

An abstract background image showing a close-up of a hand holding a glass. The hand is in the upper right corner, and the glass is filled with a blue liquid. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of light blue and white.

Education policies and Roma participation and leadership in education reforms

Empowering marginalized groups through education and
training in the Danube region

Prof dr Tünde Kovács -Cerović

RPA letter to future RPA

My dear Colleague, be cautious, patient and persistent. The job is not easy at all, but it is nice. It was not easy for me at the beginning as well. Everybody looked at me with reservation and denied cooperation. Accept your duties and try to accomplish them well. Don't let be humiliated or underestimated; take a stand from the very beginning. You have to achieve results with the children and then the colleagues will start to accept you... You must love children surrounding you. Look at the children with whom you work as your own, teach them right values and orient them in a proper way. Make their time in school interesting and comfortable. The children will feel your care and return it in ways only children can do.

RPA letter to future RPA

- **Roma to Roma communication**
 - maybe more condensed than it would be in a different genre
 - maybe more motivational and persuasive
- **Dominant messages:**
 - Value of children
 - Importance and joy of education
 - Facing discrimination, counteracting stereotypes
 - Multitude of barriers that call for persistence
 - Being proud to be able to work and help

Content of the presentation

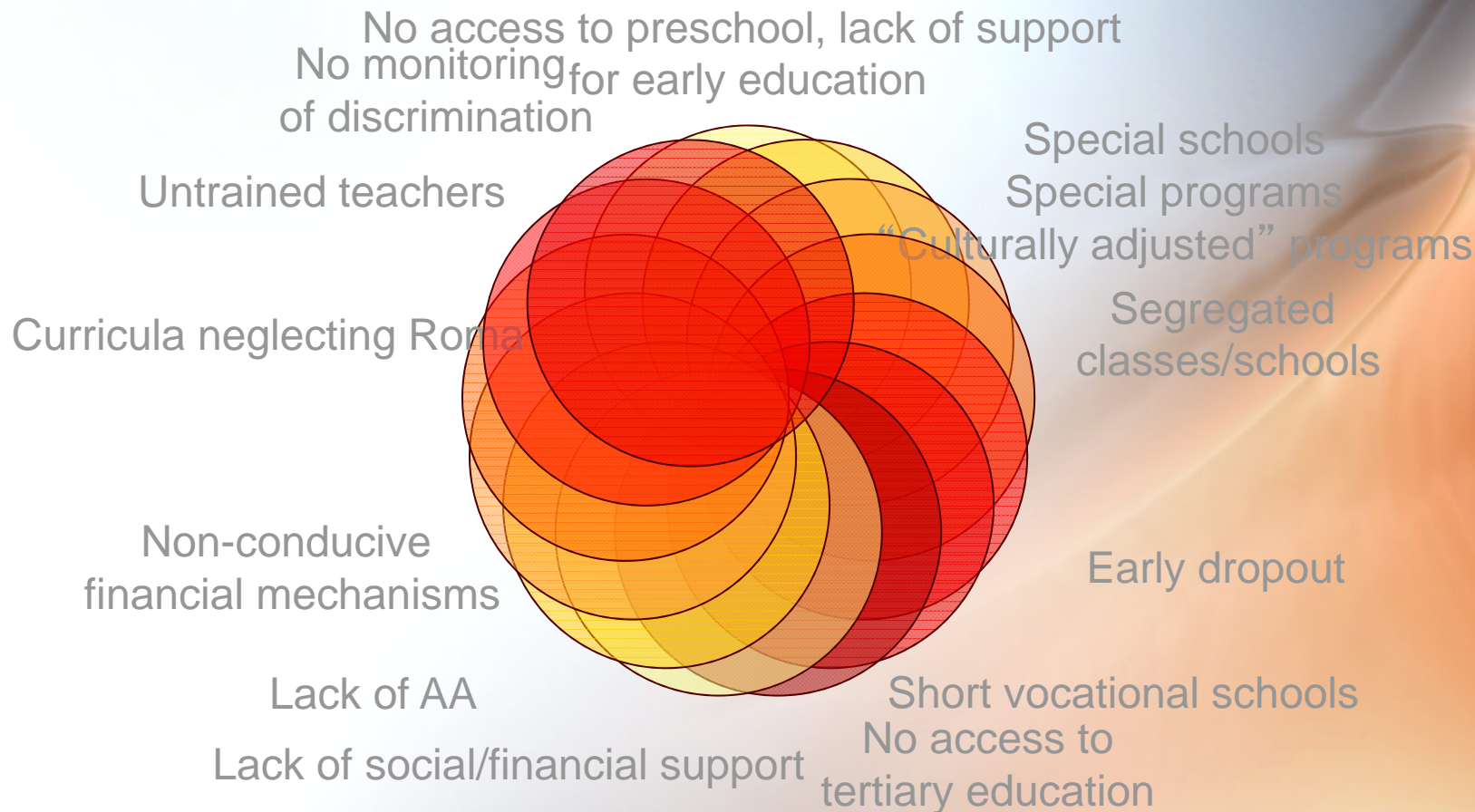
- **Revisiting barriers: Types and Cycles of overt/hidden barriers in education policy and some solutions offered**
- **Roma pedagogical assistants narrate education reform**
- **Vignettes: not to forget in the 3rd generation of Roma policies/projects**
- **I will blend experiences from multiple perspectives: Education research, Policy maker, Funding & Roma organization**



Revisiting barriers: Types and cycles of barriers and some solutions

Barriers 1: Systemic cumulative barriers to education Roma faced 10 years ago in DRI countries

REF



2nd generation of policies/projects in Central and South-Eastern Europe – some barriers softened but not abolished

Early education: access (awareness, widened capacities)

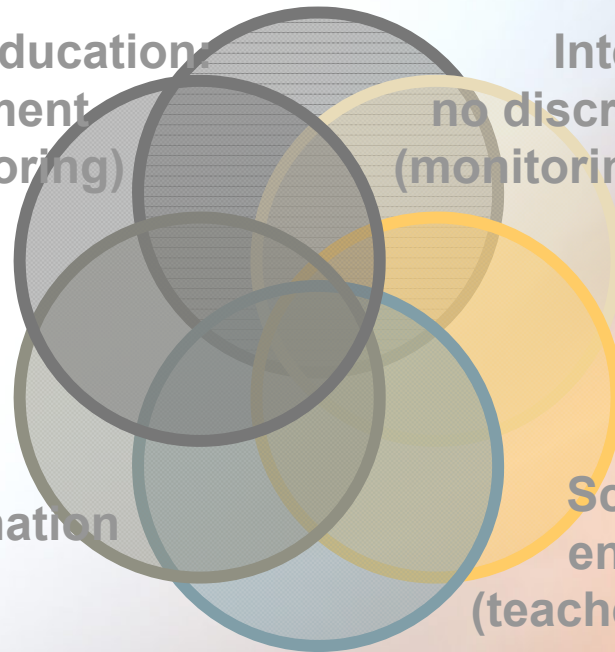
**Secondary and tertiary education:
access to employment
(AA, stipends, mentoring)**

**Integrated education:
no discrimination & segregation
(monitoring, ombudsman, litigation)**

**Monitoring discrimination
in education**

**School & classroom
environment: quality
(teacher training, curriculum)**

**Roma assistants at school
(RTA, RM, RA, PA, RPA)**



Barriers 2: Barriers in each education policy area

Education policy area	Barriers 10 years ago	Actions (2 nd gen)
curriculum	Culturally biased Requires home learning	✓ ✓
textbooks	Not available for free	✓
assessment	Formative assessment rare	?
teachers	Low expectations Mono-cultural	✓
management	Roma representation rare	
financing	Non-conducive	?

