EVALUATION OF THE EARLY LITERACY AND EARLY NUMERACY PROGRAMME IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

2009 - 2015

A summative assessment of the results of UNICEF support in raising the quality of teaching and student achievements

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BDE</td>
<td>Bureau for the Development of Education</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Cambridge Curriculum</td>
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<td>ELN</td>
<td>Early Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>LL</td>
<td>Language Literacy</td>
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<td>L&amp;N</td>
<td>Literacy &amp; Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEC</td>
<td>Macedonian Civic Education Centre</td>
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<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Examination Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>RLTs</td>
<td>Regional Learning Teams</td>
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<td>SEI</td>
<td>State Education Inspectorate</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-economic Status</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>Standard Evaluation Protocol</td>
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<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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<td>TM</td>
<td>Teaching Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEG</td>
<td>United Nations Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Evaluation Report is to present an evaluation of the Early Literacy and Numeracy Programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the ELN Programme) 2009-2015. Following a tendering procedure, DUMA consultants: Mr José Noijons, international consultant, Dr Beti Lameva and Ms Ana Mickovska-Raleva, national consultants, have been selected by UNICEF to evaluate the ELN Programme.

The UNICEF country office in Skopje instructed the Evaluation Team to conduct an evaluation that is primarily summative with a purpose of assessing the results of UNICEF support in raising the quality of teaching and student achievements through the ELN Programme. The evaluation was undertaken at the end of UNICEF country programme (2010 - 2015) that was signed with the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

Key audiences for the evaluation are MoES, the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), the State Education Inspectorate (SEI), civil society organizations and UNICEF. The evaluation findings will serve to MoES to develop action plans for implementation of the Education Strategy 2016-2020 and to evaluate the programme’s results and to make evidence-based decisions.

This Evaluation Report consists of two parts. In Part I, in Chapter 1 the content of the ELN programme and its context are presented. In Chapter 2 we present the evaluation objectives, the evaluation methodology, the data collection instruments and details of the data analysis. Also, the ethical standards applied in the evaluation are presented in this chapter. In Chapter 3 the findings of the evaluation activity are presented. In Chapter 4 we present conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for the sustenance of the ELN Programme’s results and for future similar activities in the area of teacher support and improvement of student performance.

Part II of this Evaluation Report contains the annexes to the Report, such as the Terms of Reference (ToR), the developed lists of indicators, the Evaluation Matrix, the complete set of data collection tools, the set of data gathered in the evaluation process, protocols for the site visits and other relevant information.


DUMA Consultants
José Noijons
Dr Beti Lameva
Ana Mickovska-Raleva
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Evaluation Report presents an evaluation of the Early Literacy and Numeracy Programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the ELN Programme) 2009-2015. The UNICEF country office in Skopje instructed DUMA Consultants to conduct an evaluation that is primarily summative with a purpose of assessing the results of UNICEF support in raising the quality of teaching and student achievements through the ELN Programme. The evaluation was undertaken at the end of the UNICEF country programme that was signed with the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The ELN Programme has been fully funded by UNICEF with a total budget of $1,140,000.

Stakeholders
Key audiences for the evaluation are the MoES, the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), the State Education Inspectorate (SEI), teachers and directors in primary schools, civil society organizations and UNICEF. The evaluation findings will serve to MoES to develop action plans for implementation of the Education Strategy 2017-2020 and to evaluate the programme’s results and to make evidence-based decisions.

Context
The ELN Programme (2009–2015) was developed in response to repeatedly low student achievement in international assessments, such as TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA, and in national assessment tests; to the reactions of secondary schools on the low level of numeracy and literacy of students entering secondary schools, as well as to the weak mechanisms in place to support learners lagging behind or not performing to the best of their abilities. The education system and the teachers in particular, had generally low expectations for students. Little attention was paid to those not mastering the language of instruction (such as Roma children), or having gaps in their mathematics or language knowledge. The ELN Programme was implemented on a national level in all primary schools in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

ELN Programme objectives
The overall objective of the ELN Programme was to improve students’ outcomes in early literacy and early numeracy by developing teachers’ understanding of what constitutes quality instruction in numeracy and literacy and by equipping them with the necessary skills for effective teaching and learning. This objective was to be reached through a series of related activities leading to five ELN Programme results:

1. Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development established;
2. Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy strengthened;
3. Teachers provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction;
4. On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices;
5. Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved.
Evaluation Objectives
The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- Assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence and, to the extent possible, the impact of the project interventions;
- Identification of any unintended outcomes;
- Identification and documentation of lessons learned in relation to strategies and interventions used to address certain critical bottlenecks.

The evaluation has focussed on three key areas of the ELN Programme:

1. capacity building of all involved in the Programme;
2. management and support provided by the responsible institutions; and
3. implementation of the ELN Programme in schools.

Limitations
One of the limitations to the evaluation of the impact of the ELN Programme was the lack of a system for national assessments and a lack of participation in the international assessments, such as TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA that can provide large scale and reliable data on students’ achievements. Given these limitations the Evaluation Team based its expectations on present and future performance of students on trends to be detected in the impressionistic assessments by teachers and other stakeholders on present student performance.

Evaluation instruments
The data for these impressionistic assessments have been collected through specific questionnaires for each type of stakeholder, containing open-ended and closed questions and statements to respond to. Stakeholders were requested to describe as accurately as possible their efforts and results during the ELN Programme’s lifetime and its effects for the coming years. It will relate to the ELN Programme’s general strategy and its specific targets, its results and societal relevance.

Sampling
The evaluation has covered schools whose language of instruction is Macedonian and Albanian, the two main languages of instruction. It has covered urban and rural schools in three main regions of the country (central, east and west) and in the capital Skopje. The sample is based on the type of data available, the available financial resources for the implementation of the research and the time to deliver the same. A two-stage stratified sample has been used.

Ethical Standards and Safeguards
The Evaluation Team has strictly followed the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. Following the UNEG Handbook Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance the Evaluation Team has assessed the HR & GE relevance of the ELN Programme, examining how the ELN Programme was designed and implemented to align and contribute to HR & GE.

Human Rights
In the ELN Programme context issues in human rights mainly relate to differences in opportunities and performance of Albanian speaking and Macedonian speaking students and teachers. The ELN Programme did not specifically focus on providing equal opportunities for Roma children, as does the
Inclusive Education programme, which is primarily directed towards greater inclusion of Roma students. The ELN Programme activities equally impacted the achievements of students in Macedonian and Albanian speaking classes. Interviews with teachers from Albanian-speaking classes point to some deficiencies in the provision of training and professional support to the teachers. The observation that teachers in Roma-majority schools need to be additionally supported has been recognized by UNICEF, which has led to the development of the Inclusive Education programme, primarily directed towards greater inclusion of Roma students.

Gender equality
The Evaluation Team does not think there are differences of approach and different outcomes among the two genders. As teachers indicate, boys and girls may have a different interests in and motivation for specific subjects, but this is a general phenomenon. Respondents nor the Evaluation Team have not identified any gender issues in the position of teachers, even if the great majority of teachers in primary education is female. The Evaluation Team has not found indications that men find it more difficult to be employed as primary school teachers.

Findings and Conclusions
The evaluation showed that the ELN Programme has been successful to a sufficient extent to improve the achievements of students, although the absence of end-of-project student assessment and the implementation of other programmes during the same period makes it difficult to ‘extract’ the specific effects of ELN on student outcomes.

- Most teachers consider that the Formative Assessment training influenced their teaching positively but they feel they need more time to prepare for lessons that include the use of formative assessment. They would need support for their further implementation in the next few years. This is particularly true for teachers working in schools with a majority of Roma students.
- Teachers are positive about the trainings in the Recording of Good Practices, but for teachers in schools with a majority of Roma students it is difficult to manage classes and to make sure everything goes as planned. It seems that lessons conducted by applying the approaches learned at the training require more time. Teachers feel the need for additional support in the next few years.
- Stakeholders have been aware of most of the programme expected results, be it that they sometimes phrase them differently. In various official reports on the ELN Programme different formulations were used.
- The ELN Programme can be seen as relevant to the teachers’ needs and related to the national curriculum. However, the alignment with the mathematics curriculum has been problematic at times and in places. Teachers in Roma-majority schools are less positive on the effects that the programme had on their teaching than and teachers in Macedonian-majority schools. This is caused in part by the socio-economic background of their students and the lack of participation of parents.
- The ELN Programme has made school-based stakeholders cooperate more intensively. According to the teachers the biggest asset of the ELN Programme seems to lie in raising the interest of students and in improving their attitudes towards the two subjects.
• In terms of effectiveness the newly introduced teaching methods are not always applicable for large classes (30 students or more), since they require more interaction with students, as in mixed-age classes in rural schools. The increase in administrative responsibilities during the past years has removed the focus of teachers from the students towards the administrative tasks.

• The ELN Programme management has been cost effective, especially when compared to other similar programmes. This is thanks to the use of the cascade model of trainings and relying on regional support offices, as well utilising the full capacities of the schools (support staff, management, teacher trainers etc.).

• According to most school-based stakeholders, the ELN Programme has been found to be coherent with the national priorities on advancing teaching practices through introducing contemporary teaching methods.

• The concept of the ELN Programme is seen to be innovative as to providing quality advice through mentoring support and the exchange of expert opinions and experiences among teachers.

• The certification process should continue, either on a compulsory or on a voluntary basis. However, if it is not made compulsory, it may ‘fade away’ in time. In-school and out-of-school support including external evaluations by SEI are deemed necessary for sustainability. This especially refers to certain more complex techniques for mathematics instruction.

• Strengthening the capacities of BDE should be a priority, as they are perceived as the main body which should provide sustainability in the long run. The overburdening with assignments and the change of staff (as a result of retirements and new employments) can be problematic.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)
Stakeholders assess the ELN Programme’s strengths as very high, emphasizing the methods and strategies promoted, the focus on problem-solving skills, the improved results, as well as increased cooperation at the level of the school. The programme offers many opportunities, such as its applicability for higher grades and in different subjects. A few weaknesses have been identified, such as the material expenses, the lack of continuity in requirements from institutions and the time required for implementing certain techniques properly. There are some threats which could impact the implementation of activities, such as other programmes which can defocus teachers from the ELN Programme, the lack of institutional care for the programme on behalf of BDE, the continued absence of national external assessment focussing on lower cognitive levels.

Final conclusions
The overall objective of the ELN Programme was to be reached through a series of related activities leading to five ELN Programme results. The Evaluation Team has assessed the attainment of these results as follows:

1. Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development    Yes established.

2. Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy      Yes strengthened
3. Teachers provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction  
Yes

4. On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices  
Yes

5. Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved  
To be further investigated

Recommendations
The Evaluation Team’s recommendations are given in order of priority per category. The process of arriving at these recommendations has been: Analysis of programme objectives and results > Collection of data on objectives and results > Interpretation of data > Conclusions > Lessons Learned > Recommendations.

SWOT
- BDE to apply the new ELN teaching methods to the higher grades as well.
- Continued financial support to be assured to materially implement some of the teaching methods at national and local level.

Formative Assessment trainings
- All grade teachers should be given a basic training in formative assessment. Teachers should attend additional meetings with their colleagues from the region and the BDE advisors in order to exchange experiences and deepen their understanding.
- Future teachers should be trained in formative assessment during their pre-service preparation.

Trainings in the Recording of Good Practices
- The recorded good practices should be posted on the BDE web page and linked to other websites which teachers use. More teachers should be involved in the training of recording good practices

Relevance
- Teachers should receive continued assistance from the BDE in integrating the new teaching approaches in the new Math curriculum.
- Teachers instructing in Albanian language, and those teaching in majority Roma schools should be provided extra assistance for integrating the new literacy and numeracy approaches in the relevant curricula.

Impact
- BDE to organize trainings in relating new teaching techniques to existing curricular goals.
- BDE to conduct an evaluation study on teachers’ pedagogical knowledge.
- The National Examination Centre to conduct repeated national assessment of early numeracy.
- FYROM to participate in TIMSS and PIRLS for the assessment of effects.

Effectiveness
- BDE to be made responsible for continuous monitoring of schools and teachers with regards to the quality of implementing the new techniques.
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- BDE to organize meetings at the level of support staff and teachers where good practices will be exchanged.
- BDE’s capacities to be strengthened quantitatively and qualitatively.
- SEI to place greater value on the certification.

**Efficiency**
- BDE advisors to provide suggestions for integrating approaches promoted in various other educational programmes and to adjust them to the curricular goals.

**Coherence**
- Teachers to be trained in linking TM and LL to Formative Assessment and Recording of Good Practices as interconnected parts of the teaching and learning process.

**Sustainability**
- RLTs to be provided with additional incentives (certificates or similar) from BDE, and their work to be validated by the SEI.
- Certification teams to be strengthened.
- Basic trainings on a regional level for the newly employed staff to be provided in order to ensure sustainability of programme effects.
- ELN principles to be incorporated in pre-service trainings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Evaluation Team would like to thank the following persons and institutions for their willingness to provide the team with all the necessary information for a successful completion of its evaluation task:

- Staff and former staff at the UNICEF country office in Skopje
- Staff member at the Ministry of Education and Science
- Representative of the Macedonian Civic Education Centre
- Programme Coordinator and Advisors at the Bureau for the Development of Education
- State Education Inspectors
- University Professors
- School Directors
- School Psychologists and Pedagogues
- Teachers
CHAPTER 1 CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

In this chapter we give a general description of the ELN Programme: its context, why it was initiated and who are the key stakeholders in the present evaluation.

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The education system in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is normed by a set of legislative and policy documents adopted by either the Parliament or the Government. Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia stipulates that everyone has the right to education; education is accessible to everyone under equal conditions; primary and secondary education is compulsory and free of charge in public educational establishments. Article 48 states that minorities have the right to education in their own language, both in primary and secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is accountable for the overall educational system from primary to tertiary education. MoES is in charge of the establishment and operation of educational institutions and their accreditation, approval and adoption of curricula, publication of textbooks, and endorsing appointments in educational institutions. Other key institutions responsible for education are: Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), State Education Inspectorate (SEI), National Examination Centre (NEC), Pedagogical Service (PS) and the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Communities.

