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**VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS BY ORGANISATIONS
ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

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I. Inclusive education: approaches, scope and content

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE: A REBUTTAL¹

This essay is in three parts. Part I is a critique of “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future” (ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/4); Part II is entitled “Education for All: Suggestions for An International Action Plan; Part III discusses the Options Project in Mongolia, which serves deaf and hard of hearing children and adults. The essay is written in the spirit of “constructing together a new approach, based on an honest and thorough appraisal of situations, on exchanges and the sharing of experience, as well as an on a common will to construct a better world....and with the idea of inspiring some interesting debates.” (ED 48/4 page 4)

Part I - To begin with, what is “inclusion?”

“According to UNESCO’s *Guidelines for inclusion*, it is seen as: “*a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. [...] Inclusion is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal issue on how some learners can be integrated in mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims towards enabling teachers and learners both to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment of the learning environment, rather than a problem.*” (*Guidelines for inclusion*, pp.13, 15 in ED/BIE 48/4 page 8).

We are talking about much more than *just* providing basic education to the more than “77 million children...not enrolled in school and more than 781million adults deprived of literacy...97% of adults with disabilities [who] do not have basic literacy skills. (ED 48/4 page 4)

Clearly, the movement for inclusion began in the “world” of special education, which does not historically include issues such as gender and ethnicity (although it may be true that in some cases those and other “non-special education” differences have played an unintended role): “Inclusion as we know it today has its origins in Special Education” (*Guidelines of inclusion page 9* in ED 48/4 page 9). In other words, the movement to improve the educational opportunities for “children with disabilities” (however one may define that term) has grown into a movement to include all the excluded, the “invisible” children of the world. But it has gone further because inclusion also includes those children already in school who are not succeeding:

“To different degrees, the excluded are also — even in the most efficient and developed systems — all those children and young people for whom teaching and learning do

¹ Document prepared by Marc Watkins and Otgon Sarantsetseg, Open Society Institute, United Kingdom.

not satisfy their needs and their hopes and, for this reason, have no meaning for their lives” (ED 48/4 page 10, bolded text in original).

Most significantly, however, inclusion includes the education system itself: *“it is the education system itself and the way it is organized that must be reassessed, questioned and modified.”* (ED48/4 page 10, my italics).

Thus, ‘inclusion’ is about the children who are not in school, children in school whose needs are not being met, the teachers in the schools, the legal system, the culture, ‘the education system itself,’ and to improve opportunities for the excluded, all must be addressed:

From a policy point of view, this means that a holistic perspective should be adopted to change and reform the way in which education systems cope with exclusion. This implies a multi-sectoral or systemic approach to education and the introduction of coherent strategies to ensure long-lasting change at three critical levels: (a) policies and legislation; (b) attitudes within society and the community; and (c) teaching and learning practices, as well as in management and evaluation. This means a global strategy designed to take into consideration the inter-linked sources of exclusion that used to be considered separately, such as: poverty, social and cultural marginalization, sexual, linguistic or ethnic discrimination, handicaps and HIV/AIDS. (ED 48/4, page 11)

Only through school reform will the excluded be included: “Given the limits of segregation policies (special education) and the difficulties of implementing integration policies, *“revised thinking has thus led to a re-conceptualisation of “special needs”. This view implies that progress is more likely if we recognize that difficulties experienced by pupils result from the ways in which schools are currently organized and from rigid teaching methods. It has been argued that schools need to be reformed and pedagogy needs to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to pupil diversity — seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning.”* [Guidelines for Inclusion] We find ourselves here at the heart of the fundamental problem which must guide the “paradigm change” required by inclusive education: the diversity of pupils, having always existed, is still considered most of the time as a problem, while inclusive education requires that, from the very beginning, we accept this diversity as positive, as a resource and not as a hindrance to the “good” functioning of schools and classes.” (ED 48/4 pages 10 and 11, bolded text in original).

I do not deny that schools are too rigid, or even that some of the ways in which they function perpetuate exclusion. As the author(s) of 48/4 puts it: “Everywhere in the world, education systems seem to continue functioning on the basis of “images” or “beliefs” inherited from the past or even a certain number of “myths” (such as that of the “average pupil” and that school failure is “natural” and normal or even the idea — often subconscious — that it is not the school that is made for the child but the opposite and, therefore, what we expect above all from a pupil is that, without fail, he/she will comply to the system.” (ED 48/4 page 10)

Having worked in regular and special education classrooms in the United States and Mongolia for more that 40 years, I agree that there is much that needs improving in schools throughout the world. I agree that education is an important indicator of the state of a society. I agree that exclusion *“from meaningful participation in the economic, social,*

political and cultural life of communities is one of the greatest problems facing individuals in our society today.” (ED48/4, page 6)

It is the idea of *linking the restructuring of educational systems with improving opportunities for the excluded* that I am questioning. It is the idea that “progress is more likely” if the schools are restructured. It is the idea that school restructuring must *precede* increasing the participation of the excluded because it is the structure of the schools that keeps the excluded from being included. It is the idea that a “holistic” approach must be taken, one that advocates a “global strategy designed to take into consideration the inter-linked sources of exclusion that used to be considered separately . . .” (ED 48/4 page)

I would argue that the shift of focus from disabilities to exclusion to school restructuring is a distraction. It is a distraction from providing the best possible education for children with disabilities. It is a distraction from providing basic education to the 20% of the world’s population who are not receiving education or are illiterate. It is a distraction, even, from school reform itself because it decides beforehand *exactly* how schools will evolve, which is both illogical and self-defeating.

Considering how slow the kinds of reforms that may be classified under the general heading of “child centered” have been, even in developed countries, to state that those reforms are necessary for inclusion to take place is likely to lead to decades more exclusion and, perhaps, lead educational reformers to focus on restructuring rather than focusing on educating the excluded. The approach advocated in ED 48/4 is to focus on the “inter-linked sources of exclusion” rather than the excluded themselves; but to wait for schools to “see individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning” may be to wait for a very long time. Furthermore, “individual differences” is, to me at least, an unclear term. To put it another way, there are differences and there differences: intellectual, cognitive, psycho-social, physical, ethnic, economic, and gender, to name some, and to state *a priori* that *all* of these differences must be seen as “opportunities for enriching learning” simply denies the reality of the teaching/learning experience, which accepts “problems” and “differences” as important components of children’s maturation.

It is important to ask: what do we hope to accomplish? Are we trying to improve education for children who are described as having a disability? Are we seeking to provide basic educational services for the invisible children? Are we trying to bring literacy to the one billion people in the world who cannot read and write? Or are we trying to restructure the schools?

The basic argument of ED 48/ 4 is that in order for the excluded to be included, in order for children with disabilities to be educated along with all of their peers is to reform the schools in a very profound and specific way. Therefore, the focus of the Ministers assembled here should be to reform the schools so that all of the excluded can be included. I think that this approach is ill advised.

The most basic argument against the idea that the schools must undergo restructuring for inclusion before inclusion can be successful is that, at least in much of the developed world, inclusion, integration, and mainstreaming have already brought many children with disabilities into regular schools (though sometimes rigid and inflexible schools, and admittedly, not as many into regular classes as those who support full inclusion advocate.)

There are many examples of traditional schools that have made great strides in integrating excluded children).

What ED 48/4 claims is that the cause of exclusion is non – inclusive schools because, by their very nature, they exclude those who don't fit in. As ED 48/4 puts it: "...the idea -- often subconscious – that it is not the school that is made for the child but the opposite." (page 10)

Therefore, of course, the only solution to the problem of exclusion would be to create inclusive schools. But are non-inclusive schools *the* cause of exclusion? No, they are not. They are *one* of the causes, and the claim that "it has been argued that schools need to be reformed and pedagogy needs to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to pupil diversity." is hardly a proof of the position that the cure for exclusion is inclusive schools.

There are many causes for exclusion, school structure being one. To illustrate, consider the situation of girls in countries where their exclusion is based on cultural or religious grounds. Can anyone seriously maintain that progress will only be possible when schools "respond positively to pupil diversity."? In fact, the education of these girls – if that is truly the objective and *not* the restructuring of the schools – is likely going to take place in separate schools for many years to come. The claim that the schools must develop an atmosphere of inclusion before inclusion takes place is not even logical. It is circular. Furthermore, many of the non-disabled excluded (such as dropouts, selected ethnic groups, juvenile delinquents, and unregistered or undocumented children) face the kind of resistance to full inclusion that is likely to remain strong, often for cultural or religious reasons, regardless of school circumstances. Even in schools where differences are seen as opportunities and not as problems, inclusion or even integration of certain groups is unlikely to be successful for a very long time.

But even if one accepts the idea that exclusionary, rigid schools are *the* cause of exclusion, or that the cure for exclusion is the creation of inclusive schools, focusing on creating inclusive schools may not be the best way to get the excluded included, if for no other reason than that it moves our attention from the excluded to the schools themselves. Rather than focusing on targeted approaches to impact particular segments of the excluded, "restructuring for inclusion" focuses its energies on the educational system itself, on the "culture of education." This comes at a time, for example in the United States, when many schools are becoming increasingly oriented to "measurable results," test taking, and "pay for performance." What this implies is that to link a particular *type* of school restructuring to providing greater opportunities for the excluded may be to add to the already difficult task of providing those opportunities. Schools and school systems change in many ways, and it is not possible to predict with any degree of certainty how schools will change or that the schools of the future will be "inclusive schools" as ED 48/4 defines that term.

Furthermore, why would the issues surrounding the exclusion of certain children be *the* driving force of change in the schools? Wouldn't other factors such as research, unforeseen events, and other historical trends also play a role in the ways schools evolve? Why should this one issue – exclusion (which may be very important to us, and it certainly is to me) – be *the* driving force of change, and change in one particular direction? An example of what I am talking about occurred in the recent elections in Mongolia. One of the parties in the election campaigned on "teacher-centered education" and called for a rejection of "child-

centered education,” supported by numerous NGO’s and international organizations including UNESCO and the Mongolian Education Alliance, where I volunteer.

Another claim made in 48/4 (and closely related to the argument that the schools must change before inclusion succeeds) is that a “paradigm shift” or a “paradigm change” needs to occur. Although I’m not certain, I believe that the terms are used in two different senses in 48/4. In the first instance, I believe it refers to a change in the way leaders should effect change: “... societies and education systems that function, as is still sometimes the case today, with numerous forms of exclusion are neither acceptable more feasible and second, given this situation, if past and present ways of confronting them still exist, they cannot be the ways of the future and require a complete ‘paradigm shift’ in conception and a long – term vision so as to create and introduce new policies” (ED 48/4 page 5)

Later, on page 12 of 48/4: “. . .we find ourselves here at the heart of the fundamental problem which must guide the “paradigm change” required by inclusive education: the diversity of pupils, having always existed, is still considered most of the time as a problem, while inclusive education requires that, from the very beginning, we accept this diversity as positive, as a resource and not as a hindrance to the “good” functioning of schools and classes.”

It should be noted that the term “paradigm shift” was coined by the philosopher Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Here is what he says: “[A paradigm shift] *demands large-scale paradigm destruction and major shifts in the problems and techniques of normal science, the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones*”

To begin with, the term, as he used it, applied only to the natural sciences and not to the human or social sciences, although it has been frequently used in that connection since it was first coined – and frequently misapplied. The claim that a paradigm shift must occur in order for restructuring to take place before inclusion can be accomplished only complicates matters. Furthermore, we may well ask whether a paradigm shift – a reconceptualization of the way we look at and how we approach the “problem” of exclusion and how schools are designed – is even necessary for progress to be made. I do not believe that it is.

What ED 48/4 fails to acknowledge is that educational systems, teachers, administrators, and Ministers of Education are, in general, motivated by good will. That may seem too trivial to mention, but it helps to distinguish educators from, say, bankers, shopkeepers, and manufacturers and their institutions, that quite rightly have interests other than those of their clients or customers. What that means is that, in general, all of us involved in education – including those whose philosophies or methods we disagree with – have the best interests of children in mind. If that is so – that we are educators because we want the best for our children and are not primarily motivated by personal or financial gain – no paradigm shift is necessary to apply that care and concern for the children who have been excluded from full participation in education. It only needs to be *extended*.

There is another conceptual error made by applying a term intended for the natural sciences to the social sciences, and it is this: a paradigm shift occurs in science when there is a “*persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should.*” No

scientist today seriously investigates the ethers or believes that all matter is composed of earth, water, and fire. Those concepts are no longer adequate explanations of reality; other explanations are now accepted, but they too are likely to be supplanted by new theories. In the social sciences, on the other hand, very different considerations are at play. For one, reinterpretation is an integral part of the social sciences but not the natural sciences because institutional change demands reinterpretation. In the natural sciences, on the other hand, the subject matter – the real world – remains constant. Understanding that reality, “puzzle-solving” as Kuhn put it, is the main task of science, whereas new situations emerge in the social sciences requiring reinterpretation which, in some cases, means looking again at formerly discarded theories and methodologies.

An example of what I am talking about (the difference between the natural and social sciences in regard to a “paradigm shift”) is illustrated in a recent experience I had teaching ten year old hard of hearing children for a month while their regular teacher was on maternity leave. I quickly found out that none of them could read beyond a first grade level and that the prescribed reading instruction methodology – a combination of ‘whole language’ and phonics – seemed to frustrate them, rather than helping them to improve. I decided to use a methodology no longer held in very high esteem – memorizing ‘sight words’ using flash cards -- and I combined that with substantial rewards. My reasoning was this: phonics depends on the ability to hear the distinct sounds of a language and the whole language approach depends on an age-appropriate vocabulary – neither of which the students possessed – and meaningful rewards would help them to overcome their discouragement over reading. The students made substantial progress and, because they no longer had to ‘sound out’ every word, they began to enjoy reading, perhaps for the first time in their lives. My point is this: in the social sciences, a theory or methodology that has been supplanted may still have relevance whereas in the natural sciences this is almost always not the case.

But an even more serious error is made in applying the concept of a paradigm shift to education: people who disagree with the program advocated in ED 48/4 are characterized as not having the best interests of the children in mind. “Research has shown in fact that the advantages of inclusive education compared to special education are real. Nevertheless, integration policies are far from receiving universal approval, even in developed countries; they often meet with resistance that is both “ideological” (the special education needs of children and young people evidently need to be taken in hand by specialists, outside regular education) and “corporate” (mainly on the part of special educators, reception centres, psychologists or even doctors)”(ED 48/4 page 9)

Might there not be some truth in “the special education needs of children and young people evidently need to be taken in hand by specialists” or that even doctors have valid reasons for not participating in the “universal approval” of inclusion or integration policies? Is all opposition to inclusion policies motivated by self interest rather than the interests of the children? I do not think so, nor does the largest union of American teachers think so, and in an article about inclusion and autistic children, we read: “Of the 165,000 students (ages 6 to 21) with autism receiving special educational services, 89 percent attend regular public schools. And, of those in public schools, nearly one-third spend at least 80 percent of their time in a regular classroom and about one-half spend at least 40 percent of their time in a regular classroom. But is inclusion really best for these children? The short answer is, it depends.

