

# **Education Policy AND Equal Education Opportunities**

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# Education Policy and Equal Education Opportunities

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# Education Policy and Equal Education Opportunities

*Edited by*  
Daniel Pop

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Education policy and equal education opportunities /  
edited by Daniel Pop.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1936133512

1. Educational equalization--Cross-cultural studies. 2. Educational equalization--Former communist countries. 3. Education and state--Cross-cultural studies. 4. Education and state--Former communist countries. I. Pop, Daniel.

LC213.E378 2012

379.2'6--dc23

2011044191

Published by

Open Society Foundations

400 West 59th Street

New York, NY 10019 USA

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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Open Society Foundations.

The information in the report is accurate as of March 2010 when the papers were presented at the international Education Policy and Equal Education Opportunities workshop in Tirana, Albania.

Cover designed by Jeanne Criscola | Criscola Design

Text layout and printing by Judit Kovács | Createch Ltd.

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# Introduction: Social Inclusion through Education

*Gabriel Bădescu and Daniel Pop*

There is no public education system in the world that is entirely free of unequal educational opportunities. Aspects such as socio-economic background, motivation, and the policy/political context, just to name a few, are the most likely candidates in explaining differences among pupils in compulsory school systems. However, public education systems are often expected to play an important mediating role in addressing various forms of educational opportunity differentials by fostering inclusive education. Thus, while there are important cross-country variations in the forms, extent, and degree of systematic inequalities of educational opportunity, and in the discrepancies in the policy responses, the overarching question here regards the extent to which education policy mediates or reinforces such discrepancies. Thus, inclusive education becomes one of the policy directives that have been most often adopted to ease the challenges of unequal education opportunities in public education systems.

Despite this, the research in this book indicates that there is no easy answer or magic policy solution to the question of how to regulate the interplay between unequal education opportunities and the role played by the educational system. Thus, while in some contexts the focal issue involves learning opportunity differentials of students due to different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, in others this is more a function of the disparities between city centers and their peripheries or the larger urban/rural divide, in yet others, it is mainly the issue of family socio-economic and social-class backgrounds that leads to exclusion. Education systems that segregate or track children from early ages based on standardized assessments exacerbate the problem.

To further add to this complexity, different aspects of inequality arise in pre-school education and in access to primary and secondary schools along gender lines.

Therefore, mapping the public institutional structure of national education systems that result from education reforms should shed light on the nature and extent of the distribution of education opportunities and the way in which these are likely to shape social mobility and national identity. Moreover, an analysis of the relative successes and failures of national, local policies designed to reduce inequality is extremely important for establishing what are the possibilities and limitations of the available policy options.

To address these issues, the Open Society Foundations convened an international workshop in Tirana, Albania in March 2010 that brought together researchers and practitioners to learn about the longer-term effects of education policy regulatory changes on the inclusive character of the respective educational systems. The geographical focus of the event covered countries from across Eurasia<sup>1</sup> motivated by the fact that many of these countries have experienced fundamental societal transformations in the last two decades, along with periods of substantial regulatory transformation and reform of their national educational systems. The scope of the changes includes all aspects of the educational systems, for instance, from the structure and content of curricula to the management and financing mechanisms of public educational services. Transformation is proving to be a long-term interrelated process, often requiring corrections and plagued by derailments and set-backs. Consequently, this workshop questioned the consequences of current education management and financing policy in different countries regarding equal access to education.

However, while inclusive education is a highly visible notion, it is also contentious in contemporary education reforms for conceptual, historical, pragmatic, and methodological reasons (e.g., Artiles 2006: 65). Since inclusion was put on the policy agenda by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994), researchers have grappled with the term, and consequently the number of publications on this very interdisciplinary topic has multiplied (Moen 2008). Inclusive education arose as a complex subject that includes an array of issues crossing health, education, social welfare, and employment sectors, and as a result policy development faces challenges to avoid fragmented and difficult to access services (Peters 2004).

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1 Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

Despite this remarkable interest in inclusive education, very often it is referred to and discussed as an ideology and policy, not as evidence-based analyses (Emanuelsson, Haug, and Persson 2005). In the realm of policy, whereas “social inclusion” and “raising standards” phrases dominate many governments’ agenda for educational reform, many in the field argue that the two concepts, as currently defined, operate largely in opposition to one another. It has been suggested that policies for raising standards, such as the emphasis on competition and choice, are tending to discourage the use of teaching approaches that are responsive to student diversity (West et al. 2001).

The following three sections describe the contribution of each of the 13 papers from the workshop that are included in this volume. The papers, which were edited for publication, are presented in the context of the central issues, both on the pro and contra arguments and on the results produced by the new field of inclusive education studies.

## Main Concepts

A large body of the literature on social inclusion in schools refers specifically to the inclusion of pupils with “special educational needs” (SEN) (Mitchell 2005 and O’Hanlon 2003). This category—defined slightly differently from one country to another—includes children with mild to severe physical or intellectual disabilities. Such disabilities often translate into differences in the ways that children learn and process information. Other times, a distinction is made between children with physical and sensory disabilities and those with emotional and/or cognitive issues, regarded as displaying SEN (Gerschel 2005).

A central tenet of recent discussions is that children are different and have different needs. An inclusive educational style is one that is highly responsive to diversity and to pupils’ different needs, following a principle that sees schools as adapting to pupils’ features and not the other way around (Madan Mohan Jha 2007).

Whereas the idea of “inclusive education”—a close relative of the “education for all” standard—admits that children differ along many dimensions (including such features as ethnic background, socio-economic status of their families), the usage of inclusion versus social inclusion seems to be related to learning difficulties or barriers in most cases. The connection of such learning difficulties with further characteristics (gender, race, etc.) seems insufficiently theorized and researched.

The idea of inclusion—within the educational framework—is frequently attached to concepts such as mainstream (mainstreaming), diversity (exposure to diversity, management contexts characterized by diversity), learning environments, school culture, inclusive schools (and inclusive classrooms), and equal educational opportunities.

One example of a book revolving around the concept of inclusion and its derivatives is an edited volume by Topping and Maloney, *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Inclusive Education*, published in 2005. Their book includes several articles focusing on various dimensions around which disadvantaged or “special needs” groups may emerge. The book follows a comprehensive understanding of inclusion as implying the celebration of diversity and “supporting the achievement and participation of all pupils who face learning and/or behavior challenges of any kind, in terms of socio-economic circumstances, ethnic origins, cultural heritage, religion, linguistic heritage, gender, sexual preference and so on ...” (Topping and Maloney 2005: 5).

As inclusion is discussed within its school-circumscribed parameters, references are made to a school’s “inclusive culture,” which translates into the presence of “some degree of consensus amongst adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all students access to learning opportunities” (Topping and Maloney 2005: 8). The book attempts to provide an operational definition of an “inclusive school,” by presenting these schools as relying on “participatory methods” and on the cultivation of consistent and systematic relations with pupils’ families.

The book’s discussion on the connection among SEN, gender, and ethnicity in Gerschel’s chapter on “Connecting the Disconnected” emphasizes an important aspect of teachers’ and communities’ perceptions of ethnically different children: the “willingness to attribute pupils’ difficulties and disabilities to <within-culture> factors” (2005: 102), rather than on, for example, poor healthcare services for ethnic communities, and service limitations in native languages. The phenomenon under discussion here is “institutionalized racism.” Gerschel questions the current usefulness/relevance of the concept of SEN—“reflecting a <within-child> or medical model to guide planning” (2005: 103)—in the light of the multitude of factors that may impact on a child’s style of learning. He concludes that an inclusive approach should then follow this diversity of dimensions, once it is accepted that peculiar needs may emerge from children’s gender and their belonging to an ethnic and/or religious community, and/or certain socio-economic class.

The efforts towards ensuring **an inclusive educational practice** start from assessing what are the common needs (of all participants/children in a school or classroom),

what are the distinct needs (of discrete groups, defined around one of the dimensions above listed: ethnicity, etc.), and finally what are the additional individual needs specific to each pupil (specific/individual needs). The example of the United Kingdom is provided as an illustration of attempts to create guidelines and benchmarks that would assist educational inspectors and teachers in evaluating their own school environments.

## Inclusion versus Integration

In *The Making of the Inclusive School*, Thomas et al. (1998) refers to a visible change in the discourses about “different” children, with more emphasis placed on “inclusion” as opposed to the previously insisted upon “integration.” The difference between the two approaches is connected to an earlier matter: the conceptual tightness of “special educational needs.” Thus, whereas integration “was usually used to describe the process of the assimilation of children with learning difficulties [...] the key aspect of inclusion, however, is that children who are at a disadvantage for **any** reason are not excluded from the mainstream education” (1998: 14).

The distinction between the two concepts/approaches is summarized below (Thomas et al. 1998: 13–14):

**Table 1.**

*Traditional Versus Inclusionary Approaches to Special Needs Education*

<b>Traditional approach (which may include integration)</b>	<b>Inclusionary approach</b>
Focus on student	Focus on classroom
Assessment of student from specialist	Examine teaching/learning factors
Diagnostic outcomes	Collaborative problem-solving
Student program	Strategies for teachers
Placement in appropriate program	Adaptive and supportive classroom environment
Focus on needs of “special” students	Focus on rights and needs of all students
Changing the subject/student	Changing the school
Benefits to “special students”	Benefits to all students
Specialist expertise	Informal support
Special teaching, therapy	Good teaching for all

More recently, in a historical research of the usage of “integration” and “inclusion,” Thomazet (2009) found that in French-speaking countries, the word “inclusion” is sometimes used instead of the usual term “integration” to refer to the schooling of pupils with special needs in ordinary schools. He argued that

[...] in using the expression ‘inclusive education’, one can describe not more developed integration but differentiating practices. These differentiating practices allow children and adolescents, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, to find in an ordinary school an educational response, appropriate in its aims and means, in ways that do not differentiate between them and the other pupils of the school.

With this approach, it is not the child who is included but the school and the teaching that are inclusive. Special needs are therefore no longer those of the child, but those of the school, and thus go beyond the limits of integration.

There are many authors who consider the terms “social inclusion,” “social cohesion,” and “social integration” as closely linked. In the Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion, approved by the Council of Europe in March 2004, social cohesion is defined as “the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization,” whereas the Inter-American Development Bank defines social cohesion as “the set of factors that foster a basic equilibrium among individuals in a society, as reflected in their degree of integration in economic, social, political and cultural terms.” Berger-Schmitt and Noll (2000) are among those who discuss the distinctions among inclusion, cohesion, and integration, aiming to provide a clear account of the relationship among them. Thus, social cohesion is a desirable objective, but it may or may not emerge from the elimination of poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, Berger-Schmitt and Noll argue that measures to foster social inclusion may or may not increase the capacity of people to live together in harmony. Therefore, social inclusion does not equal social integration (Atkinson and Marlier 2010: 5).

## **Inclusion versus Education for All**

In a recent article, Miles and Singal (2010) explore the conceptual affinities (redefined over time) between “inclusive education” and “education for all.” Education for All (EFA) represents an international political commitment to ensure that every child and adult receives a basic education of good quality. EFA places an emphasis on the fact that

... schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas and groups (Miles and Singal 2010: 7, quoting UNESCO).

According to the two authors, the opportunities presented by the Education for All movement since 1990 have been unprecedented, and it made a substantial contribution to the emergence of education as a rights issue, the realization that education is central to developing economies, the growing disability movement, and a deeper realization that education is essential for global tolerance. However, they argue that the “value added” nature of inclusive education is not only in its raising of issues of quality of education and placement, but more importantly it brings to the forefront issues about social justice (Miles and Singal 2010: 12): inclusive education provides an opportunity for society to critically examine its social institutions and structures, and it challenges didactic, teacher-centered teaching practices, such as rote learning, and so opens up opportunities for developing better pedagogy and greater competence. Inclusive education offers an opportunity for EFA to begin to make distinctions between “moral” and “mechanical” reforms.

## Varieties of Inclusion

Inclusion has many meanings and its ambiguous usage and lack of clarity can have negative effects on the shaping of policies. Mitchell’s edited volume, *Contextualizing Inclusive Education. Evaluating Old and New Perspectives*, published in 2005, aims to provide comprehensive typologies of inclusion and to bring further clarification of the term. The book presents several case studies from diverse regions of the world, centered on the local understandings of SEN. One main source of variance in the meaning of inclusion is due to its multiple facets: “inclusive education extends beyond special needs arising from disabilities and includes considerations of other sources of disadvantage and marginalization such as gender, poverty, language, ethnicity and geographic isolation” (2005: 1). Chapter 9, by Fletcher and Artiles, provides the following typology of varieties of inclusion (2005: 212), based on Dyson (2001):

**Table 2.**  
*Typology of Varieties of Inclusion*

Variety of inclusion	Target group	What it means to “be included”	Vision of inclusive society	Implications for schools
Inclusion as placement	Children with SEN	To have the right to be in regular schools and classrooms	Rights-based	Schools must acknowledge rights and provide support
Inclusion as education for all	Groups with poor-quality education	To have access to school education	Non-discriminatory	Schools must be capable of educating all learners
Inclusion as participation	All learners, especially those who are marginalized	To face minimal barriers to participation	Rights-based, pluralistic, and cohesive	Schools must critically examine current practices to identify and remove barriers

In an article published in 2002, Dyson and Roberts share a similar broad understanding of what inclusive education means. Whereas some commentators see inclusion as effectively being about a reform of special education in order to place and maintain students with disabilities in mainstream schools (for instance, Lipsky and Gartner 1997), and others tend to align educational inclusion with social inclusion and see it in terms of raising the attainments of low-achieving groups (for instance, Ofsted 2000), Dyson and Roberts draw on a wider notion of inclusive education and build an index based on the following key ideas:

1. Inclusion in education involves the processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula, and communities of local schools.
2. Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies, and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
3. Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all students because all students may be vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as “having special educational needs.”

This view on inclusive education has, amongst other things, informed important policy documents—notably, UNESCO’s Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) and the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education’s *Index for Inclusion* (Booth et al. 2000).

## Dimensions of Inclusion

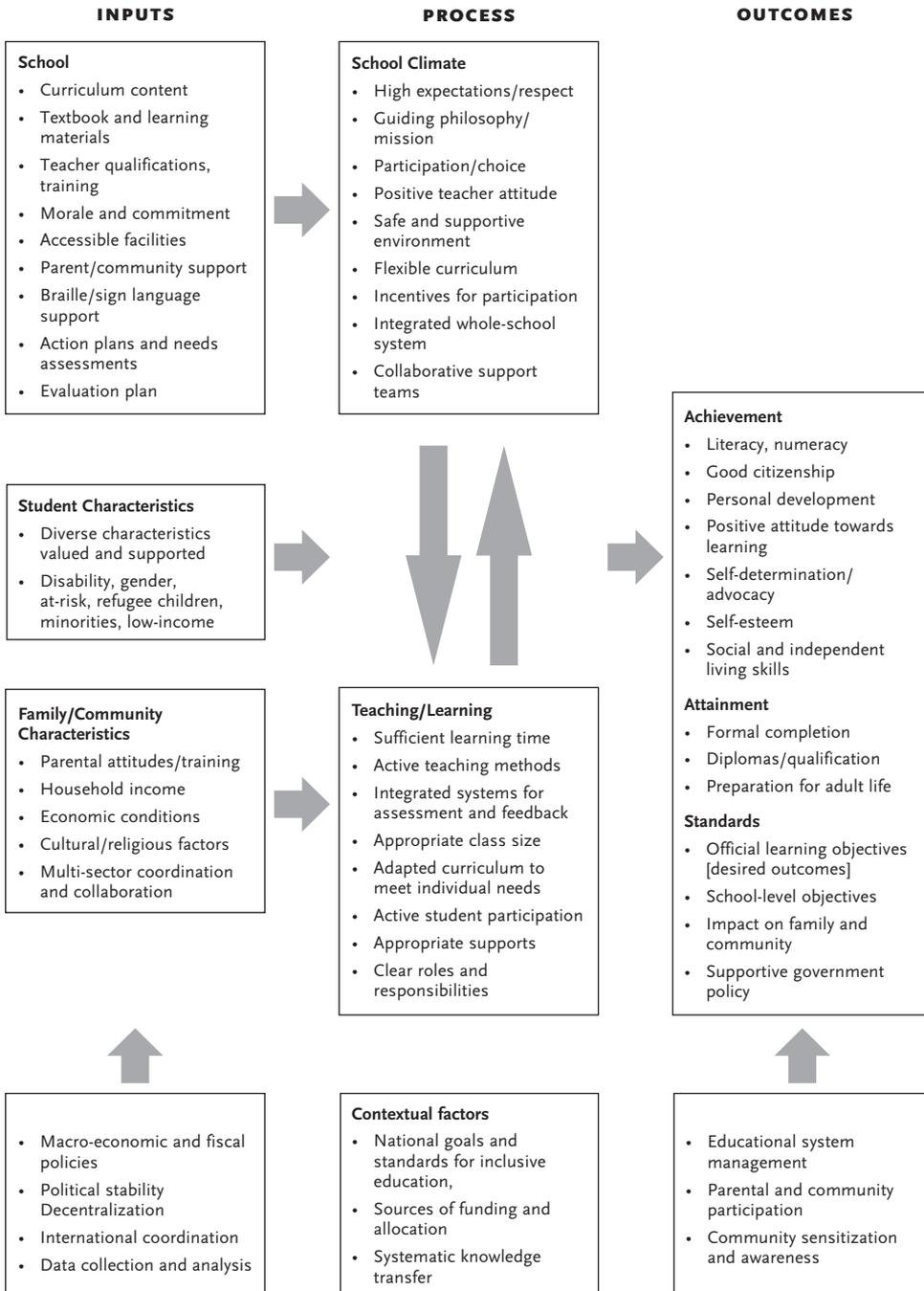
Several authors assert that inclusion can be understood with reference to both its vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension represents different levels in the education system, ranging from ideology, policy, and structures, via teaching- and learning-processes to results (Haug 2010: 2). The Index for Inclusion—developed by Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw—identifies three vertical dimensions of school life: policy, culture, and practice (Booth et al. 2000). According to Lundgren, there are three different horizontal systems that constrain, govern, and regulate the teaching process: curriculum (goal system), administrative apparatus (frame system), and judicial apparatus (rule system) (Lundgren 1981).

Haug has identified four key criteria of inclusion for inclusive education that has to be assessed both vertically and horizontally (2003 and 2010):

1. Fellowship: All children should be a member of a school class and be a natural part of the social, cultural, and professional life at school, together with everybody else.
2. Participation: Pupils should be allowed to contribute to the good of the fellowship and to be given opportunities to benefit from the same community.
3. Democratization: All pupils shall have the opportunity to discuss and to influence matters concerning their own education (democratization).
4. Benefit: All pupils should be given an education to their advantage both socially and substantially.

An even more complex conceptual guide is proposed by Peters in a report, *Inclusive Education: An EFA Strategy for All Children* (2004), that aimed to be used as a map for educational planning and evaluation in concert with instruments such as measures of inclusion. It consists of four domains of inputs, processes, outcomes, and contextual factors in an open system that considers external factors (e.g., policy, legislation, cultural and socio-economic conditions) as integral components of inclusive education development as a whole.

**Figure 1.**  
*Mapping Inclusive Education*



# Methodology

In a well-known definition, Mancur Olson called a social indicator

a statistic of direct normative interest which facilitates concise, comprehensive and balanced judgments about the condition of major aspects of a society. It is in all cases a direct measure of welfare and is subject to the interpretation that if it changes in the “right” direction, while other things remain equal, things have gotten better, or people are “better off” (Olson 1969: 97).

As a field of social science, social indicators research was born in the United States in the mid-1960s as part of an attempt by the American space agency NASA to evaluate the impact of the American space program on society in the United States. The project came to the conclusion that there was almost a complete lack of adequate data but also of concepts and appropriate methodologies for this purpose (Noll 2002).

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) started its program of work on social indicators in 1970, and at the same time, the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations initiated a project in order to develop the System of Social and Demographic Statistics in which social indicators were supposed to play a key role (Noll 2002).

Among social indicators, social inclusion received great attention within policy-making processes at the national and supranational levels. In a recent study, Atkinson and Marlier aimed to evaluate the analytical and operational significance of the measurement of social inclusion and to identify the key issues that have to be debated in this context and to produce a list of recommendations (2010). Some of their main conclusions are summarized below:

1. Given the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon at issue, measurement of social inclusion has to provide information on economic resources and employment, health, education, affordable access to other public services, housing, civil rights, security, well-being, information and communications, mobility, social and political participation, leisure and culture. In order for the measurement of social inclusion to meet subnational, national, and international objectives, any indicator should (1) identify the essence of the problem and have an agreed normative interpretation, (2) be reliable, (3) be interpretable in an international context, (3) be susceptible to revision as improved methods become available, (4) be as transparent and accessible as possible to citizens

(5) not impose too large a burden on countries, or on citizens. Additionally, the indicators should be balanced across the different dimensions.

2. While quantification is essential for analyzing social inclusion, quantitative indicators are needed to be accompanied by qualitative evidence, which helps interpret the numbers and provides a start in understanding the underlying mechanisms.
3. A global perspective does not imply that there should be a single global set of indicators for all countries and all purposes. Indeed, there is a wide diversity of national and also subnational circumstances across the world.
4. The units of analysis could be individual citizens, households, spending units, family units, inner families, and even wider groupings.
5. The construction of performance indicators needs to be based on a participatory approach, involving the regional and local public authorities, the different non-governmental actors and bodies implicated in the fight against social exclusion, including social partners, nongovernmental and grass-roots organizations (at the international, national, and subnational levels), and the poor and socially excluded people themselves.

In a 1998 article, “Continuities and Developments in Research into the Education of Pupils with Learning Difficulties,” Skidmore reviews some of the research done on issues that relate to pupils with educational needs. In doing so, three major research approaches are highlighted (Skidmore 1998: 4):

**Table 3.**  
*Major Research Approaches to Social Indicators*

<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Level of focus</b>	<b>Explanatory model</b>	<b>Form of intervention proposed</b>	<b>Epistemology</b>
Psycho-medical	Individual	Learning difficulties arise from the deficits within the individual pupil	Diagnostic testing and quasi-clinical remediation	Positivist
Organizational	Institutional	Learning difficulties arise from deficiencies in the ways in which schools are organized	Program of school restructuring to eliminate organizational deficiencies	Functionalist
Sociological	Societal	Learning difficulties arise from the reproduction of structural inequalities in society through processes of sorting and tracking	Root and branch political reform of the education system to remove inequitable practices	Structuralist

Despite policy relevance, little systematic empirical research has been done on inclusive education. Very often, when inclusion in education is discussed, it is as ideology and not as experience (Emanuelsson, Haug, and Persson 2005; Haug 2010). In one of the few systematic reviews of the effectiveness of inclusive education measures, Dyson, Howes, and Roberts, who seek to identify studies that are both conceptually rigorous and methodologically sound, found that a number of case studies have been coined as providing information about the schools that promote the participation of all, but that there is a “lack of detail about methodology in much of the literature” (2002: 5) at the same time. Their general view of the methodological approaches of the studies on inclusion through school can be summarized as follows (2002: 49–50):

1. Studies tend to be located in schools that have been identified (by the researcher, by some key informant, or by the schools themselves) as inclusive. Typically, such schools have an explicit policy of inclusion.
2. Most studies are single or small-*n* case studies. Where more than one school is studied, it is usually because all have been identified as “inclusive.”
3. Interviews with stakeholders tend to be a major source of data. Some studies include data from student interviews or parents (Hunt et al. 2000). Others

include observation data. However, the tendency is for teachers' voices to predominate in the data that are presented.

4. Data on outcomes for students (in terms of their attainments or of their participation in cultures, curricula and communities) are sometimes absent or reported by adults, or inferred from an account of teacher practices. Direct reports of outcomes data are rare.
5. Some studies understand school culture as complex and contradictory (Dyson and Millward 2000; Deering 1996). These studies search for contradictions between different discourses in the school and between the espousal of inclusion on the one hand and non-inclusive practices on the other. In the majority of cases, however, the underlying assumption seems to be that culture is monolithic and that there is no need to seek out "dissident" voices or contradictory practices.
6. Studies tend to be cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. Attempts to characterize schools in a non-inclusive state and contrast this with an earlier or later inclusive state are therefore rare.

In a review of the Norwegian research literature, Haug (2010) found that two different approaches to inclusion are particularly prominent. The first is inclusion in a macro-perspective, analyzing the structural characteristics of the whole school system. The second approach is inclusion in a micro-perspective, with detailed studies of teaching and learning processes in single classrooms, where researchers go into classrooms to look at the organization of the teaching and learning processes, pupils' activities, how the pupils experience the teaching, etc. (Haug 2010). In the first case the orientation is mostly around judicial and administrative regulation of school and mostly related to special education. In the second case, curriculum aspects dominate. In the first case the criteria for inclusion are quantitative, clear and simple, objective, and formal. In the second case they are qualitative, hidden, subjective, and a matter of individual appraisal and analysis.

According to Haug, the macro-perspective approach identifies some structural and formal aspects of education as of most importance for inclusion. They allow comparisons at the national and subnational levels and across time. However, the validity of the variables used as indicators of inclusion is often questionable. His argument is that more or less inclusive and exclusive structures cannot alone reveal the degree of inclusion in practice. The formal organization of school indicates what opportunities

for inclusion exists, but inclusion is also affected by what are the processes and what results are achieved within the structures. Haug gives three main categories of challenges posed by the macro-perspective approach:

1. First, the same school can take several non-inclusive directions, both when it comes to special education and for all pupils. Teaching can be organized in several segregated ways within school such as tracking, special classes, and part-time special education given outside classes in small groups.
2. Second, processes within structures do not necessarily reflect inclusive intentions. To be in a class does not in itself guarantee that the teaching and learning taking place there correspond with inclusive ideas.
3. Third, the results achieved within what seems to be inclusive structures do not always reflect inclusive intentions. Some groups of pupils may benefit more from certain ways of working in schools than others. For instance, pupils with parents with low cultural capital systematically achieve less than pupils with parents with a high level of education.

In contrast to the macro-perspective, the focus in the micro-oriented research is the teacher and the pupils. An important idea behind this research is to give examples of good inclusive teaching as an inspiration to others, and in this way also contribute to defining inclusion. According to Haug, the challenge for the micro-perspective approach is that inclusion cannot be observed directly in classroom activity. It is not possible to register discrete and separate incidents and then conclude directly about the conditions. Instead it must be summarized from thick observational descriptions and thorough analysis that can be broken down into smaller units (Haug 2010: 5). Therefore, it is crucial how inclusion is understood in these studies.

## Determinants of Success: Policy Implications

The outcomes of inclusive education measures are illusive and difficult to measure. The challenge is to measure success in terms of broad indicators of outcomes and impact. Thus, most of the studies rely on student achievement tests of content knowledge, although they are not strongly linked to success in adult life. At the same time, inclusive education programs' assessments require improvements at all levels: the individual (SEN students, other students, teachers), family, community, organization,

and government, and against the goals of inclusion within a democratic, human-rights-based environment (Stubbs 1994, Lynch 2001, and Peters 2004).

For most inclusive education programs, research and evaluation of outcomes are largely based on case studies and qualitative data. For illustration, three of the recent studies that rely on qualitative or mixed-methods approaches are presented in the box below.

First, a study by Moen, “Inclusive Education Practice: Results of an Empirical Study,” published in 2008, provides an example for the category of the inclusive education studies that are based on a small number of cases but extensive observations (over a five-month period) and in-depth interviews. This focused research singles out the experience of a Norwegian teacher, Ann, with the class she teaches in, as well as of two pupils with special needs from the class under study. The research outlines the dilemmas faced by a teacher “who masters the daunting task of inclusive education” (p.73) and the results are not aimed to be generalized to the population of all primary teachers in Norway. Instead, Moen suggests that the narrative of Ann and her inclusive practice in her current classroom are to be considered as a thinking tool or a cultural scaffold because it may initiate further reflections on the topic of inclusive practice, an “open work” where the meaning is dependent upon those who read or hear about it.

Second, Ben-Yehuda, Leiser, and Last’s article, “Teacher Educational Beliefs and Sociometric Status of Special Educational Needs Students in Inclusive classrooms,” published in 2010, is an example of a large qualitative study, based on 24 teachers and 782 students, where interviews are supplemented by sociometric measures. Their study aims to reveal the characteristics of teachers who have successfully promoted “school mainstreaming.” The analysis showed significant differences between the two groups (teachers who successfully implemented school mainstreaming and those who failed to do so). Here are some of the main findings: “Significant differences were found on the four themes: personal relationships; support and encouragement; knowledge of students’ background; and contact with parents. These areas represent the teachers’ personal involvement in the education of students mainstreamed. Successful inclusion teachers are interested in the child’s’ home background, and facilitate meaningful and positive communication with parents” (p. 30). Moreover, “Successful teachers expressed a strong belief in the inclusion of most students with disabilities excluding only those with severe behavior problems or cognitive disabilities, which present significant behavioral and instructional difficulties” (p. 30), and “Successful teachers

attributed the social and academic progress of included students to their own skills, abilities and activities. Unsuccessful teachers believed that students' progress depends on external factors to their teaching and support, i.e., on student effort or motivation. This finding is supported by previous research which has shown that “teachers with a higher sense of personal teaching efficacy have a better understanding of inclusion and tend to use more adaptive instructional techniques for students with special educational needs” (p. 31).

Finally, a study by Petriwskyj, “Diversity and Inclusion in the Early Years,” published in 2010, is a mixed-method research based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses of 22 teachers and 431 children in kindergarten. The research looks at the factors influencing teachers' responses to diversity. An important step in this sense is the inquiry of teachers' understanding of diversity and inclusion. The study reports that most of the interviewed teachers in the early classes understood diversity as a disability and less as a matter of cultural diversity; the three axes around which the idea of within-classroom diversity revolved were disability, learning difficulties, and linguistic differences.

Whereas most of the inclusive education studies rely on small-scale qualitative data, there are several quantitative or large-scale studies that have been undertaken. An early meta-analysis of 50 studies (Weiner 1985) compared the academic performance of mainstreamed and segregated students with mild handicapping conditions. The mean academic performance of the integrated groups was in the 80th percentile, while segregated students scored in the 50th percentile. Another early quantitative research on the effects of inclusive education measures, conducted in the United States by the Working Forum on Inclusive Schools in 1994, identified the following best practice characteristics for inclusive education:

1. A sense of community: the views that all children belong and can learn.
2. Leadership: school administrators play a critical role in implementation.
3. High standards: high expectations for all children appropriate to their needs.
4. Collaboration and cooperation: support and cooperative learning.
5. Changing roles and responsibilities of all staff.

6. Array of interconnected services, such as health, mental health, and social services.
7. Partnership with parents, seen by school as equal partners in educating children.
8. Flexible learning environments, focusing on pacing, timing, and location.
9. Strategies based on research that identify best practices for teaching and learning.
10. New forms of accountability, using standardized tests and multiple sources.
11. Access: physical environment and technology.
12. Continuing professional development: ongoing.

Also published in 1994, Baker, Wang, and Walberg conducted a meta-analysis of inclusive education studies that used a common measure of the inclusive education outcome. Their study found a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on academic and social outcomes of SEN students. Another research project conducted in the United States, the second National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-2), found that secondary students with disabilities who take more general education classes have lower grade point averages than their peers in pull-out academic settings [Blackorby et al 2003], but they score closer to grade level on standards-based assessments of learning than their peers in math and science, even when disability classification is considered (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, and Levine 2003).

Koretz and Hamilton (2000) reported that SEN students who received test accommodations scored well above the average for non-disabled students in every subject except math. Another large-scale longitudinal study of Chicago schools measured the performance of students with disabilities on standardized achievement tests after being placed in special education classrooms. Students did not do better and tended to grow further and further apart, in terms of achievement, from comparable students not placed in special education.

Another major study, *Inclusive Education at Work: Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools*, was carried out by the OECD (1999) between 1995 and 1998 in eight countries from three regions (North America, Europe, and the Pacific). Its general conclusion was that “from organizational, curriculum and pedagogical perspectives, given certain safeguards, there is no reason to maintain generally segregated provision for disabled students in public education systems.” On the contrary, changes in pedagogy and curriculum development were found to benefit all students.

A more recent study, *Special Needs Education in Europe*, conducted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs in 30 countries and published in 2003, reinforced findings of earlier OECD studies in some areas. The study found that transforming special schools into resource centers is a common trend. These centers typically provide training and courses for teachers and other professionals, develop and disseminate materials and methods, support mainstream schools and parents, provide short-term or part-time help for individual students and support students in entering the labor market. In addition, the research showed that individualized education plans play a major role in determining the degree and type of adaptations needed in evaluating students' progress.

Peters argues that the financing and support of educational services for students with special needs is a primary concern for all countries, regardless of available resources, yet a growing body of research asserts that inclusive education is not only cost-efficient but also cost-effective, and that "equity is the way to excellence" (Peters 2004: 23). She gives the example of an OECD report (1994) that estimated the average costs of SNE segregated placements as seven to nine times higher than SEN student placement in general education classrooms.

Evidence on the effects of inclusive education that extends beyond SEN students is remarkably scarce. The 1999 OECD study is one of the few exceptions, since it succeeded to provide substantial evidence that inclusive education improves performance of non-SEN students. More recently, Dyson, Howes, and Roberts, in a study entitled "A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of School-level Action for Promoting Participation by All Students" from 2002, intended to conduct a comprehensive and systematic analysis of research on school-level actions for promoting participation by all students. The research discussed by the paper revolves around the following central question: What evidence is there that mainstream schools can act in ways which enable them to respond to student diversity so as to facilitate participation by all students in the cultures, curricula, and communities of those schools? And also what evidence is there of actions which schools might take to make themselves more inclusive.

Although they designed the review to examine research in schools that had taken a holistic approach to inclusion (i.e., a focus on all students, emphasis on multiple forms of participation), they found that most studies presented detailed data only on one or a limited number of distinct student groups and on how schools were responding to these groups, and that the vast majority of studies included a focus on students with special educational needs and disabilities (Dyson, Howes, and Roberts 2002: 27). From a methodological point of view, most of the studies included in the

review presented considerable weaknesses. All 27 were based on case study designs about the structures and processes of inclusion models, most of them were cross-sectional and conducted in primary schools that were self-identified as inclusive or selected by researchers or other informants as pursuing an inclusive agenda. The evidence was based mostly on interviews and unstructured observations. Interviews were often conducted with teachers and other stakeholders (e.g., administrators, parents, and students) and generally focused on participants' descriptions of school inclusive cultures (e.g., features of such cultures and factors that supported an inclusive school culture). Teacher perspectives dominated research reports. Hence, the evidence on school cultures is mostly grounded in teachers' beliefs and views about their schools (Dyson, Howes, and Roberts 2002:5).

Despite this scarcity of methodologically sound research, several conclusions emerged, with implications for prospective policies:

1. A first conclusion relates to the inclusive culture that characterizes certain schools. Such inclusive culture is in turn the result of a relative consensus over a number of values “of respect for difference” and “a commitment to offering all children access to learning opportunities.” The implication for policy is that, in the attempt to build such an “inclusive culture” within a school, it may not be sufficient to operate changes in the pedagogical tools and to implement “reforms alone” (57). At the same time, it shows that is necessary to conduct an assessment of the extent to which “inclusive values and approaches” are present at the level of school leadership (op. cit.).
2. A further aspect relates to the similarity between particular schools' efforts to open up towards inclusion and the agenda set by the national policies and priorities in the field (op. cit.).
3. Lastly, there is the idea that schools should build a solid relationship with the families and the communities, with an emphasis on tolerance and inclusiveness (op. cit.).

Another literature review with a broader view on inclusion forms and taking into account conceptual clarity and methodological rigor, “The Impact of Population Inclusivity in Schools on Student Outcomes,” was published by Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan in 2005. Their analysis of 26 studies on the effect of inclusion on nondisabled students suggests that, although many studies included pupils with intellectual and learning difficulties, research reports were not always clear on the types

of special needs considered in the study. As a result, “it is difficult to provide direct conclusions regarding the impact of including pupils with a specific type of [special needs] on the academic and/or social or other outcomes of all school pupils” (Kalambouka et al. 2005: 4). They also found that more than 50 percent of the selected studies were published in the 1990s and the vast majority (85 percent) were conducted in the United States. Almost half of these studies (12) documented only academic outcomes.

The authors expressed a serious concern about the slightly loose or uncertain way in which the term “inclusion” was defined. As a result of conceptual imprecision, they found that it is impossible to judge from the review whether certain types of inclusion arrangements were associated with particular academic or social outcomes (Kalambouka et al. 2005: 64).

Whereas previous literature reviews offered mixed results on the effect of inclusion on nondisabled students, this review found that the inclusion of students with special needs and disabilities in regular schools tends to have a positive effect on the academic and social performance of students without special needs and disabilities. When a support system was present, there was a slightly greater positive effect for academic outcomes. The notable exception to the positive link was the category of students with emotional/behavioral disorders, where the outcomes of inclusion were negative. It should be noted that the data on the effect of inclusion was not examined across various curriculum subjects.

Additionally, the review found that successful inclusive education programs are the result of intensive, coordinated, and systematic work that is grounded in a strong and explicit commitment to an inclusive vision of education on the part of parents, students, and professionals (Kalambouka et al. p. 5).

## **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is one of the main themes of the larger discussion on social inclusion of Roma population. The widespread practice of ethnic segregation has been well documented in the case of Roma children in post-socialist societies (e.g., Grigoras and Surdu 2004; Surdu 2003). Ethnic segregation refers both to the processes that lead to the creation of homogenous Roma classrooms, as well as to invisible within-classroom segregation, in which Roma pupils are treated *de facto* differently from non-Roma students by teachers who have a higher tolerance towards failure for Roma pupils and who pay less attention to their educational progress. After conducting a large-scale qualitative and quantitative research on Romania, Fleck and Rughinis

conclude that school segregation affects dramatically the quality of the educational and social experiences of children. They found that in a society where 25 percent of Roma pupils learn in classrooms with a majority of Roma children, and an additional 28 percent learn in classes that have around half Roma children, Roma pupils in segregated classes have a significantly higher risk of illiteracy: around 15 percent of pupils in classes with a majority of Roma children are illiterate, compared to around 4 percent of other Roma pupils (Fleck and Rughinis 2008).

A special category in the inclusive education field is that of action research, an approach understood as “an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organizational change” (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

One such example is a study by Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson, “Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools: A Collaborative Action Research Network” published in 2004, which used the whole school as the unit of analysis, and used a broad definition of inclusive education, that is, “reduce barriers to learning and participation that might impact on a wide range of students” (2004a: 2). Although the target population in this research is identified in rather ample terms (e.g., all students and a wide range of students), the main group of interest is students with special needs and disabilities. The authors characterized their project as a “critical collaborative action research” in which inclusive education tenets were used inductively to examine local practices and develop action plans to become more inclusive. The team created a network based on an action research approach to work in 25 schools throughout three local education agencies (LEAs) in a four-year period (1999–2004). The questions addressed in this work regarded the way the schools address the tension found in the education reform climate in the United Kingdom between the social justice agenda of the inclusive education movement and the neo-liberal economic competitiveness rhetoric that permeates the standards reforms. Ainscow and his colleagues identified two stances toward this situation that they label pessimistic and optimistic views. The former argues that the standards movement grounded in market-driven policies hinders the creation of school cultures supportive of inclusive education. In contrast, the optimistic view contends that inclusive practices are “likely to emerge under appropriate organizational conditions” and that schools can engineer processes and structures that buffer the anti-inclusion pressure of the standards reforms (Ainscow et al. 2004: 15).

Another example of action research is Christine O’Hanlon’s *Educational Inclusion as Action Research: An Interpretive Discourse* from 2003. She argues in this research that “inclusion can be many things,” much more than the idea that “no child or young person should be excluded from mainstream schooling because of perceived learning differences, language, cultural, racial, class, religious, or behavioral differences” (O’Hanlon 2003: 13). Dealing rather with the presence of one or another disability as the criterion of pupils’ differentiation from the mainstream, the author presents her own experience with teaching in classrooms where such children are included together with other pupils. The successful integration of children initially regarded with mistrust by their colleagues came as a result of a change in the teacher’s own attitude. Ceasing to perceive her “different” students as the carriers of a diagnosed disability that called for special treatment, she started instead to search for their hidden talents and abilities. By cultivating those skills, the extent of their integration in the classroom increased (O’Hanlon 2003).

In summary, there are many promising findings in the fast-growing literature on educational inclusion, showing an increase in the conceptual refinement and a strengthening of methodological rigor. At the same time, however, it is difficult to disagree with some of critical comments regarding the development of the domain (Dyson, Howes, and Roberts 2002, Artiles 2003, Haug 2010). First, there is incongruence between inclusive education theory and its practice. Although the conceptualization of inclusive education has become increasingly sophisticated, the research focus has been on students with disabilities rather than on effects of diversity in terms of socio-economic circumstances, ethnic origins, cultural heritage, religion, linguistic heritage, gender, sexual preference, and so on.

Second, although inclusive education has been increasingly theorized, a lack of conceptual clarity has detrimental effects by compromising the accumulation of empirical facts and insights. Third, the research methods used have not produced rich descriptions of the complexities associated with the development of inclusive education programs. Additional gaps that result from methodological issues result from the validity problems of operationalizations, lack of detailed documentation of change processes, and clear implications for the transferability of research findings, as well as the fact that entire regions are under-researched and that longitudinal studies are remarkably few.

## This Volume

The current volume of papers provides fresh insights into the developing literature on educational inclusion and the ways in which this enhances equal education opportunity. In the first part of the volume the two papers by Lee and Bremner and Murphy present assessments of system-level approaches to further education inclusion. Lee and Bremner, in their paper entitled “Evaluation Frameworks and Educational Equity: Friends or Foes,” present a comparative overview of research and evaluation projects on education inclusion covering 15 countries. Evaluation exercises of inclusive education programs are conceptualized as instruments to inform efforts to further equal education opportunity. To this end the paper discusses the challenges associated with developing evaluation frameworks that reflect and promote equity while, at the same time, retain their rigor, reliability, validity, and credibility. The principal questions phrased by authors include: How can these challenges be overcome? How does the context influence the evaluation processes and the importance of “rigor” as compared to “authenticity?” The answers to these questions provide valuable insights into education policy evaluation from the view of the outcomes of education inclusion programs.

This work is complemented by the observation of Murphy—in the paper entitled “Striking a Balance between Economic and Social Objectives in Education: Insights from Western Europe”—that the sole economic emphasis on the articulation of educational policy can be in the detriment of the personal and social aspect of education. In this paper, the author elaborates on the dualisms between education for economic development and education for personal and social development, and inquires about the nature and purpose of the educational project along Freire, Green, and Roland Martin. Thus, the author elaborates on the educational project beyond its purely instrumental role to a broader understanding and conception of the educational project. The example of the British educational system illuminates the consequences for too close an alignment between education and the economy on schooling. These lead the author to the conclusion that this alignment often results in the corralling of lower-status socio-economic students into “sink schools.” The paper concludes by highlighting some recent policy initiatives that offer possibilities for recasting the traditional school system.

In the second section of the volume the four papers shift attention from the frame of educational policy towards governance issues. Municio Larsson, in the paper entitled “Politicians, Policy Communities, and Bureaucrats: Educational Change in

Estonia,” reports from a project that studies to what extent the activities of bureaucracies in the public sector change by means of directives from politicians. The principal questions being addressed include: Do the services offered to citizens change when the political regime changes from an authoritarian socialist system to a democratic liberal one? To answer the question the author looks at the activities of policy communities during the 1990s, and their interaction with politicians in the field of education. The analysis carried out points to tensions between policy communities and politicians. Policy communities tend to be quite permanent with reference to participants, ideological cleavages, and ways of influencing policy, while politicians are working with the short-term goals of the election cycle. Thus, they may have difficulties navigating policy proposals through the process of democratic decision-making. This results in a lack of clear policy guidance from the national level, which gives street-level bureaucrats a great deal of discretion. A change in the implementation approach is also noted. A bottom-up approach was used to introduce educational change during the last years of Soviet rule and the first decade of independence. This involved street-level bureaucrats, that is, teachers and principals, in the reform work. This was later changed to a top-down approach, where reforms are designed at higher levels of bureaucracy and later communicated to the street.

Bushati and Sheshi, in “The ABCs of Good Governance in Education: Monitoring EFA Goals in Albania through a School-based EMIS in the Kukësi Region,” address the challenges faced by Albania within the Education for All (EFA) framework. The empirics of the policy recommendations here build on ongoing interventions that aim at creating a good and sustainable Education Management Information System (EMIS) model, which will use information gathered from school EFA indicators that is “categorized, analyzed, summarized, and placed in the local context” and is useful for strategic policies toward achieving EFA goals. In conclusion, the paper conveys two key messages: (1) establishing a school-based EMIS constitutes a basic ABC-type policy measure towards good governance in education, necessary to ensure quality education for every Albanian child with affordable costs; (2) if the Kukësi region, as one of the poorest regions of the country, can face the challenges of the EMIS reform successfully, then other better-off regions can, too, and the whole country can benefit from this specific experience so far supported by UNICEF.

The paper entitled “A Review of Nepalese Public Education Policy: A History of Implementation and Achievements” by Indra Gurung presents a fascinating review of the historical development of public education policy of Nepal, with particular emphasis on implementation and achievements. The study starts from the observation that

there was no education policy in place until 1955, though initiation of a public education system in Nepal dates back toward the end of the Rana Regime (1846–1950). In 1954, the First National Educational Planning Commission was set up, which recommended universal literacy in the country within 25 years. Initiated with the establishment of 2,200 primary schools in 1960, the majority of which were outdoors, the total number of schools in Nepal at present reached to over 31,000 with the provision of free basic education (grades 1–8) for all as stated in the latest Three Year Interim Plan (2008–2010). This paper reviews all the education policies of the Nepalese public education system from the 1950s to 2000s. It describes the successes and failures of all the policy initiatives and their implementation in chronological order. Finally, it tries to trace out the gaps and identify the strategies imperative to adopt in achieving the goal: “quality education for all.”

The last paper in this section, entitled “Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development in Montenegro,” by Andriela Vitić-Ćetković addresses the role of the Education for Sustainable Development framework, and argues that it may be considered as a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future (UNESCO 2005). This concept of education may have a vital role in contributing to environmental protection, rural community development, and regional stability. By this the author expands the notions of education inclusion, equal education opportunity to those of environmental capabilities. In this perspective, potential forms of education for sustainable development act as support for creating educational equity between underdeveloped and developed parts of the country. The article includes also an evaluation of initial development of a sustainable education concept in Montenegro, by identifying the directions and initiatives for sustainable education promotion in Montenegro and the region, which includes cross-border cooperation projects that may link the developing economies of the West Balkans with the European Union and emerging economies.

The third section of the volume includes four papers all addressing various aspects of the educational inclusion of ethnic minorities. All the papers focus on the challenges that students from Roma backgrounds face in education and the various policy measures related to foster equal education opportunity. Jana Straková, in the “The Role of Early Tracking in the Czech Education System,” discusses the context of the widespread phenomenon of educational tracking from an early age in the Czech Republic using primarily data from PISA 2000, PISA 2003, and PISA 2006 to conduct a hierarchical linear modeling. The author finds significant differences between the achievement and social composition of students in individual tracks. Thus, the

most controversial component of the Czech education system with regard to equity is identified to be the multi-year gymnasium. Multi-year gymnasia were introduced into the education system after 1989, following on a prewar tradition, and currently are attended by approximately 10 percent of lower secondary students. An attempt to abolish tracking at the lower secondary level at the beginning of this decade met strong opposition from politicians and Czech elites. They argued that early tracking gave talented children an opportunity to accelerate their cognitive development and was thus crucial for the constitution of Czech elites. Since then, tracking at the compulsory level became even more prominent. The paper refutes shared beliefs about the role that multi-year gymnasia play in the system.

Balogh, in the paper entitled “Minority Cultural Rights or an Excuse for Segregation? Roma Minority Education in Hungary,” starts by pointing out that the establishment and maintenance of Roma minority education—as Roma in Hungary are considered to be an ethnic minority, protected and provided with minority rights by the Hungarian Minority Act—is in full accordance with both the provisions of the domestic legal framework as well as with the political and moral obligations of Hungary originating from its ratification of international conventions on minority protection. The provisions on Roma minority education take into account the lack of common culture and the linguistic diversity of Roma, and even the lack of a distinct minority language in the case of the overwhelming majority of the Roma population in Hungary. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the aims of Roma minority education are inadequately articulated, which leaves room for misuse in practice. As some cases show—investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities (minorities ombudsman) or brought to court by a strategic litigation NGO, Chance for Children—the educational framework that aimed at promoting the identity of cultural minorities and at providing equal access to adequate education for children with a minority background can actually be used as a tool to degrade or segregate socio-economically disadvantaged Roma pupils.

In “Policy Measures for Equal Educational Opportunities for Roma: The Bulgarian Case,” Milenkova conducts an analysis on the key policy measures for equal educational opportunities of the Roma population and the actual practices of involvement in the educational structures of Bulgarian society. The analysis builds on two sociological surveys carried out in 2006 and 2007 in Bulgaria (with the author’s participation). The objectives of these surveys were to identify Roma educational problems as well as to estimate policy measures on the state and nongovernmental organization level in order to overcome Roma illiteracy and early departure from school. The target

groups are Roma children, Roma parents, teachers of Roma students, social workers, and policymakers. Data obtained from the two surveys are an appropriate base for an evaluation of policies aimed at the equality of educational opportunities for the Roma minority in Bulgaria. The author finds that the education policies and practices on the state and NGO level reveal serious attempts to increase the equal educational access and opportunities of Roma students. However, it is also concluded that the quality of the education provided cannot surpass or be significantly different from the quality of the society itself, its economy and culture.

In “Segregating and Separating Roma Children in Czech Primary Schools,” Syslova finds that the segregation and separation of Roma children from the majority population in the Czech Republic’s educational system has caused nearly irreparable damage in the social and economic spheres. The root of this issue stems from the Roma minority’s long history of exclusion from society on many levels, clearly visible in the unequal access to elementary education by Roma children. It is a fact that the majority of Roma children experience persistent segregation within the Czech elementary educational system. They are continuously sent to separate schools (renamed by the new Education Act as Practical Primary Schools). For instance, many Roma pupils, in violation of their rights, are separated into classes for mentally disabled children within standard primary schools, or into Roma-only ordinary primary schools. These artificial school “ghettos” only serve to create barriers amongst children, obstruct the inclusion of Roma into Czech society, even lowering their own motivation to do so. As a result, their overall social situation in Czech Republic is worsening. It is important to acknowledge that inclusion and education are one of the key methods that allows for an understanding of cultural differences and can positively influence the current situation.

The two papers by Duman and Otgonlkhagva, included in the final section of the volume, inquire about the link between resource allocations, that is, financial allocations, on educational inclusion. The first paper, entitled “Conditional Cash Transfers in Turkey: Advantages and Disadvantages,” reviews some of the policies, with a particular focus on the conditional cash transfer program in Turkey, which was initiated with the support of World Bank to keep students, and especially girls, from impoverished backgrounds enrolled in school. The focus is on the evaluation of this program on achieving higher enrollment rates in primary and secondary education, especially for girls. The author finds that a conditional cash transfer program (CCT) is one of the methods implemented in Turkey to overcome some of the barriers for education.

The paper on “Financial and Environmental Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education for Disabled Children in Mongolia” discusses government statistics and the legal and financial framework of policies pertaining to special needs children. It goes on to discuss teacher attitudes and school capacities regarding special needs children, while the third section discusses a special school, The School for the Deaf, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and the current situation of the deaf community in Mongolia. The author finds that with the closing of special schools in the countryside because of extremely harsh economic conditions during the 1990s, some moderately disabled children who had been attending schools were admitted into regular classes in the regular schools. However, the result was that many children who had attended special schools in the countryside and in Ulaanbaatar now had no place to go. To encourage teachers and local schools to accommodate more special needs children, financial incentives were proposed, laws were enacted that guaranteed equal rights to all citizens, and policies were adopted, all aiming at encouraging the inclusion of children with disabilities into the regular schools and expanding enrollment in the special schools.