From September 2008, the primary education was transformed from eight to nine years, organized in three cycles of three years each, and children begin school at the age of six instead of seven. While curricula development, textbooks and teacher training remain as responsibilities of the central government, municipalities still have responsibility for building and maintenance of schools, selection of teachers and staff for employment, provision of textbooks, materials and support services. According to official data, there were 360 elementary schools in the country in 2015 and 105 secondary schools. Based on State Statistical Office (SSO) data at the end of school year 2014/15 there were 188,361 (91,397 females) students in the regular primary schools [out of which 120,716 (58,887 females) students are taught in Macedonian language, 61,608 (29,589 females) in Albanian language, 5,566 (2,709 females) in Turkish language and 471 (222 females) in Serbian language]. The World Bank data on “Gross enrollment ratio in primary schools” and SSO’s data on total number of children enrolled in primary school show a decline between 2002 and 2012, and then they stabilize between 2012 and 2014. The enrollment and transition rates for male and female students are about equal in primary education but there is a slight decline for girls when transitioning to the secondary education1. As regards participation in primary school by ethnicity, Roma students are the most excluded group, especially due to the high dropout rates.2

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1 www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Rodova%20analiza%20osnovnoto,%20srednoto%20i%20viskoto%20obrazovanie.pdf

DUMA Consultants
Data from the State Statistical Office indicate that out of the 6,114 grade teachers, 80% are female while 20% are male. While the vast majority of teachers teaching in Macedonian language (88%) and Serbian language (96%) are female, there are somewhat fewer female teachers teaching in Albanian language (68%) and Turkish language (52%).\(^3\)

In 2006, education was announced as one of the four Government priorities. Education was seen as key to increasing the quality of human capital. Education reform launched by the Government included also curricular reform in 2008 (shift towards goal-oriented curricula, new subjects focussing on skills and outcomes – Life skills based education) and incorporation of Child-Friendly School Principles\(^4\). Despite numerous initiatives, the achievements of students on international assessments continued to drop. Data from the last international assessment in primary education –TIMSS (2011) indicate a significant fall in achievement in mathematics, and especially in science. While there are no gender differences with regards to the achievement in mathematics, girls outperform boys in science.


1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The ELN Programme (2009–2015) was developed in response to repeatedly low student achievement in international assessments, such as TIMSS\(^6\), PIRLS\(^7\) and PISA\(^8\), and in national assessment tests; to the reactions of secondary schools on the low level of numeracy and literacy of students entering secondary schools, as well as to the weak mechanisms in place to support learners lagging behind or not performing to the best of their abilities. The education system and the teachers in particular, had

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\(^3\) Authors’ calculations based on data from the SSO (see: http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.06.pdf)  
\(^4\) One of the key principles of the CFS approach is effectiveness or what children learn – focus on higher results and relevant knowledge.  
\(^5\) European Union (2013): Teacher Education and Training in the Western Balkans, Report on: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
\(^6\) In TIMSS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study for forth and eighth grade students the country participated in 1999, 2003 and 2011.  
\(^7\) In PIRLS - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, nine and ten years old students, the country participated in 2001 and 2016  
\(^8\) PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment, of 15 old students, the country participated in 2000 and in 2015 (for the later the results are not yet ready).
generally low expectations for students. Little attention was paid to those not mastering the language of instruction (such as Roma children), or having gaps in their mathematics or language knowledge. The ELN Programme was implemented on a national level in all primary schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The ELN Programme has been fully funded by UNICEF with a total budget of $1.140,000.

The overall objective of the ELN Programme was to improve students’ outcomes in early literacy and early numeracy by developing teachers’ understanding of what constitutes quality instruction in numeracy and literacy and by equipping them with the necessary skills for effective teaching and learning.

The ELN Programme’s results framework can be found in Figure 1.1. below. As the framework shows, the programme activities focus on the ELN teachers. Through providing them with the necessary support and training it was hoped that in future students will perform better in literacy and numeracy and in other subjects, to be verified in national and international assessments. Improved quality basic education is to be provided for all students, including marginalized groups, such as students with a poor socio-economic background, students in rural schools and students from minority language backgrounds.

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9 In: *Improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy: the experience of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, UNICEF 2015

10 Activities regarding Roma early inclusion were not part of the ELN Programme.
**Overall objective:** Improving students’ outcomes in early literacy and early numeracy by developing teachers’ understanding of what constitutes quality instruction in numeracy and literacy and by equipping them with the necessary skills for effective teaching and learning.

By end of 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science ensures improved quality basic education for all students including marginalized groups.

- **Result 1:** Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development established
  - Workshop with representatives from the teacher training faculties
  - Train national trainers and advisors for preparation and selection of good practices
  - Establish L&N Learning Teams

- **Result 2:** Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy strengthened
  - Action research training for school support staff
  - Certification of acquired knowledge

- **Result 3:** Teachers provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction
  - Train all low primary teachers in L&N (cascade)
  - Train teachers in formative assessment
  - School disseminations
  - Train national trainers in L&N

- **Result 4:** On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices
  - In-school support visits
  - Train national trainers for mentor support
  - Conduct progress assessment

- **Result 5:** Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved
  - Conduct a baseline research in numeracy and literacy
As pointed out above, the main strategy of the ELN Programme was focused on building capacities of teachers and on stimulating changes in the educational system by changing teachers’ practice (as a longer term objective). In this way the ELN Programme aimed at ensuring improved quality basic education for all students. For this the ELN Programme used a cascade professional development model, elaborated upon below.

**Theory of Change**

The ELN Programme has followed a simple theory of change based on the assumption that when teachers see improvement in their students’ learning following a change in their teaching practice, only then does attitudinal change occur. This means that it is not the professional development alone that changes teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, but the experience of successful implementation of the newly gained knowledge and skills and their impact on students’ learning. The ELN Programme strategies and activities are based on the model of teacher change according to which teachers define their success in terms of their students’ learning.

The ELN Programme strategy was pursued through the following activities:

**Preparation phase (2008-2010)**

This phase focused on gaining a better understanding of influencing factors:

- Review of national curricula in early literacy and numeracy and review of teaching practice;
- Identifying international best practice of teacher education programmes in two subjects: mathematics and language;
- Development of teacher manual;
- Baseline studies.

**Implementation phase (2010-2015)**

This phase focussed on teacher training, and developing a model of teacher professional development and support:

- Training of national trainers and BDE advisors;
- Dissemination of teacher training (cascade model) in all primary schools;
- Teacher Certification;
- Setting up of Regional Learning Teams;
- Measuring progress;
- Linking the programmes with pre-service teacher training

The above mentioned training of national trainers and BDE advisors and the dissemination of teacher training in all primary schools went along the following lines:

1. **Selection of national trainers** – through public announcement BDE selected 50 national trainers for each numeracy and literacy component. The goals were to select motivated and experienced teachers from around the country, and ensure regional and language (Macedonian and Albanian) representation. 15 BDE advisors were assigned to each component;
2. **Training of national trainers and BDE advisors**;
3. **Dissemination of teacher training in all primary schools**:
   - Phase 1 National Trainers trained all early grade teachers within their schools in both numeracy and literacy.
Phase 2 National Trainers trained all early grade teachers in one neighbouring school in both numeracy and literacy.
Phase 3 National Trainers trained teachers in primary schools in regions that were not previously covered with training.

Cascade model
For the purpose of ensuring more efficient and quality support to teachers and disseminating the training to more schools and teachers, the cascade model of teacher training was introduced. Two teachers in each primary school were trained as school trainers, and then with the support of BDE advisors disseminated the training to all other teachers within their schools.

Phases 4 and 5 National Trainers trained school trainers and then the school trainers trained all other teachers within their schools.\(^{11}\)

Trainings in Thinking Mathematics and Language Literacy
MCEC created a database where all persons who attended Thinking Mathematics (TM) and Language Literacy (LL) trainings have been documented with regards to when and where they attended the trainings, how many hours, in which language, who were the trainers, in what capacity and where they work, gender and basic contact data. According to these data, the TM training was attended by 6533 persons in total, while the LL training was given to 6654 persons. In the following table the distribution is given according to year and language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>TM Total</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>LL Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>6533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 13187 people were trained, the largest number of whom were teachers from grades 1-5, and the rest being psychologists, pedagogues, BDE advisors etc.

The following tables provide the distribution of trained people according to gender and language of training and the number of training hours in each language.

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\(^{11}\) Teacher Education Programme on Early Numeracy and Literacy in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Monitoring note 1. OECD, UNICEF

DUMA Consultants
Table 1.2 Trained persons in TM and LL together, according to gender and language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trained persons</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogues</td>
<td>F 191</td>
<td>M 84</td>
<td>Mac. 237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociologists</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Grade 1 to 5</td>
<td>8154</td>
<td>2821</td>
<td>8494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Grade 6 to 9</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>1053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDE advisors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9614</td>
<td>3573</td>
<td>10311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3 Number of hours of training in LL and TM, according to teachers’ language of instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of training hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>LL 47,23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>LL 47,28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDE advisors</td>
<td>LL 45,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>LL 47,23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trainings in Formative Assessment and the Recording of Good Practices

A total of about 1500 teachers was trained in applying Formative Assessment in the classroom. Because of the large number of teachers the training was divided into three cycles, one each year, starting in Western Macedonia.

A total of 142 people were trained in the Recording of Good Practices. The following table provides the distribution of trained people according to gender and language of training.

Table 1.4 Trained persons in Recording Good Practices, according to gender and language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trained persons</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Grades 1 to 5</td>
<td>F 77</td>
<td>M 10</td>
<td>Mac. 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDE advisors</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholders

A range of key stakeholders have been identified in the ELN Programme: MoES, BDE, teachers in primary schools, MCEC and the UNICEF Country office in Skopje. Below is a short description of the key stakeholders’ interest in the present evaluation.

- Teachers and in particular early grade teachers. For them the principal sources of information have been on the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of activities, obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Survey/Questionnaires on programme performance.
Implementing Partners: MoES, BDE, MCEC. Their interest in the evaluation relates to UNICEF’s commitment to support access to quality education and holding UNICEF to account for the resources and interventions provided. MCEC interests in the evaluation relate mainly to their strategic and operational relationships with UNICEF, and substantive findings to improve any future education programmes. Information has been obtained in the form of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

UNICEF Country Office in Skopje. The office provided international expertise. Their interest and involvement in the evaluation relates to the following: involvement in the evaluation through development of the ToR and the selection of the Evaluation Team; provision of documents, reports, information and data to ET; interviewees as key informants; comments on the Inception and Evaluation Reports; direct support to the Evaluation Team including administrative and logistic support for the evaluation missions. Introduction of Evaluation Team to key stakeholders; participation in debriefings and provisions of feedback on preliminary findings and conclusions.
CHAPTER 2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, INSTRUMENTS, ETHICAL STANDARDS

In this chapter we outline the objectives of the evaluation as described in this report, with its scope and limitations. We discuss the evaluation methodology and the sampling of schools and teachers. We round off this chapter with an outline of the ethical standards and safeguards that have underpinned the evaluation activity.

2.1 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The ToR list the main objectives of the present evaluation report:
- Assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence and, to the extent possible, impact of the project interventions;
- Identification of any unintended outcomes;
- Identification and documentation of lessons learned in relation to strategies and interventions used to address certain critical bottlenecks.

Scope and Limitations

It has been the main focus of this Evaluation Report to place the ELN Programme’s objectives against the results as recorded in the final report of the ELN Programme. It analyses if and how results have been achieved and why they may or may not have been achieved. The evaluation has focussed on three key areas of the ELN Programme:
- Capacity building of all involved in the Programme;
- Management and support provided by the responsible institutions; and
- Implementation of the ELN Programme in schools.

The evaluation has covered schools whose language of instruction is Macedonian and Albanian. It has also covered urban and rural schools in three main regions of the country (central, east and west) and in Skopje. Since the ELN Programme was implemented in all primary schools in the country, the Evaluation Team has selected representative samples of schools to evaluate the ELN programme (see Section 2.4 Sampling). The evaluation has covered all the implementation phases in the ELN Programme, focussed on teacher training and developing a model of teacher professional development and support.

As is indicated in Scope and Limitations in the Terms of Reference (ToR), see Part II, Annex 1, one of the limitations to the evaluation of the impact of the ELN Programme is the lack of a system for national assessments and a lack of regular participation in the international assessments, such as TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA, that can provide large scale and reliable data on students’ achievements.

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In the TOR one objective regarding improved programmes for Roma early inclusion was not relevant for the ELN Programme. The UNICEF country office reported that it was included in the ToR by mistake.
In the two midterm reports on TM and LL reference is made to statistically significant improvements in student performance. Even if the results of the comparison between baseline and mid-term surveys are promising, as there has not been an end-of-programme student assessment, there are not enough objective data available to measure the success of the ELN Programme in terms of improved student achievement.

Also, in the evaluation we have not been able to make comparisons with student performances in other (neighbouring) countries. However, even if relevant student performance data were not available, in the interviews and questionnaires with various stakeholders impressionistic data have been gathered on possibly improved student performance.

The ELN Programme Logical Framework
The ToR lists the education programme result as follows:
   By the end of 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science ensures improved quality basic education for all students including marginalized groups.
   - Indicator: Raised achievements in literacy and numeracy of the lower primary students.
   - Indicator: Improved capacities of the officials in the educational institutions as a part of the system for quality assurance.

It is against these two programme indicators that the summative judgements of the Evaluation Team have been made, as will be further clarified in the following section.

2.2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Basic Principles
The basic principles of the evaluation methodology were the following:
   - Its quality assurance system serves to guarantee, reveal and confirm the quality and relevance of the evaluation;
   - Stakeholders take full responsibility for their responses;
   - Stakeholders’ own strategies and targets are taken into account in the assessment process;
   - The Evaluation Team has been formed in conformity with the ToR and adheres to these.

The methodology has responded to the set objectives and questions of the evaluation assignment and taken into consideration the defined ELN Programme indicators in its Logical Framework mentioned above. Baselines, progress measurements, annual reports and other available reliable data and materials collected through monitoring and evaluation activities have been considered. The chosen evaluation methodology demonstrates impartiality and lack of bias by relying on a cross-section of information sources and on the use of a mixed methodological approach to ensure triangulation of information. The participation of key stakeholders has been obtained in all phases of the evaluation.

13 Language literacy in the early grades - Research of the achievements at the end of the first cycle of the realization of the project and Thinking mathematics in lower grades - Research of the achievements at the end of the first cycle of the realization of the project, see Part II, Annex 2, documents 4 & 6.
14 This result and corresponding indicators have been taken from the UNICEF Country Programme Document (2016-2020).
The evaluation has used an established, non-experimental design, based on a Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The evaluation has applied the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards, including evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, coherence and sustainability, and the UNEG ethical guidelines. Care has been taken that the interests of various ethnic and language communities were respected. Although every effort has been made to do justice to the multifaceted nature of the ELN Programme under evaluation, the evaluation has not been able to cover every situation or answer every question that arose, through lack of relevant data, time constraints and/or financial constraints. The Evaluation Report will indicate where this has been the case.

Source materials
The evaluation is based on documents provided by UNICEF and participants in the ELN Programme, such as baselines, progress measurements and annual reports, and other data and materials collected through monitoring and evaluation activities. An overview of these sources is given in Part II, Annex 2.

Focus
The primary aim of the evaluation methodology has been to reveal and confirm the quality and relevance of the ELN Programme to the education sector in Macedonian society. The evaluation has focussed on three key areas of the ELN Programme:

- capacity building of key stakeholders involved in the ELN Programme: teachers and more specifically early grade teachers, school pedagogues and school psychologists, directors of schools;
- management and support provided by the responsible institutions: MoES, BDE, SEI, MCEC, UNICEF;
- implementation of the ELN Programme in schools, based on the four assessment criteria listed in the ToR: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability.

Target Groups
A range of stakeholders has been contacted:

- Ministry of Education and Science (MoES);
- Bureau for Development of Education (BDE);
- State Education Inspectorate (SEI);
- Macedonian Civic Education Centre (MCEC);
- UNICEF Country office in Skopje;
- Directors of primary schools;
- Teachers in primary schools;
- Psychologists and Pedagogues in primary schools;
- University Professors at teaching faculties.

