

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

Critical Thinking Program Review

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the idea “that democratic practices in schools play an important role in the transition toward more open societies”¹, the Open Society Institute (OSI) launched the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project in 1997. Initially introduced in Albania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania and Russia, and in later years in other countries worldwide², the project was completed around 2001. The program was initiated as a professional training program for teachers and teacher educators to disseminate methodology seen essential to the development of critical thinking skills. After the termination of OSI’s financial support for the RWCT program in the 1997-2001 RWCT project countries, local RWCT initiatives coalesced into organizations that adapted RWCT programs to local contexts in order to cater for the initial and new target groups of educators, and other professionals in the field of education and beyond. This has led to the emergence of a wealth of new training programs and training materials which, at least to some extent, can be traced back to the RWCT program.

Attempts have been made before to map the extent to which RWCT has spawned new developments, but lists of project titles and target groups, or donors and their focus areas do little justice to this extraordinarily far-reaching growth.

OSI’s Education Support Program (ESP), which is in charge of the Critical Thinking program, has decided to conduct a Critical Thinking Program Review (CTPR), a fact-finding exercise to document the impact of the RWCT program in the countries which have implemented the RWCT program.

Objectives of the review and key issues

The aim of this Critical Thinking Program Review (CTPR) is to document the outcomes of RWCT country initiatives in order to evaluate the impact that RWCT programs might have had on particular target groups (primarily educators, students and the institutional set-up of RWCT programs at country level). As part of this review, ESP is interested in gaining a better understanding of the sustainability of RWCT programs in close to thirty countries³ and the diversity of RWCT-related developments in content and institutional set-up that have taken place over the past five to eight years.

More specifically, the CTPR aims to find out the extent to which the initial objectives of the RWCT project, as conceived by OSI, were and still are being achieved in country-based RWCT programs today. These initial objectives are formulated in the first guidebook by Steele, Meredith and Temple.⁴ The objectives are outlined as follows:

¹ <http://www.uni.edu/coe/rwct/project/about.html> (accessed on 30.12.2009)

² *Idem.*

³ A total of twenty eight countries are the focus of this review, namely Albania, Armenia, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Thailand (Myanmar), Ukraine and Uzbekistan. In all these countries RWCT programs were implemented with the support of OSI between 1997 and 2004. However, the present study draws on the experiences of a sample of eight countries, namely Argentina, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania and Thailand (Myanmar).

⁴ Guidebook 1 of the set of 8 initial guidebooks by Steele, J.L., Meredith, K.S., Temple, C. *A Framework for Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, prepared for the Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking Project, Guidebook I (unpublished)

1. To develop open, collaborative, collegial, long-term relations between educators from various cultures and circumstances, which will expand the understanding of teaching and learning for all children and lead to a free flow of ideas between peoples
2. To increase the capacity of students to think critically, engage in critical reflection, take responsibility for their own learning, form independent opinions, and show respect for the opinions of others
3. To present practical methods of teaching based on philosophically consistent and theoretically sound ideas
4. To place teaching within a comprehensive instructional framework that guides instructional decision making
5. To empower faculty to take responsibility for becoming model teachers of RWCT able to reflect on students' thinking and learning and refine methods based on those reflections
6. To engender participant confidence based on successful implementation of the program in their own educational setting
7. To prepare participants to deliver the program to their peers.

In the following sections, these objectives are grouped according to their intended audience. A section on changes and adaptations to the content will address objectives two and three. Issues surrounding teachers and professional development will be presented in response to objectives one, five and six. Objective six revolves around changes in student knowledge and behaviors and will be addressed separately. In addition to researching the impact of the program along the lines of these objectives, the review is aimed to reveal the different developments that these country initiatives have experienced over recent years. This will address some points from the final objective.

To summarize, this review targets several key aspects related to the sustainability of the original RWCT project. It reviews the impact that the initial program had upon the target groups of educators, students and institutions. It identifies and describes the RWCT-related developments that have been initiated by local RWCT program directors and trainers. Finally, it attempts to summarize data as to the extent to which the original RWCT project goals were achieved.