Not all policy areas have been addressed yet

Barriers 3:

Cumulative barriers in the education trajectory of a Roma child

UNICEF, 2013



Cumulative barriers in the education trajectory of a Roma child

Policy/action responses to barriers

Access

ECCE
family

preschool
integrated
litigation

Attendance

transport
books
cloths
food, etc.
peers

Attainment

teacher
expectations
IEP
mediators
school support
language

Progression

AA
scholarships
career guidance
mentors
labor market

Layers of hidden barriers 2: Cycles of hidden barriers for each action - “onion” metaphor

Example 1: Introduction of RPAs in Serbia

- **Starting questions**

- Why for Roma?
- Why Roma?
- Why in classroom? Why continuous?

- **Structural barriers**

- Whose responsibility in the ministry?
- How to select the RPAs? Mistakes?
- How to contract? How to inform schools?

- **Financial barrier**

- Who should pay? How much?
- How not to forget?

Layers of hidden barriers 2: Low expectations

Baucal, 2010

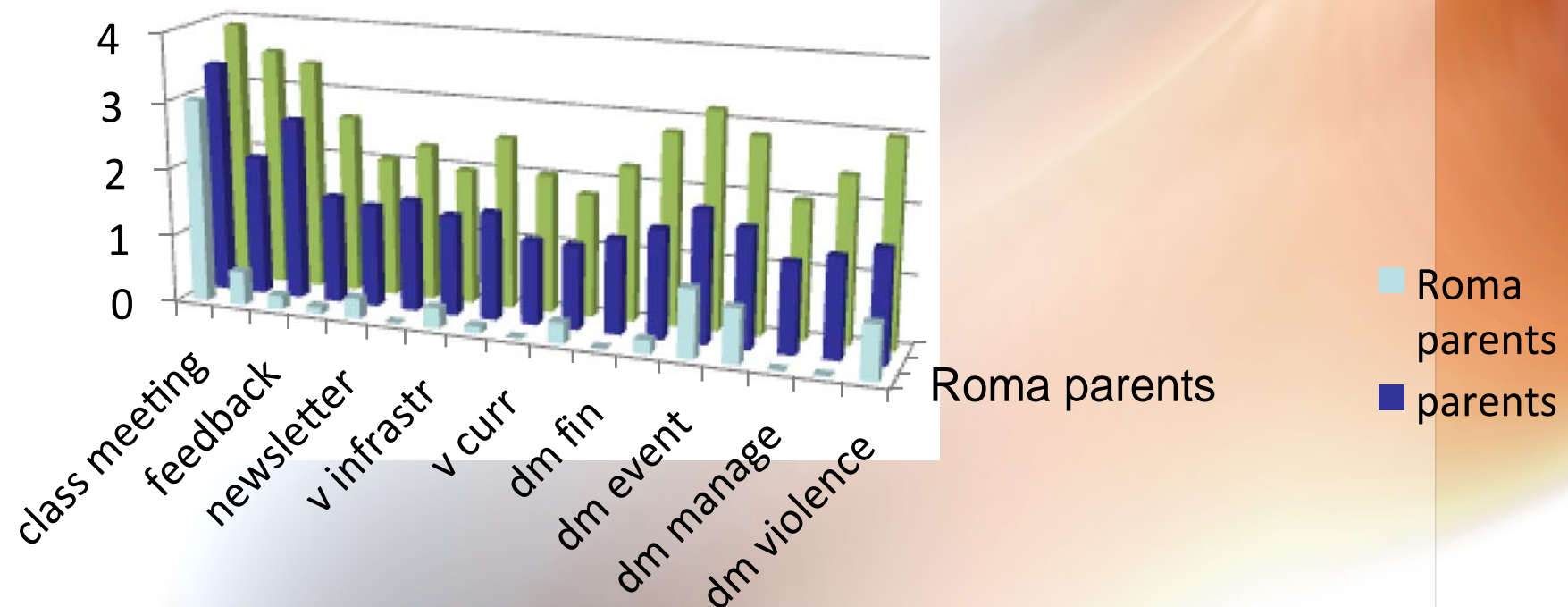
Roma children get less homework in school, less challenging tasks, less feedback, have lower requirements than mainstream children

Pygmalion effect – self-fulfilling prophecies (Rosenthal): low expectations of teachers/community change teaching style, and in turn produce lower outcomes

Easy to happen, very complicated to control
IEP?

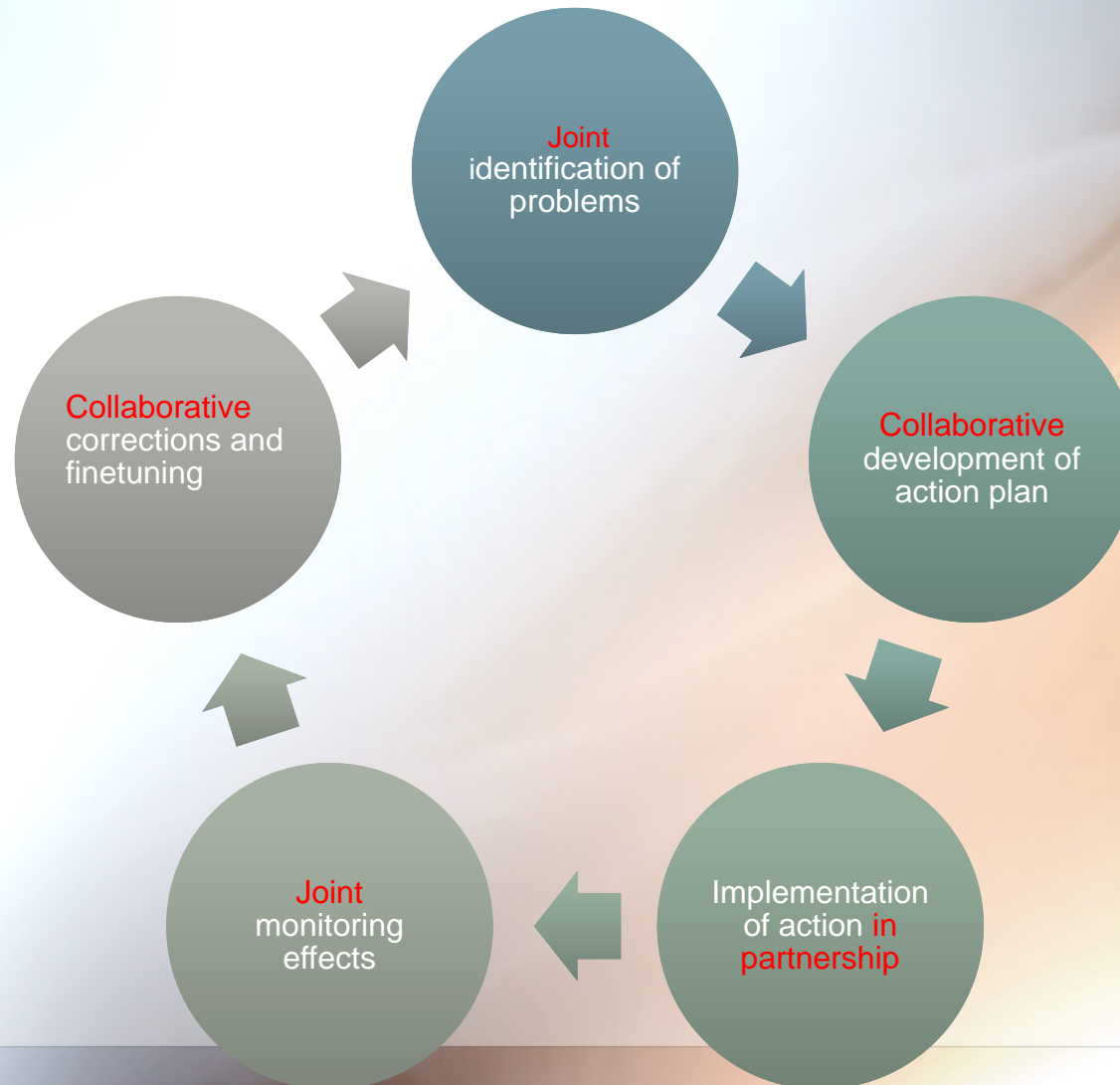
Layers of hidden barriers 3: Cycles of hidden barriers for each action