Assessment Criteria
The Evaluation Team has assessed the ELN Programme on the six assessment criteria as listed in the ToR:

- Relevance;
- Impact;
EVALUATION OF THE EARLY LITERACY AND EARLY NUMERACY PROGRAMME
IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

- Effectiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Coherence and
- Sustainability.

The Evaluation Team has ensured that the qualitative assessment and the quantitative assessment are matched. The Evaluation Team has related these criteria to the targets of the ELN Programme. The above six criteria reflect UNEG standards. In the course of the project the Evaluation Team has refined the criteria as listed in the ToR. Such criteria have been:

- Research quality
- Relevance to society

The Evaluation Team assessed the quality of the ELN Programme’s research and the degree to which that research reflects the body of scientific knowledge.

Specific Evaluation Categories
As was shown in Figure 1.1 the overall objective of the ELN Programme was to be reached through a series of related activities leading to five ELN Programme results:

1. Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development established;
2. Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy strengthened;
3. Teachers provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction;
4. On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices, and
5. Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved 15.

The judgements based on the six assessment criteria as described in the ToR (Impact, Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and Sustainability) have been applied to the evaluation of the success of these five results. These judgements are to be found in Chapter 4, Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations.

Overall Evaluation Categories
The judgements based on the six evaluation criteria as described in the ToR constitute the summative core of the evaluation. The overall judgements are set against the two ELN Programme indicators A and B as identified in the ELN Programme’s Logical Framework:

A. Raised achievements in literacy and numeracy of the lower primary students.
B. Improved capacities of the officials in the educational institutions as a part of the system for quality assurance.

In Chapter 4 the qualitative assessments have been assigned to four discreet categories: Excellent (1A/1B), Good (2A/2B), Sufficient (3A/3B) and Unsatisfactory (4A/4B). There are no intermediate categories.

15 As to result 5 see our remarks in the section Scope and Limitations above
2.3 QUESTIONNAIRES AND STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The evaluation is first of all based on the documentation produced by the ELN Programme, on information gathered during the desk review in the implementation phase and on additional source materials provided by the UNICEF country office in Skopje. The assessment was next fine-tuned through the information contained in the responses in the self-assessment questionnaires and in the interviews conducted during the site visits. Research instruments that have been used in the evaluation are:

- Questionnaires for teachers;
- Structured interviews for teachers, directors and professionals in the service of schools;
- Structured interviews for University Professors;
- Structured interviews for State Education Inspectors;
- Interview protocols for focus groups;
- Structured interviews for MoES staff, UNICEF staff, BDE advisors, BDE programme coordinator and MCEC personnel;
- Analysis of the content for ELN Programme documentation and reports.

At the request of the Evaluation Team, the UNICEF country office in Skopje has produced an introductory letter explaining the context and the purpose of the questionnaires and interviews. The protocols for the site visits and the structured interviews are to be found in Part II, Annex 6. The format and the content of each questionnaire is to be found in Part II, Annex 7.

The assessment team has produced specific questionnaires for each type of stakeholder, containing open-ended and closed questions and statements to respond to. Stakeholders were requested to describe as accurately as possible their efforts and results during the ELN Programme’s lifetime and its effects for the coming years. Their responses related to the ELN Programme’s general strategy and its specific targets, its results and societal relevance. Participants were also asked to produce a SWOT analysis in this context. Questionnaires to accompany structured interviews were sent to relevant stakeholders at least a week before the interview was planned to take place.

The rationale for using the above-elaborated methodology is outlined in the Evaluation Matrix (Part II, Annex 5), which connects the evaluation criteria and questions the evaluation is aiming to answer with the specific (1) data sources, (2) data collection and (3) sampling methods and the (4) exact item(s) in each questionnaire aimed to respond to the evaluation questions. Apart from the evaluation questions outlined in the ToR, additional questions have been developed for the purpose of exploring a greater variety of programme effects.

2.4 SAMPLING

Considering that the teaching process in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is conducted in different languages of instruction, the evaluation has covered schools whose language of instruction is Macedonian and Albanian. It has also covered urban and rural schools in three main regions of the country (central, east and west) and in Skopje. Since the ELN Programme was implemented in all
primary schools in the country, the Evaluation Team has selected representative samples of schools to evaluate the ELN programme. This sample is based on the type of data available, the available financial resources for the implementation of this research and the time to deliver the same. The sample types and the minimal sample size guarantee reliable information. A two-stage stratified sample has been used. Explicit stratification has been done for each region separately according to the language of instruction: Macedonian or Albanian. Further implicit stratification has been done according to the region in which a school is based (east, west, central and Skopje), the size of the community where a school is found (urban/rural), the number of trained teachers working at the school, and the phase in the implementation of project (especially for language and mathematics). Following this stratification schools were sorted separately from each region. From each region two schools have been randomly selected. A total of eight schools has been selected.

Table 2.1 Sample of schools according to region, urban environment of the settlement, language of instruction and phase of involvement in the ELN Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Urban/Rural</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Phase involvement</th>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>al</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Skopje</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>al + mk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Skopje</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>U + R</td>
<td>mk + al</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>mk + al</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sample of schools reflects the structure of all schools in the country. The sample includes six urban schools, one rural school and one school which is located in a town, but also has classes in a village.

The instruction language in four schools is Macedonian only, one school is Albanian only, but in the other three schools it is both Macedonian and Albanian. To ensure rationality in the sample, schools were selected where the instruction is carried out in both the Macedonian and the Albanian language. The logistic advantage of selecting this kind of school is that by visiting one school interviews with teachers teaching in Macedonian and on Albanian language can be combined.

In choosing the sample of schools the stage of the ELN Programme in the school included was taken into account. In the sample schools there are schools which are involved in different phases of implementation of the Programme, different for Numeracy and for Literacy. Some of the schools in the sample were involved in the same phase in Numeracy and Literacy, but some of them are in different phases. The sample includes one school which was involved in the first phase of the implementation of the ELN Programme, one in the second phase and one in last phase of the implementation of the ELN programme. One sampled school was included for research purposes in the baseline study.

The sample of teachers includes all teachers in the sampled schools, which means 197 teachers in total have been involved. Among them are 155 teachers whose language of instruction is Macedonian language and 42 teachers whose language of instruction is Albanian language. This
distribution of teachers by language in the sample fully covers the distribution of teachers trained in the programme.

Regarding the gender of teachers who responded to these questions 92% of them are female, while 8% male, which is comparable to the distribution of teachers by gender in the country. As, it was pointed out in Section 1.1 Context of the ELN Programme 80% of all grade teachers are female while 20% are male.

For the evaluation assignment to provide recommendations and to guide the strategic planning for improved programmes for Roma early inclusion and education, such as Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion – Roma Children in South East Europe, in cooperation with the Governments of Albania and Serbia, two schools with Roma children have been included: one Roma only school and one mixed school in two different regions.

The sample of teachers includes all teachers in the sampled schools. All sampled teachers have been presented with the Teacher Questionnaire.

In addition to the pen-and-paper based questionnaires, the Evaluation Team has interviewed four to five persons per school: the school psychologist or pedagogue, a school trainer16 (if the school has one) and some teachers available at that moment. A Structured Interview Questionnaire was used - one version for school psychologists/pedagogues and another version for teachers (see Part II, Annex 7). Apart from the open-ended questions we also asked teachers to state their level of agreement with certain statements. Bearing in mind that 3-4 teachers were interviewed through a group interview, they provided joint summative ratings on statements in the Structured Interview Questionnaire for Teachers when the statements contained a rating scale. Therefore, although in Part II, Annex 8, Response Data, the total number of responses from teachers is noted as 10, the actual number of interviewed teachers was 35.

Table 2.2 Sampling data: teachers and their response rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Sampled teachers</th>
<th>Responded</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skopje</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>Majority Non-Roma students</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Majority Roma students</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>Majority Non-Roma students</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Majority Roma students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td></td>
<td>273</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16School trainers are teachers who have been trained by the national trainers to disseminate their training to other teachers in their school.
Table 2.2 shows that 84% of teachers responded to the teacher questionnaires. The sample of school psychologists/pedagogues includes the full number (10) of Psychologists/Pedagogues who work in the sampled schools. The total number of interviewed Psychologists/Pedagogues was 9, as the pedagogue from one of the schools left the position and there was no new employee at the position.

The Evaluation Team has gathered more specific information in individual assessments from the following groups:

- Regional learning teams: two focus groups, one for literacy and one for numeracy with about 10 persons per groups; for literacy a focus group has been selected that has been active in two languages: Macedonian and Albanian;
- Advisors at BDE: two focus groups (one for literacy and one for numeracy) with about 10 advisors each;
- Representatives of the management at MCEC, UNICEF country office in Skopje and BDE;
- Representative of MoES.

There are 22 regional learning teams (nine for literacy and 13 for numeracy) active in the country. For numeracy one focus group has been selected randomly. The chosen focus group was from the Western region. For literacy, a focus group that works in two languages (Macedonian and Albanian) was selected. There is only one learning team, located in Skopje, in which there are teachers working in the Macedonian language and teachers working in the Albanian language. In this way in the interview sessions in only one focus group there were teachers using the Macedonian language of instruction and those using the Albanian language of instruction.

Two important mechanisms that were reported to ensure the ELN Programme’s sustainability are related to the following outcomes:

- the strengthened capacities of the BDE advisors to monitor school/teacher development and provide continuous support to teachers, and
- the establishment of Regional Learning Teams (RLTs) for numeracy and language instruction, as a mechanism for retaining the new approaches among teachers and providing support.

In order to be able to assess the efficiency of these mechanisms and provide them with an opportunity to reflect on the ELN Programme activities, four focus group discussions have been held in total, two with BDE advisors and two with members of RLTs. In the focus group with representatives of the language RLTs there were 13 teachers present, while in the mathematics focus group there were 11 teachers. In the focus groups with BDE advisors, there were 8 advisors for language literacy and 7 for mathematics.

The purpose of the focus groups was to evaluate the perceived impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the different ELN Programme activities in a group environment where participants’ comments will stimulate and influence the thinking and sharing of others. The value of the method is also in its ability to raise new questions/issues, which have not been initially predicted. In addition, this method has enabled the Evaluation Team to assess the perceptions and opinions of a larger number of stakeholders and beneficiaries at once, bearing in mind the restricted timeframe for data gathering.
2.5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

All instruments were pretested. Based on the pretesting conclusions changes were made regarding their functionality. After the pretesting, the main evaluation followed. The primary data collection: administering questionnaires and conducting interviews with selected stakeholders took place from November to December 2016.

Special MS Excel formats for data entry were developed for all of the evaluation instruments. The responses to open questions and statements were analysed qualitatively, while responses to questions with multiple-choice options and opinion scales were entered in the developed databases. After all data had been entered, the results were processed and subgroups were compared using the SPSS programme.

2.6 HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER AND EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Evaluation team has strictly followed the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. As is borne out by the interview protocols participants could openly express their opinion and confidentiality of their answers is guaranteed. Transparency as to the aims of the evaluation have also been guaranteed. The Evaluation Team has been sensitive to beliefs, manners, customs and opinions expressed by interviewees.

Following the UNEG Handbook Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance the Evaluation Team has assessed the HR & GE relevance of the ELN Programme, examining how the ELN Programme was designed and implemented to align and contribute to HR & GE. The analysis of the Programme’s effectiveness involved assessing the way in which results were defined, monitored and achieved (or not) on HR & GE and that the processes that led to these results were aligned with HR & GE principles. The HR & GE dimensions of efficiency included a broader analysis of the benefits and related costs of integrating HR & GE in the ELN Programme. A key aspect that was considered is that HR & GE involve long-term and complex change processes that require sustained support. The evaluation of efficiency also considered short-term process achievements (participation and inclusiveness, etc.) and medium-term results (developing an enabling environment, building capacity, etc.). To assess the sustainability of results and impacts on HR & GE the extent to which the ELN Programme has advanced key factors that need to be in place for the long-term realization of HR & GE have been studied.

Figure 2.1 Integrating human rights and gender equality set against evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criterion</th>
<th>Integrating human rights and gender equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>• Results of the Programme should also be relevant to the realization of HR &amp; GE.</td>
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<td>• Extent to which the Programme is aligned with and contributes to regional conventions and national policies and strategies on HR &amp; GE;</td>
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<td>• Extent to which the Programme is informed by substantive and tailored human rights and gender analyses that identify underlying causes and barriers to HR &amp; GE;</td>
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<td>• Extent to which the Programme is informed by needs and interests of diverse</td>
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DUMA Consultants
In the evaluation of the degree to which in the ELN Programme human rights and gender equality have been integrated there has been a focus on the following issues that have been identified in one of the ELN Programme reports:  

- Students studying on Macedonian language of instruction have higher achievements on the test on writing than the students on the Albanian language of instructions.
- Complementary support and training is needed more to the teachers in the instruction in the Albanian language (from 23% to 53% on particular aspects) than to the teachers in the instruction in the Macedonian language (between 3% and 15%).
- Those interviewed who responded that they are partially satisfied, or are not satisfied with the achievements, are the school principals and pedagogues/psychologists of the schools with the instruction in Albanian language, and in one school in which there is a considerable number of Roma students.
- The difference between the trained teachers that carry out the teaching in Macedonian language of instruction and in Albanian language of instruction, shows that a more strengthened support is needed for the teachers doing the instruction in Albanian language. The Project implementers should develop a specific and more intensive approach.
- Teachers who give the instruction in the Albanian language in the project schools have shown a considerably lower level of pedagogical knowledge in accordance with the *Thinking Mathematics*, which means that they need a reinforced support.

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17 *Language Literacy in the Early Grades - Research of the Achievements at the End of the First Cycle of the Realization of the Project*

18 *Thinking Mathematics in the Early Grades - Research of the Achievements at the End of the First Cycle of the Realization of the Project*
CHAPTER 3 FINDINGS

In this chapter we present an extensive summary of the data and findings that the Evaluation Team gathered through the Teacher Questionnaire and the Structured Interviews. The formats of these instruments were discussed in Chapter 2 Evaluation Objectives, Methodology, Instruments and Ethical Standards. More detailed data gathered through the Teacher Questionnaire are to be found in Part II, Annex 8.

Teacher Questionnaire

The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to various assessment criteria. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with statements. Responses were given by teachers with various backgrounds:

- at urban and rural schools;
- using the language of instruction Macedonian or Albanian;
- teaching Roma children;
- having been trained as Master/School trainers or being trained by Master/School trainers.

Those teachers who attended trainings in Formative Assessment and Recording of Good Practices also had to provide their opinion on the quality of these trainings. Statements, tables and frequencies for responses, and the distribution of the number of teachers are provided in the tables to be found in Part II, Annex 8.

Structured interviews

In the structured interviews with the stakeholders, open questions were presented on the definition and the content of the ELN Programme, its relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability. We distinguish between stakeholders based in the schools: teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, focus groups; and the other stakeholders: MoES, BDE Programme coordinator, BDE focus group, MCEC and UNICEF.

3.1 DEFINITION OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team assessed how stakeholders define the aims and the results of the ELN Programme.