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# **PART I**

## Educational Equity



# Evaluation Frameworks and Educational Equity: Friends or Foes?

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## Abstract

The authors of this paper worked on education-related research and evaluation projects in 15 of the workshop's focus countries. This paper will draw on their experiences by comparing the various evaluation approaches, frameworks, and processes that have been used. The paper will first analyze the frameworks and their application, thus identifying the aspects that have the potential to support the achievement of educational equity. Using real world examples that include programs designed to support marginalized and vulnerable populations (such as Roma children in Central and South Eastern Europe, children at risk of being trafficked), the paper will discuss the challenges of creating evaluations that reflect and promote equity while, at the same time, retain their rigor, reliability, validity, and credibility. How can these challenges be overcome? How does the context influence the evaluation processes and the importance of "rigor" as compared to "authenticity?" What are the opportunities for using evaluation processes themselves to promote equity? The paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications for public policy, including how evaluation can best be used as a tool to determine the programs that are most worthy of implementation.

# Introduction to Evaluation

Interventions to improve the lives of disadvantaged and marginalized populations have been developed and implemented by governments, NGOs, and public agencies worldwide. While not universal in its application, evaluation of such programs has become more and more prevalent over the past two decades. Over this same period, the field of evaluation has undergone significant changes, even in its definition.

The definition that guided evaluation through the end of the last century is perhaps best expressed by Scriven (1991):

Evaluation refers to the process of determining merit, worth, or value of something, or the product of that process.... The evaluation process normally involves some identification of relevant standards of merit, worth, or value; some investigation of the performance of evaluands on these standards; some on these standards; and some integration or synthesis of the results to achieve an overall evaluation or set of associated evaluations.

Evaluation was viewed as a means of determining the “merit, worth, or value,” a viewpoint that remains legitimate and widely held. The focus of evaluations conducted on behalf of funders often takes this vantage point, using evaluations to determine whether a particular program or intervention is worthy of continuation and, by extension, sustained funding. Along with supporting improved decision-making, accountability remains as the primary benefit of such evaluations.

Patton (1997) expands the definition:

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.

In Patton’s view of evaluation from the late 1990s, judgment remains a focal point, but the definition suggests that program improvement sits side by side with accountability as a benefit of evaluation. Examination of program activities and characteristics are listed along with outcomes or actual “performance.” In contrast, Preskill and Torres (1999) in their definition move away from “merit and worth” to the notion of inquiry to promote understanding and learning, both for organizations and individuals:

We envision evaluative inquiry as an ongoing process for investigating and understanding critical organizational issues. It is an approach to learning that is fully integrated with an organization's work practices, and as such, it engenders (a) organization's members' interest and ability in exploring critical issues using evaluation logic, (b) organization members' improvement in evaluative processes, and (c) the personal and professional growth of individuals within the organization.

In 2004, Lipsey and Freeman emphasize program improvement as the focus for evaluation and add a new benefit of informing social action that can better address social problems:

Program evaluation is the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs. It draws on the techniques and concepts of social science disciplines and is intended to be useful for improving programs and informing social action ameliorating social problems.

The sample definitions presented do not represent the full array of evaluation definitions present in the discourse around evaluation; however, they illustrate that different points of view exist on what evaluation is and, in turn, what its benefits are. Drawing on the work of Zorzi et al. (2004), the benefits of evaluation can be defined as the following:

- Accountability (program performance, resources)
- Improved decisions (program direction, design, resource allocation, implementation, efficiency, evaluation)
- Increased understanding (program and client needs) and increased capacity for program design, assessment and improvement
- Social change arising from the promotion of different programs, shaping public opinion, cultivation of pluralism and democracy
- Increased cohesion and collaboration among program team and other stakeholders

As might be inferred from the various definitions of evaluation, the field has been an evolving one. Some argue that, despite the recent debates over whether randomized control trials (RCTs) represent a “gold standard,” there has been a move to a “broader epistemological perspective and wider array of empirical methods—qualitative and mixed methods, responsive case studies, participatory and empowerment action

research, and interpretive and constructivist versions of knowledge” (McClintock 2004). Indeed the approaches and methods used in evaluation are even more varied than the definitions of evaluation. Often, when dealing with situations of vulnerable and marginalized populations, consideration needs to be given to more sensitive and less “traditional” evaluation methods.

Traditional evaluation methods have often been criticized for externally imposing judgment without including the voices of participants and stakeholders in a meaningful manner. “One of the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something done to people. *One is evaluated*” (Patton 1990). In its traditional form, evaluation practices frequently employ a deficit-based language; one destined to frame programs/projects in terms of their challenges and barriers, ultimately suggesting areas of improvement. Instead, a strength-based approach allows for a shift in language to “a more positive, affirmative stance. In doing this, participants and respondents identify what has been successful; from these successes, they can then create a future filled with more of these successes” (Preskill and Coghlan 2003).

Such an approach should be particularly suited to evaluation of programs that are designed to improve the social conditions and lives of marginalized populations. Ideally, putting the focus on participation in evaluation emphasizes the active involvement of all stakeholders: “Participatory evaluation... is a *process controlled by the people in the program or community*. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment” (Patton 1990).

Participatory evaluation practices also hold learning as a primary focus (King 1995, Leeuw et al. 1993). However, participatory evaluation also aids in organizational development and learning not only through the evaluation findings, but also through participation in the process itself:

Participatory evaluation is a process of self-assessment, collective knowledge production, and cooperative action in which the stakeholders in a development intervention participate substantively in the identification of the evaluation issues, the design of the evaluation, the collection and analysis of the data, and the action taken as a result of the evaluation findings (Jackson and Kassam 1998).

Involvement in these evaluative processes translates into an increased organizational capacity to respond and adapt to future challenges and events. Again, this approach seems promising for the evaluation of programs implemented by organizations or agencies testing new programs and strategies that engage and support communities.

## Evaluation Frameworks

With different definitions and approaches to evaluation having been recognized, how then do we comprehend the concept of an “evaluation framework?” Again, this term engenders different understandings. Others have attempted to define the components of an evaluation framework. In 2008, the RAND Corporation identified eight international research evaluation frameworks in the health field (Brutscher et al.). On the basis of the eight, they identified five key elements of research evaluation frameworks which can be summarized as: (1) evaluation objectives which flow from rationales for evaluation; (2) outcome measures, ranging from outputs to impacts; (3) levels of aggregation from an individual research to a faculty or research program to a whole research discipline; (4) timing from a single piece of research to longitudinal studies; and (5) evaluation methods from quantitative to qualitative. Brutscher et al. argue that the choice of the evaluation objective is key as it “directly or indirectly, influences the appropriateness of other key elements.”

The authors of this paper have begun with presenting various definitions and benefits of evaluation which provide the basis for the objective of any evaluation. Then, based on our work in evaluating programs designed for disadvantaged youth, we have identified the following elements that comprise our understanding of an evaluation framework.

1. **Evaluation Focus or Questions:** This represents the stated focus or articulated questions that guide the evaluation.
2. **Purpose/Benefit—**The second element of an evaluation framework is the alignment between the particular purpose or objective of the evaluation activity which can be framed as the intended benefit(s) of the evaluation (as outlined above).
3. **Audience—**The intended audience(s) for the evaluation is the third element to be considered when crafting an evaluation framework. Is the evaluation designed for internal program staff to be the audience for the findings, or is it the funder or sponsoring agency, or is it an external audience of policymakers or others in the same field?
4. **Evaluator Role—**The fourth element is the evaluator role. King (2008), in her “interactive evaluation quotient,” identifies three zones of interaction between the evaluator and the program leaders and staff—“evaluator directed,” “collaborative,” and “participant (program staff) directed.” In the “evaluator directed,”

the evaluator is the primary decision-maker regarding evaluation design and implementation, whereas at the other end of this continuum the program leaders/staff are the primary decision-makers with the evaluator playing a more facilitative, coaching, and/or technical support role. In the center of the continuum is a shared responsibility for decision-making between evaluator and program staff. The degree to which evaluation capacity building was a function of the evaluator role is also included.

5. Methods—The fifth element concerns the methods used: are they quantitative inviting statistical analysis (experimental, quasi-experimental), qualitative (descriptive, case study), or mixed?
6. Timeframe—The final element of an evaluation framework is the timeframe for the work. Is it a short timeframe that will produce a one point in time “snapshot” of a program, or a multi-year (two to three years) timeframe to longitudinal (beyond three years with tracking changes over time)?

Using these six elements, frameworks from actual program evaluations will be compared, along with their resulting utilization. As Patton (1997) argues, evaluations should be “judged by their utility and actual use.... Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process. Therefore, the *focus* in utilization-focused evaluation is on intended use by intended users.” In the case of these sample evaluations, which concerned evaluation of programs designed to improve the lives of youth from marginalized populations, utility was fundamentally important.

## Description of Four Example Projects

Four evaluations of projects or programs implemented in Central and South Eastern Europe are used as examples. One or both authors of this paper were involved in some capacity as program evaluators. All the projects, operating within the last 10 years, had youth from marginalized communities as their primary beneficiaries. In the four examples, all (or a significant portion) of the intended beneficiaries were Roma children and youth. As is hopefully becoming more widely recognized now that we are reaching the mid-point of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, national constitutions may guarantee equal protection under the law; however, deeply rooted negative stereotypes

continue to perpetuate in societies where many Roma still experience widespread poverty, poor health, and unequal or no access to social services and education.

The first evaluation discussed in this paper concerns the Roma Special Schools Initiative which was created by the Open Society Foundations in 1999 to address the issue that Roma children were being placed inappropriately in special schools and special classes in Central and South Eastern European countries. The project was based on the premise that many children suffered from economic disadvantages and social discrimination rather than cognitive impairment. Therefore, a pilot project was conceived that would use proven early childhood methodology (Step by Step), regular curriculum, high expectations for student success, and enhanced connections with Roma families to support Roma children's school success. The goal was to integrate as many Roma children from the Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, and Slovakian pilot classes into mainstream education by grade four, after three years of project implementation beginning when the children were in grade one. The evaluator on the international implementation team worked in consultation with NGO directors and researchers from the region. The external evaluator managed the over-arching evaluation, while researchers in the country conducted activities necessary to satisfy governmental requirements in their particular countries. Among other findings, the evaluation demonstrated that almost two-thirds of the Roma children were able to meet the standards of the regular curriculum after three years. Parental involvement and student attendance also increased in the pilot classrooms. The evaluation continued to follow the students when they were integrated into grade four classrooms.

The Roma Education Initiative (REI) was an ambitious project that was funded and implemented by the Open Society Foundations in partnership with Roma and non-Roma NGOs in seven countries from 2002 to 2005: Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. REI also provided support to other national efforts focused on Roma education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo. Each national project offered a continuum of services, involving education and other sectors for youth from age 3 to 18 years and beyond. Core elements of REI included a focus on early childhood education, implementation of interactive child-centered pedagogy (e.g., Step by Step), strong connections with Roma communities, training and other pedagogical supports, as well as networking and alliance building. Complementary services contributed to improving access and educational outcomes in the name of integration. Each country team shaped its project based on local needs and conditions. Ultimately, participants included approximately 1,000 teachers and 120 Roma teaching assistants in 75 schools and preschools in the seven countries.

The evaluator on the REI international coordinating team provided evaluation training and mentoring to researchers from the seven countries, in addition to producing an overall evaluation report which used data collected by the country researchers as well as primary data from web-surveys and interviews. REI was able to reach over 20,000 children and youth in each of the last two years of its implementation, of whom over 5,000 per year were Roma. These children would not have had access to quality education, both within school and through after school and summer programs, had it not been for REI. Approximately 2,000 Roma children gained access to preschool as a direct result of REI. Hundreds more moved from segregated to integrated educational settings, often made possible by their improved academic skills and knowledge; thus illustrating the importance of linking quality education and desegregation.

The Child-Friendly Schools Project, funded by UNICEF and the Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Centre for Educational Initiatives (CEI), Step by Step. The project focused on activities that supported teachers' professional development. Operating within the context of educational reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project addressed structures and processes to support sustained systemic change. Data related to outcomes were identified for the key constituent groups; children, parents, teachers, and other educational stakeholders. The evaluation consultant developed the methodology and primary data collection instruments, collaboratively with staff from CEI Step by Step. While the consultant developed the training agenda and materials, CEI Step by Step staff were responsible for training a local evaluation team, overseeing data collection, and providing the data to the evaluation consultant who was responsible for secondary analysis of existing and primary data, interpretation, and writing the evaluation report. The Child-Friendly Schools Project included about 32,500 children in grades one to five in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The children demonstrated a variety of skills including decision-making skills, critical thinking and problem solving, self-confidence, independence, respect for differences, teamwork, communication skills, and academic knowledge and skills comparable to their peers in traditional classrooms. In total, 627 teachers were trained at the basic level, another 534 through basic training at the local level, plus 479 at the advanced level, while approximately 58,500 parents were affected by the Child-Friendly Schools Project.

Trafficking in human beings has been linked to the political and social transition that countries in South Eastern Europe have experienced over the last decade. Trafficking occurs both within countries (internal trafficking) and across international borders (external trafficking). Populations that are the poorest, most disenfranchised,

and most marginalized are the populations most vulnerable to trafficking. ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour classifies trafficking among “forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery.” Combating Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine was a project, under the auspices of the International Labour Organization, International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC), designed to contribute toward the creation of an environment conducive to the prevention and elimination of internal and cross-border trafficking of children for labor and sexual exploitation. Operating in Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine, ILO/IPEC allocated funds and technical support to fund Action Programs in the project regions designed to withdraw children from trafficking and prevent instances of further child exploitation. The ILO/IPEC teams worked to link project objectives and national priorities. The evaluator for the Interim Project Evaluation (2006) visited all the countries involved, interviewing and conducting focus groups with over 400 stakeholders, including individuals from the Implementing Agencies of the various Action Programs, government officials, project leaders, families, and children. The final evaluation report also encompassed a comprehensive review of internal ILO/IPEC documents. The projects were deemed to be comprehensive, appropriate, and relevant to their national contexts. Supporting efficient and effective use of resources, the ILO/IPEC teams were successful in linking project objectives and national priorities. The projects had a significant impact on policy and legal frameworks at the national level, while at the local level they have supported the establishment of multidisciplinary teams and peer educators. While they established and supported rehabilitation services and employment opportunities for children and youth from the most vulnerable groups, these initiatives were generally at the earlier stages of implementation at the time of the evaluation. The project established the basis for national and local ownership of both policy initiatives and direct services that assist the target populations, while enhancing existing institutional capacities and maximizing the use of donor funds.

## Comparison of Evaluation Frameworks

Each project included a significant commitment to evaluation. However, some differences in the evaluation frameworks were evident. Table 1 illustrates their similarities and differences on the six elements of the evaluation framework. The main similarity is that all evaluations had policymakers as one of their intended

audiences, not surprising given that all were in some way testing interventions or strategies that they hoped would have to be sustained and/or replicated if successful. In terms of their intended benefits, to some degree REI emerged from the Roma Special Schools Initiative, so it is no surprise that they would be striving for the same benefits, including social change. This is not to say that the other two projects did not want to achieve improved social conditions, as indeed they did. However, the evaluation itself was not seen as a direct vehicle for social change, but rather it was a goal of the program/interventions.

The Roma Special Schools Initiative deliberately employed a quasi-experimental design, coupled with more qualitative methods such as interviews and drawings from the children in order to reach as many people as possible. Social change was a desired benefit. Therefore, the funder (Open Society Foundations) wanted to ensure that data would be credible to multiple audiences. Indeed, student achievement data from this project were used as evidence in the European Court of Human Rights, while other learnings influenced the development of REI (for example, the potential of using a comprehensive community development approach).

**Table 1.**  
*Comparison of Evaluation Frameworks and Utilization*

<b>Framework elements</b>	<b>Roma Special Schools Initiative</b>	<b>Roma Education Initiative (REI)</b>	<b>Child-Friendly Schools (CFS)</b>	<b>Combating trafficking in children</b>
<b>Evaluation questions or focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and assessing:</li> <li>– Academic success as evidenced by achievement of mainstream curriculum standards</li> <li>• Conditions that foster success:</li> <li>– Positive student behaviors and attitudes</li> <li>– Parental involvement and attitudes</li> <li>– Classroom environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing the achievement of:</li> <li>– Educational outcomes</li> <li>– Desegregation/integration (and the influencing factors)</li> <li>– Implementation of a comprehensive approach</li> <li>– Policy impact</li> <li>• Later additions to the evaluation focus in order to document:</li> <li>– REI reach</li> <li>– Strengths and challenges</li> <li>– Value added effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the effects on children (outcomes) of quality child-centred education and a child-friendly school environment?</li> <li>• What are the other effects (outputs and outcomes) of the major initiatives in the CFS project?</li> <li>• What are the factors or approaches that will assist sustainability (including scaling-up)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on issues of: design, implementation, performance, and sustainability with attention to recommendations for the future and lessons learned</li> <li>• Assess overall impact at different levels of project activity (policy, community, direct beneficiaries, and their families)</li> </ul>

Framework elements	Roma Special Schools Initiative	Roma Education Initiative (REI)	Child-Friendly Schools (CFS)	Combating trafficking in children
<b>Purpose/ Intended benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary:</b> Social change</li> <li>• <b>Secondary:</b> Increased understanding and increased capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary:</b> Increased understanding and capacity</li> <li>• <b>Secondary:</b> Social change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary:</b> Improved decisions</li> <li>• <b>Secondary:</b> Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary:</b> Improved decisions</li> <li>• <b>Secondary:</b> Accountability</li> </ul>
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policymakers</li> <li>• Other NGOs/ program providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policymakers</li> <li>• Internal staff</li> <li>• Other NGOs/ program providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funders</li> <li>• Policymakers</li> <li>• Internal program staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal program staff</li> <li>• Funders</li> <li>• Policymakers</li> </ul>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily evaluator directed, with some collaboration with national researchers and program staff</li> <li>• Some focus on capacity building for national researchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily participant directed with an intentional focus on evaluation capacity building within national teams including trainings and tool kits</li> <li>• Supplemented with some external evaluator directed standardized data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Some intention to build evaluation capacity/skills with educators who undertook site visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily evaluator directed, with assistance from local teams in identifying people to be interviewed and organizing data collection</li> <li>• No capacity building agenda</li> </ul>
<b>Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quasi-experimental approach (using pilot and control groups for some measures)</li> <li>• Mixed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assessment data</li> <li>– Attendance data</li> <li>– Children's interviews with drawing</li> <li>– Classroom observations</li> <li>– Teacher surveys</li> <li>– Parent interviews</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Country teams responsible for data collection on common outcomes, but some were not consistent across countries</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mixed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Web-survey to collect data on project reach and selected outcomes</li> <li>– Interviews with key country team members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Output data on numbers served</li> <li>– Questionnaires to parents, educators, and others</li> <li>– Two site visits, with interviews of teachers, school directors, pedagogues, classroom observation and focus groups with children and parents</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Interviews and focus groups with government officials, NGOs, implementing partners, youth victims of trafficking and those at-risk, families</li> <li>– Consultation</li> <li>– Document review</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Longitudinal	Multi-year	Snapshot	Snapshot

While both Roma Special Schools and Child-Friendly Schools included some element of capacity building for local researchers or educators, the Roma Education Initiative deliberately included capacity building for the national teams. Workshops on evaluation and data use were coupled with an online “Blackboard” where data collection tools and processes were shared. The intention was that local teams, including the NGO director, program staff, and a local researcher/evaluator, would develop the plan and adapt the tools provided to create their own evaluation processes, wherein they would collect data related to the outcome areas of REI. The local teams did undertake their own evaluation of their own particular projects. However, as REI evolved in the different contexts, it became clear that some over-arching data collection was needed in order to obtain comparable numbers of participants and beneficiaries. In order to capture value added and policy impact the external evaluator also interviewed key people in the implementing teams. One of the recommendations arising from the evaluation of REI was “monitoring and evaluation should be built into projects in order to learn what is most effective in promoting quality integrated education for Roma children and youth. The progress and achievement of Roma students needs to be tracked over time.” Sadly, we do not know if the interventions by the Roma Special Schools Projects or REI for preschool and school-age children have had an impact on the later lives of the children or families who were involved.

In looking across the evaluations, all have experienced some utilization. In addition to submitting data as evidence in the European Court of Human Rights, the findings from the Roma Special Schools helped to shape REI, much as the results of the first phase of Combating Trafficking in Children led to a second phase which was funded and launched in September 2006, covering Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo/UNMIK, Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine. The level and type of utilization does not appear to be particularly related to the methods used (except perhaps in the case of the Roma Special Schools Initiative).

While one cannot attribute the fact that Child-Friendly Schools have become the main model through which UNICEF and its partners promote quality education in both normal and emergency situations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the data from this evaluation was widely used by Step by Step’s Centre for Educational Initiatives to promote the model. Interestingly, in both the case of REI and CFS, the projects created other documentation—in the form of stories or documentation studies that highlighted some aspects of each model.

## Participation in Evaluation

While all of the frameworks included some level of collaboration with the program leaders and staff, the level and type of input from the program representatives was variable. Clearly, if an external evaluator/consultant (and in these examples, the evaluator was someone “imported” from Canada) was to be at all successful, some level of collaboration was crucial. At the organizational level (e.g., international coordinating teams from Open Society Foundations or the ILO/IPEC program officers), commitment to the evaluation was necessary, as it was clear data were needed to support policy change and/or to ensure continued funding. However, in all cases presented in this discussion, the program people who were responsible for implementation of the initiatives needed to accept and support the evaluation process as they often had to commit time and other resources to support data collection. Fortunately, all were cooperative and collaborated on some aspects of the evaluation framework. For these people, Patton (1997) would argue that the value in evaluation resides as much in the process as it does in the findings. Process use, as defined by Patton, is

individual changes in thinking and behaviour, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: The impact on our program came not just from the findings but from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required.

However, the program providers are not the only people who are “participants” in the evaluation process. The other people who are “participants” in the evaluation are those who are the on-the-ground implementers of the interventions (e.g., teachers, social workers, staff in partner organizations) and the beneficiaries of the program interventions themselves (i.e., children, youth, families). People in both these groups provided “data” for the evaluation. In some ways, giving voice to young children (such as those in the Roma Special Schools Initiative and the Child-Friendly Schools project) and vulnerable youth (such as those who had been trafficked or were at risk of being trafficked in the ILO/IPEC project) can be viewed as important information sources for the evaluation. Indeed, evaluation in all the projects honored the voices of participants, including those of Roma parents and families in all cases. These voices have not always been highlighted in such evaluations. Therefore, one could argue that the

evaluator in these cases was someone who was working collaboratively—to the benefit of all—with those not directly trained in evaluation participating

. . . in some or all of the shaping and/or technical activities required to produce evaluation knowledge leading to judgments of merit and worth and support for program decision making (Cousins 2003).

In these evaluations, methods were crafted to ensure as broad and deep an input as possible, recognizing that the perspectives of the direct beneficiaries are key in understanding the implementation and impact of innovative programs. Based on what has been termed the “deliberative democratic” approach to evaluation, great emphasis is placed on efforts to include diverse standpoints in evaluative practice: “the *first requirement* of deliberative democratic is inclusion of all relevant interests” (House and Howe 2000). The evaluation frameworks described in this paper do meet this standard. Voices of young children and often marginalized Roma families were included in the data collection. The importance of this as a first step in moving towards a participatory paradigm cannot be underestimated. In fact, King (2003) reminds us of the significance of hearing these stories: “Be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told because the truth about stories is that’s all we are.” However, if the ideal focus for evaluation is truly on deep levels of participation, the input of beneficiaries (who are, in these examples, people in marginalized communities) would go beyond responding to questions and telling stories so that others can make judgments of merit and worth about particular programs or strategies. Moving to an evaluation paradigm that is truly participatory requires “a *process controlled by the people in the program or community*. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment” (Patton 1990). Empowerment approaches have indeed allowed less powerful voices to be heard in particular settings (Lee 1999); however, it has taken deliberate and sustained effort with high levels of technical support.

If the voices and agendas of the “beneficiaries” are to be truly valued, evaluation (and its evaluation frameworks) needs to move beyond input and “voice” towards a transformative paradigm that will address “the anomalies that arise when researchers, evaluators, and community members express frustration that their efforts are falling short of the desired mark in terms of social justice” (Mertens 2009). The programs described in this paper all have at their heart the desire to improve the educational and social conditions of Roma and other groups for whom discrimination and racism

have been daily realities. While the programs and their evaluation frameworks have attempted to ameliorate the disparities, they have not gone to the deeper and more significant levels of partnering with the actual communities for whom the programs are intended. It may be that evaluators and others have not grasped the importance of listening and learning from the peoples who best understand the realities of racism and marginalization.

Our journeys have led us to multiple ways to express ourselves and to give voice and imagery to our pain and anguish, our hopes and dreams, our strategies and alternatives, our resistance and resilience. Many of us have come to realize that we do not have to be put under a Western lens to be legitimized.... We must be actively part of the transformation of knowledge (Battiste 1998).

Some approaches do exist that may help researchers and evaluators to move practice towards a transformative paradigm. Work in indigenous-based evaluation gained some prominence a decade ago with the work of evaluators like Smith (1999) who noted the following:

The struggle for validity of indigenous knowledges may no longer be over the recognition that indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world that are unique, but over proving the authenticity of, and control over, our own forms of knowledge.

More recently, frameworks specifically for indigenous evaluation have been developed; the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework from the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation and the Indigenous Evaluation Framework from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), to name two.

Such moves towards implementing decolonizing methodologies hold learnings for other disenfranchised populations. These frameworks honor community and engage community and other stakeholders in story creation (American Indian Higher Education Consortium). They believe the “truth emerges from consensus among informed people” which does not stray too far from what evaluators have understood for decades. However, they stress that “phenomena can only be understood within the context of evaluation and not generalized,” suggesting that the specific contexts and experiences of particular populations must be honored. Furthermore, the issue of assessment of merit and worth must be “based on traditional values and cultural expressions” (LaFrance and Nicols 2007).

Based on the work of Paulo Friere on community voice, researchers have suggested the use of methods, such as digital storytelling and photovoice, to support the telling of community stories. Photovoice, a participatory action research methodology, utilizes community generated images to demonstrate “the understanding that people are the experts on their own lives [which] also suggests ways to move into a more empowering frame for evaluation” (Wang et al. 2004). In any case these alternative approaches seek not only to understand the realities of marginalized communities, but also to empower them in telling their own stories to exemplify their own truths.

## Conclusion

The challenge for future programs and their evaluations is to be part of the transformation and legitimization of knowledge that may not fit into the experimental and quasi-experimental—and even the more qualitative—paradigms of traditional evaluation processes. Issues of reliability and validity can be less important than the political and social realities that surround programs and the communities wherein they operate. Equity and social justice should become the touchstones of practice, rather than the handmaidens of “reliability” and “validity.” Rigor gives way to authenticity. And, regardless of these notions, credibility becomes the servant of audience.

Perhaps most disturbing in this discussion is the fact that those of us who have attempted to work in participatory realms have rarely been able to move collaboratively to the next level that truly addresses issues of equity and social justice. We have been deficient, particularly in working with Roma communities, in finding ways to engage these communities to define desired outcomes and create evaluation frameworks that mobilize social change and truly give voice and power to those who we have seen as “beneficiaries” rather than creators of their own destinies. The opportunity exists to address these inequities. We can work with communities to find ways to define what really matters and what public policy should take into account as evidence of success. This entails working with policymakers at multiple levels to engage them in the discussion of what really matters and what counts as evidence of success. However, until we change our own lens, it may be that, despite our best intentions, our evaluation frameworks are as much foe as friend in the pursuit of equity and social justice.

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# Striking a Balance between Economic and Social Objectives in Education: Insights from Western Europe<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper considers the economic emphasis on the articulation of educational policy in the context of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Such an emphasis can often be to the detriment of the personal and social aspect of education. Reference will be made to recent Irish educational policy documents, especially in the context of the third level education (university). The narrowing of education at this level to meet economic imperatives will be discussed. Reference will also be made to educational thinkers such as Freire, Greene, and Roland Martin, each of whom offers an understanding for the nature and purpose of the educational project that extends beyond the purely instrumental to a broader understanding and conception of the educational project. The consequences for too close an alignment

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was previously published in Cyril McDonnell (ed.) (2009) *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*, Dublin: Mullen Print as “Tensions between an Economic Emphasis and a More Personal Emphasis in Educational Thought and Action: Toward a Re-casting of the Dualisms,” pp. 64–73.

between education and the economy on schooling will also be considered, especially in the context of England. The net result of which can often times be the corralling of lower socio-economic students into “sink schools.” The paper will conclude by highlighting some recent policy initiatives that offer a possibility for re-casting the traditional dualisms between education for economic development and education for personal and social development.

## Introduction—The Policy Context

There is much discourse today concerning the nature and purpose of what is commonly referred to as the “Learning Society.”<sup>2</sup> A pivotal document on the nature and purpose of the Learning Society in the context of modern post-industrial Ireland is *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*.<sup>3</sup> It construes the educational project in terms of a lifelong learning agenda that “redefines the school as one of many agencies and learning sites involved with the learner in a more fluid and less time specific way than has been the case traditionally.”<sup>4</sup> It also emphasizes a commitment to a lifelong learning agenda “as a relatively seamless progression through an educational continuum from the cradle to the grave, with open boundaries between the worlds of home/work/education and provision for flexibility in learning sources.”<sup>5</sup> The educational landscape in the Republic of Ireland, can, in the author’s view, be appraised against the relief of the aforementioned commitment. From this perspective, it may be possible to assess whether, in the context of the first decade of the new millennium, progression through the Irish educational system ought to be referred to as a “seamless progression” or whether it should in fact be recognized differently? This is a question that will be revisited in the course of the paper. At this juncture, however, it is worth considering a little more closely how educational policy is being shaped in the Republic of Ireland. Such an appraisal will certainly help to shed light on the

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2 Stewart Ranson (ed.) (1998) *Inside the Learning Society*. London: Cassell and Peter Jarvis (ed.) (2001) *The Age of Learning: Education and the Knowledge Society*. London: Kogan Page. Both offer good explications of these discourses.

3 Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

4 *Ibid*, p. 31.

5 *Ibid*, p. 30.

nature of the Learning Society that has come into being, especially in the wake of the Celtic tiger. A number of Irish educationalists, for example, are concerned about the apparent narrowing of our educational system along an increasingly functionalist and instrumentalist track.<sup>6</sup>

## Economic Considerations

The influence of economic considerations on the development of Irish educational policy is clearly evident in a number of recent significant policy papers on education. Certainly, the 1992 *Green Paper on Education*,<sup>7</sup> which was the precursor to the 1995 *White Paper on Education*,<sup>8</sup> was strongly influenced by economic considerations. It states, for example, that while adhering to its philosophy of contributing to the development of the whole person, “the education system must seek to interact with the world of work to promote the employability of its students and in playing its part in the country’s economic development.”<sup>9</sup>

The close symmetry between Irish educational policy and economic issues, as evidenced in the aforementioned *Green Paper*, is also alluded to in the 1994 *Report on the National Education Convention*,<sup>10</sup> where it is suggested that an over-emphasis “on economic and instrumentalist considerations in educational policy-making could have distorting effects, with deleterious consequences.” The 1995 *White Paper* attempted to respond to some of the concerns raised in the aforementioned *Green Paper* and it is in evidence that there is an acknowledgement in this paper of the fundamental importance of the social dimension in education.<sup>11</sup> Such an acknowledgment, however, is

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6 For a good discussion of this debate, see Shelia Drudy and Kathleen Lynch (1993) *Schools and Society in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan; Mary Valarsan-Toomey (1998) *The Celtic Tiger: From the Outside Looking in*. Dublin: Blackhall Publishing.

7 Department of Education and Science (1992) *Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

8 Department of Education and Science (1995) *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

9 *Ibid*, p. 35.

10 National Education Convention Secretariat, *Report on the National Education Convention* (Dublin: NECS, 1994) .

11 See *Charting our Education Future*, p. 5

posited in the context of an educational system that is still beholden to economic considerations, that perceives the development of the education and skills of people as important a source of wealth as the accumulation of more traditional forms of capital.<sup>12</sup> In the 2005 Budget Speech, for example, Brian Cowen succinctly acknowledges that the basis for future growth and prosperity “is investment in the knowledge, skills and innovation capacity that will drive economic and social development in an increasingly competitive global environment.”<sup>13</sup>

## Wider European Context

The centrality that is accorded to economic considerations in the formulation of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland is also very much in sync with developments in the wider European context. Recently, for example, the OECD conducted a major review of tertiary education. It is proposed that this review will examine how the organization, management and delivery of tertiary education can help countries achieve their economic and social objectives. It is quite evident, however, that economic considerations are very much to the forefront. One of the principal focus questions for that review inquired as to how countries can make sure “that their tertiary education system is economically sustainable, that it has an appropriate structure, that there are effective links between its parts, and that adequate mechanisms exist to ensure its quality?”<sup>14</sup> Similar sentiments were echoed in the Skilbeck Report of 2001.<sup>15</sup> It acknowledged that there is increased accountability on public universities and other higher education institutions to “systematically appraise themselves, attain clear targets, and demonstrate the overall quality and efficiency of their activities whether in teaching, research, service to the community or institutional management and accept external evaluation or audit by public agencies.”<sup>16</sup>

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12 *Ibid*, p. 5.

13 Brian Cowen, T.D. (2005) The Budget Speech. Dublin: Department of Finance, December 7.

14 Directorate for Education (2005) *The OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education*. Available online at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/30/35564342.pdf>.

15 M. Skilbeck (2001) *The University Challenged: A Review of International Trends and Issues with Particular Reference to Ireland*. Dublin: HEA.

16 *Ibid*, p. 26.

## A Broader Appreciation of the Educational Project

While no one could deny the significance that ought to be accorded to productivity and efficiency considerations in the educational sphere, from preschool right through to adult and continuing education, it is very important, however, that such considerations be placed in the context of a broad understanding of the educational project. Such a conception of the educational project might be consistent with Roland Martin's identification of liberal education with the personal and social development of a person. In such a depiction there would also be room for "feelings, emotions, and attitudes to flourish, for creativity and imagination to develop, for making and doing moral commitment."<sup>17</sup>

The revised Irish *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) aligns closely with the sentiments expressed by Roland Martin above. It recognizes, for example, that the impulse for learning is the child's "sense of wonder at the complexity of the world, the desire to understand it, and the spontaneous impetus to explore it through play."<sup>18</sup> This landmark publication represented over a decade of development and planning that involved all the partners and interests involved in Irish primary education. More recently, in England, *Creative Partnerships*, the government's flagship creativity initiative for schools and young people, contends that "creativity develops the capacity to imagine the world differently. We all need an ability not just to cope with change, but also positively to thrive on it."<sup>19</sup> There is also a strong congruence between the ideas expressed here and those to be found in *Creativity Counts: A Report of Findings from Schools*<sup>20</sup> from Learning and Teaching Scotland.

The revised Irish *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) is also in congruence with what Greene considers to be at the heart of the educational project. In her view, it ought to be circumscribed by openings and unexplored possibilities rather than the predictable and the quantifiable.<sup>21</sup> The former provide a fertile context for imagina-

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17 Roland Martin (1994) *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum*. New York: Routledge.

18 Department of Education and Science (1999) *Primary School Curriculum Introduction*. Dublin: Government Publications, p. 14.

19 Arts Council England (2007) *Creative Partnerships*. Beacon Press.

20 The Ideas Network (2004) *Creativity Counts: A Report of Findings from Schools*. Learning and Teaching Scotland.

21 Maxine Greene (2001) *Variations on a Blue Guitar, The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 7.

tion to take root and she contends that “imagination is as important in the lives of teachers as it is in the lives of their students, in part because teachers incapable of thinking imaginatively or of releasing students to encounter works of literature and other forms of art are probably also unable to communicate to the young what the use of imagination signifies.”<sup>22</sup> It is encouraging to note then that the arts are being accorded a central place in the curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, especially at the primary level. The strategic plan for 2009–2011 from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment there clearly recognizes the critical importance for recognizing a learner’s creative capacity.<sup>23</sup>

Greene above is pointing to a deep and profound understanding of the nature and purpose of the educational project, one that is oftentimes at odds with the more instrumentalist interpretation that welds education to the economic project in society. The Irish education system’s broader conception of education, particularly at primary level, has managed to stave off some of the more adverse effects that can result from such instrumentalist orientations. It resonates with Greene’s conception of the educational process as an opening-up, an ability to see “beyond the actual to a better order of things.”<sup>24</sup> And we are reminded of Merleau-Ponty’s depiction of the primacy of perception, especially where he notes that “there is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place when the spark is lit between sensing and sensible.”<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, quite a few education systems across the developed world have lost touch with such voices and have allowed the measure of education to be correlated with the amount of points that can be garnered from terminal examinations.

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22 Maxine Greene (1995) *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, p. 36.

23 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2010) *NCCA Strategic Planning 2009–2011* (Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). Available online as an audio file: [http://www.ncca.ie/en/About\\_Us/Strategic\\_Plan/Strategic\\_Planning\\_2009-2011.html](http://www.ncca.ie/en/About_Us/Strategic_Plan/Strategic_Planning_2009-2011.html).

24 Maxine Greene (1995) “Choosing a Past and Inventing a Future: The Becoming of a Teacher.” In: W. Ayers (ed.) *To Become a Teacher Making a Difference in Children’s Lives*. New York: Teachers College Press.

25 Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964) *The Primacy of Perception*. Northwestern University Press, p. 163.

## Education as an Assembly Line

The preoccupation with points accumulation has diluted the essence of what education is about, and in the words of Valarsan-Toomey, the project of education is now synonymous with a “major industry—a production line without quality assurance.”<sup>26</sup> Such sentiments also echo the thoughts of Clancy, especially where he makes reference to the apparent foregrounding of economic concerns on the development of Irish educational policy. He suggests, for example, that in the wake of the adoption of a program for economic development in the 1960s, with its commitment to economic growth and export-oriented industrialization, “the educational system would henceforth be assessed by its capacity to facilitate the achievement of these new economic objectives.”<sup>27</sup>

Such an assessment would certainly be in accordance with the prominence that is being given to the productivity-driven agenda that is reflected in recent policy formulations from the OECD. Recently, for example, the OECD Directorate for Education prepared a policy document on attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers.<sup>28</sup> The executive summary of the said document acknowledges that there is widespread recognition “that countries need to have clear and concise statements of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do, and these teacher profiles need to be embedded throughout the school and teacher education systems” (Directorate for Education 2005: 12). From the author’s perspective, it is critical that such profiles embrace a broad understanding of the nature and purpose of the educational project, one that is reflective of the thoughts expressed by Roland Martin and Maxine Greene above. Recent developments in the Irish educational landscape, however, would lead the author to contend that this broader understanding of the educational project is being quickly eroded. It may be helpful at this juncture to highlight some of these developments.

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26 Valarsan-Toomey (1998) *The Celtic Tiger: From the Outside Looking In*, p. 42.

27 Patrick Clancy (1997) “Education in the Republic of Ireland: the Project of Modernity.” In: Patrick Clancy, Kathleen Lynch, Sheelagh Drudy, and Liam O’Dowd (eds.) *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives*. Dublin: IPA, p. 479.

28 Directorate for Education (2005, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. OECD Publishing.

# Recent Educational Developments—Looming Dark Clouds

The “exam-oriented schooling,” which Dorr spoke of in the 1970s, is part of the educational landscape in the Republic of Ireland, especially in the latter stages of secondary schooling. The focus on maximizing points at this stage, especially for entry into prestigious third-level courses, can foster an over-emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge, potentially to the detriment for what is commonly referred to as a full-rounded education, such as that outlined by Roland Martin above. Cognizance could also be taken here of Greene’s concerns that increasingly today “teachers are asked to teach to the end of ‘economic competitiveness’ for the nation. They are expected to process the young (seen as ‘human resources’) to perform acceptably on some level of an increasingly systematized world.”<sup>29</sup> While this coupling between education and the economy is not as clear-cut in the context of the Republic of Ireland as it is in other countries, vigilance is called for in respect of the looming dark clouds. In the context of the United States, for example, the author is reminded of Apple’s contention that the present preoccupation with national tests and performance indicators published as league tables are a manifestation of a concern for “external supervision, regulation, and external judgment of performance.”<sup>30</sup> And in England such methods of assessment have also become increasingly “colonized by parents who possess what is seen as ‘appropriate’ economic, social, and cultural capital.”<sup>31</sup> According to Ball and Vincent, these parents’ educational perspectives and practices “are shaped and informed by a set of fears and concerns about social and economic reproduction.”<sup>32</sup> Ball and Vincent draw attention to the uncertainty that is now pervading such families concerning their once perceived educational capital. Apparently, the recent improvement in retention levels across all levels of the educational system in England, irrespective of social class, has meant that access to higher education, once their exclusive privilege, is now being assailed by “intruders from below.”<sup>33</sup>

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29 Maxine Greene (1998) *The Dialectic of Freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 12.

30 M. Apple (2001) *Educating the “Right” Way: Markets, Standards, God and Inequality*. London: Routledge Falmer, p. 83.

31 *Ibid.*

32 S. Ball and C. Vincent (2001) “New Class Relations in Education: The Strategies of the ‘Fearful’ Middle Classes.” In: J. Demaine (ed.) *Sociology of Education Today*. London: Palgrave, p. 183.

33 *Ibid.*

The interventionist strategies that some of these parents practice to optimize the positional advantage in the competitive educational stakes arena for their children are explored in Thrupp's (1999) *Schools Making A Difference: Let's Be Realistic! School mix, school effectiveness and the social limits of reform*.<sup>34</sup> These parents are keenly aware that the future occupational prospects of their offspring will be significantly enhanced if they succeed in enrolling them in schools that have a strong academic reputation. Schools are now ranked according to their university admission progression rates and obviously these parents are anxious that their children be enrolled in schools that are represented in the top tier of the league table rankings. It is apparent that schools in England are influenced by these rankings. They understand that in a system that is open to choice and competition, unless they are able to sustain a high academic reputation, they will be unable to grow or even maintain their in-take of students, which can ultimately result in closure. In order to boost their academic ratings, these schools compete with each other to recruit the most promising students. The net effect, according to Thrupp, is that "working class children and particularly children with SEN [special educational needs] are likely to be increasingly 'ghettoized' in underresourced and understaffed low status schools."<sup>35</sup> In addition, it is important to recognize that "access to knowledge is crucial to fitting into society and finding employment."<sup>36</sup> There are parallels here with Harris and Ranson's contention that "a combination of market individualism and control through constant and comparative assessment (i.e., league tables) has demoted certain schools to the lower echelons of performance, indefinitely."<sup>37</sup> And, in a context where there is strong correlation between educational achievement and future career prospects, such practices can have very serious consequences for these students.

In the Irish context it is evident then that while overall investment in education in Ireland has led to an increase in educational attainment and performance at all levels, the differentials between classes have not diminished.<sup>38</sup> At one end of the

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34 Martin Thrupp (1999) *Schools Making A Difference: Let's Be Realistic! School mix, school effectiveness and the social limits of reform*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

35 *Ibid*, p. 141.

36 European Union (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training—Teaching and Learning—Towards the Learning Society*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

37 A. Harris and S. Ranson (2005) "The Contradictions of Education Policy: Disadvantage and Achievement." *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 31, No.5, p. 574.

38 Hilary Tovey and Perry Share (1998) *A Sociology of Ireland*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, p. 177.

spectrum, it is claimed that Irish parents are prepared to hand over more than EUR 110 million a year to fee-paying secondary schools and to grind schools to help their children get the “best” education and boost their chances of university.<sup>39</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, however, it is claimed that for the most deprived students, a form of social predestination exists.<sup>40</sup> It is in evidence, for example, that the Dublin 17 district, which includes the disadvantaged areas of Darndale and Priorswood, has the poorest educational record in the nation, with a quarter of its students not even taking the Junior cert, and only two out of five taking the Leaving.<sup>41</sup>

The European Union *White Paper on Education and Training—Teaching and Learning—Toward the Learning Society* (1995) recognized that “the development of our economies and the constraints of competitiveness have led to several categories of the population being left by the wayside.”<sup>42</sup> It has promoted “second chance schools” as a way of re-engaging those learners who have become disengaged or disaffected with schooling.

## A Glimmer of Optimism

The overview of the educational policy context in Ireland, particularly at the third level, that was outlined at the beginning of the paper highlights the extent to which economic considerations have assumed a pivotal role in the development of educational policy, especially at the third level. As such, it is very much in line with educational policy across the OECD.<sup>43</sup> And, also at the second level, as is evident for example in the work of Thrupp (1999), “what education is for is a matter for consumers of the system, such as pupils, parents, civic leaders and business interests, to decide.”<sup>44</sup> However, while acknowledging the significant influence that the economic paradigm has on the direction of the Irish educational system and of its implications, particu-

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39 J. Walshe (2005) “Huge switch by parents to fee schools.” *Irish Independent*, March 7.

40 *Irish Times* (2002) “In Irish Education it’s all about your class.” September 25.

41 *Irish Times* (2003) “The dropout schools: half their pupils skip leaving.” August 15.

42 European Union (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training*, p. 42.

43 Timothy Murphy (2007) “Jack Mezirow and Perspective Transformation: Toward an Understanding of Irish Educational Policy within a European Framework.” *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 5, p. 494.

44 Dennis O’Sullivan (2005) *Cultural Politics and Irish Education Since the 1950s*. Dublin: IPA, , p. 112.

larly at the third level, it is also worth noting that there is another paradigm which does offer another understanding for the nature and purpose of education.<sup>45</sup>

This paradigm offers a counterpoint to the aforementioned mercantile perspective. It is also reflective of the enormous influence that the churches have had on the development of Irish education. When referring to their impact on the system of education in the Republic of Ireland, Murphy even contends that although the *Investment in Education Report* signaled “a new departure for educational policy in the RoI, its immediate impact was somewhat softened by the degree of influence that the Church still wielded on educational matters.”<sup>46</sup> The imprint of the Catholic Church is clearly evident, for example, in the revised Primary School Curriculum of 1971, especially in the section pertaining to the nature and purpose of education, where it states that each human being “is created in God’s image. He has a life to lead and a soul to be saved. Education is, therefore, concerned not only with life but with the purpose of life.”<sup>47</sup> Of course, the recent scandals reported widely in the media offer another perspective on the legacy of the churches on Irish education, a full discussion of which would clearly merit another paper in itself. While we might certainly acknowledge that the rhetoric often fell far short of the actual practice, the rhetoric at least held up a holistic conception for education, one that emphasized its social aspects as well as its economic side.

The various religious institutions involved in Irish education, at least rhetorically, have held the personal and social aspects of education in high esteem and the fact that our present system still nods an acknowledgment to the importance of those aspects as well is testimony to the legacy of those institutions. Recently, the OECD member states have expressed an interest in the work of Robert Putnam and this is indicative of the prominence that is now being accorded to the social dimension of the educational project. At a meeting of the OECD education ministers in Dublin in 2004, Putnam underscored the significance of “social capital” as an end of education. He contends that one reason that students from minority and impoverished backgrounds are disadvantaged educationally “is precisely because they lack access to productive

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45 I am not suggesting that the economic paradigm is the harbinger of all things bad in society; in fact, it has been regularly reported in the media that the “Celtic tiger” phenomenon was a result of the careful investment in education over a number of decades. Rather, what I am drawing attention to is that an over-emphasis on economic considerations in education, to the extent that other important aspects are overlooked, can have unfortunate consequences. This is a view that was also contained in the *Report on the National Education Convention*.

46 Timothy Murphy (2007) “Jack Mezirow and Perspective Transformation,” p. 4.

47 An Roinn Oideachais (1971) *Curaclam na Bunscoile*.

social capital, both inside and outside the school.”<sup>48</sup> At that same meeting he outlined features of the educational process that have been shown to be important in fostering social capital. He suggests, for example, that pedagogy “that encourages active teamwork seems likely to be more effective in inculcating social skills than pedagogy that promotes purely individual achievement.”<sup>49</sup>

I am reminded here of the significance of the experiential in education. So many of our classrooms today exhibit a paucity of connectedness to the world outside the classroom. In a recent press release from the Department for Children, Schools, and Families in England, Ed Balls, the children’s secretary, said that “learning outside the classroom—whether within school grounds, locally and on visits further afield or even abroad—should be part and parcel of every child’s school career.”<sup>50</sup> He also pointed out that “it was wrong to deny children valuable learning opportunities or wrap them in cotton wool because of risk assessment paperwork or fears over compensation culture.”<sup>51</sup> Such sentiments would certainly concur with Dewey’s view that

a primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile.<sup>52</sup>

In this way, as Cuffaro points out, “what we do in our classrooms, the view we offer of the world, the choices we make, add detail and direction to possibility—for the children, ourselves and society.”<sup>53</sup> Such contexts may offer the opportunity to see more and to hear more, which in turn may only prompt occasions when it might be possible to lurch “if only for a moment, out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted

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48 Robert Putnam (2004) “Education, Diversity, Social Cohesion and ‘Social Capital.’” Meeting of OECD Education Ministers: Raising the Quality of Learning for All. Dublin, March 18–19.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

50 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) “Time to End Cotton Wool Culture and Get Young People out of the Classroom.” Press Notice, February 19.

51 *Ibid.*

52 John Dewey (1938, 1963) *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, p. 40.

53 Harriet Cuffaro (1995) *Experimenting with the World, John Dewey and the Early Childhood Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 108.

but that new avenues for choosing and for action may open in our experience; we may gain a sudden sense of new beginnings, that is, we may take an initiative in the light of possibility.”<sup>54</sup> Such beginnings may offer new points of intersection between the economic and the social and personal aspects of education, that in turn may allow for new conceptions of the educational project in society to emerge, conceptions that promote rounded and holistic educational endeavors, conceptions that negate the unnecessary binaries that can exist between the economic and the personal and social rationales for education.

## Toward a Balanced Curriculum: Re-casting the Dualisms

Many students become disengaged from education when they discover that their “life-world” is not represented there. Referring to Irish education, for example, McSorley<sup>55</sup> reports that in north and southwest Clondalkin, a suburb of Dublin, over a third of the school-going population is absent on any given day and more than half of the population leave school by the age of 15. These figures are not unique to Ireland and as the previously cited European Union *White Paper on Education and Training* reports, “Young people excluded from the school system can now be counted in tens of thousands in the major conurbations.”<sup>56</sup> It would not be unreasonable to suggest that the sense of disengagement from education, particularly at the second level, is accentuated on account of the increasingly competitive climate in which education is taking place, especially for those students who are not academically inclined.

Often it is the more articulate or powerful interests in society who stamp their own designs on the education system and thus “establish the context within which quality in education is to be understood and pursued.”<sup>57</sup>

Such sectional interests can often be at variance with the efforts to put a balanced curriculum in place, a curriculum that represents “a school’s best efforts—within the constraints of regulation and circumstance—to provide for its pupils what

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54 M. Greene (1995) *Releasing the Imagination*, p. 123.

55 Cathy McSorley (1997) *School Absenteeism in Clondalkin: Causes and Responses*. Dublin: The Clondalkin Partnership.

56 European Union (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training*, p. 42.

57 Padraig Hogan (1995) *The Custody and Courtship of Experience: Western Education in Philosophical Perspective*. Dublin: The Columbia Press, p. 227.

it judges to be the most fruitful experiences in a representative range of the various field of human endeavour and accomplishment.”<sup>58</sup> If a prominent position is accorded to the importance of the experiential domain in education, as outlined by Dewey above, it may be possible to construct a balanced curriculum, one that invites the learners into the learning process so that the teacher “is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.”<sup>59</sup> It is heartening to note that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s publication (2009) *The Early Childhood Curriculum*<sup>60</sup> clearly endorses the sentiments expressed by Dewey above. And, at second level, the capacity for such learning is also being encouraged in the context of the Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL21)<sup>61</sup> initiative where one of its central aims is to encourage students to be active and responsible participants in learning. In such curriculum orientations it may be possible to attend more clearly to the voices raised in this paper concerning the nature and purpose of the educational project in society. And, accordingly, it may also be possible to re-cast the traditional dichotomies between the economic and the personal and social aspects of education toward a conception that speaks to both in a balanced curriculum.

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58 *Ibid.* p. 241.

59 Paulo Freire, (1970, 1995) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, Continuum, p. 61.

60 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2009) *The Early Childhood Curriculum*. Dublin, NCCA.

61 Pádraig Hogan et al. (2007) *Learning Anew: Final Report of the Research and Development Project: Teaching and Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2003–07. NUI Maynooth: Education Department.

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## **PART II**

# Education Politics, Policy, and Governance



# Politicians, Policy Communities, and Bureaucrats: Educational Change in Estonia<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This is the first report from a project that studies to what extent the activities of bureaucracies in the public sector change by means of directives from politicians. Do the services offered to citizens change when the political regime changes from an authoritarian socialist system to a democratic liberal one?