Example 3: family – school cooperation in SEE
(Parent participation in the life of the school, CEPS, Ljubljana, 2010)



Layers of hidden barriers 4:

Barriers in policy cycle - ministries and donor organizations tend to forget Roma participation



Summary on the effects of 2nd gen of policies/projects

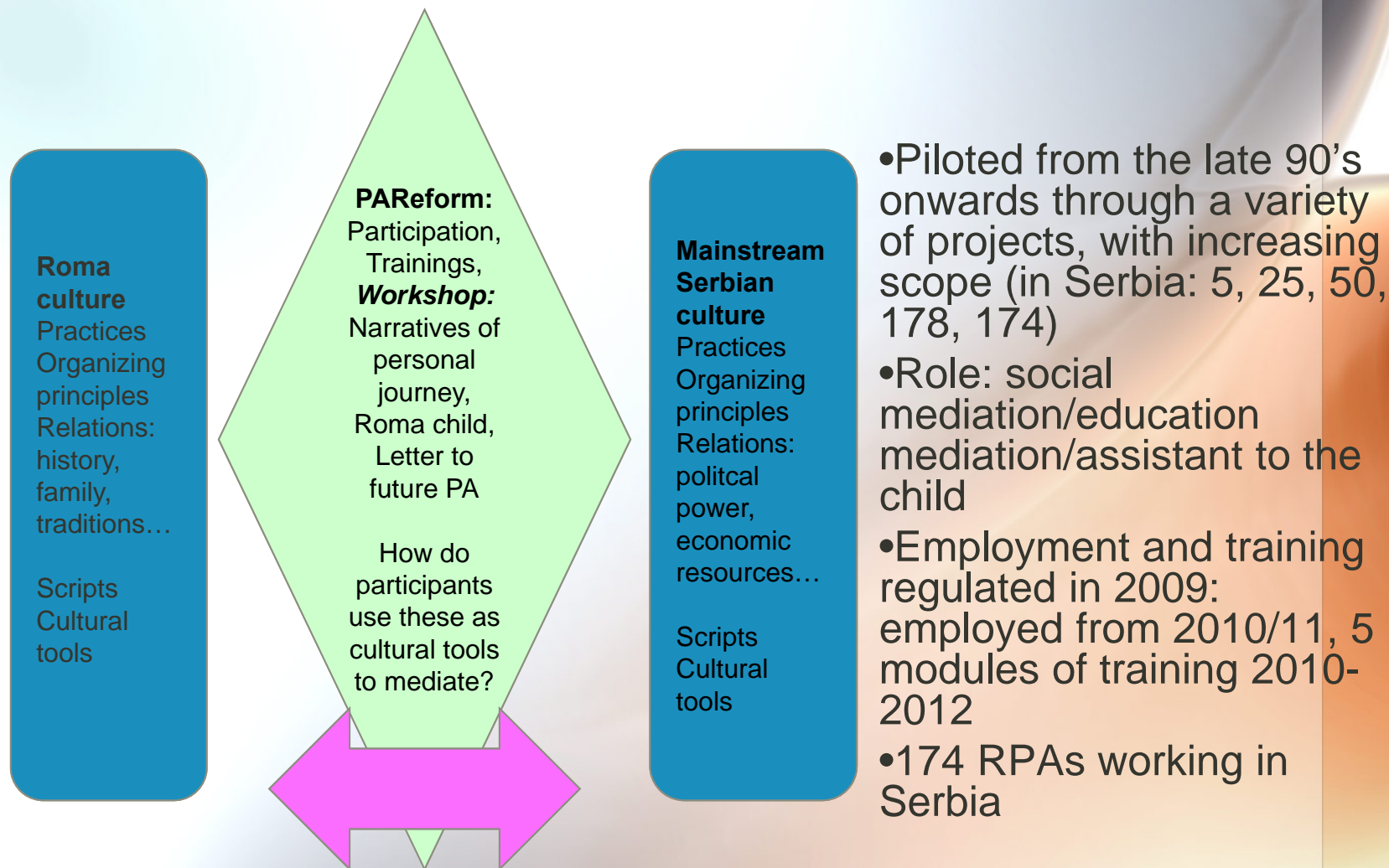
- **Wider awareness on the importance of education by all (government – both national and local, Roma community, mainstream population, teachers)**
- **Structured activists/networks**
- **Institutional allocations & networks**
- **More detailed understanding of types and layers of barriers**
- **Experience with successful interventions**
- **Commitment**

