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AGNES KENDE

Involving Others:
Assessing efforts to improve the schooling experience of Hungarian Roma children through focused teacher training and afternoon schooling programs

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ABOUT THE PROJECT
This study was prepared in the larger framework of the project "Solidarity in European societies: empowerment, social justice and citizenship - SOLIDUS" (http://solidush2020.eu). SOLIDUS is a research project funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 Program (Grant Agreement nº 649489), running June 2015 through May 2018. The project explores conceptually and empirically current and future expressions of European solidarity from an inter-disciplinary approach. The paper contains empirical data from two case studies carried out in Hungary in the education sector in 2016.

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1. Introduction

It is well known that Roma children in Hungary, as in several other countries of Central and Eastern Europe with sizable Roma minorities, encounter difficulties in their school career starting from an early age. Roma students with impoverished backgrounds are more likely to have lower educational outcomes and experience more challenges in succeeding academically (Hajdu et al. 2014, Kertesi-Kézdi 2008). Poverty and Roma ethnicity continue to interact in disturbing ways, and schools are under-equipped to respond to these realities.

Roma families suffer cumulative discrimination across areas such as education, housing, employment and health care, leading to multiple disadvantages that are almost impossible to solve: the elimination of discrimination in one area does not result in improvements in other areas. (Blank 2005) Housing segregation, for instance, is accompanied, among other disadvantages, by very poor quality schools and the lack of early childhood care institutions in most cases. Outside larger towns there are almost no public *crèches* which care for children up to the age of three[1].

Most of the general primary schools attended by mainly Roma children are not able to give students the basic competences necessary for further studies. Hence after completing primary school, Roma students from such schools are generally only accepted at low-level vocational schools or become enrolled in special bridging programs designed to prepare students to enter vocational schools, or the labour market. Vocational schools are susceptible to high dropout rates and a large number of Roma youth finish their school career without obtaining any qualifications. Consequently, their chances at entering the labour market are very low, and they tend to repeat the fate of their parents (Mártonfi 2015).

Rather than examining the complex phenomenon of the school failure of Roma children, this paper focuses on two elements of the education system. The first is teacher training and the second is the opportunity to attend after-school catch-up training. Both programs have aimed to involve a wider circle of professionals and volunteers in efforts to improve the schooling experience of Hungarian Roma children. This study was prepared in the larger framework of the project 'Solidarity in European societies: empowerment, social justice and citizenship – SOLIDUS.'[2] The project explores conceptually and empirically current and future expressions of European solidarity from an inter-disciplinary approach. The two investigated cases in this paper share commitment to social solidarity as the basis of equity in education and the belief that social differences can be reduced in education

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[1] Helyzetkép a kisgyermekek napközbeni ellátásáról, 2014 (Situational picture of early childhood daycare centers), In: Statisztikai Tükör 2015/67, Central Statistical Office, https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/kisgyermnapkozbeni/kisgyermnapkozbeni14.pdf

[2] Funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 Program (Grant Agreement n° 649489), running June 2015 through May 2018, website <http://solidush2020.eu>.

through the transformation of the pedagogical culture. Thus, while the paper in itself cannot make claims to advance theory due to the small scale of the research, it aims to **contribute to broader European explorations of the link between social solidarity belief systems and policy outcomes**.

The paper draws on the author's previous research on education and inequality in Hungary, and therefore relies on familiarity with a wide range of Hungarian academic and policy sources, which were analyzed in tandem with the primary empirical research carried out for this study. Interviews were conducted with 8 persons working or participating in Study Hall programs in Budapest, Bátonyterenye, Lucfalva and Mátraverebély, and with 7 persons involved in a variety of ways at Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc between May and September 2016.

The paper starts by giving a short overview of the Hungarian educational system in relation to Roma as the most disadvantaged minority (section 2). It then proceeds to analyze the first case, a unique Hungarian teacher training program developed at Miskolc University (section 3). The central objective of teacher training program concerns the schooling of disadvantaged and/or Roma children. Through the courses, the selection of schools where their students can do the practice component of their education, and various extra-curricular activities, the program tries to deepen students' solidarity and empathy, while the selected schools also receive support in transforming their pedagogical culture. The second case, reviewed in section 4, is a Study Hall program (*tanoda*) where students, mainly of Roma origin, are given an alternative learning program through an extra after-school curriculum. The target group of study halls is 5th to 8th graders before they enter different types of upper secondary schools[3], although these programs are open to students of all ages. The Study Hall program originally started as a volunteer-led movement, but has gradually institutionalized, primarily through the injection of European Union funds. Finally, section 5 compares the two cases and concludes with an assessment of what they have achieved.

