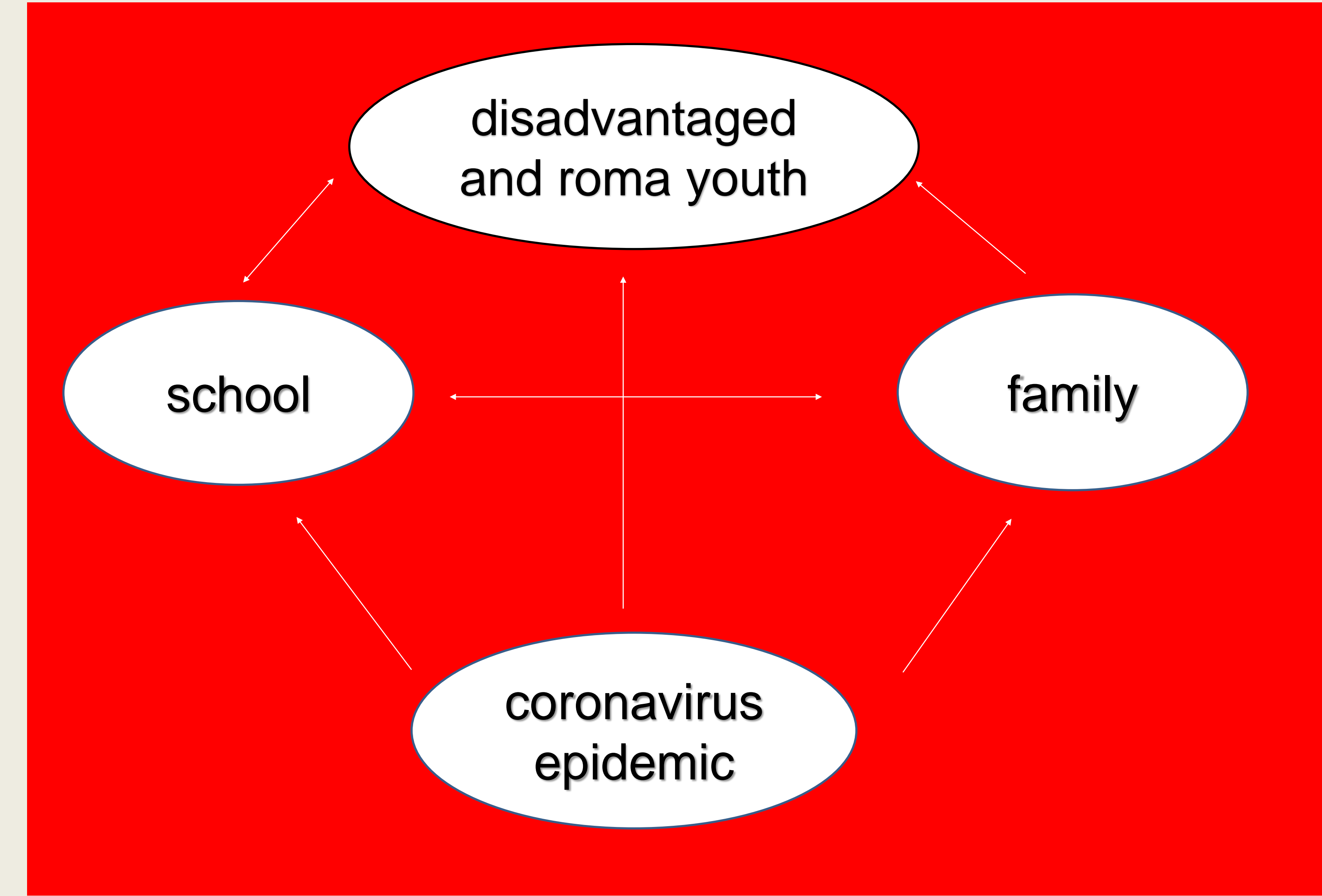
economic crisis caused by the pandemic, many people lost their jobs and thus their existing social status. For people with low socioeconomic status, this can bring with it cumulative difficulties. According to a 2015 survey, the most extensive network of contacts was among married people, singles, students, entrepreneurs, aged 30-39. Most of his friends were among those aged 18-29 (1.7 people), and those with a baccalaureate and diploma had 1.4 friends who completed a maximum of eight classes and had 0.8 friends.
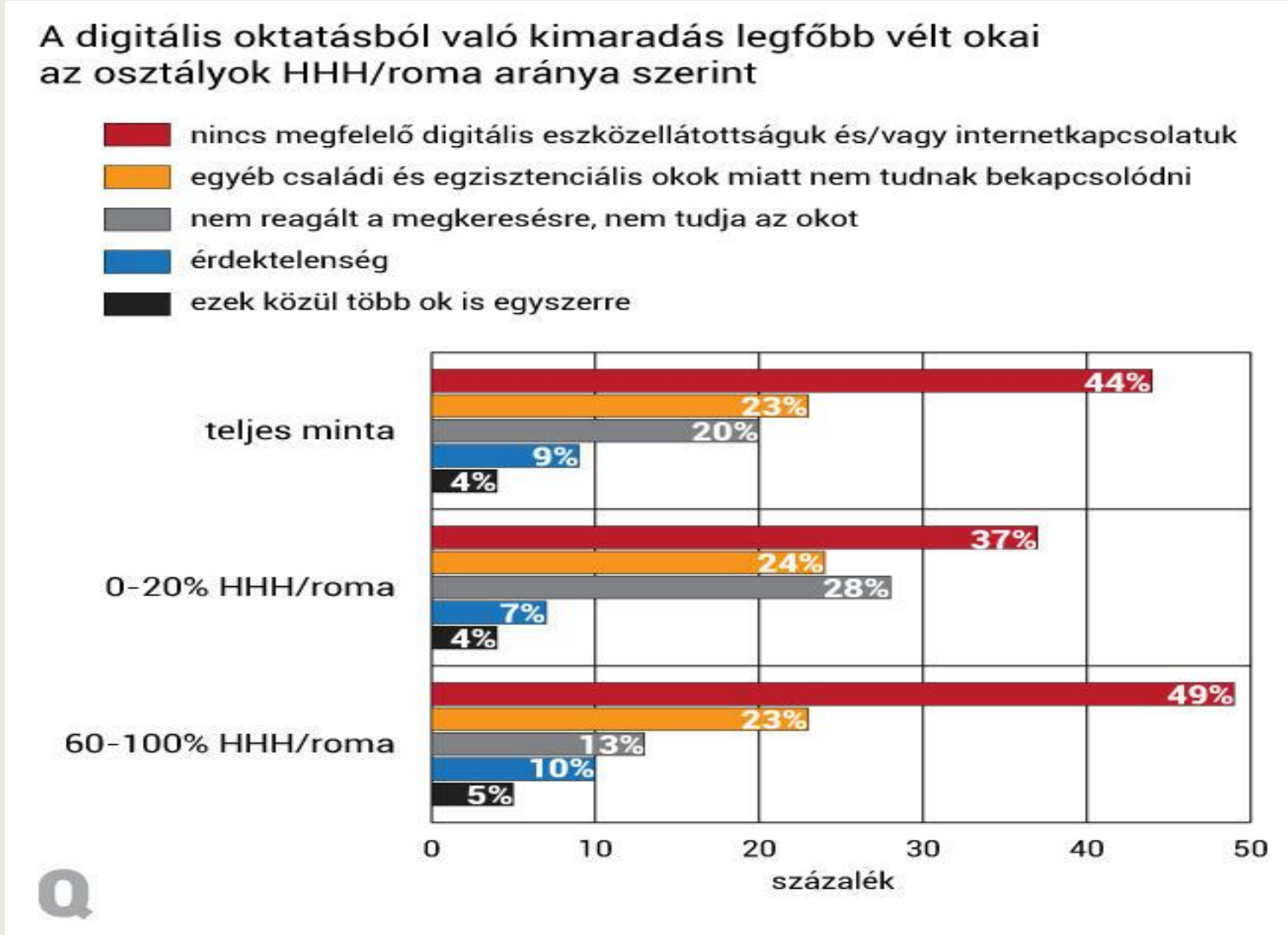
In the spring of 2020 Kende-Messing-Fejes 425 educators were asked about the difficulties of the digital curriculum in schools of mainly cumulatively disadvantaged and Roma students with the help of an online questionnaire. There was no shortage of tools on the part of teachers to implement online education, but greater problems were discovered on the part of children. Their main results: in schools where the proportion of HHH / roma students is at most 20%, 84% of young people were able to get involved in education in the virtual world, while in 60% of students HHH / roma, only 2/3 knew to do this. According to educators, 16% of students dropped out of education without a personal presence schedule. The largest drop-out rates were reported from schools in northern Hungary. According to educators educating both disadvantaged and less disadvantaged children, 37% of students dropped out of school due to infrastructural reasons, but there were also high indications of existential reasons (eg.: laziness, indifference, early coercion to earn money in hhh / gypsy children). The problems are further aggravated by the lack of independent learning skills, inadequate comprehension and reading skills, which only parents with adequate cognitive skills could help, but in the case of HHH / gypsy families this could not be the case. Overall, both the domestic and international education systems were unexpectedly hit by the digital curriculum and in a very short time the education managers asked for the transition.

It is safe to say that the pandemic will clearly have winners and losers. On poster, I tried to make it clear that the new form of teaching caused by the coronavirus epidemic, the disintegration of the initiated integration processes, will await the solution of a serious social crisis of isolation. According to recent research results, digital education has been difficult to implement in several places, so in my opinion, weaker performance results can be expected

from disadvantaged and roma young people in both OECD and domestic competency surveys compared to previous years.

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