Definition of the aims and results of the ELN Programme

School-based stakeholders, i.e. pedagogues/psychologists and teachers, emphasize that the ELN Programme was initiated in order to promote active learning methods and forms of teaching and learning, such as creative thinking and practical application of what students have learned. In this way teachers would become more effective in their work and the achievements by students would improve. An interesting observation made by a pedagogue on the practicality of the programme was that most children do not continue with learning at home, but that they learn 80% of the content at school.
Grade teachers have been included in formative assessment trainings and the recording of good practices, not just through the ELN Programme, but also in the context of other projects such as PEP, Inclusive Education etc. In fact the trainings in formative assessment trainings and the recording of good practices have been added to the ELN Programme in a later stage.

*Low performance in international surveys*

The fact that the ELN Programme was initiated following low performances in international surveys such as TIMSS and PIRLS, was mentioned by only few of these school-based stakeholders.

*Links to other developments*

The stakeholders based at BDE (programme coordinator and advisors), link the ELN Programme to the introduction of the new programmes in the nine-year primary education, with enhanced learning of the mother tongue and mathematics in the early grades. Like the school-based stakeholders, they consider that the training of teachers in new working methods may make the objectives and contents of the subjects more accessible and clearer to the students, as well as more actively engage them in the subjects. Because of the poor results of Macedonian students on TIMSS and PIRLS, the programmes *Thinking Mathematics* and *Language Literacy* were introduced. BDE has discussed the above considerations with the teams involved in the direct training of teachers and coordinators of certain components. BDE advisors also observe that the ELN Programme involved scanning the situation in the schools and training with foreign experts. MCEC observes that the ELN Programme grew out of the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools Project.

*Perceived aims of the ELN Programme*

In the view of the BDE programme coordinator the aims of the ELN Programme were:

- to raise the level of literacy and numeracy for students in elementary school through the introduction and use of innovative approaches to teacher education;
- to deepen the understanding of quality teaching in initial reading and writing and mathematics;
- teachers to become more effective in their work and to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills in their work with students;
- to improve the student’s achievements in mother tongue and mathematics; and
- to enable higher achievements of students in future international comparative studies and national assessments.

*The development of the ELN Programme*

UNICEF observes that a number of related projects with the above aims gradually *developed* into an ELN Programme. It coincided with the USAID Teacher Professional and Career Development Project. MoES observes that the ELN Programme became a priority for the policies of the Government, the Ministry, BDE and SEI. BDE and SEI were to provide information to the Ministry. BDE would have the resources for this task: *they would know the teachers and their needs, and they are used to visiting all schools.*

*The aims and expected results of the ELN Programme reconsidered*

At this stage it will be useful to compare what ELN Programme results provided by UNICEF Country office and compare them with the responses made by the stakeholders.
In the Results framework Figure 1.1, Chapter 1, the results of the ELN Programme are formulated as follows:

1. Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development established
2. Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy strengthened;
3. Teachers provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction;
4. On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices;
5. Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved.

All the above five expected results can be recognized in the formulations provided by the stakeholders, be it that the results are formulated in different terms; stakeholders may not list all the above stated results. It must be noted that in all the above definitions one of the result is that students perform better in future national and international assessments.

Similar observations on differences in interpretation can be made as to (the planning of) activities that have been undertaken within the framework of the ELN Programme to achieve each of its results. Again, many of the above activities can be recognized in the formulations provided by the stakeholders. Some activities are included in the responses, but others may not be. It needs to be noted that few school-based stakeholders mentioned that baseline assessment and progress assessment are part of the ELN Programme (as presented in the ToR). However, we will see in the following sections that stakeholders are aware that such assessments have been carried out. This also goes for the certification process: all stakeholders are aware that it is part of the ELN Programme activities, but it is hardly mentioned in connection with the definition of the ELN Programme.

The contract documents between MoES and UNICEF contain work plans for two year periods in the ELN Programme. These work plans do not describe expected results in the detail given above. As we pointed out above, in this Evaluation Report we have based ourselves on the definition of content, purposes and expected results of the ELN Programme as provided by the UNICEF Country Office, (Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). In Chapter 4 Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations we will comment on the above phenomenon, why this may have happened and what its effects may have been.

3.2 RELEVANCE OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Relevance of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- Has the programme been aligned with government and BDE priorities/policies/reform agendas?
- To what extent did the programme respond to the state priorities on improving early literacy and early numeracy teacher’s skills and knowledge to improve the student’s achievements?
- Has the programme (content and delivery) been aligned with the Ministry of Education and Science prescribed curricula?
- How relevant have been the capacity building activities?
Were the needs of the teachers addressed?
To what extent the data collecting and monitoring activities developed with UNICEF support are relevant for strengthening or/and upgrading the program activities and BDE capacities?

Teacher Questionnaire responses on the relevance of the ELN Programme
The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to the relevance of the ELN Programme. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with these statements. In Part II, Annex 8 the full set of data collected through the Teacher Questionnaire is documented. Below follow the main findings on the Relevance of the ELN Programme collected through the questionnaire.

- Respondents found it slightly more difficult to link the ELN Programme activities to the new Math curriculum than to the literacy curriculum. Both findings are confirmed in the Structured Interviews summarized below.
- Teachers of Roma students and teachers of Albanian speaking children found it more difficult to fit the ELN Programme than teachers of Macedonian speaking students.
- Master trainers tend to agree more with the statements about the ELN Programme than teachers who were trained by the master trainers in a later phase. More attention to this phenomenon is paid in Chapter 4.
- There are marginal differences between responses of urban and rural teachers.
- Teachers of Roma children found fitting the ELN Programme to the prescribed Math curriculum considerably more difficult than the other groups. Also, teachers teaching Roma children less felt that taking part in trainings was on a voluntary basis.
- Teachers at Albanian speaking schools tend to respond significantly different to the ELN Programme from those teaching at Macedonian speaking schools in a number of cases. Thus, for example, the Albanian speaking teachers found it more difficult to integrate the ELN Programme than the Macedonian speaking teachers.
- Teachers tend to agree that the trainings were given during regular school/working hours, in other words: they were not generally requested to follow such trainings after school hours or in weekends.
- The opinion on the relevance of the formative assessment training is markedly positive.
- With regards to the gender of respondents, there are no significant differences with regards to the statements provided in the questionnaire. Tables with responses according to gender are provided in Part II, Annex 8.

Responses on Relevance in Structured Interviews with stakeholders
In the structured interviews with the stakeholders, open questions on the relevance of the ELN Programme were asked.

Alignment of the programme with government and BDE priorities/policies/reform agendas.
The general opinion of school psychologists/pedagogues is that the programme has been aligned with the government priorities, and the national curricula (33% partially agree, while 67% completely agree). Stakeholders not based at schools confirm that when introducing the programme, coordination with relevant government priorities was established; the programme developed as a part of a reform that took place in primary education (according to the BDE Programme Coordinator); and it linked up with the country’s earlier ELN policies (according to UNICEF).
There is an agreement among stakeholders based in the schools and those outside of the schools that the ELN Programme responded to the state priorities on improving early literacy and early numeracy teacher’s skills and knowledge to improve the student’s achievements, which can be confirmed by the baseline and interim evaluation reports. However, it was also noted that there has not been a national or international assessment in early grades which could provide additional confirmation to this claim.

Alignment with the Ministry of Education and Science prescribed curricula.
Most teachers conclude that the LL programme is very well aligned to the Macedonian and Albanian language curricula. Some mentioned that the techniques promoted are incorporated in the textbooks, which makes it easier for teachers to implement them. Although not all methods are used with the same frequency, all are found to be applicable and there is an overall opinion that they are relevant for realizing the curriculum contents.

Experts in the ELN Programme contributed to the implementation of the curriculum reform, according to school-based stakeholders. However, there are conflicting opinions when it comes to the alignment of the TM programme to the new CC. Some teachers and support staff find the TM programme very much aligned to the curriculum and note that it has assisted them in implementing CC and they found the former as a basis for the latter. Hence, the numeric responses differ, with 40% of teachers partially agreeing that the Programme has been aligned with the prescribed curriculum, while 60% completely agree.

On the other hand, teachers from certain schools emphasised that many of the more complex methods from TM cannot be applied with CC since they require more time for implementing, while the curriculum is rigid and has a lot of content, which requires teachers to rush through sections. This prevents them to use the TM methods on some important topics.

Regarding the adjustment of the national curriculum, it was noted by stakeholders not based at schools that the originally developed TM and LL programmes were adjusted over the years, although they were developed based on a review/assessment of curricula. BDE advisors noted that in the beginning phases they faced difficulty adapting the LL programme to the specifics of each language (Macedonian, Albanian), but this was overcome in time. Now, the developed techniques can be used in subject-teaching (grades 6-9) as well.

The correlation between CC and TM is noted by university professors (at teaching faculties) as well, stating that the goals are didactically appropriate and Cambridge would be more difficult to implement without the TM methods. On the other hand, one University professor emphasised that the LL programme did not manage to make the “required curricular connections”.

Relevance of the capacity building activities.
Bearing in mind that the ELN Programme is based on a specific ‘Theory of Change’, respondents were asked on their opinion of how this theory works. Most school pedagogues/psychologists stated their agreement with the theory noting that change takes time, and the teachers get motivated from the student achievements, but also from their colleagues who implement the techniques and achieve results. However, other school pedagogues/psychologists consider that despite the fact the teaching
has improved, the achievement has not, which is paradoxical and might be due to the additional responsibilities teachers have been given during the past few years.

The BDE advisors see dilemmas regarding this concept and are not certain how the teachers can observe change in students if they do not change themselves. They conclude that the change actually depends on the coordination between the three parties (teachers-directors-advisors).

Regarding the initial basic trainings for Math and Literacy (from international consultants), it has been noted that there have been difficulties in the beginning, but the BDE advisors and master trainers managed to adjust the programme to the local needs and the national curriculum. Currently, all stakeholders agree that capacity building activities have been developed and implemented well. Although initially teachers were overwhelmed with content, later it helped them implement the ELN Programme. Teachers noted that the trainers have been capable and motivated them to try out all the new techniques immediately after the training.

There is an understanding by stakeholders based outside of schools that the quality of different levels of the cascade trainings was not equal, as the master trainers went through stricter selection criteria compared to school trainers, and the initial trainings were controlled better by the BDE. The differences in the application of the selection criteria for the school trainings was also noted as a potential problematic aspect by BDE advisors. Regardless of this, school trainers noted that they have attempted to maintain the level of quality training to the one they have received by the master trainers and BDE advisers.

When it comes to the formative assessment training, BDE advisors note that it is the most difficult aspect to implement. They note that the new techniques require new assessment skills. Teachers are still focused on the outcome, not on the process. Although school staff emphasized that they needed training in formative assessment, some teachers note that this type of assessment is not realistic for large classes. Yet some professional support staff claim that there is a need for additional trainings in formative assessment. The quality of trainings was also different with regards to the language of training/instruction. Initially, there were no master trainers in Albanian language; and in one school some four teachers instructing in Albanian language claim that they received only two days of training in TM (in contrast to eight days for teachers instructing in Macedonian language). The former also expressed more satisfaction with the frequency and quality of support from the BDE.

There are different opinions with regards to the mentoring support provided within the school and by BDE. Some teachers are satisfied with the support by BDE, but react to the lack of coordination with SEI. Others are less satisfied with the support and the frequency of visits to their school. UNICEF acknowledges that the aspect of mentoring support has not been firmly established yet.

**Addressing the needs of teachers for professional development.**
Teachers in general agree that the trainings responded to the needs of teachers for professional development (63% strongly agree, 37% partially agree). A certain number claim they have been

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19 Table 1.3 gives the overall number of hours of training in formative assessment per language. In this table training hours in the various languages do not differ significantly from each other.
acquainted with the ELN promoted principles/techniques during previous projects, but this came as a good opportunity to ‘refresh’ their practices. Others note that before the ELN Programme they mostly worked traditionally (teacher-centred methods) and the new techniques were new to them, practical and very useful for their practice. There is a shared conclusion that not all teachers have been able to change their practices, and some are very reluctant to change, mostly as a result of lack of motivation. In addition, all school staff agreed that new teachers need to be additionally supported by being involved in trainings, as well as the subject teachers, in order to enable continuity of the effects.

Some of the stakeholders based outside of schools (BDE, UNICEF) note the evaluations of each training provided support that teachers needed the programme, i.e. they met the teachers’ needs.

*Strengthening the monitoring capacities of BDE*

There is an overall agreement that the programme contributed to strengthening the monitoring capacities of BDE, as they

- use the fidelity tools developed (MCEC);
- have strengthened their skills for monitoring students’ achievements and attitudes;
- have become more skilled in monitoring focused on taking notes on as many relevant evidences in terms of causal connection;
- have strengthened their skills in giving feedback to the teachers after the monitoring. (BDE – programme coordinator).

BDE advisors themselves believe this is the case, but only partially, since they still face many obstacles, such as lack of advisors for Albanian-language classes prevents them to support all schools properly. They note that more frequent visits to schools are needed, as one of the ways to improve teaching/learning.

The MoES, in addition, notes that as a result of high turnover due to retirement, BDE’s structure and institutional memory is problematic, which impedes them to act as appropriate support to all schools/teachers.

### 3.3 IMPACT OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Impact of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- To what extent did the results contribute to raising the quality of teaching in early literacy and early numeracy?
- To what extent did the programmes contribute to increasing students’ numeracy and literacy?
- To what extent did results contribute to students’ attitudes and learning of the mathematics and reading and writing?
- To what extent did the programmes influence the school support to teaching and learning mathematics and reading and writing?
- To what extent did the Numeracy program contribute to strengthening the implementation of the new national mathematics curricula (CC)?
Teacher Questionnaire responses on the impact of the ELN Programme

The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to the impact of the ELN Programme. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with these statements. In Part II, Annex 8 the full set of data collected through the Teacher Questionnaire is documented. Below follow the main findings on the Impact of the ELN Programme collected through in the questionnaire.

- Teachers on average replied positively to the above questions.
- Master trainers tend to agree more to statements about the ELN Programme than teachers who were trained by the master trainers in a later phase.
- Teachers of Roma children tend to respond less positively to all of the statements than the other subgroups.
- Teachers of Roma children were less positive about Thinking Mathematics contributing to students liking the subject more.
- The responses of teachers in Albanian speaking schools tend to be more positive on the impact of the ELN Programme than the average of all responses and of all other subgroups.
- Differences between responses in urban and rural schools were minor. Neither subgroup was consistently more or less positive than the other.
- In almost all cases related to the impact of formative assessment training, most teachers consider that the training influenced their practice, except for the teachers from schools with a majority of Roma students.

Responses to statements in Structured Interviews

Below we summarize how various stakeholders have responded to the questions on the impact of the ELN Programme.

Contribution of programme in raising the quality of teaching in early literacy and early numeracy

The school staff respondents in general agree that the quality of teaching has been improved (53% completely agree, 42% partially agree while 5.3% do not agree), emphasising that teachers tend to use manipulatives to go from concrete to abstract and that the teacher who has started implementing, does not come back to the old methods. However, some teachers also noted that the curriculum [especially referring to Math] is too intense and does not allow them to apply all techniques. Few teachers mentioned that their teaching has been good before the programme and there was no need of improvement. In addition, some noted the fact that as a result of administrative burden of teachers, they cannot dedicate as much time for students as before.