The main issue in this paper is education policy at the state level. It looks at the activities of policy communities during the 1990s and their interaction with politicians in the field of education. It points to tensions between policy communities and politicians.

Policy communities tend to be quite permanent with reference to participants, ideological cleavages, and ways of influencing policy, while politicians are working with the short-term goals of the election cycle. Thus, people may have difficulties navigating policy proposals through the process of democratic decision-making. This

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<sup>1</sup> This project is carried out in collaboration with Eda Heinla, Ph.D., Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn. It has been financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, grant no. 3004701.

results in a lack of clear policy guidance from the national level, which gives street-level bureaucrats a great deal of discretion.

A change in the implementation approach is also noted. A bottom-up approach was used to introduce educational change during the last years of Soviet rule and the first decade of independence. This involved street-level bureaucrats, that is, teachers and principals, in the reform work. This was later changed to a top-down approach, where reforms are designed at higher levels of bureaucracy and later communicated to the street.

## Background

*Education, as well as charity, has become in most countries at the present day a national concern. The State receives, and often takes, the child from the arms of the mother, to hand it over to official agents: the State undertakes to train the heart and to instruct the mind of each generation.*

—Alexis de Tocqueville in 1840

After the transition to independence and democracy in the post-socialist states, there was a wish to start anew in every area of the state in order to accomplish comprehensive changes to society. Many statements by the new governing elites manifested a wish to leave behind the state institutions of the previous period, as well as their corresponding legislation. A new era of democratic government was to be founded on nationally designed institutions and laws. Ambitious legislative projects were initiated. The most fundamental ones established the new states. They consisted of a new constitution, election laws, as well as laws on citizenship and on language. In some of these countries, the fundamental laws reconnected to the pre-Soviet period, by partly reinstating the legislation of the prewar republics. This was the case in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Pettai 2001, Sprudz 2001, and Gelazis 2001).

Likewise, the transition to democracy involves profound changes in education. In Estonia, the challenge stated is to achieve three lines of development, that is, “democratisation, humanization and setting a high value on education” (Kreitzberg 1993: 10). The first of these is stated to mean a change from “command activity to participation activity,” and the second a change of content from the monopoly of science-centered education to an education related to “man, society, and environment.” The third aim was described as a conception of education as “an aim in itself” as well

as “financial security of educational institutions.” Similar points are found in reform programs of other post-communist countries (Webber and Liikanen 2001).

Generally, social change in society is connected to the need for educational reform. During the era of nation building of the nineteenth century, education and conscription were generally considered to be the means used by the states to create homogeneous nations (Municio 2001: 235). Today, the survival of Estonia as a nation-state is explicitly connected to the existence of “an advanced educational system” (Kreitzberg 1993: 10). Also during the interwar years of independence, the existence of a proper education system was connected to the development of the Estonian nation (Kera 1996).

The 1990s have witnessed comprehensive reform programs in neighboring Sweden as well as in many other West European countries. Thus, education is requested to adjust to ongoing or past social change. In addition, education is expected to adjust and be instrumental to bringing about desired future changes in society.

With reference to Estonia, Fritzell (1994: 1) writes that “social change in Estonia is of such extent and intensity” that “fundamental notions of education” have to be questioned. Consequently, education has been “one of the most publicly debated topics in Estonia” (UNDP 1998: 34). The changes envisaged do not only refer to the introduction of democratic procedures of decision-making within the educational organization. They also refer to the core values of educational ideology. The heritage of a totalitarian and foreign regime shall have to be wiped away and substituted by domestic values defined by Estonians themselves.

Two decades into the epoch of democratic change, it seems important to ask how and to what extent these ambitions have resulted in the formulation of public policies in the area of education and to what extent such policies have influenced education. In the analysis of policies in comparison to actual school activities, two arenas are distinguished. The first arena is characterized by often overly ambitious plans aiming at comprehensive social change. The second is characterized by the possibilities and the limits of schooling as “praxis.” The differences between these two is usually named the implementation gap.

## Education Reform

The task of reforming education in Estonia started already in 1987 when educators met with the aim to form a new platform for the development of education (Kreitzberg

1993: 6). Problems with the aims of education, its content, and ways of functioning were pointed out. However, during the years that followed, it proved much more difficult to pass “from criticism to positive innovations” (Kreitzberg 1993: 7). A couple of years after publishing this text, Peter Kreitzberg was himself a minister of culture and education, but only for about six months in 1995.

In this paper, we will look into the processes aiming at change that we have observed by means of studying documents and interviewing people involved in educational change over the years. The focus is on the interplay between politicians and policy communities. The political situation of these years is described in terms of stability/instability, and how this has influenced the possibilities of formulating and getting policy decisions through parliament. To this image is added a description of policy communities working in the area of education. The main conclusion is what Kreitzberg described as the problem of passing “from criticism to positive innovations,” which may to a large extent be described as an uneasy marriage of unstable politics and struggles between different policy communities.

## Change of Government

Fettelschoss (2005) has analyzed the continuity and change of ministers and ministries in 11 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, amongst them Estonia. She starts with the first cabinet in office after state independence, a free election, and the adoption of a new constitution, and ends her account in 2004. Her first conclusion is that, on average, the governments lasted 1.8 years, which is the same as in Western Europe between 1950 and 1983. There is some variation between countries, Estonia with 1.31 years falling a bit below the average. In addition, she analyzed the duration of ministers in office. This was calculated as the total number of days one person held a ministerial position. Also, here she found some variation between countries, with Estonia ranking lower than average, with only 18.8 percent of ministers being in office for longer than three years.

A cabinet’s duration is generally connected to its efficiency and legitimacy. Thus, stable governments not only generate an atmosphere of trust and reliability, but they also have a better chance to be effective policymakers or “they are at least more likely to develop successful policies” (Fettelschoss 2005: 3). In view of this, the instability of governments in Estonia may be a problem, in general, for creating trust among citizens and also when making new education policies. Fettelschoss also

points to the importance of portfolio stability. Firstly, continuity creates “the amount of experience necessary to govern effectively” and give ministers “the opportunity to gain specialised know-how in a certain field, which allows them to act more efficiently.” In her study, portfolio stability is studied by “counting the number of ministers who occupied a special ministerial post” (3–4). In the countries that she studies the mean duration of ministers in the observed portfolios is 2.11 years. Estonia scores lower than average, with 1.76 years of duration of ministers in the same ministry. The duration of ministers of education is a bit lower than this average of all ministers of Estonian governments during the studied period.

In interviews with principals and teachers in our project, great frustration has been expressed about the fact that education ministers stay in office only for short periods of time. The general opinion is that each new minister makes glossy declarations of intent when taking office, but this usually does not materialize in any actual policy decisions. Instead, most intentions are stopped in the policymaking process, without ever reaching the approval of parliament.

## Ministers of Education 1989–2010

Data on Estonia’s ministers of education and the party they represented, as well as the period of duration in office, is given in Table 1.

As we can see, the time in office varies dramatically, from two years and 10 months for the first minister of this period to less than one year of later periods, the average, up to the present minister, being 1.5 years. Three ministers take office twice, Rein Loik in 1989 and a second time in 1996, and Mailis Rand, who first takes office in 2002 and at the end of the same year survives a reorganization of government, and returns to the ministry as Mailis Reps in 2005. Tõnis Lukas, the current minister, is also in office in 1999. This high turnover of ministers is in accordance with the data presented by Fettelschoss (2005) on Estonia, though the periods studied do not completely coincide. As stated above, according to her study the average duration of ministers in Estonian governments is 1.98, and those of education somewhat lower.

Tõnis Lukas, the present minister, seems to be the exception to this instability. He has now been in office for more than three years, and his sojourn at the Ministry of Education in 1999 also lasted for almost three years. As we shall see, this latest period of stability in the ministry has given concrete results. Thus, the government decided on new curricula for primary and secondary education on January 28, 2010. A new

development plan for vocational education has also been announced. The challenge of the years to come is to implement these new schemes of education at the school level. Full implementation is expected to be reached in 2013.

**Table 1.**  
*Duration of Ministers of Education in Estonian Governments*

<b>Name and title</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Period</b>
Tõnis Lukas Haridus- ja teadusminister	Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica	05.04.2007–
Mailis (Rand) Reps Haridus- ja teadusminister	Keskerakond	03.04.2005–05.04.2007
Toivo Maimets Haridus- ja teadusminister	Res Publica	10.04.2003–03.04.2005
Mailis Rand Haridus- ja teadusminister	Keskerakond	01.01.2003–08.04.2003
Mailis Rand Haridusminister		28.01.2002–31.12.2002
Tõnis Lukas Haridusminister	Pro Patria	25.03.1999–28.01.2002
Mait Klaassen Haridusminister	Koonderakond	17.03.1997–25.03.1999
Rein Loik Haridusminister	Koonderakond	30.11.1996–17.03.1997
Jaak Aaviksoo Haridusminister	Reformierakond	06.11.1995–30.11.1996
Peter Kreitzberg Kultuuri- ja haridusminister	Keskerakond	17.04.1995–06.11.1995
Peter Olesk Kultuuri- ja haridusminister	Isamaalit	21.06.1994–17.04.1995
Paul-Erik Rummo Kultuuri- ja haridusminister	Reformierakond	22.10.1992–21.06.1994
Rein Loik Haridusminister	(none)	28.12.1989–21.10.1992

*Notes:* Haridus = education, kultuuri = culture, teadus = science.

*Source:* Data collected in the project.

## Changes of Bureaucracy

The 1990s were characterized not only by a paramount redesign of legislation, but by many parties competing for power, instability of governments (Mikkel 2000), and consequently quite a large turnover of ministers in office. If we now turn to the bureaucracy, what do we know about change? A first conclusion is that changes are applied particularly to the higher levels of the bureaucratic structures, while less so to lower levels, as we were able to observe in our visits to official agencies and schools.

Available data on Estonia show that the turnover of government officials and civil servants in central agencies was the largest during the 1990s. According to a poll conducted in 1997, just over 67 percent of the employees in Estonian ministries had worked for the ministry for less than three years (Kadakmaa and Sootla 2000: 31). These authors consider that the frequent change of personnel is an obstacle to the development of a unifying organizational culture, which is in turn detrimental to government efficiency. But a renewal of the cadre of personnel is frequently considered to be a precondition for radical organizational reforms. In the case of the highest levels of government, such changes seem to be inevitable, particularly in connection with a fundamental reconstitution, as in the case of the new democratic Republic of Estonia. Frequent changes of ministers may also result in changes at the top levels of bureaucracy. In interviews we have noted comments that every new minister brings his own people to the ministry, which is in detriment of building educational know-how at this level.

After such changes of personnel at the top, it is to be expected that attention will increasingly turn to lower levels of bureaucracy, which is in the last place given the responsibility to implement any new legislation, as well as any other decisions made by the governors. According to Kadakmaa and Sootla (2000: 29), the capacity of government is revealed in two ways: “by its ability to make rational and legitimate decisions, and by its ability to implement them.”

They also note that the analyses made by the government, when introducing a new policy, address the cost of “immediate implementation,” for example, the drafting of regulations, but do not address the costs associated with implementing the policy program at the lower levels of bureaucracy. According to them, more attention is paid to policymaking at higher levels than to ultimate policy delivery.

This lack of interest in the lower levels of education is often commented on in our interviews. However, in view of the great instability at the ministerial level, and the frequent renewal of bureaucrats at the highest level, the issue of monitor-

ing policy implementation is not the most relevant one. Instead, we may ask how administrators, principals, and teachers manage to organize education for children and young people, without receiving proper guidance from the higher levels. We know that schools function and that the quality of education in Estonia scores high in international comparisons.<sup>2</sup> Of course, there are problems, such as school dropouts, integration of the parallel systems of education in two different languages, and often scarce resources. But, in spite of this, what we observe when visiting schools is a lot of activities aiming at not only maintaining high quality in education, but also introducing democratic forms of decision-making.

As one of our interviewees describes it: “Just now we have many clever people at the school level, and thanks to them life is carried on in Estonia” (May 4, 2005). But in the same interview great frustration is expressed with the lack of guidance from the higher levels. “The biggest risk, what awaits us, is that people will lose their belief in the future.”

## Policy Communities

In contrast to the instability at the political level of education and at higher levels of state bureaucracy, we have observed more stability in the policy communities that share an interest in educational issues. Of the persons we have interviewed, to find out more about work on educational reform during the 1990s, many were active in education already during the previous decade. From our interviews, we may discern four different policy communities, connected by sometimes sharing interest in an issue, sometimes competing for an important assignment in this issue area.

When studying policy formulation, we may firstly identify *policy subsystems*. In our case, the field of education is such a policy subsystem. Members of such a system have “a working or professional knowledge” in the issues of education, and they “actively participate in advancing solutions to policy problems and discussing the feasibility of the various options” (Fischer 2003: 32; see also Howlett and Ramish 1995: 125). Members are found at all levels of the educational system. The only condition

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2 In 2006, in the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, Estonian pupils achieved 5th place in natural sciences, 13th place in reading skills, and 14th place in mathematics among the 57 participating countries. Likewise, in the 2003 TIMSS test (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), Estonian pupils achieved 5th place in Science and 8th place in Mathematics among 49 countries. (*About the Ministry...*, <http://www.hm.ee>, accessed April 25, 2010).

for membership is that one in some way participates in formulating problems and solutions and discussing this with others. This then includes politicians at all levels, bureaucrats in state and local administration, and finally principals and teachers at school. The *policy community* instead refers to “a more inclusive category of all those involved in policy formulation” (Howlett and Ramish 1995: 128). In our case, we reserve this concept for those who have actually worked in policy formulation and shared a common policy focus. Usually, they have an official assignment to do so, but they may also have taken their own initiatives to act. In addition, they have institutionalized this work within an organizational frame. The *policy network* is used for “the linking process within a policy community or between two or more communities” (Howlett and Ramish 1995: 128). We are thus open for collaboration between policy communities but also aware of tendencies to compete for assignments from politicians to formulate policies.

The first of the policy communities of Estonian education during this period was the Institute of Educational Research (PTUI). It existed already during Soviet rule and worked in close connection to the Teachers’ Training Institute (VÕT). In 1991 it was reorganized into a state agency of education, the Estonian Education Center. In 1996 the center was closed and according to an interview with a person who worked there, “its competence was lost, unfortunately,” and people moved on to new jobs at different places (April 11, 2005). Another policy community was formed under the umbrella of the Educational Forum. It started functioning in 1995 and is still active. They have a more loosely knit structure, but some of the people working there were/are also more permanently connected to the Tallinn Pedagogical University. Another policy community worked during the first ministry of Mailis Rand (2002–2003). It was more of a policy network, centered round the Jaan Tõnisson Institute. Representatives of different organizations were invited to participate in reform work, and it had a close collaboration with the parliamentary commission of education. A new, more permanent policy community was established in 2000, when minister Tõnis Lukas gave the Pedagogical Department of Tartu University the assignment to develop a new curriculum. This move represented a break with the policy communities that had previously been active within the policy subsystem of education.

One veteran educator commented on this decision with some disdain (April 11, 2005):

The problem is that the Tartu University has used about 10 million Estonian crowns, but they haven’t managed to do the job. I’m really sorry for those young people there, because I’m quite sure that they have tried to do their best.

In the 1990s, the educator worked in the Teachers' Training Institute (VÕT), under professor Inge Unt, and at the time of the interview she was an educational counselor in parliament. She predicted that this decision would delay the curriculum work for many years, and today we know that she was right.

Tartu University has never, ever had this particular research tradition and I think it requires long years of work and reading to develop a kind of professional approach.

## Educational Change

The task of changing education in Estonia started soon after *glasnost* in 1985. With Elsa Gretshkina as minister of education, a teachers' congress was organized in 1987. The congress aimed to make a major change to education in Estonia. The ideas for a democratic education that were later elaborated during the 1990s were present already in this congress. The aim was a renewal of the content of education, the introduction of democratic values in education, and an organization of education that would allow for democratic participation. Everyone interviewed testifies about the enthusiasm and willingness to participate in this reform work that characterized these first years of democratic change. After the congress, the work for the development of a new curriculum started and it was enacted in 1989.

This curriculum was written in an atmosphere of conspiracy. The persons involved did not know how far the Soviet educational authorities would allow them to go; neither did the minister of those years, Elsa Gretshkina. As one of the interviewees said: "We had to hurry, because we did not know what would happen in the future. We did not know that the Soviet Union would collapse" (May 5, 2005). After independence it was considered necessary to go on with the reform work in order to work more thoroughly through different sections of the curriculum. There were various groups working with this, and there was also some controversy as to which group would have the assignment. The Estonian Education Center planned for a work process that would take several years. However, some of the experts of the Teachers' Training Institute (VÕT) thought that this was not good enough. Instead, they took over the task, worked swiftly, and presented a first draft of a curriculum for compulsory education to the minister. In those early days, there was no established procedure of presenting this kind of proposals to Parliament. It was instead decided by the government and issued as recommendations by the minister of education to the schools. In this way,

political controversy around school development was avoided. Just before the center was closed in 1996, it also presented a draft of a curriculum for secondary education. A curriculum was enacted in 1997.

The Educational Forum took over the task of formulating educational reform. It developed a major reform program, which concluded in a comprehensive document called “Learning Estonia/Õpi Eesti” (interview with one of the project leaders, May 5, 2005). It was developed in two steps, the first of which was a description of four possible scenarios for education in Estonia. The intention was to put in a plea for an egalitarian, inclusive, and innovative education, presented as the most desired scenario. In contrast to this were three scenarios, each of which represented a movement in Estonian society. One was “traditional Estonia,” a past-oriented scenario, described as inclusive but not innovative. It was written in response to “the very many politicians and members of our society who dreamt of a return to prewar Estonia.” Another was “corporative Estonia,” expressing a deep disappointment with what “is happening in Estonia,” namely, that each new minister discards work done by previous ministers and experts, and starts the reform processes anew, with the intention to make a distinct and personal mark on education. It is “exclusive, because somebody must be excluded every time,” and thereby obstructs innovation. Finally, the third negative scenario was “educational market Estonia,” where education is a commodity. It was written in response to the many voices that propagated the “marketing of education,” in the very first years of independence. Such a development is said to be very innovative for some schools, but downgrading for others.

Each scenario was intended to illustrate one specific ideology on education. The authors hoped for a statement by Parliament in favor of the first scenario. In a second step, this document was developed into a more thorough description of different educational institutions and the changes needed. It was presented to the ministry in several versions, the first in 1998. In 2001, the ministry approved a revised and extended version for presentation in Parliament, where it was finally rejected in 2002. During this time, three different ministers were heading the Ministry of Education.

The Forum had at least some finance from the ministry during all these years. It is organized as an NGO and also receives economic support from other sources. For example, they were partly financed by the UNESCO when involved in the work organized by the Jaan Tõnisson Institute. In addition to working with educational reform, they organize annual conferences for teachers and others interested in education. They also organize summer camps for teachers. Between conferences there are more permanent working groups. These are assigned specific tasks, one of them

being to organize the next conference. This mix of activities gives plenty of opportunities to discuss reform programs in education within the wider circle of the policy subsystem of education.

A third policy community consisted of a group formed by the Jaan Tõnisson Institute. They compiled a document called “Education for All.” This was the Estonian part of a major UNESCO project on education with this same title. It was not intended to be a new curriculum but rather an effort to introduce the issue of human rights, in general, and children’s rights, in particular, into the subject of civic education. This institute has continued to offer teacher in-training on civic education and teacher exchanges with the United States.

Finally, the group from Tartu University started work in 2000. According to their own report (Tartu University 2009), they have been involved in four projects for the development of state curricula (RÕK 2000, 2002, 2006, and 2008). As mentioned before, this group was appointed by the minister, Tõnis Lukas. However, a year later he left the ministry and was replaced by Mailis Rand. According to our interviews with a former state secretary of education (May 3, 2005), Rand did not use this group of experts, though they continued working without any “initiative from the minister.” After Toivo Maimets took office in 2003, he commissioned them anew, and their task to develop new curricula continued under the second period of Tõnis Lukas.

In 2005, just before Mailis Rand took office, this group presented a proposal for a new curriculum to the minister. Revisions of this proposal were expected to be necessary, according to interviews made in May of 2005. As we know, after two years there was then a change of minister again, with Tõnis Lukas entering office. Finally, on January 28, 2010, the government approved a National Curriculum for Basic Schools and a National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools. These were based on proposals from the Tartu group (Vabariigi Valitsus Määrus 2010, available online at: <http://www.hm.ee>, and Tartu Ülikooli 2009).

This is a description of mainly aborted efforts at educational reform. The overall picture seems to be that political instability has ruined the efforts of successive but relatively stable policy communities to push reform programs all the way through the highest level of the political system. This confirms the conclusions by Fetzelschoss (2005) about the importance of portfolio stability to govern effectively. Undoubtedly, the appointment of the Tartu group brought some stability to the system, in spite of all the controversy surrounding their entering the educational scene. This stability was strengthened by the comparatively longer terms in office of minister Lukas. However, it seems that the prediction by Kreitzberg in 1993 about the difficulties of passing “from criticism to positive innovation” proved true.

# The Implementation Gap

Above we may envisage two different approaches to change. While the reform processes, starting with the time of Elsa Gretshkina as minister of education, were designed as bottom-up approaches, the reform initiatives of the last decade are best characterized as top-down (Hill 1997: 138–140). The tradition from the teachers' congress of 1987 was to gather ideas and proposals from teachers and principals, to organize working groups in order to formulate them in writing, and to get them approved by the corresponding authorities. This tradition was continued through successive institutions, the Institute of Education Research, the Estonian Education Center, and finally the Educational Forum. The Jaan Tõnisson Institute and the Tartu University Curriculum Centre have adopted a top-down approach, working out reform documents in quite a closed circle, and thereafter presenting them for a wider audience of teachers and principals.

The challenge of implementation is very different in these two approaches. While implementation with a bottom-up approach is halfway through, when a decision is reached, it has not even started with a top-down approach. In the first case, teachers and other street-level bureaucrats are well acquainted with reform content. They might already have started introducing the changes outlined in the reform, while waiting for a formal decision. In the second case, the decision-makers have to make every effort to inform about the new guidelines and recommendations, to convince those in charge of delivering the reform to citizens that the changes specified are necessary, and finally monitoring compliance at the street level.

The Tartu group has tried to overcome these problems by organizing seminars to inform about their proposals for new curricula during 2008. As has already been mentioned, the Jaan Tõnisson Institute has organized teacher in-training and also published course books to insemminate their ideas at school.

However, in view of the past turbulence related to the issue of curriculum development, the Tartu group may also face a legitimacy problem. Thus, according to our interviews, the implementation of any reform proposed by the Tartu group may be compromised by their lack of legitimacy (interview with a former secretary of state, April 12, 2005):

What's disturbing with the curriculum issue is the conflict between Tartu University and Tallinn University. The problem with the people who are just now working with curriculum is that they do not have a position in society that other people who are connected with education have, so these people do not trust them as good specialists. There are problems with their legitimacy in the eyes of others.

At this stage, the task of implementing the new curricula lies with the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it is up to the minister to find ways of overcoming past distrust of politicians and higher bureaucracy by people engaged in school matters.

## Vocational Education

According to Fettelschoss (2005), stable governments generate an atmosphere of trust and reliability. The fact that we register a lot of disappointment with political leadership in our interviews at the grass-roots level undoubtedly stems from the instability described above. So, for example, the vice-head of a vocational school in Tallinn comments on the consequences of this instability (February 16, 2004):

Every time the government changes and there's a new minister, there are changes. Some of the ministers have had a department for vocational education, others haven't. So after every change, the people are changed, and to start with they know very little about the vocational educational system. When they start to know something, there will again be a new minister and changes.

The other point is that every new government or education minister starts to ask for statistics about the vocational education system. That means in some way they have lost the previous statistics and they have to start anew. This means that these schools are all the time producing statistics for the minister.

It might well be that the vocational schools feel especially abandoned by this lack of guidance from the ministry. A director of another vocational school says that the fact that “the Ministry of Education tries to interfere as little as possible” in his school is because they want “to put the responsibility on the director” (February 17, 2004). During the second ministry of Rein Loik, the decisions about vocational schools were decentralized to the municipalities. According to our interviews, this decision is still questioned, as it means that there is no national curriculum on vocational education and the differences between schools are considerable.

Realistically, it's too large of a problem for the ministry, and they can't manage all of the vocational education system. This is not so only for this school, but also for all the other vocational schools. That is, they put all the responsibility on the director.

At the same time this void of power leaves the directors of vocational schools with quite a lot of discretion as to how to run their schools. It is especially striking how

they go out on the market to help finance school activities. One school gets 60 percent of its budget from market activities, in this case, offering in-service training for adults working, for example, as cooks, and aiming for a master's exam. Another school has signed an EEK five million contract with a textile factory, where their students work as part of their education. To recur to the market is said to be absolutely necessary to keep the schools going. According to the above director, while the headcount money, that is, the money received from the ministry, increased by 18 percent, during the same time span, the teachers' salaries doubled. The director is responsible for the budget and has to find ways to finance the activities. However, "generating your own income means moving along a very difficult line, because you have to look all the time what the state law permits you to do."

At the time of the interviews during the spring term of 2004, there was no national curriculum for vocational schools. The comments made by the directors with reference to the process of writing a curriculum illustrate grass-roots activities amongst directors and teachers. One director explained as follows (interview, February 16, 2004):

In 2001, the ministry started to prepare a state curriculum for all the vocational education system. It was done so that there were different working groups working with different specialties. I was leading the working group of the curriculum for the vocational schools. And this was quite okay, and we finished it in 2001.

Then the ministry moved to Tartu and many of the people who were working with vocational education left because they did not want to start working in Tartu. The curriculum was really finished; it was only to be approved by the minister. This was not done, because the ministry had to be reorganized with new people.

This was really a good curriculum for the vocational schools, and the schools started to work according to this, though it was not approved, and they are still working with it, but it's not. There's no official curriculum.

This was during the years that Tõnis Lukas was the minister of education for the first time. The move of the ministry from Tallinn to Tartu might well have been motivated by the fact that Tõnis Lukas was a former mayor of Tartu, and had also been working at the Tartu University. However, in this case we also see that when guidance from the state level is missing, the grass-roots levels fill in the void. This tradition of the Estonian educational system stems from the Soviet era. Thus, teachers and directors are used to maneuvering around state decisions that they do not support or to deciding on their own when state authorities do not perform as expected.

At the same time, during these years, there were activities at the national level, in relation to vocational education. An Action Plan for Developing Estonian VET System in 2001–2004 had been adopted by the government in 2001. It was signed by the Ministries of Education, of Social Affairs, and of Economic Affairs, as well as the Employers' Confederation, Trade Unions, and Chamber of Commerce. This plan was evaluated in the Development Plan for 2005–2008, adopted by the government in 2005. They conclude as follows (Development Plan 2005: 8f.):

Due to constant structural and staff changes, relevant organizations were not able to implement in full the principles included in these agreements, and secure the sustainability of the developments.

Management problems, including within the ministry itself, but also unsuccessful reorganisation of the VET management system and extensive staff changes in 2001, resulted in a considerable fall of administrative capacity in running the field of VET. The management of VET system has been overcentralised and multilevel, while decision-making and responsibility for end results have been divided between too many management units of the Ministry of Education and Research, there has been a lack of clear-cut and determined co-ordination.

This seems to be the background to the comments made by the directors of vocational schools. Thus, the activities going on at national level were not coordinated and presented in a form that could be communicated to the schools. In this report it is also noted that the ambition to develop curricula has not been fulfilled, as “no new national curricula has been approved” for the 42 disciplines involved (35). However, it is also noted that schools have upgraded local curricula to correspond to professional standards. Here, the ambition to develop national and school curricula is stated again (20). It is also noted that vocational education has been underfinanced, and the ambition to use the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund to finance further development of vocational education is stated (13).

## Primary and Secondary Education

If we now turn to primary and secondary education, we notice that during these years some changes were, in fact, decided by ministers and some also reached the local levels. However, other major changes have stayed at the level of policy planning, without reaching a formal decision. A major defeat occurred in 2002, when Parliament voted down the education program, “Learning Estonia/Õpi Eesti,” which aimed at introduc-

ing change with reference to educational ideology, and consequently achieving clear political statements as to the goals of education.

According to our data, the pace of change was swifter during the first years than later on. During the ministry of Rein Loik (1989–1992) a new Law on Education was prepared and was passed by Parliament in 1993, when Paul-Erik Rummo was minister of education. At the time of our interviews, this education law was still in force (Director of Tallinn Educational Department, April 12, 2005). As we have seen, some work for the development of a new curriculum was also done, during these first years. The changes are described as referring to *õppekava*, programs for different subjects, with special attention given to philosophy, history, and social sciences.

With Loik as minister, discussions started between the ministry and teacher unions about teachers' salaries. During the ministry of Peter Olesk (1994–1995) teacher salaries were increased, again under the ministry of Peter Kreitzberg (1995), and a third time during the time of Toivo Maimets (2003–2005). Disappointment with salaries is very often expressed in our interviews with teachers. A teachers' strike was organized in 2004, higher salaries being the most important demand.

At the ministerial level, they are well aware of this problem. So, for example, minister Tõnis Lukas (1999–2002), when stating the five main problems of education in Estonia, at a teachers' conference, mentioned that encouraging young teachers to keep teaching, instead of looking for better paid jobs, was one of them. However, financial restrictions make it impossible to increase the salaries of people employed in the public sector in order to match those of the private sector.

During the ministry of Toivo Maimets, a system of self-evaluation for education was introduced. It involved both teachers' evaluation of the progress of learning, together with pupils and parents, and school principals and directors' evaluation of education activities, under the supervision of municipal authorities.

However, in our interviews we heard many complaints about the absence of political guidance in education. While minor changes have been decided and implemented, it has been more difficult to reach enough political support for major reforms of education, such as educational ideology, principles of organization, and teaching content. Guidelines for a democratic schooling are also said to be lacking.

It is very important that institutions at the government level are involved in the process of democratization of education. It cannot leave this only to schools and to countryside administrations. The democratization of education has to be fixed in documents of the ministry. It is most important to talk about these ideas in a very clear and profound way, so that all people can understand them (May 4, 2005).

## A Final Conclusion

Teachers, school principals, and directors of vocational schools criticize what they perceive as inertia at the level of government. The high turnover of ministers of education seems to be a reasonable explanation to this disappointment amongst those who are expected to deliver education to the citizens. Another recurring explanation is that the issue of education was set aside, when other sectors of society were perceived to be more important. “The attention of our government was directed to the profound structural changes, such as liberalization of prices, privatization of enterprises, etc., and education was marginalized” (May 5, 2005). Unfortunately, at the local level, a lack of interest in the participation in reform work is also noted. Maybe the days when reform work was considered to be “a mission” involving every citizen have passed (May 4, 2005). Today, this work is expected from those democratically elected to govern the country. The immediate future will tell if those elected will be up to this challenge or if the “greatest risk” will occur, as envisioned in one of our interviews: the risk that people will lose their belief in the future.

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# A Review of Nepalese Public Education Policy: A History of Implementation and Achievements

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## Abstract

This paper reviews the historical development of public education policy in Nepal, with particular emphasis on implementation and achievements. The study revealed that there was no education policy in place until 1955 though the initiation of a public education system in Nepal dates back toward the end of the Rana Regime (1846–1950). This is evidenced by the existence of only one college, one or two high schools, and a limited number of primary schools in the kingdom until 1951; access made available only for the Rana and their favored subjects. It was only in 1954 that the First National Educational Planning Commission recommended universal literacy in the country within twenty-five years. Initiated with the establishment of 2,200 primary schools in 1960, the majority of which were outdoors, the total number of schools in Nepal at present reached to over 31,000 with the provision of free basic education (grades 1–8) for all as stated in the latest Three Year Interim Plan (2008–2010). This paper reviews all the education policies of the Nepalese public education system from

the 1950s to 2000s. It describes the successes and failures of all the policy initiatives and their implementation in chronological order. Finally, it tries to trace out the gaps and identify the strategies imperative to adopt in achieving the goal: “quality education for all.”

## Introduction

### A Brief History of Education in Nepal

Education in Nepal until 1951 was practically non-existent, though the history of modern schooling was claimed to have begun about 150 years ago when the first schooling was introduced in 1853 within the Rana palace (Savada 1991). It was begun only after the arrival of the then prime minister Jang Bahadur Rana from his first visit to Britain in 1850. Rana arranged two English teachers from Britain to teach his own brothers and nephews within the palace in 1853, which however, remained confined to only Ranas for decades. Later, Jang Bahadur’s successor opened these classes to all Rana children and formally organized them into Durbar High School, the first formally established school in the entire kingdom, which is still located in the middle of Kathmandu valley (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

*Durbar High School*



The history of tertiary (or higher) education in Nepal dates back to 1918 when Tribhuvan Chandra Intermediate College (now called Trichandra College) was established by the then prime minister Chandra Shamsheer Rana. This was the only college that used to impart the tertiary education in Nepal till 1950. It was only in 1958, when Nepal's first university, Tribhuvan University, was incorporated. Since then the country brought together a multi-university concept in 1983, a private university concept after restoration of democracy in 1991, and an adoption of a cost recovery policy since its Ninth Five Year Plan, 1997–2002 (Baral 2007) that encourages foreign investments in the sector. Perhaps overoptimistically, Nepal predicts having large numbers of foreign universities from now onwards.

Except for the sons of government officials, education was discouraged and even prohibited until the 1950s. The public education system began only after 1951 when a popular movement ended the autocratic Rana family regime and initiated a democratic system. Before the 1950–51 revolution, Nepal had 310 primary and middle schools, eleven high schools, two colleges, one normal school, and one special technical school (Savada 1991). The average literacy rate at that time was 5 percent. Literacy among males was 10 percent and among females was less than 1 percent. But in the past fifty years, there has been a dramatic expansion of educational facilities in the country. As a result, the adult literacy (15+) of the country was reported to be 48 percent: nearly 34 percent for females and nearly 65 percent for males (NLSS 2003/04). By the end of 2008, the total number of schools reported in the country was 31,156: 20,345 primary schools, 4,109 lower secondary schools, and 6,702 (including 1,556 higher secondary grades) secondary levels. These are catering to the education for almost seven million students in total, of which nearly five million students are at the primary level. The total number of teachers reported in these schools is 207,567 (DOE 2009). For post-secondary level education, the country currently has six universities and two autonomous institutions recognized as universities in Nepal that provide education opportunities for just over a quarter million students from all over the country, of which 91 percent are in Tribhuvan University (TU), the largest national university in the country.

## **Structure of the Nepalese Education System**

Education in Nepal is basically structured as school education and higher education. Until 2008, school education had been categorized as primary (grades 1–5) and lower secondary (grades 6–8) education and secondary (grades 9–10) education. A national level School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination is carried out at the end of tenth

grade. The higher secondary level of grades 11 and 12 are an extension of secondary education. The corresponding age for the primary, secondary, and higher secondary level is specified as 6 to 10, 11 to 15, and 16 to 17 years, respectively (Education in Nepal 2003). But the Three Year Interim Plan (2008–2010) has decided to merge grades 1 to 8 as basic education free for all and grades 9 to 12 as secondary education under its School Sector Reform Program (MOES 2007).

The system of higher education consists of bachelor's degrees of three to four years depending upon subject and two years for master's degrees. Some universities also offer Post Graduate Diploma and Master of Philosophy courses. A Doctorate of Philosophy is regarded as the highest degree offered. Presently, the intermediate level, equivalent to the higher secondary level, is also being offered under the university education system. However, the government is phasing out the intermediate level from the university system and is gradually merging it into the higher secondary system. Similarly, based on the ownership and management, there are three basic types of education system in Nepal: public (government), private (institutional), and community owned or managed.

## **Nepal: General Introduction**

Nepal is a landlocked country situated in South Asia in between two great neighbors: China and India. It is bounded by India to the east, west, and south and by the People's Republic of China to the north, both of which dwarf it in scale and scope. As a result, Nepal is often overlooked when talking about Asia. The country covers a total area of 147,181 square kilometers, which is elongated along the Himalayas stretching 885 kilometers in an east-west direction and with a mean north-south width of 193 kilometers. It is divided into three contrasting geographical zones:

- a) Terai: flat and fertile strip of land in the south of Nepal, bordering with India but sharing borderless geographical and socio-cultural milieus with the adjoining parts of India.
- b) Himalayas: the snow-capped high mountains on the north bordering China and sharing the historical roots of the socio-cultural milieu.
- c) Foothills: between the Terai and the Himalayas, with lush green valleys and hills supported socio-economically by the other two zones.

Administratively, Nepal is divided into five development regions, 14 zones, and 75 districts (Figure 2). The development regions are made up of zones and districts.

There are three zones and 16 districts in the Eastern Development Region, three zones and 19 districts in the Central Development Region, three zones and 16 districts in the Western Development Region, three zones and 15 districts in the Mid-Western Development Region, and two zones and nine districts in the Far-Western Development Region. Each district is divided into a number of village development committees and municipalities. Currently, there are 3,915 village development committees and 58 municipalities including one metropolitan city: Kathmandu and four sub-metropolitan cities: Biratnagar, Birganj, Lalitpur, and Pokhara.

**Figure 2.**  
*Administrative-Territorial Map of Nepal*



Nepal is a country of diversity and ambiguity with amazing landscapes and a peaceful populace. It is known for its mountain ranges and diversified historical cultures. Thousands of temples and shrines as well as the influential architectural genius of the past bring alive the struggle for survival amid modern changes. The Great Himalaya Range, bordering along the northern line and along the eastern half of the country, towers to the height of 8,848 meters at the peak of Mt. Everest. Along the western half of the country, Nepali land extends beyond the north of Himalayas as well.

The total population of Nepal according to the census in 2001 is reported to be about 23 million, and is estimated to reach to about 26 million in the most recent estimates. The population of Nepal consists of several ethnic/language groups. The census of 2001 has listed over 102 social groups and 92 spoken languages.

Nepal remained virtually isolated from the outside world as well as among various internal groups until 1950. The country's rugged topography and segregating social system were the most hindering factors. Even today, Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. The World Bank (2006) ranked Nepal as the poorest among all the countries in South Asia and twelfth poorest among all countries in the world. Economically, Nepal is predominantly an agricultural country with about 80 percent of the population directly depending upon agriculture (Census 2001). The average per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country is USD 260 and about 31 percent of the population still lives in extreme poverty (World Bank 2006). However, regardless of these hardships and realities, Nepal has stood the test of time in history and still stands tall as a nation of peace, love, and harmony.

## Materials and Methodology

There was no record of a formal education system for the general public before 1853, though education for the ruling family or the Ranas was started then. Education policy and practices for the general public were introduced only after the 1950s—after a century. The first formal education policy was formulated and implemented in 1956 as a part of the First Five-year Plan (1956–1960). Since then, the country has promulgated nine five-year plans and two interim three-year plans: one from 1962 to 1965 and the other from 2008 to 2010. One way or another, education policies in Nepal from their beginnings to the present day are theoretically interconnected. In each plan, abundant stress has been laid on education and it has always been considered as the fundamental factor for the development process. Thus policies from early history to the present have been written accordingly.

This paper reviews the education policies of pre-1951 or the Rana Era (1846–1950) and the post-1951 or Modern Era (1951–2000s). The educational policies in the Modern Era have been further divided into three parts: (a) a basic universal education system (1951–1970), (b) a new education system (1971–1990), and (c) education in the transition to a democratic system (1990 to present).

For this, various published and unpublished literatures, including government's policy documents, articles, technical and review papers, and documents on informal discussion, were referred to and reviewed. Most of these documents were obtained from authorized websites of the government institutions such as the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Education, universities, research institutions, and various other national and international organizations working in the education sector.

# The Study: Chronological Review of the Education Policies

## **Educational Policy in the Pre-1951 or the Rana Era (1846–1950)**

Prior to 1951, Nepal had some religion-based traditional education systems. The purpose of education at that time was to teach religious philosophy to high-caste people. However, it has since been claimed that the first formal education in Nepal began in 1853 when Jung Bahadur Rana, the founder of the Rana regime, hired two English tutors to hold classes for his brothers and nephews in the Rana palace ( Savada 1991). But the Ranas kept education the exclusive prerogative of the ruling elite; the rest of the population remained largely illiterate. The Ranas were opposed to any form of public schooling for the people; they emphasized formal instruction for their own children to prepare them for a place in the government. The Rana family autocracy felt that public education would be a political threat to the survival of the Rana legacy. Therefore, the privileged access of members of the higher castes and wealthier economic strata to education remained as a distinguishing feature of society for almost a century.

Even then it was impossible for the Rana rulers to totally block the progress of public education, at least at the lower levels. Each successive Rana prime minister opened several primary schools in various parts of the kingdom that were clustered mainly in the urban centers. The children who went to these schools were the children of upper caste and better-off families in both urban and rural areas.

In 1901, a brief shift in government education policy came into effect when the then prime minister Dev Shamsher Rana, the successor to Janga Bahadur Rana, took office and called for sweeping education reforms. He proposed a system of universal public primary education, using Nepali as the language of instruction, and opening Durbar High School to children who were not members of the Rana clan. But Dev Shamsher's policies were so unpopular that he was deposed within a few months. However, his call for reforms did not disappear entirely. As a result, a few Nepali-language primary schools in Kathmandu Valley as well as in the Foothill and Terai Regions were opened gradually and at least a few middle- and low-caste children were admitted to Durbar High School.

Later, before the Second World War (1939–45), several new English middle and high schools were founded in Patan, Biratnagar, and other places throughout the country, and a girls' high school was opened in Kathmandu. In the villages, public respect for education was increasing, largely as a result of the influence of returning Gurkha soldiers, many of whom had learned to read and write while serving in the

British army. Some retired soldiers began giving rudimentary education to children in their villages. Some members of high-caste elite families sent their children to Patna University, Banaras Hindu University, or other universities in India for higher academic or technical training. It was, in fact, some of these students, having realized how oppressive the policies of Rana rule were, who initiated anti-Rana movements, filled revolutionary cadres, and finally began the revolution that ultimately overthrew the Ranas' rule in 1951.

The presence of only 310 primary and middle schools, eleven high schools, two colleges, one normal school, and one special technical school established throughout the entire kingdom in the regime is the indicator of Nepalese education policy at that time. In the early 1950s, the average literacy rate was 5 percent: literacy among males was 10 percent and among females was less than 1 percent (Savada 1991). The schools were given very small grants from the state and were managed by the local community.

## **Educational Policies in the Post-1951 or Modern Era (1951–2000s)**

### ***Basic Universal Education System (1951–1970)***

With the dawn of democracy in 1951, Nepal entered into a new era of democracy and established a cabinet government system. After this historic revolution, Nepal made significant efforts to establish an education system. This political revolution, in fact, served as the landmark of educational development in Nepal, both at the school level and in the higher education sector. This led to the rapid expansion of education with the wider implication of social change. Public schools were opened in many parts of the country and in the meantime, private schools were introduced. Therefore, in order to implement and refine the education system, Nepal founded the National Education Planning Commission in 1954, the All Round National Education Committee in 1961, and the National Education Advisory Board in 1968 (Savada 1991). These three bodies were responsible for reviewing the situation of education in the country. With the recommendations of these three bodies, His Majesty's Government drew up three plans for the development of education in Nepal. The first plan covers the periods July 1956 to 1961 (the First Five Year Plan); the second, July 1962 to 1965; and the third, July 1965 to July 1970 (UNESCO 1991).

Before 1954, Nepal had at least six types of primary schools: the English System; the Basic Education System; the Sanskrit System; the Gompa (Buddhist Monastic) System; the Madrasa (Muslim School) System; and the Bhasa Pathashalas (Vernacu-

lar Schools) (UNESCO 1991). Later in 1954, the Nepal National Education Planning Commission that comprised 46 elected members of the government (Wood 1959) suggested a model that prescribed a uniform curriculum for all schools seeking government recognition and financial support through grants in aid. It also proposed the introduction of initial free primary education leading to compulsory primary education in the country.

### *The First Three Education Plans: A Brief Review*

The first Five Year Plan (1956–1961) emphasized the need for universal education in Nepal. It considered education as an integral component for democratic government and a democratic way of life as well as for technological and economical advancement in the country. The plan took serious consideration of the steady growth of education in order to gain and hold a place for Nepal in the world as it had become a part of the world after a century of isolation during the Rana regime. Additionally, there was a firm belief that education was the first step in the development of the country.

A few of the serious problems emphasized in the First Five Year Plan included the shortage of trained teaching personnel, shortage of schools, and lack of a university for training the country's own personnel; shortage of capital problems of reorganization within a new government; an extremely inadequate transportation and communication system; an obsolete tax and land program; and a severe lack of health facilities. The people's desires that education must be universal, it must be national, it must serve individual needs, and it must serve the people were all addressed seriously in the plan.

According to Wood (1959), the plan set four major goals: (a) five years of universal primary education within 25 years; (b) multipurpose secondary education for about 20 percent of the nation's youth, and at least one high school in every one of the then 32 political districts within ten years; (c) a national residential university within five years, and some form of higher education for about 5 percent of the youth within ten years; and (d) adult education (including literacy) for all within 15 years.

The plan also emphasized that the financing in schools be based on an estimated per pupil cost per year and assured that well-trained teachers at all levels be considered a necessity so that children can receive a proper start in education.

The plan further highlighted the requirement of an additional number of teachers: 1,800 primary teachers, 504 middle school teachers, and 100 high school teachers for the plan period, and for 630 primary, 126 middle, and 10 high schools to be scattered across the nation. The National Teachers Training Center was already in place and the proposal to establish the School of Education and the Sub-Teacher Training

Centre was heading towards making significant progress in a teacher training program with an approximate target of training 600 teachers per year. It was also hoped to train the required personnel for the overall program.

The government failed to formulate the new educational plan for some time after the completion of the first one. However, community participation in education continued at the local level. And, at the center, a new educational system and education plan was prepared to suit the changed political context.

As a result, the Second Three Year Plan (1962–1965) was formulated after a gap of one year. The Commission wisely tried to probe into weaknesses inherent in the First Five Year Plan and tried its best to base the new plan on realism. This Three Year Plan had given the highest priority to the basic requirements necessary for implementation of plans such as administrative reforms, the collection of economic data, a survey of natural and human resources, and the training of personnel. The next most important stress was given to the development of the means of communication, power, and irrigation while education, health, and other social services were given a low priority due to the limited availability of resources while developing the capacity of the administration that would be responsible for organizing the reform.

Though education was given a low priority, the importance of the training of personnel was not minimized but rather enhanced. The plan thus emphasized the development of vocational and technical education at the secondary level. It even targeted the establishment of 1,200 primary schools, 50 secondary schools, 10 multi-purpose schools, and 4,050 adult education centers during the plan period.

Similarly, the Third Five Year Plan (1965–1970) emphasized the all-round development of education including general education from primary level to higher education. It prioritized the further expansion and development of facilities such as teacher trainings, vocational education, school infrastructures, educational materials, and textbooks. Adult literacy was also equally emphasized in the plan.

### *Achievements*

The First Five Year Plan ended in 1960, two months before its actual date. The first Five Year Plan was not successful. However, people began to understand the meaning and significance of a planning process. They understood that, without planning, progress in economic, social, and cultural life is unthinkable. This was the greatest achievement that the people of Nepal secured upon the completion of the First Five Year Plan (UNESCO 1963).

Yet another achievement was that by the end of the First Five Year Plan period, Nepal held its first elections in 1959 that led to the establishment of Parliament under the 1959 Constitution. The first elected government then opened 1,600 primary schools in a single year in 1959, and an additional 600 primary schools in 1960. Altogether, 2,200 primary schools were established at that time (Save the Children).

However, the speed and vigor with which the elected government worked was slowed down by the political changes that took place in December 1960 when King Mahendra dissolved Parliament, banned political parties, and imposed his direct rule called the “Partyless Panchayat Democracy.” The policy of universal literacy in twenty-five years was abandoned and a lower target was established. As a reaction, disgruntled political groups started using school teachers as activists to keep their political ideologies alive. This was how politics entered into the field of education in Nepal.

Primary education showed remarkable progress and success during the Second Plan period. The plan tried to organize, consolidate, and improve the existing schools. The percentage of the primary school enrollment increased from 15.3 percent to 26 percent and was envisioned to reach 40 percent by 1970. However, girls’ attendance remained significantly lower and that was perceived as a serious problem.

### ***A New Education System in Nepal (1971–1990)***

During nearly two decades, Nepal formulated four major national plans (Fourth to Seventh plans), where educational development was well emphasized. Below is a brief review.

The New Education System in Nepal started with the launching of the New Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971 that was developed as an integral part of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1975–1980). This was designed to address individual as well as societal needs in concert with the goals of national development. The main objective of the plan was to develop mid-level managers and skilled manpower for the economic development of the country. Therefore, vocational education was most emphasized in the plan.

Unlike earlier education plans, the NESP paid more attention to increasing access to primary education and maintaining certain standards as well. The policy of universal primary education was continued. The emphasis on the Nepali language as the official medium of education was given a high priority. To bring uniformity in education, all schools running in partnership with the community were taken over by the government; consequently, the government took responsibility for

managing schools centrally (UNESCO 1991) and promoted the policy of universal primary school enrollment.

This plan organized education into three different levels: primary (grades 1 to 3); lower secondary (grades 4 to 7) and upper secondary (grades 8 to 10); and higher education. The objective of primary education was to achieve proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Lower secondary education aimed to improve the proficiency in the same areas as well as to expose the students to work situations by including pre-vocational training in the curriculum, while upper secondary education aimed at developing the skills in general, Sanskrit, and vocational streams, with the latter being a compulsory component of all streams. And finally higher education aimed to develop adequate skilled manpower for the overall development of the country (HMG/NECO 1972, as cited in CNAS 1998).

In 1975 primary education was made free up to the third grade; it began at age six and lasted for five years. The government thus became responsible for providing school facilities, teachers, and educational materials. New textbooks were produced and primary schooling was made compulsory and free up to third grade. Secondary education began at age eleven and lasted another five years in two cycles: two years at lower secondary and three years at higher secondary levels (Savada 1991 and UNESCO 1991).

The Fifth Plan (1975–1980) attempted to establish a common system of education throughout the country for the first time. The plan tried to involve the communities as much as possible in education and encouraged regional planning and decentralization of decision-making for the entire development period, including for education, the participation of girls in education; the introduction of science and vocational work in the secondary level; an examination system; strong coordination between teacher training, curriculum development, and teaching/learning materials. The expansion of primary schools and the development of other school facilities were some of the other additional aspects on which this plan had focused.

The Sixth Plan (1980–1985) developed new strategies to make primary education accessible to girls and to children in remote areas. It received wide publicity and an emphasis was laid on the improvement of instructional quality. In 1981 primary school was expanded from three to five years. The Ministry of Education supervised the finance, administration, staffing, and inspection of government schools. It also inspected private schools that received government subsidies (Savada 1991).

In the early 1980s, approximately 60 percent of the primary school teachers and 35 percent of secondary school teachers were untrained, despite the institution of

a uniform method of training in 1951. The Institute of Education, part of Tribhuvan University, was responsible for in-service and pre-service teacher training programs. Beginning in 1976, the institute organized a distance learning program—electronic links between distant locations—for prospective teachers. Development in telecommunications was considered as a new mean to provide new educational options.

The Seventh Plan (1985–1990) endorsed the policy of voluntary implementation of compulsory primary education by the town *panchayats* (now known as VDCs). This plan had also favored a policy for the privatization of primary schools where local leaderships and resources were available. Pre-primary education was emphasized to expand to help reduce the high repetition rates in first grade. The Basic Needs Approach to Development (1987) was a new plan formulated to universalize primary education by 2000. The national objectives and national priority projects of the plan are presented in Box 1.

#### Box 1.

##### **National Objective of Education in the Seventh Plan**

- a) To prepare citizens who are loyal to the nation and the crown, dedicated to the system and preservation of national sovereignty, conscious of their duties and rights and have high moral character
- b) To prepare capable manpower by developing technical skills and knowledge necessary for various nation building works
- c) To develop science and technology in order to fulfill the multi-dimensional need for development and national modernization
- d) To support national development by preserving and promoting the glorious culture, art, and literature of the kingdom of Nepal

##### **National Priority Projects**

- a) Expansion of primary education and vocational education
- b) Offer additional technical subjects in higher education
- c) Raise the qualitative standard of education through the improvements of teachers' training programme, educational materials production programme and the examination system.