The heterogeneity and developmental nature of autism make it unlikely that one specific instructional program or setting will be best for all children, or will work for any one child throughout his or her educational career. . . . While it's true that each autistic child has a unique constellation of strengths and weaknesses, there are some commonalities. Regardless of their developmental level, practically all children with autism require systematic instruction in social interaction and language, and assistance with generalizing newly learned skills to multiple environments. . . . In addition, these students are likely to have some challenging behavioral issues. In some cases, the behaviors are neither severe nor frequent and can be handled in a regular classroom. In other cases, the child's behavior may be too distracting or too dangerous for a regular classroom to be appropriate.

In summary, due to the heterogeneity of the disorder and the changing needs of children with autism as they develop, it is unlikely that one specific treatment or instructional strategy will emerge as the treatment of choice for all children. Different children will require different types of treatments and different levels of support at different times in their lives. When a student with autism is able to learn from the regular curriculum and behave appropriately, inclusion in a regular classroom will probably be the best placement for him. Nonetheless, failure is not a good experience for any child, and it is imperative that the decisions for each child be made on the basis of sound considerations of individual needs and abilities. (Aubyn Stahmer and Laura Schreibman in *American Educator*, Summer 2006. Aubyn Stahmer is a clinical psychologist and an investigator with the Child and Adolescent Services Research Center. Laura Schreibman is distinguished professor of psychology and director of the Autism Research Program at the University of California at San Diego).

The summarizing statement, "due to the heterogeneity of the disorder . . . it is unlikely that one specific treatment or instructional strategy will emerge as the treatment of choice for all children" can be applied to many of the excluded. One approach, one solution does not fit all. It is not that some educators and advocates for the excluded refuse to make a paradigm shift. They have cogent reasons for opposing inclusion as *the* answer for complex, multifaceted issues.

Unlike the author(s) of 48/4 I do not believe that Special Education is a step in an "inevitable" progression towards inclusion. Rather, it is likely to remain as integral component of any educational system that is serious about educating children with disabilities. Many of these children need special accommodations, materials, and techniques, but probably most important of all, they need specially trained teachers who may be their most passionate and effective advocates.

But even if one accepts ED 48/4's use of the term "paradigm shift," does one have to take place before inclusion is achieved? I do not think so. In fact, quite the opposite is more likely. Great social and cultural changes typically occur as the *result* of largely unplanned events and movements; they do not *precede* the events. In the United States, for example, the civil rights movement had clear, discreet, and measurable objectives such as school integration, elimination of voter restrictions, and equal access to public accommodations. As a result of progress in those and other areas, there has been a change in the culture of race relations in the United States.

I remember quite well, as an active participant in the American civil rights movement of the 1960's, that we focused on very discreet objectives – lunch counter integration in a national retailer (Woolworth's), voter registration in Mississippi, school integration in

Alabama – and not on creating a “paradigm shift” in people’s minds, belief systems, or cultures, or trying to alter the “myths” that guided the behavior that created and maintained the racist structures and institutions that were the norm. Of course, we hoped that attitudes would change and expressed that hope in a nonviolent approach, but *we didn’t try to change people; we tried to change what people did*. In that sense, we did not take a “holistic” approach although our goals were holistic.

The approach we took was what the philosopher Karl Popper has described as “piecemeal social engineering.” He discusses with great clarity the two contrasting approaches to social change that social planners may take: holistic (‘utopian’) and piecemeal. It is my contention that ED 48/4 endorses the “utopian” approach, and I fully agree with Popper that this approach is doomed to failure while “piecemeal social engineering” is more effective, more “scientific,” and, in this instance, much more likely to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of the excluded.

Following, is a rather lengthy (though highly expurgated) excerpt from “Piecemeal Social Engineering,” which Popper wrote in 1944. I have included it here because I believe it states much more effectively than I could what is wrong with ED 48/4’s approach, despite its noble intentions:

The characteristic approach of the piecemeal engineer is this. Even though he may perhaps cherish some ideals which concern society ‘as a whole’ – its general welfare, perhaps – he does not believe in the method of redesigning it as a whole. Whatever his ends, he tries to achieve them by small adjustments and re-adjustments which can be continually improved upon. His ends may be of diverse kinds, for example, the accumulation of wealth or of power by certain individuals, or by certain groups; or the distribution of wealth and power; or the protection of certain ‘rights’ of individuals or groups, etc. ... The piecemeal engineer knows, like Socrates, how little he knows. He knows that we can learn only from our mistakes. Accordingly, he will make his way step by step, carefully comparing the results expected with the results achieved, and always on the look-out for the unavoidable unwanted consequences of any reform; and he will avoid undertaking reforms of a complexity and scope which make it impossible for him to disentangle causes and effects, and to know what he is really doing.

Such ‘piecemeal tinkering’ does not agree with the political temperament of many ‘activists. Their programme, which too has been described as a programme of ‘social engineering’, may be called ‘holistic’ or ‘Utopian engineering’. Holistic or Utopian social engineering, as opposed to piecemeal social engineering...aims at remodeling the ‘whole of society’ in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint... One of the differences between the Utopian or holistic approach and the piecemeal approach may therefore be stated in this way: while the piecemeal engineer can attack his problem with an open mind as to the scope of the reform, the holist cannot do this; for he has decided beforehand that a complete reconstruction is possible and necessary. This fact has far-reaching consequences. It prejudices the Utopianist against certain sociological hypotheses which state limits to institutional control; for example...the human factor’... ‘The political problem, therefore, is to *organize human impulses* in such a way that they will direct their energy to the right strategic points, and steer the total process of development in the desired direction.’... [Piecemeal social engineering] can be used, more particularly, in order to search for, and fight against, the greatest and most urgent evils of society, rather than to seek, and to fight for, some ultimate good (as holists are inclined to do). But a systematic fight against definite

wrongs, against concrete forms of injustice or exploitation, and avoidable suffering such as poverty or unemployment, is a very different thing from the attempt to realize a distant ideal blueprint of society. Success or failure is more easily appraised, and there is no inherent reason why this method should lead to an accumulation of power and to the suppression of criticism. Also, such a fight against concrete wrongs and concrete dangers is more likely to find the support of a great majority than a fight for the establishment of a Utopia, ideal as it may appear to the planners.” (Popper: *Selections*, pages 309 – 317)

In the following section, I will develop an argument in favor of a very different approach to addressing the needs of children with disabilities, the excluded, the approximately 25% of the world’s population that is either illiterate or not in school and of school age.

Part II

To begin with, it is important to clearly define the problem. I do not think that “non-inclusive schools” is the problem; rather, it is one of the causes of the problem, and restructuring schools is *one* solution. I do not think that teachers are the problem. They do not have to “abandon the attitude ‘me and my class’ in favor of ‘us and our school’” (ED 48/4, page 12) for the situation of the excluded to improve. Teachers and schools are not the problems. The problems are: (1) exclusion of children from education and (2) adult illiteracy. (By the way, I include combating adult illiteracy as an integral component of any educational improvement program aimed at the excluded if for no other reason than that today’s illiterate adult is yesterday’s excluded child).

Furthermore, each of the problems (exclusion and illiteracy) should be as clearly delineated as possible. There *are* important differences among the excluded and among adults who are illiterate. I believe it is valuable to differentiate between “special needs” children and “invisible” children, for example (even though, in many cases, they are one and the same) and to differentiate among “special needs.” Furthermore, the differences among students do not have to be seen as “opportunities” as ED 48/4 insists. They are “responsibilities” in exactly the same way that the included are responsibilities.

The problems are exclusion and illiteracy, and the approach to exclusion and illiteracy does not have to be “a global strategy designed to take into consideration the inter-linked sources of exclusion that used to be considered separately, such as: poverty, social and cultural marginalization, sexual, linguistic or ethnic discrimination, handicaps and HIV/AIDS.” (ED 48/4, page). On the contrary, exclusion of these and other children and illiteracy will most effectively be dealt with when a piecemeal or targeted approach is taken. I hope that the reader does not feel that I am making matters more complicated than they need to be. I think that by clarifying problems or issues, effective responses are more likely to be developed. The issues *are* complex and the responses need to be nuanced, localized, humane, and realistic. As H.L. Mencken, an American writer, said, “For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.”

But *how* should Ministers of Education act, what should they *do*? The answer is that they should focus on activities that will bring more of the excluded into school and reach the greatest number of adults who are illiterate and teach them to read and write. This may seem too obvious to state, but it refocuses us on the problem: the children and adults who have

been excluded, rather than the schools, and doing so encourages us to come up with policies and projects targeted to specific constituencies and locations.

I would also like to offer a clear measure of progress rather than “the education system itself and the way it is organized that must be reassessed questioned and modified.” (ED 48/4, page 10). It would be this: the numbers of excluded children and adults who receive services for the first time or return to school. Additionally, I believe we should distinguish between developed and developing countries as we focus on appropriate ways to *do the most for the most*.

Following, are some ways to establish goals:

1. Pledge to eradicate adult illiteracy worldwide by a date certain.
2. Pledge to provide at least basic literacy for every child by a date certain.
3. Pledge to provide the best possible education for every child with a disability throughout the world and dramatically increase the number of disabled and excluded children in regular schools and in regular classes.

As educational leaders know quite well, there is a difference between establishing goals and developing programs to address those goals. ED48/4 suggests: “a holistic perspective [that] should be adopted to change and reform the way in which education systems cope with exclusion. This implies a multi-sectoral or systemic approach to education and the introduction of coherent strategies to ensure long-lasting change...”. I am suggesting a very different approach, one that perhaps can be best illustrated by the international effort to eradicate polio.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative began in 1988 when about 1,000 children per day were being infected. Spearheaded by the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF, the initiative has eliminated polio from more than 99% of the world and expects to totally eradicate polio at about the time that this conference is taking place in Geneva. Today, only in India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan does the wild poliovirus still exist. (It has recently been eliminated from war-torn Somalia).

How has polio been eliminated? Through international coordination and funding, volunteerism, and local initiatives (\$1 Billion +, one million Rotary volunteers, two billion inoculations, 125 countries involved). Through clear objectives, targeted activities such as Vaccination Days, and persistence. Belief systems, poverty, racism, even war – all of which contribute to the spread of polio – were not targeted. Rather, the focus has remained constant: the elimination of polio through universal inoculations.

What the Global Polio Eradication Initiative illustrates is that a targeted approach can be developed and implemented, evaluated, and refined, and that it can be highly successful – without changing the conditions in which the problem exists. The WHO, Rotary International, and UNICEF did not try to end the war in Somalia or poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. They focused on inoculating children to prevent polio. It is just such an approach that I think could make a significant impact on the lives of children excluded from basic literacy, an appropriate education, attendance in a special school or class, a regular school, or a regular class. The focus should be to significantly improve the lives of the excluded, and that will undoubtedly involve very different goals, methods, and outcomes.

So, what can Ministers of Education do to improve educational opportunities for the excluded? In the developed world, the vast majority of children with disabilities receive a full education, and illiteracy is minimal, while in much of the developing world, just the opposite is true. In much of the developed world and in some places in the developing world, the improvement of services to children with disabilities and not their initiation is the issue, and the importance of various exclusionary factors such as racism, sexism, child labor, and poverty varies widely from country to country. Although I do not believe that the best or the only way to improve the educational experiences of excluded children in the developed and developing worlds is necessarily to reorganize the schools in a particular way, I do agree that more children with disabilities should be getting their education in the same classroom with non-disabled children and that many more of the excluded should be in those classes as well. The question remains: what is the best way to get them there? 48/4 suggests that it is to restructure the schools, and reeducate the teachers, so that “differences will be seen as opportunities and not as problems.”

But there is a more direct way to create schools and teachers willing and able to accommodate all but the most vulnerable or disruptive children into regular classes. That is to limit class size to 12-15 children, thus doubling, tripling, or even quadrupling the number of classes so that, if each class accepted one or two previously excluded children, teachers would be able to take on what are very likely to be some additional and perhaps new responsibilities. To further enhance the capability of the teacher to provide appropriate and individualized attention to all the students, provide her with an assistant. One indication that class size is so important in providing the best education is that the richest people in the world send their children to schools with the smallest class size. Why? Because they can afford to.

Ministers of Education can encourage integration and inclusion by becoming personally involved. For example, why not go directly to a school and work with the staff to develop a plan to bring more excluded children into their school? Inform the staff that the Ministry of Education, the local school, and the teachers are required by law (if that is the case in your country) to educate all the children. Recognize that providing services for the excluded may challenge teachers and their methods. Compromise, negotiate, but most of all INSPIRE. Becoming personally involved will encourage the schools and teachers throughout your country to reach out to the excluded, and it will make you a much more effective leader because you will know first hand the range of the issues involved.

Work with other countries and organizations through UNESCO to develop an international campaign similar to the polio initiative. Send teachers out into the field to teach adults how to read and write (and do some of that work yourself to inspire others to follow your example). Develop a national literacy program that can be broadcast on television (and teach some of the lessons). Support advocates of the excluded (even if – or especially if – they challenge educational policies). Provide real incentives to schools for reaching out to excluded children. Plan for unintended consequences. Learn from failures as well as mistakes.

In the concluding section of this paper, I would like to describe the Options Program, which serves deaf and hard of hearing children, teens, and adults in Mongolia.

Part III

The first year of the Options Program was very successful. We convened a national Deaf convention (the first in Mongolia), developed curricula at the school and college level, supported the opening of the first kindergarten for Deaf children, effected changes in teacher licensing, raised public awareness through nationally broadcast informational and instructional programs, published and widely distributed literature and instructional materials for children and families, established a training center, a free Internet center, and a rural service center. More than 1,000 children and adults received training and instruction in everything from Mongolian Sign Language to computer skills. We were prepared to continue along the same lines until we held a two-day parents' workshop at our rural education. On the last day, we asked this question: "If you were the Minister of Education and you had a Deaf child, what would you do to help your child?" The response was unanimous: "Open a special class in the school for deaf and hard of hearing children."