Stakeholders outside of the school also confirm that the teaching has improved, stating as evidence results from the interim evaluation, which shows that methodical and pedagogical knowledge of teachers have been improved. BDE advisors confirm the observations of school staff concluding that while there was no research to document this, they had many school visits and concluded that teachers use the new approaches.

Some of the university professors acquainted with the programme have noticed improvements, noting that the creativity within teachers is developed and the programme provides them different approaches for conducting their lessons. Still, others, though considering that the techniques and
strategies have big didactic value, consider that there was not enough attention paid to connecting it with the teaching/learning goals. Thus, they have noticed lesson plans in which the techniques have become a goal of their own, not a mean for achieving the set goals.

**Contribution of the programme in increasing students’ numeracy and literacy**

The BDE project coordinator remarks that in the two interim reports impact was reported as to the achievements of students.20

The school-based staff, mainly based on impressionistic evaluation, but also on the everyday summative and formative assessment, conclude that in general, there has been an improvement in students. In particular, improvements are noted in: better writing essays, improved critical thinking, selecting different strategies to solve a task, cooperating more when solving a task, etc. Expressed numerically, 42% completely agree with the statement that *the programme results contribute to increasing students numeracy and literacy*, 47% partially agree while 10% do not agree. However, not all changes can be directly attributed to the ELN Programme, since there have been other programmes within schools as well, such as *Readers are Leaders* and curricular changes, such as the Cambridge curriculum.

Baseline and midterm studies also confirm increased achievement in project schools (especially in numeracy) and they were pointed out as proof of impact by the non-school stakeholders.

In addition, the great number of action research studies, conducted by professional staff, have focused on assessing the impact of specific approaches and techniques promoted by the ELN programme on students’ achievements. These have included the use of: conceptual maps, matrices, proportionate tables etc. in solving mathematical problems; thematic networks for essay writing, reading strategies etc. They have all found improvements in student achievement after the application of the strategies, leading towards a conclusion that systematic use of the ELN approaches has the potential of significant improvement in the students’ numeracy and literacy competencies.

With regards to differences of achievements between different groups of students, no gender differences have been noted (every respondent agreed that the programme equally impacted students of both genders), although it was emphasised by some school-based stakeholders that girls tend to be more engaged during lessons and hence tend to be better achievers, but this is unrelated to this programme.

The effects of the programme were noticed in some schools with regards to improving the achievements of socially vulnerable children, as a result of the more stimulating environment, the simple tools which they can also use at home. Still, the lack of involvement of parents was stressed as the main factor for lack of improved results among these students.

The level of influence of the programme on students from different ethnic backgrounds was noted only with regards to Roma students, some of which in Macedonian speaking classes witnessed improved results, while Albanian students from rural regional school did not fare as well as their

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20 See also Chapter 2, *Scope and Limitations*
EVALUATION OF THE EARLY LITERACY AND EARLY NUMERACY PROGRAMME IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Macedonian peers, again as a result of lower socio-economic backgrounds of parents and lower involvement.

Most psychologists/pedagogues agreed that the programme also assists students with slight intellectual disabilities to understand the material, since it starts with concrete concepts and then goes towards the abstract ones and they feel less isolated since the methods encourage working in teams. In general, the ELN Programme provides opportunities for integrating these children.

Contribution of the programme in improving students’ attitudes and learning of the mathematics and reading and writing

There is a wide agreement among all stakeholders that the biggest influence of the programme so far has been the improvement in student’s attitudes towards learning (68% completely agree and 32% partially agree). Specifically, the manner of tasks setting motivates students, enables them to choose their own path when learning, adjusting the learning to personal interests etc. As lessons are more dynamic, students are more interested. Some teachers noted that students have higher expectations from the lessons, they have grown used to the new techniques and even request them on their own. Nevertheless, certain teachers emphasize there are differences between the two subjects, with language lessons being far more interesting to students than before, while for Math it is more difficult.

The BDE Programme Coordinator noted that the professional visits of advisors confirm that the classes in which teachers apply techniques, methods, strategies resulting from the curricula, students are actively involved in the learning process. They feel free to express their opinions, to explain/argument the given answer, ask questions and are creative.

With regards to individual differences in motivation, the gender of students was not mentioned as a factor. However, it was noted by teachers and psychologists/pedagogues that the programme caters well to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (especially Roma students) and students with special needs since it makes the material more applicable (concrete) to them, and they are more interested.

Influence of the programme on the school support to teaching and learning mathematics and reading and writing

The support by the school’s professional and managerial staff was noted as crucial in certain schools (e.g. psychologist follows lessons, advises, assists, was very much involved), while others emphasized more the mutual support by teachers from their school (e.g. teachers often prepare their own materials and share among each other). In general, most confirmed that teachers and support staff cooperate on a daily basis and the programme activities have strengthened the cooperation between them. Specifically, 73% completely agreed with the statement that Programme results influence school support for teaching and learning literacy and numeracy, 20% partially agreed while 7% did not agree.

Both BDE and MCEC noted the efforts to include the school management in the programme activities, which influenced their sensitivity for providing teaching aids, and their way of thinking.
Contribution of the numeracy programme to strengthening the implementation of the new mathematics curriculum

The majority of teachers have not yet fully accepted the CC and are sceptical when it comes to its efficiency. On the other hand, most teachers and school support staff consider the TM to be a good programme. However, when it comes to combining the two programmes, there are varying opinions. For one part of teachers, TM is excellently aligned with the CC and they would have had problems implementing the new national curriculum if it were not for the techniques and principles promoted by TM. For others though, the two programmes do not work well together, as the CC relies on a spiralling method and requires the teacher to go through the material fast, while TM principles often require from students to ‘stay’ longer on a certain task. Hence, for some more important topics TM is less applicable.

Expressed numerically, 20% of teachers responded that TM did not contribute to strengthening the CC, another 20% that it partially contributed, while 60% say that it completely contributed.

Non-school stakeholders, though, believe that there was a good coordination in the introduction of the CC and TM and there was analysis before the introduction of the CC. BDE first introduced the TM, which sensitized the advisors and the teachers who worked on adapting TM later on. As the strategies and techniques introduced by the CC were complementary with the ELN Programme, there was no need to train teachers specifically on the CC.

One of the university professors interviewed also confirmed that both programs are related and the curriculum goals are didactically appropriate. She also believes that the CC would be more difficult to implement without the TM methods.

3.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Effectiveness of the ELN Programme on the following points:
- Have the planned results been achieved (quantitative and qualitative)?
- To what extent the programme contributed to creating or improving the curricula and/or teachers pre-service and/or in-service preparation?
- To what extent the programme contributed to strengthening monitoring capacities of BDE?
- To what extent the programme contributed to strengthening the teachers’ capacities for quality numeracy and literacy teaching?
- How effective was the support/mentoring provided to teachers? What management and monitoring tools have been used and what tools could have been used?
- Are there any unintended results of the interventions?

Teacher Questionnaire responses on the effectiveness of the ELN Programme

The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to the effectiveness of the ELN Programme. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with these statements. In Part II, Annex 8 the full set of data collected through the Teacher Questionnaire is documented. Below follow the main findings on the Effectiveness of the ELN Programme collected through in the questionnaire.
On average teachers are positive on the effectiveness of the ELN Programme. On average all subgroups are positive about the effectiveness of the ELN Programme. Master trainers tend to be more positive than teachers who were trained by the master trainers in a later phase. The average response of teachers of Roma children is slightly more negative than the average responses of all teachers in seven out of eight statements. However, these teachers tend to respond more positively than the teachers at rural schools to for six out of eight statements. The responses of teachers in rural schools show that they are markedly less positive about the effectiveness of the ELN Programme than all teachers taken together, or than any subgroup. The responses of teachers in Albanian speaking schools tend to be more positive on the effectiveness of the ELN Programme than the average of all responses and of all other subgroups for five statements, although such differences are minor. Differences between responses in urban and rural schools tend to be minor.

Responses on Effectiveness in Structured Interviews

In the structured interviews with the stakeholders open questions on the effectiveness of the ELN Programme were asked.

Curricula and teachers pre-service and in-service training

Most respondents argue that the ELN Programme helped to implement the existing curricula, rather than improve them. At the beginning of the introduction of the new CC the teachers appeared confused as to how to make the connection to the 10 principles promoted in the TM Programme. Teachers feel that the ELN Programme’s methods should be part of pre-service training as these are new methods of teaching which are currently not being taught at the university. According to the MCEC some universities are working along the same lines as the ELN Programme (the TM manual being introduced in their training). However, not all were involved in the ELN Programme. BDE advisors argue that the in-service cascading model has worked for regional centres and that workshops on formative assessment by BDE have become institutionalized. One university professor argued that regarding the expertise of teachers, the ELN Programme offers competencies teachers did not have so far. Its effectiveness should be seen in the educational outcome, which will come from the application of the methods promoted, and are closely related to the Bloom taxonomy and the set teaching goals. If the programme develops in this direction, it will increase the level of expertise of teachers for better quality teaching.

Unintended results of the interventions

Both pedagogues/psychologists, teachers and BDE advisors remark that materials to carry out the ELN Programme’s new didactics often are not available at school and need to be bought or taken from home by the teachers. Also, classrooms are not suited for keeping manipulatives. These methods are difficult in large classes of over 32 children and there is extra work in reporting the assessments. According to teachers in one school the many changes have caused some stress as the ELN Programme requires a different level of engagement. It was also noted that the USA approach to language learning was not always fitting enough in the Macedonian context (e.g. in the case of training spelling).
There have been some positive unintended results as well, such as the application of some methods to other subjects and the cooperation between the school subject teams. The literacy programme has been accepted by all teachers, not only in the lower grades. Teachers have also become aware of the need for formative assessment.

**The ELN Programme strengthening the monitoring capacities of BDE and school support staff**

44% of teachers interviewed partially agree with the statement that the monitoring capacities of the school support staff have been strengthened, while 66% completely agree with the statement. Both the BDE and the school support staff use the fidelity tools that have been developed. There existed instruments for assessing lessons, but now there are guidelines for the consultations after the lesson. It makes it easier for support staff to follow the lessons, since the materials are more concrete. School support staffs have suggested to organise meetings of support staff from different schools at which they would exchange experiences and be more certain what aspects to pay attention to.

**The ELN Programme’s effects on teacher development**

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers say that all elements are connected Math/language–formative assessment-action research come full circle. This is better than just attending a training and then just receiving a certificate. Here, they have to try to apply some techniques in order to get a certificate.

The respondents are of the opinion that the cascade system works well. The first group of trainers may have had a difficult time, as they had to process the methods, adapt them and the manuals too, in order to make them applicable to the Macedonian context. For the next group of teachers it was easier, they know exactly the problems, the programs, the levels of achievement.

The school-based respondents feel there should be a more long-term approach: trainings from time to time, monitoring by BDE, SEI to assess and to organize meetings at the level of support staff and teachers where good practices will be exchanged, texts of good practices to be published etc. All newly employed staff should go through a basic training.

The MCEC thinks it is effective only if there is a strong system of support. The BDE advisors consider that ELN Programme provides more effective support compared to other programmes: it is a step forward, the teachers now know who to turn to for support and it should be part of all university pre-service programmes, as well.

**Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy deepened/improved.**

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers are of the opinion that it depends on the teacher a lot, but the knowledge about quality teaching has been deepened. They have known some of the things before, but have added to that knowledge. They already had similar trainings before, however this helped them enrich their teaching. Only 11% of school-based respondents responded that teachers did not improve their understanding of quality teaching, 56% stated they have partially improved it and 33% they have completely improved their understanding.

UNICEF observes that the midterm assessment showed teacher understanding deepened. Not just the pedagogical expertise increased, subject expertise increased also. The BDE advisors also refer to the interim report that provides support for this claim. Teachers have improved their pedagogical skills and their subject knowledge as well. These effects are visible through the lessons that they monitor.
Differences in the quality of teaching in numeracy and literacy among teachers teaching in different language of instruction

The BDE programme coordinator observes that the difference in improvement of the trained teachers who teach in the Macedonian language of instruction classes and teachers who teach in the Albanian language of instruction classes, shows that it requires strengthened support for the teachers who teach in Albanian language classes.

The effectiveness of the on-the-job support system.

83% of school-based respondents stated that the system of on-the-job support provided to teachers has been completely effective, while for 17% it has been partially effective. Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers are of the opinion that teachers know how to reach the support team whenever faced with difficulties. But teachers also provide support among each other. The team spirit has been strengthened.

The MCEC points out that the success also depends on the availability of the BDE and that there are fewer BDE advisers for Albanian speaking teachers.

Monitoring by UNICEF

UNICEF depended on a monitoring system that was BDE-centred. Midterm progress and results have been evaluated by UNICEF against ELN Programme objectives. However, for continued assessment the government would have to adopt (inter)national assessments.

The effectiveness of the action research training

Some pedagogues/psychologists and teachers are of the opinion that the system provides immediate effects, it is not only an evaluation of a condition. It is motivating and such activities should continue. However, it was felt by some that it was known from before and used before. Certain school psychologists argued they already have the skills, so the training did not provide them with many new things. Some observe that the style of the trainers was too abstract.

3.5 EFFICIENCY OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Efficiency of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- How cost effective was the teacher training and teacher support?
- Could the same results have been achieved by using different strategies (or set of strategies) with less resources?
- How well the implementation of activities has been managed? Were the management and monitoring tools well developed and appropriately used, and what tools could have been used?
- Did the Early Literacy and Numeracy programmes ensure coordination with other relevant programme interventions?

Teacher Questionnaire responses on the efficiency of the ELN Programme

The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to the efficiency of the ELN Programme. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with these statements. In Part II, Annex 8
the full set of data collected through the Teacher Questionnaire is documented. Below follow the main findings on the Efficiency of the ELN Programme collected through in the questionnaire.

- Respondents tended to be positive about the efficiency of the ELN Programme.
- In five out of eight cases Master trainers tend to agree more to the (negative) statements about the ELN Programme than teachers who were trained by the master trainers in a later phase. This means that Master trainers were less positive about the efficiency of the ELN Programme than the teachers that were trained by them. However, the differences are not significant.
- The responses of teachers of Roma children tend to be in line with the average of all other teachers.
- The teachers in Albanian speaking schools tend to agree more with the negative statements on the efficiency of the ELN Programme than the average of all responses.
- There are consistent differences between responses in urban and rural schools. Teachers in rural schools tend to be more negative about on the efficiency of the ELN Programme.
- As to the statements referring to the time (spent on the training and the time required to prepare for lessons), all subgroups of teachers indicate that they feel they need more time to prepare for lessons which include the use of formative assessment.
- Likewise, teachers consider lessons conducted by applying the approaches learned at the training in Recording Good Practices require more time.

Responses on Efficiency in structured interviews with stakeholders

In the structured interviews with the stakeholders open questions on the efficiency of the ELN Programme were asked.

Cost effectiveness of the ELN Programme

The MCEC would argue that ELN Programme was cost effective, certainly given the restricted funding from UNICEF only. It is felt that MoES might have provided more funds. UNICEF states that compared to other programmes and given the large scope the ELN Programme was cost effective. BDE and MoES state that the ELN Programme was cost effective.