2. Inequalities in education: the educational situation of Roma children

A multilevel approach can be used to specify the mechanisms and interacting processes through which ethnic inequalities are reproduced in the education sector and sustained in a cumulative fashion. In Phillips' theoretical framework micro-level racialization is framed by the influence of familial socialization and shared cultural values which are manifested in individuals positioned within various ethnic and classed groups (Phillips 2011). These are shaped by interactions with other identity groups, and influenced significantly by local environmental conditions. The meso-level institutional racialization

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[3] This paper follows the classification of UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, available at http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf.

recognizes cumulative disadvantage experienced across interrelated educational experiences. These are produced through institutions' routine operations and happen regardless of the intention of individual actors. The macro-level structural determinants of material conditions provide the frame through which institutional processes and practices at the meso-level are enacted. The formation of the modern racial state through its apparatuses are shaping articulations of race and racist exclusion, through definition, regulation, management, economic controls and the mediation of social relations.

One example how the articulation of racial exclusion or the definition is shaped by the state is the double discourse on Roma children in the school system. Double discourse here means referring to children in disadvantaged situations and Roma children as synonyms. Professionals in schools tend to use the different terms with the same meaning, often even within a single sentence. As the ethnic registration of Roma students is forbidden, a new social category was introduced in 2003, called 'multiple disadvantaged children'. The purpose was to direct extra services and financial support to schools with many Roma children. While this category is a social category, Roma children also belong to an ethnic minority. This results in a sort of double talk about the problem. To give an example based on the author's multiple research experiences in the field: a teacher can describe a child using the 'disadvantaged' or 'multiple disadvantaged' term and thus toe the official line about how one talks of Roma children, while the description of the child refers to the Roma ethnic background. Everybody involved in this conversation is assumed to understand that they speak about Roma children, even though naturally there are disadvantaged children who are not Roma. Sometimes, in the second part of the sentence or conversation, they start using the Roma term, thereby unconsciously abandoning officially accepted rhetoric.

Since Roma is not just a social category but also a recognized minority with specific rights deserving recognition as an ethnic minority group, using the 'disadvantaged' category in their case makes Roma children disappear as an ethnic minority from the system. Assuring a colour-blind policy in schools hides the nature of prejudices against Roma children where the basis of prejudice is not their socio-economic situation but ethnic origin. While segregation and discrimination against Roma children are still on-going, ethnicity stays hidden due to this social category, which also effectively undermines the right for their identity to be respected. Mixing the two terms 'disadvantaged children' and 'Roma children' in everyday discourse prevents a deeper understanding of what it means to be a member of an ethnic minority group in a society. At the same time, a hidden culturalist approach towards Roma children stating that "they are so, because they are Roma" can flourish under the auspices of the term of social disadvantages. This double discourse deprives Roma children from the recognition of their identity, while it fails to handle the prejudices against them.

Hungarian children of Roma origin face multiple disadvantages, one of which is the inability of the mainstream educational system to compensate for social inequality and to

provide upward mobility for all at macro level. "Within the framework of a free school choice system[4], it is impossible to implement a consistent policy of equality in education or operate systems of quality control and accountability with appropriate orientation" (Varga 2008: 235). As highlighted in a Roma Education Fund (REF) country assessment study (Kende and Osztolykán 2015) on Roma children in the education system, this *macro-level* factor means that "about one third of every generation leave their schools without having received the basic skills required to make it on the labor market" (Kende and Osztolykán 2015).

Integration versus segregation of Roma children in schools is one of the most debated and contested issues at *meso-level* in Hungarian public discourse, going far beyond the remits of policy actors in the field. "School systems that reward academic achievement in their admissions policies effectively shift Roma children out into schools with lower rates of educational attainment. The result is that Roma pupils are concentrated in the same (underperforming) schools even in areas where they may be otherwise (residentially, locally) integrated. Added to this is the practice of separating out children with 'special needs'. In many cases this leads to the creation of de facto Roma classrooms in otherwise (integrated) majority schools" (Fox and Vidra 2013:27).

Since the 1990s, governments have been well aware of the situation but have promoted different policies. The results of the first OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000 demonstrated that Hungary had much wider gaps between low- and high performing children, and the extremely selective character of the educational system at all levels was repeatedly shown in various studies (Csapó et al., 2014, Radó 2005, Kertesi-Kézdi 2016). The most important determinant of students' performance is their home background. Furthermore, the differences between schools are big in comparison with other countries. Stratification happens according to children's social background, and Roma children, who make up around 15% of the school population, are de facto being taught in segregated systems (Papp 2015).

The so-called 'PISA-shock' triggered the introduction of a complex set of interventions supporting educational integration. Between 2002 and 2010, the Socialist-Liberal government reinforced a more or less liberal educational policy, which was complemented by attempts to reduce inequalities and segregation via centrally launched programs of integration. The nationalist-conservative government coming into power in 2010 broke with policies in place on ideological grounds, replacing the emphasis on integration with one focused on remedial education (Szalai and Kende 2014:8).