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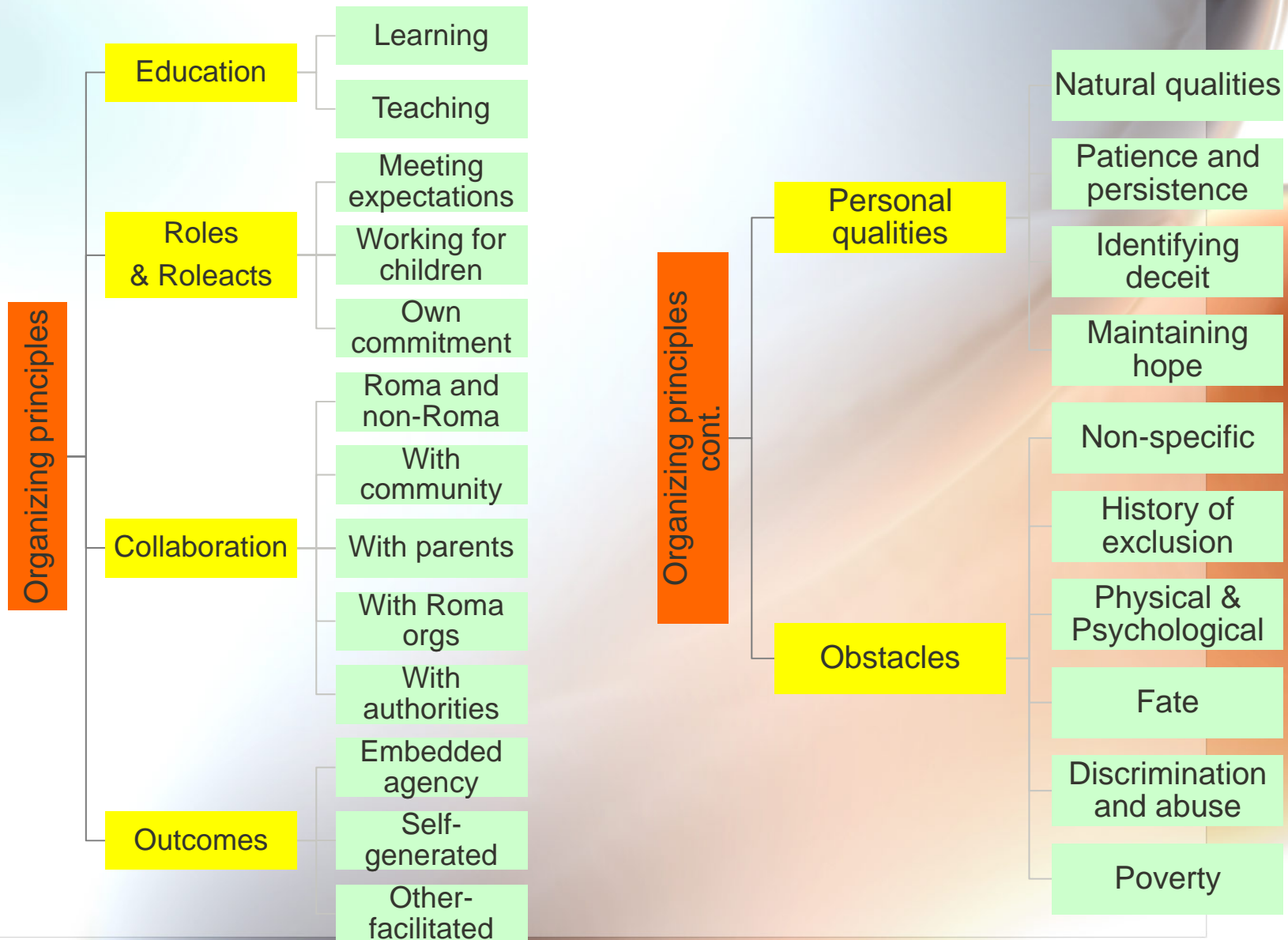
Roma narrate education reform

Pedagogical Assistant Program in Serbia

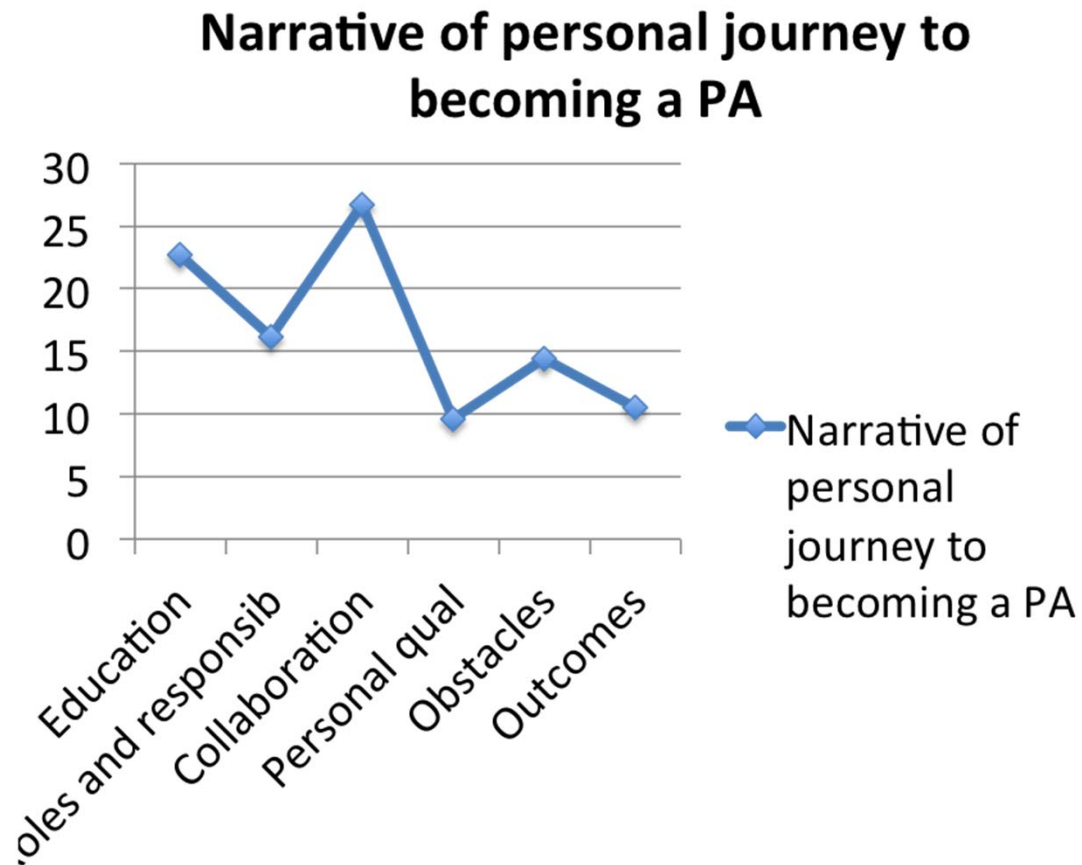
OSF/OSCE



Organizing Principle Categories that emerged across 5 Genres (grounded theory)