Research Design of the Review

The purpose of this section is to outline the design of the research and methods. The data collection was conducted with the cooperation of country-based RWCT program members. The data collection of both primary and secondary sources followed different protocol in the various countries, producing a somewhat varied level of detail in reporting. In general, RWCT country organizations' staff gathered and communicated the collected data. In some cases, the country-based organizations provided a summary of findings for the authors of

the report⁵ or alternatively produced existing documents that contained some relevant information for the review⁶.

Selection of countries for the review

As indicated earlier, the RWCT project was initiated by OSI and local partners in close to 30 countries beginning in 1997. For the purposes of this report, eight countries were chosen in which primary data collection could take place. In choosing these countries, three considerations were used as criteria. First, the sample of countries needed to be representative of the various RWCT program histories based on the year of program inception and the duration of the program itself. Six countries where the RWCT project was launched in 1997 or 1998⁷ were included (the Czech Republic - 1997, Georgia - 1998, Kyrgyzstan - 1997, Lithuania - 1997, Moldova - 1998 and Romania - 1997). Thailand (Myanmar) and Argentina were added to these, having RWCT programs which were initiated in 2002⁸ and 2004⁹, respectively. The second criteria related to geography. Countries were selected by geographic location in an attempt to represent the various regions where the RWCT project was implemented. Four countries from Europe, one from the Caucasus region, one from Central Asia, one from South East Asia and one from Latin America have been included. Finally, selected countries' willingness to take part in the review was necessary for their inclusion: of the intended eight, all wished to take part.¹⁰

Data Sources and Instruments

The research design for the CTPR focuses on four RWCT target groups: RWCT *teachers*¹¹, RWCT *university teachers*¹², RWCT *trainers*¹³, and RWCT *program coordinators*. In addition, a group of non-educational institutional partners was consulted. From each country, one focus group each with seven to fifteen RWCT teachers, seven to fifteen RWCT university teachers and seven to fifteen RWCT trainers was to be completed.

Optional individual interviews were used to supplement the focus groups. For these interviews, the same topic guides were used in conversations with two or three RWCT *teachers*, *trainers* and *university teachers*. In addition, interviews with the RWCT program coordinators of each selected country and individual interviews with three to seven partners in each country were to be carried out in the primary data collection phase.

In addition to this body of information gathered from individuals involved in RWCT programs in different capacities, the design also entailed a review of documents of two kinds to supply factual information about current RWCT programs in the eight countries. First, a

⁵ Georgia

⁶ Kyrgyzstan

⁷ See American Institutes for Research (AIR), 'The 2000-2001 Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project Impact and Institutionalization Study', 2001, p. 4.

⁸ Lung, N. 'The Review of Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) in Burmese Educational Context', 2009, p. 1.

⁹ This is inferred from the report submitted by Fundación Leer, 'Document review', Buenos Aires, May-June 2009.

¹⁰ It should be noted that ESP offered financial compensation for primary data collection to all organizations that participated in the study underpinning the report.

¹¹ For a definition, see Crawford, E. et al, 'Project Certification Standards and Procedures: The Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project', Newark, DE: International reading Association / Open Society Institute, 2001.

¹² *Idem.*

¹³ *Idem.*

review of existing empirical research focusing on any aspect of RWCT country programs was used as a means to collect information regarding RWCT program outcomes. Second, a review of country reports and other documents was conducted to provide information about outputs of country RWCT programs, e.g. number of teachers and university faculty trained, number of newly certified RWCT trainers per year, number of individuals from other target groups trained, number of hours of RWCT courses, program budgets over a period of eleven years (from 1997 to 2008, where applicable) etc. The collection of secondary data is seen as complementary to the primary data gathered from RWCT teachers, university faculty, trainers, program coordinators and other partners.

The Data Collected

As indicated earlier, the primary data collected, although relying on the same collection instruments, differs between countries because of the collection methods. This variation included differences in reporting, as some data was reported via face-to-face group or individual interviews, telephone interviews or questions completed through email. Additional variations include the means by which data was reported. Some responses were transcribed verbatim and submitted, while other responses were summarized before submission. In addition, the different country organizations gathered different types of data. While some carried out focus groups with RWCT teachers, university faculty and trainers without individual interviews, others only provided interview data collected via telephone or email. The primary sources of data were gathered between May and August 2009, with different countries delivering their data package earlier or later within this four-month period.

