



Roma Education Initiative (REI)

**ANNUAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT
MACEDONIA
2005**

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PERIODICAL EVALUATION

2004 - 2005

ROMA EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Goal of the evaluation

The goal of the annual evaluation is to determine the periodical results from the implementation of the Roma Education Initiative in the Republic of Macedonia in the period between September 2004 to September 2005.

The Periodical Evaluation should demonstrate to which extent have the objectives of the Programme been achieved, and should give answers to the following questions:

- What is the % of Roma pre-school children from targeted communities that have been enrolled in primary schools?
- What is the % of Roma primary school students from the project schools that have completed the school year?
- What is the % of Roma primary school students (REC beneficiaries) that have completed the school year?
- Have the Roma Centres activities improved student success?
- Are the activities implemented by the Roma Centres adequate to the problems Roma children face?
- What are the opinions of teachers towards school achievement of participating Roma children?
- Relations between teachers and Roma Centres educators.
- How do teachers apply the knowledge and experience from the training in their work with Roma children?

Evaluation/research methods

Following research methods have been applied in order to collect valid data to cover all research objectives - with a special focus on regular attendance and success/achievements of students in primary education:

- School Documentation analysis (defining of the real status of student non-attendance, progression and achievements in primary education)
- Questionnaires (teachers in primary education)
- Pre-school children portfolios provided by RECs

Target groups

Students: The evaluation covers pre-school and primary education students.

Teachers: For the needs of the evaluation, the research covered teachers in primary education.

Sample of the Evaluation

Basic sample: All REI primary school students

Sub-sample:

Students:

- 217 students (107 male & 110 female) from primary schools attending the following FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres: REC "Dendo vas" Skopje, REC "Drom" Kumanovo, REC "Kham" Kumanovo and REC "Romano Pro Angle" Prilep;
- 460 students (258 male & 202 female) from primary schools: "11 Oktomvri" PS, Kumanovo; "Braka Miladinovci" PS, Skopje; "Dobre Jovanovski" PS, Prilep; "H. T. Karpos" PS, Kumanovo; and "Strasho Pindzur" PS, Skopje;

Sample of Primary School staff:

- 40 primary school Teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, Skopje, with SBS and RWCT training;
- 40 primary school Teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, and Skopje.

Time of Evaluation

The research was carried out in the course of October 2005 by the Research Team consisting of:

1. Zoran Velkovski, PhD, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy/Institute of Pedagogy, Skopje
2. Graduate students from the Faculty of Philosophy / Institute of Pedagogy, Skopje

EVALUATION REPORT

Starting position

The Evaluation of the REI consists of two major components: 1) introduction and analysis of the school documentation for the purpose of detecting the actual situation of the students participating in the REI (in primary education) in relation to their regular attendance, success/achievements, drop-out and progression, represented through the comparison of the initial status at the beginning of the school year (1 September 2004) and the status at the end of the school year (1 June 2005); and 2) conducting of an empirical research with the objective of determining the opinions and attitudes of REI and non-REI teachers in primary education on the course of the Roma Education Initiative in the abovementioned period. For this purpose, a survey was conducted and focus group discussion were organised, with a sample of parents of and with secondary school students themselves, in order to receive data (opinions and attitudes) on the implementation of the Programme in the respective period.

The periodical evaluation was carried out in the course of October 2005 by the Research Team.

The analysis of the results obtained will be presented in the context of the three main goals (Goal 1, Goal 2 and Goal 3) of the Roma Education Initiative and functionally related to it.

Explanation:

The evaluation did not take into account the primary school students in grades 1 to 4, as in this tier of primary education, students do not repeat grades, and so their progression rate cannot be determined. Therefore, the focus of the Evaluation is placed on 5th to 8th grade students in primary schools, and 57 pre-school children (6 and 7 years old) that have attended the kindergarten groups in the RECs.

GOAL 1: Pre-school Roma children from targeted communities enrolled in primary schools

Roma children in pre-school age are not sufficiently present in pre-school facilities neither within primary schools nor within public kindergartens. This lack of pre-school education makes compulsory schooling for Roma children especially difficult – they remain with low competency both in Macedonian language and social, emotional and intellectual foundations needed for a successful start of primary education.

It is unrealistic to expect that all children who attend the pre-school program will successfully start their primary education at the age of 7 due to the inability to compensate fully for a continuous lack of the minimum intellectual and social stimuli within the children's surrounding. The baseline showed that 84% of the children attended the Roma Education Centres in the previous year has been enrolled in regular primary schools.