Management of the activities

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers are of the opinion that all institutions (BDE, MCEC, and UNICEF) involved cooperated well, with the BDE engaged to the maximum: trainings, monitoring, certification. There were continuous mentoring trainings where all problems were discussed, how to overcome them, and specific directions were provided.

However, BDE advisors also identified some problems: for them it was a rather top-down process where people in authority do not ask us anything but impose things and we need to do everything. Another observation made by teachers in one of the schools was that there were insufficient training days for Albanian teachers and that the quality of trainings was also problematic for Albanian teachers.\(^21\)

\(^21\) We would again like to refer to Table 1.3 in Chapter 1 for the distribution of training hours.
In general, the vast number of school-based respondents (84%) completely agreed that the implementation of activities has been managed properly, while only 16% partially agreed with the statement.

The BDE advisors are of the opinion that the logistical and technical support by the MCEC was most professional, they had a very good relationship with the advisors. They feel there might have been more support for the schools. There was not sufficient support outlined within the ELN Programme. Also, there was not enough staff capacity at the BDE to support schools sufficiently.

**Management and development of monitoring tools**

BDE requested technical support from MCEC to help them to develop a monitoring system and how to more effectively plan the monitoring visits (while the actual school visits were conducted by BDE advisors). In consultation with and with participation of BDE advisors the following activities were managed by MCEC:

- Collection of examples of good practice;
- Assistance in the planning process of BDE;
- Development of a system of reporting;
- Regular meetings with UNICEF on joint planning of annual activities and discussion of their effects.

This is confirmed by UNICEF.

**Assessment of the monitoring tools**

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers are of the opinion that the monitoring tools make the monitoring process more structured. They are useful also to assess the teachers themselves and they think that the tools can be used for planning lessons as well. However, quite some teachers prefer their own monitoring forms. In some cases the monitoring tools have only been used during certification, which is confirmed by the Focus group-RLT-Numeracy. Some of the respondents think that the monitoring tools have changed/widened their methods of monitoring, others do not think so.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy thinks that the fidelity tools are very rich in directions and provide a lot of information; they have their own tools and usually combine the two to make them more relevant. BDE Programme coordinator and advisors are of the opinion that monitoring tools improved the monitoring process since observers do not have to write their own thoughts, making the monitoring more objective. Like the teachers they think that the tools can be used for planning lessons as well.

**Overall Programme management: role of the BDE advisors and cooperation with MCEC**

In the process UNICEF has found that although BDE’s commitment was good, their number of staff capacity was insufficient, also due to retirements. MCEC has played an excellent role in assisting BDE.

**Empowerment of stakeholders: women and individuals from marginalized and/or discriminated groups**

According to MCEC, teachers (men and women), all language groups, and students (girls/boys) have been empowered by the ELN Programme. Roma and Albanian speakers have been empowered more than before.
UNICEF states that the original government policy was to raise the average performance of the nation. Since then Roma schools intergovernmental empowerment programmes for Roma children have been put in place. UNICEF lists a number of specific activities in this area:

- Extra offers of support to Roma and Albanian speakers for second language acquisition;
- New part of the program on inclusion developed in response to findings that majority-Roma schools need more support;
- Actions to include students with learning difficulties;
- More in-school visits for Roma and Albanian schools;
- Roma children given extra support and extra measures were introduced for them.

These activities were also in line with child friendly schools policy, where it was shown that in Math teachers support more boys, while in literacy-girls.

It is felt by respondents that gender equality has not been an issue.

**Coordination with other programmes**

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers refer to the new CC, where they have tried to find connections with. They remark repeatedly that even though there is a connection with regards to the techniques, there is no time in class to do most of the programme according to the techniques.

Another programme mentioned by school-based respondents is *Readers are Leaders*, but teachers say that they only received training in testing, not in the teaching methods going with them. One other programme is mentioned: *Mathematics+.* It is very similar to TM, and using it you can work on one task for a number of days on end.

The numeric data from school-based actors indicates that the largest percentage (53%) consider there was partial coordination with other relevant programme interventions, 29% consider there was complete coordination, while 18% that there was no coordination.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy remarks that teachers are not being asked when a programme needs to be implemented, the MoES decides and just imposes it on them. They feel this is not good, since a programme needs to be tried out for a longer period in order to become implemented well. They feel that the BDE should be given larger decision-making power on what to implement in schools.

UNICEF emphasizes that for them alignment with other programmes and funders is mandatory. It enjoyed a strong collaboration with the Government, World Bank and USAID: *Readers are Leaders*, and the PEP project. They have been able to fundraise and add components. Also, the Programme methodology moved from ELN to grades 4-5 in schools.

MoES notes that there are relations with IPA 1 and 2 and with USAID’s programme on teachers’ professional development, which has now finished.

BDE advisors remark that EGRA/EGMA-were not included much in working for the ELN Programme, as these are more about testing. Other parts of *Readers and Leaders* include similar methods to those in the ELN Programme. There was no need for this training, it would be too much repetition. BDE advisors tend to advise teachers to combine, connect, select what is more relevant for them. The LL programme was similar to the learning techniques that were acquired from the professors at
the learning community of the Skopje Faculty of Pedagogy,

**Time management and the new approaches in the ELN Programme**

Teachers remark that in the beginning the new methodologies required more time, but now not any more. Things have now become easier, they have forms for daily preparation and only integrate the methods.

Others claim that they take more time: you cannot finish everything in school, so they take work home. In the classroom, to be able to implement everything in practice, the lesson should not be limited to 40 minutes. More time is needed, but the lesson has become more effective. The administration regarding lesson plans, assessment etc. also takes more time.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy remarks that the new methodologies take more time, some need to be continued during the following lesson or the following day (which is against the Cambridge principle). One member suggests that teachers join an eTwinning project for communities of teachers (or RLTs joining with other similar communities).

### 3.6 COHERENCE OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Coherence of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- To what extent do stakeholders perceive the specific ELN Programme components as logically linked (internal coherence)?
- To what extent is the Programme coherent with the local context and national curriculum?
- Is the Programme logically connected to other programmes/projects?

**Responses on Coherence in structured interviews with stakeholders**

**Perceived internal coherence of the programme activities**

The internal coherence was assessed through requesting from stakeholders to define the ELN Programme through its composing components and their interrelatedness.

It can be noted that the school staff does not perceive all components as part of the system of ELN Programme, they rather focus on the basic trainings and the school dissemination. In particular, with few exceptions, they do not relate the formative assessment training as part of the ELN Programme. In addition, they do not mention the element of support (by school-support teams, RLTs and BDE advisors) nor the action-research training (provided to professional support staff) as an integral part of the Programme.

Other stakeholders who were involved in the development and implementation of the programme are more aware of the interconnection between the various activities, mention the internal evaluation process (baseline and interim assessment) and the component of support. However, they also tend to leave out the components of Formative Assessment and Recording of good practices as

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22 eTwinning offers a platform for staff (teachers, librarians etc.) working in a school in European countries involved, to communicate, collaborate and develop projects.
integral parts of the ELN Programme. This raises the issue that logical links between these components and the LL and TM may not have been sufficiently addressed.

**Coherence with the local context and national curriculum**

The ELN Programme was assessed to be coherent with the national priorities on advancing teaching practices through introducing contemporary teaching methods, as well as improving student achievement.

Teachers find the approaches promoted with the ELN programme coherent with the language curriculum regardless of the language of instruction, although there were needs for adjustments in the beginning phases. However, bearing in mind that the ELN Programme was being implemented at the same time with the introduction of the innovated Cambridge curriculum, certain teachers assess the approaches that the two programs promote as incoherent, claiming for example that “With the Cambridge Maths programme we can’t apply many of the techniques, although there are good techniques. The strict curriculum doesn’t allow you to relax and freely shape your lesson, but you have to follow rules”. At the same time, others claim that “TM was a basis for Cambridge” and the former helped them implement the latter, pointing to the fact that they perceive the two to be logically related.

**Coherence with other programmes/projects**

Stakeholders perceive interconnectedness between the ELN Programme and other previously implemented and ongoing programmes. They do not mention contradictions between ELN and other similar programmes, although some note there have been repetitions with regards to techniques and approaches promoted. Nevertheless, the majority of school staff does not perceive these as setbacks but as possibilities to better acquire the knowledge and skills.

Other stakeholders note that while attempts to coordinate different initiatives and activities are made, there can be some repetitions, bearing in mind that all programmes have similar overall outcomes.

### 3.7 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Sustainability of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- To what extent do the state institutions involved in the project have the capacities to use the results and lessons learned in improving further the literacy and numeracy teaching?
- Did the programme promote ownership over different programme activities? Did the relevant partners own the results of the programme?
- Did the programmes contribute towards establishing innovative approaches towards professional development of teachers?

**Teacher Questionnaire responses on the Sustainability of the ELN Programme**

The Teacher Questionnaire presented a number of statements related to the Sustainability of the ELN Programme. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with these statements. In Part II, Annex 8 the full set of data collected through the Teacher Questionnaire is documented. Below follow the main findings on the Sustainability of the ELN Programme collected through in the questionnaire.
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- Respondents tended to be positive about the sustainability of the ELN Programme.
- Respondents feel that the certification process should continue.
- There is not a strong wish among teachers to have more trainings.
- It was not common practice that the new practices were made obligatory by the school management, but it happened more often than not, in the opinion of the teachers.
- With the exception for the statement about the need for more support, the master and school trainers tend to be more positive about the sustainability of ELN Programme than teachers who were trained by the master and school trainers in a later phase.
- The responses of teachers of Roma children are in line with the average of all teachers, as far as the everyday application of the ELN methodologies is concerned. Teachers of Roma children differ in opinion with the other teachers on the need for continued certification: they are less positive on this point.
- The teachers in Albanian speaking schools tend to agree with the other subgroups in their positive attitude to the sustainability of the new methodologies, but they seem to like to have more support.
- It can be observed that teachers in general claim to use the formative assessment approaches in their everyday work, but they would need support for their further implementation in the next few years. This is particularly true for teachers working in schools with a majority of Roma students.
- Teachers trained in Recording Good Practices in general use the approaches promoted, but are going to need additional support in the next few years.

Responses on Sustainability in structured interviews with stakeholders

In the structured interviews with the stakeholders open questions on the sustainability of the ELN Programme were asked.

Sustainability of teacher professional development and on-the-job support

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers argue that some of the techniques (the easier ones) will sustain, but they fear that what teachers are not required to do will stop being applied. Continuous support and improvement is needed, otherwise teachers will only apply in order to be certified, but will not improve their practice. Hence-difficult to sustain. Trainers, notably LTs should be motivated in order to make the system sustainable. Also the BDE has a role to fulfil here. There is a need for support from BDE.

Focus groups add that depending on the school there are different opinions on the assistance from the BDE. In some the BDE comes frequently, in others rarely (have other obligations, responsible for too many schools). Although it would be difficult without the support of the director and the pedagogue, they cooperate more often now, exchange lesson plans, discuss about what they have done. The support staff in some schools is very helpful to teachers, but in others it is not (not interested in getting engaged). This depends on the person/s responsible.

They argue that the school learning teams should be the main provider of teacher support, and then the RLTs, which can be very effective if their members seriously take their responsibilities.

Other stakeholders argue that as the Certification process may be seen as proof of sustainability, the BDE should be accredited to train trainers, and money to be provided for organising trainings.
UNICEF argues the sustainability here is not dependent on resources, it is based on motivation. Fortunately, it is becoming an autonomous practice and culture in some regions.

The capacity of state institutions involved in the ELN Programme to use the results and lessons learned in improving further the literacy and numeracy teaching

An issue in BDE staff numbers is signalled by MCEC. In addition, the National Examination Centre (NEC) could be involved more in collecting data on student performance and on interpreting data for the benefit of formative assessment.

UNICEF also signals an issue: appointments in BDE, SEI and NEC have not always resulted in a sufficient strengthening of the capacity of these institutions. That is why UNICEF invested in teachers and structures within and between schools.

MoES believes the BDE can do this through cascading and networking, the MCEC through implementing a USAID teacher professional career and development programme. The aim is to strengthen institutions by implementing donor-programmes.

Ownership of the ELN Programme

The main opinion of pedagogues/psychologists and teachers is that the ELN Programme has been implemented in cooperation with BDE, MCEC and UNICEF, but that it is now the programme of the teachers and the students, they now own the programme, they have adjusted it. It is now part of the State policies. However, other ownership was mentioned as well: UNICEF, USAID, BDE, an institution in England, the American Teachers Federation. Some argue that it is the Government as it says so in all documents. But for many people it is UNICEF because of the titles and headers in many documents.

Consultations during the development of programme activities

Some pedagogues and psychologists say they were consulted in the process, but teachers say they were not. While the BDE programme staff was consulted, the BDE advisors say they were not.

The innovativeness of the ELN Programme

Some pedagogues/psychologists and teachers argue that the programme was not completely new. There are similarities with a USAID programme (Primary Education Project and Readers are Leaders). It was a replication to some extent without reviewing the possibilities and threats. Some of this was included in programmes such as Active Teaching – Interactive Learning and From Reading and Writing to Critical Thinking from before 2000, but that was long time ago. The Focus groups add that older teachers have challenged the input of international consultants. Others say that it is an original programme with an innovative approach (cascade trainings, certification). Creativity, interactive character and the dynamics are included in every lesson. The lessons have become more interesting with the new approaches. It includes periodical support meetings, which is different from other programmes where the evaluation is only in the end.

The programme is seen to be innovative with regards to:

- Providing quality advice through mentoring support;
- Exchange of expert opinions and experiences among teachers;
- Including everyone in the learning process;
- The approaches and tools promoted;
- Achieving learning goals through the use of different mechanisms.
The MCEC mentions that it was developed by the American Federation of Teachers; permission had been given to adapt it to the needs of the country. Logistics, support, length/intensity and continuity were new. UNICEF argues that it was very innovative because of its focus on:

- Regional approach;
- Pacing of reforms (not “throwing in” international standards);
- Structured teacher professional development.

UNICEF now tries to use the same approach for the new inclusive education programme (training>learning teams>action research).

BDE advisors agree with pedagogues/psychologists and teachers on the following:

- Parts of the programme were known before, but some are new (the 10 principles in math, requiring to elaborate the process, explain how a solution was reached...);
- It emphasises the learning process, teachers now tend not to interrupt students when they explain, even though they may not know the correct answer/solution;
- Still, many programmes have been mixed lately, which makes it difficult for teachers to select what is important.

**The ELN Programme and its effects on teachers’ every day work**

Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers agree that most aspects are applied, notably the monitoring and action research. Possibly not all techniques are implemented, but the simpler ones are. In Math there may be less implementation. The CC requires time, includes many new concepts so there is no time for implementing the programme. Thus most of the strategies which do not require much time, only.

**The application of the ELN Programme**

One pedagogue argues the following:

- The grade teachers implement most of the techniques, especially from 1-3 grade. However, the transition to subject teaching is problematic, as those teachers are more traditional.
- Teachers trained few years ago it is easier for them, especially in implementing Cambridge (they acquired the strategies well and can use them in Cambridge). Others that were first trained in Cambridge, and then in the programme had it more difficult to adapt.
- In time, the percentage of teachers which show interest in using the principles in their everyday teaching has been increasing because it had positive influence towards the quality of teaching and the students’ achievements.