Summary of Data Reports per country

Below is a comprehensive list of how data was reported by each country.

Argentina: individual face-to-face interviews with five RWCT teachers and one face-to-face interview with an RWCT trainer. No focus groups or interviews were carried out with university faculty. No interview was carried out with the coordinator of the RWCT program, nor were there interviews with institutional partners.

The Czech Republic: two focus groups were carried out with an unknown number of RWCT teachers, university faculty and RWCT trainers, who discussed the questions in the RWCT teacher topic guide and found the included questions to be relevant. Following the focus group, seventy-one individuals in total, including six university faculty and an unknown number of RWCT teachers and trainers, provided answers in a written format via email to the questions listed. In addition to this information, an incomplete interview supplied in written format with the RWCT program coordinator was also provided. No interviews with partners were carried out.

Georgia: focus groups with a total of fifteen RWCT teachers from five cities¹⁴ and a total of ten RWCT university faculty from three locations¹⁵ were carried out. In addition, focus groups with RWCT trainers were carried out in Tbilisi with seven trainers, as well as interviews with one trainer each from Batumi, Gori, Ozurgeti and Telavi. No in-depth interviews were carried out with either teachers, members of university faculty or trainers. One

¹⁴ Batumi (4 persons), Kaspi (2 persons), Rustavi (5 persons), Tbilisi (3 persons) and Telavi (2 persons).

¹⁵ Batumi, Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

interview with the RWCT program coordinator in Georgia and two interviews with partner nongovernmental organizations were reported, although it is unclear whether they were carried out separately and in what format. It is also unclear based on the summary of answers whether all questions included in the respective topic guides were covered in the interviews.

Kyrgyzstan: no primary data reached the authors as of the writing of this report. Secondary source reports were used to gain a picture of developments within the country.

Lithuania: responses to the questions in the topic guides were provided by fifteen teachers, fifteen trainers, and ten university faculty, presumably in a non-face-to-face manner. In addition, in-depth interviews were carried out with three RWCT teachers, three RWCT university faculty and three RWCT trainers. A complete interview with the RWCT program coordinator was also sent (although the exact format of its completion is unknown). Two RWCT partner organizations provided answers via email.

Moldova: one focus group each with a group of RWCT teachers, university faculty and trainers, respectively, was completed, although not all issues included in the respective topic guides were covered. No in-depth interviews were carried out. In addition to the focus groups, the program coordinator also provided answers to the questions listed in the topic guide. Information from partner organization(s) was also reported, although it is unclear how many organizations were approached for data and in what format they offered their answers.

Romania: eleven RWCT teachers returned answers via email to the questions contained in the respective topic guide and another two teachers were interviewed individually. In addition, seven RWCT university faculty members returned answers via email and one faculty member was interviewed. Twelve RWCT trainers provided responses to questions addressed to them, via email, while two other trainers were interviewed. No focus groups with teachers, university faculty or trainers were carried out. The Romanian RWCT program coordinator was interviewed, and four institutional partners – three NGOs and one local council – were approached for this report to provide interview data, which was then reported via email.

Thailand (Myanmar): fourteen RWCT teachers provided answers to the questions in the supplied topic guide via email. Of these, three teachers were selected for in-depth interviews, carried out via telephone. The questions in the topic guide targeting RWCT trainers were completed individually and sent via email by ten trainers, three of whom were then asked for an in-depth interview via telephone. The three teachers and trainers interviewed were selected from different types of schools and different regions of the country (inside Myanmar and along the Thai-Burmese border). A complete interview with the program coordinator was also provided. No information was gathered from RWCT university faculty or from other institutional partners.

The review of this primary source data consisted of comparing and contrasting in-country responses and then subsequently comparing and contrasting these across different countries. Interview and focus group information for the same groups (i.e. RWCT teachers, university faculty and trainers, respectively) was reviewed together. The answers to certain questions are reported together in some cases because in several countries (e.g. the Czech Republic), the focus groups included all three target audiences.