The Roma Education Centres (REC) keep records on the number of Roma children who participated in their pre-school activities in the period September 2004-June 2005, and those who later (September 2005) managed to enrol in the first grade of primary education.

		male	female	total
DENDO VAS	Total number of children in kindergarten	6	12	18
	Enrolled in first grade	6	11	17
	Not enrolled	0	1	1
DROM	Total number of children in kindergarten	16	2	18
	Enrolled in first grade	15	2	17
	Not enrolled	1	0	1
ROMANO PRO ANGLE	Total number of children in kindergarten	9	11	20
	Enrolled in first grade	7	9	16
	Not enrolled	2	2	4
SONCOGLEDI	Total number of children in kindergarten	1	0	1
	Enrolled in first grade	1	0	1
	Not enrolled	0	0	0

The results presented into the above table show that 51 children or **89,47%** (out of the total number of 57 children) have been enrolled in primary schools. This data additionally confirms the necessity of the REC activity in the Roma communities and pose the question of their further strengthening if we take into account the baseline that showed that 84 % of Roma pre-school children from targeted communities (attending RECs) have been enrolled in primary schools in previous years.

Goal 2: To improve the school performance of Roma students aged 7-15

The research covered 217 (107 male & 110 female) primary school students, beneficiaries of the Roma Education Centres. The basic situation of these children can be concluded from the following indicators:

- 80% of the students live in functional families (mother and father are married), but the remaining 20% of students live in incomplete families;
- 61.25% of the students live in a multi-child family (3 and more children/family);
- 57.50% of the children have an unemployed father, whereas 77.50% children have an unemployed mother;
- more than half of the families receive social welfare and have an income below 5,000 denars (80 EUR), whereas 17.50% of the families have no income.

The above data are in compliance with the general trends and characteristics of the Roma population in the country. The lack of finances, unregulated family relations, as well as poor living conditions, are also characteristic for the population covered by the Program for Education of Roma.

For the needs of the Evaluation, the data received on the Roma Educator Centre students are compared with data received on 460 Roma students (258 male and 202 female) from the project schools (217 students attending RECs, plus 243 students not attending the RECs)

2.1 Retention

The statistical analysis of the data, presented in Table 1, clearly points out the importance of the REC and of the support they provide to the Roma students.

From the total number of students enrolled in primary education who attended the REC, only 2.30% dropped out, whereas this percentage reaches 6.30% among non-REC students. This data can, but does not have to necessarily indicate that these students did not (or will not) at some point continue their education, although data reveals that the dropout in both groups occurred mainly in grade 5 (72.41% among the non-REC and 80% among the REC students), which on the first glance indicates terminal dropout.

Table 1

Retention rate of primary students attending the REC and other Roma primary students												
Grade	ENROLLED			DROP-OUTS			REPEATERS			GRADUATES		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
Students not attending the REC												
V- VIII	460	258	202	29	17	12	130	86	44	301	155	146
	100.00	56.09	43.91	100.00	58.62	41.38	100.00	66.15	33.85	100.00	51.49	48.51
	100.00%			6.30%			28.26%			65.44%		
Students attending the REC												
V- VIII	217	107	110	5	3	2	12	9	3	198	93	105
	100.00	49.31	50.69	100.00	60.00	40.00	100.00	75.00	25.00	100.00	46.97	53.03
	100.00%			2.30%			5.53%			91.24%		

If one takes into account that the highest dropout among Roma rate is found in the progression from grade 5 to grade 6, then the incidence of changing the school. These dropout data have a logic of their own. Namely, until grade 5, children do not repeat a grade and, regardless of their achievements, i.e. marks, they continue into the next grade. From grade 5 onwards, progression depends on success/achievements. Thus, a portion of the students who perform poorly cannot progress into grade 6, so they either repeat grade 5 or drop out of school. We believe that this is what happens in our case. The data gathered in the research that relate to repeating of students confirm our opinion; repeating is most common in grade 5: of all dropouts 66.67% (among the REC students) and 67.69 % (among the non-REC students, an almost identical percentage) happens in/after grade 5.

Data distribution according to gender shows change in the tendency that the majority of drop-outs and grade repeaters are girls; in both cases, REC and non-REC students, it is the boys that drop-out and repeat the respective grade in a greater number. This occurrence can be a result of three factors: 1) random case, 2) the influence of the REC and the teaching staff, and 3) the ripening of the understanding of the necessity of education for girls among the Roma population. Which of the three factors has most influence and which will be confirmed or refuted, can best be demonstrated by continuous monitoring of the students and this phenomenon.

It is evident that both groups of children confirm dropout and repeating in grade 5. The difference lies in the fact that the REC and the project teachers have managed to decrease the number of dropouts and repeaters in the total number of students. This data additionally confirms the necessity of the REC activity in the Roma communities and pose the question of their strengthening. The strongest argument for the correctness of this conclusion lie in the fact that **91.24%** of the students that benefit from the services of the REC successfully completed the grade, as opposed to **65.44%** of all Roma students from project schools.