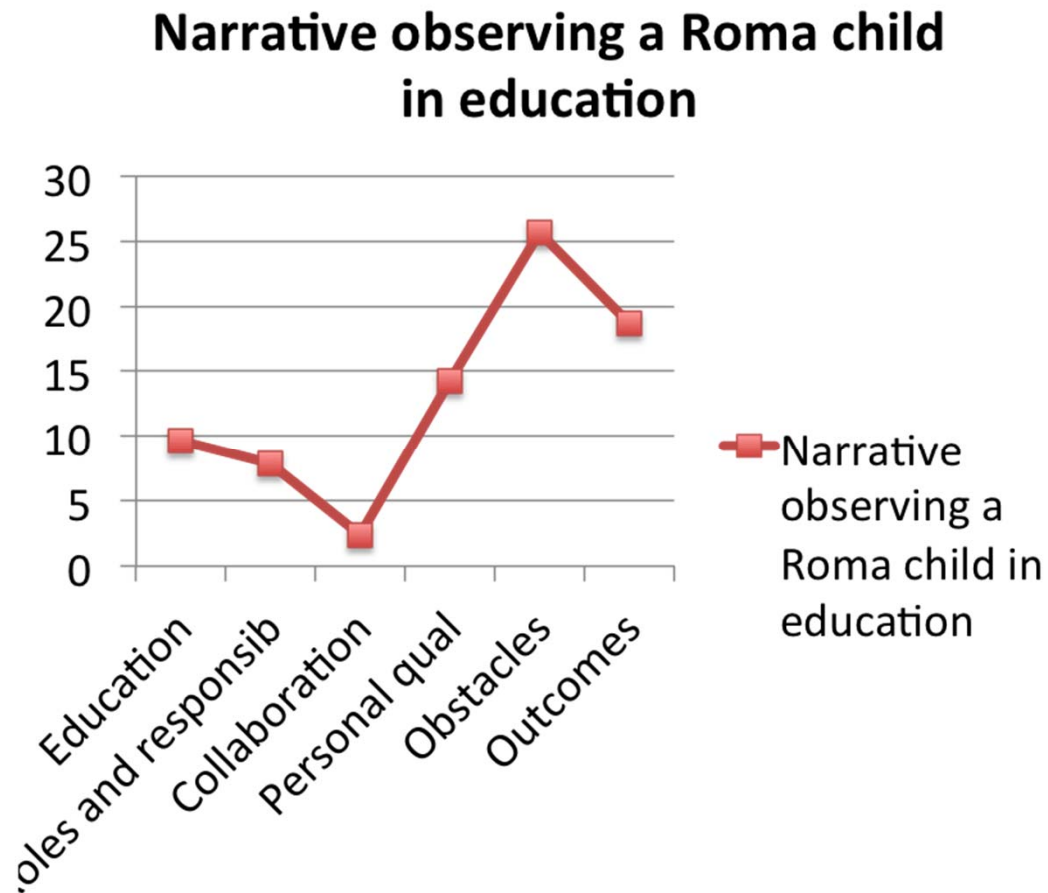


Highlights of Findings from Analyses through different Genres



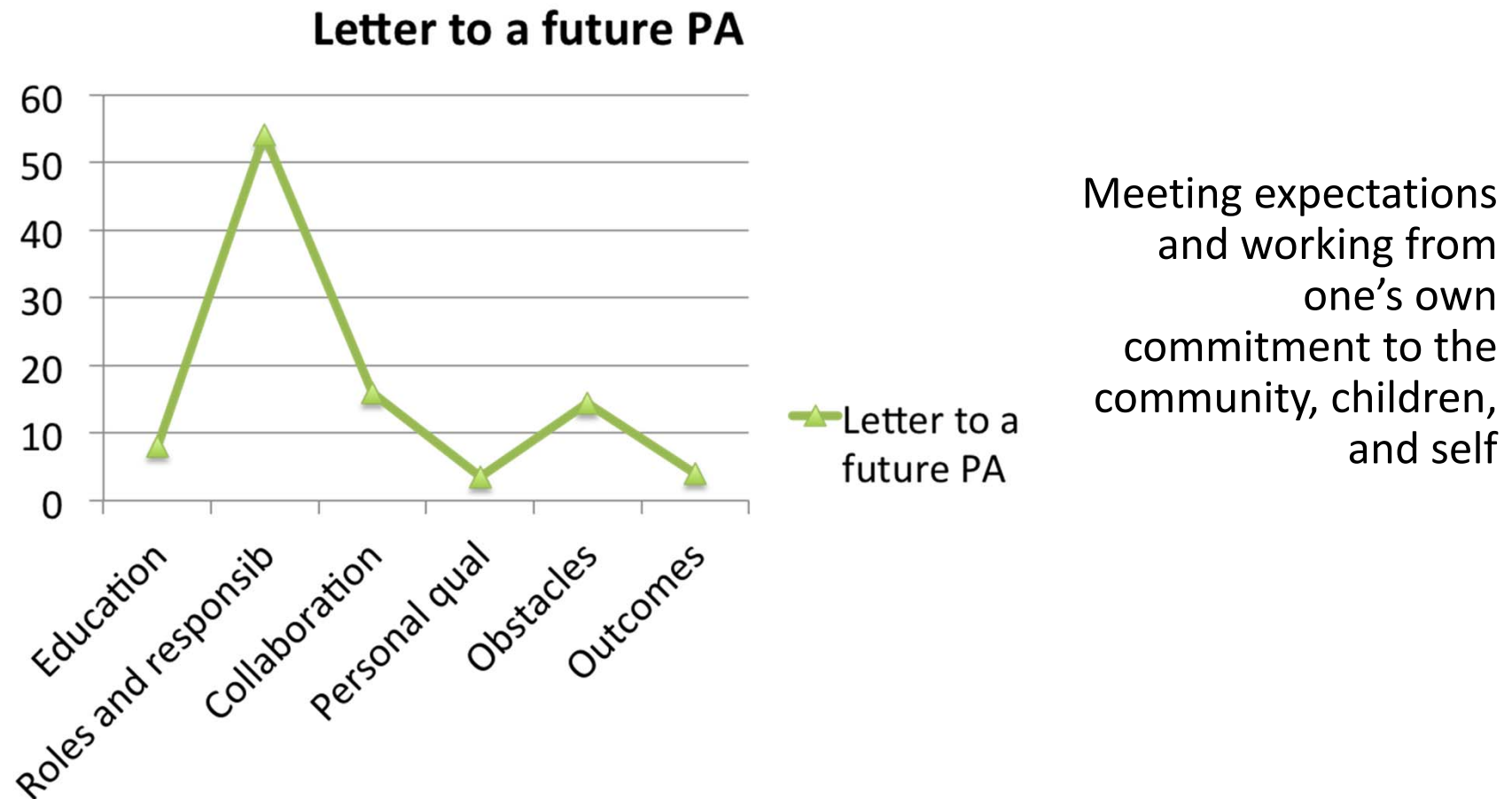
Interaction and collaboration, especially with others in the Roma community & organizations. Importance of education, experience of endurance and success