Secondary Source Data

Coupled with group and individual interviews, information sent by each individual country also included two sets of documents, forming the basis of the secondary data analysis. As indicated above, the review of secondary sources draws namely upon two types of documents. Empirical research and other RWCT program reports were examined to reveal particularities in *outcomes* regarding different target groups of the programs, e.g. educators, students and RWCT trainers (see country reports for a list of publications). Additionally, documents which summarize program *outputs*, particularly after the withdrawal of OSI from the implementation and/or financing of RWCT programs, were studied with an eye towards sustainability aspects.

The review of publications and reports focusing on RWCT program outcomes in different locales for different target groups followed a pre-defined format. Thus, the review focused on main conclusions of studies and reports as concerns the seven initial objectives of the RWCT project at its launching in the late 1990's and on the main recommendations of these studies.

Limitations of the Review

Although the design and data collection instruments were conceived in such a fashion as to provide sufficient information regarding the sustainability of RWCT programs and shed light on the diversity of developments characterizing organizations delivering RWCT trainings for the initial and new target groups, a series of limitations is evident in the research underpinning this report.

A first set of limitations relates to the design, in particular to the countries included in the review and the ways in which data collection was completed. As indicated earlier, very few scientifically sound justifications existed for choosing the eight countries that feature in this review. Given financial constraints, it was not possible to include all countries. In addition, the authors were not in charge of data collection, but relied on individuals from each country to compile the data package requested by ESP for the review. As a result, the eight countries included in the review were to an extent self-selected and can only represent the experiences of a greater number of countries where RWCT programs have taken place over the past twelve years to a limited extent.

A second set of limitations relates to the data collected and provided for analysis. As indicated above, the different individuals compiling the requested information in different countries gathered very different types of data in varying formats, which were also incomplete in many cases (most notably in relation to Kyrgyzstan). Furthermore, the data compiled was sometimes transmitted as a report rather than in raw form, making systematic analysis virtually impossible. The fragmented nature of the data makes the exploration of particular narratives extremely difficult.

A third set of limitations is connected to the data analysis. Due to the limitations described in connection to the data, a systematic analysis of the initially planned qualitative data was deemed unfeasible. As a result, the findings are in essence summaries of responses given, with the most recurrent ones prioritized in the account of the authors.

Furthermore, no justifications existed for prioritizing focus groups and interviews rather than employing other data collection methods. Finally, the information gathered to document the institutional evolution and developments of RWCT training following the withdrawal of the OSI seem insufficient when compared to the topics covered in group and individual discussions with RWCT teachers, university faculty and trainers regarding the outcomes of RWCT programs. Yet the issue of RWCT organizations' institutional development and sustainability is one of the main objectives of the review initiated by the ESP, representing an imbalance in the collection procedure.

For all these reasons, the authors feel that recommendations cannot be made drawing on the primary and secondary data collected for the purposes of this report. Thus, the conclusions, analysis and recommendations of this report can be made only when acknowledging the varied nature of data sources and in recognizing that this data is predominantly self-reported.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE RWCT PROJECT

What is the RWCT project?

The RWCT project was initiated as a professional development program for teachers and teacher educators.¹⁶ RWCT introduces research-based, instructional methods to help students think reflectively, take ownership of their personal learning, understand the logic of arguments, listen attentively, debate confidently and become independent, life-long learners. The program can be used in upper primary, middle and secondary schools, as well as within higher education, for all subjects with existing curricula. RWCT methods are adapted for classrooms in order to promote active inquiry, student-initiated learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, cooperative learning, and authentic assessment.¹⁷

Strategies for the development and sustainable implementation of RWCT are designed for each country individually, based on local human and economic resources, and are the result of close consultation with partners in that country.

RWCT is designed to build local capacity. RWCT trainers recognize that local educators' knowledge is critical to the overall success of the project. RWCT is designed to invite modifications that resonate within each country. Mentored by a select group of international educators, RWCT builds a solid base of local teacher trainers, ensuring that each education system the capacity for expansion.

For classroom teachers, RWCT training consists of a series of four to five workshops over an 8-12 month period. During these workshops, participants practice the methods demonstrated, adapt them to their own classrooms and circumstances, and substitute national texts for those introduced in training workshops for further application. The participant teachers also meet on a monthly basis with colleagues to discuss their progress. Additionally, teachers are observed in the classroom and provided with feedback to help drive their development.¹⁸

RWCT has a set of standards and a certification process for both teachers and trainers which is available to all participants and is internationally recognized.¹⁹

Brief history and geographical influence

Since 1997, trainers from the RWCT group have brought extensive staff development programs in best practices of teaching for active learning and critical thinking to more than 50,000 teachers in over 30 countries, and those teachers have taught more than 2 million students using interactive and engaging methods.