2.2 Regular attendance and success/achievements

Table 2 displays data on regular attendance and success of both student categories. In regard to regular attendance, students attending the RECs have better results in comparison with results from all Roma children from project schools. Even though the data disregards those students who dropped out or repeated the grade (which dominate the number of absenteeism from the lessons), and who to a large extent come from the category of non-REC students, the results are very much in favour of the REC-attending students.

Table 2

Grade	Total students*	Instances of absence			Average success/achievement rate
		Excused	Unexcused	Total	
Students not attending the REC					2.58
V - VIII	301	15597	10692	26289	
Average value		51.82**	35.52	87.34	
Students attending the REC					2.73
V - VIII	198	11929	5258	17187	
Average value		60.25	26.55	86.80	

* Students who dropped out or repeated the grade are not taken into account.

** Number value, not percentage.

The average number of instances of absenteeism is bigger among the non-REC students, with 87.34%, that among the REC attending students, with 86.80%. The difference is small, but significant if one takes into account that the REC students have a much smaller number of unexcused absences, on average 26.55 as opposed to the 35.52 unexcused absences of the non-REC students. If the instances of absence of those students who dropped out or repeated the grade, were taken into account, then the difference in absenteeism between the REC and non-REC students would be much bigger and would reach a ration of 1: 2 in favour of the REC students, and would support the conclusion that these students attend school more regularly that the students not benefiting from the Roma Education Initiative.

In regard to the gender distribution, results indicate that there are no remarkable discrepancies, with boys tending to be more absent from school than girls.

Although data reveals that REC students attend school more regularly than the other student, the fact still remains that they too have a significant number of instances of absenteeism. It is evident that this phenomenon, which is characteristic for Roma students and is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving better results in learning and progress in education, is still present even among them. The reasons are numerous (tradition, values, poor previous knowledge and skills, lack of discipline and a lightweight attitude towards education), but the fact remains that the poor financial situation of the families is the most significant cause.

The lack of financial resources is primarily evident in the inability of parents to set aside additional funds from the family budget for the education of children, but in the time that children have to spend earning money for the family in the course of the school year through seasonal agricultural work or other income generation activities, with the aim of increasing the family budget. Children's seasonal work for an appropriate wage (picking grapes and vegetables, etc.) is concentrated primarily in early autumn or more precisely at the beginning of the school year. This contributes to an increase in the instances ob absenteeism and reduces regular attendance, and additional hampers the future success/learning achievements of part of the students in the course of the school year, as they would already have missed out on a significant

portion of the learning matter and on the basis of the annual curriculum, and thus have difficulties in catching up with the other children. At the end, this results with lower success rate in their learning.

Although the REC and participating teachers have contributed to the improvement in learning achievements if the students (decrease in drop-out and repetition), the average success rate (2.73) is still only slightly higher than the average success rate of the other students (2.58). The causes can be detected not only in the regular attendance, but also in the other factors that affect learning: lack of textbooks, lack of learning materials and stationery, bad learning conditions, lack of clothing and footwear, poor finances, lack of separate room for learning, problems with reading and writing, teachers talking too fast and the poor command of the Macedonian language. As we addressing only a one-year period, and in order to be able to determine the real causes, success needs to be monitored also in the coming period, in order to ascertain whether the success rate improves or retains the current trend.

Given the family environment of the students attending the RECs, the question remains open: What would have happened to these students if they had not had the support of the REC and the teachers? Would we not be dealing now with a much larger number of dropping out or repeating the grade? It is obvious that the answer is affirmative. This conclusion, along with the results these students achieve stresses the need for strengthening of the efforts in the RECs and school, but also in the Roma communities themselves, which clearly underlines the need for an integral approach to resolving this problem. It is namely not sufficient only to implement educational measures, but it is imperative to undertake economic measures (employment) and improvement of the socio-cultural environment in the Roma communities in parallel.