While the previous government (2002-2010) implemented some measures to support the education of Roma, a comprehensive and systemic approach to reducing the number of

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[4] While the particular regulatory frameworks differ, a free school choice system is characterized by students being able to attend schools of their or their parents' choice regardless of their residence, provided that there are educational places available.

Roma majority schools and classes in education was not put in place. Some administrative measures to address the prevailing issue of the high number of Roma majority classes and schools in state schools were initiated and are still in place. Likewise, ongoing programs such as the Study Hall program, one of the case studies of this paper, contributed to increasing the competence levels of disadvantaged pupils. Since 2010, the government has undone, or tried to undo, some of these measures, including repealing laws designed to prevent the segregation of Roma children in schools. The Public Education Act[5] authorizes the government to allow waivers that can be applied to permit segregation in Hungarian schools. The proposed reforms legalize segregated education of Roma children, allowing the operation of 'Roma-only schools which provide undefined 'social catch-up' services.

The measures introduced after 2010 are contradictory regarding equity in general, and regarding equal opportunities for vulnerable groups (including Roma students) in education in particular. Some may improve equity in education; making preschool (kindergarten) compulsory from the age of 3, and introducing full-day schools belong to these measures. At the same time other measures such as the decrease of the compulsory school age from 18 to 16, or the 3-year-long dual vocational education (VET) system with a rigid interoperability tracking system between the different educational paths at upper secondary level demonstrate an adverse effect on dropout and early school leaving.[6]

3. A unique Hungarian teacher training program: the case of the Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

What could help remedy some of the problems outlined in the previous section in the long run would be a new, skill-based, inclusive teaching practice which would strongly favour life-long learning, and a new pedagogical culture of defining and transmitting key competencies. This would be different from current pedagogical practice that concentrates on transferring knowledge and information to the pupils/students. However, the courses preparing students for new pedagogical culture in teacher training programs are either too few or optional, while most of the courses still offer subject based classes with traditional frontal methods, strengthening the elitism of the school system where only a few are able to meet the expectations. In this section, the paper reviews one of the few exceptions, a teacher training program in Miskolc which has sought to adopt a more inclusive approach.

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[5] Paragraph § 27 (5) of Art. Z

[6] Since 2013, the new VET system has been shortened from four to three professional training years. The content of the general education curriculum is a third in comparison to the previous system. Along with the lower compulsory school-age, many students – mainly Roma - drop out at the beginning of the training. Changing the program or transferring to another profession is difficult. These legislative changes are drastically influencing the opportunities of Roma youth to get a vocational certificate.

Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc is located in Miskolc, in North-East Hungary. This is the most deprived region in the country, and has the highest number of Roma population. With 160,000 inhabitants, Miskolc is considered a big city in Hungary and has a somewhat heterogeneous social population, but nearby small towns and villages are extremely deprived settlements. The rate of Roma children is higher in this region than the rate of the Roma children in the country, 33% compared to the average 15% (Papp 2015). The multiple disadvantaged situation and deep poverty of Roma children is made worse by the prejudice towards Roma people. This results in various forms of segregation of Roma children. Thanks to the free school choice system, some schools became segregated, similarly to the 'white flight' phenomenon in the US, i.e. middle class non-Roma students leave schools when the rate of the Roma children reaches a certain 'psychological limit.' There are also schools that are segregated because they are located in districts or in villages that are themselves segregated, i.e. with only or mostly Roma people living nearby.

The spirit of Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc has been strongly influenced from the beginning by the most progressive professionals of education science in Hungary. The doors were open to progressive young professionals at the time of the Institute's foundation, and since 1992 these same people have been involved and steering its work.[7] Acknowledging that the most crucial problem of the Hungarian education system is social selectivity within the schools and that schools are unable to compensate for the social disadvantages of children, pedagogical work primarily focuses on these problems. This is shown in the mission statement of the teacher training institute:

> *"We place a strong emphasis on the training of professionals for the North-Eastern region of Hungary, struggling with deep social and economic challenges, who will be able to tackle problems related to poverty and ethnic conflicts and who can respond creatively to these challenges. Therefore we believe that it is vital to improve our students' awareness of social issues and to familiarize them with practice-oriented, up-to-date programs like the Complex Instruction Program developed at Stanford University. We teach our students how to apply these programs and help them develop a general social competence. Our research and development program also has strong and diverse ties to our region. We have established partnerships with several educational institutions located in our city and county. We offer the full support of the devoted professionals working at our Institute to the schools, boarding schools, and other educational institutions seeking to find their own way." (Extract from the webpage - http://www.tanarkepzo.hu/en)*

In Hungary most future teachers conduct the practice components of their educations in officially designated 'practice schools', which have competitive admission practices and generally are attended by children of the upper middle class and the elite. Distinguishing

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[7] Among the founders of the Institute you can find the "first generation" of innovative education scientists: Ottó Mihály, Ferenc Loránd, László Trencsényi, Gábor Pőcze, Zoltán Báthory, Tamás Vekerdy, Attila Horváth, and Gábor Halász.

it from other teacher education institutions in Hungary, the Institute of Teacher Training does not have elite practicing schools for its students[8]. Instead big efforts are made to send students to practice in schools with lots of Roma children. In addition, the Institute has many mandatory and non-mandatory programs, from mentoring to community and volunteer work, designed to prepare students for a better understanding of the situation of Roma children, to help them overcome prejudices and to develop empathy and solidarity.