The RWCT project received full funding from the Open Society Institute's Division of Children and Youth and was housed within the International Development Division of the International Reading Association from 1997 to 2001.

RWCT was offered originally in the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Russia, Poland, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Through various other projects of the OSI, RWCT has been offered for Burmese teachers in refugee camps in Thailand, teacher trainers in

¹⁶ <http://www.uni.edu/coe/rwct/project/about.html> (accessed on 30.12.2009)

¹⁷ See also Sanchez, E. M., Boyd-Batstone, P. and Garcia, D. 'Building Capacity for Reading and Writing based on the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project', International Reading Association, Fundacion Soros Guatemala, Consejo de Lectura de Guatemala, 2006.

¹⁸ See also American Institutes for Research (AIR), 'The 2000-2001 Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project Impact and Institutionalisation Study', 2001, p. 1-4.

¹⁹ Crawford, E. et al, 'Project Certification Standards and Procedures: The Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project', Newark, DE: International reading Association / Open Society Institute, 2001.

Liberia, and educators in Turkey. Derivative training projects are also ongoing in Central and South America.

Past Evidence of Effectiveness

In 2000, OSI commissioned the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an independent evaluation of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project. After observing teachers in the project in four countries – Macedonia, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Kyrgyzstan – and comparing those project teachers with a control group of teachers, the evaluators found that participating in the project had changed teachers' practices in important ways. More specifically, the evaluators concluded that RWCT teachers integrate more critical thinking principles into their teaching practices and at a deeper level and exhibit higher levels of authentic pedagogy than other teachers -- skills that increase as teachers gain more familiarity with RWCT. RWCT teaching behaviors are positively associated with pupil scores on critical thinking assessments. RWCT teachers have strong positive feelings about the RWCT project and believe that it has changed the way in which they interact with pupils.²⁰

The evaluation surveys pointed out that RWCT teachers were more likely to increase their use of critical thinking pedagogy over time. The data also revealed a significant difference between the classroom practices of teachers who participated in RWCT workshops and teachers who had not. RWCT teachers included more teaching techniques aimed at fostering critical thinking, and they increasingly used communication patterns and other classroom techniques that supported critical thinking and discussion. The data revealed that the program had an impact on teaching practices and student performance as well as the attitudes of teachers and learners.

The RWCT project was singled out by UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education (IBE) as one of 25 promising practices world-wide in peace-building and was featured on a CD ROM entitled "Learning to Live Together: Good Practices in Schools" (Geneva: UNESCO/IBE, 2003).

EVALUATING IMPACT ON THE TARGET GROUPS

This section focuses on the impact of the various targets of the original project goals. These include the content, its outgrowths and the ways in which it has been adapted to local contexts. Specifically, this means the delivery of the ERR framework and the use of the RWCT curriculum itself. Beyond the content and delivery of the program, the review focuses on the impact upon participant teachers. This centers upon their professional development within school and national contexts, as well as their perceived developments in self-confidence and personal growth as educators. The next focus is students, and their perceived ability to think critically, evidence of changes in achievement, and differences in desired learning behaviors. Educational reform is the next target area, and this report focuses on evidence of reform as seen influence upon textbooks, contributions by RWCT affiliates to research publications, and changes within the national curricula. The final section is a review of sustainability aspects, namely how the project was kept alive in various national contexts after the initial launch with OSI.

CONTENT

In attempting to map developments in program, we were interested in learning about

²⁰ American Institutes for Research (AIR), 'The 2000-2001 Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project Impact and Institutionalization Study', 2001.

changes within the content and method of delivery of the original program. Further, this review endeavors to track how sustainable the structure is by asking respondents to what degree they continue to use the teachings from the program, and if so to give reason as to why they choose these methods. This section will thus examine how program delivery has changed since the initial implementation. This is particularly relevant when exploring offshoots and impacts outside the formal education sector.