*Source:* NPC (1985).

It laid emphasis on qualitative improvements in education in order to maintain high educational standards. Besides, several policy measures were adopted for upgrading the instructional system. They included the improvement of curricula and

textbooks, the provision of trained teachers, reforms in the supervision and examination systems, the creation of a competitive atmosphere in the education sector, the establishment of model schools in regional centers, and arrangements for training and educational materials for upgrading the standard of teaching of science, mathematics, and English (NPC 1992).

However, the curriculum was greatly influenced by models from the United States, and it was developed with assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Savada 1991).

### *Achievements*

Primary school enrollment rose dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. Total enrollment in the primary schools exceeded 2.7 million students in the last year of the Seventh Plan (1989/90), reflecting the attainment of a gross enrollment ratio of 107 percent. The number of primary schools reached 17,842. And that of primary school teachers reached 71,213. The proportion of girls in total primary school enrollment was 36 percent (NPC 1992). The total number of students at the secondary level by the final year of the Seventh Plan was 708,663. This reflects the gross enrollment ratio of just over 34 percent at the secondary level in that year. The proportion of girl students in total secondary enrollment was 29 percent. Similarly, the number of secondary schools and secondary teachers reached 5,917 and 22,820, respectively, in the final year of the plan.

Additionally, during this plan period a lot of innovative programs and projects were developed and launched. Some of the notable ones were: (a) Radio Education Teacher Training Project that was established in 1978 with the assistance of USAID and was institutionalized under the MOE in 1980; (b) Seti projects (1981), Primary Education Project (PEP) (1987); and (c) Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) (1986). These programs were principally designed and developed for curricular improvements. Activities relating to the development and the revision of curricula were conducted from the beginning of the plan period. Arrangements were made for the introduction of a new supervision system in order to conduct effective supervision of the schools. Various activities aimed at raising the quality of education and the improvement of physical facilities of schools were carried out in various districts of the Seti zone covered by the Education for Rural Development under the Seti Project; and in Jhapa, Dhankuta, Tanahu, Kaski, Dang, and Surkhet districts under the PEP. Activities conducted during the plan period under the PEP were the establishment of 76 Resource Centers, the rehabilitation of 782 schools, the distribution of educa-

tional materials, teacher training, supervision, and reform of the examination system (NPC 1992).

NESP, however, often had been criticized because it was not based on a realistic assessment of the country's resource situation and thus the program faced severe resource constraints. Teachers became government employees and teaching became just a job for them. Parents and communities had little role to play. Education became altogether a state affair.

There was a gradual but nominal increase in the percentage of literacy, but the relevance and quality of basic education was questionable. The NESP proved a failure in terms of delivery, and the government had little choice but to allow private schools again, in contradiction to the earlier policy of nationalizing all schools and their management. However, the public's management capacity had almost been lost due to its exclusion from education for more than a decade, and it has taken a long time to reappear.

Additionally, NESP faced constant political challenges from the outlawed political parties as it was closely identified with the "Partyless Panchayat Democracy." According to the education plan, the objective of NESP was to "produce citizens, who, with full faith in the country and the crown, will conduct themselves in accordance with the Panchayat system; and to meet the manpower requirements of development through the spread of scientific and technical education." The teachers as well as students were highly politicized and they continually took to the street on every possible occasion. Unfortunately, in the process of political war, everyone forgot their responsibility towards children. Marginalized ethnic groups and children from poor families remained untouched by the national education system, which is still highly prevalent in many rural areas of Nepal.

### ***Education in the Transition to a Democratic System (1990 to present)***

The Nepalese government went through a major reform in 1990 and restored a multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. This political change of 1990 has brought another phase in the history of educational policy in Nepal. Nepal has fully endorsed the Jomtien Declaration of 1990, "Education for All" (EFA), that became a national slogan and has made commitments towards achieving its goals, including participating in an EFA 2000 Assessment. This has brought a new optimism. In 1992, the government constituted the National Education Commission to make policy recommendations for education based on democratic values, and thus "free school education" became the policy of the 1990s. The World Conference on

Education for All (EFA) and the restoration of multiparty democracy coincided in 1990. Nepal also signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that declares education a fundamental right of every child. This was perhaps the first ever attempt when Nepal has considered education as the right of all children.

However, even after the restoration of multiparty democracy (modeled on the British system), the political leadership has been unable to move ahead as fast as people might want. Successive governments have not been able to deliver the goods and services to benefit all sections of society. Education still remains the primary aspiration of the people. People are prepared to financially invest in their children's education. Since government schools lack management efficiency, private schools have been established on a massive scale, not only in towns but also in remote villages. However, in the absence of a clear state policy these private schools choose their own management system and set their own policies for student fees and teacher salaries. Their costs seem to be decided without a clear basis and appear to be motivated by profit only. Education is focused on examination results—as the private schools boast of their SLC pass rates. They get children through their SLC results; otherwise parents would not pay. However, this raises the question of whether that is the sole end of education.

Four major national education plans have been formulated after the 1990's restoration of the democracy: three of them (Eighth, Ninth and Tenth) were Five Year Plans; while the latest one is the Three Year Interim Plan (2008–2010). Below is a brief presentation and overview of all the four plans.

#### *Overview of Recent Four Education Policies of Nepal (1990–2007)*

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the government constituted the National Education Commission (NEC) to give a new direction to the educational system in the changing political context of the country. The commission submitted its report in 1992 with several recommendations. The education policies thus developed are all guided by the Commission's recommendations.

Various attempts have been made to advance education programs and make them comprehensive in a planned way, in line with democratic norms and values, based on the demands of time and the aspirations of the people. However, the education sector faces various problems. Basic education is still not available to everyone. The national goal for the universalization of primary education is hindered by the significantly lower participation of girls in education. The lack of progress in this direction remains a serious problem. The progress towards adult literacy was in the

same vein, making up only 39 percent until 1992 (NPC 1992). The government target was to achieve 67 percent by 2000 but progress remained so weak that the adult literacy rate reached to only 49.2 percent by 2002 (NPC 2002).

No progress has been made in the overall education sector in Nepal in the decade after the restoration of the multiparty democracy system. The rate of progress was approximately 1 percent per year; which was no different than before 1990 (Laksamba 2006). The present efforts made to raise the literacy rate are totally inadequate. The male and female literacy rate is 65.8 percent and 35.4 percent, respectively (NPC 2002). The literacy rate in urban areas is 63.5 percent, and rural areas is 34.5 percent. It is thus apparent that there is a higher percentage of male literacy than female and a higher literacy rate in urban areas as opposed to rural districts. The literacy rate in the Eastern region is 41.9 percent, Central 35.1 percent and Western 34.6 percent.

The four modern education plans in the decades after 1990 have been prepared to address various issues of education in Nepal. A few important highlights of the plans are as follows:

- The *Eighth Five Year Plan (1992–1997)* emphasized the development and expansion of basic and primary education in view of the national goal of universalization of primary education, and the attainment of 67-percent literacy by 2000. It was viewed that the qualitative improvements have lagged behind quantitative expansion in the education sector in the past; hence, the priority was given more on improving the quality of education. For this, it focused on increasing the number of trained teachers, the improvement of physical facilities of the schools, curriculum development in keeping with the needs of the country, the provision of textbooks, and regular and effective supervision of schools. At the same time, necessary measures to maximize the participation of people from disadvantaged areas, tribal groups, and women in education were emphasized in particular (NPC 1992).
- The successive *Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002)* also focused on providing equal opportunities to all sections of the society and developing education as the mainstream of national development. Additionally, the plan also focused on increasing people's awareness about democracy and encouraged them to become dedicated, productive, disciplined socially responsible citizens. Therefore, the plan had ample emphasis to upgrading literacy, school education, as well as technical and vocational skills. It aimed for 100-percent literacy within two decades through the promotion of compulsory primary education with the encouraged active participation of the private sector (NPC 1997).

- The *Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–2007)* intended to keep up the pace, continuing the Ninth Plan’s long-term vision of providing access of education to the people of each class and level, raising the quality of education, involving the local bodies in the process of educational development, ensuring gender equality, making education employment-oriented by producing a lower-, medium-, and high-level workforces in the country by developing educational institutions as “centers of excellence,” and making the higher education more scientific. The focus of the Tenth Five Year Plan was principally:
  - Local Self-governance Act and the concept of decentralization.
  - Empower and assign the local communities to take up the responsibility of educational planning and management, and delegate the responsibility of school operation and management to the communities.
  - Restructure the school education system from grades one to twelve; strengthen the curriculum, examination system, and financial management accordingly.
  - Emphasize formal, non-formal, technical, and civic vocational education and implement the useful and appropriate education system gradually; and emphasize the use of technology.
  - Special programs to increase the access of women, *Dalits* (oppressed, lowest-caste people), people with disabilities, and indigenous communities in quality education.

The plan’s aim was to set up 205 Community Learning Centers (CLCs) to make 1,866,000 adults literate, particularly women and the lowest-caste indigenous/ethnic groups (NPC 2002). The plan also set a target to increase the number of Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDs) to 13,000; provide basic primary education to 200,000 boys and girls of school age via non-formal primary education; and provide parental education to over a quarter million parents. The plan also aimed to promote the role of the private sector as effective, relevant, and opportune; ensure public participation in the formulation of appropriate policies and plans, management, implementation, and monitoring to maintain quality; and carry on administrative and educational decentralizations hand in hand by following the policy of decentralization.

- The recent *Three Year Interim Plan (2008–2010)* has emphasized ensuring proportional and equitable access to school level as well as higher and technical education. The main idea is to make education more useful and relevant for

daily life and teach productive, quality skills for future employment. The plan has also focused on the significance of reintegration, reconstruction, reestablishment and the latest developments in science and technology. Additionally, the Three Year Interim Plan has put forth the following major goals and targets:

- Make all citizens literate by ensuring access to all and by providing quality and employment-oriented education.
- Make everyone experience the feeling of free and equal quality education with easily accessible basic education.
- Develop higher education in line with research-oriented and competitive human resource production.
- Make all levels of education equitable and inclusive.
- Produce competent and disciplined youth power for the social unification of the country through the mobilization of sports and youth.

The plan aims to reach the overall literacy rate among the population over age six to 76 percent and the net primary school enrollment rate to 96 percent by the end of the plan period from the current status of 63 percent literacy and 87.4 percent of primary school enrollment, respectively.

In addition, this plan also envisions bringing about some major policy reforms in the education sector in the country. For this, the plan aims to carry out the following activities:

- Strengthen the school-based teacher training and user-friendly curriculum development in order to bring reforms in education learning activities.
- Reform the grant making system in order to provide the grants directly to schools.
- Prepare and pilot test the School Sector Reform Program in order to form the School Education Framework for grades 1 to 12 by maintaining basic education of grades 1 to 8 and secondary education of grades 11 to 12.
- Expand and open remote education systems to ensure access to education for all.
- Determine and communicate the education strategy for minimum learning norms for quality education.

## *Achievements*

By the end of the Tenth Plan, the total number of schools, both public and private, had reached 28,131, at the primary level, which is now reported to be 31,156, of which 20,345 schools alone are primary schools that hold nearly a half million primary students at the moment (MOE/DOE 2008). Likewise, the net enrollment rate of students has reached 87.4 percent. The percentage of girl students has increased more in comparison to that of boys in primary schools. The participation of girl students from the beginning of the plan has increased from 43 percent to 48 percent. Of the children of school-going age, 38 percent of the children of marginalized and indigenous people (*Adibasi Janajatis*) have participated, whereas 18 percent of *Dalits*, and only 1 percent of children with disabilities have participated. At the primary level, the proportion of female teachers has nearly reached 31 percent, and that of *Dalits* stands at 2.5 percent and *Adibasi Janajatis* at 17.8 percent (NPC 2008).

Although there has been progress in the development of primary education, even now almost 13 percent of children are deprived of primary education. Of this, the poor, *Dalits*, *Madhesis*, and *Adibasi Janajatis* are the most deprived and excluded. There has not been equal access to school and higher education for all genders, groups, and regions. The class repetition rate and dropout rates are high and the passing rate is also unsatisfactory.

## **Higher Education in Nepal: A Brief Overview**

The history of tertiary education in Nepal dates back to 1918 when Tribhuvan Chandra Intermediate College, now popularly known as Tri-Chandra College, was established for the first time in the country. This was the only college that used to impart tertiary education in Nepal till 1950. However, after the dawn of democracy in Nepal in 1951, a number of intermediate and degree colleges were established within and outside the Kathmandu Valley at the initiation of the government and community (All Nepal Education Committee 1961). But there was no university in the country. At that time all colleges were affiliated with Indian universities. By 1958 Tribhuvan University (TU) was incorporated on the recommendation of the Nepal National Education Committee (1954) and from then on all colleges were disaffiliated from Indian universities and affiliated with this university. This has grown as a monolithic university with more than 150,000 students on its 60 constituent campuses (Baral 2007).

Later in 1983, Nepal brought about a multi-university concept. As a result, the Mahendra Sanskrita University was established in 1986, which has since been converted to Nepal Sanskrita University (NSU) after the popular movement of 2006.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, a number of universities were established in Nepal including a few private universities like Kathmandu University (established in 1991), Purvanchal University (established in 1995), Pokhara University (established in 1997), Lumbini Boudh University (established in 2005), National Academy of Deemed University for Medical Sciences (established in 2002), and B.P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (established in 1993). In addition to these universities, the Nepalese government has announced the establishment of an Agriculture and Forestry University in Rampur, Chitawan by merging the Institute of Forestry and Institute of Agriculture (Baral 2007).

In the same vein the government has also announced the establishment of three more universities in the far-western and mid-western regions by amalgamating the constituent campuses of TU being run in these regions. Those universities include (a) Open University, (b) Mid-western University and c) Far-western University (Baral 2007). Thus, the country will have nine universities in total, once the four universities in the pipeline are included.

## Major Findings of the Review

- Altogether **11 Educational Plans** have been formulated from 1956 to the present, of which two were three-year interim plans and nine were five-year plans.
- All of these plans were found to have focused on establishing a sound education system in the country.
- From the First Five Year Plan to the last Three Year Interim Plan, education is placed at the center of the country's development.
- The plans have focused on universalizing education with a special emphasis on access and quality, including physical facilities.
- Several national programs and projects have been brought about under these plans for the entire development of education in the country starting from the NESP in 1971 to Education for All: 2004–2009.
- Most are being funded by various donors and multilateral funding agents, mostly through government entities.
- The review found some noteworthy progress in some areas with the implementation of the plans while in some areas the progress seems almost nil.

- The progress towards quantitative gain has resulted in the attainment of a current literacy rate (15 years+) of 48 percent (males: 64.5 percent and females: 33.8 percent), an increment of 5 percent since 1951, which is quite unsatisfactory compared to the targeted goal of achieving a 67-percent literacy rate by 2000.
- Similarly, the number of schools in the country at present is reported to reach to 31,156, including 20,345 primary schools—up from 310 in 1951.
- 12.6 percent of the children are still out of school; those are mostly from the poor, *Dalits*, and other disadvantaged groups.
- Progress towards higher education can be said to be satisfactory with the establishment of six universities (including three private universities)—an increase from two colleges in 1951.
- But achievements in bettering quality remain minimal, regardless of the continuous focus and priorities of all the plans and policies that are simply characterized by a high dropout rate, an increased unemployment rate, and an increased migration of youth to various parts of the world.
- There is a gap between the formulation and implementation of policies, which is particularly due to lack of capacity to understand them at the grass-roots level of the concerned stakeholders.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

From the overall review of the past and present education policies of Nepal combined with personal observations on the present circumstances in the education sector in Nepal, it can be concluded that education in Nepal will always be a central political concern. It also has become a battleground for the Maoists' "People's War." The Maoists, whose insurgency began in 1996, demanded a complete reform of the government school system and the closure of private schools, accusing them of charging exorbitant fees. But they have never thought of how to accommodate the huge educational workforce as well as the students that attend these private institutions, particularly neglecting the country's present capacity and resource constraints.

Since the First Five Year Plan, the education policies of Nepal have focused on and addressed similar issues and remain very much the same today: increasing

literacy rates, developing/producing skilled human resources for the country's entire national development, decentralization and democratization of educational administration and management, enhancing quality education through teacher training and development, expanding vocational and technical education. All of education's stakeholders, stretching from the government's policymaking authority to local communities, the general public, the donor communities, education activists, and political groups and leaders, are shouting about the same issues and challenges. Each of these groups is claiming that they are fighting to establish a durable system of quality education in the country. But the reality is that the quality of education is deteriorating day-by-day, and with it the levels of educated unemployed. The trend of migration of highly-skilled and well-educated people to the United States, Australia, Canada, Europe, and other parts of the developed world is ever increasing. The country and its policies clearly are unable to hold the excellent intellectual youth force in the country, even for a year or two.

## Recommendations

From this review, the Nepalese public education policy may appear rather unwieldy and selfish and incapable of fulfilling the country's needs and realities. The policies and plans of the Nepalese education sector are rather out of touch and overambitious, and they need serious review and revision relating to the country's actual need and current status. There is a huge gap between the policies and their implementation.

The authorities responsible for formulating the policies should not align themselves towards their donors' best interests; rather they should be fair, honest, and accountable about the country's needs and requirements, as well as open and generous in using and putting forth their own innovative ideas rather than following or copying others who merely internalized the slogan: "*Quality education for all.*"

This paper focused on just the general trends and information on the historical development of Nepalese education policy and was unable to present adequate quantitative data in a structured manner covering all issues associated to education. Its sole purpose has been to bring attention to the efforts that have been made to develop education and change in Nepal in the last six decades. It is, however, recommended to make a further review and analysis of separate specific issues including curriculum and course structures, textbooks, teacher management, exams, government monitoring and evaluation systems, and other related topics.

The Nepalese public education sector is one of the most prioritized and donor-supported sectors in the country. Regardless of the huge amount of donor support

and funds, there are still many problems and challenges in this sector. The principal challenge lies in the inability and lack of competence of various stakeholders and educational managers as well as inappropriate program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It is, therefore, recommended to consider these aspects for further review.

Regardless of the problems and challenges, there are opportunities as well. Some of the encouraging steps that foresee the betterment and improvement of the Nepalese education system include the use of information and communication technology in education; reforms made in the Education Management Information System (EMIS); increased donor assistance in implementation of commitments made by Nepal in international forums; increased interests/concerns among schools and local communities on transparency, accountability, and responsibility; increased community participation in school management; increased partnership and collaboration between NGOs and the private sector; and the national consensus and government's policy commitment to make basic education available free of cost—all are essential in a future review.

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# The ABCs of Good Governance in Education: Monitoring EFA Goals in Albania through a School-based EMIS in the Kukësi Region

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*The Education Management Information System (EMIS) has the role of supporting the management and policymaking functions of the education sector. EMIS includes exclusively the information systems and applications specific to this sector, that is, the Data Collection System, the Database Querying System, and the Analytical and Policy/Decision Support System.*

*EMIS aims to ensure that schools collect information and use it for improving conditions at the school level (Cark 2002).*

# Abstract

This paper is written for Albanian education policymakers. In support of the National Pre-university Education Strategy in Albania to face the Education For All (EFA) challenges, it focuses on a proposal to scale up a school-based EMIS model in the Kukësi region, which is a key component of ongoing reforms to the national education system. Thanks to UNICEF support initiated since 2006 in this region, the model has started to be configured, but it still needs more support until it consolidates and becomes fully operational and ready for large-scale use.

The ongoing interventions aim at creating a good and sustainable EMIS model, which will use information gathered from school EFA indicators that is “categorized, analyzed, summarized, and placed in the local context” and is useful for strategic policies toward achieving EFA goals.

The paper conveys two key messages: (1) establishing a school-based EMIS constitutes a basic ABC-type policy measure towards good governance in education, necessary to ensure quality education for every Albanian child with affordable costs; (2) if the Kukësi region, as one the poorest regions of the country, can face the challenges of the EMIS reform successfully, then other better-off regions can also and the whole country can benefit from this specific experience supported by UNICEF.

## What’s at Stake?

Good governance in education starts with “knowledge management” (Christopher 2001), which is based on reliable data collection from schools and the analysis of Education For All (EFA) indicators to identify gaps for policy adjustments and undertake the appropriate interventions addressing disparities wherever they are aiming to ensure quality education for every Albanian child. Quality education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1999), but *is this really happening in Albania?*

The issue is a complex one. First, a complete, reliable, and sustained Education Management Information System (EMIS) is needed at both the central and local administrative levels. The information made available to policymakers by this system develops into knowledge when it is used by them to identify gaps for strategic interventions. But such an EMIS is still not functional in Albania.

Evidence shows that unified information sharing rarely happens among the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Regional Education Directorates (REDs: MoES deconcentrated bodies), local governments, communes, and schools. As a consequence, central policymakers consider mainly national statistics, which do not help them to identify local problems or design specific strategies to improve the indicators in problematic regions, and as such, to improve them on a national scale. The same is also happening with local decision-makers.

Until now, the general collection of information in the education sector in Albania has been done by using ready-made templates of statistical tables filled out by hand by the schools and sent to the education directorates and the MoES. The data processing is made mainly at the MoES level. The information collected in this way does not provide the opportunity for the production of the expected output related to a real statistical analysis of the data for several reasons.

*First*, the use of the non-standardized and unrelated data tables has brought about the improbability of the design of a complete database and performance of comparative analysis. *Second*, how the data is transmitted from schools to the MoES has raised questions about the credibility of the information produced. *Third*, the collection of the information only up to the district level has restricted the possibility of a more advanced data analysis, and consequently has led to lack of security in decision-making. *Fourth*, some necessary indicators are lacking in order to properly identify and justify what parts of the educational system need intervention and improvement. *Fifth*, the lack of a central database nearly made impossible the accomplishment of a predictive analysis and the coordination of work and decision-making between the departments of the MoES and other institutions depending on it. All these together have reduced the given product to the form of an information sheet with tables and figures.

It is indisputable that no successful analysis and strategy could be designed without having complete, systematic, and exhaustive disaggregated data coming from the schools. In order to ensure the standardized and reliable information flow among key education stakeholders as well as efficient policy interventions to achieve quality education for all (for every child), it is necessary to start with developing a reliable system of data collection, elaboration, and analysis on schools, students, education personnel, and other resources linked with education. This is a key issue for the policy- and decision-makers in the Albanian education sector today, despite nearly two decades of opportunities to implement such a system.

The result is that the sound analysis of EFA policy interventions as well as monitoring achievements has been compromised.

## What Do We Know, Rationale, and the Policy Question

The new Albanian government has made education one of its top priorities and it has demonstrated this by committing to increasing budgetary support to the education sector from 3.6 percent to 7 percent by 2013 according to the Albanian Government Program of the Democratic Party, 2009–2013. The MoES is committed to reform, has taken several steps to enhance efficiency in this sector, and has established a donor coordination group, Partners for Education, to help better manage and coordinate donor contributions to the sector. In 2006, the ministry initiated the first Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) in education, and in which the newly initiated Education Excellence and Equity Programme (EEE-P 2006–2010) is the initial contributor, including EMIS reform.

The Albanian government is committed to Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 (EFA/MDG 2 and 3), but there are challenges to implementation. One of them is information management for policy purposes. *First*, the culture of collecting and using data for planning and policy development is not well developed within the MoES, not to mention the regional directorate and district office level. *Second*, the national EMIS is still undeveloped. This means that there is an actual and real lack of proper monitoring of the progress of EFA. These facts put the achievements of EFA/MDG 2 and 3 at risk of failure. Evidence shows that EFA monitoring based on core indicators, which must come from schools, is still missing.

The National Strategy of Pre-university Education 2006–2015 (NES) identifies four priority regions: (i) governance, that is, reforming and strengthening management capacity; (ii) improving the quality of the teaching and learning process; (iii) financing pre-university education; (iv) capacity building and human resource development. This strategy provides a commonly agreed view to help strengthen the sector's performance and serves as a basis for concerted efforts to achieve EFA goals, as well as better learning outcomes in a more equitable and efficient way.

To ensure implementation of all these challenging goals, the first priority is to improve the database and installation of an effective school-based EMIS, as one of the key components of a successful EFA Strategy that is also part and parcel of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI or PRS) for 2007–2013. This is a system for monitoring their implementation and for tracking progress. This system is a cornerstone in the success of both strategies, ensuring that they are solidly based on evidence, focused on results, and evolving over time. As such, this monitoring system is critical for the entire national PRS cycle as it feeds necessary informa-

tion into the further elaboration of the strategies, influencing the design of the related policies by monitoring policy implementation and evaluating the impact.

The management of the information system in education aims mainly at providing opportunities for: (i) collection, distribution, and storing of information that is simple, fast, accurate, complete, standard-based, and unlimited by all the unit levels. It performs this in both forms: (a) hard copy and (b) electronic copy; (ii) study and processing of the information to find out results and indicators in the schools, municipalities, and regions, as well as the national level; and (iii) analyses, policy and strategy building, and action plans about the processed information.

The key elements of EMIS are: (i) human resources; (ii) basic standards and procedures, through which the units must create the information, control, communicate, and store it; and (iii) supportive technological infrastructure of this system which comprises the hardware and the communication techniques.

In the past, with the assistance from the World Bank, the Planning and Policy Development (PPD) Department was established to act as the key MoES unit for data analysis and policymaking. The World Bank program has also supported the development of an EMIS system (during 2002–2004) to assist the PPD department to complete its tasks to collect all available and relevant data which consists potentially of disaggregated economic, infrastructure, social, and educational data by rural/urban region and at the central, regional, district municipal levels down to the schools. Unfortunately, due to the limited capacity of the PPD department, it was unable to fully utilize the EMIS for policymaking.

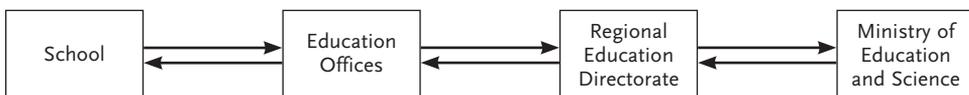
The EMIS NES component is an institutional strengthening component that builds on the school-mapping database (Map-Decision) introduced under the World Bank's first education project in Albania (2001–2004). One of the main objectives of this component was to: (i) establish the Department of Information and Statistics (DIS); (ii) establish an EMIS in the MoES and in the districts; (iii) establish a simple EMIS that could be easily extended in terms of data and users, and that can be used routinely by policymakers and managers at the ministry and district levels; and (iv) require MoES and the DIS, utilizing EMIS, to produce an annual publication "Statistical Report Card on Albanian Education" for stakeholders (Ministry of Education and Science 2004a).

According to the evaluation report of the EMIS component conducted with the World Bank's support in 2004, the efforts made by the MoES towards developing a sustainable school mapping and EMIS failed when it came to their implementation. The so-called EMIS I (data collection, processing, and decision support) was developed

and deployed successfully by EMIS (including the Map-Decision (M-D) software and various data entry and importing modules), and training was provided for some 24 MoES staff in October 2002. The so-called EMIS II modules on document tracking, legislation, accounting/budget, and payroll were developed by DATECH–Tirana and installed, and preliminary training was conducted in the MoES. However, after 2002 none of the EMIS modules was used by MoES staff (with very few exceptions) who continued to use the old Excel-based manual data entry and analysis. In the case of EMIS I, the pilot in two regions (rural Tirana and urban Durrës) was never extended to the entire country as planned and regional data was never fed into the MoES server in order to develop the national education database. Moreover, the analytical and decision support functions of M-D could not be used because in 2002 there was no Policy and Planning Unit in the MoES to use the system for developing policies and plans for the MoES executive to choose from and implement (Ministry of Education and Science 2004a).

At present, the Data Collection System of EMIS is set up. Templates have been designed to allow data collectors at the school level to gather the information requested. The final list of educational data to be collected from each school already has been established. The core set of data follows the inputs-processes-outputs model. The way the information actually follows can be seen in Figure 1 (Ministry of Education and Science 2004b).

**Figure 1.**  
*EMIS Data Collection Model*

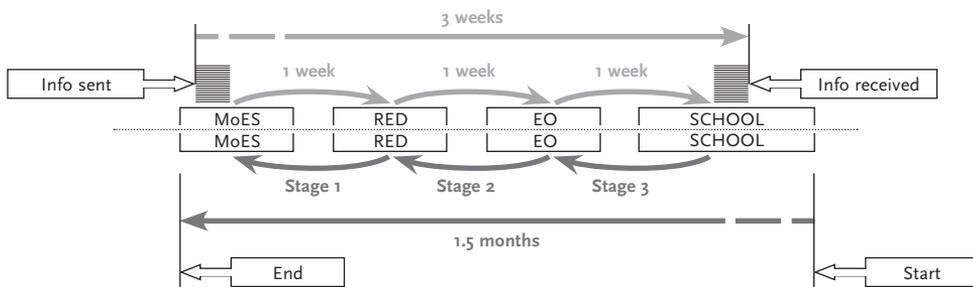


Information collection is currently performed in two directions: (1) from MoES towards the schools, dependant institutions, universities, and the public in the form of administrative acts such as plans, strategies, budgets, legislation orders, and publications; (2) from these actors to the MoES in the form of statistical information based on the legal obligation of statistics as well as a lot of information required by different institutions for task performance, study plans, etc.

Today, the information also passes from school to the MoES through several stages and each stage has a set period of time for information communication, which varies from several days to several months in the two figures below showing stages

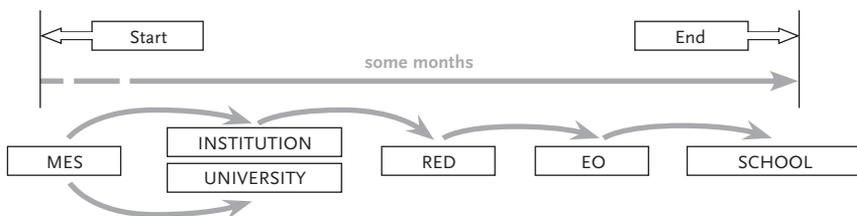
of information flow from MoES to schools and vice versa. Figure 2 shows the simple ordinary information flow, while Figure 3 shows the situation when the information flow links MoES and diverse institutions in regard to studies, surveys, analysis, etc.

**Figure 2.**  
*Simple Information Flow*



Note: EO: Educational Offices, MES: Ministry of Education and Science, RED: Regional Education Directorate.

**Figure 3.**  
*Linked Information Flow*



Note: EO: Educational Offices, MES: Ministry of Education and Science, RED: Regional Education Directorate.

Only in a few cases does the information pass at once from MoES to several institutions simultaneously, and these are MoES announcements in the ministry webpage, almost completely unused by RED, education offices, and the schools. At present, EMIS does not have a manual of standardized procedures for electronic information. What is in hard copy must also be in electronic copy and what is electronic must be in hard copy, both at its source and its destination.

## Efforts at the National Level

As mentioned earlier, Albania embarked on the EEE-P (SWAp) in 2006, including EMIS as an important component of good governance reform (Enache et al. 2006). Its main objective is to support the implementation of the first phase of Albania's NES 2006–2015. For a proper implementation of this relevant national document, several complementary measures need to be taken, which have now been integrated into the Medium Term Budget Plan (MTBP). These include a proper sequencing of the action plan and budget on a year-to-year basis based on detailed monitoring of the achievements in the previous year. Hence, the first priority is to improve the database and installation of an effective EMIS. And the second priority that emerges is to build the managerial capacity of key personnel in the affiliated educational institutes and educational administration at decentralized levels down to the school level.

In 2007, the MoES prepared a plan for developing and implementing a school mapping system, including establishing a reliable Geographical Information System (GIS) database as an input to EMIS through school mapping for effective education planning and appropriate decision-making, procurement of hardware and software, assessment of school mapping data for education planning and policy, capacity building on GIS Application, School Mapping Dissemination, etc. It has also prepared a plan for improving the existing EMIS (Ministry of Education and Science 2007). This plan includes the following components: (a) a preparation stage with procurement and customization of the core systems, development of required capacity and basic infrastructure; (b) a pilot phase with selected schools, districts, and relevant departments at MoES; and (c) EMIS implementation phase in all districts.

The key message from these MoES plans is that the “existing EMIS” need to be revitalized, improved, and fully operational. In this respect, without a school-based EMIS that provides detailed and disaggregated information from the schools, the education managers cannot know if the EFA objectives are met or not, and cannot conduct cost-benefit analysis of past interventions to undertake efficient future policy actions. Therefore, the establishment of a disaggregated gender friendly school-based EMIS that provides all the necessary data to monitor and evaluate the EFA process is a must for the Albanian government. Firstly and above all, real policymaking in education is based on sound and real data coming from the schools.

## Efforts at the Local Level

For the last two years, UNICEF has supported the Kukësi RED towards the establishment of a school-based EMIS, which is a missing link so far in the national EMIS

system. One program goal is to assist the government with the pilot-phase plan in order to prepare the ground at the local level by creating the necessary model tools for a full and sustainable school-based EMIS system able to respond to the requirements of the regional and central EMIS. The pilot interventions are serving also to highlight the gaps for strengthening the institutional capacity and infrastructure needed to ensure its adequate functioning. The final goal is to propose EMIS pilot interventions for scaling up at the regional level. So far, interventions in this respect include:

1. *The first stage (2006)* started at a moment when the town of Kukësi had almost none of the EMIS elements at least as regards the electronic form of information. For this reason the activities of this period consisted in: (i) supporting with technological infrastructure; (ii) equipping all five Kukësi urban schools with computers, printers, and batteries and providing them with broadband internet access for one year; (iii) capacity building of school principals, teachers, and specialists at the RED; (iv) compiling and using a school EFA indicators list (182 indicators) (UNICEF 2005).

The first EMIS products are: (i) the establishment the school's electronic information system; (ii) the first electronic communications of information between schools and the RED.

2. *The second stage (2007)*, reflects the requirements, needs, and gained experience, extended and focused on local capacity building as a very necessary element for the sustainability and performance of EMIS in general. The RED was powerfully supported through establishing a network and a real training center for EMIS. As regards this, the following was done:
  - *Support with technological infrastructure:* (i) a training center was set up in Kukësi RED with five computers, one projector, one laptop, one projection screen, one all-in-one photocopier, scanner, and printer), one 3.4 KvA inverter as well as three 200AH batteries; (ii) RED has been provided with broadband internet; (iii) WiFi network has been created to provide internet access to 10 computers; (iv) five schools were provided with two PCs, a 3.4KvA inverter, and three 200AH batteries; (v) five schools continued to have broadband internet access for one more year; and (vi) networks were established in schools that provide internet access to about 25 computers.
  - *Support with human capacity building:* (i) 12 regional trainers were trained in the skills needed for web-based information communication and electronic communication; (ii) key local government employees and 60 teachers were trained, mainly in basic IT and communication programs.

- *The outputs of this stage were:* (i) ongoing electronic communication among schools and the Kukësi RED; (ii) websites for the Kukësi RED and five schools have been designed; (iii) all the information of the results of the first term, school year, and registrations from September 2007–2008 were online; (iv) 12 regional trainers and 60 trained teachers were applying the new skills; (v) there was the communication and technological basis for an EMIS in program schools; (vi) there was transparent information about the performance of the educational process in Kukësi town for the larger community; and (vii) the local government committed to cover budget needs for 2008.

3. *Third stage (2008–2009)—further steps for the accomplishment of the pilot model:*

The two previous phases have been focused mainly on preparing the ground with the technological infrastructure and the capacity building of key education staff in Kukësi town, mainly regarding their ability to use computers, collect and elaborate school data based on MoES templates, as well as on digital communication from school up to the RED (through physical devices, e-mail and the web).

These interventions still do not constitute a full operational EMIS model which should be completed during the 2008–2010 program as per the following components: (i) *technological infrastructure development:* Establishment of connections for online electronic communication; communication and storing of the electronic information, at first in Kukësi RED; design of Has and Tropoja Education Offices' websites; (ii) *standardization of procedures:* Develop the manual of electronic standard operating procedures and formats; ensure links with the central EMIS system; implement or develop a data-entry interface linked with the central EMIS system; provide a standard set of core EFA indicators internationally recognized, which make Albania easily comparable with other countries; (iii) *capacity building:* Extension of the Kukësi town experience in communes as well as in Has and Tropoja districts with 10 trainers per district (20 altogether); equipment including at least one computer per school initially; continuation of capacity building of 202 school principals and deputy principals, as well as of two teachers per school (202 altogether; 101 x 2) (Table 1.); accomplishment of information products in electronic form in schools; (iv) *policy development:* policy circulars for schools regarding teachers workload due to school EMIS records, data elaboration, and e-communication.

**Table 1.***Data from Compulsory Education in Kukësi Region (September 2007)*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>In village</b>	<b>I Kukësi</b>	<b>II Has</b>	<b>III Tropoja</b>
<b>Students</b>	18,218	12,495	10,336	3,545	4,337
		69%	57%	19%	24%
<b>Teachers</b>	1,155	887	613	221	321
		77%	53%	19%	30%
<b>Schools</b>	106	98	57	19	30
		92%	54%	18%	28%

Considering the above, the relevant policy questions are: What is the perspective of these school-based EMIS pilot interventions in Kukësi? Can they be scaled up? What will be the cost? Is it affordable, so the local government can proceed with scaling-up?

## Background

### Why Kukësi? A Brief Geographic and Socio-economic Overview

Kukësi is one of the poorest regions in Albania (INSTAT 2001) and the message of this paper is that if the Kukësi Region can face the challenges of EMIS reform successfully, then other, better-off regions can benefit, too, like the whole country.

Here are some facts that hint at the Kukësi region's situation:

The Kukësi region lies in northeastern Albania and shares its borders with Kosovo and Macedonia. This region includes three districts: Kukësi, Has, and Tropoja. The first level of local government consists of 24 communes and three municipalities: Kukësi, Krumë, and Bajram Curri. The population of the region, according to the population registration by INSTAT (2001), is 111,393 inhabitants, with a density of 47 inhabitants per square kilometer. The urban region population is 24.5 percent (INSTAT 2001).

The opportunities for inhabitants in the Kukësi region are few and far between compared to other regions of the country and the neighboring countries. Unlike elsewhere in the region, because of unfavorable agricultural conditions, agriculture is

not the main source of income or sufficient to ensure more than self-sufficiency for rural inhabitants. They mainly deal with livestock breeding and selling meat and other livestock products. However, the lack of roads, the distances from the market, unorganized production and trade associations, and few measures to support local products have all led to cheap prices for these products, aggravating the economic balance sheet of the region's inhabitants.

The more urban regions of Kukësi and Albania also suffer from a lack of economic development because private employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sectors are rare. The main activity regarding this consists of trade and services. But the actual activities of the business are very limited. For these reasons, the unemployment level and the social assistance for the inhabitants are the highest in the country. Thirty percent of the inhabitants eligible to work are unemployed (UNDP Albania 2004).

The migration of the population within the country and abroad and any subsequent remittances are considered as an important source of income. This has resulted in a reduction of the population in the region by 23.75 percent within the last 15 years (Tropoja 37.59 percent, Hasi 10.1 percent, and Kukësi 19.69 percent) (Meçaj et al. 2004).

For these reasons the surveys of UNDP, through the Human Development Index, classify the Kukësi region as the poorest in the country, based on the indicators of life expectancy, education, and GDP. This HDI in 2001 was 0.726 (Tirana the capital being the first with 0.822 and Dibra the penultimate one with an HDI of 0.734) (UNDP Albania 2004).

The difficult social and economic situation of the region is reflected in low indicators in the health sector. The Kukësi region is distinguished by very high indicators for the infantile death rate, 16.3 per thousand. The unemployment of women in the urban regions is higher compared to men as well (UNDP Albania 2004).

Despite this gloomy picture, recent studies have identified some factors that can qualitatively affect the overall development of the Kukësi region. The Kukësi region has numerous potentials. Its most important resources are its inhabitants who are devoted to tradition but are also characterized by the willingness to touch the future, for which Kukësi became famous in the spring of 1999. The Kukësi people hosted more than half a million Kosovo Albanians deported by force from their lands by the Serbian regime of that period, thus avoiding a grave situation in the region and becoming a partner in the international attempts to solve the crisis.

# Problem Analysis: Why Start from the School-based EMIS?

**National Figures Hide Strong Disparities at the Local Level.**

## **Social Disparities**

Albania is a middle-income country with a per capita of USD 7,716 (as per the World Bank ranking of 2008), but this rate conceals very *pronounced social disparities*. LSMS (2006) data indicate that 25.4 percent of the population lives below the poverty line with 10.8 percent living on less than USD 2 per day and 59.3 percent living on less than USD 4 per day (World Bank and INSTAT 2006). Over the past 15 years, 25.8 percent of the population has migrated from villages to urban centers. The vast majority of these migrants experience high unemployment and are unable to meet their basic needs. The greatest part of the unemployed reside in the peri-urban regions where access to public services, in particular to education, is extremely limited.

While Albania has achieved a relatively high 94-percent net enrollment and a 92-percent completion rate in primary education (grades 1 to 4), the enrollment rate for basic education (grades 1 to 9) is less, at 88 percent (World Bank 2007). These national rates hide enhanced non-attendance in regards to gender, economic, cultural, and geographic disparities (Innocenti Research Centre 2006).

- The dropout rate for basic education in several regions is 5–10 percent, which highlights the fact that one out of every four children of school age is not attending any type of school at all (Development of Education Association 2002).
- In several regions across the country girls are pressured by their parents to leave school and the number of girls dropping out is nine times higher than that of boys. Girls are forced to quit school when they reach puberty and are restricted in their movements away from home. Early marriage is on the rise.
- The average years of schooling for Roma and Egyptian children is 4.02 and 5.05 years, respectively (De Soto et al. 2004).

There are a growing number of children who are not in school because they are working on the streets or have been trafficked to other countries such as Greece and Italy where they are forced to beg and in some instances into prostitution.

## School Dropouts

The highest amount of dropouts occurs in villages. In the region of Kukësi, the dropouts in the villages are nearly eight times more than those in the town, and Kukësi is a prevailing influence in this inequality with about 16 times the number of dropouts in some of its villages. Table 2 shows the dropout percentages for each district and the respective “village/town” ratio (Korça Regional Education Directorate 2007).

**Table 2.**  
*Dropout Rate in Villages and Towns—Kukësi Region*

Residence & Ratio	Kukësi	Has	Tropoja	Region
Town	0.3%	1.6%	0.0%	0.5%
Village	4.9%	2.3%	3.2%	4.1%
Village/Town Ratio	16.3	1.4		8.2

Some communes in the district of Kukësi reach very high figures such as in Arrën with 17 percent, Kalis with 12 percent, and Tropoja with 11 percent. According to some RED specialists, the dropout figures are actually up to 2.5 times higher than the official ones, because some school principals report lower percentages in order not to reduce their teaching personnel even when girls drop out from school more often than boys. In Table 3, this phenomenon is shown to be more prominent in the region of Kukësi, whereas in the district of Has, boys are more disposed to dropping out from school (Kukësi Regional Education Directorate 2007).

**Table 3.**  
*Dropout Percentages by Gender*

Gender	Kukësi	Has	Tropoja	Region
Girls	4.8%	1.6%	2.8%	3.7%
Boys	2.7%	2.5%	1.9%	2.5%

In some communes and villages of the Kukësi district, the number of girls dropping out is much higher than the average for this district. In the commune of Topojan it is 14 percent, Çajë 15 percent, and Kalis 16 percent. In two villages of the commune of Çoja, this percentage deteriorates further and goes up to 21 percent in Buzëmadh and 24 percent in Shkinak, whereas in the village of Kalis of the commune of Kalis

it is 21 percent, in Cërmale of the commune of Shishtavec 28 percent, and in Nimçë of Topojan it is also 28 percent. Despite the insecurity of the official statistics, it is obvious that in the Kukësi region there is a huge discrepancy in school attendance between the students in villages and towns. This inequality is also felt between boys and girls.

## **Hidden Dropouts**

The number of children dropping out of school is much smaller if a comparison is drawn with those pupils sitting at school desks on a daily basis who do not necessarily receive all the due attention of their teachers. Although the school completion rate is high (95.4 percent) (INSTAT and UNICEF 2005), students' learning achievements are very low. Because of the widespread use of traditional teaching practices inherited from the past, the typical teacher neglects those students who perform below average or have learning difficulties. As a consequence, between a third to a half of students complete basic education with the lowest passing grade. There are around 150,000 such students in Albania who perform below their ability, in general. For example, more than a quarter of students in grade four read less than 60 words per minute (Development of Education Association 2001 and Sultana 2006).

## **Urban/Rural Disparities**

Table 4 presents data from two regions in Albania: Korça in the south (one of the most prosperous regions) and Kukësi. Of particular concern is that nearly half of all schools lack running water and nearly a quarter of the schools in Kukësi have no toilets. This is particularly worrying given that this region of the country is conservative and where girls are not encouraged to continue their education. The lack of toilets is a contributing factor to increasing dropout rates amongst girls from compulsory education (Korça Regional Education Directorate 2007 and Kukësi Regional Education Directorate 2007).

**Table 4.**  
*Education Shortcoming Indicators in the Korça and Kukësi Regions*

Indicator	Korça (Percent)	Kukësi (Percent)
Percentage of teachers without proper education	15	39
Schools without science lab	83	86
Schools without physics lab	85	93
Schools without foreign language lab	100	100
Schools without gym	92	94
Schools without toilets	8	26
Schools without running water	48	46
Schools with no telephone	90	99
School psychologist per students	1:1,700 pupils	1:5,000 pupils

## Cultural Disparities

The data in Table 5 below compare some indicators between one school that has a majority of Roma students with other schools in the same region (Korça) that do not have any Roma or Egyptian students in their schools. Of note, is that only 7 percent of children from the Roma group attend kindergarten compared to 51 percent of students from the majority. A concern is that 7 percent of girls and 11 percent of boys from the Roma group drop out from school compared to none from the majority (Korça Regional Education Directorate 2007).

**Table 5.**  
*Disparity Indicators among Roma and Majority Children in the Korça Region*

Indicators	Roma	Other
Percentage of pupils enrolled in the first year who have attended kindergarten for at least one year	7	51
Percentage of girls who have dropped out of school	7	0
Percentage of boys who have dropped out of school	11	0
Percentage of pupils who have more than 40 percent unaccounted-for absences	14.7	0.2
Number of missing hours per pupil	102	14
Number of pupils who attend secondary education (per school)	6	64

The above data are mainly from studies and surveys supported by UNICEF.

This evidence shows that the current education system is unable to fulfill the rights of each individual student to access basic education and to complete the minimum levels of learning achievements, as it is not fully able to detect different shortcomings and disparities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address a wide range of problems with appropriate solutions by starting through EMIS development.

It is important to note here the differences between data, information, and knowledge. A recent article by Laura Empson, which presents the argument that knowledge is a product that is built from data and information, provides the following definitions: “It is perhaps easiest to understand knowledge in terms of what it is not. It is not data and it is not information. Data are objective facts, presented without any judgment or context. Data becomes information when it is categorized, analyzed, summarized, and placed in context.” Information therefore is data endowed with relevance and purpose. Information develops into knowledge when it is used to make comparisons, assess consequences, establish connections, and engage in a dialogue. Knowledge can, therefore, be seen as information that comes laden with experience, judgment, intuition, and values (Empson 1999 and Thorn 2001).

To sustain the above argument, first of all, problems must be properly identified and this cannot be realized without a reliable and functional gender-friendly school-community-based EMIS.

## **Reform Efforts at the Local Level**

In this situation of strong disparities in educational outcomes combined with the lack of a fully functional school-based EMIS that provides the necessary information to be used for targeted policy action, the result is the lack of real situation analysis by the policymakers and a patchwork of uncoordinated and inefficient interventions at all education levels.

In these conditions, there is a strong need to avoid *ad-hoc* policymaking that often results in programs that, at best, do not reinforce one another and at worst actively work to undermine each other. To revamp the current typical style of policymaking and management, the hope, from means/inputs centered to output/outcome-centered trends, is that a fundamental reform will lead to an improvement of educational services. This is the guiding vision of Kukësi EFA Strategy Document (2007–2015) developed through UNICEF support in 2007 to strengthen the regional dimension of the NSDI/PRS (2007–2013). Here is an extract (INSTAT 2001).

The main motto of EFA in Kukësi region is qualitative educational service for every student. The quality of this service is measured by students' achievements, above all by their achievements in lessons. Among the strategic means that would be fruitful for the radical improvement of the students' achievements is implementation of a contemporary management style rather than the increase of financial resources.

In this framework, performance-oriented management, which is fundamental for the success of education reform, also implies the establishment of a school-based EMIS.

- *Performance-oriented management:* This new working style for local education managers is already part and parcel of Kukësi Region EFA Strategy 2007–2015. Here is another extract:

This reform involves horizontally all the schools and vertically all the levels of educational local government. At a school level, the management reform involves the teacher, the school principals and other school governing institutions, but above all the school board. At a decentralized unit level (RED/Education Office), the management reform implies development of plans at a regional and district level focused on priority objectives of students' achievements. This also implies objective evaluation of the students' achievements on school basis, publication of school ranking and management of a professional community and public debate on strong and weak points of each school.

- *School management:* Managing schools is one of the weakest links of the Albanian education system and the same holds true for the Kukësi region. The typical profile of the school principal is that of an administrator who conveys hierarchic orders and believes that the means to his/her success is his/her control over teachers. The annual school plans are old and do not reflect the real mission of the school, which is to do the utmost for the teaching success of every student. These plans do not start from measurable objectives for the students' achievements, are not based on the school statistical indicators, and as a consequence, are far from the care for the accomplishment of Education For All's principles.
- *Development Program:* The objectives of school management at a regional level are: (i) 100 percent of the school principals should work with the school development plan and the new format annual school plan, from 10 percent currently; (ii) 100 percent of the school principals must monitor the teaching process focusing on the students' achievements, from 10 percent currently.

Drafting and implementation will be accomplished in cooperation with the teaching staff and representatives of the school community, and even the students themselves. Kukësi RED has now a fruitful experience in the development and implementation of an annual school plan centered on the students' achievements and with the active participation of the teachers and representatives of parents, students, etc. Such a planning starts from a detailed analysis of the school situation according to a system of indicators (182 in number) (UNICEF 2005), which include those of school attendance, subject achievement, and student behavior; indicators for the school, personnel; socio-economic condition of the students' families; other indicators on school infrastructure and its equipment and teaching aids, as well as the real students' achievements. The extension of this program will be accompanied with information digitalization thanks to the accomplishment of the "TIK or E-Schools" (Computerized Information Technology) MoES program (Albanian Government 2006). This system of indicators will help decision-making at a school level and will favor the accountability of the teaching staff to the school service clients, and will encourage the increase of the responsibility of the school board and school community in general for the effectiveness of the teaching and school management.

The conclusion is that in Kukësi's context, where a school-based EMIS is lacking, the information from schools is unreliable and as such the policymaking is merely based on assumptions. From the other side, there is the pressure of EFA regional strategy that calls for an urgent paradigm shift in management style with school-based EMIS as a fundamental component of good governance for quality education for every child. Strong evidence from the region shows that there are many children who are deprived of quality education—a fundamental right. Policymakers should think from every child's perspective, and therefore take action to ensure their rights.

## Suggested Policy Option, Finance and Sustainability Issues

### **Policy option: Scale up the school-based EMIS pilot model in the Kukësi region**

*Ad-hoc* decisions or assumptions on all the interlinked elements of the education system are bound to lead to costly projections, both in terms of policy and finance. Therefore, the establishment of a reliable and functional school-based EMIS constitutes a matter of urgency for the Kukësi region as well as for the entire education

system in Albania. A school-based EMIS is the only source that provides relevant gender-friendly disaggregated data. It is critical also for monitoring an educational system as efficiently as possible.

In considering all the above, this paper proposes to Kukësi policymakers to consider and provide all the supportive necessary measures for scaling-up the school-based EMIS pilot after the model is strengthened and completed with all the necessary components.

## **Program Cost, Financing Mechanisms, and Sustainability**

The answer to the policy question is that the total program cost is affordable. The cost of the main items is about EUR 300,000. Table 6 shows the cost according to items and responsibilities of all education stakeholders (MoES, RED, Education Offices, and third parties). The total cost covers a year-long cycle, but it is spread over a longer period. The cost for the establishment of electronic communication and internet maintenance is considerable.