> *"We thought we can only be authentic if we pay attention to our social environment. That was the origin of all of our activities. This inspires all our steps." (Professor at the Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc)*

The best example of this approach has been the development of a special matrix, which helps to build the aspects of school disadvantages and problems of ethnic differences into all pedagogical subjects. It is important to note that such holistic and innovative approaches may occasionally be found in other teacher institutions as well, but that these are then usually promoted by individuals and not by the institution itself.

Building social networks with partners outside of the faculty is one of the strengths of the teacher training institute. Beyond theoretical knowledge the biggest emphasis is on the practice element in schools where students can meet children with disadvantages (e.g. Roma children), and on providing help to schools which are in trouble and are not equipped for dealing with the tremendous social problems children are facing. It is a win-win situation for everybody, since the schools can benefit from the help of the teachers in training, while the institute can extend its network of hosting students. The relationship with NGOs also enriches the social network of the students. Later in their careers this can be used for support if they want to teach something more beyond the mandatory curricula.

The hope attached to the teacher education is that teachers who have gone through this training, and those that will do so in the future, will be able to provide a better schooling to Roma children leading to higher educational achievements in this group. However, it should be noted that this goal is very ambitious; it may be unrealistic to expect such an immense achievement from teacher education alone, as the problems Roma children are facing are far more complex. Teacher education can foster flexibility towards new ideas, but by itself it is unable to influence many conditions missing from the public education system such as local autonomy, professional and bureaucratic flexibility towards new

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[8] These are schools where students can carry out the practical components of their teacher education. These schools are the most elitist schools in Hungary: a school teacher has to be qualified as a mentor teacher to accept students of teacher education. Moreover, it is commonplace thinking that it is better if the students meet "normal" children first, in order to keep them on the track of a teaching profession. At the same time, the institutions can vary as to how important the teaching practice in schools with students with diverse background is for them. (See Donlevy, Meierkord and Rajania 2016 for which the research on the Hungarian education system was prepared by the author).

ideas, a predictable financing system, teacher autonomy, and selection of school directors based on their professional background.

According to certain interviewees for this case study who are professors, the efficiency of the teacher teaching program is very hard to measure using hard indicators. Instead, interviewees mentioned a number of observations that together indicate that the program has some impact: changed attitudes that become apparent through personal conversation between faculty and staff, reliance on methodologies acquired in the program in further teaching, satisfaction among partner schools, and students' choice of thesis topics.

Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc aims to make the students realize that understanding pedagogy is impossible without learning about the social context or environment. The children cannot be taken out from their social environment, their abilities, mental situation, motivation, etc. is strongly dependent on the influences from the schools and outside of the schools, and the teachers must take into account all these circumstances.

Even though there are very few Roma students at the teaching department and no policy to increase this number, the development of empathy and/or feelings of solidarity towards Roma children is part of the professional identity of this institute. This puts more responsibilities on the teachers in addition to teaching their subjects. Expanding their methodological repertoire is also about recognizing the different needs the children may have.

> *"The diversity in methods is not an end in itself, but as there are so many kinds of children, we need to teach the students to have a choice when they teach a subject according to the different needs of the children. If the repertoire of the teacher is large enough, the children can be easily motivated." (Interviewed Professor at Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc)*

To strengthen their professional identity, the institute organizes mandatory programs, such as activities that combine community service and learning and non-mandatory programs such as voluntary work, fieldtrips, etc.

According to the holistic philosophy of the teaching department the teaching profession goes beyond subject-based knowledge and embraces theoretical knowledge about the social role and responsibility of being a teacher combined with a rich methodological repertoire. Through its programs where students are confronted with the problems faced by Roma children, the Institute places great emphasis on changing attitudes, strengthening solidarity, and encouraging the ability to empathize:

> *"There are people who have strong solidarity feelings anyway, and some of them become more open-minded during the student years. This is true for the school directors, for the in service teachers, but also*

for our students." (Interviewed Professor at the Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc)

To sum up, the analysis of interviews and documents associated with Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc revealed two sets of insights related to the social solidarity underpinnings of the program and its policy value. First, the program develops a sense of intra-group solidarity through developing the community *within* the institute. Students encounter and experience intra-group solidarity during their studies, which enables them to build on that for the development of their own sense of solidarity during their teaching work. Intra-group solidarity among those working at the training institute also creates inter-group solidarity towards other actors around this organizational unit. The basis of cooperation with schools to help achieve changes in the culture of pedagogy is the notion of solidarity. Community work or volunteering with Roma children are also based on inter-group solidarity That is the way how students of teacher training can become empathetic teachers and can learn to act in solidarity. Second, the program is a good example how teacher education can be developed to counteract educational inequalities even in unstable and partly hostile policy environments. Over the 25 years of its existence, the program has become an equity based holistic program, including *in muros* (within schools) and *extra muros* (out of school programs) elements. At the same time, the research also demonstrates that local progress does not automatically translate into policy transfer and up-scaling. The program has tried to distance itself from politics and shield itself from its effects, but this may have contributed to how little influence it has had on encouraging politicians to adopt more equity based educational policies.

