

EX POST EVALUATION OF CEB GRANT PROJECTS
Establishing boarding kindergartens for Roma children as a pilot project
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Abstract

In 2006, the CEB granted 150 000 € to a municipality in a southeastern European country for a pilot project aimed at attracting Roma children to kindergartens, especially in order for them to acquire the official language. Many children from minority groups do not speak the official language well because they grow up within their own language environment. This hampers their integration in primary school, and impacts later stages of their development and their integration in society. Teaching them to speak the official language before entering first grade is a generally accepted solution to this problem. The project's originality consisted in proposing the concept of a *boarding kindergarten*, in order to make learning more effective.

The project had three objectives: to restore and equip three existing kindergartens and prepare them to host three boarding classes for 20 children each; to provide teacher-training focused on working with multi-ethnic and bilingual classes; and to inform and mobilise relevant stakeholders and especially the local minority community through the organisation of a series of seminars. The municipality was responsible for the implementation of the project and took charge of kindergarten staff and overheads. The project was coordinated and managed by an international charitable foundation and implemented from April 2006 to June 2007.

Project objectives were found to be highly relevant, even if a reservation could be made with regard to boarding very young children, as they may be alienated from their families. In terms of planned activities, project objectives were all well achieved and effectiveness is considered very satisfactory. The restoration of the kindergartens constitutes an enormous improvement compared to the previous situation. Efficiency of the project was highly satisfactory: the schedule was respected and project management was highly professional; however, reporting, although following the imposed requirements, could have been tailored better to the objectives of the project, especially in terms of the children's learning objectives and progress made.

Project impact is considered high, especially in social (on the children) and institutional (municipality level) terms. The economic impact other than from the temporary restoration activities and the lodging of the children (supervising staff, cooks...), is as yet impossible to determine as, depending on the children's future school careers, this will show in the long run only. Whereas institutional and technical sustainability are high, financial and socio-cultural sustainability seem uncertain as they hinge too much and solely on the municipality's intentions rather than on the continued involvement of parents, crucial for new generations of children to integrate the boarding schools. There are some indications, remaining to be confirmed, that the concept of boarding kindergartens for preschoolers from minority groups may become part of national policy.

The overall rating of this project is **very satisfactory**. CEB added value to the project was high in financial terms and by the contribution it made, through technical missions, to improvement of project implementation – even though specific education-related input would have been more effective earlier on in the project.

Recommendations:

- Parental involvement in the project appeared both most difficult and probably most crucial to be attained. In future projects of a similar nature, the issue of parental involvement deserves even more attention than in the present case and specific strategies (and alternatives) should be worked out in detail at project outset.
- Monitoring and reporting has first and foremost focused on accounting for the expenditures of the project and its activities. It has not looked into the progress made by the children or the new competences acquired by the teachers. In projects having objectives related to learning and education, more attention should be paid to monitoring and reporting on the achievement of these objectives; these should not only be limited to the infrastructural components of the projects or to a mere description of the activities carried out.
- The project was a “pilot” project without specifying at the outset how “pilot” should be interpreted. In the present case, the project learning experience was not capitalised upon and packaged in order to serve as an example for other situations. Without this, the only next step possible is reiteration or expansion within the same municipality. It is recommended that the “pilot” nature of pilot projects should be better defined and associated to specific, measurable objectives allowing the assessment of whether the project was satisfactory as a pilot project. A pilot project should in its final assessment also indicate how the experience might, if this is found relevant and useful, be replicated and possibly generalised.