The above is confirmed by other pedagogues and teachers but there is mention that it is not compatible with the CC.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy warns that in the beginning the new techniques were applied more, but now they are less and less. Often the old techniques are now being used, without innovation. After the certification, learning teams have been established in the schools and they incorporate the methods in the annual action plans, so they are becoming part of the school system.

The MCEC argues that the first group of selected teachers, as is often the case, are more motivated. However, Cambridge consultants helped with other schools in the second half of the ELN Programme to gain motivation for the second generation teachers trained.
UNICEF observes that there is a difference: in the beginning only the best schools were selected and they were more motivated. It will take five years for the programme to be become fully effective. Change takes time, years of working, supporting, sharing.

BDE advisors also see differences. The first trained teachers had more time to gain experience. They were also better and more motivated. Still, even the schools that have not participated in the beginning tended to exchange experience with the project schools. They communicate among each other.

Aspects of the ELN Programme to sustain within teachers and fade away
Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers argue that most elements will remain because teachers see their use, but the learning techniques are most likely to stay. Learning teams should continue their work. They argue that SEI and BDE require to see such methods, so the teachers have to use them. The ones requiring more time (especially in Math) may be lost because there is no time to practise in the CC. Most techniques will stay but these stakeholders fear what will happen when new conflicting programmes are introduced. There is a danger that if it is not compulsory for teachers it will vanish in time. Also there are now new teachers that have not been trained, so it would be good for new teachers to be trained as well. So far, the new teachers are learning through cooperation with their colleagues.

BDE advisors add to this that teachers tend to fall back upon older methods in higher grades.

The certification process
Most pedagogues and psychologists argue that certification should be mandatory for all. It should remain, but it should be validated by SEI. The certificates are to be valued as more than just having participated at a seminar. There should be re-certification, as well, according to some. Teachers tend to agree, it may be motivating to some teachers, but not to all. It is good that one should show and apply one’s knowledge before being certified. However, there are also opposing views: certificates do not work - teachers do.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy adds to this that Certification should be mandatory. Certification should be equal for everyone. In the beginning it was taken more seriously, but later there was a tendency to make it shorter, without participation from BDE, criteria have been lowered. If it is mandatory, it would be different. Now some schools insist on it and in some all teachers have passed the process, while in other-none. This impacts on the children and their progress. It is mentioned that the process of certification is questionable, since the certificates are valid for three years, then what? Should they re-certify? They are not sure how this will continue.

The BDE Programme coordinator indicates that the acquired experience has been used in the certification of other programs of the BDE.
The BDE advisors think certification is an incentive to apply methods, to make portfolios. BDE can and should continue the process. They still issue certifications, they have the means for printing and traveling to schools.
Need for continued support for teachers
Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers argue that there should be trainings from time to time, to explain things, refresh the knowledge, exchange practical experiences. It would be most logical for this to go through the BDE, UNICEF cannot support the process all the time. It would be good if from time-to-time at least trainers and the support staff are called for new trainings and for the newly employed, there should be mandatory basic training and more practical training during university training.

The Focus group-RLT-Literacy add to this that the programme needs to be transferred to the upper grades, and the kindergartens as well.

BDE advisors argue that they will have to be responsible for continued support and possibly include parallel methods from other (earlier) programmes.

Continuation of the ELN Programme after the end of UNICEF funding
Pedagogues/psychologists are of the opinion that the trainings need to be entered in the BDEs catalogue of trainings. There should be a continued system of assessing achievements through national assessment. There should be a better validation of the programme by SEI.

Has the ELN Programme formally finished?
Pedagogues/psychologists and teachers argue that it has become part of the teaching and learning process, and has not finished: It has become part of their life. It has increased the self-confidence of teachers and their motivation for achieving success. However, the young teachers are trained in the school, but they do not know much, they have very little practice. They should attend a formal training.

The MCEC points to the fact that there was no closing event, since the process continues to be implemented by teachers and is not ending with the end of the UNICEF financial support. UNICEF argues that activities are continuing following the same method, concepts, with learning teams etc. Now there is a focus on:
- Marginalized children;
- Roma children (Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion);
- Building blocks for inclusive education;
- Equity;
- Creating conductive environment.

The BDE-Programme coordinator points at the trainings for formative assessment that is continuing.

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23 UNICEF does not organize closing events, as this is not supported by their organizational policy. UNICEF funding may stop after a period of time, but the programme may continue.
CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter the Evaluation Team provides conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations based on the findings that we have described in Chapter 3. The process of arriving at these has been: Analysis of programme objectives and results > Collection of data on objectives and results > Interpretation of data > Conclusions > Lessons Learned > Recommendations. In our conclusions we will briefly refer to the findings. Our recommendations are given in order of priority.

4.1 SWOT ANALYSIS

The Evaluation Team has asked stakeholders to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the ELN Programme’s lifetime and its effects for the coming years. The responses to questions relating to questions on these four perceived characteristics of the ELN Programme are to be found in Part II, Annex 8.

Conclusions

- Stakeholders are positive about the ELN programme and assess its strengths as very high, especially emphasizing the methods and strategies promoted, the focus on problem-solving skills, the improved results, as well as increased cooperation at the level of school. They consider the programme to offer many opportunities, such as its applicability for higher grades, in different subjects, the concept of exchange of good practices through cooperation of local and regional learning teams, the certification process which ensured active implementation and understanding of activities, the possibility to formalize the training and align it with EU agenda 2020 goals.

- The weaknesses of the programme are assessed as rather low and refer to the material expenses, the lack of continuity in requirements from institutions, the time required for implementing certain techniques properly etc. In addition, there are some serious threats which could impact the implementation of activities, such as other programs which can defocus teachers from this one, the lack of institutional care for the programme on behalf of BDE, the national external assessment which focuses on lower cognitive levels in contrast to the ELN programme which aims to develop and strengthen higher cognitive levels.

Lessons learned

- The introduction of new educational programmes is more than familiarizing and training teachers to implement new methodologies. It is also about facilitating stakeholders in terms of funds, logistical and content support.

- The introduction and the implementation of the ELN Programme seems to have been a rather top-down process. Stakeholders will be more motivated if they are involved in the introduction of new programmes right from the start and are encouraged to come up with suggestions to improve it.
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Recommendations

- BDE is advised to apply the new ELN teaching methods to the higher grades as well.
- Central and local authorities to continue financial support to materially implement some of the teaching.

4.3 THE DEFINITION OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

The Evaluation Team has assessed how the aims and objectives of the ELN Programme have been presented to and interpreted by stakeholders.

Conclusions

- From the comparison between the objectives of the ELN Programme according to the ToR and the objectives as stated in (progress) reports and in responses made by the stakeholders, we have found that most of ToR objectives can be recognized, be it sometimes phrased differently.
- We would have expected that in all official reporting on the ELN Programme under the auspices of UNICEF the exact same formulations as at the start of the Programme would have been used.

Lessons learned

- There is a danger that stakeholders look at new educational programmes selectively, i.e. that they focus on their direct interests without sufficient realisation of the general aims of a programme. Thus it is important to regularly present them with the complete picture.

Recommendations

- UNICEF should define the aims, objectives and scope of a programme such as the ELN Programme at the start of the activities and adhere to the formulations therein in later publications.
- UNICEF and BDE should inform all stakeholders of all aims, objectives and scope of a programme.

4.4 SPECIFIC EVALUATION OF THE ELN PROGRAMME

As was shown in Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 the overall objective of the ELN Programme was to be reached through a series of related activities leading to five ELN Programme results:

1. Effective and sustainable approaches to teacher professional development established;
2. Teachers’ understanding of quality teaching in numeracy and literacy strengthened;
3. Teachers are provided with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of quality mathematics instruction and quality literacy instruction;
4. On the job support provided to teachers to change their classroom practices;
5. Students’ outcomes in early numeracy and literacy and results in future international assessments improved.
The Evaluation Team has evaluated the ELN Programme the above results on the six assessment criteria as listed in the ToR: Relevance, Impact, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and Sustainability.

Relevance
The Evaluation Team has assessed the relevance of the ELN Programme on the following points, as specified in the ToR:

- Has the programme been aligned with government and BDE priorities/policies/reform agendas?
- To what extent did the programme respond to the state priorities on improving early literacy and early numeracy teacher’s skills and knowledge to improve the student’s achievements?
- Has the programme (content and delivery) been aligned with the Ministry of Education prescribed curricula?
- How relevant have been the capacity building activities?
- Were the needs of the teachers addressed?
- To what extent the data collecting and monitoring activities developed with UNICEF support are relevant for strengthening or/end upgrading the program activities and BDE capacities?

Conclusions
- The ELN Programme is relevant to the teacher’s needs and related to the national curriculum. While the agreement on the alignment with the literacy curriculum is general, teachers have different opinions with regards to the alignment with the mathematics curriculum (CC).
- The perception on the alignment depends on the ability of teachers and support staff to adapt TM to the CC and find the most appropriate ways in which the two programs can ‘work together’.
- Teachers in Roma-majority schools are less positive on the effects the programme had on their teaching than and teachers in Macedonian-majority schools. This is caused in part by the socio-economic background of their students and the lack of participation of parents.
- The developed monitoring tools provide more specific and therefore more objective feedback to teachers. Parts of them are integrated into the monitoring forms developed before.
- The opinion on the relevance of formative assessment is markedly positive in almost all cases related to the impact of formative assessment training: most teachers consider that the training influenced their teaching positively.
- Teachers are positive about the relevance of the trainings on Recording Good Practices.

Lessons learned
- Align new teaching techniques with existing curricula.
- Cater for extra support for children with a problematic socio-economic background.
- The practice of recording and exchanging good practices could be extended well above the ELN programme and applied to other education programmes where new/innovative methods of teaching or assessment are being introduced. It is a rather effective and efficient method for teachers to exchange experiences without having to meet in person.
**Recommendations**

- Teachers should receive continued assistance from the BDE in integrating the TM approaches in the CC.
- Teachers instructing in Albanian language, and those teaching in majority Roma schools should be provided extra assistance by the BDE for integrating both the LL and the TM approaches in the relevant curricula.
- Support can be given in the form of external assistance from the BDE in integrating the programme approaches in students’ everyday practice, as well as internal assistance from the school support teams on adjusting programme techniques for the aim of reaching curriculum goals.

**Impact**

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Impact of the ELN Programme on the following points, as specified in the ToR:

- To what extent did the results contribute to raising the quality of teaching in early literacy and early numeracy?
- To what extent did the ELN Programme contribute to increasing students’ numeracy and literacy?
- To what extent did results contribute to students’ attitudes and learning of the mathematics and reading and writing?
- To what extent did the ELN Programme influence the school support to teaching and learning mathematics and reading and writing?
- To what extent did the numeracy programme contribute to strengthening the implementation of the new mathematics curriculum?

**Conclusions**

- According to the teachers and the support staff the ELN Programme has made them cooperate more intensively. According to the teachers, the quality of teaching has improved as a result of the ELN programme. Some feel there was no need for improvement, as they knew about approaches and they have now only ‘refreshed’ them.
- Teachers feel that the students’ numeracy and literacy have improved, especially with regards to increasing achievements of children with lower SES (typically referring to Roma students) and students with special needs (in particular, those with slight intellectual disabilities).
- Small-scale action research indicates that approaches promoted through the programme can have direct effect on improving students’ literacy and numeracy competencies.
- The biggest asset of the ELN Programme seems to lie in raising the interest of students and in improving their attitudes towards the two subjects. Learning through play and tasks which go from concrete to abstract thinking make it easier for them to understand the material and be more interested in acquiring it.

**Lessons learned**

- Introducing new relevant teaching techniques can have a positive influence on the cooperation between teachers and support staff.
EVALUATION OF THE EARLY LITERACY AND EARLY NUMERACY PROGRAMME IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

- Recordings of good practices can be shared on Facebook pages which teachers use to exchange information on education-related issues.

Recommendations

- BDE should organize trainings in relating new teaching techniques to existing curricular goals. Trainers can be teams of BDE advisors, University Professors of Methods of Teaching and some more experienced teachers.
- BDE is to include more teachers in the training of recording good practices.
- The recorded good practices should be posted on the BDE web page and linked to other websites which teachers use.
- BDE to conduct an evaluation study on teachers’ pedagogical knowledge.
- MoES should make a decision on conducting national assessment, so that the NEC may conduct repeated national assessment of early numeracy and literacy in order to follow the achievements during a longer period of time and intervene timely in case of detected problems.
- MoES should make one of its priorities for Macedonia to participate in TIMSS and PIRLS for the assessment of effects for an overview of the effects in international context.

Effectiveness

The Evaluation Team has assessed the effectiveness of the ELN Programme on the following points, as specified in the ToR:

- Have the planned results been achieved (quantitatively and qualitatively)?
- To what extent has the ELN Programme contributed to creating or improving the curricula and/or teachers pre-service and/or in-service preparation?
- To what extent has the ELN Programme contributed to strengthening monitoring capacities of BDE?
- To what extent the ELN Programme contributed to strengthening the teachers’ capacities for quality numeracy and literacy teaching?
- How effective was the support/mentoring provided to teachers? What management and monitoring tools have been used and what tools could have been used?
- Are there any unintended results of the interventions?

Conclusions

- Implementing the new teaching techniques requires materials which most schools do not provide.
- The newly introduced teaching methods are not always applicable for large classes (30 students or more), since they require more interaction with students.
- In mixed-age classes in rural schools the use of some new techniques is difficult.
- Some teachers are not prepared to adjust their practice according to the new approaches. Their reasons range from lack of interest and motivation to lack of professional capacities.
- Adapting the programme/trainings to the local context takes time.
- The increase in administrative responsibilities during the past years has removed the focus of teachers from the students towards the administrative tasks.
The action research training was generally assessed as useful for the support staff, although the techniques were noted to be familiar to some school pedagogues and psychologists.

The application of action research skills in the school appears to be dependent on the value the school management places on this process.

_Lessons learned_

- Dedicated programmes like the ELN Programme can have unintended positive effects, such as approaches being transferred to other subjects.
- The data collected in the course of the ELN Programme provide a very good overview of the training outputs and enable making analyses very easily. This is a practice which can and should be replicated by future programmes.
- The developed fidelity tools need not be limited to the ELN’s programme activities but can easily be applied in the everyday monitoring of teachers’ lesson planning, classroom practice and providing specific feedback.
- Trainings in formative assessment are useful in improving and motivating teachers and students. Such trainings are useful not only at the lower (ELN) grades but in all grades in order to accomplish the goal of improved student achievement.

_Recommendations_

- BDE should be made responsible for continuous monitoring of schools and teachers with regards to the quality of implementing the new techniques.
- BDE should organize meetings at the level of support staff and teachers where good practices will be exchanged.
- The provision of funds for the implementation of TM and LL techniques (such as the purchase of materials) should be guaranteed (e.g. by MoES, municipalities, etc.).
- As BDE is the main institution to guarantee the further implementation of ELN’s principles, BDE’s capacities should be strengthened quantitatively and quantitatively.
- SEI should place a greater value on the certification as it includes not only proof of training but also the practical implementation of new skills.