4. Study Hall Program as an after-school alternative learning arena

Just as the initiative to reform education at Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc, the Study Hall program *(tanoda)* is not new. It was set up in the 1990s to ensure a successful learning career and a path to further education to children whose social background and educational circumstances do not allow for such trajectories. The program has been the subject of fairly extensive evaluations, much more extensive than the limited number of interviews undertaken for this paper. However, by synthesizing previous research, public debate and empirical data from the author's interviews carried out with long-time leading activists and participants in the program, the paper offers a long-term perspective on its inter-linkage with social solidarity ideas and policy efficiency and makes this available to an international audience.

The first Study Halls were founded by NGOs and set up independently from schools in order to help Roma children overcome failures in schools and help them continue their studies. The positive evaluations of the first Study Halls resulted in European Union financial support dedicated for this activity in Hungary from 2005 onwards, leading to an increase from around 20 to around 180 such institutions today. However, it is estimated

that only about 20 of these would survive without EU funding (Fejes et al., 2016). The majority of children attending Study Halls are Roma children living in ethnically segregated and socially disadvantaged conditions: 70% of participating children arrive from segregated schools where the rate of Roma children is higher than 25% and 80% of children come from poor families (Németh 2013).

A Study Hall is an *extra muros* (out of school) educational program. One of its defining principles is independence from mainstream schools; the teachers of the Study Hall cannot be the same as those who teach the children in the school, and non-formal pedagogical methodologies are used in order to avoid the same failures these children suffer from at school. Ideally, the Study Hall functions as both an institution and community in which children are motivated towards further education, can discover the value of volunteering and are encouraged to feel at home (Kerényi 2005). However, several challenges and problems in relation to the Study Halls have been identified by previous studies. One of the most cardinal problems is the lack of specialized teachers. Study Halls cannot assure specialized teachers in every subject because of financial reasons. Often there are no teachers with specialized qualification and frequently people without any teaching qualifications are hired. Another issue is that many classes in Study Halls are catch-up classes instead of developing basic competences, as suggested in the original aims of this movement. Most of the children attending Study Halls lack proficiency when it comes to applying reading comprehension and math skills, and the Study Hall programs themselves are unable to compensate for the dysfunction of schools. Hence, the key aim to overcome disadvantages and to assure continued education for the children attending Study Hall programs cannot be fulfilled.

In addition, it is clear that Study Halls cannot solve the structural problems of an education system that hinder the opportunities of disadvantaged and/or Roma children. Owing to the flexible nature of Study Halls and the innovative solutions they utilize, they have an important role in helping social sensitization and in the activation of local communities. As for the structural problems of the education system, there is an ideological debate among activists and those outside the program on the role of Study Halls. This debate developed in the context of the Hungarian school system in Hungary. The fundamental issue at stake is the legitimacy of the *Study Hall* as an institution: whether it is a good idea at all to set up these alternative learning centers (ALC) that ultimately promote a segregated educational institution system alongside the mainstream system, or it would be a much better solution to improve the mainstream educational system for better accessibility, quality and equity for every child, including Roma children.[9] It is a widely shared concern that due to the existence of Study Halls, the

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[9] The issue becomes a dilemma as the resources are too limited to develop both – the mainstream and the alternative learning type institutions.

mainstream education system will absolve itself of its duties concerning the teaching of Roma children.

In order to better understand this debate it is important to take a longer perspective on how these alternative learning centers developed. The first Study Halls were set up in the mid-1990s by grassroots NGOs financed by the Soros Foundation and other international NGOs in order to create more flexible spaces that support special needs, without the pressure of uniformization. This 'golden age' of Study Halls was characterized by citizen-based actions and democratic decision-making mechanisms. The aim of the Study Hall was to prevent early school leaving and to prepare Roma children for admission into upper secondary school. The success of first Study Halls led the political decision makers to the idea to spread this phenomenon all over the country. The experts invited to help the institutionalization of Study Halls were the same people who founded the first such initiatives. The institutionalization could not have been achieved without EU financial support, resulting in the need for meeting certain operational standards. This meant losing, to some extent, flexibility and certain individual characteristics of the Study Halls. In 2004, this was a serious dilemma for involved experts and activists: participating in the working group organized by the responsible ministry and setting up the requirements of first Study Hall Call (including setting up standardization protocols) meant giving up the more free and flexible nature of Study Halls, however, doing this also meant having the chance to establish new Study Halls and serve more Roma children. There was a more serious underlying debate, interconnected with this dilemma, about financing. This took place among decision-makers, including experts on this issue, posing the question whether it would be better to run these as project-based or as included in the regular budget. The sustainability of project-based Study Halls is uncertain, but at the same time a more flexible, civil society-based institution can be set up, while Study Halls financed through the regular state budget are predictably financed while losing some flexibility. At the same time, they become parallel educational institutions threatening to uphold the segregation of Roma children.