Highlights of Findings from Analyses through different Genres

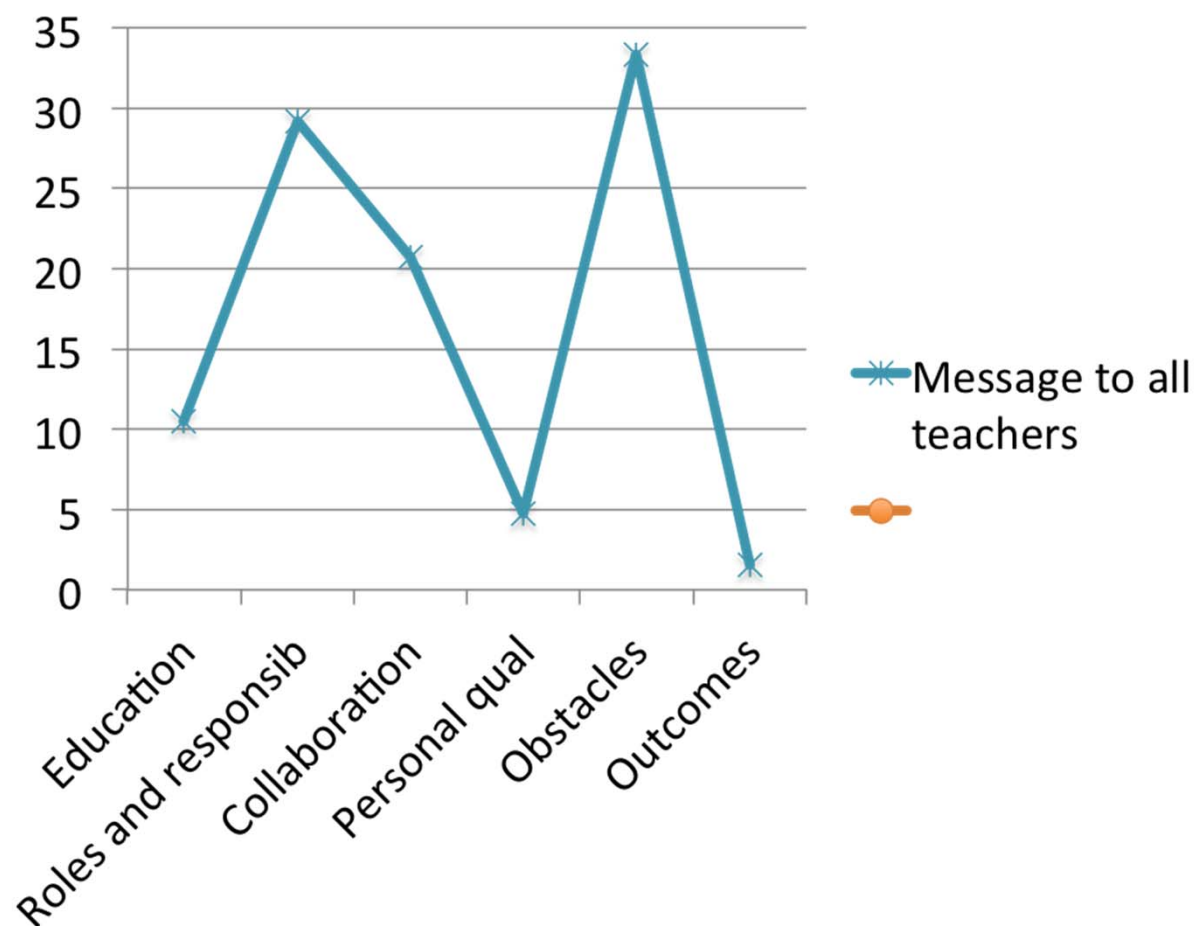


Immense obstacles overcome for positive outcomes, especially through personal qualities of children or concerned adults, and education.