The ERR framework²¹

The RWCT Project developed a comprehensive lesson framework with three key stages of instruction in order to aid teachers in guiding students toward better critical thinking skill acquisition. By design and intention, the pedagogical framework *Evocation, Realization of Meaning, and Reflection (ERR)* and the teaching techniques that support it, introduce some shifts in what it means to be a teacher and what it means to be a learner. The framework for thinking and learning is built on the premise that previous knowledge is the primary determiner of what one can learn. The framework provides methods by which teachers can effectively activate student thinking and set a purpose for learning. The activities and strategies provide rich material for discussion, engage students in the learning process and stimulate change in thinking and perspective. Learners are continually exposed to varied opinions and are encouraged to express their own ideas and ask authentic questions. The three stages of this framework of Evocation, Realization of Meaning, and Reflection are described briefly below.

Evocation (E)

In this first phase, learners are actively engaged in recalling what they know about a certain topic or problem. This forces them to examine their own knowledge and begin thinking about the topic they will soon be exploring in detail. Of primary importance is that within this initial activity, the learners establish a baseline of personal knowledge to which new knowledge can be added. Information presented without context, or information that learners are unable to connect to known knowledge, is information that may soon be lost. Learners/participants build new understandings from the foundation of previous knowledge and beliefs. This stage serves to illuminate misunderstandings and confusion that otherwise would not surface without active examination of prior knowledge and beliefs.

Realization of Meaning (R)

The second stage of the framework for thinking and learning is referred to as the *realization of meaning* stage. This is the stage in which the learner comes into contact with new information or ideas. This contact could take the form of reading text, watching a film, listening to a speech, or doing an experiment. This is also the stage of learning during which teachers have the least influence on the learner.

The first essential task of this second stage is to sustain engagement and maintain the interest and momentum established during the evocation stage. The second essential task is to support learners' efforts to monitor their own comprehension. Effective learners and efficient readers monitor their own understanding as new information is encountered.

²¹

Question 1 in the RWCT educators and trainer topic guides for interviews.

Reflection (R)

The third stage in the framework is the reflection stage. This stage is often forgotten in teaching, yet it is essential. It is during the reflection stage that learners consolidate new learning and actively restructure their schema to accommodate new concepts. Whether that difference is seen in terms of new understandings or a new set of behaviors or a new belief, learning is characterized by genuine and lasting change. This change occurs only when learners actively engage in restructuring their schema to accommodate new learning. Within a lesson this may take the form of summarizing the main ideas, interpreting the main points, sharing opinions or personal responses, testing out the ideas or asking additional questions.

One of the initial objectives of the RWCT program was “to place comprehensive instructional teaching within a framework that guides instructional decision making.” Consequently, we wanted to learn whether RWCT teachers and trainers still use the Evocation-Realization of Meaning-Reflection (ERR) framework promoted in the project and why they choose the methods for their classrooms.

With very few exceptions the respondents stated that they use the ERR framework on a weekly basis and listed the following reasons for its use:

- it follows the logic of the constructivist approach to learning;
- it allows building new learning on existing knowledge;
- by including Evocation the teacher can identify where the students are in their learning process; and the students know what follows next;
- it includes reflection as a mandatory phase, which helps to increase and solidify learning; by allocating time for reflection, the teachers get useful feedback from the students about their learning, and whether the objectives of the lesson have been achieved;
- it makes learning meaningful;
- it helps develop learning skills;
- it contributes to the development of critical thinking in both the students and the teacher;
- it motivates students to get involved and stay focused throughout the lesson;
- it creates a relaxed learning environment;
- it meets the need to actively involve the students in learning.

Interestingly, it is not only participants from the trainings who use the ERR framework. Trainers also responded on the usefulness. The RWCT trainers have pointed out that they use the ERR framework for much the same reasons as stated above in planning and delivering training sessions.