This dilemma becomes clearer by understanding where Study Halls are set up in Hungary. The Study Halls are located in settlements where the most disadvantaged and/or Roma children live, ranging from small villages to bigger cities. The quality of the schools that the children attend during day-time is generally very low due to a range of factors such as the selectivity of the Hungarian school system, underfunding, difficulty to recruit teachers, etc. Often these dysfunctional schools consider Study Halls a convenient solution whereby their teaching obligations can be off-loaded to these after-school programs. The original aim of Study Hall was to prepare Roma children for upper secondary education. The Study Hall served as an extra source of support, just like Hungarian middle-class children often take extra classes paid by their parents in subjects where they are failing or just to increase their competitiveness. This original aim could have been fulfilled in parallel with desegregation efforts, while the actual Study Halls turned out to maintain or even strengthen the segregation of Roma children in some cases.

Moreover, an extension of the eligible age span to take part resulted in too many children attending Study Halls and therefore individual development can no longer receive enough support and attention. Even if the regular state-budget financing provides longer term sustainability, the tendency of becoming a parallel segregated institution is more dangerous than what is gained by stable financing according to the experts who oppose normative financing, or - in other words - the total institutionalization of Study Halls.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the children attending Study Halls, these institutions are much more attractive than schools. This is because they learn how to study, they become more motivated in schools, enjoy the non-formal pedagogical methods used in Study Halls, benefit from the community feeling, etc. The most important values of the Study Hall mentioned by children in a 2013 study (Németh 2013) include tolerance, inclusion, providing a feeling of security, light and cool atmosphere, targeted attention to individuals, community development and family-like atmosphere. Children feel positive about the world of playing and studying not being separated but coexisting in the Study Hall. This atmosphere enables the development of children's motivation to study and it also contributes to the self-regulation of learning. Children love to go to Study Hall, they like to spend time there, they take their siblings along with them, and if they are already attending a school within the upper secondary system, they still like to go back to the Study Hall. The children who participated in the study emphasized that many times they feel isolated and lonely in the school, but the tolerant and safe atmosphere of Study Halls compensate for these negative feelings. The special quality attention given to children in Study Halls is very important for the parents, too. Parents unanimously claim that since their child has attended the Study Hall, his or her self-esteem and self-confidence has greatly improved. In the most disadvantaged micro-regions[10] and settlements, as parents explained, Study Halls are the only institutions enabling children to access cultural programs like theatres, summer camps, or excursions. Parents also feel that their children are appreciated in Study Halls, as compared to schools where these children suffer from many failures and from non-recognition. In this sense project-based financing is not ideal for Study Halls as projects formally end, and the initiatives either have to close or continue operating with minimum capacities (Németh 2013).

The original idea of Study Halls to be maintained by grassroots NGOs does not work in Hungary in the long run, as the support for any kind of NGOs is very limited and it is especially hard to find financial support in the most deprived regions and settlements. As mentioned above, if civil society support was the only financial source of Study Halls, only a few of them would survive. The Study Halls maintained by NGOs collect donations and strive to diversify their funding, but often find local fundraising difficult since they target Roma children against whom prejudice is rife. International funding for Hungarian

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[10] In 2007, the government selected the 33 micro-regions most underdeveloped, where 10% of the population live, based on the classification according to the complex indicator made by Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

NGOs (beyond EU support) is scarcer than it used to be and national-level funding is complicated in a politicized civil society climate (Szalai and Svensson 2017). The spatial aspect is also very important concerning the possibilities of getting donations. Study Halls are mostly located in the most disadvantaged regions and their media coverage and public visibility are very poor, while the people living in the same regions are also poor and the majority of locals are prejudiced against Roma people. Therefore, these Study Halls are not supported by the local people at all. Moreover, Study Halls financed by EU funds feel "comfortable" about financing during the project period, so this makes them less motivated to increase the visibility of their activities in order to get donations from different sources. Instead, they count on receiving more funds from the next open calls for financing Study Halls. At the same time, this is a vicious circle because it is hard to find any support from the local community or from other sources.