From that experience, we have initiated a new phase of the Options Program. We are concentrating on providing services as quickly as we can to as many children throughout the country (the least densely populated country in the world) as we can. Prior to this conference in Geneva, we plan to open five more classes in rural areas and train deaf and hearing teachers as well as local doctors. To do that, we will travel to remote areas, work with local schools and teachers, and then bring the teachers and doctors to Ulaanbaatar, the capital, for intensive training. Through our funder, the General Education Sub Board of the Opens Society Institute, we will fund the newly established classes for at least one year and then seek additional funding from other sources while encouraging the Ministry of Education to create and fully fund programs for deaf and hard of hearing children.

We have embarked on this program because the families we were teaching became our teachers, our leaders. They reminded us of the importance of language learning in the early years of a child's life. We realized there was an alternative to waiting for a "paradigm shift" or for teachers, schools, and communities to become more "inclusive."

Of course, I do not know how our efforts will work out because I don't know any better than the author(s) of "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future" what the future will bring (although they seem to think they do). What I am almost certain of, however, is that scores of children will improve their language skills, receive hearing aids if appropriate, and have a wonderful time going to school everyday with their peers.

Furthermore, I believe such an approach, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative approach, and some of the suggestions I have made stand a much better chance of fulfilling UNESCO's mission: ". . . to support the efforts of Member States in providing education to all of their citizens, but particularly those who have been marginalized or excluded from the system, in order to bring an end to discrimination in terms of their access, their active participation and their success at all levels of education."
(ED 48/4 page 5, boldface added).

II. Inclusive Education: Public Policies

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY²

In the context of the initiated process of Serbia's association with the European Union and momentous processes taking place in Europe – globalisation, impact of information and communication technologies, knowledge management, need for acceptance of diversity and tolerance of differences, etc., the set Lisbon objectives³ striving towards a knowledge based society and lifelong learning, it was necessary for the Serbian education system to set itself new tasks which pushed the issues of quality and accessibility to the fore. Thus, in 2001, in Serbia, an education system reform was launched which set the framework and guidelines in accordance with the general direction of education system development within the European Union. However, since 2004, when the Government of the Republic of Serbia desisted from an all-encompassing education system reform, sporadically, without an agreed national education development strategy, some segments of the educational system have been changing at a very slow pace. Unfortunately, what was essential – child-centred educational practice, participatory aspect, work on ensuring quality (standards, objectives, outcomes, evaluation, self-evaluation, professional development of teachers), curriculum reform, democratisation (openness to different needs, intercultural approach to education, etc.), at the time of inception of “*Inclusive Education – From Practice to Policy*” project in late 2005, was only touched on or not at all. Even though the *decentralisation* process did start, no room has been made for inclusion of stakeholder groups (parents, pupils, etc.) or schools themselves in the processes of setting the directions for development and advancement of quality of education, adoption of laws and educational programmes, establishing of standards, etc. *Parental participation*, as an important segment of democratisation, despite the existence of legal participatory forms (parental councils, school committees), is more often than not only formal, and it does not represent an instrument of change and development. Results of international testing of our children (*Pisa* 2003 and 2006) point to a lower *quality* of education in Serbia and a gap with respect to a modern society's requirements. Those results were not used as a basis pointing to the way the education system should be changed and developed. Instead, they were mainly ignored.

Of great importance for the issue of real *accessibility* to education as a millennium goal is the position of special education, as a solution to education of children with disadvantages. Despite the fact that the documents recommending the introduction of inclusive approach in education and already well-developed practice and theory of inclusive education have been embraced worldwide, in Serbia's special schools, the medical model is dominant, which is, however, contrary to the social one, the widely accepted model in Europe. Although the law guarantees the right of all children and young people to quality education, experts estimate that 85% of children with disadvantages are not encompassed by the schooling system, while 25–80% of Roma children, due to their ethnic background and social deprivation, attend special schools.⁴ Children with disabilities and socially deprived children are seriously facing the problem of exercising their right to access to quality education. Those children with disadvantages who happen to be in the regular system are often exposed to discrimination due to both undemocratic relations and climate in school environment and insufficient support to the teachers supposed to help develop their positive

² Document prepared by Tatjana Stojić, Open Society Institute, Serbia

³ Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon, 23/24 March 2000, http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

⁴ *Equal Access to quality education for Roma*, Monitoring Reports, Open Society Institute, Budapest, 2007

attitude and to increase their competency for meeting different needs and ways to accomplish it. This situation most often results in the departure (dropping-out) of a large number of children from the educational process. Roma children's drop-out rate rises up to 72%.⁵

“*Inclusive Education - From Practice to Policy*” initiative came into existence with the goal of putting back on the political agenda the issue of a comprehensive and substantial education reform, collecting and utilising in the process experiences and results of the pilot programme and good practice in order to *establish/support/reinforce general reformist context*, and, as part of it, inclusive educational policy. This is why the work on the reform – through the work on teachers' professional development, criteria and indicators for inclusive educational practice, evaluation and self-evaluation, as well as the work on increasing accessibility of schooling, by way of the from-practice-to-policy method – constituted the dominant content and the way of work which the Fund for an Open Society (hereinafter, the Fund) advocated, in the belief that the access to quality education was instrumental in the process of building the social and civic cohesion of the society.

Starting from the assumption that education is the *right* of every individual as well as the assumption that for every child it is the most acceptable to be raised and educated in his/her natural environment – with other children rather than in isolation, the Fund is working with its partners on the creation of *conditions that would ensure equal access to quality education* for all children, particularly those children and young people who are marginalised, discriminated against or isolated on account of their ethnic background, social deprivation, mental abilities, disabilities or illness.

Practice first...

In Serbia, by 2005, there had been several initiatives, mostly initiated by the nongovernmental sector, which proved that inclusive education was possible. On the other hand, some practitioners, finding themselves in a situation where they had to respond to different needs of children coming from war-ravaged families, socially deprived environments or children who were hyperactive, with physical or mental handicap, children who belonged to different cultures..., were heightening their sensitivity and, sometimes without even knowing, developing methodologies which were individualising and standardising their work. They were often capable of defining what they might expect of individual pupils as an outcome of the educational process. Starting from the premise that such teachers and their experiences constitute a huge resource, as well as that the existence of an authentic need is the biggest incentive for development and change, the Fund's initiative has relied on practical solutions and experiences from which proposals for some systemic solutions would be derived.

The whole team, consisting of representatives of the organisations dealing with inclusion (CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, Initiative for inclusion VelikiMali (The GreatLittle), Serbian Teacher Association, Reformist Educational Circles, Cultural Centre Stari grad, Beton hala teatar, Vojvodina Pedagogical Institute and MOST), firmly hold the view that inclusion, based on social and integrative approach, should become the main characteristic of the regular education system. For this to happen, the fundamental concept should be the child-centred practice, which entails changes in terms of greater flexibility and openness for different needs, curricula reforms, (re-)defining of educational objectives and outcomes, ensuring quality, valuation and self-valuation.

⁵ *Više od nezvanične procene – položaj romske dece u Srbiji (More than Official Estimate – Position of Roma Children in Serbia)*, Centar za prava deteta (The Child Rights Centre) , Save the Children, Beograd, 2006

In this field, the Fund is dealing with development, implementation and promotion of the inclusive education model through the initiative which has brought together many partners in a *coalition advocating the introduction of inclusive and intercultural approach to the education system*. The foundation to this broad initiative was laid by launching the “*Inclusive Education - From Practice to Policy*” initiative intended to:

a) create conditions which would be conducive to the extension of access to quality education for all, particularly the marginalised groups – those children and young people who were marginalised, discriminated against or segregated due to their ethnic background, social deprivation, mental abilities, disabilities or illness;

b) develop and promote the inclusive approach model, opposing in the process to those models which allow or foster dissemination of prejudices and stereotypes, which tolerate exclusion and segregation;

c) develop citizen’s identity and augment intercultural competencies of pupils and teachers;

d) mitigate strict dividing lines between regular school institutions and special schools, and instigate co-operation and exchange among them in order to increase competencies of pupils for the inclusion in the life of the community and in order to increase capacities of teachers for work with children with different needs and children originating from different cultural milieus.

These goals are attainable only if *the building of the education system towards development of child-centred educational practice, democratisation* (openness, different needs, participation) and *quality* (standards, educational objectives and outcomes, evaluation, self-evaluation, teachers' professional development) continues.

Through five projects which stemmed from the Fund’s initiative, a broad coalition of partners was established consisting of state organs (Secretariat of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and Vojvodina Pedagogical Institute), local governments, professional associations (Teacher Association), NGOs dealing with developing, implementation and promotion of the inclusive education model. Members of this coalition, in accordance with their respective positions, made their contributions in rendering the issue of inclusive education in 2006 and 2007 a focal point of expert reviews, public debates and media coverage.

1. “Inclusive Education through Network of Teachers and Schools”

As part of this project, the Inclusive Education Network (IEN) has been expanded and it currently comprises over 150 teachers and expert associates in 15 cities and towns in Serbia. Teachers, IEN members, are applying experiences acquired through the implementation of the inclusive education model and pilot project which the project’s expert team assessed, on the basis of developed criteria and indicators, as examples of good practice. An Inclusive Education Support Service has been set up, consisting of 30 education experts and experienced practitioners in 10 Serbian cities and towns who provide support by phone or field visits to teachers, parents and all other stakeholders with respect to the enjoyment of the right to education for all children. The support services collaborate amongst themselves through an exchange of experiences and provision of mutual support.

With the backing of the Fund's information programme, www.inkluzija.org web portal has been created as a means of communication and expert support via exchange of experiences, expert literature, organisation of seminars and courses for teachers using in the process information technologies.

2. "Educational Inclusion – Local Teams"

In late 2006 and over the course of 2007, a network of 10 local inclusive teams (LIT) was established in 10 Serbian cities and towns, involving in its work teachers, education experts, representatives of local self-governments and various relevant local agencies (health care, social policy and employment), representatives of the associations of people with handicap and other NGOs, and business and media representatives. LIT members were trained, above all, in representation of children's rights and advocacy of new strategic policies. Through public debates, media presentations and talks with educational institutions, the LITs are promoting the inclusive concept of education and encouraging local educational institutions to open to marginalised groups. Actions by local inclusive teams are successfully co-ordinated by the CIP- Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and the Initiative for Inclusion VelikiMali (The GreatLittle).

3. "Inclusive School in Multicultural Community – Creating conditions for Inclusive School Development in Multicultural Vojvodina"

Bearing in mind that the same modality of exclusion of children with special needs is also replicated within the education system for ethnic minority communities, the Fund is backing a special project whose goal is to create conditions for development of inclusive school in minority languages. Main activities within the project are networking of pairs of teachers at special and regular primary schools where members of national minorities are also educated, organisation of support for schools and teachers through quality and dynamic exchange (web portal, blog) and public affirmation (round tables and media) of their activities focused on development of inclusive education in minority-language instruction at schools. The Fund's partner in this project are Vojvodina Pedagogical Institute and Secretariat of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

4. "Intercultural/Multicultural Education – From Practice to Policy"

The project is dealing with advancement and development of quality multicultural co-existence through educational practice and policy in two distinctly multiethnic regions. During the project's implementation, a functional and dynamic local network of innovative teachers and associates from the local community who learn from and mutually support one another in their innovative endeavours was formed. The common objective of multicultural and intercultural education is to exert a positive impact on the process of building, respecting and strengthening of cultural pluralism and tolerance in a society, as well as to develop a sustainable model of living together. These activities were conducted by the MOST Group.

5. "Art and Educational Inclusion"

One segment of the initial project developed in the direction of making art instrumental in the enjoyment of the right to education and quality education for all children. By employing drama, music and scenic movement, as an educational method applicable to the regular education system, in this segment as well, through this project, we are going back to the premises of the 2003 education reform. This project, as a segment of the general project, is dealing with affirmation of artistic forms and models (movement, music, drama) in the work with disabled children. The goal is to raise educational and artistic public's awareness of great possibilities that artistic forms provide for expression and affirmation of

abilities of disabled persons and for bringing them closer to the environment in which they live. The project is run by the Cultural Centre Stari grad and BETON hala teatar.

Some concrete results...

Service

Over the course of a period from 1 September 2007, when it started its work, until 30 June 2008, the *Inclusive Education Support Service* received 722 calls; it helped as many as 91 children with disadvantages to enrol in regular schools and kindergarten groups; a large number of parents, as many as 144, asked for assistance and support to make sure the rights of their children to inclusion in a regular school or a group at a pre-school institution are exercised. Parents were also initiators of co-operation between schools and the Service. In this period, teachers and expert associates mostly called in. In addition to 203 teachers and 136 expert associates, another 74 subject teachers contacted the Service, which speaks in favour of the extension of the Inclusive Education Network also to subject teachers who, thus far, have shown less sensitivity for the work with children who have difficulties. Through telephone consultations and 328 meetings of Service members with groups of expert associates, headmasters, class councils and local teacher societies, hundreds of interventions were undertaken (provision of information, advisory-expert support, contribution to positive attitudes towards inclusive education) of which the majority were in the area of provision of support for direct work with children with disadvantages – 328.

Local Inclusion Teams

In all 10 Serbian cities and towns, actions were organised to promote inclusive values in the community, which encompassed over 2,000 citizens. Initiatives to architecturally adapt the facilities to the needs of persons with handicap, or initiatives for establishing parents association for children's rights protection were launched. The teams created and distributed 10,000 pieces of various promotional material (leaflets, posters) on 3,000 copies of Information Booklet for Parents with instructions concerning the rights and possibilities to ensure education for all children. Expert events were organised – 2 conferences (150 participants) and 7 panel discussions, focusing on the topic of inclusive education, with around 350 participants – representatives of municipal authorities, regional school administrations, health care, social protection, pre-school and school institutions and associations, but also 3 lectures for teacher councils and 6 exemplary inclusive classes at schools. Great progress was made in the field of collecting the data on children and young people in need of additional support – databases in three Serbia's districts were considerably improved (in one of the districts, the data for as many as 80% of schools were processed); in 2 cities, the teams succeeded in gathering the data on 30 children with disabilities who were outside the education system. The teams also drafted strategic, political and expert documents, like *Declaration on Enjoyment of Right to Education for All Children* and *Social Policy Development Strategy*, which were adopted by the local assemblies in those cities, or 2 handbooks: *Handbook for Parents of Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Children* and *Handbook for Work with Pupils Suffering from ADHD*.

Guides



Guide for Advancement of Inclusive Educational Practice arose from the need to develop education towards inclusive education as well as to ensure integration of existing experiences in a comprehensive and systematic manner. This guide has originated from practice and is intended to be used in practice, but it also represents a specific instruction for inclusive policy development. The guide features examples of inclusive educational practice on the basis of which an Inclusive Education Criteria and Indicators List has been compiled.