Highlights of Findings from Analyses through different Genres

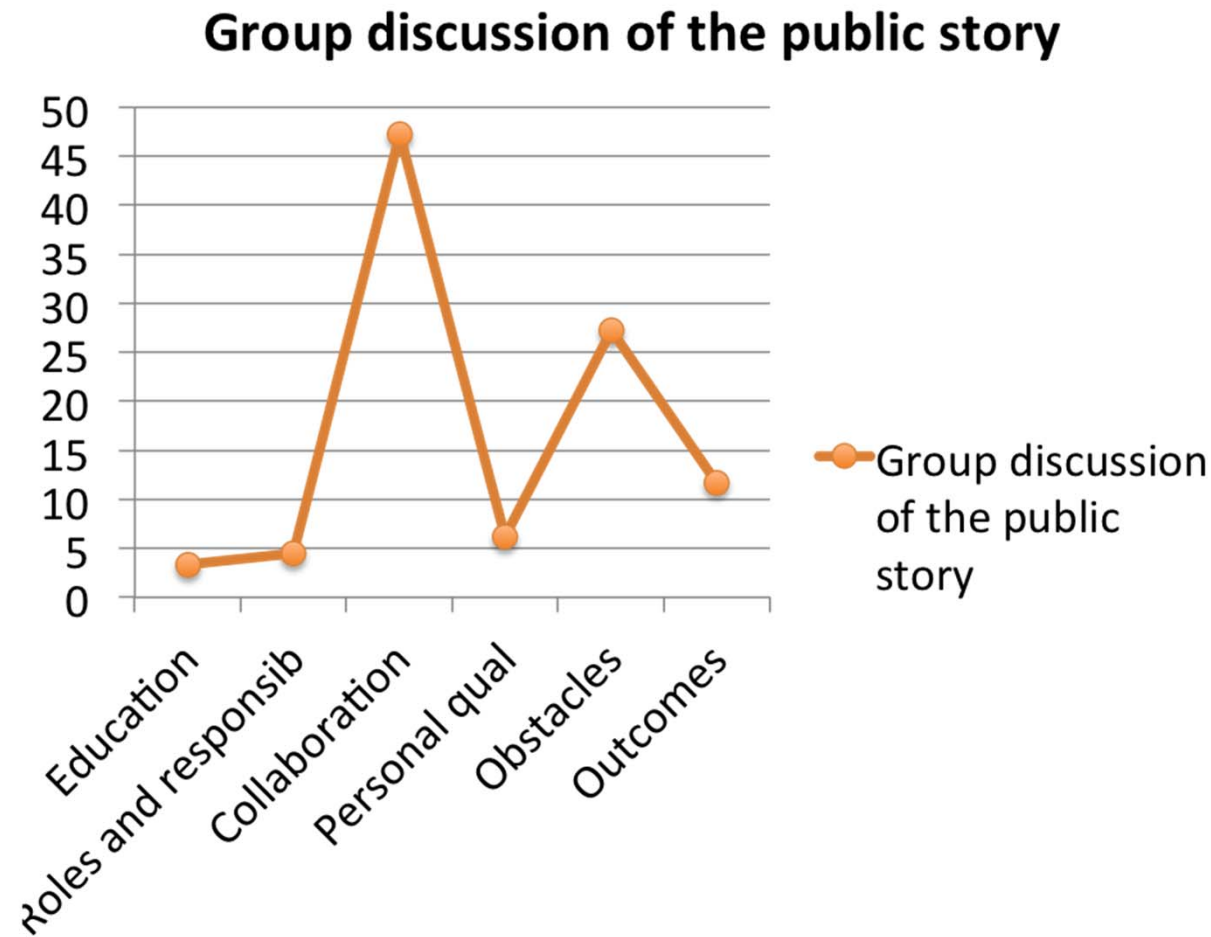


Highlights of Findings from Analyses through different Genres



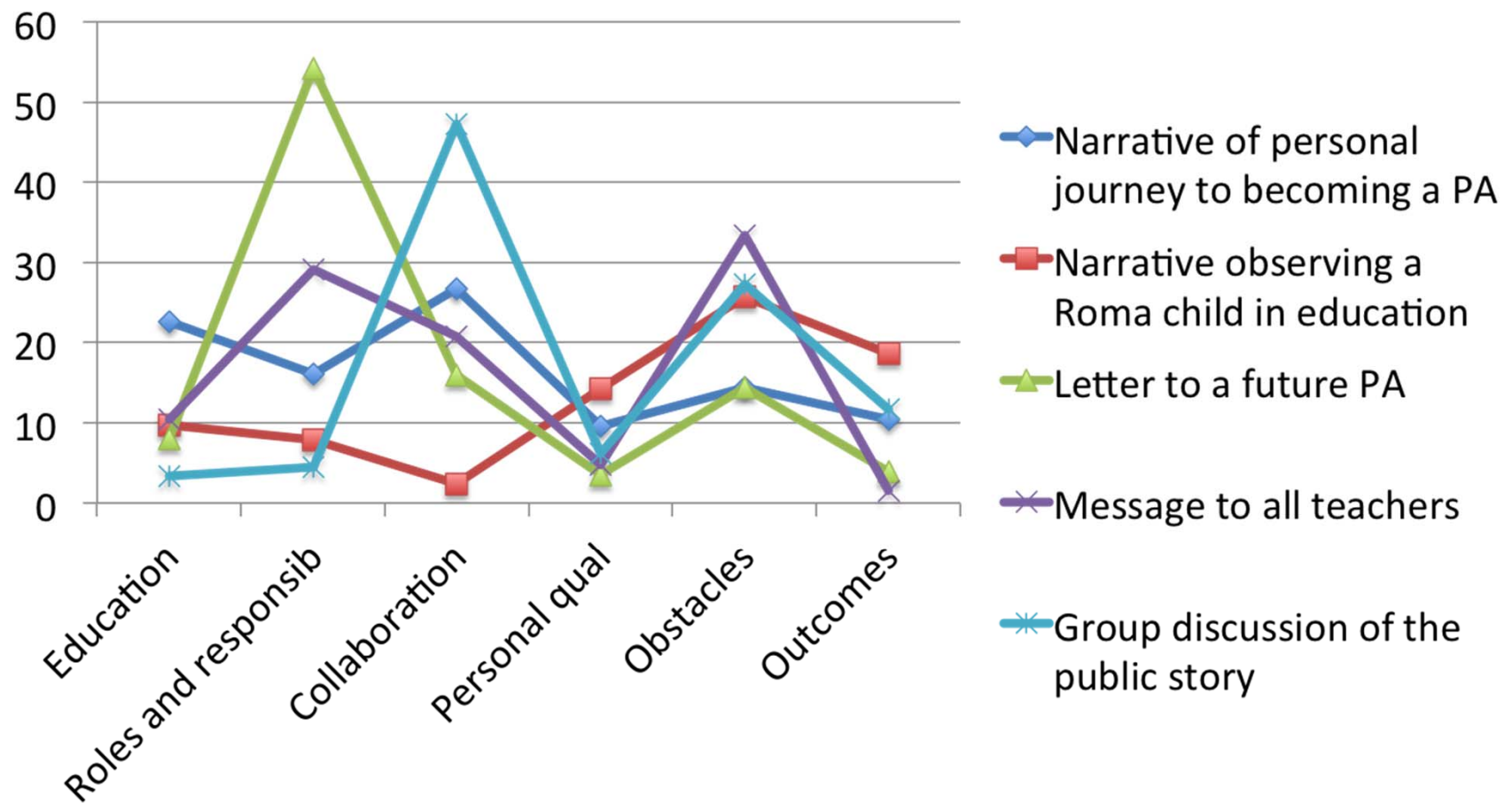
Treating Roma children with high expectations, understanding, Without discrimination, collaboration with them, their parents, and community

Highlights of Findings from Analyses through different Genres

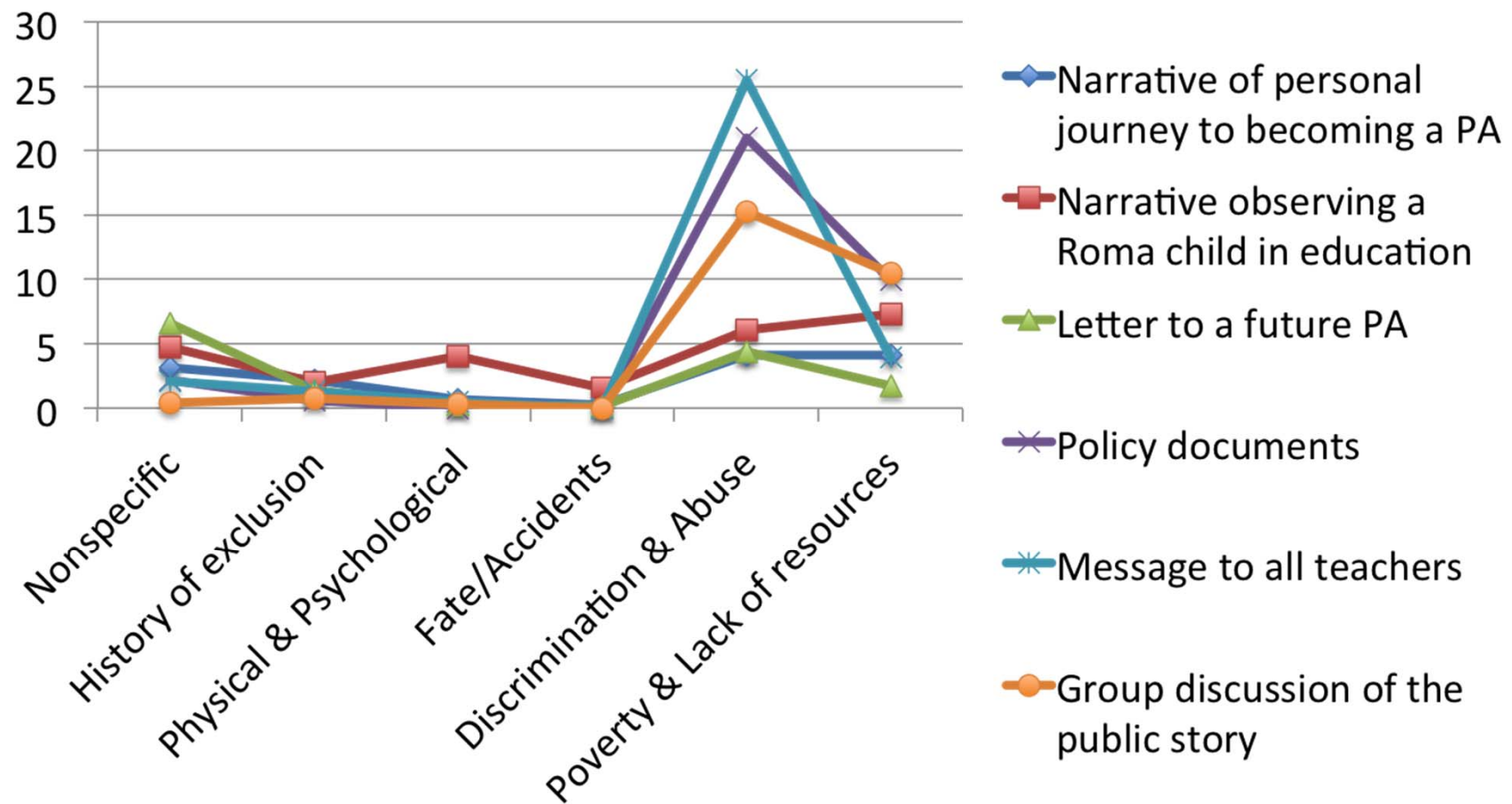


Assess situations carefully for their discriminatory or other intentions, and organize collaborative support involving institutions