- *The role of central government:* There are some relevant facts regarding the possibilities for fiscal space that should cover the cost of scaling-up the EMIS program cost in Kukësi. The MoES is the principal owner of the E-Schools Initiative (Albanian Government 2006), a program with EMIS. The MoES will assist its activities technically and financially. The commitment of the MoES toward the computerization of all schools is also expressed in financial terms by allocating a significant amount to this initiative. The MoES has concrete plans in reforming its training institutions and utilizing them more effectively for training all teachers in computer technologies. So, in the framework of the EEE-P, the MoES has prepared the EMIS and School Mapping Implementation Plan and Budget 2006–2010. The MoES has already covered the purchase and installation of hardware and communication systems for 24 Education Offices in the country. It will also cover the school costs for electronic infrastructure (Ministry of Education and Science 2007). The rest of the program cost should be covered by the local governments (through the state budget) as well as by schools themselves in the framework of decentralization and recent school autonomy reforms.
- *The role of local government:* Local governments are key partners for the program's success. The fulfillment of some preconditions (like rooms for computers, electric installation, security measures, and training follow-up activities) has

not been a problem. On the contrary, the program is supported with enthusiasm. In 2005, UNDP conducted a survey including the Kukësi region (UNDP Albania 2005) to assess if the local governments will invest their “own money” in internet services for schools, educational software, and computers. One question was if 25-percent self-financing should be a strict precondition for receiving any centralized money. The information was collected after contacting all the heads of communes and municipalities. From a total of 16 heads of communes and municipalities, 12 of them expressed their willingness to contribute in this project with a value of 10 percent of the total amount. Their contribution may be during the implementation phase and later on maintenance issues. Only four heads of communes expressed that they did not have enough financial resources for supporting such an initiative.

- *The role of schools:* It is in their nature that investments in ICT hardware become obsolete within two or three years. For the schools, the replacement of such investments is very difficult because: (i) depreciation brings no returns for the schools on old equipment and (ii) the schools are not allowed to create reserves for such investments, whereas the generation of incomes could be a solution. But (i) the corresponding legislation, which regulates the administration of such funds and avoids a possible conflict between the profit orientation and the original mission of the schools, is missing; with the new reform on school autonomy, there is an opportunity that this situation can change; (ii) offering computer courses as income generator could be an option in towns and communes; (iii) RED and schools must try to create the possibility of income generation through other services and products and use the money for computers.

**Table 6.**

*Cost According to Items and Responsibilities of the Stakeholders (MoES, RED, EO-s, Third Parties)*

Item	Unit	Price, in Lek	Total cost, in Lek	Beneficiaries			Budget source			
				I Kukësi	II Tropoje	III Has	MoES	LG	RED, EO-s	Third parties
School				52	30	19				
Teacher				208	120	76				
Trainer					10	10				
Training group				21	13	9				
PC + printer	101	500	50,500	26,000	15,000	9,500	50,500			
Maintenance	101	30	3,030	1,560	900	570		3,030		
Communication set-up	101	800	80,800	41,600	24,000	15,200	80,800			
Internet	101	50x12	60,600	31,200	18,000	11,400		30,300		30,300
Web	101	30	3,030	1,560	900	570			3,030	
Hosting	101	5x12	6,060	3,120	1,800	1,140			6,060	
Training hours 43x60, 430 persons	2,580	25	64,500	31,500	19,500	13,500	12,900		12,900	38,700
Rooms + PC min 10x5	43	0x100x15								
Projector + Laptop 1x5	43	0x30x15								
Trainer's accommodation 43x15	645	15	9,675	4,725	2,925	2,025	2,000		2,000	5,675
Trainer's per diem 43x15	645	20	12,900	6,300	3,900	2,700	2,500		2,500	7,900
Additional statistical work	6x12	200	14,400	4,800	4,800	4,800				14,400
<b>Total</b>			<b>305,495</b>	<b>152,365</b> 50%	<b>91,725</b> 30%	<b>61,405</b> 20%	<b>148,700</b> 49%	<b>33,330</b> 11%	<b>26,490</b> 8%	<b>96,975</b> 32%

*EMIS program strengths applied currently in the Kukësi region:*

- Simple to implement and using the latest technology methods; it assists and makes easier the work of education staff in implementing EFA strategy.

- The possibilities to transmit and receive information is without limits in terms of time, quantity, and type; computers bring new opportunities for learning in school.
- Kukësi education stakeholders' attitudes towards the EMIS program so far are very positive: the majority of people are supportive and enthusiastic for innovations and there are good signs of ownership and active attitudes, as the experience is being spread to more teachers.
- UNICEF will continue supporting the EMIS program until the model can be completed, strengthened, and ready for scaling up.

## Challenges and Recommendations

After discussions with MoES officials, the feeling is that up to now EMIS has been conceptualized the wrong way (a kind of upside-down situation). Responsibility is seen to be more with the Department of Information and Technology (DIT, MoES), while the key issue is not mainly the provision of new technology equipment to education offices and schools, but the training of human resources from the central to the local level, in order to ensure in a near future that information is managed in a sustainable way and data are used for policymaking. This issue has been a priority for the school-based EMIS pilot in Kukësi, but the future interventions face a range of challenges. In spite of the achievements so far, there is a need for procedures for the standardization, dissemination, and increase of the outputs for EMIS program effectiveness.

Here are some challenges and recommendations:

### Challenges

- The Kukësi region has the greatest infrastructure difficulties in the country and there might be also delays in implementation due to complicated financial administrative procedures.
- Some critical issues are linked with the coordination of institutions at different levels and simultaneous access to information communication from one source to different education stakeholders as well as preparation of standard operating procedures and formats.

- The schools lack institutional memory; primary schools do not have a secretary; normative dispositions do not create the necessary space for teachers' additional EMIS tasks, teachers at present should work overtime but are paid with the same salary; most of the them have poor knowledge of English and there are mental barriers towards innovations.
- Regarding internet access, it has been difficult to find reasonable providers. The connection speed is slow. The lack of professional knowledge from the side of the client (schools) creates a market asymmetry from which the providers can profit.

## Recommendations

- The MoES and REDs should issue policy circulars regarding the harmonization of school staff workload with new EMIS tasks and should provide EMIS software in the Albanian language. Core EFA indicators should be standardized and used nationwide to make Albania comparable with other countries in the region (European Commission 2000 and UNESCO 2006).
- Kukësi RED should disseminate the positive experience of the town in the schools of the neighboring communes in gradual stages. Teachers' training on IT should be part of the RED training program. It needs to be better organized for the exploitation of the human resources available and in exploring the appropriate ways to ensure their active participation. There is a critical need for capacity building in Education Offices and village schools.
- The schools must create and communicate the information in two forms, electronic and hard copy. These forms should be similarly administered for both communication and archiving. This approach requires that all the schools are provided with the same opportunities for these products.
- The inverter and battery systems do not solve the problem of situations with electricity shortages. In these cases, the reliability of power supplies remains a concern. The program must foresee difficulties and provide necessary solutions (including equipment, maintenance, and running costs).
- Building and having EMIS does not mean simply data collection and filling in tables. Awareness raising is aimed to be reached at all levels of education starting from the teachers in schools and parents up to the decision-makers at the central level to contribute to the consolidation of this system and their encouragement to use it for decision-making goals.

- All these important points must be part and parcel of the future scaling-up plan, which will be realistic only through the joint collaboration and commitment of all the education stakeholders.

## Looking Ahead

Technology develops exponentially but much of society in Albania is unprepared to catch up with technology. What are the choices then for a middle-income country like Albania with a range of strong disparities that soon intends to be integrated into the European Union? The developing trend is that digital communication is necessary and unavoidable nowadays. Challenges are part of development. I do believe that the only unfailing guidance is to look ahead with eyes to the future, with the eyes of children, to think about every child's rights in perspective, to create child-friendly schools. The bearers of this duty should track educational achievements over time through advanced communication methods and new participatory school management styles that are required with EMIS as part of it. But it is time for change: to really give a chance for quality education to every Albanian child

many things we need, can wait, the child not. Now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow. His name is TODAY!

—Gabriela Mistral, Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet

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# Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development in Montenegro

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## Abstract

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) may be considered as a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future (UNESCO 2005). This concept of education may have a vital role in contributing to environmental protection, rural community development and regional stability.

Based on different methods, this paper does the following:

- Explores the potential forms of education for sustainable development to help create educational equity between underdeveloped and developed part of the country.
- Explores potentials of creating sustainable communities in Montenegro through sustainable education.
- Identifies good practices and approaches in sustainable education as a tool for education equity.
- Increases public awareness about sustainable education in Montenegro and the region.

The article includes an evaluation of initial development of a sustainable education concept in Montenegro. Actually, the idea behind the implementation of ESD in Montenegro is that schools also have the potential to be learning and development centers—role modeling and sharing good practice, providing information and supporting innovation. Thus, this paper evaluates whether the concept of education for sustainable development may be implemented in a way to encourage active inquiry among participants and develop skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, social entrepreneurship, and leadership.

The paper also identifies the directions and initiatives for sustainable education promotion in Montenegro and the region, which includes cross-border co-operation projects that may link the developing economies of the West Balkans with the European Union and emerging economies.

## Introduction

In this era of globalization, education has a responsibility to produce a human capital that includes future professionals and decision-makers, and also responsible citizens. Education for Sustainable Development helps pupils and students to develop knowledge, understanding, values, and skills. Education for sustainable development may also be defined as an approach to the whole curriculum and management of an institution (school, college, universities, organizations, etc.)<sup>1</sup>. The period from 2005 to 2014 has been proclaimed the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development by the United Nations. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), on the meeting of ministers for education and environment held in Vilnius, March 17-18, 2005, accepted the strategy for education for sustainable development.<sup>2</sup>

Some authors (Salih 2008) express that education for sustainable development has an important role in the production of human capital—educated individuals who contribute to the development of quality living conditions in society and also to a harmonious national environment.

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1 Available online: <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/references.htm> 02.12.2009.

2 Government of the Republic of Montenegro (2007) *Integration of Sustainable Development into the Education System Action Plan—(2007–2009)*. Podgorica: Government of Montenegro, p. 5.

But other authors (Jeffrey 2006) also underline the importance of education for sustainable development for building sustainable peace. Keeping in mind the previous decade of conflict in the Balkans, research on education for sustainable development in Montenegro may have references to the greater region, especially from the perspective of tools used for regional stability and reforms leading to European Union standards in candidate states like Montenegro.

The evaluation of the importance of the promotion of education for sustainable development in Montenegro should start with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD). The NSSD of Montenegro mentioned the education sector through two priority goals:<sup>3</sup>

- Achieving quality Education For All; achieving Millennium Development Goals and goals from the National Plan of Action for Children.
- Increasing thematic contents of sustainable development in curricula for different level of education.

In analyzing the perspectives on education for sustainable development in Montenegro, we should start with an evaluation of the NSSD. NSSD has been part of the policies of the government of the Republic of Montenegro, especially the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Physical Planning since 2007. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning (MEPPP)<sup>4</sup> was the coordinator of the NSSD drafting process. The process was supported by UNEP/MAP, UNDP, and the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land, and Sea.

In the strategy, Montenegro is characterized by significant regional differences in the level of development, primarily reflected in contrast between the underdeveloped northern region and more developed central and southern regions. The underdevelopment of the northern region also brings limitations in respect to social development (limited access to institutions and services) and a higher risk of the unsustainable use of natural resources.

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3 Government of the Republic of Montenegro (2007) National Strategy of Sustainable Development of Montenegro. Podgorica: Government of Montenegro, p. 52.

4 Since the end of 2006, the Ministry has reorganized and changed its name to the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection.

In the NSSD, it is a given that the northern region comprises just over one half of Montenegrin territory and has the following characteristics:<sup>5</sup>

- The region contributes to national GDP with only 18 percent (in the beginning of 1990 this was 25.5 percent).
- The unemployment rate is close to 30 percent (according to the same source, the unemployment rate in the southern region was slightly lower than 21 percent).
- Depopulation—the number of inhabitants in the period between the 1991 and 2003 censuses dropped by 9 index points; close to one-third of the total population lives in the northern region.
- At just over 19 percent, the poverty rate is significantly higher than the national average.
- Transportation (and other) infrastructure, especially in rural areas, is underdeveloped.

Nonetheless, the region has substantial resources, especially when it comes to agriculture (67 percent of total cultivable land and 70 percent of the total cattle in Montenegro) and forestry (71 percent of the total extracted wood mass).<sup>6</sup> The northern region has a significant potential for economic development, especially the types that could contribute to the sustainability of the tourism sector that is primarily focused on the coastal (southern) region. The southern region is truly a mass tourism destination yet is also a destination (as well as to the central region) for many Montenegrins migrating from the northern part of the country in search of better socio-economic opportunities.

The NSSD's two highest-priority objectives are

- a) small and medium size enterprise (SME) development and increase of employment (primarily in the northern region where alpine and ecotourism, food production, and sustainable forestry should be developed);
- b) improvement of the infrastructure (transport, water supply and sewage, electricity supply).

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5 Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection (2007) National Strategy of Sustainable Development of Montenegro. Podgorica: Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

6 Ibid.

Two important segments stressed in the NSSD are tourism and agriculture and rural development.

Tourism development is one of Montenegro's economic priorities and an opportunity for the underdeveloped northern part of Montenegro. Apart from attractive resources, tourism generates the development of other complementary activities such as transport, trade, banking, agriculture, and construction. Such development has positive economic effects, including a decrease in unemployment, an increase in living standards, and a contribution to regional/rural development (including keeping people in the villages).

From the perspective of generating tourism, the NSSD's two highest objectives are

- a) diversification of the tourist offer (development of village, agro-, eco-, alpine, cultural, sports, and other forms of tourism, especially in the northern part of the country) in support of the extension of the tourist season and the attraction of guests with higher purchasing power;
- b) integration of sustainability criteria in tourism development projects, especially when it comes to coastal and alpine tourism.

Together with tourism and services, agriculture is one of the top priorities of economic development of Montenegro. Many households farm on small-scale holdings (around five hectares on average), and thus agriculture represents a basic or an additional source of income for over 60,000 households.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, sustainable education initiatives should be concentrated primarily in these two areas.

## Institutional Framework and Current Status on Implementation of the National Strategy of Sustainable Development (NSSD) of Montenegro

The National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSDD) was established in 2002 as a body of the government on the issues of sustainable development, chaired by the prime minister and composed of representatives of different Montenegrin stakeholders.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The composition of the NCSO was expanded in 2006. In the period from 2006 to 2008, the NCSO continued to be chaired by the prime minister of Montenegro, while the vice-chair was the deputy prime minister for economy. The head of the Office for Sustainable Development served as the secretary general of the council. The remaining 42 members included representatives of the following sectors:<sup>8</sup>

- Government (ministers of environment, health, economy, tourism, agriculture, labor and welfare, education and science, foreign affairs, external economic relations and European integration, and secretary of the Secretariat for Development)
- Municipalities (mayors of three municipalities and head of the Union of Municipalities)
- Scientific institutions (heads of eight scientific environmental institutes, research centers, and protected areas management enterprises)
- Academia (University of Montenegro and two from the Academy of Arts and Sciences)
- Businesses (eleven heads of major businesses and business associations operating in Montenegro)
- NGOs (five environmental NGOs)
- Independent expert on environment

By late 2008, the NCSO was considered overly top-heavy. The number of NCSO members was reduced to 23, a category of independent experts in the area of sustainable development was introduced, the organization of the Council was reformed by introducing the working groups, and the creation of local councils for sustainable development was recommended in the future. The period from 2007 to 2012 is connected to the first Action Plan of the NSSD. Implementation progress of NSSD aims is supposed to be a subject of a yearly report by the Office for Sustainable Development. Revision of the document is planned for the end of 2012, along with reports about the implementation of NSSD.

The NSSD Action Plan has a lot of process indicators attached to certain NSSD measures and/or objectives (Table 1). Some of the indicators are more qualitative than quantitative.

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8 Available online: [http://www.eeac-net.org/bodies/montenegro/mo\\_nsor.htm](http://www.eeac-net.org/bodies/montenegro/mo_nsor.htm) 02.11.2009.

**Table 1.***NSSD Indicators and the Link with General Goals*

<b>NSSD aim</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Accelerate economic growth and development, and reduce regional development disparities	GDP per capita
	GDP by regions
	Unemployment rate
	Contribution of SMEs to GDP
	Trade imbalance
	Foreign Direct Investments and ODA
	Annual investments in infrastructure
	International revenues from tourism
	Share of beds not located in the coastal region in the total number of tourist beds
	Public and private expenditures for research and development
	Energy consumption per capita
	Energy consumption per GDP unit (total and by sector)
Reduce poverty; ensure equitable access to services and resources	Poverty rate and inequality indicators in total, by regions, and by vulnerable groups
	Enrollment rate in primary school
	Literacy for ages 15–24
	Infant mortality rate
	Children under age five mortality rate
	Women's unemployment rate
Ensuring efficient control and reduction of pollution, as well sustainable management of natural resources	Percentage of the territory protected to preserve biodiversity
	Area of marine protected areas and coastal zone
	Water consumption per capita
	Share of wastewater being treated
	Territory under forests
	Tourism density at the coast
	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita
Consumption of substances damaging for the ozone layer	
Improve governance system and public participation; mobilize all stakeholders, and build capacities at all levels	Share of tax revenues of local governments, expressed as the share of total tax revenues

Source: NSSD—Montenegro, Podgorica, 2007, p. 58.

In Montenegro, the financing of projects for sustainable development and environmental protection from industry and the private sector is a weak point. The reasons may be lack of incentives and the poor economic situation. These facts directly influence financing options for the NSSD. Measures given in the NSSD's Action Plan can be classified in five categories, based on financial resources:

1. Measures for which implementation is possible from the existing budget
2. Measures which can be implemented by better government coordination
3. Measures that can be supported by donors
4. Measures that may be implemented by public-private partnerships
5. Measures that represent additional costs of the strategy's implementation

Since the national state budget cannot finance the complete implementation of NSSD objectives, bank loans are a potential source other than donations. When discussing capacities for the implementation at the national and local level, a SWOT analysis is necessary.

**Table 2.**

*SWOT Analysis for Future Sustainable Development in Montenegro*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written in the Declaration of Montenegro as an ecological state</li> <li>• rich biodiversity, specific landscape and cultural values</li> <li>• dynamic society, especially after achieving independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• almost no experience in modern economy management (globalization)</li> <li>• weaknesses of nature conservation management system</li> <li>• old-fashioned environmental protection management system</li> <li>• weak human resources development</li> <li>• undeveloped participatory system of power—weak self-governance and civic society</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balkan region stabilization process</li> <li>• integration process with the EU</li> <li>• build development on green jobs and environmentally-friendly activities</li> <li>• less consumption-oriented society</li> <li>• less environmental pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stimulating economic growth without taking into account social and ecological issues</li> <li>• overexploitation of natural and cultural values</li> <li>• too slow process of integration with EU</li> <li>• destabilization of Balkan region</li> <li>• segregated society</li> <li>• corruption issues</li> </ul>

*Source:* Adapted according to <http://www.undp.org.me/home/archive/nssd/presentations/A.%20Kassenberg%20-%20Opinion%20on%20NSSDM.ppt> 04.09.2009.

In regards to evaluating the NSSD, the following should be considered and respected if the program is to succeed:

- The draft NSSD is too ambitious: it must be based on an integrated approach and it must be realistic in the institutional and financial domains.
- There is a need to revise this document into a holistic and integrated mapping of priorities and tasks, including primarily the presentation of a realistic pathway for their achievement.
- Attention should be paid to those priorities and tasks that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, moving away from a document that is only the sum of different detailed planning programs.
- The risk is that NSSD can share the fate of many national strategies that, however ideologically sound, are unfeasible without the incorporation of the local government level or further development of local strategies for sustainable development.

## The Education Sector and Local Sustainable Development in Montenegro

In order to support sustainable development in Montenegro, with particular reference to the education sector, new educational curricula should be developed (Robinson 2005). Actually, the curriculum and approaches to teaching, as well as the learning experiences that pupils and students should have, are all key elements of effective education for sustainable development.

Some of the most-pressing issues have been spelled out in the document Action Plan—Integration of Sustainable Development into Educational System 2007–2009. New primary education curricula should give priority to

- developing critical thinking, independence, and interest in acquiring new knowledge;
- education respecting national values, history, and culture of other peoples;
- developing creative personalities;
- education on mutual tolerance, respect for diversity, and cooperation with others, respect for human rights and basic freedoms in a democratic society;

- creating awareness about the importance of healthy living and a responsible attitude towards the natural environment.

Further creation of outdoor schools in Montenegro's north and outdoor teaching integration into school curricula may have a lot of positive influences on the future sustainable development of the region. Actually, teaching in outdoor schools may allow students to visit different regions, enabling them to become more familiar with geographic and cultural diversity, ecological issues, and environmental preservation of the country and region. However, supporting and encouraging students creative thinking is an undeveloped side of many typically conservative education systems in transition countries, including Montenegro (Vitić-Ćetković and Cvetkov-Čikošev 2009). As part of this stress on creativity and flexibility, Montenegro should develop a policy that would encourage students not to stop with formal schooling but also to pursue opportunities for lifelong learning. Therefore, creating training centers and regional centers for lifelong learning may be one of the potential roles of civil society in northern Montenegro.

## Education for Sustainable Development: Status and Perspectives in Montenegro

The introduction of sustainable development content in the Montenegrin education system is in its initial phase. The Integration of Sustainable Development into the Educational System Action Plan (2007–2009) covers the last three-year period. It contents include details on the tasks, roles, dynamics, and financial resources needed for educational institutions in order to perform their planned activities, until a new plan can be drafted for the next period.

The Montenegrin educational system has experienced a number of recent systemic changes as it has begun to cooperate with the wider region and the European Union. One important aim of reforms in Montenegro is to create a new generation of people who will respect and apply the principles and concept of sustainable development in Montenegro.

Therefore, new curricula developed around the ESD concept for primary schools, secondary vocational schools, high schools, and also universities must underline the knowledge and skills that ensure achieving important economical, social, and environmental goals.

Promoting the importance of sustainable development during the process of European integration is needed if educational reforms are to be strengthened in support of creating sustainable communities in Montenegro. Therefore, any new curricula should be compatible to EU requirements in this area. One step in Montenegro has been to give teachers, students, and schools the independence to create new subject curricula. It means the local community can create around 20 percent of the local curricula's contents. Trials within the last few years have shown that this does depend on teachers' motivations to adjust the curricula to the local community and school. This is an opportunity for sustainable development to gain traction and teachers who have worked with this program have received training and aid.

Delivering sustainable development in education in Montenegro is based on the idea that children and young people may play an active role in promoting sustainable development. Therefore, children are considered as active agents of change to promote sustainability in the home and in the wider community (for example, recycling, energy and water saving, etc.). Accordingly, schools should act as a focal point for sustainability issues in their communities, while learning in that manner needs to be a practical experience.

Another recent model in Montenegro has promoted elective subjects in primary schools, high schools, and secondary vocational schools, giving students different avenues to explore their creativity and satisfy their interests. Also, through elective subjects, teachers are often teaching in areas in which they are highly qualified. The recent Montenegrin orientation towards lifelong education should include a higher amount of sustainable development subjects in the new curricula for adults' education.

Teachers' training should include interactive work (exchange of experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and needs between leaders and participants, as well as among participants), and cooperation and partnership (cooperative learning). The promotion of diversity in the training is an important category for teachers' training.

A campaign to promote these reforms in Montenegro should include the development of short scientific and educational TV programs, a website about education for sustainable development, as well competitions for young leaders and promoters of sustainable development. NGOs may be important partners in the promotion campaign.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Low GDP, substantial pressure on public expenditure, and the weakened economic situation of local governments are some of the factors influencing the implementation and financial support of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) in Montenegro. Strengthening finances of local government is the important task in the next period, keeping in mind that regional progress in sustainable development, as well as in involvement of education for sustainable development, is closely associated with the local level of administration. In practical terms, it means that local authorities will actively participate in financing local schools.

More adequate systemic and practice-oriented knowledge are necessary if sustainability is going to take root in the curricula of the Montenegrin education system. Education has not evolved yet in the region to enable participants to acquire comprehensive knowledge concerning sustainability, no education materials are available for this at present, and the education profession has only just started to prepare for the subject of sustainability. An increasing number of initiatives have been launched to offset social differences and inequalities of opportunities that are reproduced in the public education system and they should also be priority elements of sustainable education strategies to be promoted by the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Sport. General steps to be taken in Montenegro should include the following:

- A strategic approach and coordination
- Further specialization of local government officials and stakeholders
- Improvement of training and education of teachers and instructors
- Improvement of institutional capacities and competences of the local administration, especially on environmental issues
- Integration of the environmental issues in school curricula

There is a real need to create a regional network in the West Balkans that will enable individuals as well as society to gain the knowledge necessary to guide the state towards sustainable development. Focusing on a broader inclusion of themes relevant for establishing sustainable development and overall development of ecological awareness of individuals and society shall also improve the fundamental skills required for success in the labor market, increase employment, decrease migration, and be of benefit to rural communities in the future.

The main precondition is that schools in the region include aspects of ESD in their curricula, and aim to become sustainability role models—not just to pupils and parents but to the wider community. The curricula should provide learning in a way to involve children in all aspects of inquiry, analysis, planning, decision-making, taking action, and evaluation.

Finally, a less consumer-based society and more jobs related to environmentally-friendly activities may be a long-term benefit from integrating a sustainable education model in the region. That may lead to promotion of sustainable living, managing waste, energy and water, waste recycling initiatives, orientation to “green” transport, consumption of local and organic foods, greater use of renewable resources, and sustainable travel alternatives in the region.

The Integration of Sustainable Development into the Education System Action Plan (2007–2009) is designed so that it connects all subjects that are involved in educational reform through implementing the themes and contents relevant for the achievement of the educational reform concept by realizing the adopted Strategic Plan for Education Reform 2005–2009. This plan envisages the necessary steps and activities, determined carriers, resources, and deadlines as well as the cooperation and connecting of institutions in its implementation and achieving of set goals, in addition to the very important cooperation of relevant ministries in monitoring successfulness of its implementation.

These plans have opened the way for establishing sustainable development and the overall development of ecological awareness in individuals and society. However, the monitoring of their implementation by all involved institutions, especially the Ministry of Education and Sport, is essential to understand how much progress has or has not been made.

Education in Montenegro demands a complete reorientation at every level, starting from preschool to university, if education for sustainable development is to succeed. Educators have to understand the changes that ESD requires. An appropriately reoriented education would ideally include more principles, skills, perspectives, and values related to sustainability and taking responsibility to educate the society’s future leaders.

Sustainable development requires a population that is aware of the goals of a sustainable community and has the knowledge and skills to contribute to those goals. The promotion of education for sustainable development and creating awareness of its models and practices may be an important step in order to become compatible with the European Union education system and sustainable development planning. Accordingly, higher education and other institutions in Montenegro and the

wider region may use the concept of education for sustainable development to move forward to upholding and maintaining the development of a whole and integrated human capital.

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## Online Resources

- <http://www.balkanicsd.net>
- <http://www.coe.cg.yu>
- <http://www.eeac-net.org>
- <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/references.htm>
- <http://europeandcis.undp.org>
- <http://www.gov.me>
- <http://www.mdgmonitor.org>
- <http://www.undp.org.me>
- <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf>
- <http://www.vlada.cg.yu>



## **PART III**

# Roma Educational Opportunities



# Early Tracking in the Czech Education System

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## Abstract

Many studies show that one of the most important factors related to delivering equity in education is the design of the education system, its differentiation, and children's ages at the time of the first selection for school. In the Czech Republic tracking is widespread and starts from a very young age. In all international comparative studies of student achievement, the Czech Republic exhibits a relatively strong relationship between student achievement and family background. National analyses show high differences between the achievement and social composition of students in individual tracks. The most controversial component of the Czech education system with regard to equity is the multi-year gymnasium. Multi-year gymnasia were introduced into the system after 1989, following a prewar tradition, and currently are attended by approximately 10 percent of lower secondary students. An attempt to abolish tracking at the lower secondary level at the beginning of this decade met strong opposition from politicians and Czech elites. They argued that early tracking gave talented children an opportunity to accelerate their cognitive development and was thus crucial for the constitution of Czech elites. Since then tracking at the compulsory level became even more prominent. The paper intends to refute shared beliefs about the role multi-year gymnasia play in the system. It seeks answers to the following questions: (1) Are

entrance procedures able to select the best students, do multi-year gymnasia really serve the most able students? (2) Do multi-year gymnasia really accelerate student cognitive development? Do students in multi-year gymnasia learn more than students in other tracks? The analyses, using hierarchical linear modeling, use data from PISA 2000, PISA 2003, PISA 2006, and from an additional survey of students in grade 12 in 2000.

## Introduction

International comparative studies repeatedly show that the Czech Republic exhibits a stronger dependence of achievement and attainment on family background than most developed countries (OECD 2001, 2004, and 2007). It has also a long tradition of early tracking in education. In the past decade, the differentiation of educational tracks has been further increasing. It occurs at all levels of the system and takes on many diverse forms. The Educational Act of 2004 launched a curricular reform introducing a bi-level curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Many headmasters interpret the reform as an invitation to determine their educational profiles through optional subjects and to create selective classes of all sorts that they can then offer parents as special educational opportunities for their children.<sup>2</sup> This tendency is enhanced by a decline in the student population that leads to stronger competition between schools for students. These selective schools and classrooms are not visible in regular statistics; differentiation of the system is not monitored.

Data from international comparative studies also show that in the last decade the inequalities in educational results of individual students, schools, and tracks have been growing. Table 1 shows that while the achievement of students in selective tracks is significantly improving, the achievement of students in regular basic schools is deteriorating.

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1 At the national level the curricular framework is defined while schools are expected to design their own educational programs following the national framework but also taking into account specific needs of the local community.

2 The differentiation has so far taken the form of classes with extended teaching of a certain subject, usually a foreign language. In recent years, classes for gifted students are beginning to emerge and entrance exams are increasingly introduced in “prestigious” schools with a high surplus of demand over supply.

**Table 1.***Trends in Reading Achievement of Students in Individual Tracks in Lower Secondary Education*

	2000			2006		
	read	(se)	escs	read	(se)	escs
Basic school	475	(3.3)	-0.2	464	(3.5)	0.0
Basic school with extended curricula	500	(10.3)	0.2	506	(12.7)	0.3
Multi-year gymnasias	579	(7.1)	0.5	602	(3.7)	0.7

*Note:* escs is The Programme for International Student Assessment index of economic, social and cultural status.

*Source:* PISA 2000 and 2006.

The degree of controversy over the differentiation of educational pathways varies across the Czech education system. While differentiation at the primary school level has so far received minimum attention as it has gained strength only in the last several years, and differentiation at the upper secondary level is perceived as appropriate and desirable, differentiation at the lower secondary level is more often perceived as controversial. In this context, multi-year gymnasias seem to be the most controversial and debated part of the system. This long academic track for students from age 11 to 19 was introduced into the system after 1989, following a prewar tradition, and recently is attended by approximately 10 percent of the respective age cohort.<sup>3</sup>

Gymnasias have always played the role of exclusive institutions in the educational system, with exceptionally high demands on their students. The first gymnasium was founded in 1556. In 1848 gymnasias became eight-year institutions divided into a lower and higher level. The United School Act of April 1948 shortened the length of gymnasium studies from the original eight to four years. At that time, 11 percent of the population studied at multi-year gymnasias. During the socialist period, gymnasium curricula significantly diverged from the curricula of interwar gymnasias, and gymnasium studies still represented an educational track for gifted students aspiring to university studies. In the academic year of 1989, gymnasias were attended by 18 percent of all secondary school students and just over 19 percent of the given age cohort was admitted to universities. Soon after the November of that tumultuous and dramatic year, a significant increase in enrollment was recorded in the numbers of gymnasias as well as the emergence of many multi-year gymnasias with varying study periods (from five to eight years). In the course of the 1990s, the gymnasium study

3 A description of the structure of the Czech education system is included in Appendix A.

period settled at four, six, and eight years. The overall proportion of gymnasium students in the population remained relatively stable. The share of gymnasium students in the population entering secondary education in 2007/2008 represented 18 percent, half of which were students admitted to multi-year gymnasia and half were students entering four-year programs.

A proposal of OECD experts to abolish tracking at the lower secondary level at the beginning of this decade met strong opposition from politicians and Czech elites. The discussion about preservation or elimination of multi-year gymnasia is complicated by the absolute absence of empirical data on the impact of students' division into either multi-year gymnasia or "residual" basic schools based on their educational results and further educational trajectory.

### **International Findings on the Impact of Educational Trajectory Differentiation on Students in Different Tracks**

Researchers in the United States and United Kingdom have devoted great attention to the theme of educational trajectory differentiation at the level of lower and upper secondary education.<sup>4</sup> They primarily studied the impact of student separation into selective and non-selective classes on their educational results and socialization; they mapped the differences in teaching, and separation mechanisms.

In the American survey *High School and Beyond* (Gamoran and Mare 1989) and the National Education Longitudinal Study, thousands of students within the differentiated system were observed over the long-term with the aim to study the impact of tracking on the students' educational results. The survey confirmed that students in the highest track learn more than students in other tracks (controlling for other variables, such as socio-economic status and initial knowledge) and that placement in the highest track increases the likelihood of secondary education completion. These studies have also shown that track selection mechanisms slightly prefer minority students and girls (they are represented in higher tracks to a higher degree than their results would suggest). However, higher representation in lower tracks is maintained in relation to social classes. The representation of children from poor families in lower tracks is higher than their results would suggest. Research has shown that tracking increases inequalities in results and in likelihood of secondary school completion among students from families with higher and lower socio-economic status.

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4 Very little research, on the other hand, was carried out in Central and Eastern Europe, despite the long tradition of student differentiation into selective and non-selective classes in this region.

Similar findings were also made in Britain. Kerckhoff (1986) monitored more than 9,000 children in differentiated and non-differentiated conditions (i.e., in schools separating students based on results and schools where all students studied together). He did not find any differences in the average results in both groups. However, in the differentiated environment the highest group achieved better than in a heterogeneous setting, while students in the so-called remedial classrooms achieved far worse than students with the same background and initial knowledge who were educated in higher tracks or in a heterogeneous study group.

Gamoran and Nystrand (1991) studied the impact of teaching methods and attitudes on achievement differences between students in higher and lower tracks; they focused on differences in learning experiences of students in individual tracks. They carried out the research in 58 eighth grade classes with approximately equal representation of classes where students were studying together and classes belonging to the highest, middle, and lowest performance level. The research was carried out during one school year: in autumn, the students took a reading literacy test and an essay test and completed a questionnaire about their family background and study experiences. The questionnaire was also completed by teachers. At the end of the school year, students took a test serving as a final test in English for the entire year. Researchers also carried out observations in class, focusing on the types of questions asked and the extent to which teachers work with students' answers; they also observed students' participation in class work, whether they pay attention and do the tasks required. Based on observation and questionnaires, two indicators were construed: the first characterized the level of in-class discussion, the other student participation. Data analysis using multilevel modeling showed there were no overall differences in average results between heterogeneous and homogeneous classes, but big differences were found in the results of the advanced, regular, and lowest tracks. Analysis showed that a third of the differences are caused by different study experiences in different tracks. It confirmed that students in the lowest tracks suffer from segregation, while the students in the highest tracks benefit from it academically. Oakes supported these findings by a previous study (1990), showing different quality of teaching in different tracks: higher tracks have more academic subjects, more enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers, and a better learning climate.

Ireson, Clark, and Hallam (2002) studied the mechanisms of student separation at British secondary schools (division into groups within class, division into tracks within a year for some or for all study subjects). They found that students are wrongly placed in groups or tracks in many cases (students are not in the groups correspond-

ing to their performance) and that division into groups is influenced by factors such as ethnic origin, race, or family background. The lowest groups feature higher representation of students from poor families and minorities. Another problem is that students often do not change groups even when their performance changes. It has been found that if a child is moved to a higher group, his or her results improve, while, on the contrary, the results of a child with the same performance deteriorate in the lowest group. The above studies in Britain also showed that dividing children according to performance at schools, their socio-economic status is the main predictor of results, even when controlling for initial knowledge. This is not the case in heterogeneous groups. Incorrect placement then directly impacts student results.

In the United States, studies of the effects of student division impacted directly the organization of teaching. Halfway through the twentieth century, it was common for American high school students (11 to 18 years of age) to be divided into three tracks based on IQ tests: (1) the highest, preparing students for university studies, (2) average, for regular students, and (3) the lowest, with prevalently vocational training. Whereas graduates of the highest track attended universities, students from the middle track continued to colleges or immediately entered the labor market, and the lowest track students often left the school early. In the second half of the twentieth century, many American schools eliminated the division of students into permanent tracks in response to these studies and began to offer the main subjects (math, English, science) at greater levels of difficulty. The supposed advantage of this organization was the more flexible division of students into individual subjects, which provided the possibility of different placement for different subjects as well as easier transfer to a more advanced course for students showing improvement.

Lucas (1999) studied the extent to which the new manner of differentiation really removes the disadvantages of permanent tracks. His main research question was to what degree was the different student socialization eliminated in individual tracks. Therefore, he studied whether students really are placed differently for different subjects, the extent to which their placement is based on their results, and whether students move between courses of different difficulty. He found that the placement for English and math courses is determined by math results, that is, the placement in English classes is not primarily dependent on results in English. He also found that the placement of students still depends on their socio-economic status: students with better family backgrounds are represented in courses with higher demands to a higher degree than would correspond to their results and vice versa. The positive finding, however, was that, in most cases students are not placed in courses of the same level

for math and English, and there is frequent movement between different levels, and so the socialization of students in individual courses is not different (e.g., students attending different levels do not have a different relationship to school). Even in this new system, certain students are systematically educated as “unsuccessful” and others as “successful,” though to a lower degree than in the past.

Despite empirical evidence and studies, American experts still differ in their answers to whether or not it is legitimate to separate children into selective and non-selective tracks. Slavin (1987 and 1990) is one of the opponents of differentiation, arguing that the division into groups itself has no effect; differences arise when the groups have different curricula, better teachers, and more finances. To provide certain students in compulsory public education with better teaching conditions than others is anti-democratic; therefore, this practice needs to be abolished.

On the contrary, Kulik (1992) supports the preservation of different tracks. The fact that gifted students benefit academically from selective tracks seems to him a sufficiently convincing argument for their existence. Loveless (1998) believes that the evidence for or against differentiation is unconvincing, and it needs to be left up to the schools whether they want to differentiate or not. In any case, increased effort needs to be put into the improvement of the mechanisms for dividing students and into the care for students in tracks or courses of the lowest difficulty. Also better awareness of the advantages of heterogeneous classes, their possibilities, and ways for improvement is highly needed.

Lucas (1999) argues that the new system keeps disadvantaging students with low socio-economic status and asks whether structural change itself can significantly improve the situation in a system where student division is embedded. Lucas warns against the hasty removal of selective tracks. He calls for a careful study of the effects of such a step so that the potential activities in this direction do not bring more harm than good. He further points out that the removal of labels can easily lead to making the situation less transparent, where children are going to be divided covertly and parents will not have enough information necessary for making decisions. Lucas, however, asks the American school to look for ways towards the highest possible individualization of teaching and curriculum differentiation based on the specific needs of individual students so that each can develop to the maximum.

## Questions and Hypotheses

The debate in the Czech Republic is very similar to that in the United States. Opponents of multi-year gymnasia most often argue that students draining from basic schools to multi-year gymnasia reduces the quality of the educational environment in basic schools, leads to climate deterioration, and a decline in student motivation, and that to maintain the quality of basic education, it would be better if all children were educated together at the level of compulsory education. On the contrary, supporters of gymnasia claim that society's prosperity follows from the quality of its intellectual elites and these need to be recognized as early as possible and provided with high-quality education for the fastest and most efficient possible development of their talents.

However, the situation in the Czech Republic and the British and American systems differs in several aspects: Czech students are not divided within one school, rather they are tracked into separate schools with no movement from one track (school) to another based on performance. Another fundamental difference is that American teachers and educational policymakers have a great deal of empirical evidence about higher achievement and fundamentally different educational experience of students in higher tracks in comparison with students in lower tracks.

In the case of Czech multi-year gymnasia this is only a presumption. Another important feature of the Czech system is that gymnasium education can be attained not only through multi-year programs but also through four-year programs, while multi-year and four-year studies at upper secondary level are carried out in identical conditions in the same schools, with more or less the same curricula and the same teachers. If the multi-year gymnasium did not educate students fundamentally better than the second cycle of basic schools followed by four-year gymnasium, the argument that its existence is justified by its contribution to the more efficient development of gifted students would be invalid. If its sole asset was the different social composition of students, Czech society should not be leading a discussion on whether it is justified to provide gifted children with higher quality education. Instead we should be discussing whether it is legitimate to provide a socially exclusive environment to children from families with high socio-economic status within a system of public compulsory education.

**Table 2.**  
*Structure of Schooling in the Czech Republic*

Option 1	Option 2
Basic School (grades 1–9)	Basic School (grades 1–5)
Gymnasium (grades 10–13)	Multi-year Gymnasium (grades 6–13)

In the Czech Republic, there are no longitudinal studies available focused on studying the impact of student division into selective and non-selective schools on their performance and socialization within compulsory education. Only cross-sectional data are available on the differences between the results of basic school and multi-year gymnasium students, or multi-year and four-year gymnasium students from the comparative tests within international achievement studies (PISA, TIMSS) or by national agencies. A comparison of the achievement of students in individual tracks does not usually control for family background, and therefore often yields inexact information on the benefits of multi-year gymnasia.

Matějů and Straková (2005) used the PISA 2000 data to show that at the level of compulsory schooling, multi-year gymnasia are the main source of variance as for the student results in individual schools and that this variance can be to a great extent ascribed to the differences in students' socio-economic status between basic schools and multi-year gymnasia. Their analysis challenged the embedded image of the high "added value" of multi-year gymnasia as to educational results, but they also showed the great impact of multi-year gymnasium attendance on the students' study aspirations. They found that the aspirations of multi-year gymnasium students are significantly higher than those of basic school students, and aspirations are even very high for gymnasium students with poor results, suggesting that aspirations are a result of socialization rather than performance.

In this paper, we focus namely on comparing multi-year and four-year gymnasia. Such a comparison shows best how the assumptions related to the existence of multi-year gymnasia are met in reality, that is, to what extent it is true that

1. the best students attend multi-year gymnasia; the system is able to recognize them and motivate them to aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies;
2. multi-year gymnasia are capable of developing their students' potential better than basic schools followed by four-year secondary schools; multi-year gymnasium graduates leave secondary education with better knowledge and skills than their equally gifted peers from other tracks with the same family background.

Based on the suspicion that the broadly shared assumptions about the role of multi-year gymnasias in the Czech educational system are false, we formulated the following hypotheses:

1. A significant part of multi-year gymnasium students are not among the best, and a significant part of gifted students stay outside multi-year gymnasias.
2. Multi-year gymnasias provide a socially more exclusive environment than four-year gymnasias but students do not achieve more significant educational progress.

## Data and Methods

As stated above, longitudinal studies that would enable the documentation of the progress among students in individual tracks are lacking in the Czech Republic. National cross-sectional surveys do not have duly documented samples and do not provide high-quality indicators on the students' family backgrounds.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we use international survey data for our analyses, where samples were selected according to international standards and which contained detailed student questionnaires enabling high-quality description of students' family backgrounds. Analyses were carried out on PISA 2000 and PISA 2006 data sets. Apart from data on 15-year-old students, information on students in grade 12 acquired through the national expansion of the survey<sup>6</sup> were used from PISA 2000. In all data sets, national variables identifying track attended<sup>7</sup> were used, variables covering the students' math and reading test results,<sup>8</sup> and variables characterizing the students' family background.<sup>9</sup> For the

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5 In the best case, they are limited to the highest education attained by parents.

6 Within the PISA 2000 survey, third-year secondary school students also were tested in schools selected for the international sample. These students accomplished the same tasks like first-year students.

7 Multi-year gymnasium, four-year gymnasium, technical secondary studies with leaving matriculation examination, vocational secondary studies without leaving matriculation examination, special education.

8 Test scores were determined using the IRT methodology, student performance in each test is described by five *plausible values*. Methods were used in the analysis enabling work with these scores.

9 For grade 10, international index of economic, cultural, and social status index *escs* was used. For grade 12 this index was not available, the variable *ses* was used to characterise the family background—a factor score of the highest education of parents, highest occupational status (ISCO classification), and the ownership of a computer and Internet connection.

additional information on the students' decision whether to participate in the multi-year gymnasium admission procedure, we used data from the IEA TIMSS survey.<sup>10</sup>

We discuss hypothesis 1 using descriptive information. We used multilevel modeling to test hypothesis 2 due to the applied sampling method.<sup>11</sup>

## Analyses and Results

### *Do the most gifted study at multi-year gymnasias?*

First, we asked to what extent do the genuinely best students study at multi-year gymnasias. Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of reading literacy results for basic school ninth grade students and corresponding multi-year gymnasium students in 2000 and 2006. Table 1 shows percentage shares of gymnasium students not achieving average results, not placed among the best quarter or among the best decile. The figures as well as the table show clearly that a significant share of multi-year gymnasium students should not be attending this type of school based on their test results, and on the contrary, a significant share of students whose test results are among the best do not study at multi-year gymnasias. The figures and tables also show, however, that between 2000 and 2006, the overlap between the results of basic schools and multi-year gymnasias decreased. The results of multi-year gymnasium students remained stable in the period observed, while the results of basic school students deteriorated (see Table 1). Math test results give a similar distribution.

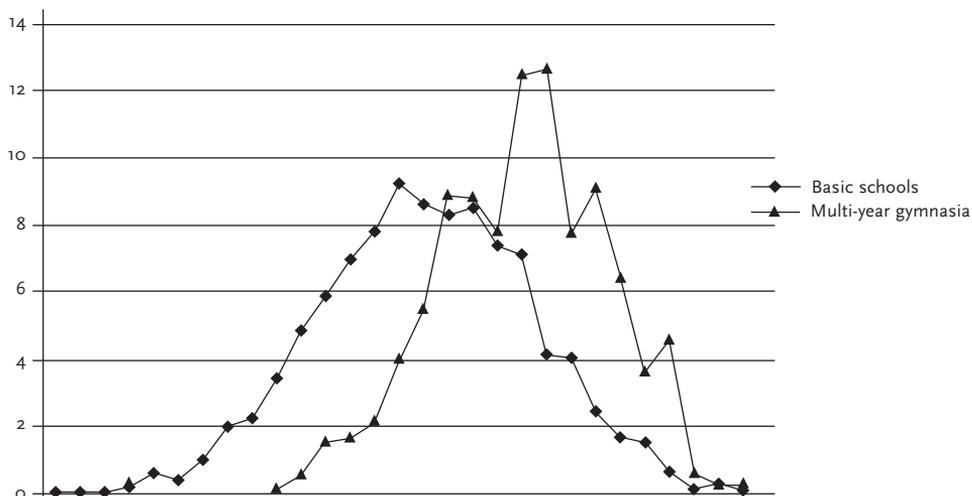
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10 International survey of math and science knowledge and skills of students in fourth and eighth grade of compulsory schooling, carried out in 2007 by International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

11 For the PISA survey, schools are first selected at random, and then students within these schools are selected randomly. The selection cannot be considered strictly random; students in the same schools have some similar characteristics.

**Figure 1.**

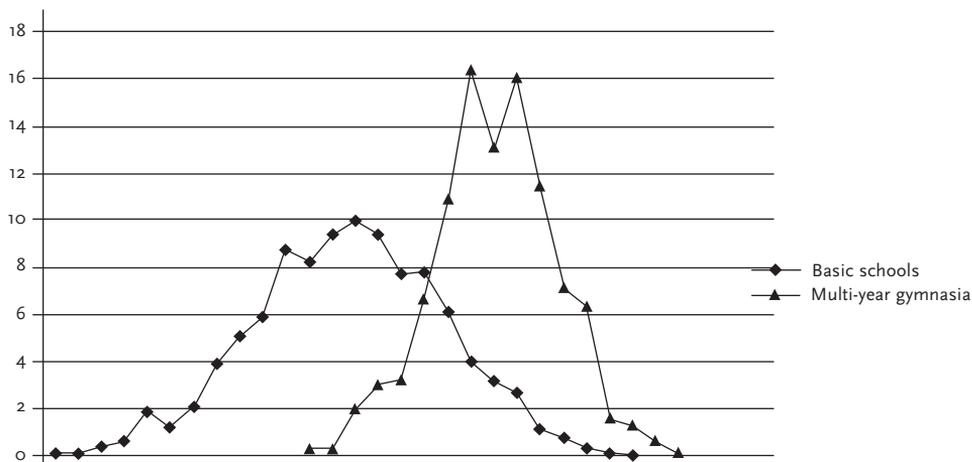
*Distribution of Reading Scores of Students in Ninth Grade of Basic School and in the Corresponding Years of Multi-year Gymnasia, 2000*



Source: PISA 2000.

**Figure 2.**

*Distribution of Reading Scores of Students in Ninth Grade of Basic School and in the Corresponding Years of Multi-year Gymnasia, 2006*



Source: PISA 2006.

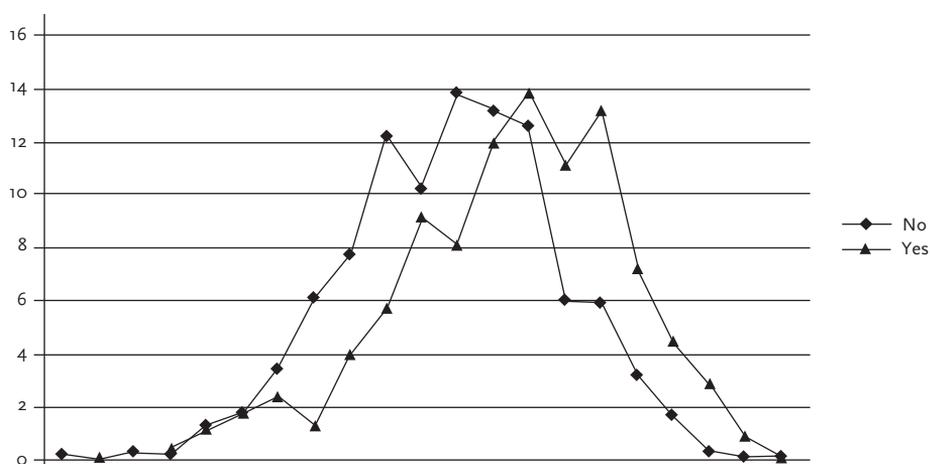
**Table 2.**  
*Percentage Share of Students Not Achieving the Determined Success Levels  
in the Reading Literacy Test*

Score lower than	Percent of multi-year gymnasium students	
	2000	2006
50th percentile	8.2%	2.1%
75th percentile	28.2%	14.6%
90th percentile	61.1%	50.7%

Source: PISA 2000 and 2006.

When assessing the size of student groups not achieving given levels, we need to take into account that the comparison was done in the ninth grade, after multi-year gymnasium students have gone through four years of selective education. Unfortunately, there are no representative data in the Czech Republic to compare achievement between the two tracks in the sixth grade when students are entering eight-year gymnasia. Figure 3 shows the distribution of TIMSS math test results for students at the end of fourth grade who wish to aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies and those who do not wish to do so. The distribution clearly shows that the aspiration to multi-year gymnasium studies definitely does not correspond to the test results for many students.

**Figure 3.**  
*Distribution of Mathematics Scores for Fourth Grade Students Who Aspire for Multi-year  
Gymnasium Studies and Those Students Who Do Not*



Source: TIMSS 2007.

The results presented clearly show that, by far, not all students who belong among the best aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies and study there. Many talented students do not aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies at all. At the same time, students whose results are average or below the average aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies and many are accepted to this selective track. The findings presented in this paragraph support hypothesis 1. If the system truly wanted multi-year gymnasia to serve as special educational centers for the most gifted, it would devote much more attention to tracing, motivating, and selecting them.

### ***How efficiently do multi-year gymnasia educate?***

The benefit of multi-year gymnasia should be assessed according to whether this track helps its students to achieve higher educational progress than their peers, who come to gymnasia when they finish the second cycle of basic schools. To duly calculate the school's contribution to the growth of student results,<sup>12</sup> we would need to separate the information on current student test results from the impact of students' initial knowledge and family background by controlling for these factors (Scheerens, Cees, and Thomass 2003). However, we do not have the information on student results for the two time-relevant periods ("initial" and "leaving" knowledge), as there are no longitudinal surveys in the Czech Republic. Therefore, we cannot calculate the added value, and we only take family background into consideration when estimating the impact of attended tracks on student results.