For kindergarten and school as entities, the *Guide* may be usable as an incentive for development of a positive climate and ethos nurturing the respect for diversity.

For parents, as well as for professionals, this *Guide* may have a special purpose – highlighting impacts which regular education in inclusive conditions have on pupils' development; highlighting forms of parental involvement and goals which parents may set in co-operation with the school and accomplish them in relation to the school.

For local community, the *Guide* may be stimulative as it presents guidelines for local educational planning, highlighting the importance of interconnecting of different education levels and interconnecting of education and work, as well as underlining the significance of support and development of a general climate of respect for diversity.

The *Guide* could be of use for development of the educational system as a whole – in all the *Guide's* contents, the importance of the aspect of fairness is very conspicuous; openness is promoted and participation is advocated as crucial features of an inclusive system; but, above all, this *Guide* is showcasing the good inclusive practice and pointing to the systemic support which, importantly, should be provided to the existing good practical solutions so as to systematically develop the inclusive dimension of our education system.

Guide for Advancement of Intercultural Education came into existence as part of the “*Intercultural/Multicultural Education – From Practice to Policy*“ project. It relies on the innovative practice of intercultural education in different countries, but also on the existing, albeit rare, examples from our schools testifying to schools' possibilities and readiness to contribute to intercultural education under the conditions when the educational policy is not supportive enough. The Guide is an effort to contribute to the development of intercultural competencies. It is intended for teachers and their pupils, school managements, local communities, parents, authors of textbooks, working materials and programmes for professional advancement of teachers, and creators of the educational policy.

The Guide contains a review of the relevant and topical documents that define the need for intercultural education in European and international framework, clarifies key notions related to the field of intercultural education; it presents foreign experiences and

provides examples of good domestic practice, but also defines criteria and indicators for a good intercultural practice.

... *and then policy*

Given the lack of systemic support, the outcomes of this three-year initiative (2005–2008), which may be of importance for potential defining of inclusive educational policies, are as follows:

- collected examples of good practice and established criteria and indicators for good inclusive practices in education whose application is facilitated by the published “Guide for Advancement of Inclusive Educational Practice”;
- developed pedagogical practice of inclusive education on the part of 150 practitioners from 15 Serbian cities and towns and established network and horizontal learning model;
- developed “Inclusive Education Support Service” (30 professionals in 10 cities and towns, counselling over the phone or by field visits, support for teachers, parents and other stakeholders);
- developed practice of networking institutions from various systems (educational, health care, social protection, financial... systems) with the civil society in 10 local environments, and advanced experience of joint work on the creation of conditions for an inclusive approach as a model of local community’s support for the inclusive education;
- offered incentives’ mechanism for the education system institutions to work inclusively through “The Most Inclusive School Competition” which instigates schools’ self-evaluation and inclusive approach institutionalisation – embedding the approach into school’s plans, decisions, documents;
- improved model for use of integral art as an educational method;
- raised issue of application of inclusive principles at minority-language schools and enhanced capacities of practitioners at minority-language schools for implementation of inclusive approach in pedagogical practice;
- established criteria and indicators for advancement and development of quality multicultural co-existence through educational practice whose implementation was facilitated by the compiled “Guide for Advancement of Intercultural Education”.

The existence of good inclusive practice, and criteria and indicators for an inclusive approach could present a good basis for defining of *minimal standards in this field as well as for defining and development of mechanisms for monitoring the accomplishment of educational objectives and outcomes* which will result in the inclusion of all the children irrespective of their diversity. These criteria and indicators, even the Guide for Advancement of Inclusive Educational Practice itself, probe into the issues of initial professional training and further professional advancement of teaching staff, and they provide possibilities for *supplementing curricula of teacher faculties* with this topic and approaches, as well as for defining of new *programmes for teacher trainings*. Even more important is “...the training of expert pedagogical supervisors so that their capacities for detection of discrimination against children with special needs in the educational system could be developed.”⁶

⁶ *Oslonci i barijere za inkluzivno obrazovanje u Srbiji (Pillars of Support and Barriers to Inclusive Education in Serbia)*, CETI, 2007, Fund for an Open Society and Save the Children Fund, Belgrade, 2007.

On the grounds of good practice in *collaboration between special and regular schools* through projects related to art and inclusion and the project which was developed in conjunction with the Vojvodina Pedagogical Institute, it is possible to introduce sustainable “...mechanisms and instruments which would prompt the establishment of collaboration between special and regular schools with the objective that teachers and experts from special schools provide support to regular schools in their inclusive activities, thus facilitating the inclusion of children from special schools into regular schools”, but also “...to develop a procedure for transfer of children from special schools to regular schools, which would clearly and accurately define the conditions under which the given transfer may occur – who is responsible for initiating the process of transfer when the necessary conditions are met; how a child and his/her parents must be prepared; which preparatory activities must be carried out at the level of regular school into which the child in question is being transferred; in which way will the child in question and his/her parents be provided psychological and pedagogical support in the period following the actual transfer to a regular school; etc.”⁷

The existence of *practitioners’ network which is motivated and continues to learn horizontally and develop*, constitutes a support for (possible) systemic changes towards inclusiveness of schools and education system, the testing of different models and development of the most acceptable one.

Interconnectedness of the system’s institutions in a local environment with respect to the issue of fairness and accessibility of education, and raised awareness that all these institutions, together with parents, nongovernmental organisations and all other stakeholders, may have an impact on the designing of an inclusive educational policy model is, in Serbia, a relatively novel method of work on the changes to the education system. Awareness, institutions’ openness for one another as well as institutions’ openness to civil society organisations and parents in ten local communities could be an example of good practice for the *defining of a local educational policy and the defining of local community’s requirements of the education adjusting it to local plans pertaining to children, social protection, employment and development*. Education is an inseparable part of the regional development plan and an instrument for economic and social development of both the local community and the society at large. This is why local inclusion teams’ actions may be perceived as support for the government’s efforts to co-ordinate and plan activities for poverty reduction at both national and local levels through implementation of the project that supports the drafting of annual operative plans (AOPs) in Serbian municipalities in those areas of which various ministerial departments are in charge.

An important missing segment as regards the education of marginalised groups is the *non-existence or unreliability of the data* on the number and types of difficulties⁸, and necessary support for parents, children and teachers. Indisputable is the need that the Electronic Information System (EIS), whose designing was initiated by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, should contain information on the basis of which it would be possible to monitor the coverage of children with special needs by pre-school institutions, special and regular schools. To this effect, local inclusion teams (LITs) and *local databases* on which various institutions are working, in conjunction with nongovernmental

⁷ *Oslonci i barijere za inkluzivno obrazovanje u Srbiji (Pillars of Support and Barriers to Inclusive Education in Serbia)*, CETI, 2007, Fund for an Open Society and Save the Children Fund, Belgrade, 2007.

⁸ 2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Report, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister’s Team for Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation, Belgrade, 2006.

organisations in local communities, endeavouring to make the information contained therein as reliable as possible, may be of help.

Re-introduction of *various artistic forms* into the educational system – not as separate disciplines, which is the way they exist in it now, but integrally (drama, scene movement, fine arts, music and video creativity) – enhances the educational-upbringing *method*, enabling *interdisciplinary thematic educational work* and offering to participants in the educational-upbringing process *several channels for expression* of diversity, specific traits, talent...

Multiculturalism, if understood solely as the exercise of the minorities' right to education in their own respective languages, is the characteristic of the education in Serbia, which, however, does not apply to all national minorities. Development of knowledge and skills acquired in the education process, which will contribute to an increase of *intercultural competencies and ability to learn from diversity*, must become a part of educational policies through the programmes of professional advancement for teachers, initial studies at teacher faculties and through changes to the curricula directed towards freedom to integrate contents of different cultures and to create a climate of tolerance with respect to ethnic, religious, physical, mental and other differences. The work of experts to augment intercultural competencies of teaching staff and "Guide for Advancement of Intercultural Education" could of help in the defining of intercultural education policies.

As a result of an increasing number of inclusive programmes, expert public's raised awareness that good inclusive practice does exist as well as that the inclusive approach must entail various types of systemic support so as to be more effective, teachers are beginning to exert pressure on the Ministry of Education so that they could receive the said support. The need recognised by practitioners to adapt the educational system to marginalised groups and children in general, instead of *vice versa*, has highlighted the necessity of curricula-related changes, methodology of work and approach. As a result, a document entitled *Directions for Development of Education and Upbringing of Children and Pupils with Disadvantages*, made by the Institute for Advancement of Education, states that this development must unfold through "...reformist processes relying on international and European objectives, general economic and social conditions for society's development, poverty reduction and provision of quality and accessible education for children, pupils and adults with disabilities and other impairments..."⁹ The document is still set to be reviewed by the National Educational Council, and if it is adopted without major changes to it, it will present a good basis for quality education for all.

We are hoping that good practice, researches and recommendations which have originated from this three-year initiative launched by the Fund for an Open Society, that has gathered together over 250 teachers and workers from kindergartens and schools with instruction in the majority and minority languages, over 150 professionals and parents, members of local teams, at least 8 organisations – both governmental and non-governmental, may provide their contribution and help find solutions to the benefit of children.

⁹ *Pravci razvoja obrazovanja i vaspitanja dece i učenika sa smetnjama i teškoćama u razvoju (Directions for Development of Education and Upbringing of Children and Pupils with Disadvantages)*, Zavod za unapređivanje vaspitanja i obrazovanja (Institute for Advancement of Education), 2007. (proposal).

Breaking the Roma Education Curse

**10 hurdles to overcome for a successful integration
of Roma children in schools**

This document contains a summary of the findings included in the Open Society Institute's monitoring report '*Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*'. The full text of the report is available in print and online at www.eumap.org.

Introduction

'Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma' is a series of monitoring reports produced by the Open Society Institute (OSI) in 2007. The reports review the situation in Central and South Eastern European countries, and offer badly needed data for the improvement of policies and practice in the area of education for Roma.

Roma, with a population of up to ten million across the continent, are Europe's largest minority and one of its most vulnerable groups. The disadvantaged situation of Roma communities has been widely recognised at the international and national levels and a remarkably wide range of initiatives has been developed to address and improve this situation. Yet, positive change is slow to manifest itself.

The OSI reports present a rather bleak outlook: Roma have dramatically worse rates of participation and performance in school than majority children. Too few Roma children ultimately complete their education with the necessary skills to succeed on the job market.

As discouraging as the current situation can be, there is no reason to believe that change is impossible. The obstacles that Roma children face in getting through school can be removed with political will. They have to be removed if the situation of Roma – and of the region – is ever to improve.

Roma are, incontrovertibly, part of European society, and the choice to be made is whether they will stay at the margins, or whether they are drawn into a more inclusive, cohesive social setting.

The following text is a summary of the more extensive and detailed analysis on the subject included in the regional overview and in the individual country reports which make up the monitoring reports 'Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma'. Recommendations are taken from the regional overview.

¹⁰ Document prepared by Miriam Anati and Christina MacDonald, Open Society Institute, United Kingdom.

Foreword to the monitoring reports

There are about ten million Roma in Europe, living in virtually every country on the continent. There is no single type of Roma but a rich variety of cultures, traditions and other characteristics. They speak different languages and practise a number of religions.

Because of anti-Ziganism, many Roma have sadly been afraid to display their Roma identity openly. This is one reason why the number of Roma in national censuses is usually much lower than the real figure. We must break all stereotypes which seek to reduce Roma identities and voices. The time has come to recognise the contribution Roma have already made to European societies.

This is the aim of the ongoing Council of Europe campaign *Dosta!* (Enough! in Romani) currently underway in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The next step is to extend the campaign to all European countries. Every European state should join in stating loud and clear that they have had enough of prejudice against Roma. There must be an end to the discrimination of Roma – in employment, housing, health care and education.

During my missions to European countries I see the sad consequences of anti-Ziganism and have come to believe that *schooling* is the main instrument for putting an end to the downward spirals. There is of course a need for awareness-raising among the majority population, not least the young ones, but as important are further efforts to provide quality education to the next generation of Roma. I see this as absolutely necessary in order to break the vicious circle.

Many Roma children remain outside national education systems altogether, there is a high drop-out rate among those who enrol and the achievements in general among Roma pupils are low. One explanation is of course the high level of illiteracy among parents.

However, segregation of Roma children in the school system also remains a serious problem across Europe. The European Court of Human Rights recently delivered a landmark ruling in the case *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*, bringing new focus on the over-representation of Roma in special schools or classes for children with intellectual disabilities.

This problem has been documented in several countries. I visited myself some years ago schools in the Czech republic where Roma children were placed almost automatically in special classes for pupils with learning problems even when it was recognised that the child was obviously capable – though had little study encouragement from home.

This underlines also the importance of *early education* possibilities for the Roma children so that they can avoid the immediate disadvantage of too little background when starting primary education. I have seen with interest that the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues has suggested programmes for such pre-schooling.

As Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe I also welcome the research presented by the EUMAP monitoring project on Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma. I consider this as an important contribution to improving our understanding of the issues facing Roma in education and therefore a good basis for the political decisions needed. I find it particularly important that Roma representatives themselves have participated in conducting the research for each country report, to help ensure that Roma communities' perspectives are represented.

The country reports include specific and detailed recommendations, which should help to initiate further discussion at the national and local levels. They also highlight good practices that have been developed and could serve as models elsewhere.

Thomas Hammarberg
Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

Background to the monitoring reports '*Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*'

Researched over 2005–2007, the series of reports '*Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*' focuses on eight countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015* (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia).

This series was produced by the Open Society Institute's EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP), in cooperation with the Education Support Program (ESP) and the Roma Participation Program (RPP).

The series includes individual country reports and a regional overview. Each report contains an in-depth analysis of the specific situation in the country, case studies conducted in three locations, and a list of concrete, specific and constructive recommendations for improving equal access to quality education for Roma, both in policy and in practice. The overview consolidates the main themes across all reports and includes recommendations addressed to European and international organisations.

The monitoring reports were drafted by local teams of experts, including a reporter, an education specialist and researchers drawn from Roma civil society. National roundtables were organised focusing on a draft version of each report, giving all stakeholders an opportunity to critique and comment on it. Final reports were also published in translation and publicly presented in all the countries covered in the monitoring.

The reports are available in both English and the local language. They can be downloaded at www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma_education/reports or requested using the order form available at www.eumap.org/puborder.

For information on EUMAP's work on Roma, including the methodology and other materials used for this project, please see www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma_education.

For further information contact EUMAP at eumap@osi.hu or Miriam Anati, Advocacy and Communications, EUMAP, at manati@osieurope.org.

