

Roma Education Research Study Brief

Background: The OSI Education Sub-Board made the decision to focus and devote more attention to supporting activity to improve education for Roma pupils. In order to inform future strategic thinking in this area, it was decided that, first, the network must learn from existing programs that are regarded to be successful. Thus, a research project into existing approaches is being planned that could help guide the Soros Foundation Network's strategic thinking for future education programming for Roma students.

A Roma Education Working Group (REWG) suggested that six separate approaches in six different countries be investigated. Criteria used to choose the countries were: Countries with a large percentage of Roma and that demonstrate big need, experience in programs and/or with strong government relations, but also countries who have been given less attention in terms of research and reporting. The group favored a mix of the above. Originally, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia were identified.

As discussions continued among the Network, however, it became clear that there are other experiences and approaches in the network from which it would be beneficial to learn. Thus, the Mentoring and Non-Mentoring Scholarships Program that is run by the Hungarian Foundation was added, as well as an example from the Step by Step Program, which has made a large contribution to the education of Roma children.

The programs identified differ in their approach, and in their context. It was suggested that programs that target general education be the focus of this study.

Programs to be investigated:

- Two Roma Teaching Assistant projects in **Bulgaria** (CEGA and Interethnic Initiative)
- The "Nadez" community center approach in **Macedonia**
- The teacher training component of the "Nova Skola" Foundation in the **Czech Republic**
- The Educational Centers approach in **Slovakia**
- The whole school approach of the "Equal Chances" program in **Romania**
- The Mentoring and non-mentoring scholarships approach for secondary students in **Hungary**
- The Step by Step approach in **Yugoslavia**

Research Questions: In order to learn about the results of the programs, the REWG considers the central questions to be the following:

- What is the feasibility of program replication within each country and across countries based on issues of cost, resources, institutions, and culture?

- How effective is each program in getting and keeping Roma children in school and at improving the educational achievement of Roma children? In particular, we will assess the correlation of program participation and student attendance, academic performance, dropout and graduation rates, students returning to school to graduate, and secondary school/university entrance rates.
- Has the program promoted systemic change to advance goals of equity and quality in the schools?
- Has there been a change in attitude in teachers and other school staff, non-Roma students and parents, and the community at large?

Consistent descriptions of the nature of the program, the purpose of the program, and the processes associated with their original development and implementation will also be outlined in the research.

The findings of this study will be distributed within the Soros Foundation Network, and specifically used as a sounding board upon which the OSI Education Sub-Board, Roma Education Expert Committee, and Foundations could further develop strategic approaches or develop strategies. In addition, however, the project will also provide significant benefits to the administrators and staff of the participating programs -- and those of other related programs. The results will enable them to improve their own programs -- either by understanding and addressing their own emergent weaknesses, issues, or needs OR by learning from the experiences of others. Finally, the research project will enable program administrators and staff to develop a better understanding of when and how to reflect on one's program and recognize avenues for improvement.

Researchers: The study will be carried out by an external researcher and an assistant, so as to alleviate any extra burden for the Soros Foundation and/or Program being studied. The professional researcher will focus on the design of the research plan, facilitation of its implementation, and preparation of any resulting reports. In each country, local researchers will be recruited (approximately two) to focus on data collection and preliminary analysis. The lead researcher will be responsible for supporting and overseeing their work. Both the professional researchers and the local network will work closely with program staff, participants, and stakeholders to actively involve these individuals in the design and implementation of the research.

Proposed Methodology: The methodology used shall be participatory, but with the use of an external researcher who could give a sufficient independent, objective look at the work being done, and thus help inform future work in this area. Moreover, the methodology used to look at each of the programs shall be the same, so to ensure the ability to compare results across program areas and country boundaries.

Since the research questions are focused on outcomes, part of the design of the study will include comparison groups. In each country, a control group of students, teachers, schools with the similar geographical and socio-economic status will be used. Due to time constraints, the option of using a longitudinal study is not possible.

Local research teams who will participate in the evaluation/study will first be brought together for a common orientation and planning meeting on the approach.

A "monitoring committee" will also help inform the process of the research. This committee will consist of Tomislav Reskovic (Education Sub-Board Member who leads this effort), Christina McDonald (IEP), and two other persons from the education community.

Time frames for completion, reporting, administrative and management arrangements:

Summer (June to August 2000) - All programs will be contacted and invited for participation, local researchers will be recruited, collection and review of written information on the programs will take place, identification of statistical data regarding the programs and the participants, and the lead researcher will begin the design of the data collection tools and processes.

Meeting #1 Autumn 2000 (Sept 25-Oct. 1 or Oct. 2-8) (five days) - First meeting Orientation and planning with all stakeholders, and the local researchers. Input from the members of the Monitoring Committee and stakeholders on the design of the tools and processes. Tools translated into appropriate languages.

Data Collection Level One (see Research Concept Paper) – October-December, 2000

Meeting #2 December/January (3 days)- To coordinate a review and analysis of the summary data by your office and the evaluation committee.

Preliminary Report January 2000 - Based primarily on written documents, statistical information, staff/participant surveys, and (possibly) short interviews.-

Data Collection Level Two January-February 2000 (see Research Concept Paper)

Meeting #3 February (3 days)- Review and discuss the final report.

Final Report - March 2000

In order to respond to the multiple institutions interested in the evaluation results in addition to the Open Society Initiative (i.e. individual programs, Soros Foundation network, individual schools, and national organizations/agencies), the researchers will use multiple strategies.

In addition to written summary reports, the evaluation team will provide oral presentations (where appropriate) and use the Internet and videos to further disseminate the evaluation findings and conclusion

Appendix B

Conclusion: This brief has been shared with you so as to invite your comments and suggestions to further shape this effort. After all input is collected, a formal brief will be prepared.