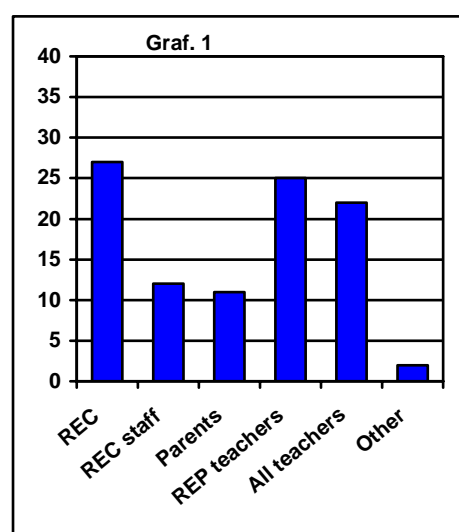
2.3 REI trough the Teachers' Opinions

The Evaluation also aimed at gathering indirect information of the course of the REI in primary education. 40 project and other 40 non-project teachers from the primary schools attended by the students - REC beneficiaries were consulted. The results relate to:

Students: Both groups of teachers agree to a large extent that the Roma students - REC beneficiaries were characterised in the course of the school year by:

- increase in the regular attendance,
- more active participation in the teaching process,
- better discipline,
- better achievements,
- increased self-confidence,
- improved creativity,
- greater respect for teachers,
- satisfaction with the successful completion of the tasks/assignments, and
- increase motivation for learning.

Where both groups of teachers agree, and which is negative from the aspect of the REI, is the fact that the project students did not excel in the areas of: critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning. Given the data on student success, these opinions are appropriate and confirm the real

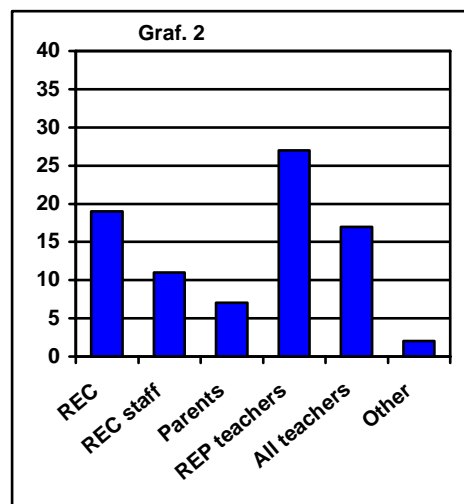


picture. It is evident that more work is needed in the coming period in required, especially in the RECs.

In relation to the causes mostly affecting the improvement of the regular attendance of REC students, the statements of the project teachers identify the influence of the REC and the REC staff as having the strongest influence, followed by the project teachers and the other teachers (Chart 1). Parents appear in 25% of the answers as strong factors for improved attendance of students. Although this phenomenon is not very strongly supported by numbers, from the viewpoint of the project goals, it is very significant.

It is interesting to read the statements of the teachers in regard to the question what mostly affected the improvement of the success of the REC students (Chart 2).

According to them, the strongest factor of influence is the influence of the RECs, the REC staff, their own influence and the influence of the other teachers. The statements of the other teachers are very similar, with only one difference; they believe that the most contributing factors were the influence of all teachers, followed by the RECs, REC staff and then the project teachers. Although this slight tendentiousness is evident in the answers, it is heartening to see that all teachers highly value the influence of the RECs. It is also good to see the role of the parents as a contributing factor; maybe not in the expected extent, but still strongly, which indicates a trend of growing participation and interest on behalf of the parents in the education of their children.



This conclusion is strengthened by the high degree of agreement among the project and the other teachers about the changes that occurred among the parents as a direct influence of the Roma Education Initiative. These changes are primarily expressed through:

- increased social communication,
- increased self-confidence,
- strengthened positive attitude towards the school, and
- improved care for the education of their children.

In the context of the Roma Education Initiative, these changes should be stimulated and expanded as much as possible. Only through an active family can the Roma students hope for better success in education. All previous research confirm the fact that aside from the school and teachers, the parents, i.e. the family are key factors and without their involvement and coordination there can be no improvement of the achievements. Precisely this is the weakest point of the Roma students. The parents and the family, in great many cases not only did not act in the same direction with the school, but also had a completely different effect. The results of this evaluation show that it is possible to address this issue and to achieve even greater success.

A synergy of efforts can be pursued also in the relation of project and other teachers. The results show that the other teachers collaborate with the project teachers and use their experience and that they frequently plan the activities together. Unlike the results from the initial study, the current data indicate positive changes in the schools themselves. For the REI, this is of great significance and provides a good basis for a continuation of the positive influences.

The good collaboration among the teachers can be detected also in their statements on the differences between the REC students and the other Roma students. They agree to a large extent that the REC students are better in: acquiring new knowledge, communication, establishing new contacts, respecting other people's opinions, adapting to new situations and in the self-confident expression of their own opinion.

Did the Programme fulfil its goal? 82.5% project teachers think that the Programme fully or largely achieved its goal, whereas only 17.5% think that the goal has only partly been achieved. The same source indicates that the Programme's highest achievement lies in: the increase in the regular attendance and in the improvement of the success of the students, the mobilisation of the parents and in the increase of the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the teachers.

The Roma Education Initiative is attractive for the other teachers as well; 75% of them would like also to participate in the Programme, whereas 20% are not yet sure.

Skopje
14.10.2005