* The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 is an unprecedented political commitment by governments in Central and Southeastern Europe to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma within a regional framework. The Decade is an international initiative that brings together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society, to accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma and to review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way. The Decade focuses on the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, and commits governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.

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About EUMAP

This report on "Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma" builds on previous EUMAP reports on Minority Protection. In 2001 and 2002, EUMAP released two series of reports looking at the situation of Roma and Russian speakers in Central and Eastern European countries. In 2002 and 2005, EUMAP published reports on the situation of Roma and Muslims in selected Western European countries. In 2007, EUMAP initiated a new monitoring project looking at the situation of Muslims in eleven cities in Western Europe. In addition to its reports on Minority Protection, EUMAP has released monitoring reports focusing on the Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities, the Regulation and Independence of the Broadcast Media, Judicial Independence and Capacity, Corruption and Anti-corruption Policy, and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. EUMAP is also currently working on a follow-up monitoring of broadcast media, on digital media, and on the situation of Muslims in EU cities. All published EUMAP reports are available online, both in English and translated into the national languages (www.eumap.org).

About ESP

The OSI's Education Support Program (ESP) and its network partners support education reform in countries in transition, combining demonstration of best practice and policy advocacy to strengthen open society values, and promote justice in education, in three interconnected areas:

- Combating social exclusion: equal access to quality education for low-income families; desegregation of children from minority groups; inclusion and adequate care for children with special needs.
- Openness and accountability in education systems and education reforms: equitable and efficient state expenditures on education; anti-corruption and transparency; accountable governance and management.
- Open society values in education: social justice and social action; diversity and pluralism; critical and creative thinking.

Support is focused in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, South Asia and Southern Africa. ESP has offices in Budapest, London and New York, and previously had an office in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where it was known as Open Society Education Programs-South-East Europe (OSEP-SEE). The Budapest office now oversees work in South-Eastern Europe as well. Past work of OSEP-SEE can be accessed at www.osepsee.net.

About RPP

OSI's Roma Participation Program (RPP) is committed to further the integration of Roma in society, and empower Roma to challenge the direct and indirect racial discrimination that continues to hinder such integration. RPP views integration not as a flattening process of assimilation, but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. This commitment finds expression in RPP's four core objectives:

- Providing institutional support and training to Roma NGOs capable of effective advocacy; linking these NGOs to wider regional and national activities and campaigns, and strengthening networking across borders to impact on policy processes at the national and EU levels.
- Creating training, development, internship and funding opportunities to consolidate the new generation of Roma women and men who will be the future leaders of national and international Roma movements.
- Broadening awareness of the priorities of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" and creating opportunities for increased Roma participation in the Decade process.
- Promoting Roma women's access to public institutions and participation in decision-making processes, and to build a critical mass of Roma women leaders.

<p style="text-align: center;">Breaking the Roma Education Curse: 10 hurdles to overcome for a successful integration of Roma children in schools</p>
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1. A lack of reliable, comprehensive, and comparable data, both across the region and within each country, is a serious obstacle to developing suitable policies and tracking progress

Poor data is a problem in all the countries monitored, without exception. Without disaggregated data based on ethnicity, how can governments differentiate between who is succeeding and who is not, and make appropriate provisions?

Several governments do not allow the collection of personal data when gathering statistics. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding or misinterpretation of data protection standards. While indeed the protection of privacy is important – particularly for Roma who may have concerns that data be used to their disadvantage – European Union data protection standards distinguish between the collection of individually identifiable personal data and that of aggregate data. A Council of Europe Convention also clearly says that statistical results are not personal data because they are not linked to an identifiable person.

Available data are unreliable in many countries as data-gathering systems are not efficient, systematic or in place at all. For example data might not be compatible across ministries, let alone with international data collection systems.

This lack of regular or consistent data collection takes place also at the local level where school inspectorates rarely collect data based on ethnicity. School drop-outs, as well as other indicators, therefore, cannot be appropriately tracked.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *In collaboration with the relevant bodies of the European Commission, take the necessary legal and administrative measures to develop methods of ethnic data collection in order to monitor the effects of policies on ethnic minorities, and to take corrective action as required.*
- *Respecting all relevant data protection laws, gather and make public in a readily comprehensible form statistical data on the situation of Roma in education; disaggregated data on enrolment, performance and progression should be collected.*

To the European Union

- *Adopt measures to support the collection of comparable data in all countries, disaggregated by ethnicity (with a specific mention of the Roma minority), with appropriate protection of individual detail, and stress their relevance to education and social inclusion.*
- *Further specify the indicators necessary for the development of social inclusion policies as per the Lisbon Process, to include education, and develop indicators of more relevance to Roma, such as the development of a segregation “index” for education.*

To the Decade of Roma Inclusion

- *Initiate and endorse awareness-raising among Roma as to the value of data collection on social inclusion measures by ethnic group.*

2. Governments' policies and programmes are neither sufficient nor implemented

All countries included in the monitoring have adopted governmental policies and programmes addressed to improve the situation of Roma in schools. However, many programmes are either inappropriate (do not address Roma specifically or the issue of segregation), outdated, do not contain specific targets with indicators and monitoring arrangements defined, do not address issues that are relevant or important, or are inconsistent. In addition, they are insufficiently implemented and lack mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

The ongoing process of decentralisation particularly affects the implementation of education policies as local authorities gain greater autonomy, but often without clear responsibilities or appropriate support and/or guidance, and the central Government retains fewer and fewer mechanisms to combat negative trends such as segregation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Taking into consideration all strategies, both Roma-specific and general education, create a coherent policy for the education of Roma children, which is linked and relevant to existing strategies; Roma should be explicitly addressed and targeted.*
- *Establish mechanisms to ensure that education tasks within the Decade Action Plan that fall under the competency of local authorities are effectively implemented.*
- *Monitor progress towards the Decade Action Plan goals in education; engage and consult with civil society to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, including the creation of indicators, and report openly on the progress of achieving the goals in the Decade Action Plan.*

To the European Union

- *Encourage all Decade countries to address Roma as a target group in their National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and Lifelong Learning, and other relevant policy frameworks.*

To the Decade of Roma Inclusion

- *Support the involvement of Roma organisations in efforts to promote ethnic monitoring as a means to identifying problems, arguing for targeted policies and programmes, monitoring action and evaluating impact.*
- *Facilitate dialogue between monitoring initiatives such as the DecadeWatch and participating states, to promote constructive debate on the progress of implementing Decade objectives in each country.*
- *Provide technical support to Governments in designing practical action plans to implement their Decade Action Plans for Education, including the creation of indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.*
- *Exert pressure on national Governments to follow through and implement their education action plans as they were developed within the framework of the Decade.*

3. Racism, prejudice and discrimination are not seriously addressed

The issue of discrimination against Roma, whether it be covert or open, is a reality in all the monitored countries, clearly resulting from the widespread negative prejudices and attitudes towards Roma in mainstream societies. In all countries monitored, most Roma children face disadvantage in every aspect of their education, however not all countries have enacted comprehensive laws as well as competent bodies with adequate powers and resources to counter discrimination. When such frameworks are in place, their implementation is very poor.

In many cases Roma themselves do not have enough knowledge about their rights and opportunities for protection. They also fear possible negative consequences if they file a complaint, and they may not trust that official institutions are willing and able to solve their problems. They might not recognise many discriminatory acts as discrimination or violation of their rights, or even that the system itself is not effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Establish and monitor equal treatment criteria ensuring enrolment of disadvantaged children and maintaining integrated classes, and allocate funds from the central budgetary and EU funds only to schools and authorities that meet these criteria.*

4. Several Governments do not recognise or address the segregation of Roma in education, which is present in all the countries monitored.

Improper placement of Roma in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities: In many countries, following insensitive testing that does not take into account language or cultural barriers, Roma children are frequently erroneously diagnosed as having a disability. As a result some special schools have been found to enrol 90–100 per cent Roma children. Students who complete school in such an environment almost inevitably find themselves without the skills they need to succeed on the labour market.

Segregation of Roma into separate classes or schools: Roma children are placed together, in order to help them “catch up”. This type of segregation is thus characterised as an expediency measure, never discrimination. Roma children rarely have a chance to “catch up”, though. A true programme for bilingual education, and adequate training and preparation of teachers, could more effectively address these children’s needs, without resorting to segregation.

Geographic segregation in schools in majority Roma areas: Roma communities often live in separate neighbourhoods within a city, separate villages, or unregulated settlements established on the outskirts of towns. Many Roma communities and neighbourhoods lack a local school, and as transport is too expensive or unavailable, some children simply do not attend schools. When schools are available in majority Roma areas, they offer lower quality education. Because of geographic isolation children may have no exposure to the national language, which means that they start schools completely disadvantaged.

Schools of any type with a high number of Roma students are almost invariably inferior to those with lower numbers of Roma enrolled. Lower expectations from Roma children contribute to lower achievement, and are an unwritten lower standard. The curriculum used in these schools and classes is indeed a reduced one compared to mainstream schools as Roma children are considered unable to work to the pace in mainstream classes.

The material conditions in Roma schools are deplorable, as schools very often lack running water and indoor toilets, have no computers, science facilities or libraries, fewer teaching aids, no books and so on. Overcrowding is also a serious problem, with many Roma schools having to resort to a two-shift system.

The poor material conditions and the overall difficult and unrewarding working conditions also affects teachers’ motivation. Not surprisingly, teachers in schools with a high number of Roma tend to be under qualified.

School inspectors often have limited powers and lack a mandate to handle segregation issues or actively support desegregation.

The little data available demonstrate that Roma pupils consistently under-perform in school compared with their majority peers, they repeat grades more often, and drop out more frequently, all of which results in a population that lacks literacy skills. Interestingly, however, there is evidence that in segregated settings literacy is far lower than it is in integrated settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Take the necessary legal, financial and administrative steps to end all forms of educational segregation of Roma children.*
- *Reduce the number of Roma in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities through ensuring that mainstream primary schools can offer the same benefits to disadvantaged children as special schools and improving diagnostic and assessment tools/instruments used in the assessment of children with special educational needs.*

To the European Union

- *Consider the adoption of EU rules prohibiting ethnic and racial segregation in the field of education; investigate further the development of legal measures in this area; and provide for formal monitoring with inspections and sanctions.*
- *Explore ways in which EU education policies and programming can address racial segregation in education and the widespread unequal and inadequate level of provision for Roma.*
- *Develop focused awareness-raising campaigns on the problems of anti-Roma racism and the current social exclusion crisis facing Roma in Europe, and encourage Decade countries to undertake such awareness-raising campaigns.*

5. Preschool is key to integrate all Roma children into schools, yet too few Roma children have access to preschools.

Preschool can offer vital preparation for Roma children, to help them learn the language of instruction if it's not what they speak at home, and also to give them a chance to get used to the school routine. Many Roma children find school to be a dramatically different environment than they have experienced before.

Not enough Roma children have access to preschool. In some countries there aren't sufficient places for all children to enroll while in others preschool is not part of compulsory education and the fees are too high for poor families to spare. Roma children often arrive for the first day of first grade without any preparation at all.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Ensure that all children have access to preschool, adding facilities and classes as necessary to accommodate all children; eliminate any fees for disadvantaged children, and cover transport costs.*

6. The impact of poverty and bureaucracy on Roma education needs to be neutralized

Many Roma families are very poor and don't have money to dress children appropriately, buy them books and school supplies. In bad weather Roma children can be kept home rather than sent out without shoes or a coat. The poor conditions in many Roma communities limit the extent to which children can be expected to study at home. Where families are crowded into small living spaces there may be no area where a child can complete schoolwork. Irregular power supplies may mean there is no light to read by. Roma

children can also be withdrawn from school to work, as the income they bring may be essential to the family.

In some countries special schools profit from this situation as their funds depend on the number of enrolled pupils. They offer benefits such as free meals and accommodation as an incentive for poorer families to enroll their children there, rather than in a mainstream school.

Standard requirements for enrolment in preschools and schools include sometimes a written request, a birth certificate and medical documentation, sometimes asking too much from Roma parents, particularly in countries hosting displaced persons as in Montenegro and Macedonia.

Roma in many countries live in marginalised settlements, often illegal or unregulated, and their children are not included in the usual call for enrolment. Roma parents may be illiterate, and unable to read the notification advising them to enrol their children by a particular date. With poor access to health care, Roma children may not have the medical certificate required for registration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Work towards improvement of access to personal documents and health care for Roma as one of the preconditions for their successful access to education and, where appropriate, develop policies for displaced persons and refugees to gain access to education despite not having appropriate papers.*

7. Classroom practice and pedagogy need to change

The majority of teachers are still working in the old paradigm of frontal teaching with a passive learning style. Although official policy may require more interactive, child-centred methods, it does not have a system or means to monitor or support its implementation. In practice few teachers actively implement new techniques.

Teachers are insufficiently prepared to work with diverse groups of children as they do not receive adequate training during their studies or while in service. A trend to introduce elements of multiculturalism is starting to develop in pedagogical departments within universities or colleges. But systems also are not yet in place requiring teachers to update their skills regularly, including in areas such as multiculturalism and Roma culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Mandate in-/pre-service diversity training for all education professionals and provide support for in-service teacher-training institutions to encourage new models and practices of school-based leadership and management, student-centred instruction and parent and community involvement.*
- *Create incentives to attract high-quality teachers to schools that may be in lower socioeconomic areas, for example, professional development opportunities and other incentives for young teachers to teach in less desirable schools.*
- *Increase the number of Roma working in the education sector.*

- *In the absence of national systems, issue criteria for teachers to assess and grade student achievement, to prevent the subjective lowering of expectations and the inflation of grades for underachieving students.*
- *Create systems of national standards, linked to national-level assessment systems, so as to have reliable and comparable national knowledge of student outcomes disaggregated for ethnicity; standards and assessment systems should be linked with textbook creation and selection criteria and standards;*

8. Schools should get closer to Roma communities and parents

Roma parental involvement with schools tends to be minimal, further increasing the isolation and exclusion of Roma communities. There is very little systematic means for parental and community involvement in the education systems. School boards, or councils, exist in all countries, but they do not necessarily make for meaningful parental or community involvement in the education process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Encourage educational institutions to strengthen links with Roma communities and parents, and ensure that they participate in decision-making and in the teaching/learning process.*
- *Promote community-based strategies to enhance the capacity of ethnic-minority groups to engage with education systems.*

To the European Union

- *Use existing programmes such as the European Social Fund to include components for training and the empowerment of Roma groups and individuals in the field of education, in order for them to become more active in implementing and shaping policies and programmes.*

9. Language issues need addressing

Many Roma are not native speakers of the language of the countries in which they live. Roma communities are diverse and may speak a Romanes dialect or another non majority language as a first language. This situation causes linguistic and other problems for Roma children when they enter school.