However, there are exceptions to this dire picture. In an interview for this project, the leader of a mini-Study Hall-network located today in three settlements in North Hungary illustrated how a loss of money led to innovative new practices. The network did not receive funding in the previous Study Hall call even though a few hundred children who attended their Study Halls lived in a multiply disadvantaged micro-region. After the first shock caused by the loss of funding, which could mean inability to maintain their Study Halls (at that time four in four villages), this mini-network started to rethink how to establish a new role for the Study Halls with much less money. They created a Facebook campaign to support the teaching of children by asking the supporters to help the children one by one. The campaign was so successful that the Study Halls are still functioning, although with reduced budget, and, at the same time, they are free to choose their activities without the limitations of calls or tenders.

In some places volunteers are involved to teach children. The volunteers can be university students, in most cases coming from Budapest or big towns and going to work in small villages far from urban areas. They can also be young Roma people from the settlements where the Study Halls are located, who are either more educated than the others in the village or become motivated because of the Study Hall, and decide to help out in Study Halls while continuing their own studies. Teachers who accept to work in Study Halls are committed, to a certain extent, to equity issues in education, but it is also a very important factor that they can get some extra income besides their low paid teacher salaries. As the interviewees confirmed, the approach of the teachers towards Roma children changed a lot during their work in Study Hall. They learned a lot about the children and their families while they also learned about themselves and about their own prejudices.

The recognition of Study Halls is not very high in society as a whole, while their acceptance by the local communities varies. From this respect it is interesting to analyze the different levels of local society: the local community, the local institutional system and the target group for the intervention. In most of the cases, Study Halls are set up in settlements where the most disadvantaged and Roma people live; these settlements or

segregated settlements within bigger settlements are the most deprived parts of the country. The Study Halls, which are new institutions in these locations, mostly start out without a strong reputation. They may even have gained strong opposition among the local people who tend to say "Gypsies, again, get extra services." The social embedding of these institutions progresses slowly, even though it is very important to become accepted by the local community. Acceptance of the Study Hall leads to more acceptance of Roma people in general, and it also enhances the possibilities of future sustainability, for example by receiving help from the local government. In most cases, the Study Halls become accepted over time and if they are closed, the community feels the lack of these institutions. In the most deprived villages, the Study Hall as a community space increases the importance of the village. They become important parts of village identity, especially in villages where the schools have been closed for a while. Schools functioning in the same settlements as Study Halls also have difficulties in accepting or understanding Study Halls as alternative educational institutions. Either a Study Hall is considered a rival institution, or to the contrary, it is thought of as help for regular schools in teaching Roma children. The latter can go as far as some schools feeling absolved from their responsibilities to teach Roma children since the Study Hall can also fulfil this task.

An aspect of spatial inequality is the vulnerability with respect to how Study Halls function in the settlements. In most cases the local governments provide the buildings rent free, but the maintaining body pays all the corresponding expenses and utilities. In very rare cases, the maintaining organization - or if the church has this role - owns the building. The sustainability of Study Halls is largely dependent on the decision of local governments, independently from the effectiveness or importance of the Study Hall. In most cases Study Halls were set up because of a call for Study Hall project proposals, and the funding was attractive for local governments as the upgrades, refurbishment, and costs of building equipment could be covered from EU funding. After the projects conclude, some Study Halls are sustained by the local governments as the experiences related to the positive impact of the Study Hall is so strong that it is worth for the local governments to pay the utilities and use public workers for maintenance. However, there are also examples when the Study Halls had to be closed down after projects closed due to lack of support from the local governments.

Among the villages there are significant differences concerning the function and effectiveness of Study Halls. There are Study Halls in villages where the rate of Roma population is relatively low, but because of the phenomenon of "white flight" in the schools, all non-Roma children attend schools outside from the village and only Roma children stay in the village school. This often leads to a decrease in quality of the school, so to set up a Study Hall would be an answer for the school situation of these children. This means that the Study Hall can become either an integration hub enabling children with different backgrounds to meet after school, or it can become the opposite, a "Gypsy club" in the eyes of the majority population saying either that "Gypsies get everything" or as a more positive approach: "at least Roma children are not in the street." There are

also Study Halls in segregated villages, in most cases in so called 'dead-end' villages, meaning that they are located at the end of a public road, from where mobility is almost impossible. This is due to infrequent or too expensive (for the poor people) bus services, and often the Study Halls are the only centers that provide educational, cultural, social and community services for the locals. The role of Study Halls in these villages is very important, but according to the research conducted by the author, the effectiveness of these Study Halls is very low from the aspect of educational improvement of the children. At the same time, from the aspect of community development, these Study Halls are very important.

At micro-level, the Study Hall can promote the recognition of Roma children in the local community and to improve the school success of children attending Study Halls. At meso-level, the promotion means to change the attitudes and approaches of schools through cooperation between schools and Study Halls, and to obtain better results in children's motivation towards school, hopefully resulting in a decrease of absenteeism from schools or repeating grades. At macro-level, the promotion means to struggle for educational integration through lobbying for equity in education at the political level, with participation in working groups responsible to design the content of Study Hall calls and in other forums of decision makers.