“The ERR framework is beneficial in the planning of lessons “because it helps [develop] deep, sound learning. [It contributes to] better motivation of students, intensified processes of thinking, establishes logical connections between various concepts, [and it develops] metacognition which will influence the students’ future career.” (RWCT trainer)

Most frequently used teaching strategies promoted by the RWCT project²²

Another major objective of the RWCT project was “to present practical methods of

²²

Question 2 in the RWCT educators and trainer topic guides for interviews.

teaching based on philosophically consistent and theoretically sound ideas”.²³ The RWCT project introduced an impressive number of teaching methods (close to 100) mostly – if not exclusively – developed by North-American educators, and presented in English language specialist literature.²⁴

Respondents were asked to list the methods they use at least once a week and to provide some explanation for their choice. Most of these explanations were related to the subject matter and age group. Respondents pointed out that their choice of methods or strategies always depends on the objectives of the lesson. The most frequently mentioned methods include (in alphabetical order):

- Academic controversy
- Brainstorming
- Cinquain
- Clustering
- Concept map
- Cubing
- Directed Reading-Thinking Activity / Directed Listening-Thinking Activity
- Dual entry diary
- Free write
- Gallery tour
- INSERT
- Jigsaw
- Key terms
- KWL
- One stay, three stray
- Paired reading, paired summarizing
- Pens in the middle
- Predictions
- Quadrants
- Reading workshop
- Reciprocal teaching
- Round robin review
- Save the last word for me
- Shared inquiry
- Study guide
- Think-Pair-Share
- Venn diagram
- Writing workshop

Program Structure

We were interested to learn how the RWCT teachers, trainers and university faculty have actually developed or refined what they originally learned in the RWCT project. To

²³ See Steele, J.L., Meredith, K.S., Temple, C. *A Framework for Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, prepared for the Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking Project, Guidebook I (unpublished)

²⁴ For an almost complete list of methods, see the tables of contents of guidebooks 1 to 8 (unpublished) of the RWCT Program, developed by the project co-directors Kurtis Meredith, Jeannie Steele, Charles Temple and Scott Walter.

synthesize the respondents' answers, taking RWCT from the training room to the classroom involved adjustment – to the age group and the subject matters taught. The RWCT trainers have had more experience with RWCT and therefore listed more aspects both under “RWCT development” and “initiatives at the educational policy level, textbooks and curriculum development, assessment, etc.” than did the RWCT teachers and university faculty.

The RWCT program was initially designed and implemented as a staff development course for in-service teachers. However, with the involvement of teacher educators as workshop participants, interest quickly turned toward institutionalizing the critical thinking pedagogy in programs of pre-service teacher preparation. Further, as university level participants were also drawn from departments of sociology, psychology, and the natural sciences, these instructors began experimenting with critical thinking pedagogy in their classrooms as well.

New courses applying the RWCT program were developed in many different areas for various target groups. Courses in civic education, HIV and AIDS awareness, gender issues, management and migration were often seen in more than one country. In reviewing specific information given on program developments from each affiliate, it was clear that in countries with less RWCT exposure (Argentina and Burma where RWCT had only been introduced recently) there were fewer outgrowths and program adaptations. While this makes generalizations across countries more difficult, it alternatively serves to highlight unique developments within each nation. What follows is a synopsis of program developments within each target country.

In *Argentina*, where there has been only limited exposure to RWCT training of some Step-by-Step trainers (first RWCT teachers trained in 2005), and where in fact only six schools have been introduced to RWCT, the only developments mentioned are slight adjustments to some methods.

In *Burma* and Burmese refugee schools in Thailand, where RWCT was first introduced in 2002, the RWCT teachers have made adjustments to the RWCT methodology to fit some specific curriculum content especially in monastic schools. In addition, they designed new curriculum, developed especially for the refugee schools.

RWCT was first introduced to the Czech Republic, Kyrgyzstan²⁵, Lithuania and Romania in 1997, and to Georgia and Moldova in 1998.²⁶ The significantly longer exposure of these six countries to the RWCT program as compared to Argentina and Burma made it possible for the RWCT teams of teachers and trainers not only to refine the program, but also to impact educational reform in their respective countries. All these six countries have continued implementing RWCT in different ways, designing training programs for a variety of target groups, influencing pre-service teacher training programs, and impacting curricular reform.

In the *Czech Republic*, the adjustments mentioned include connecting the RWCT methodology with the Key Competencies and the Expected Outcomes in the national Curricular Framework. They reportedly plan more carefully for the achievement of curricular goals. Another improvement made to the program concerns assessment. Respondents report paying significantly more attention to assessment techniques and instruments. An increasingly innovative combination of teaching methods has also been reported. Initiatives of the Czech RWCT concerning educational reform include participation in developing national teacher standards, the provision of a training program for school-based curriculum developers, textbook writing, and production of a variety of publications to promote RWCT.