The language barrier for Roma children can result in incorrect placement in a special school, or segregation in a Roma-only class. While preschool programmes, and in particular the establishment of a mandatory zero year, can help Roma children gain basic competence in the language of instruction before starting primary school, too few Roma children actually attend preschool for this to have a widespread impact. When children do have access, it is often the teachers and educators who are not trained to deal with helping children becoming acquainted with the majority language. Schools thus fail to serve as a force to promote integration, and instead increase Roma children's sense of marginalisation.

The recognition of Romanes, the Roma language, as an official language, and the governing laws regarding the right to receive instruction in the mother tongue, and to have access to studying one's mother tongue as a subject, have not yet received sufficient space.

Despite the fact that many countries provide for the possibility to study in the mother tongue, implementation, again, is problematic

Another issue that varies from country to country is the use of Roma Teaching Assistants. Despite the need and confirmed benefits demonstrated at local levels, some countries have taken more affirmative measures to meet the need than others.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Take steps to ensure that Roma children whose first language is not the language of instruction receive the support they need in schools, by supporting and fostering in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education, ensuring that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of Romanes, and developing preschool programmes that place particular emphasis on language acquisition and bilingual techniques.*
- *Make necessary changes in textbook and curriculum creation criteria to integrate cultural and ethnic diversity issues and ensure that Roma culture, language and history are integrated into those standards.*

10. Non multicultural curricula are tools for exclusion

It is important for the curriculum to reflect diversity in unbiased ways. The relevance of the school curriculum, and its dealing with diversity, however, has not been paid enough attention in the context of social integration.

Although there may be some inclusion of the Roma minority in a handful of books, their depiction remains dubious. There are very few broader attempts to deal with concepts of multiculturalism or diversity in the curriculum.

Efforts have also been made to increase curricular material relating to Roma. However, current approaches seem to take too narrow a view and offer this material to Roma only, overlooking the fact that the majority population must also receive exposure to diversity, even more so than the minority groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Governments

- *Allow for the provision of curriculum development at the school level that takes into account the local Roma community.*
- *Make necessary changes in textbook and curriculum creation criteria to integrate cultural and ethnic diversity issues and ensure that Roma culture, language and history are integrated into national standards.*

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL LIFE¹¹

“School leadership is a collective enterprise.” - Fullan, Michael (2003), page XV.

Abstract

The paper presents the main findings of a survey conducted in eight South East European countries to learn about school principals' attitudes and beliefs in what concerns the engagement of pupils' parents in school life for primary schools. We introduce a model that tries to capture the possible relationships between the satisfaction of school principals with parental engagement in school life and the characteristics of school principals, the characteristics of schools, schools' efforts to foster parental participation and the actual practice of parental participation. These possible relationships are theorized to occur through several pathways. Beside the direction of the statistical procedure, the model also tests whether the paths are statistically significant. As hypothesized, a positive correlation could be identified between the personal perceptions of school principals regarding the benefits of parental engagement in school life and the extent of satisfaction with Parents' Council performance, the importance of parental participation and the belief in the importance of parental voice in school matters.

1. Introduction

School leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a welcoming participatory environment, which – besides facilitating the engagement of parents in school life – increases inclusiveness ensuring that parents belonging to socio-economic groups less likely to engage are also engaged (Bradshaw et al., 2004; Hallam et al., 2006; Lupton, 2006). Parental involvement in the education of children has been studied extensively and there is compelling evidence of a systematic and positive relation between the levels of parental engagement and the developmental and educational outcome of pupils (Okpala et al., 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Barnard, 2004; Moran & al., 2004; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006; Hartas, 2008). Evidence also shows (e.g. Sacker et al., 2002) that parents who are economically less well off and those with lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to be meaningfully engaged in the education of their children compared to those who have higher socio-economic status (Waanders et al., 2007).

The relevance of the role played by school leadership in influencing the developmental and educational outcome of pupils by fostering an inclusive home-school partnership is further emphasized by the increasing decentralization of the responsibilities related to school governance and the adaptation of innovative methods of management, e.g. distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), evidence-based leadership (Lewis and Cardwell, 2005), turnaround leadership (Fullan, 2005), educational leadership (Hoyle and Wallace, 2006), etc. Nonetheless, there is only limited systematic knowledge of the attitudes and beliefs of school principals regarding the implementation of the newly adopted participatory regulations in the case of countries that have recently introduced reforms in view of enhancing school level governance.

To have a better insight into the possible outcomes of strengthening the role of school leadership, we carried out an exploratory survey in eight South-East European countries that have recently adopted reforms institutionalizing parental participation in school governance, and decentralized considerable decision-making authority to school level. The survey of school principals investigates the role of school principals' attitudes and beliefs in fostering

¹¹ Document prepared by Daniel Pop, Education Support Program, Open Society Institute & Steve Powell, proMente social research, United Kingdom. *Work in progress. Do not quote. Comments and observations are welcome.*

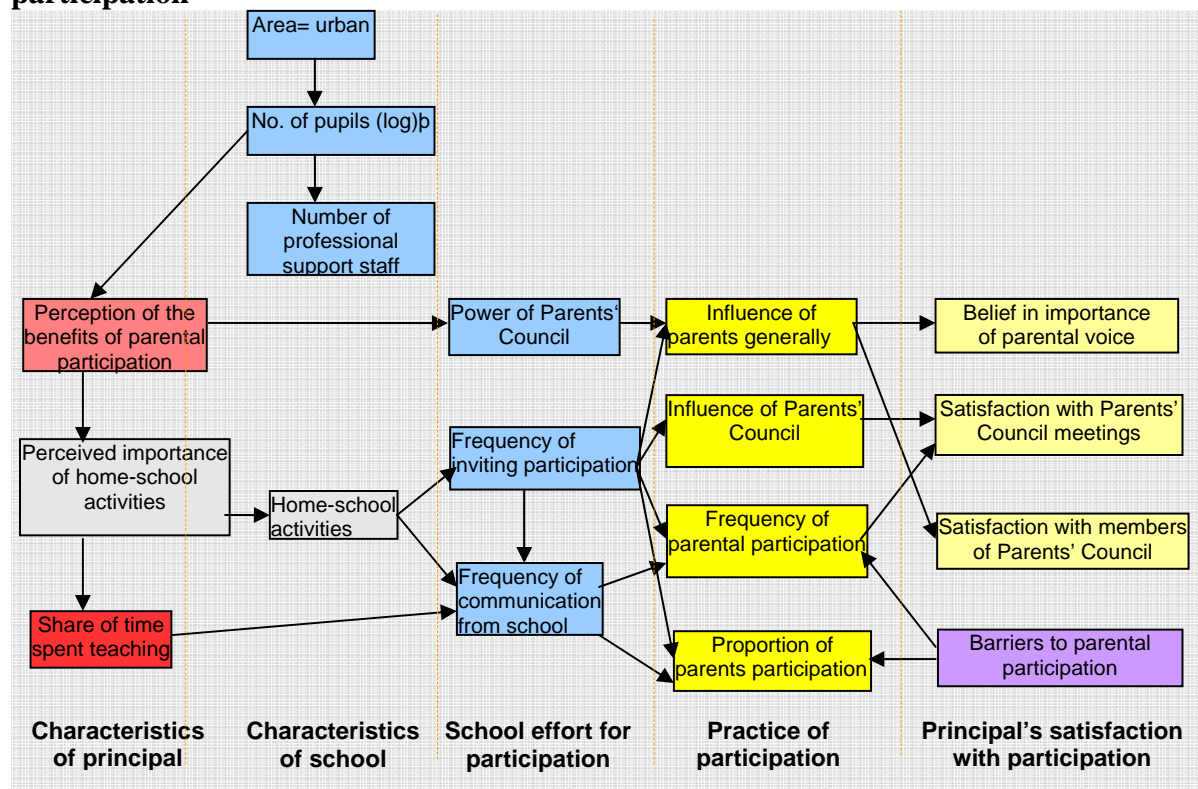
parental participation (in decision-making, in extracurricular activities, and in the education of one's own children) in public elementary schools.

This paper presents the main findings of the above mentioned survey, modeling the relationship between the satisfaction of school principals with parental engagement in school life and the characteristics of school principals, the characteristics of schools, schools' efforts to foster parental participation and the actual practice of parental participation in school life. The paper is structured in four sections. In the first section we introduce the topic addressed in the paper. The second section presents the theoretical model for the analysis with a discussion of the different pathways that are hypothesized to exist among variables. The third section details the methods used, and includes a presentation of the cross-country survey of school principals, the measures of the key variables and the statistical analysis used. In the fourth section we present the main findings of the analysis also pointing out the main limitations of the study.

2. Theoretical model

Our theoretical model captures the extent to which the attitudes and beliefs of school principals concerning the utility of parental engagement in school life affect the extent of parental engagement. This relationship is studied through a number of possible pathways, which are presented in figure 1.

Figure 1 Path diagram on school principals' attitudes and beliefs about parental participation



We suggest that the personal perceptions of school principals regarding the benefits of parental engagement in school life – which is mediated by the perception of the importance of home-school partnership and the share of time spent teaching – may influence the extent of satisfaction with Parents' Council performance, the importance of parental participation and the belief in the importance of parental voice in school matters. These possible relationships are theorized to occur through several pathways that were grouped in: the characteristics of

the school, the efforts undertaken by the school to engage parents in school life, and the practice of parental participation in school life. Considering the multidimensional nature of the possible activities seeking to engage parents and the methods or strategies adopted by parents to engage in school life, each mediating factor consists of a number of composite indicators that each capture a given dimension of the concept.

The model also includes a series of possible interactions among the mediating factors. For instance, the frequency with which parents are invited to participate in school activities is likely to influence the practice of participation. Similarly, the frequency of school communication with parents may influence both the frequency of parental participation in school activities and the share of parents that engage.

It is important to recall that the paths in this diagram were developed based primarily on theory and plausibility. However, once designed, the model (i.e. the network of paths) was specified using a special notation, which was then formally tested using software for structural equation modeling. Firstly and most importantly, the model was tested to see whether it fits the data, i.e. whether the observed questionnaire data would be likely were the model true. Besides the direction of the statistical procedure the model also estimates the strengths of the hypothesized connections (it also tests whether the paths are statistically significant). The model is certainly not the only one that fits the data, but probably most models which fit the data would have very many similarities with this one. Another important thing to note is that lines which are not in the diagram are assumed not to exist, and as the model fits the data, we can assume that the connection does not exist in reality either.

3. Methods

3.1. Population under study

The data on the attitudes and beliefs of school principals regarding parental participation in school life used in this paper was collected as part of the initiative “Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe” funded by the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute and jointly implemented with the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education). The survey of school principals was carried out simultaneously in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.

The data was collected using two-stage random sampling. In the first stage, in each country, we identified the relevant strata, namely urban vs. rural, and distribution by region. In the second stage, to ensure equal probability of selection of schools within each stratum, random sampling was applied. In the case of school stratification by region the aim was to reflect regional distribution in the population of schools. In the case of urban/rural distribution to correct for the mismatch between the school population and pupil population, country specific urban/rural population size weighting was used. To ensure the minimum required sample size, two additional samples were drawn using the same procedures as in the case of the original sample. Confidence level was set to 95% and confidence interval at ± 5 (± 3 in the cases of Moldova and Romania).

As part of the survey instrument development process, upon the completion of a literature review, we organized a series of focus group meetings with school principals in all eight countries and we also pre-tested the survey instrument in each country. As part of the survey, in each selected school the principal was contacted and interviewed face-to-face. Nonetheless, there were schools in which the principal position was vacant. In such cases, the person temporarily fulfilling the responsibilities of the school principal was interviewed. For instance, in Romania of the 670 completed interviews, 88.21% (591) were conducted with principals, while 11.79% (79) were realized with persons that temporarily filled the position

of school principal. At the other end, in the Republic of Moldova over 99% of interviews were conducted with principals.

Table 1 School distribution in SEE countries

Country/ regions	Schools	%	Sample	Urban	Rural
Albania	1,484	100%	300	234	66
Bosnia and Herzegovina¹	612	100%	200	70	130
Kosovo²	539	100%	225	39	186
Macedonia	518	100%	200	120	80
Moldova³	661	100%	296	31	265
Romania³	6,135	100%	670	169	501
Serbia	1,209	100%	200	105	95
Notes:					
1. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the sample is unbalanced.					
2. In Kosovo the sample was limited to Albanian schools.					
3. In the cases of Moldova and Romania school districts were used instead of regions.					
4. In Montenegro a census was carried out.					

With the exception of Albania and Serbia, the response rate from the initial sample was above 90% in all countries. In the case of the above mentioned two countries, where the response rate was lower, the issue of non-respondent bias needed to be addressed. Given the low level of refusals in the case of the other six countries, we can assume that the effect of a possible systematic difference between those responding and those refusing to respond is marginal.

Table 2 Response rate by country

Country in which school is located	Sample from which school was chosen from			Total
	Original Sample	Addition al Sample 1	Addition al Sample 2	
Albania	199 66.3%	69 23.0%	32 10.7%	300 100%
Bosnia Herzegovina	224 94.5%	13 5.5%	0 .0%	237 100%
Kosovo	220 97.8%	5 2.2%	0 .0%	225 100%
Macedonia	187 93.5%	13 6.5%	0 .0%	200 100%
Republic of Moldova	292 98.6%	4 1.4%	0 .0%	296 100%
Romania	641 95.7%	26 3.9%	3 .4%	670 100%
Serbia	162 81.0%	30 15.0%	8 4.0%	200 100%

The low levels of non-responses in the original sample, with the exception of Albania, indicate a high level of reliability of the survey data. The main reasons for refusals include exceptional instances that limited the extent of systematic non-respondent bias.

3.2 Measures

Considering the multi-dimensional nature of school principals' attitudes and beliefs related to the engagement of parents in school life, the outcome variables were grouped into three main composite indicators, namely: (1) the principal's belief in the importance of parental voice in school life, (2) the principal's satisfaction with Parents' Council meetings, and (3) the principal's satisfaction with the individual contribution of Parents' Council members. The explanatory variables were grouped in four main clusters, following the path of the hypothesised course of relationship. The four groups include: (1) the characteristics of the school principal, (2) the characteristics of the school, (3) the efforts by the school to foster parental participation and (4) the actual practice of parental participation in school life. In the following we will discuss each separately.