Table 3 includes the parameters of multilevel models that estimate the impact of the track attended on students' math test results. Four-year gymnasium serves as a reference level. The increments in test scores related to a track, as stated in the first column, show the difference between the given track and a four-year gymnasium. Model 1 explains the result solely by track. The effects of all tracks are statistically significant.

However, when socio-economic status was added into the model at the level of student and school (student social composition), differences between multi-year and four-year gymnasium cease to be statistically significant. This means that at the end of the first year of upper secondary education, there are no statistically significant differences in math knowledge between students with four years of education in the multi-year gymnasium's selective environment and students with the same socio-economic

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<sup>12</sup> *Added value.*

status who started studying at a four-year gymnasium after finishing the second cycle of basic school. The overall better results of multi-year gymnasium students are to a great extent caused by the better social composition of multi-year classes.

Moreover, during the first year of upper secondary education, students entering four-year gymnasium catch up with most of what the multi-year gymnasias students received in the course of compulsory education. The analysis of the knowledge gain in individual tracks between the ninth and the tenth grade carried out within the PISA 2003 survey shows that students of four-year programs achieve approximately twice as much progress in this school year compared to their peers from multi-year gymnasias.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 3.**  
*Impact of Attended Track on Student's Mathematics Score, Grade 10*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	coef.	se	sig.	coef.	se	sig.
Intercept	562.01	3.84	0.000	561.5	3.52	0.000
Escls_school			0.000	61.82	16.76	0.001
Multi-year gymnasias	30.87	13.84	0.027	14.51	13.05	0.269
Technical	-75.40	13.33	0.000	-41.2	15.61	0.010
Vocational	-172.49	14.75	0.000	-117.14	19.79	0.000
Special	-229.48	24.77	0.000	-138.38	36.2	0.000
Escls_student				9.22	2.55	0.001
Variance explained at the school level	84%			89%		

Source: PISA 2006.

Table 4 shows similar results also for the reading literacy test. Here, we only show model 1; as for reading literacy, the difference between four-year and multi-year gymnasium is not statistically significant even when socio-economic background is not taken into account.

<sup>13</sup> Test results of basic school ninth grade students aspiring to four-year gymnasium studies were compared to the results of four-year gymnasium, first-year students and the results of students in corresponding years of multi-year gymnasias. For results, see Appendix B.

**Table 4.***Impact of Attended Track on Student's Reading Literacy Score, Grade 10*

	Model 1		
	coef.	se	sig.
Intercept	535.23	3.69	0.000
Multi-year gymnasia	14.35	9.83	0.147
Technical	-83.08	10.70	0.000
Vocational	-214.70	14.57	0.000
Special	-237.86	23.51	0.000
Variance explained at the school level	84%		

Source: PISA 2006.

PISA 2006 data show that studying the lower cycle at a multi-year gymnasium is not related to a higher increase in student knowledge and skills than studies at basic school followed by a transfer to a four-year gymnasium. Data show, however, that there are statistically significant differences between four-year and multi-year gymnasia in the composition of student population as to their family background.<sup>14</sup>

The PISA 2006 survey provides information on the differences in the results of gymnasium students at the beginning of upper secondary education. For the assessment of the benefits of both tracks, however, the differences in students' school leaving knowledge are decisive. As the data acquired in national assessments do not provide information on sample composition<sup>15</sup> and a good indicator of student family background, we use the PISA 2000 data to estimate the benefits of higher gymnasium for student results. Apart from first-year students, third-year students were also tested then. Table 5 shows the results of a model analogous to the one in Table 3 for grade twelve students. The international *escs* index is not used as an indicator of family background (survey in grade twelve was not performed internationally); instead, the

14 Differences in the values of the index of economic, social, and cultural status among students of individual school types were statistically significant in data sets from PISA 2000, 2003, and 2006. This applies also to differences in the composition of students of multi-year and four-year gymnasium classes. For values of indexes for individual school types, see Appendix B.

15 Data are not acquired through probability selection, and although they are large samples, it is not clear whether they represent the gymnasium student population accurately.

ses variable is used—a factor score of the highest education of parents, the highest occupational status, and the ownership of a computer and Internet connection.

**Table 5.**  
*Impact of Attended Track on Mathematics Score, Grade 12*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	coef.	se	sig.	coef.	se	sig.
Intercept	548.75	3.26	0.000	548.87	3.06	0.000
Ses_school				24.58	9.03	0.008
Multi-year gymnasia	19.16	10.69	0.075	14.57	10.22	0.158
Technical	-61.49	10.33	0.000	-41.43	10.49	0.000
Vocational	-145.80	9.74	0.000	-106.55	13.13	0.000
Ses_student				11.25	3.11	0.001
Variance explained at the school level	82%			87%		

Source: PISA 2000, Czech extension.

The table shows that in 2000, the difference in math scores of grade twelve students at multi-year and four-year gymnasia was at the edge of statistical significance. When the socio-economic status of students at the individual level and at the school level is taken into account, the difference between both gymnasium types becomes statistically insignificant. The differences in students' results in both tracks are then to a great extent caused by different social composition of students, that is, students from better educated families study at multi-year gymnasia more frequently than students at four-year gymnasia. More educated parents invest more energy into finding the most prestigious schools for their children, prepare them for entrance examinations, and support them during their studies.

Table 6 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in reading literacy scores in grade twelve (just like in grade ten) between students of both types of gymnasia, even when we disregard the different student composition in both tracks. The findings presented in this paragraph confirm hypothesis 2.

**Table 6.**  
*Impact of Attended Track on Reading Score, Grade 12*

	Model 1		
	coef.	se	sig.
Intercept	552.28	2.53	0.000
Multi-year gymnasia	11.52	8.6	0.186
Technical	-56.33	7.59	0.000
Vocational	-148.84	7.27	0.000
Variance explained at the school level	89%		

Source: PISA 2000, Czech extension.

## Conclusions and Recommendations for Educational Policy

Analysis makes it apparent that many students with average or below-average results aspire to (and attend) multi-year gymnasia, although many talented students also do not aspire to multi-year gymnasium studies. Analysis further shows that a multi-year gymnasium does not contribute to the development of student competencies in basic subjects like math and native language any more than a basic school plus a four-year gymnasium.

Our findings show that the basic assumptions connected with the role of multi-year gymnasia are false and that multi-year gymnasia cannot be referred to as schools serving to accelerate the development of gifted students. This is a very *preliminary and grave* finding that requires further confirmation, as the available data are not longitudinal and thus do not allow for the added value of multi-year gymnasium studies to be determined with complete rigor or to discover the mechanisms of decision-making and admission to multi-year gymnasium studies.

If a longitudinal study following students during the transition from basic schools to multi-year gymnasia were to confirm the findings presented here, it would be necessary to open a discussion about whether it is justifiable to provide children from families with the highest socio-economic status better conditions for studies than their peers from worse family backgrounds in the framework of public schooling. This is despite the fact that many of them do not display special talents and that multi-year gymnasium studies do not appear to lead to their more effective education.

Recently, early differentiation of students has enjoyed strong support among both the general public and education community in the Czech Republic. In the survey carried out in 2009, only 4 percent of teachers expressed an opinion that selective schools at the lower secondary level should not exist and 13 percent of teachers believed that their amount should be restricted. Over a quarter of teachers wanted to increase the number of selective schools and classrooms; about half of the teaching body was satisfied with the current state (Factum Invenio 2009).

In a survey of parents of students in compulsory and upper secondary education, 76 percent of respondents supported the current practice of early selection (STEM/MARK 2009). The same survey confirmed that school choice is advantageous for children from families with high socio-economic status. Among families with limited financial resources, only 15 percent of parents choose schools for their children, while 85 percent sent their children to neighboring schools. Among affluent parents 60 percent choose the schools for their children. A similar pattern gives the distribution according to the level of education. Two-thirds of parents with higher education and only one-third of parents with compulsory education choose school for their child (STEM/MARK 2009).

However, a transition from selective to comprehensive education is not possible without long-term and thoughtful preparation. This should include a change of the “mission” for teachers so that they see their primary task as encouraging the maximum study progress of each student instead of distributing students into individual tracks. It should also include providing schools with the methodological and material resources from which they can individualize the teaching within a heterogeneous group composed of students with differing academic skills and family backgrounds. It would be highly desirable to stress an orientation towards teaching individualization as soon as possible, as it represents a fundamental change in the understanding of the role of school and poses high demands for teachers on the adoption of new responsibilities and learning new skills.

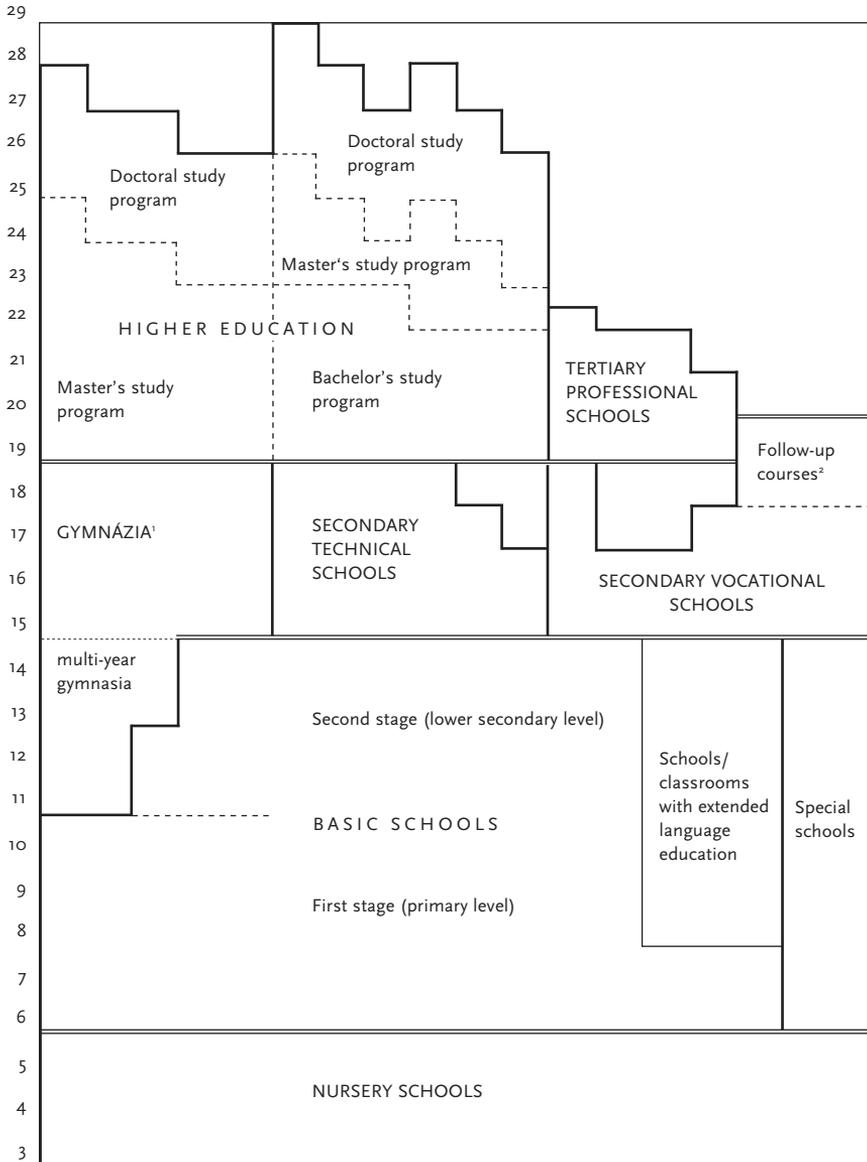
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# Appendix A

## Structure of the Czech Education System



- Notes: 1. Compulsory education lasts nine years. The majority of pupils complete it at basic schools. Pupils who study a multi-year gymnasium accomplish it in the relevant years of gymnasium.
2. A follow-up study is designed for graduates at three-year courses of secondary vocational schools. It gives them the opportunity to improve their qualifications and pass “*maturitní zkouška*,” which opens up access to tertiary education study.

## Appendix B

**Table B1.**

*Annual Increment in Achievement Scores of Students in Multi-year and Four-year Gymnasium*

		Maths literacy		Reading literacy		Science literacy		Problem solving	
Grade 9	MG	623.9	(5.8)	585.6	(4.8)	629.9	(4.9)	613.3	(5.4)
	BS	586.6	(6.1)	553.1	(6.8)	588.7	(6.8)	578.8	(6.0)
Grade 10	MG	637.2	(7.2)	600.7	(6.6)	643.0	(6.6)	628.3	(6.9)
	4G	610.3	(5.8)	584.4	(5.4)	615.7	(7.2)	605.2	(5.5)
Progress	MG	13.3	(1.4)	15.1	(1.9)	13.1	(1.6)	15.0	(1.7)
	4G	23.7	(2.8)	31.3	(3.6)	27.0	(2.7)	26.4	(3.3)

Source: PISA 2003.

**Table B2.**

*Index of Economical Social and Cultural Status per Secondary School Track*

Track	Index escs	
	escs	(se)
Basic school	-0.051	(0.027)
Multi-year gymnasium	0.737	(0.037)
Four-year gymnasium	0.565	(0.082)
Technical education	0.053	(0.036)
Vocational education	-0.248	(0.037)
Special education	-0.863	(0.091)
Country mean	0.029	(0.019)

Source: PISA 2006.

**Table B3A.***Variables Included in Multilevel Models, Grade 10*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
PV1MATH	61,993	224.95	860.17	536.83	97.53
PV2MATH	61,993	186.39	858.62	535.41	98.24
PV3MATH	61,993	243.33	915.01	535.28	96.48
PV4MATH	61,993	229.62	874.58	536.00	97.17
PV5MATH	61,993	184.83	872.64	535.89	98.04
PV1READ	61,993	90.76	834.48	508.36	106.83
PV2READ	61,993	86.75	819.07	509.69	107.53
PV3READ	61,993	83.54	844.72	509.02	105.62
PV4READ	61,993	108.40	867.05	507.74	106.23
PV5READ	61,993	98.78	815.89	507.98	108.72
ESCS	61,993	-2.611	2.361	0.102	0.727
ESCS_school	139	-1.077	1.279	0.271	0.502
MG	139	0.00	1.00	0.37	0.49
Technical	139	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.47
Vocational	139	0.00	1.00	0.15	0.36
Special	139	0.00	1.00	0.06	0.23

*Source:* PISA 2006.

**Table B3B.***Variables Included in Multilevel Models, Grade 12*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
PV1MATH	64,376	263.29	814.31	549.43	94.18
PV2MATH	64,376	265.04	802.69	549.05	92.77
PV3MATH	64,376	257.92	838.85	550.76	93.06
PV4MATH	64,376	278.64	814.57	549.29	92.72
PV5MATH	64,376	284.89	803.12	551.05	93.24
PV1READ	64,376	293.06	788.71	553.81	84.81
PV2READ	64,376	274.88	814.12	553.56	85.47
PV3READ	64,376	267.65	816.89	552.67	83.54
PV4READ	64,376	270.34	769.58	553.94	84.34
PV5READ	64,376	244.89	810.48	554.34	85.07
Ses	64,376	-2.58	4.47	0.00	1.00
Ses_school	120	-1.27	1.55	-0.02	0.62
MG	120	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.38
Technical	120	0.00	1.00	0.36	0.48
Vocational	120	0.00	1.00	0.31	0.46

*Source:* PISA 2000.



# Minority Cultural Rights or an Excuse for Segregation? Roma Minority Education in Hungary

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## Abstract

The establishment and maintenance of Roma minority education—as Roma in Hungary are considered to be an ethnic minority, protected and provided with minority rights by the Hungarian Minority Act—is in full accordance with both the provisions of the domestic legal framework as well as with the political and moral obligations of Hungary originating from its ratification of international conventions on minority protection. The provisions on Roma minority education take into account the lack of common culture and the linguistic diversity of the Roma, and even the lack of a distinct minority language in the case of the overwhelming majority of the Roma population in Hungary. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the aims of Roma minority education are inadequately articulated, which leaves room for misuse in practice. As some cases show—investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities (Minorities Ombudsman) or brought to court by a strategic litigation NGO, Chance for Children Foundation—the educational framework that aimed at promoting the identity of cultural minorities and at providing equal access to adequate education for children from minority backgrounds can actually be used as a tool to degrade or segregate socio-economically disadvantaged Roma pupils.

# The Social and Legal Context of Roma Minority Education

Roma constitute the largest minority group in Hungary (and at the same time, the Roma of Hungary are one of the largest Roma populations in Central and Eastern Europe). The estimated number of the Roma in Hungary is at least 400,000–600,000 (Open Society Institute 2001), which is approximately 5 to 6 percent of Hungary’s total population, while the last population census in Hungary in 2001, based on self-declaration of ethnic affiliation, showed only 108,407 Roma. (The divergence in estimates can be interpreted in part as a reaction by Roma questioned during the census to the prejudices and hostility in the current social environment, as well as a permeating fear concerning ethnic registration remaining from the Roma Holocaust.)

The legal status of the Roma minority in Hungary is provided by the 1993 Minority Act (Act No. LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities). It should be mentioned that the Minority Act neither contains any definition specifying the difference between “ethnic” and “national” minorities, nor does it make any distinction between the statuses or the rights of these two types of minorities. Usually, within the Hungarian context, the main condition for a minority to be considered as “national”—as opposed to “ethnic”—is the existence of a kin-state. According to this approach, Roma and Ruthenian are “ethnic minorities,” in addition to eleven “national minorities” (Pap 2007). The official list of minorities in Hungary listed by the Hungarian Minority Act are Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Greek, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serb, Slovak, Slovenian, and Ukrainian.

There are three main groups (and twenty-seven subgroups) of Roma in Hungary, grouped according to cultural and linguistic categories: the Romungros (who are linguistically assimilated and speak Hungarian as a mother tongue), the Beás (who speak a language that is based on an ancient version of Romanian), and the speakers of different dialects of the Romani language (the most widespread version is Lovari). According to a series of sociological studies, the majority of the Romungro population has diverged from the idea of assimilation during the last decade (partly as a reaction to exclusion and segregation by the majority population). In contrast, there are more Beás and Romani speakers now than a decade ago who indicate Hungarian as their national identity (Kemény 2002).

The situation of the Roma minority is clearly different from the other minorities living in Hungary. In Hungary, Roma constitute the only “visible” minority and the majority of the Roma population faces serious social disadvantages and suffers

from discrimination, while the members of the other (mostly national) minorities are considered as socially integrated. Additionally, the Roma lack features normally possessed by national minorities, such as an established common culture. Given these conditions, since the Act entered into force, it has always been doubted whether the approach of this comprehensive legal framework—dealing with Roma issues and the issues of other minorities in the same way—is adequate or inadequate.

The minorities of Hungary, except for Roma, are overwhelmingly assimilated to mainstream society, though they may maintain some kind of cultural identity, encouraged by and supported by the relevant Hungarian legislation, the institutionalized system of minority self-governments, and by minority policies in the fields of education and culture. As regards the background—and adequacy—of the Hungarian Minority Act, it is important to note that the Hungarian approach to ethnic and national minority rights has always been defined by a more or less subliminal reference to the rights of the ethnic Hungarian diaspora in the neighboring states, and the legal and political consequences of this stance are highly debated (Pap 2006). The Hungarian Minority Act is a peculiar feature in itself. An uninformed outsider would assume that fervent demands from the minorities catalyzed the legislation in Hungary. This is actually not the case, as this law is rather an initiative of the state, intended to show benevolence towards guarding the cultural heritages of the already over-assimilated national minorities and indirectly aimed at promoting the situation of Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries.

The Minority Act contains provisions on the cultural and educational rights of the ethnic and national minorities. Romani languages (Romani and Beás) are listed beside the other twelve acknowledged minority languages in Article (42) of the Hungarian Minority Act. However, as stated in the wording of the Act, “it is permitted to conduct Roma minority education in the Hungarian language (exclusively), but according to the parents’ requirements, educational institutions must provide Romani language (Romani or Beás) education as well” (Article 2 (45) of the Hungarian Minority Act). This article means in practice two (or three) different kinds of Roma minority education. First, those Roma who do not speak any of the Romani languages (because they belong to the Romungro community or to some other Roma community that does not use a Romani language anymore) might require a special kind of Roma minority education, namely “Roma Ethnography” or “Roma Culture” courses, taught in the Hungarian language. Second, the Romani or Beás speaking families might require “classical” minority education, that is, courses (or at least some courses) taught in the minority language. And as a third, in-between solution, parents (or pupils themselves if above age 14) might require Romani/Beás language classes if they wish to

reinforce their affiliation to Roma culture, and/or wish to participate later in courses that are taught in Romani/Beás.

According to Amendment 3 to the 1993 Public Education Act, the Hungarian state supports the use of minority languages in minority education, regardless of the maintainer of the institution, and guarantees the provision of minority education within the framework of public education (organized by local municipalities). Minority education groups in preschools or classes in schools are to be organized in every settlement where at least eight parents who belong to the same national or ethnic minority demand so.

For the time-being in Hungary, minority education issues are regulated by a modified version of a government Resolution on the Directives on Preschool and Primary School Education of Ethnic and National Minorities (No. 32/1997 (XI) MKM, based on the 1993 Public Education Act—Act No. LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education and its amendments). This legal document makes a clear distinction between the education of national minorities and Roma minority education, based on the difference that a minority language is not necessarily an element of the latter. A feature of this resolution is so-called “intercultural” education, aimed at starting a cultural dialogue between participant and non-participant (in minority education) pupils of the school where minority education is conducted and providing an opportunity for majority pupils to learn more about the concerned minority’s culture—in the framework of non-compulsory, extracurricular activities.

This Public Education Act prescribes the establishment of a National Minority Committee by the representatives of minority communities. This is an advisory body regarding minority education issues at the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to a resolution of the Ministry of Education of Culture (No. 23/2004 (VIII 27)), all textbooks should be evaluated (by pedagogy experts) to ensure that the content of textbooks are in accordance with the requirements of equal treatment regarding (among others) ethnic and national minorities, and do not contain hate speech or stereotypes. In “questionable” cases, experts with an academic background in the particular issue should be involved. (However, there is no mechanism to involve minority representatives in the evaluation process, except in the case of the teaching materials of minority education programs.)

The Ombudsman Act, which was passed in the same year as the Law on Ethnic and National Minorities of 1993, provides the legal background of the position of the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities, otherwise known as the Minorities Ombudsman (a position that is currently held—since 2007—by a person of Roma origin).

In 2003, the Equal Treatment Act (Act No. CXXV of 2003 on the Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities) came into force and it prohibits the unequal treatment of individuals on the basis of their origin or affiliation to an ethnic or national minority (among other grounds of discrimination). According to this dichotomy, the education-related issues of Roma might fall either within the authority of a minority protection system (manifested, first of all, in the Minorities Ombudsman) or within the scope of an equal treatment system (e.g., the Equal Treatment Authority), both systems being difficult to manage and characterized by a level of overlap in some aspects.

As for international documents concerning equality in education, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) might be noted, which declares that education “shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups,” and that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

The Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO 1960) articulates the claim that the establishment and maintenance “for religious or linguistic reasons, of separate educational systems or institutions offering an education” should be in keeping “with the wishes of the pupil’s parents or legal guardians,” that participation in such systems or attendance at such institutions should be optional, and moreover, that the education provided should conform “to such standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities, in particular for education of the same level.”

With the release of the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Educational Rights of Minorities (an OSCE document from 1995), another milestone was reached in the history of European minority education—and affecting Hungary as well. This manifesto (which is not legally binding, but imposes political and moral obligation upon the OSCE party) states the double aim of social integration and protection of the cultural integrity of minorities and requires party states to apply the principles of non-discrimination and to respect cultural minority rights. The document expects states not just to tolerate the establishment and maintenance of minority educational institutions, but also calls on them to act in a proactive manner regarding the measures and resources aimed at providing adequate educational facilities for minorities. Regarding the aims of minority education, the “Explanatory Note” of the document emphasizes that: “minorities not only have the right to maintain their identity through the medium of their mother tongue, but they also have the right to integrate into and participate in the wider national society by learning the State language.” However, the document also claims that “with integration in mind, the intellectual and cultural development of majorities and minorities should not take place in isolation.”

As for Roma education issues in the European context, a specific point of reference is the Recommendations on the Education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe by the Council of Europe (2000). The document concludes that the “curriculum, on the whole, and the teaching materials should therefore be designed so as to take into account the cultural identity of Roma/Gypsy children,” but warns at the same time: “However, the member states should ensure that this does not lead to the establishment of separate curricula, which might lead to the setting up of separate classes.”

Concerning the international obligations of Hungary regarding the Roma minority’s cultural and educational rights, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages should also be mentioned. By signing in 1998, Hungary assumed obligations towards only six minority languages (Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian, and Slovenian) but remarkably did not undertake to guarantee language rights for the members of the Roma minority of Hungary, who speak dialects of the Romani language or Beás. The Hungarian government later gave an official explanation for this, declaring that “though Hungary wants to develop both Gypsy languages, presently it does not yet want—or rather, cannot yet—undertake such obligations which are impossible to meet” (Resolution about Hungary’s Second Report Pursuant to the ECMRL Convention 1146/2002 (IX 4): 24). It is important to note that, despite strong tendencies of linguistic assimilation during the second half of the twentieth century, currently the Roma are the most sizeable linguistic minority in contemporary Hungary. About 55,000 people speak some dialect of the Romani language and the Beás speaking Roma population is about the same size (Kemény 2000: 105). In 2008, Hungary expanded its obligations regarding minority languages under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by undertaking a legal commitment to guarantee language rights for the speakers of two Romani languages: Lovari and Beás. Educational programs (from grades one to twelve) were developed, while the system of teacher training for these languages is currently being elaborated. The 2010 ECMRL Recommendations to Hungary “recommends that the Hungarian authorities... as a matter of priority... take further resolute measures in language planning for Romani and Beás with a view to making available on a wider scale teaching of and in these at all appropriate stages” (ECMRL 2010: point 6).

According to the information provided by the Public Education Information Office, currently 535 kindergartens, 577 elementary schools, and 48 high schools provide national or ethnic minority education programs, while 305 elementary schools and 13 schools provide curricular classes in minority languages. According to recent data, almost 12,000 children participated in Roma minority preschool education, as did approximately 27,000 pupils in 207 elementary schools. Roma minority education

is present in secondary schools as well (in 18 institutions), with the participation of almost 2,000 students (Hungarian Ministry of Education 2004: 4).

## Educational Segregation of Roma Children in Hungary

One of the most notable manifestations of the disadvantages of the Roma in Hungary is a significantly lower average level of education compared to members of mainstream society; this includes illiteracy among Roma adults. The causes behind this may lie in the limited access to quality education, the atrocious practice of putting socio-economically disadvantaged, but mentally fit Roma children into “special” classes for the mentally handicapped, and the segregation found in lower levels of education. It should be noted that identifying the exact forces behind discriminatory conduct, practices, and institutional processes against Roma children are quite challenging; nevertheless, the situation should not be oversimplified by blaming only the teachers for being prejudiced and biased (Erőss and Gárdos 2008).

As for the phenomenon of segregation, the Hungarian Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities Act of 2003 considers unlawful segregation as a distinct form of unequal treatment (in addition to direct and indirect negative discrimination, harassment, and retribution). The definition is as follows: “unlawful segregation is a conduct that separates individuals or groups of individuals from others on the basis of their characteristics as defined in Article 8 without a reasonable explanation based on objective considerations” (Article 1(10) 1 of the Equal Treatment Act). It is important to stress that the present situation of unlawful segregation might be a result of the tolerance and perpetuation of continued, past segregation, and therefore decision-makers are responsible for taking appropriate measures and efforts aimed at eliminating the phenomenon.

As for the “grounds” of educational discrimination of Roma children, “national or ethnic origin” (Article e(8) 1 of the Equal Treatment Act) might be what first comes to mind. However, according to the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority (2009) some other grounds might be also relevant, such as “racial origin,” Article b (8) 1; “skin color,” Article c(8) 1; “mother tongue,” Article f(8) 1; “social origin,” Article p(8) 1; and “financial status,” Article q(8) 1.

According to the logic of the Equal Treatment Act, although minority education is in itself a kind of segregation, it cannot be considered as unlawful, if there is a rea-

sonable explanation based on objective considerations regarding the aim of the segregation (i.e., maintaining a distinct minority culture), if it is the informed and voluntary choice of those concerned (i.e., the parents and the children themselves if age 14 or above), and if the value of the educational service is equal to non-minority education (Farkas 2007: 10). In the case of minorities other than the Roma, the consideration of the relationship between minority education and the possibility of unlawful segregation does not have much relevance in practice, since all of these national minorities are socio-economically integrated, and prejudices against them are practically non-existent. But in the case of the Roma, such worries are justified as the diverse forms of discrimination and exclusion of Roma are prevalent in many fields of social life.

Just like in other Central and Eastern European countries, the unlawful segregation—that is, cases where no reasonable explanation is available to justify the practice or the situation of segregation (Cahn 1998)—of Roma children in educational institutions is considered to be a persistent and widespread problem in Hungary. However, there are no exact data on the prevalence of the phenomenon due to the current legal framework whereby collecting and processing data on national or ethnic origin, without the concerned person's explicit consent, is prohibited by data protection laws (see, for example, Act No. LXIII of 1992 on the Protection of Personal Data and Access to Public Data) and the current practice of data handling (even aggregated data on the presence of Roma is unavailable).

Even with this lack of official statistics, however, the forms of unlawful segregation of Roma are identifiable (Farkas 2007: 27). It may occur as intra-school segregation (separate all-Roma classes, taught either according to the general curriculum or according to a kind of inferior curriculum), as intra-class segregation (pupils taught according to different standards/curricula within the same class), as inter-school segregation (all-Roma schools, which may be from the result of regional or housing separation), or even as individual segregation (the practice of offering the option of home schooling for Roma pupils). The sociological conceptualization of segregation differs somewhat from the legal one. In the Hungarian context, scholars usually examine the ratio of the Roma and non-Roma children at a given level of educational institutions, and consider the composition as a realization of segregation if the proportion of Roma children is higher than 50 percent (Equal Treatment Authority 2009). The 2009 Amnesty International Report on Hungary (2009) found that *de facto* segregated Roma-only schools exist in approximately 170 localities, and measures to eliminate the segregated education of Roma have been met with resistance by some local authorities; furthermore, the financial resources available for the implementation of such measures have been underapplied or misap-

plied. Comparative research has described the ways in which local authorities try to avoid or obstruct desegregation measures (Neumann and Zolnai 2008). These observations regarding the issue of school desegregation are in accordance with the conclusions of the latest ECRI Report (ECRI 2009).

## The Misuse of Minority Education in Hungary

Ironically, the provisional framework of Roma minority education proved to be a double-edged sword, as it was used—and is still being used—in numerous cases as an excuse for unlawful segregation in Hungary.

The previous version of the regulation on Roma minority education (Government Resolution 130/1995 (X.26) on the National Core Curriculum) was especially problematic, supposedly providing for the “advancement” of Roma minority education, and was gradually abolished starting in 2004. This process is shaped by government Resolution 243/2003 (XII.17.), Article 12 of which overwrote the above mentioned regulation of 1995, including its provisions on upgrading Roma minority education. The practice of “advancing Roma minority education” appeared at the beginning of the 1990s before the 1993 Minority Act. The professed aim of this educational practice was the promotion of equal opportunities by decreasing the social disadvantages of Roma children through “talent management.” This form of Roma education was later harshly criticized because of the implicated “ethnicization” of socio-economic disadvantages. As it was carried out in practice, and as it was observed by experts, these kinds of educational programs—based on an ethnicized concept of a disadvantaged situation—were charged with creating harmful segregation instead of improving the situation of Roma pupils and proved to be rather counterproductive considering the original aim of “advancement” (Ministry of Education 2004: 3). By taking these experiences into account, the modified version of the Ministry of Culture and Public Education Resolution on the Directives on Preschool and School Education of Ethnic and National Minorities (No. 32/1997 (XI) MKM) do not include any more elements aimed at promotion of the educational advancement of minority students: the only aim of Roma minority education—as in the case of national minorities—is to promote minority culture and identity. However, according to the latest report of the Minorities Ombudsman (2008), the practice of conducting (and even organizing) “Roma advancement education” had still not disappeared in 2008, four years after its abolishment.

In the case of Roma minority education, even the undoubtedly benevolent initiative of “intercultural education,” aimed at improving interethnic relations between Roma and non-Roma children and raising anti-racist consciousness, might have undesired side effects. According to a report of the minority ombudsman, which detailed a complaint regarding Roma intercultural education, the content of an accredited educational material about the prejudices against Roma—and the classroom discussion generated by it—was humiliating for Roma pupils. The case is described as follows in the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities (2001) (author’s translation):

The leader of a local Roma Self-government presented a complaint to the Minority Ombudsman, claiming that anti-Roma statements were expressed during a biology class in a municipal elementary school. For example: “the Roma have a specific smell.” We called upon the headmaster of the school to provide us with information regarding the concerned biology class. The headmaster investigated the case, and then informed us that he had instructed the biology teacher to revise and modify his outline and to remove the problematic parts. In this specific case, these actions proved to be sufficient to prevent further violation of the law.

However, some aspects of the case made further investigation necessary. As the biology teacher noted, his outlines were based on an official publication of the Ministry of Culture and Public Education (No. 27213/96/VII, Roma Education Program), and he also attached the relevant parts of the publication that were used by him for his class outline. The following developmental criteria were specified in the section on the requirements in anthropology by the end of the 8th grade: “Analyze the in- and out-group relationships of the Roma by using media sources and everyday life examples!” A section was also included with the title, “The separateness and rigidity of Roma communities as basic obstacles to development,” and a subheading entitled: “The paradoxical nature of the value system and value judgements of the Romas,” below the title, “Minimal achievement.”

We established that the cited parts of the texts are unacceptable in educational materials, being suitable to evoke prejudices, or to nurture existing prejudices. Therefore, we appealed to the Minister of Education to take the appropriate measures aimed at the revision of the publication. The minister accepted this recommendation, and according to the information given by him, the new core documents of Roma minority education are being elaborated, and the revision of the concerned publication became timely as well, therefore the ministry will take all the necessary measures regarding this issue.

The situation of Roma minority education is worrisome in other aspects as well. For example, when parental consent is needed, in certain cases it is reasonable to question whether Roma parents are fully informed about the aim and the actual

content of the Roma minority education program when they are convinced by school headmasters to sign the “Minority Education Enquiry Forms” (which indicate their consent for their child to take part in Roma minority education). The realities of minority education, such as an inferior infrastructural environment, undertrained teaching staff, and poor curricula, may indeed be vastly underreported, since effective evaluation mechanisms are missing in this field (Ministry of Education 2004: 4). There is no research evidence regarding the performance of students participating in minority education programs in comparison to students participating in mainstream educational programs. Furthermore, as a country report (Molnár and Dupcsik 2008) points out, the professional background (previous education and training) of teachers working in minority schools is also among the most under-investigated aspects of minority education.

## The Hajdúhadház Segregation Case

The phenomenon of unlawful educational segregation of Roma children, disguised as Roma minority education, is manifested in the court case of the Chance for Children Foundation (CFCF) versus the Hajdúhadház Education Authority.

On November 19, 2008, the Hungarian Supreme Court partly reversed the appellate court’s decision and ruled in favor of the strategic litigation NGO Chance for Children Foundation (CFCF), which asked the court to establish that the Hajdúhadház Education Authority and two primary schools discriminated against about 500 Roma children by unlawfully enrolling them in separate classes and school buildings. (Ethnic data was collected and reported by a public education expert; see: Körtvélyesi 2009.)

The elementary school in question, run by the local council of Hajdúhadház, consisted of a central and two supplementary buildings. The sum proportion of Roma pupils was 54 percent in the school; however, in the central building only 28 percent of the pupils were Roma, while in the supplementary buildings the proportions of Roma pupils were as high as 86 and 96 percent. The central building was much better equipped than the supplementary buildings: the educational needs of the (mainly non-Roma) pupils were served by five specialized classrooms, nine seminar rooms, a gym, and a sports ground, four laptops, three projectors, two video cameras, two copy machines, and a library. But the supplementary buildings were rundown and lacked special equipment (there was only a copy machine in one of the buildings).

The Hajdu-Bihar County Court (which is a court of first instance) established that the situation amounted to segregation by the school and by the local council (as maintainer of the schools); furthermore, that the Roma pupils had also been directly discriminated against because in the supplementary buildings the physical conditions were significantly worse than in the central building.

However, the maintainer and managers of the concerned schools repeatedly claimed to conduct Roma minority education and used this as an explanation for teaching the Roma pupils separately. Actually, “Roma minority education” meant only a “Roma Ethnography” course, three classes per week, taught in Hungarian. Given this condition, the Hajdúhadház segregation case attracted attention to an important interpretational issue regarding the practice of the courts, namely that parents’ agreement to minority education for their children does not necessarily mean that they would like their children to be taught separately—not to mention with an inferior infrastructure.

It should be noted that the unlawful segregation of Roma children and pupils, referring to Roma minority education as an excuse, does not seem to be a unique Hungarian phenomenon. In March 2010, the Ministry of Education in Romania released a notification aimed at preventing and eliminating the segregation of Roma children in kindergartens and primary schools. The document mentions that the teaching of the Romani language and culture should not encourage the segregation of Roma pupils. Although the notification is not legally binding, and does not include sanctions, Romanian Roma rights activists welcome this document as a stance by the government and as a point of reference (Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, and Sports 2010).

## Conclusion

The aims of Roma minority education are not well articulated, which leaves room for misuse in practice. As it is shown by several cases—investigated by the minority ombudsman—the educational framework aimed at promoting the identity of cultural minorities can be used as a tool for (further) segregating Roma children who are already socio-economically disadvantaged. Eventually, the various, often hidden practices of educational segregation—for example, disguised segregation through minority education, in-class segregation, etc.—result in situations where Roma have little, if any contact with mainstream society where common educational institutions

serve as the only remaining possibility for interethnic communication, children, and for their parents.

In the Hungarian context, the main dilemma originates in the uncertainty of whether the human/political rights or the minority rights aspect should dominate Roma issues. In the first case, the application of the human/political rights approach implies the conviction that Roma issues should be dealt similarly to the racial equality issues in the United States (Fiss 1977), acknowledging that desegregation (in every area of social life) serves the interests of the discriminated members of society. At the same time, the European-style “national minority” approach focuses on the groupedness of Roma by claiming cultural rights, aimed at sustaining the distinctiveness of Roma (while, of course, promoting their equal status in the society).

Concerning Roma in contemporary Hungary, controversial efforts and tendencies are identifiable, aimed at both assimilation and nationalization. In this situation, only carefully planned and implemented measures of minority education might serve the undisputed aim for the Roma population’s social integration, not to mention vigilance, aimed at preventing or revealing misuses of the minority education framework. The consideration of the following criteria makes it possible to distinguish genuine minority education from disguised segregation: voluntariness (informed choice of the parents, taking into account the best interest of the child); the aim of promotion and maintenance of a minority culture (by enhancing the cultural identity of the children); equal level or standards (regarding curricula, human resources, teaching materials, and the infrastructural conditions of the education).

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# Policy Measures for Equal Educational Opportunities for Roma in Bulgaria

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## Abstract

One of the basic goals of modern educational policy across the world is to guarantee equal access to education for underrepresented groups; the most underrepresented minority in Bulgaria is the Roma, who qualify for a series of broad socio-economic and educational interventions to help integrate them into Bulgarian society. Most research and statistical data agree that Roma across all age-groups have a high rate of illiteracy and low levels of educational qualifications.

This paper aims to analyze the key policy measures for equal educational opportunities of the Roma population and real practices of their involvement in the educational structures of Bulgarian society. Another aim of the paper is the formulation of ways in which the Roma educational needs might be met and their school deficits would be overcome.

The conducted analysis is based on two sociological surveys carried out in 2006 and 2007 in Bulgaria (with the author's participation). The objectives of these surveys were to identify Roma educational problems as well as to estimate policy measures on the state and nongovernmental organization level in order to overcome Roma illiteracy and early departure from school. The target groups are: Roma children, Roma parents,

teachers of Roma students, social workers, and policymakers. Data obtained from the two surveys are an appropriate base for an evaluation of policies aimed at the equality of educational opportunities for the Roma minority in the country.

## Introduction

When considering the present-day condition of Bulgarian education and its interlacing with a dynamic quality of social life along with institutional changes and transformations, we must inevitably focus attention on the problem of ethnic integration and the deficit of equal educational opportunities, for the success of the educational reforms that were launched in Bulgaria in 2000 hinges to a great degree on its achievements in improving ethnic minority education and on the inclusion of the youngest generations of Roma in the system. Keeping in mind the demographics of the Roma ethnic group, the manifold impacts of poor education, and a lack of awareness about poverty and unemployment, the chances for the success of equal education opportunities for minority ethnic groups promises to be one of the decisive criteria for the success not only of educational reform but for the consolidation of an entire society.

The equality of educational opportunities is a fundamental factor in the theories of social mobility that argue for the right of every individual to enter into “open competition” and prove his or her gifts and aptitudes (Halsey 1977). Moreover, equal educational opportunities are correlated with the guarantee of equal conditions of school teaching for all ethnic groups and are a prerequisite for social justice and meritocracy (Coleman 1968 and 1990). Based on these theoretical issues, this paper aims to analyze the key policy measures for equal education opportunities of the Roma population and real practices of their involvement in the educational structures of Bulgarian society. Another aim here is the formulation of ways in which Roma educational needs might be met, specifically to overcome Roma students’ early departure from school and illiteracy.

## Educational Status of the Roma Population

Compared with other ethnic communities, the Roma in Bulgaria consistently represent the lowest educational level (Table 1).

**Table 1.**  
*Ethnic Communities and Graduation Rates (in Percent)*

Degree of education	Bulgarian	Turks and Muslims	Roma	Average for people over 18 years
Lower elementary	1.2	11.8	18.7	3.1
Elementary	6.4	14.0	37.8	8.8
Basic	22.2	49.2	37.9	25.2
Secondary	52.7	20.8	5.5	47.6
Tertiary	4.7	4.3	0.1	15.3
Total	100	100	100	100

*Source:* Center for Research of Democracy (2005) "Social Profile of Ethnic Groups in Bulgaria."

The causes for this situation can be found in various directions. The first cause, and often pointed out as the most basic, of their low educational status is their specific socialization and way of life (Nunev 2006). Although the churches played a decisive role in public education, they did not deal with Roma until the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries; the state-run schools were not attended by Roma. "Bulgaria was the first Eastern European country that created schools for Gypsies, but in 1910 their literacy was only 3%, rising to 8% after the First World War" (Crowe 1995: 13). The analysis of Roma education in terms of a complex syncretism between reconciled values of institutionalized teaching and family upbringing is important, as it tries to reveal the ambivalence of the situation in which the Roma exist: on the one hand, their world is imbued to a high degree with traditional relationships and hierarchies, with the domination of the head of the family; on the other hand, there is participation in the modern structure of the school, where individualism and a new understanding of success predominate (Liegeois 1998).

During socialism, Roma and their education was the object of special care and political commitment on the part of the state.

First, permit us to backtrack and to trace the concrete educational forms in which Roma children were included during the years of socialism and how these forms evolved with time.

In the 1960s and 1970s boarding schools were created for Roma children, but these schools were later shut down either for financial or for ideological reasons. Meanwhile, vocational primary schools eventually grew into secondary schools. Primary schools with professional training are the preferred choice of Roma children, for

their curriculum offers a short cycle aimed at teaching literacy and imparting some basic skills (Tomova 1995).

The most widespread schools created for Roma during socialism, and in which most of these children were included, were so-called “Roma schools,” situated in overpopulated neighborhoods with a standard of living below the rest of the country. In Bulgaria, these Roma schools developed with the formation of Roma ghettos in the 1950s: the purpose of this measure was to concentrate children in the limits of a “neighborhood”; the main aim of the education provided to them was teaching basic literacy and employment skills. Some of these schools emphasized professional training. As a result of an education policy planned and implemented by the state, Roma schools became closed, segregated spaces in which all the negative features of an ethnic “underclass” were reproduced. In the next two decades these schools were also engaged in educating the adult Roma population through literacy courses.

From the mid-1970s, a campaign for limiting the number of Roma schools began; the purpose was to integrate Roma children. In October 1978, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party adopted Resolution 1,360 for the gradual elimination of Roma neighborhoods and schools (Marushiakova and Popov 2001: 236–256). But this measure eventually failed and the ghettos still exist today, together with their schools. Therefore, a more realistic educational policy was undertaken of improving the quality of teaching in Roma schools, that is, the Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children from Ethnic Minorities, 2005–2015.

### **Where Do Roma Children Study?**

Foremost among schooling opportunities for the Roma are the so-called “Roma” schools mentioned above: nearly all of the students at these schools are Roma; the schools are situated within or near Roma ghettos. According to expert assessments, about 70 percent of the Roma children of school-age study in these Roma ghetto schools (Denkov 2001; Nunev 2006).

More Roma schools can be found in rural villages; unlike the urban ghetto schools, they were not specially created for the Roma, but evolved as a result of the outward migration of majority Bulgarians, together with their children, to the cities.

Mixed schools with a high share of Roma children are also prevalent. According to the findings of a survey conducted in 2001, there are more than 332 schools in Bulgaria in which the proportion of Roma children is over 50 percent (Denkov 2001). In the mixed schools, “Bulgarian classes” are often formed at the insistence

of non-Roma parents who prefer their children to be in separate classes from Roma (Tanaka 2001: 133).

Remedial schools for special needs children are also institutions with a high Roma prevalence that may be up to 80–90 percent of all pupils, according to unofficial estimates. Many Roma students are attracted to these institutions for the benefits they provide and which regular schools do not offer, that is, room and board, free meals, and clothes.<sup>1</sup> All remedial schools are entirely financed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), unlike the rest of the schools, which are supported by municipal budgets. Thus the demographic crisis, which has led to an overall decrease in the number of schoolchildren and the risk of schools being shut down, has become a persuasive motive for teachers to be more active and to make special efforts in convincing Roma parents to send their children to schools for the handicapped. The larger budget of remedial schools affords better living conditions compared with those of the family homes of these children. Roma families are typically very large, undernourished, their homes lack electricity and running water, and their children lack basic healthcare and parental control. Hence, the choice in favor of special schools is often viewed as a source of vital support and the only means for the families to meet the elementary needs of raising, caring for, and educating their children.

Another perceived advantage of the special schools is the reduced school curriculum. Many Roma children have serious difficulties in their schoolwork in common schools due to

- an insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian;
- a lack of individual aid from the teachers;
- negative attitudes toward them on the part of their classmates, sometimes going as far as violence.

We see that the system of schools for Roma children is characterized by segregation. This segregation, when combined with the miserable living conditions of the families, trap Roma in the vicious circle of a “culture of poverty.” Schools attended by Roma children produce intellectual stagnation and social isolation. In addition, the educational segregation is a consequence of the school policies imposed during the years of socialism as well as of the current state of the Bulgarian educational system; it also results from a lack of effort by the school and other official institutions to engage with the education of minority children in a way that would help them escape the social isolation and disintegration.

In the field of education one view has firmly established that schoolchildren are, consciously or not, being “discriminated” against on the basis of their ethnic group, which influences teachers’ attitudes, assessments, and opinions. Many empirical surveys support this conclusion and demonstrate that ethnic minorities and the poor are treated differently by teachers (Taylor 1981; Mac an Ghail 1988). Thus, the emphasis is placed on the relative role of ethnic affiliation as a factor for low educational attainment, which in turn has an effect on the aptitudes of ethnic minority children and consolidate in a negative self-image and scholastic failure. According to some studies, quite a few teachers label children from the ethnic minorities as less smart (Coard 1971; Pumphry and Verma 1990) or as children with behavior problems (Cicourel 1971). Negative attitudes of teachers toward children from ethnic minority backgrounds inevitably give rise to greater doubts about the children’s aptitudes and “self-generating mistrust”; such children are more often the target of conflict and critical attitudes on the part of teachers.

In summary, there seems to be a deficit of equal educational opportunities in Bulgarian education. The ethnic division of education and the creation of exclusionary Roma schools are reflected in their most basic features that require immediate redress:

- Material conditions in Roma schools are considerably worse than those in other education institutions in Bulgaria (Tanaka and McDonald 2001: 131).
- Teaching in Roma schools is an unattractive job for most teachers, so teachers prefer to quit at the first opportunity; in some cases the teachers themselves are unqualified. Moreover, many teachers have no preliminary training for working with minorities, which hampers good communication and creates a gap between teachers and students.
- The poor quality of education is due to the lack of motivation among the teachers and children; as a result many Bulgarian majority families are unwilling to send their children to these schools. Thus, a sustained trend emerges of growing separation by ethnos and of increasing stigmatization, completing the process of social exclusion and eliminating the chances for a young generation of Roma.

All of these reveal the responsibility of the whole educational system as an implementation of policy measures as well as of particular teachers’ practices involved in the schooling process.

The next section discusses the educational policy of the state and nongovernmental organizations in the country.

## Review of Policy Measures towards Roma Educational Integration

In the first years after 1989, little interest was shown in any social or economic policies for the Roma; one consequence was an increasing number of Roma children dropping out from school at an early age. Little by little in the middle of the 1990s the situation resulted in the creation of local Roma media as well as many different NGOs with a special interest toward Roma problems and Roma education. The main mechanisms in this direction were the following:

- Scholarships for Roma students in order to be educated in Bulgarian and European universities (Central European University, New Bulgarian University)
- Conducting different projects oriented to Roma integration in the sphere of labor, employment, health, and social policy. A number of projects and studies have been conducted on Roma education and on Roma students' reasons for dropping out from school<sup>2</sup> and they provide details on the educational opportunities for Roma in Bulgaria. The Open Society Foundations in Budapest have funded and helped shape this NGO effort, *Desegregating Roma Schools*, which seeks to provide Roma children with opportunities to enter into the broader education system and improve their access to quality education in Bulgaria.
- *Desegregating Roma Schools* began by transporting students from Roma schools to majority schools in order to study with Bulgarian students. The project was piloted in the town of Vidin in 2000–2001; thereafter, it was replicated in six towns: Montana, Pleven, Sliven, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, and Sofia. In addition, the desegregation project was also implemented in Samokov and Kyustendil with funding from the British Council.

*Desegregating Roma Schools* was presented in two detailed publications by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. The first one is concentrated on the “first steps” (Kanev 2003), based on interviews with different target groups: team leaders of the project, representatives of Regional Inspectorates of Education, parents of children involved in the project activities, headmasters and teachers, Bulgarian parents, Roma

leaders, and Roma working in municipal administration. These publications examined the approach, the specific features of the project, its problems and difficulties as well as its positive practices. A special place was dedicated to the criteria for project efficiency:

- Number of participants: rate of participants in the project versus number of the remaining children in Roma neighborhoods' schools
- Roma students' attainments
- Effective support of Roma children in receiving schools
- Involving Roma parents in the desegregation process
- Conducting extracurricular activities
- Local authorities' support
- Financial efficiency

Another publication (Bulgarian Helsinki Committee 2005) presents the efficiency of the project in the higher attainments of students involved in the desegregating projects conducted in six towns in comparison with achievements of students from the segregated schools.

The projects' core is the creation of the conditions for equal educational access and the provision of intercultural education, while students from different ethnic groups study in a mixed school, and teachers together with assistant teachers (representatives of the same ethnic minority group as the children) contribute to ethnic integration and respect toward the ethno-cultural differences of the minority children. The essence of the project is the mobilization of the Roma community, including parents, assistant teachers, and children, as an active actor.

In conducting the education desegregation project, some serious problems have emerged:

1. Not all the children wishing to study in Bulgarian schools may get a place: the selection is done from all Roma children in Roma neighborhoods.
2. Once situated in a Bulgarian environment, the selected Roma students feel vulnerable: they are not like their Bulgarian classmates, their families do not have the same socio-economic conditions, they are less (in number) than the Bulgarians, and they may have difficulties with the learning process.

3. Roma students feel oppressed by their Bulgarian classmates and sometimes by teachers, too (most of the interviews with Roma children and parents have confirmed that).
4. Bulgarian parents believe that Roma students threaten the quality of education in the classrooms and as a consequence they prefer to transfer their children to other Bulgarian schools. As a result, the circle is closed, for the headmasters really do have the authority to limit the access and number of Roma children in their schools.