Major organizing principles by genre



Diverse obstacles by genre



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

1. Complex, critical and creative experts – change agents

- Complexities of positioning brought out by multiple narratives; viewing social transformation from the perspective of change agents

2. Bases for Policy innovations

- Counter-stereotypical findings: Need to view social/educational transformation from the perspectives of the focal participants in the reform and to consider perspectives which do not completely match wider policies

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

3. Essential to recognize RPAs professionalism, ensure spaces for equal participation in policy making on school, local, regional and national level and profoundly involve PAs in:

- School development
- Own training Training of teachers
- Joint training activities of teachers and PAs
- Production of/for media

4. Need to create safe spaces for Roma internal discussion of obstacles and nuanced ways of coping with them, include sharing success, creativity and commitment to prevent burnout, empower PAs for their social mediation role

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“Not to forget” vignettes for
3rd generation of
policies/projects

Vignettes: not to forget 1

Policies

- Do not forget to address policies and not only projects
- Do not forget to address the mainstream policies – many obstacles are embedded there
- Do not forget the context of comprehensive policies, including:
 - education
 - + social support
 - + health
 - + employment

Vignettes: not to forget 2

Education system

- Do not forget to address the entire span of education trajectory:
 - access
 - + attendance
 - + attainment
 - + progression
- Do not forget the in-perfect context of education systems, especially missing areas
 - Financing
 - Management of schools
 - Parent participation

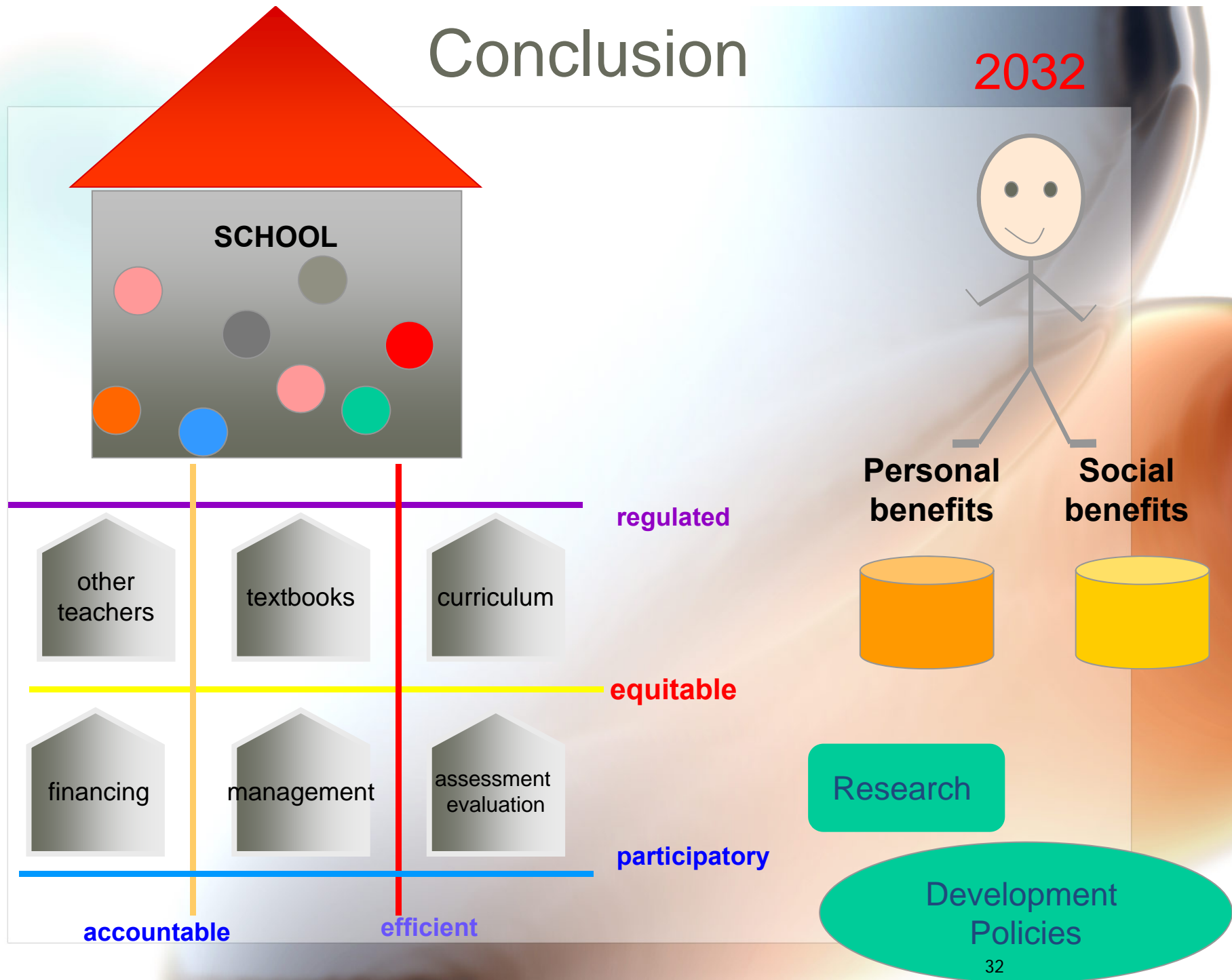
Vignettes: not to forget 3

Roma leadership and participation throughout the

- Policy cycle**
- Project cycle**
- As mediators between cultures**
- As social facilitators**
- As researchers**
- As change agents**

Conclusion

2032



A story of a Roma child

A long ago a mother lived with many children. They have been very poor, had a room without windows or doors, one bed and a table without chairs. The mother daily went to the village to work in women's houses. She would get few coins, cloth, some food, and that was how they lived.

Children would stay at home and care about each other. Although of different ages, no one went to school. They were poor but full of joy and closely attached. One day a young teacher came into their home. She asked them how they are, what are they doing and why don't they go to school. She was sad when she saw the conditions in which they lived, and was willing to help them.

The children gleefully told her about the happenings in their life at home. Their cleaver eyes twinkled when she asked them would they like to go to school. When the mother came, she could not believe that somebody came to visit her children and that that somebody was Roma and that she works at school. She was surprised and had happily accepted the hand offering help. The next day the teacher brought the cloth for Borka, Srdjan and Milica, and the mother dressed them and sent off to school. Frightened children timidly followed the teacher. They will never forget the first day at school, the stage fright and the assuring hand of their teacher. Their life has changed. They come to school regularly. Borka wants to become a teacher and Srdjan – the football player. Milica does not know yet, but she knows that she does not want to be a poor Roma.



Thank you for your attention!

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