_Efficiency_

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Efficiency of the ELN Programme on the following points, as specified in the ToR:

- How cost effective was the teacher training and teacher support?
- Could the same results have been achieved by using different strategies (or set of strategies) with less resources?
- How well has the implementation of activities been managed? Were the management and monitoring tools well developed and appropriately used, and what tools could have been used?
- Did the ELN Programme ensure coordination with other relevant programme interventions?
Conclusions

- The ELN Programme management has been cost effective, especially when compared to other similar programmes. This was due to the use of the cascade model of trainings and relying on regional support centres, as well utilising the full capacities of the schools (support staff, management, teacher trainers etc.).
- The ELN Programme management was assessed by all stakeholders as efficient, and all parties completed their roles professionally.
- Some trainings were presented without reference to existing methods (e.g. same methods introduced, under a different name) promoted by other projects (past or ongoing).
- Preparing for lessons and conducting lessons now takes more time, although teachers using the new techniques frequently have got used to them and have become more effective in their preparations.
- Teachers in schools with a majority of Roma students are being the least positive with regards to efficiency of the approaches promoted with the training on Recording Good Practices. For them it is difficult to manage the class and at the same time record, take photos and make sure everything goes as planned.

Lessons learned

- When embarking on a new educational programme, initiators are advised to formalize and publish links with other existing programmes.

Recommendations

- BDE advisors are to provide suggestions for integrating approaches promoted in various other educational programmes and to adjust them to the curricular goals.

Coherence

The Evaluation Team has assessed the Coherence of the ELN Programme on the following points:

- To what extent do stakeholders perceive the specific ELN Programme components as logically linked (internal coherence)?
- To what extent is the Programme coherent with the local context and national curriculum?
- Is the Programme logically connected to other programmes/projects?

Conclusions

- There is a difference in awareness between school staff and stakeholders responsible for the development and implementation as to inter-relationship of all programme components.
- Most school-based stakeholders do not regard Formative Assessment and Recording of Good Practices as integral parts of the ELN Programme.
- The ELN Programme is coherent with the national priorities on advancing teaching practices through introducing contemporary teaching methods, as well as improving student achievement.
- For some teachers the ELN Programme has been in conflict with parts of the new Maths curriculum, for others the two complement each other and are logically linked.
- Stakeholders generally perceive interconnectedness between the ELN Programme and other previously implemented and ongoing programmes.
Lessons Learned
- Logical links between components in a new educational programme need to be firmly established and communicated with all stakeholders.

Recommendations
- Given the limited awareness with teachers of the interconnectedness of ELN Programme components, it is important to train them in linking TM and LL to Formative Assessment and Recording of Good Practices as interconnected parts of the teaching and learning process. This would be best done by BDE advisors and the RLTs.

Sustainability
The Evaluation Team has assessed the sustainability of the ELN Programme on the following points, as specified in the ToR:
- To what extent have the state institutions involved in the project the capacities to use the results and lessons learned in improving further the literacy and numeracy teaching?
- Did the programme promote ownership over different programme activities? Did the relevant partners own the results of the programme?
- Did the ELN Programme contribute towards establishing innovative approaches towards professional development of teachers?

Conclusions
- The concept of the ELN Programme is not completely new, but it is innovative as to:
  o Providing quality advice through mentoring support;
  o Exchange of expert opinions and experiences among teachers;
  o Approaches and tools promoted;
  o Achieving learning goals through the use of different mechanisms;
  o Regional approach;
  o Pacing of reforms adjusted to the local context;
  o Structured teacher professional development.
- While teachers in general claim to use the approaches for formative assessment and recording good practices in their everyday work, they would need support for their further implementation in the next few years. This is particularly true for teachers working in schools with a majority of Roma students.
- The certification process should continue, either compulsory or on a voluntary basis. However, if it is not made compulsory, it may ‘fade away’ in time, as it was noted.
- In-school and out-of-school support and inspection is deemed necessary for sustainability. This especially refers to certain more complex techniques for mathematics instruction.
- Strengthening the capacities of BDE should be a priority, as they are perceived as the main body which should provide sustainability in the long run. The overburdening with assignments and the change of staff (as a result of retirements and new employments) can be problematic.
Lessons learned

- The establishment of RLTs is a good method of ensuring communication between different schools and sustaining programme effects. This mechanism can be used in other similar projects and aligned with the practice of learning communities which is being applied within other programmes.

Recommendations

- RLTs should continue with their work and encompass all schools.
- Teachers from RLTs are to be provided with additional incentives (certificates or similar) from BDE, and their work to be validated more by the SEI.
- BDE should make efforts to strengthen the structure of certification teams. Specifically, ensure that certification is conducted by representatives from other schools and a BDE advisor.
- Basic trainings on ELN approaches on a regional level for the newly employed staff should be provided by the BDE in order to ensure sustainability of programme effects.
- All grade teachers should be given a basic training in formative assessment by the BDE. This can be done by engaging their colleagues from the school and/or the region through a combination of workshop-style training accompanied by observing and analysing lessons where formative assessment techniques are used.
- After a certain period (2-3 months), teachers should attend additional meetings with their colleagues from the region and the BDE advisors in order to exchange experiences and deepen their understanding.
- BDE to involve NEC through conducting national assessment and collecting and analysing data from formative assessment.
- MoES should formalize trainings and make them part of the non-formal adult education system;
- University teacher training faculties should incorporate ELN principles in their pre-service trainings. In addition, these faculties should train future teachers in formative assessment during their pre-service preparation, as data indicate that pre-service training of both teachers and psychologists/pedagogues insufficiently includes formative assessment principles and techniques.

4.5 INTEGRATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

In the evaluation of the degree to which in the ELN Programme human rights and gender equality have been integrated there has been a focus on issues identified in one of the ELN Programme reports mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.6. Human rights, Gender and Equity Considerations.

Ethical standards and human rights

The Evaluation team has not found any indication that school-based stakeholders could not openly express their opinions on the many innovations of the ELN Programme that heavily impacted on their everyday work.
In the ELN Programme context issues in human rights would mainly relate to differences in opportunities and performance of Albanian speaking and Macedonian speaking students and teachers. The ELN Programme did not specifically focus on providing equal opportunities for Roma children, as does the Inclusive Education programme, which is primarily directed towards greater inclusion of Roma students. Nevertheless, we have investigated the situation of Roma students in the context of the ELN Programme as well.

**Conclusions**

- The Evaluation Team has not found any instance where Albanian speaking and Macedonian speaking students were treated differently, other than the differences of the language of instruction.

- The Programme activities equally impacted the achievements of students in Macedonian and Albanian speaking classes.

- Interviews with teachers from Albanian-speaking classes point to several deficiencies in the provision of training and professional support to the teachers:
  - In the beginning of the ELN Programme, trainings were only conducted in the Macedonian language and some Albanian-speaking teachers and BDE advisers received the initial training in Macedonian;
  - The number of Albanian-speaking BDE advisors was rather low compared to Macedonian speaking advisors. These Albanian-speaking BDE advisors say they are not in a position to conduct frequent school visits to support teachers in the implementation of the approaches promoted by the ELN programme.

- There is no general agreement among teachers of Roma children as to success of the ELN Programme approaches in improving achievements of Roma students more than students from other ethnic backgrounds.

- The observation that teachers in Roma-majority schools and in Albanian-instruction classes need to be additionally supported has been recognized by UNICEF, which has led to the development of the Inclusive Education programme, primarily directed towards greater inclusion of Roma students.

**Recommendations**

- The number of Albanian-speaking BDE staff should be increased to enable them to regularly visit Albanian speaking schools. However, in the meantime, their role of supporting teachers in the implementation of programme approaches can be performed by master and school trainers, as well as trained school support staff;

- The problem of unequal achievement of Roma children needs to be tackled with long-term interventions. Such interventions should include developing mechanisms for increased participation of parents and an enhanced advisory function of the BDE.

**Gender equality**

In the context of the ELN Programme a distinction must be made between gender equality for pupils and for teachers.
Conclusions

- SES data seem to indicate that boys and girls have equal opportunities to attend primary school.
- The Evaluation Team does not think there are differences of approach and different outcomes among the two genders. As teachers indicate, boys and girls may have a different interests in and motivation for specific subjects, but this is a general phenomenon.
- Respondents nor the Evaluation Team have identified any gender issues in the approaches adopted by male and by female teachers.
- Respondents nor the Evaluation Team have not identified any gender issues in the position of teachers, even if the great majority of teachers in primary education is female.
- As was pointed out in Section 1.1 Context of the ELN Programme, 80% of all grade teachers are female while 20% are male female teachers tend to teach in the lower (ELN) grades. This seems to be the case in most European countries. The Evaluation Team has not found indications that men find it more difficult to be employed as primary school teachers.

Recommendations

Since the Evaluation team has not been able to identify issues in gender equality, no recommendations are given.

Summing up

In Figure 4.1 below we have summed up to what extent human rights and gender equality have been integrated in the ELN Programme. We have set the ELN Programme against the evaluation criteria as put forward in Figure 2.1 in section 2.6.

Figure 4.1 Integration of human rights and gender equality set against evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criterion</th>
<th>Degree to which human rights and gender equality have been integrated in the ELN Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Relevance            | • The Results of the ELN Programme have positively impacted HR&GE, notably on the identification of issues with teaching Roma children and Albanian speaking children (see section 4.4 above).  
                        | • The ELN Programme has been aligned with and contributes to national policies and strategies on HR & GE, following the Convention of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.  
                        | • The ELN Programme has not been specifically aligned to human rights and gender analyses that identify underlying causes and barriers to HR & GE. Programmes for Roma early inclusion and education, such as Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion – Roma Children in South East Europe have done so.  
                        | • The ELN Programme has identified the needs and interests of Roma and Albanian speaking groups of stakeholders (see section 4.4 above).  
                        | • All relevant stakeholders have participated in the ELN Programme. |
| Effectiveness         | • The Theory of Change and results framework of the Programme did not specifically integrate HR &GE.  
                        | • Human rights strategies were not incorporated in the design and implementation of the ELN Programme, even if – in the case of the Roma |
children they had been identified elsewhere. Other programmes do focus on the needs of Roma children (see above).

- Key results, if any, on HR & GE were not published.

**Efficiency**

- No specific resources for integrating HR & GE in the ELN Programme were allocated. The Evaluation Team has recommended that the BDE invests in the training of Albanian speaking teachers.
- In the ELN Programme there was no allocation of resources to targeted groups to prioritize those most marginalized.

**Sustainability**

- The Evaluation Team has recommended that teachers in Roma-majority schools should be facilitated more to reach better results of Roma children.
- The Evaluation Team has found that teachers’ attitudes and behaviour were conducive to HR & GE.
- The evaluation team has recommended capacity development of BDE to cover the needs of Albanian speaking teachers and pupils.
- No need for a redistribution of resources, power and workload between male and female teachers has been identified.

### 4.6 OVERALL EVALUATION

In their proposal the Evaluation Team have indicated that they will provide an overall evaluation based on the findings as described in Chapter 3. The judgements based on the six evaluation criteria as described in the ToR constitute the summative core of the evaluation. The overall judgements are set against the two ELN Programme indicators A and B as identified in the ELN Programme’s Logical Framework:

A. Raised achievements in literacy and numeracy of the lower primary students.
B. Improved capacities of the officials in the educational institutions as a part of the system for quality assurance.

**Conclusions and lessons learned**

On the basis of the responses by stakeholders the Evaluation Team has assigned qualitative assessments to four discreet categories: *Excellent* (1A/1B), *Good* (2A/2B), *Sufficient* (3A/3B) and *Unsatisfactory* (4A/4B). The highlighted squares represent the opinions of the stakeholders as concluded by the Evaluation Team.

Even if stakeholders have expressed some concerns about the quantity and the quality of the support provided by the various institutions, the general opinion on the support can be characterized as “Good” (2B).

Due to the lack of objective information through (inter)national assessment student progress cannot be sufficiently and reliably demonstrated, thus the categorization: “Sufficient” (3A). This qualification is also supported by the teachers and support staff who have signalled (only) some progress.
Figure 4.2 Overall evaluation set against the two ELN Programme indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat.</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Students are shown to achieve considerably better in literacy and numeracy thanks to the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Student performance is shown to have improved consistently thanks to the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Student performance is shown to have improved considerably thanks to the specific trainings in the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Students have gained an outstanding repertoire of skills to guarantee high performance in literacy and numeracy thanks to the ELN Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations show outstanding capacities to ensure raised student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed highly effective methods to improve student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed highly cost-effective, excellently managed training programmes.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have shown a very large capacity to continue new and innovative approaches.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Students are shown to achieve better in literacy and numeracy thanks to the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Student performance is shown to have made consistent good progress in literacy and numeracy.</td>
<td>Student performance has improved thanks to the specific trainings in the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Students have gained a large repertoire of skills to guarantee high performance in literacy and numeracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations show large capacities to ensure raised student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed many effective methods to improve student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed cost-effective, well-managed training programmes.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have shown a large capacity to continue new and innovative approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Some progress is shown in student performance as a result of the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Student performance is shown to have improved sufficiently as a result of the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Some progress is shown in student performance thanks to the specific trainings in the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Students have gained a sufficiently large repertoire of skills to guarantee high performance in literacy and numeracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations show sufficient capacities to ensure raised student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed a number of effective methods to improve student performance.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have developed sufficiently cost-effective training programmes.</td>
<td>Supporting school staff and supporting organizations have shown a sufficient capacity to continue new and innovative approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Little or no progress in student performance in literacy and numeracy has been reported.</td>
<td>Student performance is shown to have not improved sufficiently as a result of the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Little or no progress is shown in student performance in spite of the ELN Programme.</td>
<td>Students have gained little or no repertoires of skills to guarantee high performance in literacy and numeracy in spite of the ELN Programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The evaluation showed that the ELN Programme has been successful to a sufficient extent to improve the achievements of students, although the absence of end-of-project student assessment and the implementation of other programmes during the same period makes it difficult to ‘extract’ the specific effects of ELN on student outcomes. With regard to its effects on teacher’s competencies, there has been an improved understanding of quality teaching among a sufficient number of teachers and the repertoire of teaching techniques has been improved. The school support staff has to a good extent increased their capacities to support teachers and ensure raised student performance. The BDE has been continuously involved in the ELN Programme activities and the capacities of the advisors for monitoring and providing support have also been strengthened. This institution has been identified as crucial for sustaining the ELN Programme effects and its commitment has been assessed as strong. However, the overburdening with responsibilities and the insufficient number of staff in the institution is assessed as a potential challenge for enabling continuous support in future.

The ELN Programme was found to equally influence the achievement and motivation of students from both genders and students from different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, its added value was its enhanced influence on the achievement and motivation of students with lower socio-economic status.

Nevertheless, certain schools and teachers would need further support in order to implement the approaches promoted by the programme more effectively. In particular, when it comes to differences in opinions among sub-groups of teachers, the master and school trainers express significantly more positive opinions regarding most aspects of the programme, teachers from Roma-majority schools express significantly less positive opinions regarding certain aspects of the programme, while there are no significant differences in the opinions of teachers from schools located in urban and rural areas.