The long-term hope of activists is that the need for subject-oriented learning would decrease or entirely disappear. Then Study Halls could be transformed into community centers focused on community development in places that are welcoming and open to their existence.

5. Concluding remarks

The two programs presented in this paper share the beliefs that social solidarity should serve as the basis of equity in education and that social differences in education can be reduced through the transformation of pedagogical culture. On the surface, the two case studies of educational initiatives may seem very different. One is an alternative learning after school program, the other one is a university-based teacher training program. However, seen as parts of a broader social solidarity movement in education, they are strongly interrelated and influence one another. As seen in the multi-level approach adopted in this paper, the macro-, meso- and micro-levels are interacting in the processes in which the educational inequalities are reproduced concerning Roma students.

The *macro-level* is structurally about the impact of comprehensive as opposed to selective school systems on student achievement. The use of separate tracks in upper secondary schools generates needs for compensatory measures like the introduction of alternative learning centers such as the Study Halls. The institutional meso-level is determined by a pedagogical culture developed partly by the teachers whose professional culture was

'learned' at the 'traditional' teacher education programs. The teacher-student relation at *micro-level* is about conveying the importance of compensatory measures, unless pedagogical differentiation combined with school integration renders these compensatory measures unnecessary.

The teaching of non-middle-class or mixed groups of children causes many difficulties for teachers. In general, Hungarian teachers have never learned to teach in heterogeneous classes and they have never learned the methodologies necessary for differentiation in teaching. In sum, tackling the differences between children from a pedagogical perspective is not part of Hungarian pedagogical culture. The problem of pedagogical culture coupled with the selective school system has led to the establishment of Study Halls. The pedagogical approach used in most Study Halls is missing from most traditional schools.

Hence, the commonality between the two programs presented above is that the Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc provides the same pedagogical approach in its training that Study Halls use in their programs, compensating the schools that mostly lack this approach. Although community development essentially is not in the focus of these programs, their success and effectiveness is strongly supported through the development of strong community relations. The commitment to teaching as a profession and to vulnerable social groups is developed through a strong sense of community characterizing both programs. Experiencing empathetic feelings towards the teacher students from the professors help building empathy towards the children they will teach after graduation; the children in Study Halls experiencing a sense of security conveyed by the Study Hall teachers can build stronger self-esteem and an increasing resilience.

However, both programs are powerless in themselves to struggle against inequality in the education system as a whole. Despite all their "soft" effectiveness, the positive changes in school attainment of Roma children cannot be demonstrated by the evaluations made about the Study Halls or the interviews made with the professors at the University of Miskolc. The Study Hall itself is not capable of compensating for the deficiency of selective and segregated low quality schools. In general, compensatory measures, such as the Study Hall in this case study, are insufficient to address the root causes of the problem regardless of how well they work. Preventive and early intervention should be more stressed via policies like teacher education, and integration of minority students has been found to be more successful than any compensatory measures (Rothstein 2013). By the same token, students graduating from the teachers training in Miskolc are not able to change the pedagogical culture of the schools where they start to work. Moreover, it is a real risk that young teachers after graduation give up part of the approach and methodologies they learned in order to fit into the expectation of the school where they work.

The social innovations of the two programs presented here consist of, among other things, social solidarity based activities and the development of community attachment and self-esteem through exchanges between different groups. Taken as a whole, these represent opposites to an educational context characterized by selection and stratification. Therefore, the overall argument of this paper can be divided into three parts. First, there are positive potential local effects of both initiatives. Second, much but not all of this local potential has been realized over the decades. Third, lack of embeddedness into the larger educational and societal structures is likely to hinder mainstreaming of their underlying solidarity-based approaches into Hungarian educational policies for the foreseeable future.

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Interviews

Interviewee 1: Educational expert and long-time participant in the Study Hall movement

Interviewee 2: Sociologist and participant in the Study Hall movement

Interviewee 3: Leader of a local network consisting of 3 Study Halls in the Bátonyterenye microregion. Long-term participant in the Study Hall movement

Interviewee 4: Student from a Study Hall in Bátonyterenye

Interviewee 5: Student from a Study Hall in Bátonyterenye

Interviewee 6: Teacher from Study Hall in Mátraverebély

Interviewee 7: Student from Study Hall in Mátraverebély

Interviewee 8: Teacher from Study Hall in Lucfalva

Interviewee 9: Professor, Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 10: Professor, Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 11: Professor and director, Univers Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 12: Student, Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 13: Student, Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 14: Student, Institute of Teacher Training at the University of Miskolc

Interviewee 15: School teacher, Nyitott Ajtó Baptista Általános Iskola, Óvoda, Szakképző Iskola, Középiskola és Kollégium