Many obstacles are a natural part of desegregation projects that seek to impart change. Including projects and practices from different NGOs, including Roma NGOs, is a basic prerequisite for overcoming the educational deficits of the Roma minority and achieving equality in educational opportunities, and for a short period the nongovernmental sector was of vital importance for Roma integration and Roma education inclusion. The early years of experience from partnerships with international organizations that have competence with minorities and their educational specifics in local aspect were of great importance, for these projects and programs coordinated by NGOs in Bulgaria contributed to creating a new approach to underrepresented groups and especially to the Roma minority during the transition. But quite a few NGOs have faced serious disadvantages: they have a low level of sustainability. Another problem for Bulgarian NGOs is the low quality of projects and the lack of monitoring, a reason for the contradiction between the state and non-state sectors. Weak institutional coordination across different projects has sometimes meant repeating and doubling otherwise accomplished actions and high expenses. However, the improvement of Roma children's access to education is connected to guaranteeing an appropriate environment for education as well as to create mobile forms for the inclusion of distance education, evening schools, and additional classes in the formal and non-formal education system. In order to enhance inclusion in education, it is necessary to improve the content and teaching methods; to design instruments for the recognition of prior learning and the validation and certification of results of non-formal and informal learning; and to encourage lifelong learning for adults.

Since the end of 1990s, the state has conducted and applied a few different policy measures:

- The National Council for Ethnic and Demography Problems at the Council of Ministers is created on December 4, 1997.

- The Framework Program for the Equal Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society is elaborated in 1999, which stipulates the development of specialized programs for helping adult Roma to become literate. An action plan is accepted.
- In February 2005, the prime ministers of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia sign on to the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. The Decade works in the sphere of eliminating discrimination and overcoming the unacceptable differences between Roma and the rest of society. In the process, action plans in different priority areas like education, employment, health, and residence are elaborated.
- The other key state policy is the Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children from Ethnic Minorities (2005–2015). The Strategy is accepted by the Ministry of Education and Science and guarantees the right of equal access for children from ethnic minority backgrounds to quality education, promotes their cultural identity, and provides prerequisites for their successful socialization, thus promoting cultural diversity, mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance. The Strategy defines specific objectives for each minority. Priority is given to the integration of Roma children by desegregating kindergartens and schools in Roma areas. A five-year National Action Plan was approved in June 2005 and it presents the specific actions, responsibilities, estimation of finances, and results. Its conclusion in 2010 yielded the following outcomes:
  - 3,500 students from Roma schools were integrated in common schools outside Roma neighborhoods.
  - 107 Roma assistant teachers were hired to support educational integration of Roma children.
  - 150 Roma assistant teachers qualified at university.
  - 360 primary teachers were trained for teaching in an multiethnic environment.
- The Council of Ministries creates the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities to better accomplish the Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children from Ethnic Minorities. The main aim of the Center is to mobilize and accumulate the resources of different donors and to guarantee the necessary financing from the budget. The Center’s mission is to do the following:

- Provide conditions for mutual education of children from different ethnic origins in state schools and kindergartens.
  - Provide additional pedagogic work on children at risk of dropping out from school in order to improve their achievements.
  - Improve teachers' qualifications for work in ethnically diverse environments.
  - Include research on multiculturalism and multiethnicity.
  - Prepare parents to support their children's educational activity.
- The other important document concerning equal educational opportunities for Roma is the National Program to Include More Students of Compulsory School-age 2005–2008 accepted by Bulgarian Parliament. An Action Plan, which defines the Program's aims, has established specific practices in order to stimulate education motivation of Roma children. The Program includes three modules:
    1. Providing free textbooks for children from grades two to four (elementary level). This measure is oriented to support socially vulnerable groups (especially Roma) in order to guarantee textbooks and additional school materials for children. (In first grade the textbooks are free for everyone.) The aim of the Ministry of Education and Science is to expand this measure to grades five to eight.
    2. Optimizing the school network by providing transport to state and municipal schools. This measure aims at students living in small villages that have no schools and where the number of children of compulsory school-age is small.
    3. Providing free breakfast for children in grades one to four.

## **Problems with Applying the Program**

The main problem is that the program has not been promoted enough among the target groups. The program also suffers from a high degree of centralization, creating difficulties in defining regional specifics and necessities. A further disadvantage is the lack of a system for monitoring of the whole program and its effect.

- Another essential document stressing the equality of educational opportunities is the National Program on School Education and Preschool Upbringing

2006–2015 approved by the Council of Ministers in 2006. The program identifies two basic goals: equal access to education and quality education. Equal access to education is conceived as the access of all children to education of comparable quality. The program features a wide range of policy measures to keep at-risk students in school, such as: (a) a change in the education structure; (b) measures designed for children for whom Bulgarian is not their mother tongue and for children with special educational needs. In addition, the program envisages a system of measures that also includes those children who have already dropped out, such as: adapting study content, alternative forms of teaching, and launching “Second Chance” pilot schools.

When summarizing the government measures to increase equal access to education, it is necessary to note that policies in this field are very complex entities to a great extent determined by the individual school’s environment as well as the local relations and social milieu. Interministerial policies engage most of public organizations on the national, regional, municipal, and school level, yet no effective coordinating mechanism exists to guarantee equal education opportunities in Bulgarian policymaking. In addition, there are many different interpretations of the terminology, a lack of continuity in most of policy documents (white papers, plans, strategies), and confusion about the actual policies themselves, hardly making for efficient communication and implementation among the various policy actors.

## Sociological Surveys: Some Results

The present analysis is based on two sociological surveys (financed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bulgarian branch of UNICEF) that were carried out in 2006 and 2007 in Bulgaria (Tilkidjiev et al. 2009; Nonchev et al. 2006). The objectives of these surveys were to identify who are the Roma dropping out from school as well as to estimate the necessary policy measures to overcome this situation. The target groups included in making the estimates were Roma children, Roma parents, teachers of Roma students, and social workers. Data obtained from the two surveys serve as an appropriate base for evaluating the educational policies about Roma minority inclusion in the education system.

# Roma Dropping Out of School

A very large proportion of schoolchildren who drop out from school while of obligatory school-age are Roma. The choice to leave school at an early age hinges on the economic and cultural state of society; it may be a consequence of the immediate environment, the small role of a family in a child's education, or the specific cultural capital of low-status segments of the general population. State policy in education and its consequences for the organization of schools can directly exacerbate or decrease the dropout problem, its causes typically described as economic, ethno-cultural, or educational.

## **Economic Causes**

The poor economic situation of many Bulgarian families is considered to be one of the basic factors for dropping out of the education system. Unemployment, low income, decreased living standards, and growing poverty are trends that leave many children in difficult circumstances. At present, Bulgaria is one of the poorest countries in Europe, and due to low income many parents cannot cover their children's education expenses. Parents, teachers, and experts indicate poverty as a cause for dropping out of education (Tilkidjiev 2009). In addition, respondents indicate that dropping out for economic causes is linked with the participation of some children in various forms of labor: paid employment or work on the family farm and in the household. Such children drop out of school because they are unable to attend school or prepare for school adequately. Some of the parents also state that they needed help with the housework and that is why their children stopped going to school. One-fifth of the children work for money in order to assist their families. The main activities they engage in are salvaging scrap metal and other reusable items; picking herbs, fruits, and other plants; construction work; or farming. According to more than half the interviewed teachers, children frequently combine school and work. Very often, however, the children who have dropped out of school remain idle and do nothing. Dropping out for economic reasons is also connected in quite a few cases with the internal and external migration of parents seeking better economic opportunities.

## **Ethno-cultural Causes**

The ethno-cultural causes for the school dropout trend are related to traditions, customs, and the value system of various social and ethnic groups. Ethnic affiliation has

an impact on the dropout trend inasmuch as it is related to the building of attitudes regarding everyday life, of which going to school is an inseparable part. That is why there is a widespread view that education is “a waste of time”; in group discussions parents have shared that “our children do not need an education” (Tilkidjiev 2009). Teachers, school directors, and representatives of the Regional Inspectorates of Education have voiced the opinion that “children and parents see no use in schooling.” Overall, parents from an ethnic minority background say that education is a good thing, but that the school alienates their children from Roma tradition, contributing to a loss of ethnic identity (Liegeios 1998). Teachers lack the ability to teach Roma children the necessary ethnic values because the school protects and cultivates the prevailing majority culture. As a result, according to parents, it is normal and inevitable that children interrupt their education. This is due, on the one hand, to the low education level of the parents themselves and, on the other hand, their willingness to protect the “specific Roma culture” (Nunev 2006). The lack of interest of many Roma parents in motivating their children to attend school is influenced by their impoverished way of life as well as by ethno-cultural values connected with 1) the role of patriarchal norms; 2) traditional Roma crafts passed down over generations but not incorporated in the school system; and 3) Roma folklore, which is not included in the school curriculum. Poverty, economic concerns, and a difficult domestic situation combine with the ethno-cultural particularities of the community and its attitude towards education. To overcome these obstacles, the introduction of classes and extracurricular activities related to Roma folklore and roots, which may give additional motivation for attending school, is a necessity. Furthermore, continuous work with Roma parents regarding the importance of education for their children is vital.

Another aspect of the ethno-cultural causes for dropping out of school is early marriages. In some cases, girls stop going to school at about the age of 12 or 13, about when they marry; this is sometimes combined with early pregnancy and childbirth. The discontinuance of schooling among girls is part of the conviction, widespread among the Roma community, that girls should get an education only up to the age of 13 or 14. Another display of traditionalism is parents’ fear that their children will be abducted, a feeling indicated in the interviews with teachers and in focus groups with parents and teachers; for this reason parents do not let their girls go on class excursions or go far from home.

## Educational Causes

The educational causes for dropping out of school represent a complex set of characteristics that hamper the education and upbringing of children; they have two basic aspects:

- **Causes related to teaching**, connected with (1) the contents of studying; (2) teachers as active agents of teaching; and (3) the degree of Bulgarian language skills, which are the basis for further learning. Another teaching-related cause for absences and dropping out is (as shared by parents) that the knowledge taught in school “has no connection with practical life.” Parents want the curriculum to be pragmatically oriented, so that their children will be able to find work after graduation or at least have some practical skills important in everyday life. The lack of this pragmatic aspect makes schooling seem like an accumulation of useless information.
- **Institutional-organizational causes**, related to the availability of facilities that are an important part of the educational environment: libraries, manuals and textbooks, laboratories and specialized classrooms, computers, out-of-class forms of learning, all-day learning; in other words, the entire set of components that make for a complete school environment. These are important features, because they create preconditions for the education process and have a positive impact on the desire of children to attend school. And so many of the problems associated with the organizational aspects of teaching, optional subjects, merged classes, and all-day learning with educators are linked to the number of children in the school and in the respective grade level. The demographic crisis is leading to a school crisis. The optimization of the school network promised by forthcoming educational reforms may lead to the closure of certain rural Roma schools due to an insufficient number of students.

**Figure 1.**

*Efficiency of the Measures Oriented to Education for Underrepresented Groups (Roma Parents)*

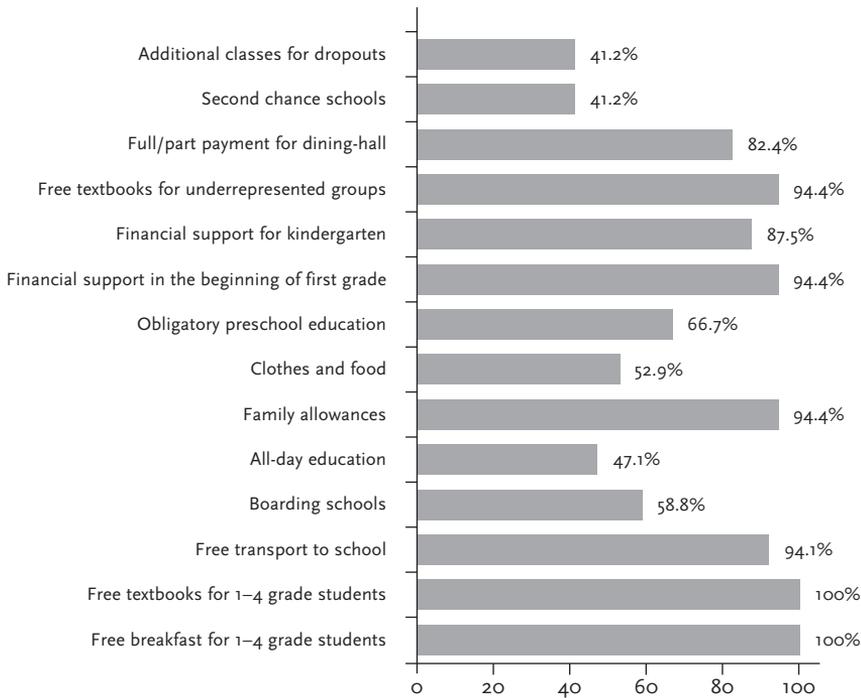


Figure 1 presents some sociological survey data, and the accent is on the evaluation of different policy measures oriented to overcome early departure from schooling and to provide equal education opportunities; the figure presents Roma parents views (Tilkidjiev 2009). Most poor Roma families in this survey evaluate measures provided by state institutions and organizations as effective. Among the most effective measures indicated by respondents is “providing free breakfast and textbooks for children from grades one to four.” In second place, nearly 95 percent of respondents indicate as effective “monthly financial support for children if they go regularly to school,” “giving a sum of BGN 80 in the beginning of the first grade for social vulnerable groups,” “giving textbooks for children from underrepresented groups.” In third place as a measure that has importance for increasing the access of Roma children, just over 94 percent of respondents indicate: “providing free transport to state and municipal schools.” The families are most unfamiliar with the next measures: “additional classes for dropouts of obligatory school-age,” as well as “second chance schools”: just over 47 percent of those interviewed did not know about such educational practices. The

data from cross tabulation reveals that only a small part of the respondents indicate “all-day education” as an efficient measure (47.1 percent); nearly a quarter of them think of it as ineffective, and nearly 12 percent regard it as “unknown.” A large share of people (nearly a third) think that “boarding school” is an ineffective measure for decreasing the dropout rate.

The data obtained can be summarized as follows:

- Most of the interviewed parents estimate state measures for education integration as effective.
- The most effective measures are “giving free breakfast and free textbooks” for students in grades one to four.
- Unknown measures are “additional classes for dropouts” and “second chance schools.”
- There is a differentiation in the evaluation of the measures as effective according to the participants’ family incomes.

The policy measures for equal education opportunities of different ethnic minority groups are only partially known by the target groups. However, the policy measures for social care are well known. These measures are provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (in projects stretching over two to three years) and a serious misbalance characterizes some of them. These projects tend to overly concentrate on elementary school dropouts without tackling the problem in future grades. Another problem is that the measures correspond to everyday needs of particular children and families and less to better the study process and school environment. Thus, the measures to guarantee access to equal education must be coordinated with departmental state policies and practices as well as the nongovernmental sector. The measures have to sustain the relationship with families and parents of children who have dropped out from the school. The aim of this entity is to create a cumulative effect, efficiency, and sustainability.

Summing up, it may be concluded that at the state level the measures for equal educational opportunities have been formulated. But some problems can be distinguished, related to the practical implementation of the national policies and their transformation into educational activities, in that some educational institutions practically remain passive performers of these initiatives.

# Some Propositions to Increasing the Educational Opportunities of the Roma minority

The educational measures can be distinguished in two branches: (1) policy measures connected to the study process and education and (2) policy measures linked to improving the school organizational environment.

## Policy Measures Connected to Study Process and Education

- Improving the school curricula in order to decrease the abstract and complicated study contents and ideas.
- Incorporating into the school curricula more elective and additional classes on
  - Bulgarian language for children in Roma schools;
  - “Roma culture” or “Roma folklore,” oriented on intercultural education. These classes are useful for Roma as well as for the other students in order to facilitate their knowledge of traditions and habits of the community and mutual understanding and respect for Roma.<sup>3</sup>
- Educating pragmatically: Following the data obtained from a survey in 2007, 96 percent of Roma parents indicate that “children have to acquire professional qualifications” during the school years (Tilkidjiev 2009).
- Improving the assessment methods in the education system as well as developing the evaluation of the whole education process, a precondition for an appropriate teaching approach.
- Creating of “additional classes” that help students to compensate for their deficits and overcome difficulties connected with understanding and learning.
- Incorporating “preschool classes” in the education system that emphasize Roma children studying Bulgarian, a key to social mobility as well as a factor for social capital and participation in networks of Bulgarian society-at-large.
- Including half-board school learning as an option.
- Improving teachers’ qualifications for multiethnic education. The teaching staff working with Roma students has to obtain additional training for Roma culture, habits, beliefs, and values.

- Including innovative teaching methods and forms of distance education.
- Sustaining qualification of assistant teachers that facilitate the adaptation of Roma children to Bulgarian school and contacts with non-Roma children.
- Involving the position of the “school psychologist” in Roma schools in order to sustain contacts with children with difficulties and problems.
- Increasing the number of Roma teachers.
- Sustaining the specialty course on Primary Pedagogy with Roma Language incorporated in Veliko Tarnovo University.
- Offering university courses on Roma history and culture.
- Developing initiatives for teachers’ tolerance in education.

### **Policy Measures to Improve the Schools’ Organizational Environment**

- Ensuring good material conditions and facilities in Roma schools.
- Creating libraries, study offices, laboratories, gyms, and sport facilities.
- Maintaining free dining halls.
- Ensuring clothes for children from underrepresented groups.
- Perfecting the diagnostic methods for entrance into remedial schools, where perfectly normal Roma children are placed in order to access the room and board and healthcare ensured by the state.
- Improving the “information system” on dropping out, connected with control of the records of students’ “moving” after changing residences and completed education grades.
- Reinforcing the mutual contacts between teaching staff and Roma parents to better inform them about the benefits of regular school attendance.
- Creating “second chance schools” for illiterate Roma teenagers and adults.
- School participation in different project forms oriented to socialization of Roma children and their involvement in extracurricular activities.
- Including Roma NGOs in the education process provided in Roma schools.
- Enlarging the practices of the Desegregating Roma Schools projects and including new donors.

- Better coordination between school institutions and regional social welfare offices.
- Sustaining the practices of free textbooks and free snacks for schoolchildren in primary school grades and enlarging these measures to upper grades.
- More rigorous linking of the obtainment of welfare payments to school attendance of children.
- Using community centers for out-of-class educational activities.

In conclusion, it is necessary to note that the education policies and practices on the state and NGO level reveal some serious attempts to increase the equal educational access and opportunities of Roma students. At the same time, the ethnic problems in education must not be regarded only as the inability of schools to perform their functions for integration; it is a far more serious problem, involving the entire society. Moreover, the quality of the education provided cannot surpass or be significantly different from the quality of the society itself or its economy and culture.

The equality of education opportunities for Roma is becoming a means for integration but also a means to support equity in education. Those who say that the system has done all it can are closing their eyes to ethnic separation in education and leaving things to be solved by themselves. The dynamics of social events and the rapid change of ideology and preferences in the recent past have filled education with a number of variants of policy solutions and approaches, with quite a few undertaken activities and commitments to the process going on in schools, yet in most cases with a “discrepancy between words and deeds” (Equal Roma Access 2007).

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# Segregating and Separating Roma Children in Czech Primary Schools

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## Abstract

The segregation and separation of Roma children from the majority population in the Czech Republic's educational system has caused nearly irreparable damage in the social and economic spheres. The root of this issue stems from a long history of the Roma minority's exclusion from society on many levels, clearly visible in the unequal access to elementary education by Roma children. It is a fact that the majority of Roma children experience persistent segregation within the Czech elementary educational system. They are continuously sent to separate schools (renamed by the new Education Act as Practical Primary Schools). For instance, many Roma pupils are separated into classes for mentally disabled children within standard primary schools, or into Roma-only ordinary primary schools. These artificial school "ghettos" only serve to create barriers amongst children, obstruct the inclusion of Roma into Czech society, even lowering their own motivation to do so. As a result, their overall social situation in the Czech Republic is worsening. It is important to acknowledge that it is normal to be different and that inclusion and education are one of the key methods that allows for an understanding of cultural differences and can positively influence the current situation.

# Introduction

Education is a crucial element in the socialization process of every society. It leads to gaining knowledge, abilities, and skills; it also forms one's moral and ethical norms, and thus shapes one's attitudes and behaviors towards others. Education is also the main tool of social mobility and integration, particularly in our multicultural societies. Therefore, once access to education is no longer equal for all members of society, problems start to occur. The separation of Roma children within the Czech elementary educational system is a clear example of one such problem. The persistent segregation of Roma children in the Czech elementary educational system has caused nearly irreparable damage in the social and economic spheres. Indirect discrimination of Roma children in the Czech Republic is not enough to describe the situation, whereby Roma children are persistently sent to separate schools (renamed Practical Primary Schools under the new Education Act). For instance, many Roma children are separated into classes for mentally disabled children within standard primary schools or to Roma-only basic primary schools. Those artificial "ghettos" only serve to create barriers among children, obstruct the inclusion of Roma into Czech society, even lowering their own motivation to do so, and most importantly establish a platform for the worsening of their overall social situation in the Czech Republic. The vicious circle of Roma poverty, caused mainly by a lack of education and incentives to integrate in the society, lead to higher social needs and an increase of social tensions. This educational element, among others, plays a key role in Roma and Czech relations.

Although some attempts have been made to address this issue by the central government and by Czech schools, the situation merits much more discussion. Roma in the Czech Republic admit that they regularly face discrimination, and are often overlooked and ignored. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Roma minority and Czech majority are not and cannot be harmonized unless this changes. George Berkeley once said that existence means being noticed, and we should keep this in mind when dealing with the interlinked and complex problems of minorities. If we are aware of what is problematic and do not turn away, we can then start an appropriate action for change and improvement.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the awareness about Roma children's segregation within the Czech elementary educational system. This paper highlights particular elements of this struggle, gives some background information, provides an overview from both the historical and present points of view, and analyzes

the contemporary situation while offering some steps for the improvement of Roma children's equal access to primary education in the Czech Republic.

## Origins and History of the Roma

Rajasthan is largely considered to be the original homeland of the Roma, sharing their language, social structures, behaviors, traditions, crafts, and tools. However, it is widely believed that Roma once belonged to the lowest Indian caste of *harijans* or untouchables. This could explain the migration of Roma from India, which started at the beginning of eighth century and continued until the tenth. Presumably, it was more than widespread drought and hunger in those years that inspired the migration, including a wish to escape the strict caste system as well as finding new “markets” for their services and products.

The Roma traveled across Mesopotamia, and by the twelfth to fifteenth centuries the majority had settled in Turkey. The first records of Roma in Europe date to the thirteenth century. Their appearance was registered in the Balkans, Greece, Armenia, Caucasuses, Russia, and later in Scandinavia (Hübschmannová 1999). By the beginning of the fifteenth century Roma had settled across Europe, including England and Scotland. During the following years and centuries Roma were often hunted and persecuted both by the church and the secular authorities. Only during the Enlightenment was there a period of positive attitudes towards Roma. However, by the first half of the twentieth century, hate, violence, and cruelty towards the Roma had coalesced, reaching its height in the Second World War with the systematic slaughter and genocide of Roma and many similar groups (Hancock 2001).

## Roma in the Former Czechoslovakia

Since their arrival in the Czech lands (early fifteenth century), Roma have been the target of oppressive legislation encouraging the destruction of their identity. Over a span of centuries we can see three main types of approaches by the majority population towards Roma: forced assimilation, total destruction (Holocaust), and forced integration (Czech Radio 2000a).

The events of the Second World War resulted in a drastic decline in the number of Roma living in the Czechoslovakia. The genocide of the Second World War almost

completely wiped out this population; most Czech Roma died in the concentration camps, targeted as both an asocial group and as members of an “unclean race.” After the war, many Roma from Slovakia were settled along the Czech borders, especially in the areas seized from the Sudetenland Germans; these were industrial regions where cheap labor was needed. After the communist coup in 1948, the status of the Roma as a nationality was repealed and the Roma were officially recognized only as a socially backward ethnic group (Hancock 2001).

From the 1950s to the 1970s the Roma started to return to Czechoslovakia. In the revolutionary year of 1989, an unofficial record suggested that approximately a quarter million Roma were living in Czechoslovakia. The number of people who admit their Roma nationality in an official census is obviously much lower than reality and reflects their fear of the consequences of making such an official proclamation. However, before the split of the Czechoslovak federation, the Roma formed the largest minority within the republic (Miko 2008).

After November 1989, the Roma organized into many political and non-political parties and movements. In 1991, their status as a national minority was again adopted by the Federal Constitution. The Romani Civic Initiative (ROI), joining the Civic Forum (OF), the strongest political party at that time led by President Vaclav Havel, entered Parliament after the 1990 elections with a Roma party (Czech Radio 2000a).

The year 1989 was a turning point for Roma. The rise of nongovernmental organizations spawned many different projects on the improvement of education, housing, and employment opportunities for Roma. Initially, perceived as a good cause, it also provoked a widespread nationalist reaction from some of the non-Roma majority. The abrupt socio-economic transformation after the collapse of the totalitarian system was accompanied by widespread societal stress as the population tried to adapt to the new political and economic conditions. Nationalism in the Czech Republic strengthened after the Velvet Revolution and Roma became the favorite targets of skinheads, often abetted by the police, according to Human Rights Watch: “police continue to harass Romanies and are often indifferent and slow to react to attacks” (Human Rights Watch 2001). Many Roma were repeatedly excluded from both the public and private spheres. Also, the Czech citizenship law passed after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 was considered by international organizations (including the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), the United States Department of State Annual Report, and others) to be discriminatory against the Roma. Some were denied access to the Czech Republic and some even became stateless (Czech Radio 2000a).

## Roma in the Czech Republic

Historically, Roma are the oldest and most “traditional” minority in the Czech Republic. Statistically, the Roma population is also one of the largest Czech minority groups. Unofficially, approximately 3 percent of the Czech population is Roma (350,000 inhabitants). However, at the beginning of the 1990s, hundreds of Roma families left the Czech Republic and immigrated to the United Kingdom or Canada, claiming that they could no longer put up with the assimilation, economic problems, and discrimination that they face; as a response, the United Kingdom and Canada tightened their visa policies. An official data coming from the last 1992 federal census stated that 33,000 people proclaimed themselves as Roma (Český Statistický Úřad 2009). Some unofficial estimates coming from both government and Roma nongovernmental organizations have suggested a figure ten times higher.

Despite stricter visa policies in the United Kingdom and Canada, more families continued to try to emigrate. However, when the Czech Republic joined the European Union in 2004, it became possible for Czechs to travel and for Roma to emigrate again. Canada’s harsh visa policy is still in effect. Nevertheless, many Roma families are still trying to leave the Czech Republic. One recent rumor suggested that property investors were exerting pressure on this migration in order to get hold of the flats that Roma families leave behind.

## Culture and Identity of the Roma

Roma culture is highly specific. There are major differences between Czech and Roma traditions and social behavior. Most significant is the value of the family and family relations. The traditional Czech family usually consists of the immediate family members like parents, grandparents, siblings, life partner (husband or wife), and children. Aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces, and in-laws are also considered family, but usually as a sort of outer family, or to be precise, as relatives (Hancock 2005).

Roma do not make this distinction regarding their families. Expulsion from the family is the cruelest punishment that any Roma can experience, as family means the world to the Roma. The family is not just a safe surrounding but also an environment that ensures the fulfillment of all the basic needs of its members. As a historically nomadic nation, Roma were absolutely self-sufficient and independent of any other society, except their own families. The Roma family was a society unto its own. It was

the source of culture, identity, material and economical support, education, and safety. In the traditional structure and function of Roma families, women are responsible for food and clothes for the children and the household in general and obliged to obey their husbands; men are responsible for safety and the decision-making process of the family. Children were always considered indicators of family prestige and every newborn child was warmly welcomed (Hancock 2005).

Roma speak many dialects of their own common language that belongs to the Indo-European group of languages (Miko 2008). Despite their territorial migrations and the variety of Roma dialects, Roma from different parts of the world can still understand one another. For Roma living in the Czech Republic, Czech is a foreign language and difficult. Moreover, speaking Romanes is increasingly suppressed and diluted by the Czech language. No official government forms are available in Romanes and all communication at schools, offices, or clinics, etc., requires a good knowledge of Czech, so Roma are forced to learn and use Czech as their main language. However, language is an essential part of forming one's identity. For example, a child born into a family where parents neither speak Czech well nor have a good knowledge of Czech is literally lost, along with communication skills, thinking, feelings, and abstract locution, in what was once their native language. Since knowledge of language is a vital part of identity, a child cut off from his or her cultural heritage is incomplete, neither Roma nor Czech, and he or she faces many potential problems with identity formation, an inclination to manipulation, and outright exploitation.

Roma are widely misrepresented as being uncivilized "barbarians." Yet, no one acts surprised when a Roma is a great musician, dancer, or artist. Roma culture is unique and special, often the source of marvelous visual and applied arts. It should be noted that this artistic aspect of Roma culture is often praised, admired, and respected exactly because it corresponds with romantic visualizations of Roma temperament and imagination. The Roma culture is a source of, as well as a testament to, their great inner power and energy and can, like any other culture, become a bridge between Roma and "the others" (Hancock 2005).

Almost all Roma have converted from their traditional nomadic way of life. In the twentieth century, the only remaining nomadic Roma were Olashs and some Roma in Germany (Sinti) who traveled seasonally as circus owners. The vast majority of Roma are not nomads anymore, and many have settled in Roma communities in rural areas, some of which are very poor. Nowadays, the Roma also live in blocks of flats in urban areas while still keeping elements of their traditional way of life, often bringing them in conflict with the majority. These incidents, for which there are many

causes not mentioned here, should not be characterized as cultural or generalized as typical of the Roma as a whole. The socio-economic situation of the majority of Roma families does not allow them to purchase large flats, so they wind up living in small low-quality flats in an industrial part of a city or its outskirts. Often the flats are run-down and overcrowded. Many Roma also sell their flats and instead live itinerantly, visiting their friends and relatives. (Czech Radio 2000a).

For the Roma, traditional crafts that had provided much of their income in the past have slowly faded away and only a few earn a living from such occupations. Many Roma work as builders or do other physical work; however, the majority of them are forced to live from social benefits. Long-term unemployment rates are high, often estimated at between 70–85 percent, while 60 percent of Roma adults are unemployed for more than three years, which reflects the catastrophically low employment rate of Roma in the Czech Republic. There are at least three reasons. First, there is a low demand for unqualified workers. Second, the system of Czech social benefits is neither effective nor efficient. Third, Roma have extremely poor chances to secure more permanent jobs as employers claim they are irresponsible and poor workers. Roma face discrimination before they even enter any potential employment. An employer who is hiring a new employee would rather hire someone else instead of checking the references and abilities of a potential Roma employee. So the unemployed must then live from the state's meager benefits or find alternative sources of income for their families in the informal economy. If Czech statistics are to be believed, Roma criminality is widespread, accounting for 20–30 percent of working-age Roma. The reality and perception of crime among the Roma increases the majority's aversion, fear, and prejudices about Roma. Furthermore, criminality eats at the Roma nation and culture as Roma communities start to believe that there is no other option but criminal activity and that it is normal to be hated and imprisoned (People in Need, Internal Memo).

The overall relation between Roma and Czech people could be described as a never-ending spiral of chronic tension, which sometimes leads to open hatred and mutual violence. One of the reasons is the strong homogeneity of the Czech population and some surveys report that an estimated 87 percent of the Czech population shows significant signs of racism and xenophobia towards Roma. Nevertheless, there exist exceptions and there are friendships and positive relations amongst Czech and Roma or even among entire communities. Despite this, there can be no doubt about the fact that the Roma population is discriminated against in the Czech Republic, directly as well as indirectly. Roma feel like foreigners at home (People in Need, Internal Memo).

Although discrimination against Roma is a common practice in the Czech Republic, there are no practical tools for controlling or even punishing such prejudice. The Roma thus fear Czech institutions, the Czech social system, and the Czechs, in general. They often feel like “second-class” citizens, especially when it comes to dealing with offices and state institutions. The language and cultural barriers that hold them back do not make this process any easier. One of the outcomes of this situation is a feeling of desperation, segregation, aggression, and hatred. The behavior of Roma often reflects all of those feelings, just as the behavior of Czech people reflects many negative prejudices due to the media’s spreading and strengthening of stereotyping or based on personal experiences. The coexistence of Czechs and Roma is also complicated by an aversion that is bilateral, reactive, and defensive, caused by constant fear.

Clearly, many barriers exist between Roma and Czechs, among them mutual fear, aversion, and discrimination that are very deeply rooted but not insurmountable. The problem is twofold. First, no major effort has been made to integrate the Roma in non-Roma society, which has little interest in or knowledge about Roma culture. And since the majority does not want to know about and understand the culture of the Roma, it makes effective communication with them impossible. Since cross-cultural communication is the key to integration, one should not be surprised that Roma in the Czech Republic are more segregated than integrated. The second hurdle is that the Czech society deems traditional Roma culture and their way of life unsuitable for modern times. But this does not mean that they should be forced to change and give up their identity to be converted into non-Roma. Again, integration is the path, not assimilation. Would it hurt to learn about traditional Roma culture or even bring the old traditions back to life, analyze them, acknowledge and appreciate them? Moreover, this process of ethnic enlightenment could restore Roma identity and prevent social problems from eradication, thus easing Roma’s integration into Czech society. It could also be a way to change and improve Czech and Roma relations and address mutual suspicion and distrust.

## Roma and the Czech Elementary Educational System

One key manifestation of negative Roma and Czech relations is teachers’ attitudes towards Roma children in Czech schools. The Czech elementary educational system discriminates against Roma children on many levels. Roughly 55,000 Roma students

attend Czech primary schools. But the Czech education system does not know what to do with them. They frequently repeat first grade or do not finish and leave to attend the so-called “easier” schools. In schools near Roma ghettos, seven out of ten Roma students fail and must repeat a grade, according to the research by the Foundation for Civic Society Development and the Open Society Fund Prague. The research, prepared by Global Analysis and Consulting (GAC), mapped out the fate of 502 students in nine schools. The results demonstrated that the first grade already represents the first problematic issue. Further breaking points appear in third grade, when requirements increase, and after students make the transition to the second level of primary school. In the assessed group, girls did better than boys. Approximately half of them failed a grade. Among children from the “major” society only one out of ten children shows the same results (Czech Radio 2009d). Also according to other findings of the GAC, Roma children living in or coming from separated localities are 50 percent less likely to finish basic school than the classmates they started with. One of the problems is the lack of preparation for school among the Roma minority; though 90 percent of non-Roma children attend preschool, only 40 percent of Roma children do so. Roma pupils are less prepared for the educational routine at school, they lack Czech language skills and lag behind in math. The probability of Roma children being transferred to schools for children with mild intellectual disabilities (formerly special schools, presently practical schools) soon after entering elementary education is six times higher than non-Roma (GAC).

The segregation of Roma children within the Czech elementary educational system has been a long-term problem. The main turning point did not come about until 1999 when 18 children represented by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and local attorneys unsuccessfully filed complaints in the Czech courts. In 2000, the applicants turned to the European Court of Human Rights, alleging that their assignment to “special schools” for children with mild intellectual disabilities contravened the European Convention. It was stated that tests used to assess the children’s mental abilities are culturally biased against Czech Roma and placement procedures allowed for the influence of racial prejudice on the part of the educational authorities (Czech Radio 2007c).

Evidence before the Court, based on ERRC research in the city of Ostrava, demonstrated that school selection processes frequently discriminate on the basis of race:

- Over half of the Roma child population is educated in remedial special schools.
- Over half of the population of remedial special schools is Roma.

- Any randomly chosen Roma child is 27 times more likely to be placed in schools for the learning disabled than a similarly situated non-Roma child.
- Even where Roma children manage to avoid the trap of placement in remedial special schooling, they are most often schooled in substandard and predominantly Roma urban schools.

Officially, special or separate schools no longer exist in the Czech Republic. They were recently abolished. However, as Indian-born Roma rights activist Kumar Vishwanathan stated, segregation has not gone away.

In 2007, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights received a complaint coming from a group of 18 Roma pupils, stating that they were indirectly discriminated against by the Czech Republic within the Czech educational system. They claimed that as a result of this discrimination their opportunities to get better jobs were limited and thus the quality of their current and future lives was negatively influenced. The court ruled by a vote of 13 to 4 that in the case *D. H. and others vs. the Czech Republic* from November 13, 2007<sup>1</sup> that the Czech Republic had violated the European Convention of Human Rights by segregating Roma children into special/separate schools for the mentally disabled and thus indirectly discriminated against Roma children and violated their fundamental human rights (Czech Radio 2007c).

“The court confirmed that the school segregation of Roma children is illegal in Europe. The Czech government has an opportunity to take a leadership role on the treatment of Roma children throughout Europe’s schools,” said Robert Kushen, managing director of the European Roma Rights Centre. “Racial discrimination has no place in today’s Europe” (Czech Radio 2009). The Senate reacted by stating that the Czech Republic does pay attention to the improvement of the very complicated issue of educating Roma children.

However, currently an estimated 15 percent of all Roma children attending primary schools are still sent to so-called “practical” schools even though they do not have any mental problems or disabilities (Czech Radio 2007b). These schools offer a limited and simplified educational program, and thus further limit the future opportunities for further education or qualifications. Roma children attending those schools are therefore discriminated against, as their chances on the job market are significantly lower than those who have access to standard and potentially even higher

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1 Věc č. 57325/00 – D. H. a ostatní proti České republice (Zpráva vlády České republiky 2009 a.)

education. This practice locks them into a vicious circle leading to unemployment and criminality. In the two years since receiving the European Court's verdict on the Czech educational discrimination case, the only thing that changed was the official name of the "special" schools from separate to basic. The rest remained the same. The renaming of those schools was just a formal act pretending to change while not changing anything. The practical schools are still offering the same limited and simplified educational program as the separate schools of the past.

Yet, there is still the landmark discrimination ruling of 2007 from the European Court of Human Rights pressing the Czech government to do something about the educational barriers and discrimination against Roma children. Some further attempts have been made to change and improve the current situation. The Ministry of Education has decided to change educational policy. According to the Ministry of Education's spokesperson Kateřina Böhmová, an official attempt to change is underway: "(...) the blueprint draft of new educational policy and notice about educating children is being prepared ... the change is going to affect mainly pupils with special educational needs" (Rodriguez 2009).

Although the situation in the Czech educational system on the Roma discrimination matter remains unsolved and unimproved, since the European Court's judgment many steps were made. First, because of its obligation to submit reports about the particular steps taken in the given matter, the Czech government (Ministry of Education, especially) conducted analytical research and reports to gather information about Roma children in the Czech educational system. Even though those analyses do not provide a complete picture of the problem (as social research on ethnic minorities is always very complicated), it is still a huge accomplishment that the first government-commissioned research on Roma issues was finally conducted. The first analysis was carried out by the Czech nongovernmental organization People in Need and investigated the level of individualization of teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and special needs. The second analysis was conducted by the GAC and aimed at mapping out the educational chances and possibilities of the Roma children living in or close to socially excluded and separated localities. According to figures from the GAC, an estimated 28 percent of Roma pupils are being educated in "separate" schools and therefore out of the educational mainstream. The probability of a Roma child being sent to a separate/practical school is 3.5 times higher than that of a non-Roma child. The Roma children are often diagnosed with light mental retardation, normally present in about 3 percent of the general population. The People in Need's survey indicates that 15 percent of researched schools have good enough

conditions for the integration of children with special learning needs; another 15 percent has a substantial staff capacity, adequate equipment, and appropriate educational programs. But not only research and surveys were conducted; the Ministry of Education also allocated budgets from EU funds that are to be used to support various inclusive projects in schools and the improvement of the Czech educational system in general. In the first round of funding, CZK 200 million was already allocated and more money will be invested in future. An estimated CZK 4.5 billion is scheduled to be invested in the upcoming project “EU Funds for Schools,” which is focused on supporting the desegregation of ethnic minorities in the Czech educational system and establishing equal opportunities for all children (Zpráva vlády České republiky 2009a).

Nevertheless, despite some of the positive elements coming out of this new research, the data of both surveys declare that the Czech educational system is neither efficient nor effective enough when educating Roma. Even though money is beginning to be invested in projects to change the status quo, the segregation and discrimination of Roma children has not disappeared, says Indian-born Roma rights activist Kumar Vishwanathan:

In Ostrava, if you stand by the roadside and you watch the kids taking the 7:30 morning buses to school you find a certain bus full of Roma kids is going one way, and that is to the former special school. And you find non-Roma kids going the other way, to the normal school. Basically, the old special schools, segregating special schools, still continue to remain, although they have been repainted and the signs changed (Czech Radio 2007c).

The main problem of the Czech educational system is, as Zdeněk Svoboda, one of the researchers from People in Need, put it:

Czech schools are in general proven to be able to work only with children from families which adequately prepare their children for the educational system and give them all the necessary or missing information and skills. In the cases where parents are unable to do so, do not create good conditions for educational processes, or in other words do not cooperate or even sabotage its work, the Czech educational system cannot offer them help or anything else (Zeman 2009).

Furthermore, the standard educational system, which does not know how to work with children from difficult social backgrounds, and this is not just the case for Roma children, leads to the following: children from difficult social backgrounds can

either remain in the standard primary school and fumble with continuous learning difficulties, or they can be transferred or asked to be transferred to separate, practical schools, where they will receive only limited education, with which their options on the job market will be significantly reduced. In reality, Roma children do not really have a choice, since whatever option they will choose or pass through will result in more or less the same.

As Geraldine Scullion, the legal director of the European Roma Rights Centre, concluded, the Czech educational system is

not addressing at all the needs of these children. In fact [it] is compounding their difficulties, by putting them in these schools where they have a lower curriculum, they don't learn their numbers or their alphabet until a much later stage than if they'd attended another school. They're isolated from the rest of the community, so you're compounding problems for these Roma children, in terms of their social exclusion, their failure to find a job in later life, their access to further education and perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion—which is to the detriment of the whole of Czech society (Czech Radio 2007c).

The Czech educational system is unfortunately designed in such a way that instead of helping children from difficult social environments, it creates a vicious circle for them.

The reaction of schools is usually to sustain certain provisions that they adopt based on the consequences and not causes of the social handicap of Roma pupils. The effect of such provisions is often just temporary. The abolishment of this social handicap and this segregation cannot be done by schools only. It is simply out of the schools' competencies and possibilities to do so, the multilateral cooperation of the whole social system is the only solution to this problem (Zpráva vlády České republiky 2009a).

The problem of the Czech educational system cannot remain overlooked anymore. Education is vital to the process of social cohesion. Support provided to—but not just to—Roma children in the elementary educational process would notably improve and ease their integration to our society. Thus, it is crucially important that future teachers understand multiculturalism, risk behaviors, and will have the methods and techniques for integration and facilitation as a compulsory part of their studies. The Ministry of Education has already started a number of projects, yet one might wonder if this is for the sake of improvement or fulfilling the responsibilities being imposed upon Czech government after the European Court of Human Right's verdict

from November 2007. Based on the court's verdict, the Together to School<sup>2</sup> program and the Together to School Coalition<sup>3</sup> were established and a new national project starting in July 2010—The Educational Project of the Center for Support of Education and Inclusion—was announced with the purpose of passing on this new information to learning centers established within this project along with the various techniques and methods of inclusive education. Another project of the Czech Ministry of Education is an information pack on how to improve equal opportunities in educational processes for pupils from socially disadvantaged environments. This manual hopes to provide the guidelines for the appropriate education and assistance to children from socially disadvantaged environment and ensure better and easier integration of those children into Czech society. It is part of a long-term conceptual solution to this problem; it was taken up by the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education in late 2010. This plan should set the complex arrangements and measures that will change the traditional, standard educational system into a system focused on integration and inclusion (Zpráva vlády České republiky 2009b).

## Where Are We Now and Where Do We Go from Here?

A number of programs, changes, or plans have recently been implemented or designed to address Roma children's segregation within the Czech elementary educational system. Most notably, the Czech Republic joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015,<sup>4</sup> implemented a National Action Plan on Education that included

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- 2 Together to School is a project run by the organization *Zvůle práva* (According to Law), aiming at creation of an equal opportunity environment in terms of education for Roma children. It was established in 2007 to ensure that the obligation imposed upon Czech Republic by the European Court of Human Rights will be fulfilled and the separation and discrimination of Roma will be tackled.
  - 3 The Together to School Coalition consist of 13 international, Roma, and Czech NGOs, namely, European Roma Rights Centre, Amnesty International, Step by Step ČR, Open Society Fund Prague, Peacework, Roma Centre DROM, IQ Roma Servis, ROMODROM, Czech Helsinki Committee, People in Need, Czech NGOs Living together, Human Rights League, the British NGO European Dialogue, Roma NGO Čačipen and The Rule of Law. The coalition is aiming at conducting research and analysis and creating trainings and educational projects for those who want to be or are somehow involved in the problem (teachers, professionals, as well as the general public). The purpose of this is to help the desegregation of the Czech educational system and help to establish an equal opportunity environment for all children, no matter their race, culture, religion, or social background (Zpráva vlády České republiky 2009a).
  - 4 The Decade was established in 2005 with the main aim of spreading across countries the idea of a coherent attempt to solve the problematic issues involving the Roma. The main areas of concern are education, accommodations, medical care, and employment.

Roma, and created an Agency for Social Inclusion in regions with high-density Roma populations, along with other actions and activities of the governmental and nongovernmental sector. But that has not stopped racist attacks towards the Roma minority that have been accompanied by increasing hate and violence. In the face of the stereotyping, segregating, and separating that drives this violence, the most important question in this matter is how to improve the relations between Roma and non-Roma. How to eliminate or minimize the negative attitudes against one another? The solution can be found among various educational and nurturing tools. The educational processes can ease integration and address the social balance. But it is fundamental to change the philosophy of the Czech educational system and also the attitudes of the Czech majority. “The Czech government must take immediate steps—including adopting a time-bound plan with targeted goals—to desegregate its schools,” said James A. Goldston, executive director of the Open Society Justice Initiative. “Unless Roma are able to access quality education they will remain trapped in poverty and isolated at society’s margins” (Czech Radio 2009).

The acceptance of multiculturalism, and even more importantly the full participation of Roma children in the Czech elementary educational system, while accepting and respecting their culture, identity, and social differences, is a key element of successful integration. First, it is necessary to raise the number of Roma children in the preschools and kindergartens, so they have a chance to prepare for entrance to elementary schools. It is vital to equip the nurseries with appropriate accessories and tools in the Romanes language, so Roma children will be able to understand properly, since their Czech language skills are usually very low in comparison to non-Roma. In addition, special Roma language classes should be added to this effort. These classes should also aim to develop the knowledge necessary for the successful and easy entrance of Roma children into the elementary education system in the Czech Republic. It currently remains very complicated for them to do so, and support for preschool and kindergarten education would accelerate this process, undoubtedly a radical turning point in the lives of most Roma children.

As listed earlier, some steps leading to the integration of Roma (and other socially disadvantaged) children into Czech society have already been taken, are being applied, or in the process of preparation. However, the Council of Europe, the Open Society Justice Initiative, and the European Roma Rights Centre still argue that the Czech Republic must do more to comply with a 2007 European Court of Human Rights ruling on school segregation. In spite of the existing efforts to address the problem, the government’s statistics confirm that Roma children are still 26 or 27 times

more likely than non-Roma to be shunted into practical schools for children with mild intellectual disabilities in many parts of the Czech Republic (Czech Radio 2009).

Therefore, once again the necessity to consider the specific problems of Roma children is essential, particularly in this sort of process. They cannot be put in one bag together with the other socially disadvantaged children. They have specific and very concrete problems and needs, which must be acknowledged. Foremost is the significant language barrier.

Thus, the appropriate solution and improvement of the first year's Roma dropout rate on the elementary education level would be the establishment of "balancing" classes. A limited number of pupils per class and a tailored approach will help Roma children to get used to the school environment, learning process, and education in general. Another important element of this process is the presence and the professional assistance of Roma pedagogical assistants (RPAs). The role of Roma pedagogical assistants includes assistance with the educational process and communication with pupils, their parents, and teachers.

Currently, the Czech Ministry of Education is already running such programs. Since the beginning of September in 2007, all nurseries and kindergartens are obliged to work according to the rules set by the Educational Framework Program for preschool education (RVP PV). Within this program, schools create their own educational programs and some schools are also opening such balancing classes. Roma pedagogical assistants have worked in Czech schools since 1993. After more than 15 years, there are approximately 400 RPAs working in Czech preschools, basic schools, and practical schools, mainly in Moravia-Slezia, the northern part of the country, and in the Liberec region. According to information from the Roma broadcast "O Roma Vakeren," there are problems with the information flow about the function and qualifications of RPAs. But there is a general lack of information about the opportunities to use RPAs, and even if schools know about the possibility, they resist applying for their own RPAs as they fear financing problems (O Roma Vakeren). The author of this report would stress that the role of RPAs in Czech elementary educational system is crucially important to help and assist Roma children gain new knowledge, complete their daily homework, attend classes of interest, etc.

The role of the nongovernmental sector has been essential. A number of Czech NGOs are providing services like after-school education, free-time activities for Roma children, social services like advocacy and legal advice, medical care, help with housing, and finding employment. Amnesty International is strongly lobbying for a total moratorium on the separation of Roma children and their placement in practical schools, the abolishment of segregation, and support to all children who are in need of

help to actively participate in schools, and thus in the social life of the country where they live. People in Need, OSF Prague, Pixla in Pilsen, Dzeno, Drom, and many more NGOs are taking an active part in all these processes and the “fight” for equal opportunities within one of the most basic human rights, the right to education.

Yet, it is crucial to mention that schools play the key role when it comes to the matter of Roma children’s discrimination. Indeed, their function in the process of change and improvement is the most crucial one. But the problem cannot be solved by schools alone. In the words of Svoboda, this problem “must be dealt with within the complex social context, in this case, particularly the family context” (Zeman 2009). In order to solve the problem of Roma integration into Czech society, all the elements of integration must cooperate and be effectively interlinked with each other. As Jim Goldston of the Open Society Justice Initiative said,

One, the government must end the disproportionate assignment of Roma children to certain kinds of schools. Two, it must begin to track and monitor what are the numbers of Roma and non-Roma, so that it can comply with its obligation to ensure that it’s not disproportionately assigning Roma children to certain schools. Three, it has got to deal with consent, because the current practice of consent was clearly shown to be inadequate by the court. And four, it has to review the tests and the manner in which they are interpreted, because the court again suggested that they are clearly problematic (Czech Radio 2007c).

## Summary

Although many positive steps have been taken in order to eliminate and abolish discrimination against Roma children in the Czech educational system within the last three years, the situation is still troublesome. The majority of Roma children suffer from persistent segregation within the Czech elementary educational system and this fact drives many problems in the social and economic spheres.

The Strasbourg verdict has been important to creating pressure to tackle this issue. While it raised awareness and proved the existing discrimination against Roma children within the Czech educational system, it has also opened, at least in theory, the door for legal action and brought a need for support to nongovernmental efforts in this area. Most importantly, this process helped to acknowledge that the Czech educational system is imperfect and that those imperfections must be dealt with. It is crucial, and not just for the Czech educational system, to admit that it is normal to be different and that multiculturalism is so omnipresent in our societies that it can no

longer be overlooked. The Czech government was officially forced to acknowledge this and also engage in the process of making a positive change in this regard; however, the general public, both Roma as well as non-Roma, must do so as well.

This paper would like to stress that there are no victims or offenders; these problems come from both parties. The picture described here is, more or less, a picture of reality, which demonstrates only the fact that coexistence and social inclusion of the Czech Roma minority is complicated, and that if it is to be improved, it needs a complex, coherent approach. Czech educational, social, informational, governmental as well as nongovernmental actors, together with the Roma, their actors, and “authorities,” must support this process because only then can a change be achieved. Only a multidimensional inclusion and education reaching across all spheres of life would allow everyone to understand cultural differences and positively change the current situation. The doors to a better future have been opened; let us hope that everyone will make it all the way to the end and one day in the near future Czech Roma citizens will peacefully coexist with others.