The characteristics of the school principal include the perceptions (attitudes and beliefs) of school principals concerning the utility of parental engagement in school life. These are measured along ten variables that are grouped in two composite indicators, namely (1) the perceptions of school principals regarding the benefits of parental participation (four variables), and (2) the perceived importance of home-school activities (six variables). We also included a variable to capture the share of work time dedicated to management activities, by inquiring about school principals' teaching load.

The characteristics of the school include geographic location (urban or rural), the number of pupils enrolled (the log is used), the number of professional staff, and the existing home-school activities. For the latter we asked respondents to report on the extent to which in the last academic year the following activities were carried out at their school: sessions to help parents assist their children with homework, providing parents with materials helping to assist their children with homework, providing parents with materials helping to monitor their children's homework, providing parents with information on creating a home learning environment, providing counselling service to parents by school, and providing support groups for parents. School efforts to engage parents in school life include three composite measures, i.e. (1) Parents' Council participation in school decision-making (five variables), (2) invitation of parents to engage in school related activities (eight variables), and (3) school-home communication (nine variables).

Four composite measures were used to assess the practice of parental participation in school life: (1) the perception of the school principal concerning the influence of parents on school life, (2) the influence of the Parents' Council, (3) parental participation in school decision-making, and (4) the share of parents that engage in school related activities.

All composite measures used in the analysis were standardised, ensuring that items are in numerical agreement within the other attributes of the variable (e.g. by eliminating non-responses and refusals).

3.3 Statistical analysis

We carried out univariate and composite scale reliability analysis of the variables that were planned for the modeling procedures. For the analysis of variance in the case of path analysis we used the *pathreg* command developed by Ender (2005), which allows the simultaneous analysis of all pathways of influence using the same number of observations. The key variables used in the model are presented in table 4. The analysis of composite indicators was carried out using country weights, so that the difference in country sample size would not influence the results of the analysis.

This paper focuses on the main indicators only, the full analysis being presented in the Survey Research Report (available upon request). At the level of school characteristics we observe that there are differences in terms of the average number of children enrolled in schools, with urban schools being larger than those in rural areas. The country with the largest mean is Bosnia and Herzegovina (681), and the one with the lowest mean is Moldova (159).

As for the characteristics of school principals, it is worth pointing out that there are important variations across the countries under study in terms of the share of time dedicated to teaching activities. In Montenegro 86.2% and in Serbia 85.5% of principals reported of not having any teaching obligations while being a school principal. In contrast, in Romania 51.8% and in Moldova 41.5% of principals reported about dedicating at least 50% of their time to teaching related activities.

Table 3 Characteristics of schools and school principals

	Albania	BiH	Kosovo	Mace- donia	Moldova	Monte- negro	Romania	Serbia
Area, urban, %	23.7	60.8	17.3	60.5	10.5	38.6	25.2	49.5
Number of pupils (mean)	449	681	648	729	159	514	274	450
Number of pupils (log)	5.79	6.34	6.19	6.38	4.94	5.61	5.18	5.86
School principals' share of time teaching								
No teaching obligations at all	11,0	59.1	71.1	58.0	1.7	86.2	11.8	85.5
Less than 25 percent	39,3	17.3	7.1	7.0	17.6	9.0	14.0	5.5
At least 25 but less than 50 percent	31.3	15.6	7.6	17.0	38.2	4.1	21.5	5.0
At least 50 but less than 75 percent	10.3	5.9	8.0	11.0	33.1	.7	24.5	1.5
Over 75 percent	7.7	2.1	6.2	7.0	8.4	.0	27.3	.5

The remaining variables in the theoretical model are composites and therefore we report results at this level (and not at the level of individual items). We carried out an analysis of scale reliability of composite indicators using a measure of internal consistency estimator of items. Cronbach's alpha measures the portion of total variability of the items given their correlation. In this way, it assesses the extent to which a set of given items measure a single unidimensional object. The coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, where the maximum value indicates that the items measure the given object. There is no theoretical standard for a level from which the score should be considered acceptable. Nonetheless, according to DeVellis

(2003: pp. 94-96), the accepted norm in most fields for a cut-off point is .70 (the so called Nunnally cut-off value).

The scores are presented for each composite indicator and country in table 5. Furthermore, we have included a column that reports Cronbach's alpha for the whole dataset. In this case, country weights were used to ensure that observations in each country had the same weight in the analysis.

Table 4 indicates high levels of consistency for all countries and composites. Nonetheless, we observe two composite indicators (barriers to parental participation in school life and the proportion of parental participation in school decision-making) that underperform and fall below the cut-off point. The lowest consistency was measured in the case of barriers to parental participation in school life indicator, with the exception of Montenegro (.713), and the composite measuring the proportion of parental participation in school decision-making. The latter composite underperforms in the cases of Albania (.699), Bosnia and Herzegovina (.580), Macedonia (.674), and Serbia (.644). In the case of seven composite indicators the scores of all countries were above the cut-off points, with very good results in the case of the two composites capturing the perceptions of school principals concerning the benefits of parental participation in school life. Very good internal consistency scores can be observed in the case of the whole dataset analysis (which includes the country weighted values of items), where – with the exception of the composite barriers to parental participation in school life – all others are above the cut-off point.

Considering that Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in a scale (we used fewer than ten items in all cases), the above scores are important, so we did not report the mean inter-item correlation for items (internal consistency of the scales are available upon request). All in all, with the noted exceptions, the reported results for the proposed composite indicators suggest good and very good internal consistency for the scale with these samples.

Table 4 Reliability analysis (Cronbach' Alpha) by composite and country

	Albania	BiH	Kosovo	Mace- donia	Moldova	Monte- negro	Romania	Serbia	All
Principal's belief in the importance of parental voice in school life	.770	.818	.836	.837	.792	.829	.851	.844	.849
Principal's satisfaction with Parents' Council meetings	.785	.639	.664	.800	.843	.799	.863	.789	.819
Principal's satisfaction with the individual contribution of Parents' Council members	.671	.761	.609	.865	.812	.821	.870	.814	.863
Barriers to parental participation in school life	.687	.645	.697	.675	.555	.713	.671	.684	.670
School principal's perceptions of	.810	.827	.873	.883	.891	.947	.895	.906	.896

the benefits of parental participation									
Perceived importance of home-school activities	.814	.819	.884	.874	.772	.854	.846	.862	.857
The existing home-school activities	.765	.765	.832	.836	.756	.800	.839	.827	.836
Participation of Parents' Council in school decision-making	.845	.733	.795	.800	.832	.831	.832	.797	.825
Invitation of parents to engage in school related activities	.736	.780	.826	.866	.765	.804	.764	.827	.849
School-home communication	.736	.822	.818	.854	.768	.926	.828	.623	.788
School principal's perception of parents' general influence on school life	.791	.779	.861	.872	.837	.814	.845	.783	.845
Perception about the influence of the Parents' Council	.711	.699	.861	.749	.793	.868	.786	.651	.808
Parental participation in school decision-making	.699	.580	.755	.674	.843	.803	.861	.644	.788

4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive analysis of the key variables and composite indices indicate that in general school principals across all eight countries share similar perceptions regarding the benefits of parental engagement in school life. Thus, the engagement of parents is seen to have a direct and significant contribution to the improvement of pupils' school attainment and the overall improvement of school climate. Participation is also viewed to be leading to the enrooting of a more positive attitude of parents towards school and to more support to school by parents. This suggests that principals in the countries under focus are not, at least in principle, against parental engagement in school life. That is relevant in the context of increasing decentralization of managerial and decision-making responsibilities to school level.

Despite the perceived relevance and usefulness of parental engagement in school life, principals report that in the last school year parents were on average invited to participate at school activities once a semester. Furthermore, parents are on average invited to formal

school meetings once a quarter. As for formal meetings, principals report that in over 75% of the cases less than one fourth of parents participate at meetings organized at the school. Thus, not only that the occurrence of participation is limited, but the coverage of the parent body in such activities is limited, too.

Similarly, while virtually all schools report to have a Parents' Council at school level, which is a legal provision in all countries, the extent of satisfaction with the activities of the Parents' Councils is limited. School principals report only limited levels of satisfaction with both the performance of the Council and that of individual members.

What factors limit parental participation? We inquired about both school and parent related ones. We have found that school principals identify parent related factors as being the most important barriers to a meaningful engagement of parents in school life. These factors, in order of importance, as reported by school principals, include parents' limited interest, time and communication skills. Teacher related factors are perceived as a barrier to parental participation to a smaller extent.

School principals in all countries agree that the Parents' Council should participate in school decision-making only when invited to do so.

Table 5 indicates that in what concerns the parenting services offered by schools in the eight countries we there are important variations both in regarding of different services within and between countries. In the case of each service we observe that a considerable share of schools continue not to offer such services. The schools that are more likely not to offer such services are those located in rural areas and those that report to have larger shares of pupils with a vulnerable social background (e.g. single parent household, low income family, etc.).

Table 5 Parenting services offered by schools in the last school year
%, schools that offered no service at all

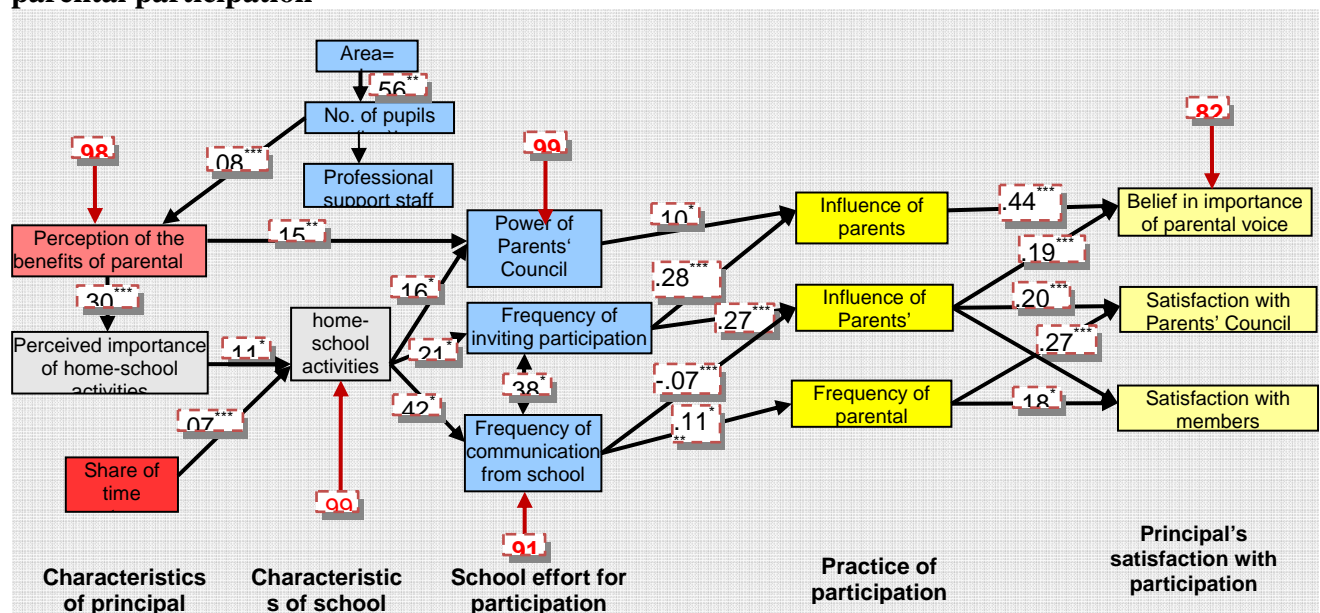
	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Macedonia	Moldova	Montenegro	Romania	Serbia
School sessions to help parents assist their children with homework	18,4%	6.4%	29.9%	24.7%	3.4%	17.9%	13.3%	38.6%
Materials provided for parents to help their children with homework	42.4%	31.2%	73.3%	47.2%	13.7%	32.4%	26.6%	54.4%
Materials provided to monitor children's homework	49.5%	36.3%	71.3%	46.9%	16.4%	33.1%	35.4%	57.2%
Information provided to parents on	29.2%	6.4%	34.0%	16.2%	3.1%	4.1%	6.4%	16.3%

creating a home learning environment								
Counseling service to parents	35.4%	.8%	31.0%	13.7%	3.7%	15.9%	24.3%	32.7%
Support groups for parents.	20.4%	14.9%	37.8%	26.5%	15.3%	8.3%	31.2%	20.7%

4.1. Structural equation modeling

The regression model indicates that the attitudes and beliefs of school principals, the characteristics of schools, the efforts by schools to foster parental participation and the actual practice of parental participation are significant predictors of school principals' levels of satisfaction with the extent of parental participation in school life in their respective schools. The model was trimmed and the statistically non-significant (cut-off value .95) interactions were deleted, the final path model is presented in Figure 5. From the figure we observe that two composite indicators, the proportion of parents' participation and barriers to parental participation, were deleted. The latter was not included in the regression analysis as low levels of internal consistency were observed, which implies low levels of reliability of the measure. The values represented along the paths are statistically significant and represent the standardised regression coefficients.

Figure 2. Results path diagram on school principals' attitudes and beliefs about parental participation



Notes: ** p≤.01, ***p≤.001

To ensure coherence in interpretation, all variables in the model were standardised, higher variable scores representing more favourable attitudes, beliefs, higher occurrence of participation or influence of parents and Parents' Council. Also, to ensure numerical agreement within the attributes of every variable, non-responses and refusals were eliminated. As hypothesised, we identified a positive correlation between school principals'

levels of satisfaction with the extent of parental participation and the variable attitudes and beliefs of school principals.

Standardized regression coefficients indicate that school size, measured as the number of pupils enrolled in the given academic year, is associated positively with school principals' perception regarding the benefits of parental participation. Yet, we observe that there is an indirect path between the location of the school and the perceptions of school principals. More precisely, urban schools are systematically larger (.56, $p \leq .001$) compared to schools in rural areas, which is associated with a more favorable perception about the benefits of parental participation. Besides, more positive perceptions about parental participation are also directly and positively associated with the perception about the importance of home-school activities (.30, $p \leq .001$). We could not identify a systematic relationship between the teaching load of school principals, their perception regarding the benefits of parental participation and the perceived importance of home-school activities.

Surprisingly, no direct relationship was identified between the perception of the benefits of parental participation and home-school activities, this relationship being mediated through the perceived importance of home-school activities. This implies that there are two main indirect pathways of influence. The first one links school principals' perceptions about the benefits of parental participation to principals' belief in the importance of parental voice in school life through the Parents' Council participation in school decision-making and the perception about the extent of parental influence. The second main path links the perception of the importance of home-school activities to all three outcome variables under overall satisfaction with parental engagement in school life through the set of variables under school efforts to engage parents and those under the practice of parental participation in school life.

