

**Presentation to International Steering Group
Belgrade by Gordon Alexander Feb 17th 2009**

The right to education for all children

**For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY**



Key messages

- All children, no matter what their origins, abilities, ethnicity or economic status, have a right to education
- All rights for all children
- A 'continuum of education' that starts even before birth
- There is a way forward.

CRC Art. 28: The right to education

‘State Parties recognise the right of the child to education...

- a) primary education ‘compulsory’ and free to all
- b) access to ‘life long’ learning
- c) ‘progressive realisation’, but zero tolerance for discrimination

CRC Art 29: The right to *quality* education

‘State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- a) his or her fullest potential
- b) the child at the centre
- c) balance between respecting, nurturing and validating the child's cultural identity, language and values and that of country he or she is living in
- d) equipping the child with capacities for continuous learning, independence, and ability to contribute as member of society that respects diversity and promotes solidarity...

Obligation of the State to take away barriers....

In case of differences, state has to make sure each child 'enabled' to participate

whether barriers due to:

- geography or inaccessibility physical distance
- the costs of education
- family background
- prejudice
- what happens in the classroom

barriers can be due to perverse incentives of financing system,
...and for parents

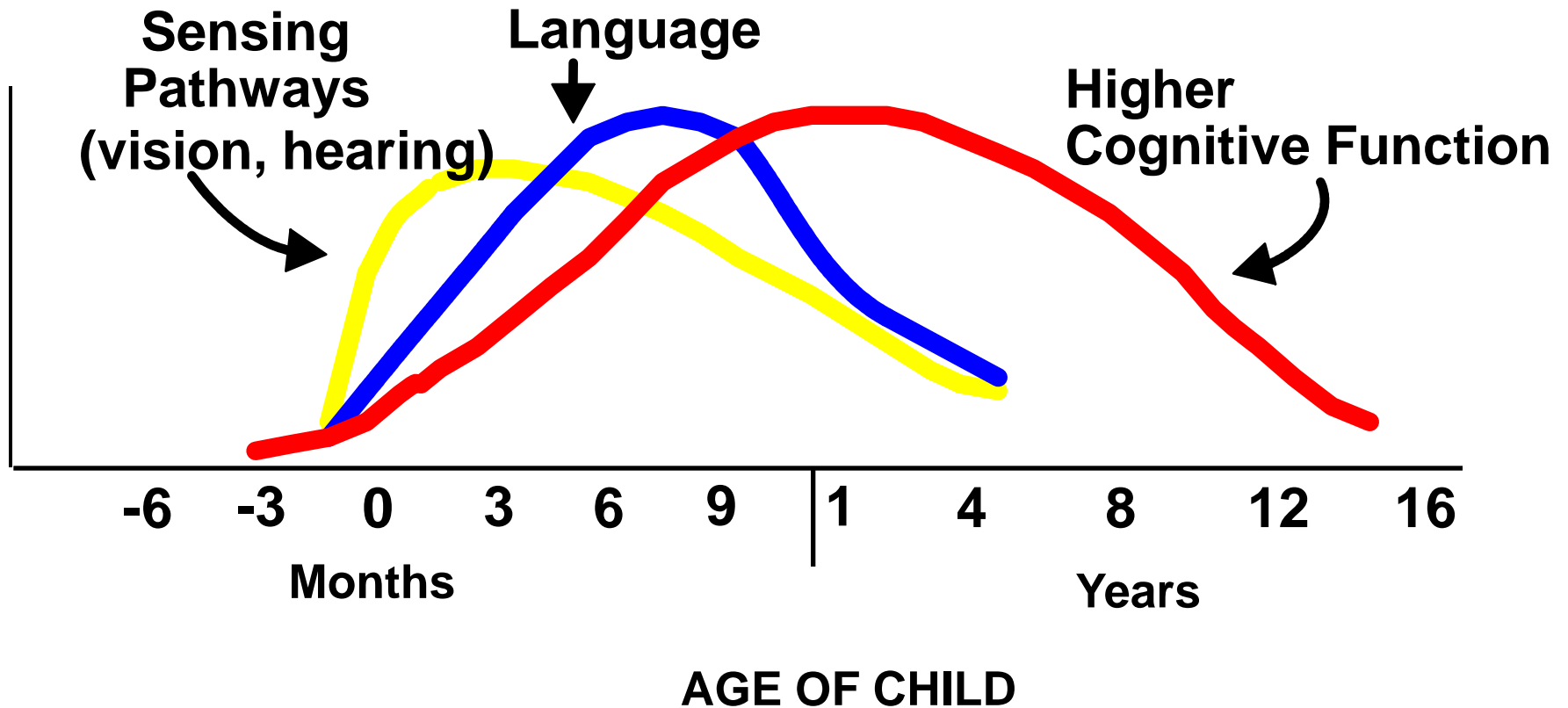
Accountability at each level of the education system

- National level - policy, norms and financing
- Sub-national - co-financing/ organising/ optimising system
- School - management of classroom and environment
- Classroom - stimulation of active learning - all children, all abilities

Good practice: life long learning

- Immediately after birth....
- First 3 years of life are magic (but parents may need support to understand how to ensure benefits)
- Readiness for schooling with structured pre-school is key to success in primary school
- Whichever child struggles in primary education needs support
- Nothing less than secondary as an acceptable outcome
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The most rapid period of growth and change in human lifespan...



Responsibility to fulfill the right lies squarely on Education Ministry

....but Education cannot do it on its own

- Minimum conditions within family environment to ensure participation in education
 - Decent space for learning
 - Bringing friends home
 - Text books and clothes
 - Safe neighbourhood
 - An inclusive community...

- Obligations on other actors to make these possible

Almost half-way into the Roma Decade

- Yes, there is some progress - but 'some' is not enough
- High time to consolidate experience, articulate new targets and lay out how to approach the remaining 5 years
- Ensure Education gets focused attention as a priority

The Vision:

Inclusive schools for every child...

- Free access for every child to kindergarten and pre-school
- Abandoning biased systematic testing of children
- Active rather than passive de-segregation
- School and classroom management creating an enabling environment
- Availability of support for all who need it (mediators, counselling, peer support ...)
- Reaching out to parents
- Transport and textbooks

...backed up by a coherent and integrated approach to poverty reduction

So much is in place in each country,

- yet children we are most concerned with dont seem to be able to profit from them
- investments are not giving expected return...
- synergy is missing...

We still need to:

- Social protection and cash transfers that reach the poorest and most excluded groups and become effective in reducing poverty
- Avoiding simple solutions (silver bullets) that backfire....
- Find local solutions in an integrated way; planning from perspective of child or family that needs support, and linked to system

We need to measure progress

- 'Closing the gap' between best and worst off children in access to education and performance
- PISA (focus on poor performers)
- % public expenditure to inclusive mainstream schools compared to segregated Roma or majority schools)
- % of young Roma completing secondary education
- independent monitoring of discrimination (especially at local level)

We can get there

- Good Policies for all children – and thereby each Roma child (new allies; but also new challenges)
- It can be done. Not so long ago, other ‘un-achievable’ goals...
- A new partnership initiative on Roma education
- The decisive step: May 09