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## **PART IV**

# Financial Matters of Educational Service Provision



# Conditional Cash Transfers in Turkey: Advantages and Disadvantages

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## Abstract

Education remains one of the most important sources for those who want to improve their lifelong opportunities and to achieve better labor market prospects. Hence, equal access to education and its quality are essential in generating equality of opportunity for individuals. In the last decade the Turkish government has launched several programs to enhance the equity and quality of education. This paper reviews some of the policies, with a particular focus on a conditional cash transfer program that was initiated with the support of the World Bank to keep students, and especially girls, from impoverished backgrounds enrolled in school. The focus is on the evaluation of this program on achieving higher enrollment rates in primary and secondary education, especially for girls. There are two aims of the paper: first, presenting a detailed analysis of the Turkish experience, and second, discussing the shortcomings and strengths in terms of its success in overcoming economic, institutional, social, and cultural hurdles against education expansion.

# Introduction

Education and health stand out as important factors shaping the socio-economic opportunities of any individual, and hence access to these significantly alters an individual's chances in his or her life. Schooling is essential to ensure any individual's labor market prospects and it continues to be a dividing line among social groups both within and across countries. In addition to the private gains one can receive, education also has a positive spillover effect whereby the entire economy and society in general benefit from the increase in human capital. Since there often are pervasive labor and capital market imperfections in developing countries, education can help to overcome them if the opportunities for schooling are equally distributed or can aggravate them if education is only accessible and available to certain segments of the society. Moreover, some academics like Birdsall and Londono have asserted that education inequality<sup>1</sup> has a negative effect on the overall economic growth of a country and income growth of the poor (1997).

Despite the importance of education, Turkey lags behind its own targets and has scored lower compared to other countries with similar levels of development. Especially, in the area of female access to education, it ranks very low and is expected to fail to reach the equality goals for primary and secondary education by 2015 (Aydağul 2007). As a result of these problems and overall concerns about expanding basic education, the Turkish government has launched several initiatives and reforms in the last two decades with the support of civil society organizations and international institutions. The first set of reforms mainly concentrated on extending schooling, and in 1997 the compulsory years of education were increased from five to eight.<sup>2</sup> The second set of reforms that have followed since then have been concerned about the quality of education and its compliance with international standards; generally, these more recent programs frame basic education as a human right. Several policies have been pursued to this end, which includes a conditional cash transfer program.

This paper reviews the conditional cash transfer program for education in Turkey. The conditional cash transfer program (CCT) was initiated with the support of the World Bank and targeted the poorest 6 percent of families with children. This paper focuses on the evaluation of this CCT program as it sought to achieve higher enroll-

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1 Education inequality simply means differential access for several socio-economic groups, and this paper's purpose is not to look at the educational outcomes.

2 This was passed by Law No. 4306 on National Education.

ment rates in primary and secondary education, especially for girls. Such programs can have multiple objectives and criteria for assessment such as their effects on time allocation decisions or work incentives;<sup>3</sup> unfortunately, this paper only investigates the educational outcomes and does not discuss its impact on poverty alleviation or labor market decisions. There are two aims of the paper: first, to present a detailed analysis of the Turkish experience, and second, to discuss the shortcomings and strengths in terms of its success in overcoming economic, institutional, social, and cultural hurdles against education expansion.

In the next section a brief overview of gender disparities and girls' schooling is presented. The third section looks at the details of the conditional cash transfer program and its results in terms of educational attainments. In the fourth section, an evaluation of the program is provided by highlighting the shortcomings and strengths for overcoming educational barriers. The final section offers some conclusions as to the problems and successes of this program.

## Gender Disparities and Girls' Schooling in Turkey

In the vast literature on education equality, several arguments have been offered to illustrate the existence of gender disparities in schooling. Among these, socio-economic, cultural, demographic, and geographical factors are important and capture several dimensions of differential access. Household income is seen as a crucial factor for schooling decisions since it determines the amount of available resources for each child and the family. A family's current income will greatly determine a family's ability to invest in their children's education, especially for those families who are short on credit and capital (Glewwe and Jacoby 1994). A number of studies have found a positive correlation between household income and the schooling of children.<sup>4</sup> The evidence shows that income and wealth often inform educational choices, especially for higher levels of education in both developed and developing countries. Certainly, in addition to their current income, families may have other financial assets and these are also expected to affect any education investments in a similar manner. Obviously,

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3 For a more detailed explanation on the evaluation of CCTs, see F. Bourguignon, F. Ferreira, and P. Leite (2002).

4 Behrman and Knowles (1999) argue that children from higher-income households have significantly higher chances to get more education and the few deviations found in the literature are mostly a result of measurement errors.

the wealthier families care less about both the indirect and direct costs of schooling. The direct costs include fees, books, travel expenses, and all other materials related to schooling. The indirect costs are the opportunity costs or the price of the time spent for education instead of participating in the labor market or domestic duties. In families with few financial and economic resources, girls might be left out disproportionately from formal education as a result of cultural biases. Hence, economic constraints can interact with other factors and aggravate their impact. In this sense, cash transfers might help to mitigate both the financial restraints and break the link between these and the social grounds for discrimination.

Another factor influential for children's schooling prospects is the level of parental education. Well-educated parents are more open-minded, more willing to send their children to schools, and perceive education as more worthy (King and Hill 1993). It is expected that parents who have high levels of education would provide opportunities for their children to accomplish at least the same level of schooling as themselves. Moreover, incomes are largely determined by education, and in Turkey the returns from schooling are quite high. Thus, income and wealth should be correlated with the parents' education level. Also, mothers who have a better education have more bargaining power and generate a better allocation of resources towards their children's human capital (Thomas 1994). The relevant literature generally finds that daughters' educational attainment is more closely associated with their mothers' education.

Child labor in developing countries is pervasive and children are expected to undertake a range of low-skilled tasks such as taking care of siblings and household duties. It has been shown in many studies that these types of chores tend to reduce educational attainment (King and Hill 1993). In Turkey, girls are the prime contributors to household chores; hence, they are expected to stay at home and perform these duties more often than boys. Particularly, child-care services within the family will be provided by the females.<sup>5</sup> Also, the number of dependent family members might increase the daily amount of tasks that need to be carried out.<sup>6</sup> For example, in rural India the number of children aged 6 to 16 in a family has a positive impact on the time used to work and a negative effect on the time used to attend school (Cigno and Rosatti 2002). However, it should be noted that in advanced countries family size turned out to be insignificant under most specifications. The size of a family will defi-

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5 Anderson (1988) pointed out that school attendance for females is more sensitive to the number of children under the age of five in the household than male attendance.

6 Although, most of the effect might come from the number of siblings, elder care can be important in the Turkish context.

nately put pressure on their resources and trim the finances available for each child. Besides, the effect may be higher for girls because the extended family networks are used to the advantage of boys (Lloyd and Blanc 1996).

The surrounding community's structure has a large impact on education investment and has different implications for the schooling opportunities of boys and girls. Both the quality and quantity of schools are lower in rural areas in developing countries; furthermore, the perceived value of education tends to be lower in these communities (Hyde 1993). Turkey is a geographically divided country where its western regions are more industrialized and more urbanized compared to its eastern regions. The costs of education can be higher in rural regions, given that the schools tend to be farther away and the ratio of school quality to expenditure is lower. This rural versus urban distinction can also capture the labor market chances up to a certain point. Since farm employment is more widespread in rural areas, a high degree of educational attainment is less of a requirement. The already inadequate number of available jobs in the formal labor market will most likely be allocated to males; therefore, education for girls in the rural communities is limited. Thus Turkey's more urbanized western regions have higher school attainment levels for both genders.

Extensive studies have gone on to further examine the different education opportunities for men and women. King and Hill examined the barriers to women's education in developing countries and concluded that girls still receive less education than boys despite the decrease in the gender gap (King and Hill 1993). One of the main factors behind this is the institutional structure where there are biases against girls' school choice, and another one is the cultural impediments and different standards applied to genders.<sup>7</sup> There is also discrimination and segregation in the labor market, which pushes women to select certain professions and get the appropriate training. The World Bank data show that there has been a significant improvement in girls' enrollment in schools. For example, the secondary school enrollment rate among girls in low-income countries rose much faster than it did among boys though a gender gap still exists (World Bank 2008). In Turkey, even though there has been improvement in girls' enrollment ratios over the years, girls are still considerably behind their male counterparts, specifically in secondary and tertiary education. Only primary education best reflects near gender equality, while as of 2007 a gender gap of 14 percent and 3 percent remains in secondary and tertiary education, respectively. Table 1 compares the enrollment rates for males and females in 1997–2007.

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7 For example, teachers are prejudiced against girls for their math and science skills.

**Table 1.**  
*Enrollment Ratios for Genders and School Types*

Year	Schooling ratio	Primary education		Secondary education		Higher education	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1997/98	Gross	96.26	82.43	60.20	44.97	22.92	15.95
	Net	90.25	78.97	41.39	34.16	11.28	9.17
2007/08	Gross	106.41	102.57	94.04	80.70	42.62	33.56
	Net	98.53	96.14	61.17	55.81	22.37	19.69

Source: TUIK.

Despite the low investment in girls' education, the returns from schooling for women are found to be quite high. In some cases, the returns from secondary schooling for girls are estimated to exceed that of boys (Dollar and Gatti 1999). This might be due to the small supply of female employees with higher levels of schooling. Additionally, the returns from higher education rose significantly across countries and over time for both genders. This is also true for Turkey, where for almost all schooling categories the female rate of return is higher according to the most recent data. The biggest discrepancy is for secondary school and vocational training. Women benefit extensively from attaining both formal schooling and vocational training, while for men the returns have remained stable over time. Table 2 provides a summary of the returns between 1994 and 2004. In 1994, secondary schooling had the highest return for both males and females, while in 2004 this category offered more returns to females than males. Also, tertiary education became more valuable for females in 2004, although the returns increased for men as well.

**Table 2.**  
*Returns to Education by Category and Gender*

	1994		2004	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Primary (8 years)	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.06
Secondary (3 years)	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.23
Higher (2–4 years)	0.10	0.10	0.16	0.19

Source: Vural and Gulcan (2008).

However, the private returns of an education are coupled to the negative social effects that result from not sending girls to school or ignoring their education. For instance, economic growth is adversely affected by gender inequality through two channels. The first channel is the direct influence of fewer years of education and a poorer quality of human capital in the nation's workforce. The second channel flows from the consequences gender education inequality has on child mortality and fertility rates (King and Mason 2001). It has been shown that child mortality and fertility rates decrease as a mother's education increases. Both of these factors are extremely significant for the overall development of low-income countries. Although the full extent of social returns cannot be calculated adequately, and since not every externality can be taken into account, by and large, it is accepted that the social returns are considerable. Thus, providing equal and universal access to schooling has many broader, positive spillovers in society, defusing the gender bias that often leads to poverty traps and impairs the future learning capabilities of children.

As can be seen from the above accounts, there are several barriers to girls' education as well as general education. Socio-economic, demographic, cultural, and geographical factors impede equal and easy access to schooling in many countries, and numerous projects have been implemented in Turkey to mitigate the negative impacts of these factors. These schemes have been designed to overcome the many problems that individuals face in making their human capital investment decisions. Certainly, economic, cultural, or demographic hurdles would require separate strategies and resources.

Conditional cash transfer programs are just one way of dealing with the barriers and they mainly target the economic side of the problem, trying to decrease the costs of education by giving families more funds and by increasing the shadow price of schooling. CCT in Turkey tried to change the incentive structure within families to get girls enrolled in formal schooling by means of better financial benefits. Thus, other hurdles and gender biases are also pursued indirectly.

## Conditional Cash Transfer Programs in General and in Turkey

### Overview of Conditional Cash Transfers

Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs have been put in place as a way out of poverty for many developing countries. Instead of simply transferring cash into the hands of the poor, the CCT programs aim to "condition" the assistance so that impoverished

households would invest in the education and health of their offspring. It has been argued that CCTs have public and private justifications; from the public perspective, government might have a better valuation of certain activities than households or individuals, such as in the case of immunization and female education. From the private perspective, conditioning can help to give higher bargaining power to disadvantaged parties such as women. Also, the myopic behavior of poor households can be avoided by requiring investments into long-term goals (de Brauw and Hoddinott 2008). CCTs are generally viewed as more welfare enhancing and less disincentive generating than simple transfers.

But criticism directed at CCTs emphasize that the returns are much lower compared to what can be achieved by infrastructural investments and other public services. Hence, the scarce resources in developing countries can be used much more effectively when they are channeled towards public goods. Also, there are difficulties with targeting and delivery since general services are universal and do not need special assessment. The possible disincentives and social perceptions about the beneficiaries are also counted as negative aspects of CCT programs. It is much easier to single out targeted recipients, and thus any negative social view becomes more visible. The main obligation to the recipients can be multiple, but usually the enrollment of children in schools and regular visits to healthcare service providers are set as conditions in most cases.<sup>8</sup> Table 3 provides a summary of CCT in some developing countries, their conditions, and target populations.

The CCTs mainly attempt to achieve behavioral changes and these are expected to have long-running effects and viewed as less distortionary than pure transfers. Moreover, in the short run CCT aims to pull households out of poverty, since targeting becomes crucial, in addition to the conditions about to whom to channel the financial funds, which affects the success of the program. However, this is not peculiar to CCT programs and will apply to any type of social policy that is targeted. To achieve the second intention, a precise selection among the poor is needed in order to identify households that would or would not send their children to school even in the absence of assistance. Moreover, a cost-benefit analysis is required to minimize the project expenses and get the highest rates of change in behavior (de Janvry and Sadoulet 2006). If these aspects are not taken into account, CCT programs will be inefficient, and hence will incur more social costs than supposed benefits. These two sources of inefficiency can be dealt with

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8 In some cases, only education was put as a condition while others have both education and health components. Also, some programs did not enforce the entire conditions. For a detailed discussion of CCT programs in Latin America and the exact type of conditions, see Rawlings and Rubio (2003).

when the probability of enrollment in a school and attendance is computed by considering individual, household, and community features as well as the transfer offered. Since these probabilities can never be calculated perfectly,<sup>9</sup> there will always be efficiency losses. But they can be minimized depending on the accurateness of the estimations and whether the broader context is considered or not.

**Table 3.**  
*CCT Programs in Selected Latin American Countries*

Program	Conditions		Target population	
	Education	Health and nutrition	Education	Health and nutrition
<b>Brazil</b>	At least 85% school attendance in a 3-month period		Poor children 6–15	
<b>Colombia</b>	At least 80% school attendance in a 2-month cycle	Regular health care visits for child's growth and development	Poor households with children 7–17 enrolled in school (2nd–11th grade)	Poor households with children 0–6 not participating in other programs
<b>Mexico</b>	School enrollment and minimum attendance rate of 85%, both monthly and annually	Compliance by all household members with the required number of health center visits and mother attendance at health and nutrition lectures	Poor households with children 8–18 enrolled in primary (1st–3rd grade) and secondary (3rd grade and higher) school	Cash grants are targeted to poor households while nutrition supplements go to pregnant and lactating women, children 4–24 months old and malnourished children 2–5 years old
<b>Nicaragua</b>	School enrollment; less than 6 days of unexcused school absence in a 2-month period; and school grade promotion	Regular health care visits for child's growth monitoring; up-to-date vaccinations; and attendance at health and nutrition talks	Poor children 6–13 enrolled in primary school grades 1–4	Cash grants are targeted to poor households; health care services are targeted to children 0–5

Source: Adopted from Rawlings and Rubio (2003).

9 For a further discussion of this issue, see de Janvry and Sadoulet (2006).

In Latin American countries, CCT programs are supposed to be quite successful in reaching their objectives and they raised the investments in human capital among poor households significantly. For education, higher enrollment rates were observed for both boys and girls (Schultz 2000). Mexican and Nicaraguan enrollment rates at the primary and secondary school level went up considerably. While in Nicaragua the attendance rates were more raised than enrollment rates, in Mexico the opposite held true. Positive results were also recorded for child labor where reductions in the probability of children working from both genders were seen (Parker and Skoufias 2000). Moreover, in Brazil the probability of children working in risky jobs went down as well (Yap, Sedlacek, and Orazem 2001). Finally, the health and nutrition of children improved as a result of these CCT programs. After the implementation of these projects, children were better nourished and some of the previously common health problems decreased (IFPRI 2002). As can be understood from these evaluations, these programs proved to be successful and mostly accomplished their aims. In the below section, the Turkish case will be presented along with the general outlines of the CCT program.

## CCT Program in Turkey

With the assistance of the World Bank, Turkey launched its CCT program immediately after the financial crisis of 2001.<sup>10</sup> One of the goals was to remedy the negative effect of the crisis on the poorest segments of Turkish society. The overall objectives of the program were twofold, like its counterparts in other developing countries. On the one hand, the program aimed to prevent poor households from becoming poorer, and on the other hand, it intended to improve their children's future productivity and incomes. The CCT was designed to transfer payments to the poorest 6 percent of the Turkish population based on education and health-related conditions. Overall, 1.1 million beneficiaries were targeted, and since then the government has extended the coverage substantially, so much so that by the end of 2007, 2.63 million people were receiving such benefits. After 2006, the loan obtained from World Bank was exhausted and Turkish government continued the program from its local funds.<sup>11</sup> There are internal discussions about lengthening the duration of CCT project and the possibility of turning it into a longer-term anti-poverty scheme. Table 4 presents a brief overview of the program in Turkey.

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10 It came as a part of Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP).

11 The government allocated approximately USD366 million in 2007 and another USD407 million for 2008 from the budget of the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity (SGYDGM).

**Table 4.**  
*Overview of CCT in Turkey*

<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Poor families with children, Pregnant women</b>
Transfer Size	Bimonthly transfer for education: USD13 for boys' primary schooling, USD16 for girls. USD20 for secondary schooling for boys and USD28 for girls. Transfer for health: USD12 per month per child, another USD12 per month during pregnancy, and USD39 per birth at health center
Conditionality	For school-age children attending school For children 0–6 years, complying with regular visits to health clinics For pregnant women, regular attendance to prenatal and postnatal checkups, and giving birth at hospitals

*Source:* Lagarde, Haines, and Palmer (2009).

The Turkish CCT program had both education and health components. Poor pregnant women were also included as a separate group of recipients. Payments were made to women in poor households, and they were required to send their school-aged children to schools and have their younger children regularly visit healthcare facilities and get vaccinations. There are extra incentives for households to enroll their children in secondary schooling. Primary schooling in Turkey is compulsory and extended to eight years in 1997; hence, the starting enrollment rates are expected to be much higher for this category. Since secondary schooling is optional, the enrollment is lower to begin with and higher benefits are set to make a sizeable impact on household behavior. Furthermore, at each education level, investing in girls' education is favored. Several reasons for not sending girls to schools have been discussed in the previous section and CCT tries to overcome these obstacles by means of higher financial assistance.

Table 5 describes the final status of the program in Turkey. There were 1.4 million applications for the scheme, while approximately 64 percent of these households were deemed eligible, which amounted to 0.92 million households and 2.6 million individuals. Out of these, 63 percent received assistance through education and 36 percent through health. The pregnancy benefits were relatively small. In financial terms, the share of education payments was the highest, reaching 73 percent of all expenditures. Health payments had the second highest share, with 26 percent, and the amount of pregnancy payments was a mere 0.02 percent. In the following part, I will attempt to evaluate the CCT program's success in Turkey regarding the preset objectives. The targeting and health outcomes will be briefly mentioned since the emphasis will be on the educational results, especially secondary school enrollment

rates. The target rates for the project are also presented in this section as well as a brief comparison with findings from such programs in other countries.

**Table 5.**  
*Final Status of Conditional Cash Transfers*

Applicant Households	1,431,001
Households Receiving Education Support	750,888
Households Receiving Health Support	508,601
Households Receiving Both Supports	339,919
Beneficiary Households	919,570
Education Beneficiaries	1,659,713
Health Beneficiaries	944,103
Mothers	25,138
Mothers Giving Birth in a Health Center	10,582
Beneficiaries	2,628,954
Education Payments	YTL 582,210,396
Health Payments	YTL 212,365,721
Pregnancy Payments	YTL 1,861,508
Payments	YTL 794,838,272

*Source:* World Bank Project Coordination Unit.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

This section looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the CCT program in Turkey from the perspective of educational outcomes. Although the program can be evaluated on its impact on health and nutrition as well as pregnancy, these are not the main concerns of the paper and will not be discussed. In terms of targeting and implementation, the CCT was deemed quite successful. Evidence supports that the poorest household were identified correctly and received the promised transfers. Nearly half of all health-beneficiary households and nearly one-third of all education-beneficiary households were among the poorest 10 percent of all households in the income distribution at the national level. Moreover, none of the education or health assistance recipients belonged to more affluent segments of society (World Bank 2008). However, there were problems at the beginning of the program and a significant portion

of eligible households joined only in the later stages. Also, there were issues about partial payments but the Turkish government quickly got up to speed as the program widened its scope and size. Finally, although rare, there have been some accounts of leakages in terms of some non-needy households getting benefits and genuinely needy ones being left out.

The CCT program primarily aimed to raise the school attendance rates for the poor, particularly the secondary school rates. Also, a decrease in dropouts was among the objectives. Turkey displays great regional divergences in terms of educational attainments and gender roles; therefore, it is useful to have a quick glance on regional diversity. Table 6 presents the enrollment rates among the CCT participant households across three representative provinces.<sup>12</sup> As can be seen in Samsun, girls managed to have much higher net rates at both levels of schooling, while in Van girls lag behind considerably. Diyarbakir province lies somewhere in between; however, the enrollment rates are still higher than the sample average. In Van, the secondary school enrollment rate for girls is as low as 15.5 percent.

**Table 6.**  
*Enrollment Rates in Three Provinces*

	Samsun	Diyarbakir	Van
Primary (boys)	92.3	97.5	90.7
Primary (girls)	100	95.6	81.1
Secondary (boys)	58.8	78.7	47.4
Secondary (girls)	70.0	63.9	15.5

Source: Adato et al. (2007).

On average, according to a study conducted by regression discontinuity design (RDD) methodology,<sup>13</sup> the secondary school enrollment rates for girls went up by 10.7 percent while this was 1.3 percent at the primary school level. Moreover, the attendance of girls increased by 5.4 percentage points in secondary schools as a result of CCT transfers (Ahmed et al. 2006). These results indicate that the program was quite successful in elevating girls' participation in secondary schooling. Table 7 summarizes

12 Geographically, there are seven regions in Turkey; Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, East Anatolia and lastly Southeast Anatolia.

13 This methodology mainly looks at the average outcomes between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households that are closer to the eligibility criteria.

the net school enrollment rates before and after the establishment of the program. We can see from the table that the project targets were passed in secondary schooling for both genders. The actual enrollment rates exceeded the target rates by approximately 6 percent for boys and 7 percent for girls at the secondary school level. One should note that the baseline rates for girls were quite low for this education category.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 7.**  
*Net School Enrollment Rates in Percent*

	<b>Baseline (2001)</b>	<b>Actual (2007)</b>	<b>Project target</b>
Primary (boys)	99.6	99.7	99.8
Primary (girls)	90.8	87.2	95.0
Secondary (boys)	48.5	61.1	55.0
Secondary (girls)	39.2	52.0	45.0

*Source:* World Bank Project Coordination Unit.

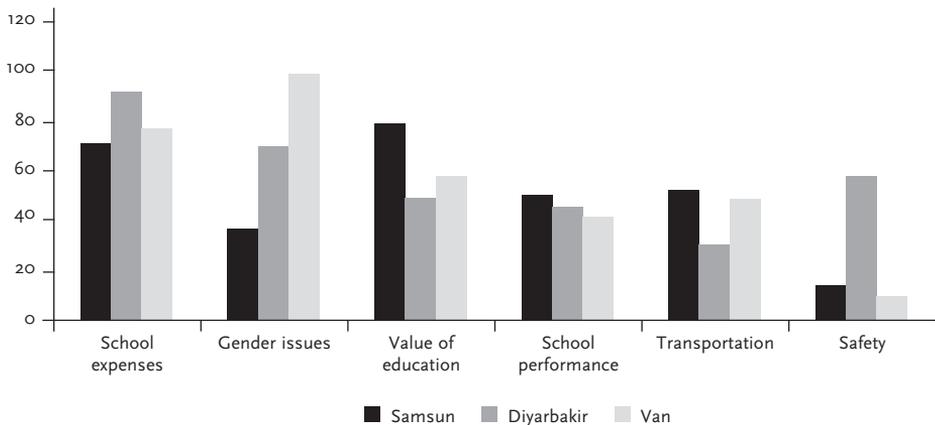
However, the program was quite ineffective in increasing the primary school enrollment rates. As can be observed from the above table, the project targets were not reached at the end of 2007. There was almost a 9 percent gap between genders in 2001 and at the end of the project, the gap has even increased to 12 percent. Although, the target was almost met for boys, the primary school enrollment rates for girls remained much lower than the aimed level, at around 87 percent. One reason for this can be the already high enrollment rates; however, this is not necessarily the case for girls. In Van, for example, primary schooling is around 80 percent, much lower than what is observed in other developing countries and also the national averages. Therefore, regional specificities and non-economic sources of gender bias are at play and might explain why CCT was unable to boost primary school enrollment rates. Also, it has been found that CCT transfers did not improve the succession from primary to secondary schooling for either girls or boys (Ahmed et al. 2006). Therefore, guarantees to continue with educational life are not provided by these transfers to children in poorer households. A likely explanation can be the extra costs that emerge, such as commuting, with secondary school education. Since, the secondary schools are more scattered spatially in the Turkish context, families need to invest additional resources

<sup>14</sup> The secondary school enrollment ratio for females in several Latin American countries is around 60 percent, which is comparable to developed country standards.

to send their children to those institutions. Therefore, the demand-side interventions alone are insufficient to promote education expansion and gender equality. In many developing countries, supply-side constraints to education are quite prevalent and CCT programs do not explicitly or implicitly help to overcome such barriers. Indeed, the underlying assumption is that the bona fide reason to encourage low human capital investments by poor households is related to demand.

There are significant regional divergences in the perception of schooling, especially for girls, and various reasons were weighted differently in each region. Figure 1 presents the factors that negatively affect human capital investments in the three provinces. As can be seen from the below figure, gender issues have the utmost importance in Van and this holds true even for primary schooling. The second greatest reason is the school expenses in the same province; hence, CCT can be seen as a solution to this barrier. The value of education also plays an important role and generally lower values are attributed to formal schooling. In Samsun, the most prominent factor is the value of education followed by school expenses. Gender issues play a much smaller role compared to other provinces. Finally, in Diyarbakir, school expenses have the highest share of not investing in human capital of children. The second highest-ranking issue is gender and then comes safety. Diyarbakir is in the southeast of Turkey where armed conflict has been going on for a long time and thus public safety turns out to be a relevant component, unlike other provinces.

**Figure 1.**  
*Reasons for Not Sending Children to School*



Source: Adato et al. 2007.

Given the multiple dimensions of gender inequalities for schooling, CCT can be argued to be more successful in certain areas than in others. If we group the barriers to girls' education under the headings of economic, institutional, and socio-cultural, CCT is much better at dealing with households' economic problems since it provides financial resources. However, there are also institutional and socio-cultural reasons why households refrain from sending their children, and particularly their girls, to school. Among these, supply-side factors such as an inadequate number of schools or transportation are very crucial. Besides, the quality of education differs significantly across regions in Turkey and public investments are too low to tackle this issue. Most importantly, there are various socio-cultural grounds why girls are discriminated against in the educational sphere. In many households, their financial means are not enough to overcome the socio-cultural factors constraining education. The value of schooling is very low for girls and this decreases with higher levels. Sometimes education is also perceived as an obstacle in the marriage market and girls are proactively kept away from formal schooling. Plus, high unemployment rates hamper labor market expectations and this leads to a reduction of the value of schooling for both genders.

## Conclusion

Education is one of the most vital factors in shaping individuals' labor market prospects and lifetime incomes. Thus, many policymakers view investment in human capital as a viable method to fight poverty, especially in the long run. But poverty is certainly also a problem in the short run, and therefore human capital investment and poverty alleviation is jointly targeted by conditional cash transfers. Many developing countries, including Turkey, can improve the access to education significantly and formal schooling can be expanded. There are still major gender inequalities and these are even more pronounced at the higher levels of education. In Turkey, particularly for girls, educational attainment is still a problem and recently there have been numerous programs aimed at decreasing the gender disparities and raising schooling levels across the population.

A conditional cash transfer program (CCT) is one of the methods implemented in these countries and in Turkey to overcome some of the barriers for education. This paper reviewed the CCT program in Turkey that was initiated after the 2001 crisis and evaluated it on the basis of educational attainments. Conditional transfers are thought

to be superior in comparison to simple transfers since the requirements make the households behave in a more optimal manner. Evaluations from programs that were already implemented also proved to be quite effective. In the Turkish example, the conditions were determined by educational and health obligations. Designed to give higher incentives for investing in female education, the school enrollment and attendance of girls lead to higher benefits.

Overall, the CCT program in Turkey can be regarded as a successful endeavour, above all in raising the enrollment rates for both genders in secondary schooling. Girls' attendance also has remarkably progressed as a result of the transfers. Nevertheless, the program failed to boost the primary school net enrollment rates for girls and boys and did not increase the progression rates. This might indicate that conditionalities do not automatically raise the human capital investments above the immediate targets. In the Turkish context, one important reason for no progression is the limited number of schools in rural areas. These supply-side constraints can be equally hampering, hence conditional cash transfers cannot achieve significant results without improving the institutional resources as well. In developing countries, the demand conditions are not the only obstacles to education, and public investments in this area are required to make more favorable demand terms work. More schools, boarding facilities, and transportation assistance can encourage households to send their children to higher levels of schools once they finish the primary level.

There are also notable regional varieties in terms of enrollment rates, attendance, and the factors parents decide about their human capital decisions. Girls are disproportionately left out of formal education in the eastern and southeastern provinces. Also, gender issues as well as the perceived value of education play greater roles in these regions than the rest. Given these differences, any program that aims to decrease educational inequalities should consider dominant barriers in each locality and try to design mechanisms to overcome these factors. Financial incentives are best suited for families that do not discriminate between genders and value education already. But some of the major reasons for underinvestment in human capital are socio-cultural and cannot necessarily be changed via monetary means. CCTs try to overcome these barriers indirectly by offering higher benefits, but for families that have very negative perceptions about formal education, economic tools are insufficient to accomplish behavioral transformations.

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# Financial and Environmental Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education for Disabled Children in Mongolia

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## Abstract

This paper looks at the policies of the Ministry of Education of Mongolia, the conditions of schools, and stakeholder attitudes that, taken together, impact the education of at-risk, marginalized, special needs, and “invisible” children. During Socialist times, mildly mentally and physically disabled children attended regular classes in regular schools but moderate and severely disabled children attended many special schools and informal education programs devoted to working with disabled children and adults. Since about 1994, when DANIDA initiated a program that brought more than 40 special needs children into regular classes in four rural provinces, policies have been promulgated with the intention of improving the educational opportunities of special needs children. With the closing of special schools in the countryside because of extremely harsh economic conditions during the 1990s, some moderately disabled children who had been attending those schools were admitted into regular classes in regular schools. However, the result was that many children who had

attended special schools in the countryside and in Ulaanbaatar now had no place to go. To encourage teachers and local schools to accommodate more special needs children, financial incentives were proposed, laws were enacted that guaranteed equal rights to all citizens, and policies were adopted, all aiming at encouraging the inclusion of children with disabilities into the regular schools and expanding enrollment in the special schools.

These policies, however, have had little effect, at best, and they maintain and encourage segregated facilities and discourage local schools from reaching out to excluded children in the worst case. Although most Ministry of Education personnel, administrators, teachers, and parents acknowledge the benefits of regular class placement for the vast majority of students and the importance of education for all children, opportunities for special needs children remain extremely limited. A survey conducted on this theme shows that there is general agreement that mild to moderately impaired children should be in a regular class, but because classes are so overcrowded in the regular schools for the foreseeable future, some of those interviewed believed that even mildly disabled children may be better served in a special school where classes are much smaller and there is a greater possibility that individualized attention will be given.

This paper begins by discussing government statistics and the legal and financial framework of policies pertaining to special needs children. It goes on to discuss teacher attitudes and school capacities regarding special needs children, while the third section discusses a special school, the School for the Deaf, in Ulaanbaatar, and the current situation of the deaf community in Mongolia.

The next section discusses the role played by nongovernmental programs and organizations that target special needs children. The end of the paper presents how to increase the number of at-risk students, including special needs children, in regular schools, under the present conditions in public schools in Mongolia.

## Introduction: Statistical, Legal, and Financial Considerations

Obtaining reliable statistical information about special needs children is extremely problematic in Mongolia. To begin with, the Ministry of Education only speaks of disabled children who are categorized according to diagnostic criteria such as blindness, deafness, language impairment, intelligence, and physical disabilities, yet leaves it

very much up in the air how these diagnoses will be arrived at, and does not call for diagnoses and recommendations to be made by educational diagnosticians. In fact, diagnoses and recommendations for placement typically do not focus on educational issues but rather on medical criteria. In the field of deafness, for example, no diagnostic reports encountered in the course of this research mentioned issues such as preferred mode of communication, language skills, academic achievement, and attainment of developmental milestones, preferring instead to employ medical terminology that was frequently vague and possibly misleading, such as “deaf and dumb,” “without speech,” and “abnormal hearing.”

Therefore, this investigation relies upon national and school-based figures regarding disabilities to arrive at “educated guesses” about the schooling of “disabled children.” Anecdotal evidence collected from visits to regular and special classrooms to observe students who were categorized as disabled and from speaking with their teachers provides the grounds to determine how special needs children are being educated in Mongolia.

According to Ministry of Education figures for 2008, there are 548,500 school-age children (6 to 18 years old) enrolled in 786 schools, six of which are designated special schools for disabled children; 38,569 or 7.1 percent of all children in school were designated as disabled children, which according to figures from the Ministry of Health represents only 62 percent of all children in Mongolia designated as disabled. Again, there is no way to determine the reliability of this information because the categories are often ambiguous and the method and criteria for designating a child as disabled are also vague. For instance, I found children with “poor vision” sitting at the rear of the classroom and not wearing glasses; a child designated as “half deaf” was also sitting at the back of the room, was not wearing a hearing aid, and when asked about the child’s hearing disability, the teacher said she was not aware of any special accommodations being made for the student to help him achieve academic success. I was told that a child who was considered “slow” was unable to do academic work but could only draw pictures, which is what he was doing while I was in the classroom.

The 2007 regulations regarding special needs or children with disabilities state that

- disabled children have the legal right to choose to end the appropriate education,
- increased opportunities for regular class placement for disabled students should be developed,
- every school is responsible to create an environment for disabled children,

- a 30 percent bonus will be offered to encourage disabled students to attend school.

However, the actual situations in schools often do not meet the guidelines established in regulations regarding children with disabilities, at-risk children, and non-attendees. For example, only special schools receive the 30-percent bonus for accepting children with disabilities and only teachers in special schools receive a 30-percent bonus over and above their salaries. This means that the special schools and the teachers in those schools, some of whom have been trained as “defectologists” in the former Soviet Union, have a financial interest in keeping disabled children out of the regular schools. At the same time, teachers in the regular schools are reluctant to accept what they think will be extra responsibilities teaching children with disabilities but without extra compensation. In fact, none of the teachers in neighborhood schools were aware that a regulation had been passed that offers additional compensation to all schools and teachers for accepting children with disabilities into their programs. Furthermore, Ministry of Education personnel confirmed that the 30-percent bonuses have only been given to special schools because of the difficulties of carrying out the program in regular schools.

## Stakeholder Attitudes and School Capacities

Interviews were conducted in five schools, three in the countryside where the Options Program has established classes for deaf children and two in the capital city. School principals, teachers, and parents of disabled and non-disabled children agreed to participate, as well as disabled and non-disabled children themselves.

- **Western Mongolia:** The school is in Tsetserleg, the provincial capital of Arkhangai, 500 kilometers and a half day from Ulaanbatar; 440 students attend the school, 48 of whom are designated as disabled children between the ages of 8 to 16. The school has opened a special class for 15 mentally challenged children. The other 33 children are integrated into regular classes. More than half of the teachers have received trainings in special education methodology organized by a local office of World Vision International and the Swedish International Development Agency and sign language training and methodology for working with deaf and hard-of-hearing children under the Options deaf education project by the Mongolian Education Alliance.

- **Northern Mongolia:** Darkhan: The school is a former special school and now designated as a mixed regular and special education school with 410 non-disabled and mildly disabled children in regular classes and 100 disabled children studying in five special classes.
- **Eastern Mongolia:** The school is in Choibalsan, the eastern center of Mongolia with over 1,500 children, 52 of whom are designated as disabled students, about 3.5 percent of the total students. About 60 percent of the disabled students are deaf and hard-of-hearing students. For reasons that have still not been determined, the deafness rate in the province has always been higher than in other parts of Mongolia. Because of the unusually high incidence of deafness among the children in the province (including the child of the former provincial governor), the Education Department opened a deaf class in the school almost 15 years ago and now there are three classes for deaf children. The other disabled students are integrated into regular classes. The school has been very active implementing various projects from the Mongolian Poverty Reduction Program, with the assistance of the national NGY for the disabled, “Tegsh duuren,” Save the Children, and the Education Support Program (ESP).
- **One school in Ulaanbaatar:** School No. 113 opened in September of 2009 and is located in one of the poorest areas of Ulaanbaatar. The school has 998 students, of whom 68 are designated as disabled, or about 7 percent of the students, and those disabled children are integrated into regular classes. Eighty percent of the disabled children are primary students.

All of the regular schools have integrated disabled children into their classes and some have opened special classes. None of the schools receive any extra budget for having special needs children in their schools except for the school in Darkhan, which receives a 10-percent bonus for their special needs children.

On average, class size in the regular schools is 38, with one to three children designated as disabled. According to the surveys conducted in the course of this research, 60 percent of the teachers stated, “They have no problem working with disabled children, and special needs children do not need special attention.” Thirty percent expressed the opinion that to have special needs children in a class with 36–40 children “makes it very difficult for the disabled child and it affects the other regular children’s study.” In order to integrate disabled children into regular classes, they think that class size should be reduced to between 20 and 25 students. Ten percent of the teachers said that they “have no idea what to do with the special needs children

and think that all disabled children should study in special schools ‘where they will be receiving good services.’” When asked the question, “If a new disabled child comes, would you be willing to add the child into your class?” 10 percent answered they would try not to take the child, but 90 percent answered they would take the child if the school principal asked them, which indicates that they are not anxious to have special needs children in their classes. A lot of the teachers said that there is no evaluation standard for special needs children in regular class. Evaluating the disabled children at the same level of regular children brings the teachers’ performance down. And the teachers’ performance evaluation is measured by their students’ test results.

Half of the teachers interviewed said that they wanted to get a raise in their salaries while another half said that they wanted special methodological support and information regarding special needs children. The teachers of deaf classes in the countryside supported by the Options deaf education project receive an additional salary from the project that motivates them to work with deaf children and to learn sign language.

Eighty-four percent of the general curriculum teachers said that they had never received any training in working with disabled children when they studied to become teachers, although a few courses are now being offered at the teaching colleges. Those teachers who said they had received some special training reported that the training came exclusively from international nongovernmental organizations. When asked what were the biggest obstacles to bringing more special needs children into regular classes, they answered that it was class size, lack of training, lack of support in the classroom, and the national teacher rating system that rates teachers only on students’ performance.

## **Parents’ Survey**

Fifty-eight percent of the parents whose disabled children go to regular schools would prefer that their children attend special schools where they would have specialized and experienced teachers. They expressed the opinion that “service in the special needs school is better.” Some parents think in the current situation when 40 children are in a regular class that “a disabled child is unable to receive good service.” But most of them said, “it’s better for their children to socialize with ‘normal children,’” and “teachers’ salaries should be improved, teachers should improve their skills or knowledge to work with disabled children, and class size should be reduced.”

In Moron, G. Amarjargal, the mother of 9-year-old Nyamdavaa, told us that her child had been uncontrollable before he entered the class supported by the Options

deaf education project. He had no way to communicate with his family and they had no way to communicate with him. Now he is learning to sign, finger spell, and read. He is communicating with his family. His life has been transformed by language. They had tried regular schools in Moron but the schools refused to take the child because of his language limitations. They had had no money to pay for the transportation to bring the child to Ulaanbaatar to the School for the Deaf.

## Children's Survey

About half of the disabled children interviewed said that they are “having difficulty studying in regular schools” and would move to a special needs school if they could. When asked why they would prefer to go to school at a special school, 30 percent said they would move because “I don't understand the lessons well,” and 20 percent said they would move because “the ‘normal children’ laugh at me.” But almost all the students said that they much prefer going to school to staying at home, even though they experienced problems at school

When we interviewed non-disabled children who are studying with disabled children, 60 percent of the children said, “I have no problem studying with disabled children in the same class,” while 40 percent of the students said, “It's disturbing to study together with the disabled children,” and “I prefer the disabled children to study in a specialized school.”

Research conducted by the Association of Disabled Children's Parents of 233 disabled children shows 62.5 percent of the children go to school, 12.5 percent dropped out of school, and 25 percent do not go to school at all.

Eighty percent of the children who go to school say they do not need special care and 20 percent say they do. Nearly every disabled student who is not in school expressed a desire to return to school or attend school for the first time. When those children who were in school were asked what problems they encountered, they gave the following answers, listed in order of preference:

1. The distance between school and home.
2. The lesson program for regular children is difficult for the disabled students.
3. Other children laugh at them.
4. No special facilities such as chairs, desks, toilets, etc.
5. Lack of textbooks.
6. The evaluation standard of the children.

When children out of school were asked why they were not going to school, they replied,

1. because of my disability: 67.2 percent,
2. because schools refuse to take me: 13.8 percent,
3. schools and teachers are not satisfactory: 12.5 percent.

## School 29, the School for the Deaf

The 420 deaf and hard-of-hearing children at School 29 are about 12 percent of all the deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Mongolia. Scattered around the country are ten self-contained classes of deaf and hard-of-hearing children with approximately 150 students. Those figures would imply that approximately 85 percent of the deaf and hard-of-hearing population is either out of school or in regular classes, but it is difficult to make any assumptions because national government estimates, local government estimates, Ministry of Education figures, and figures based on reports by nongovernmental organizations, including Save the Children, World Vision International, Parents of Disabled Children, and others, vary considerably. Diagnostic criteria for evaluating hearing, speech, and language have not been established, and the equipment and personnel required to evaluate hearing and language do not exist in most places in the country. Whatever the numbers may be, there are certainly many children with mild to moderate hearing loss who should be (but may not be) attending regular school and receiving support services. Just as likely, there are many children whose hearing loss would make regular class placement inappropriate and who should receive an education in an accessible format as soon as possible.

What I have learned from interviews with parents of deaf children is that children with moderate losses may not be accepted either at their local school or School 29, and a review of records in the audiology department at School 29 showed that the number of children with mild hearing loss is extremely low. Most students have significant hearing loss and their preferred mode of communication is Mongolian Sign Language. The average class size at School 29 is 16, and there are two dormitories that house 186 students. Most students in the dormitory are from the countryside, but some come from the outskirts and outer districts of the capital.

Inclusive school movement advocates have raised important questions about the place of residential schools and special schools for special needs children. But some

educators and advocates for the deaf have written about the importance of creating a language-rich environment for deaf children and the most important factor in providing an appropriate and inclusive education for deaf children. As Sofia Friere writes about deaf education in Portugal,

... because of the controversial issues and the unfavorable results with deaf education in Portugal, the Portuguese government enacted a law regarding deaf education that not only is based on inclusion principles but also explicitly acknowledges a sign-bilingual education. Deaf education should take place, preferably, in sign-bilingual environments that will facilitate PSL development and also written Portuguese, and eventually, the development of oral competencies. To achieve this goal, deaf children should begin formal education as early as possible, within groups of deaf children and with deaf adults who use PSL to communicate (Ministry of Education 1998).

Not only does School 29 provide a language-rich environment for deaf children in its dormitories, but the recent change in the school's communication policies and the introduction of Mongolian Sign Language as the language of instruction mean that there is exposure to accessible language in class as well. Providing a comprehensive education for deaf children, as School 29 does, is not possible at this time or in the foreseeable future in local schools (except perhaps in the capital city). In Mongolia, much of the population is spread over a very large area. Yet the importance of early language intervention with deaf and hard-of-hearing children is well-established. Therefore, it seems appropriate to develop programs in the countryside that bring diagnostic and educational services to children (and adults) who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The lack of contact between deaf children who attend residential schools and regular children who attend their neighborhood schools negatively impacts both groups and should be addressed. Activities and programs should be initiated such as intramural sports, self-contained or partially self-contained classes for deaf children in regular schools, and other activities that bring deaf and regular children together.

Some modest gains have been made by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) that produced the first comprehensive dictionary of Mongolian Sign Language in 2005; since then, sign language training and the creation of a university level curriculum in deaf education and in Mongolian Sign Language were developed by the Options program of the Mongolian Education Alliance (funded by ESP). The first deaf kindergarten was established at the school in 2007; the Options program developed a curriculum for kindergartens in 2007 and a revised curriculum in 2009.

Outside of the capital, opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing children are extremely limited or nonexistent. Young children living in the countryside are in grave risk of not developing an adequate language system. Even children in the capital city are in danger of not developing an adequate language system if they are not exposed to an accessible language system early in life. This means that the special services that are available at the school such as audiological examinations, sign language training, and subject matter curricula adapted to deaf children's abilities should be brought to the rural areas of Mongolia and that more children should be enrolled at School 29.

## **Deaf People in Mongolia**

One of the biggest issues in the education of deaf children is the limitation of achieving higher or professional education after finishing the School for the Deaf. According to the survey at the School for the Deaf, only 28 percent of the children who graduate from School 29 enter college or higher educational institutions. None of the college or higher education institutions have sign language assistance for deaf students. There remain significant obstacles for deaf people to access services, obtain education and training, and participate fully as citizens. There are very few sign language interpreters in Mongolia, and it is difficult to get interpreters since they have not been paid by the government. Adaptive technology such as videophones are extremely limited or nonexistent, and discrimination against the deaf persists.

Mongolia has been a democratic market economy since 1990, almost all that time governed by the former Communist Party. Despite economic development that saw the economy rise at an annual rate of 8.2 percent during the 1990s, living conditions for most Mongolians remain harsh, and the gap between rich and poor has grown. The vast majority of deaf people are poor, with high rates of unemployment, social problems, and poor reading and writing skills. Deaf people face challenges finding and keeping jobs. Very meager social welfare payments that cannot be guaranteed for life are sometimes the only source of regular income for many deaf people. In the capital, deaf people work as construction workers, textile factory workers, painters, sculptors, vendors, and teachers. Outside of the capital, deaf people are employed almost exclusively in manual labor. One positive sign is the increasing number of deaf people attending and graduating from college, many with degrees in teaching. Some have become designers, computer programmers, and other professionals requiring specialized training.

Mongolian domestic policy has focused on economic development, and insufficient attention has been paid to the problems faced by deaf people. It is unsurprising

that nongovernmental organizations, both local and international, have played a major role in supporting the deaf community. The Mongolian Association of the Deaf was established in 1978 and was once the core of the deaf advocacy movement, seeking self-reliance and equal opportunities for its deaf members, but because of management and financial issues, the association is now inactive. There are more than 20 registered nongovernmental organizations serving the deaf, such as the Deaf Women's Association, the Deaf Youth Association, and the Deaf Sports Association.

In recent years, organizations representing deaf people and people with disabilities have advocated for the recognition of Mongolian Sign Language and the right of deaf people to equal access to information and services. There has been interest in establishing the Mongolian Sign Language Center to enable the Mongolian deaf community to become aware of their diverse linguistic and cultural collective status and to develop a community of professional interpreters.

## Nongovernmental Organizations

There are many nongovernmental organizations, large and small, providing services to and advocating for children and adults with disabilities. International organizations working in Mongolia include World Vision International, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Christina Noble Foundation, Save the Children, Volunteer Service Overseas, UNICEF, the Education Support Program of the Open Society Foundations, and the World Bank.

*The Education Support Program* has supported establishing rural education centers for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and language impaired children, teens, and adults through its Options deaf education project. These centers offer services ranging from audiological testing to dispensing hearing aids, from providing sign language instruction to offering classes for deaf children that focus on language development. Many young adults and adults attend classes to improve their sign language, literacy, and life skills. Many teachers, parents, government officials, and others have taken sign language and sensitivity classes in the seven provinces where the Options project has established centers.

*The Christina Noble Foundation* is currently helping 1,600 low-income or disabled children, many of whom are at risk of dropping out from school, to stay in school by providing USD 31 per month to their families. Those stipends come from individuals and organizations that agree to sponsor the child so long as he or she

remains in school. More than 90 percent of participants remain in the program until they graduate from high school, and more than half the students go on to university study. In fact, there are now more than 300 students studying at university who began receiving benefits when they were in primary school. When students first enter the program in primary school, they study at the foundation's school preparing to meet the age/grade standards at their local school. There are currently 600 children awaiting sponsorship in the program.

*World Vision* has branches and conducts activities in every *aimag* (province) of Mongolia, usually for vulnerable populations. One of the services is providing educational opportunities for disabled children by setting up accessible environments in classrooms and in informal settings for disabled children and providing methodological support to teachers who work with disabled children.

*Save the Children* has opened rehabilitation and education centers around the country for children with disabilities who do not attend school. In the past few years, they have been active in integrating special needs children into regular schools and regular classes.

*ADRA* has also opened rehabilitation and education day-care centers in Ulaanbaatar for children with severe disabilities who do not attend school.

These organizations and others provide activities and programs for disabled children that are very beneficial and fill in the gaps in the government-provided education and rehabilitation services. However, according to some, they may be counterproductive because they do not encourage capacity building in those agencies responsible for providing services to children and adults with disabilities.

## Conclusions, Implications, Suggestions

Regulations enacted to encourage children with disabilities to attend their local schools have been promulgated and sometimes enacted, but according to interviews with Ministry of Education officials, many have not been put into effect. Instead, financial incentives are awarded only to special schools, with a few exceptions. Surveys of regular class teachers indicated that they were unaware that regulations had been enacted to encourage students with disabilities to attend their neighborhood school, which raises the question whether the law is encouraging the regular schools to enroll disabled students or discouraging them. Currently, it seems to be encouraging the special schools to enroll more disabled children in their schools by providing a

30-percent bonus and discouraging the regular schools from enrolling disabled children by not giving the 30-percent allotment.

If the original intent of the regulations regarding special needs children was to encourage children with disabilities to attend their local school—but enactment of the regulations proved problematical—perhaps it is time for the Ministry of Education to reconsider its financial incentives program. Giving teachers extra pay for teaching special needs children at special schools encourages segregation rather than integration and inclusion. It contributes to the belief that all special needs children are more difficult to educate and should be separated from their peers. It creates a special interest group that has a financial involvement and interest in maintaining separate schools for special needs children.

Clearly, there are advantages to placing all, or nearly all, students in regular classes in regular schools. Interviews with all parties showed a high degree of consensus regarding inclusion. But what became equally clear in the interviews was that under the present conditions, where extremely large classes are the norm, along with a lack of adaptive materials and equipment and a lack of adequately trained teachers and administrators in the regular schools, many parents choose special school placement, if it is available. Outside of the capital, however, there are very few special schools or special classes in regular schools, resulting in high levels of non-attendance of at-risk children because schools and teachers are reluctant to take on new responsibilities.

The question that schools and parents must answer is: what can we do under the circumstances that presently exist within the schools to expand opportunities for all children? If class size is to remain at today's levels in the foreseeable future, regular class placement will not meet the needs of many children, whoever they may be. The critical lack of space in schools in the capital will continue to negatively impact reducing class size and creating special classes where necessary.

One model, the mixed special/regular school that presently operates in Darkhan, could be considered. Where appropriate, at-risk students would be placed in regular classes that would have considerably fewer students than those in most schools, which would encourage some parents of non-disabled children to send their children to the mixed school. At-risk students who need even more individualized attention would be placed in self-contained or partially self-contained classes in these schools. Instead of paying teachers more money to work in these schools, they could be provided with assistants and other incentives to improve their working conditions and effectiveness.

There is little doubt, however, that in order for at-risk students to have a greater degree of inclusion in the public school system, the system needs a major overhaul.

If schools are made more meaningful and more appropriate for typical students, opportunities for marginalized students are likely to improve. All students would benefit from a nurse or doctor in the school, social workers, counselors, reduced class sizes, more child-centered techniques, improved facilities, an evaluation system, and better trained and compensated teachers. These improved conditions would also make it more likely that marginalized, at-risk, special needs, and “invisible” children would be welcomed in their neighborhood schools, rather than being routinely turned away.

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