The presence of home-school activities were related to Parents' Council participation in school-decision-making, invitation of parents to engage in school related activities, and sustained home-school communication. In turn, each of these variables is significantly related to variables under the practice of parental participation in school life. These relations indicate a number of pathways, of which the main ones are described in what follows.

Home-school activities are related to the invitation of the Parents' Council to participate in school decision-making, which is positively related to the principal's perception related to parents' general influence in school life and, finally, in the principal's belief in the importance of parental voice.

Alternatively, home-school activities are associated with the invitation of parents to engage in school related activities, and the frequency of home-school communication. The frequency of invitation of parents to engage in school related activities is associated with the principal's perception related to the general influence of both parents and the Parents' Council, which are related to all three outcome variables. Furthermore, as expected, home-school activities are related to home-school communication and direct parental participation in school decision-making, which in turn is associated with the principal's satisfaction with the performance of individual members of the Parents' Council and that of the Council as a whole.

Another important path links the school principal's perception of the Parents' Council to the satisfaction with parental engagement in school life. At the same time, however, home-school communication is negatively related to the perceived influence of the Parents' Council.

4.2. Limitations

Before drawing conclusions based on these results, we need to address the main limitations that are related to these findings. One limitation of the analysis concerns the item selection of the composite indicators and the robustness of the scores resulted from the

reliability analysis. The composites were built based on theory and prior research, but also using face validity. Considering that the same composites were tested on independent datasets collected in eight countries with similar results, the measures are robust. Nevertheless, the limited variation of scores, the non-normal and the skewed distribution in the case of composites point to the possibility of heteroskedasticity and the presence of influential cases (outliers or highly influential cases). The second main limitation relates to the selection of the method for the aggregation of the indicators at the composite level.

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IV. Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers

ALLIANCE FOR INCLUSION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN EDUCATION¹²

SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION -FOSIM's Roma Education Program as Inclusive Education Practice

This background paper describes the scope, content and impact of the educational interventions employed by the Foundation Open Society Institute-Macedonia (FOSIM) within the framework of its Roma Education Program (REP). It tends to share FOSIM's key approaches and experiences in supporting the access, participation and retention rate of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, thus stimulating national dialogue and contributing to the ongoing international dialogue on inclusive education policies and practices. This paper could also serve for future Roma programming.

Context

Roma represent 2.66 percent of the total population in Macedonia (53.879 Roma inhabitants) and they are the most socially and economically disadvantaged ethnic group in the country. As indicated in the Roma Education Fund (REF) strategy¹³, the poverty rate among Roma is 88.8% which is three times bigger than the poverty rate of the rest of the population (national average is 30.2%). UNDP report suggests much higher unemployment rate among Roma of 79%¹⁴ compared to the general unemployment rate in the country of 37.2 % (2005). The UNDP survey on vulnerable groups¹⁵ shows that only 8.3% of the working age Roma (over 15) are employed or self-employed (both within formal and informal economy). The unemployment rate among Roma women is much higher than among men.

There is a strong positive correlation between the low employment rate of Roma and their low educational attainment. According to the data from the 2002 Census, 90% of the Roma population older than fifteen have either completed only primary education (37.4%), have incomplete primary school (28.6%), are still in primary school (0.8%) or have no education (23.2%). Only 9.2% of Roma have completed secondary education, and only 0.3% have finished some form of postsecondary education.

The access, retention and achievement rate of Roma students is the lowest in the country. The percentage of Roma children enrolled in primary education varies between 90-95% depending on the source of information, but only around 45-50 % complete primary education. UNDP report on Roma suggests that Roma children start their schooling at the age of 7 in fairly high rate (91%), but only 63% of them at the age of 10 remain are still enrolled in school [at the end of IV grade] The same report records the alarming enrolment rate of only 19% of Roma in secondary education and 1.5% in higher education.

There are many reasons for this situation. Poverty affects both children's prospects of attending school and their performance. Children from poor families are more likely not to attend, or drop out of school for a variety of reasons, including: financial and opportunity

¹² Document prepared by Suzana Pecakovska and Spomenka Lazarevska, Open Society Institute, Macedonia.

¹³ REF Country Assessment and Strategy, 2006, p. 7

¹⁴ UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Macedonia, Focus on Roma, December, 2006

¹⁵ UNDP Research on Vulnerable Groups, 2004

costs, insufficient information about the benefits of education, substandard housing conditions at home that impede learning and studying, and health status. The other reasons are: low quality of teaching in schools with large number of Roma students, low teacher expectations of Roma students, lack of teachers' competency to deal with underachievers and diversity in the classroom, prejudice against Roma, lack of academic foundation when Roma children begin primary education etc.

Given that the accession of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU is contingent upon its compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the conditionality of the Accession Partnership, improvement of the status of Roma in the country (including in the area of education) came at the forefront of the approximation process. This obligation also derives from many other EU documents: Agenda 2000 of the European Union (1997); COCEN principles (1999), the EU employment policies (the Amsterdam and Luxembourg summits 1997) and the social policies (Lisbon and Feira summits in 2000); Recommendations of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe; It also derives from other European Conventions and Protocols for Protection of Human Rights and Basic Freedoms, as well as the documents of the Council of Europe; OSCE; UNESCO (Convention on Fight Against Discrimination in Education, 1997); Millennium Development Goals and many other UN Documents (Universal Human Rights Declaration ,1948; Child Rights Conventions,1989 etc).

Rationale

The educational problems of Roma are very complex and multidimensional which requires comprehensive and innovative intervention models. Maintaining its focus on the priority needs, FOSIM has been active in the field of Roma education since 1997. Its years-long experience in supporting and implementing education programs for Roma has been incorporated into a comprehensive six-year (2004 – 2010) *Roma Education Program (REP)*. Launched at the end of June 2004, REP was supported by the USAID mission in Skopje, FOSIM, OSI/REI and the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation. The program goals were additionally supported by OSCE and the Hungarian Embassy in the Republic of Macedonia that funded the high-school component and the Roma Education Fund from Budapest supporting the university component.

REP offers education support to Roma youth at all levels of education (pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary), targeting 5 Roma settlements¹⁶: 5 primary schools, 57 secondary schools from 22 cities and 4 universities in Macedonia. A total of 200 Roma pre-school children, 740 primary, 260 secondary and 64 Roma university students are exposed to the REP' interventions.

Program interventions focus on transitional points (from grade to subject-based teaching in fifth grade primary school, from primary to secondary, and from secondary to higher education) where Roma children and youth are most likely to drop out from the educational system. Thus, the Program is structured with pre-school, primary, secondary and university components.

REP also embraces and supports the goals of the region-wide Decade for Roma Inclusion, 2005 -2015 to which the Macedonian Government has already committed itself.

¹⁶ Two in Skopje (Dame Gruev and Klanica); two in Kumanovo (Sredorek and Lozja) and one in Prilep (Trizla)

Program Interventions - What do we do and how we do it?

The **main goal** of the Roma Education Program is to help Roma students remain in the school system and improve their performance and attendance, by means of positive interventions at all education levels.

The specific objectives are:

1. to provide better educational basis for pre-school Roma children to enter primary education;
2. to improve retention rate, transition and achievement of Roma students in primary education;
3. to improve retention rate, transition and achievement of Roma students in secondary education;
4. to increase the academic achievement of Roma university students.

Activities for Roma children at pre-school age are implemented by the non-formal Roma Education Centers led by 5 Roma NGOs in the targeted Roma settlements. Focused on improving Macedonian language skills, basic knowledge in mathematics, social and cognitive skills, the Centers advance the educational experiences of Roma children so that they can begin primary school at less of an educational disadvantage compared to their non-Roma peers.

Roma students in primary schools receive additional out-of-school support in homework writing, subject-based tutoring, English language and IT courses, creative and other workshops on daily basis delivered by the Roma Education Centers. The Centers also provide the link between Roma families and schools, and carry out educational and other activities intended for parents. FOSIM provides extensive teacher and organisational development capacity building support to 5 primary schools in targeted areas, to enable better integration of Roma children. In addition to increasing teachers' skills and knowledge on social justice and use of interactive, child-centered teaching methods, the schools receive training and technical assistance for designing and implementing School Improvement Plans.

The high school component provides scholarships, mentorship and additional academic support for Roma student cohort enrolled in the first year of secondary school in the academic year 2004/5. The scholarships meet the educational needs of students in relation to textbooks, additional teaching materials, transportation and food costs, clothing, etc. Support will be provided until the completion of their secondary education, while the scholarship renewal depends on students' regular attendance, performance and successful transition in the next year of secondary education. The school-based mentorship activities aim at providing assistance for overcoming shortcomings and gaps in the knowledge inherited from the previous education level. The selected number of high school teachers who serve as mentors receive basic and advance training, as well as appropriate professional literature on effective mentoring techniques and working with parents. Their primary task is tutoring subjects where students show poor results and where they face difficulties in comprehending the contents concerned. They also encourage and assist integration of students within the school community, help them develop planning and organization skills, including good learning habits, motivate them and encourage their interest in extra-curricular and other activities available at the school. The additional academic support enables expansion of knowledge and interests of high school scholarship recipients by participating in winter and summer schools on various topics (presentation and communication skills, leadership, street law, etc.) and by attending English language and computer literacy courses.

The fourth component of Roma Education Program intended for Roma students enrolled at Macedonian universities offers scholarship for purchasing books, covering travel costs, accommodation and other school equipment. The Additional Academic Support provides opportunities for students to develop their personal skills and improve their academic performance.

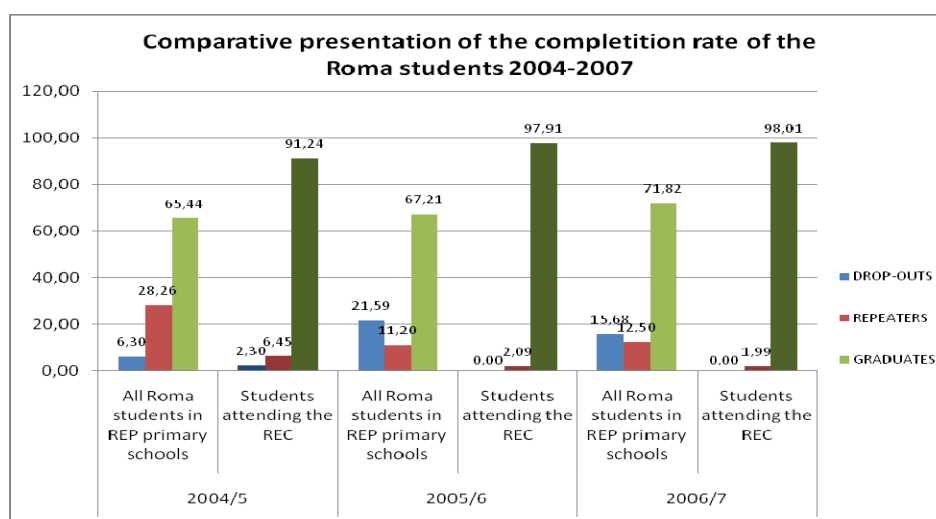
Project Major Accomplishments -What we have achieved?

The REP evaluation findings have landed into positive measurable outcomes. Here are the major results after three years of project implementation¹⁷:

- increased percentage of participating Roma pre-school students who enrolled in the 1st grade (**99%** in 2006/7 compared to 92.1% in 2005/6 and 89.47 % in 2004/5); this is an overall increase of 9.53 % from the first project year;
- **98.01%** of the V-VIII grade primary school students (REC's regular attendees) completed the grade and continued to the next, keeping the high completion rate from last year of 97.91% and showing significant increase of 6.77% from two years ago (91.24% in 2004/5). The evaluation findings suggest that the increase primarily was as a result of the additional REP activities and concentrated efforts on the 5th grade students who are most likely to drop out.
- as a result of REC's attendees share in student bodies of project schools, the overall completion rate of Roma students in the 5 project schools has increased from 65.44 % in 2004/5 to 67.21 % in 2005/6 and 71.82 % in 2006/7 respectfully. This represents an increase of 6.38% from project's first year and 7.82% from the base-line completion rate data of 64%.

as shown on the Chart 1.1. there is a huge discrepancy between the completion rate of direct project beneficiaries (REC's attendees) and other Roma students from the same project schools not attending RECs (91.4% versus 47.74% in 2004/5, 97.91 % versus 42.06% in 2005/6, and 98.01 % compared to 42.08 % in 2006/7).

Chart 1.1.



¹⁷ The evaluation of the fourth year of REP implementation will be available at the beginning of November.

- No drop-outs reported among REC's attendees at the end of project's second and third year. School achievement of REC's attendees is higher than non-REC attendees (GPA of 2.85 compared to 2.29);
- The third year evaluation of REP's primary school component showed that the work of teachers and REC educators attending REP training had the biggest impact on Roma students achievement and regular attendance, followed by increased involvement of Roma parents and - finally - the work of other teachers in the schools included in the project.
- Positive changes noticed with Roma parents of primary school students are reported as one of program's effects, expressed by: improved social communication, improved self-confidence, more frequent visits and presence in school, positive attitude towards school and increased care about education and progress of their children.
- **92.92%** of secondary scholarship/mentorship assistance recipients in 2006/7 completed the third and enrolled in the fourth school year of secondary education. This represents an increase of 13.92% from the completion rate determined by the base-line study prior to the Program's initiation (79%). As shown on the Table 1.3., the completion rate for the previous two years of the project (**93.6 %** in 2004/5 and **96.3%** in 2005/6) was higher than the one achieved in 2006/7. This is due to the influence of the marriage factor accentuated among girls in the third year of their secondary schooling. Yet, the evaluation findings recognize the high motivation of REP secondary school students to complete secondary education and REP's strong influence on learning.
- REP interventions have positively affected the school achievement of Roma secondary school students (GPA of 3.11 in 2004/5 and 3.42 in 2005/6 increased to 3.47 in 2006/7). The evaluation has shown that the assistance provided by mentors and mentoring teams has had a great impact on students' performance, resulting in higher self-esteem and learning motivation, better grades, greater respect and trust in teachers, improved creativity and active class participation.
- **96.55%** of Roma university scholarship/tutoring assistance recipients from 2006/7 transited to the next study year (increase of 9.05% from 2005/6 of 87.5%). The average academic achievement of students remained at same level of 7.46 GPA (on 5-10 scale).

Based on the achieved results, the on-going lobbying and advocacy for attracting public and donor support for the educational interventions as well as for their sustainability beyond the project years have become FOSIM's key strategic priorities.

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