²⁵ No specific information is available for the Kyrgyz experience regarding developments that educators made to the RWCT methodology since 2001.

²⁶ <http://www.uni.edu/coe/rwct/project/about.html> (accessed on 06.09.2009)

In *Lithuania*, the RWCT teachers and trainers have been using RWCT approaches to conduct parent-teacher meetings. They have refined some reading methods, introduced new reflection methods, perfected the use of portfolios for evaluation, and combined “traditional” methods with RWCT ones. A number of respondents have described how they took their RWCT-gained experience into various national-level working groups active in education reform.

“I prepared national level programs of native language for basic education, methodical recommendations to the program, methodical publication *Effective reading strategies: reading workshop*. “ (RWCT trainer)

“We have participated in a working group to adapt the RWCT certification system to Lithuania.” (RWCT trainer)

“I have developed a teaching program of Polish as foreign language and a textbook of Polish as foreign language” (RWCT trainer)

Other respondents participated in EU-funded projects where they used their RWCT experience to contribute to the successful implementation of the project.

In *Romania*, RWCT teachers and trainers were involved in developing the curriculum and teaching materials for Second Chance education, an initiative developed for older drop-outs, where they used the RWCT framework as well as strategies. The materials developed included textbooks, workbooks, and a teachers’ guide. The Romanian language and literature and civic education curriculum and assessment have been greatly influenced by the RWCT program, as the curriculum developers and textbook writers were trained in RWCT. Roma education has also benefited from RWCT both in terms of teacher training and curriculum development, including textbook writing. Multiannual national education reform programs (Rural Education Project supported by the World Bank, Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups supported by the EU) used RWCT trainers to train the local trainers, and to promote active and cooperative learning. RWCT has spawned in-service and pre-service teacher training programs as well as a large number of school-based curricula, all developed locally. Inclusive education, multicultural education, anti-corruption education, community participation in education, and education for sustainable development are all outgrowth areas which have seen influence by the RWCT program in Romania.

In *Georgia*²⁷, many RWCT teacher respondents state that they combine some methods according to classroom requirements and specific situations that make lessons productive and interesting. As for the teachers’ participation in educational policy-making and curriculum development, some of the teachers stated that they gave recommendations from their own instructional practices, and the majority think that they take initiatives at the school level. According to teachers’ opinions, the RWCT program had a great impact on the Georgian educational system as national curriculum, new textbooks, as well as teacher standards developed by the Ministry of Education and Sciences were harmonized with RWCT program principles. Examinations increasingly are developing to consider students’ conceptual skills, their critical and creative thinking. In all, they feel as though the school curriculum has become more learner-oriented. A teacher reports, “This program highly encouraged the introduction of many projects and initiatives that support and supplement the educational reform in the country.”

²⁷ All information on Georgia was provided in the country report summarizing the findings of focus groups and interviews with the 15 school teachers, 10 university faculty and 11 trainers.

The majority of teachers report feeling that the current reform in educational system encourages teachers to apply RWCT-style teaching. The Georgian university professors interviewed think that their involvement in the program had a significant impact on the improvement of the university curriculum as syllabus requirements now correspond with the basic principles and philosophy of the program.

The majority of Georgian RWCT trainers state that they created new methods and strategies out of the initial set of RWCT methods. According to them, the program itself promotes creative approaches towards designing instructional processes. The majority of trainers are authors of various school guidebooks and instructional manuals, experts of accreditation in evaluating professional teacher development programs and in reviewing schools. Some of the respondents have participated in the development of the National Academic Standards, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Sciences. In fact, in the process of outlining and implementing various school reform policies, the Ministry of Education and Sciences has hired the RWCT program trainers as the core team.

In *Moldova*, the RWCT teachers reported that they started applying RWCT strategies in computer-assisted teaching. They have generalized the use of portfolios in evaluation and have adapted some of the RWCT strategies to a broader age groups and subject matter. The university faculty respondents named new strategies they have developed, as well as new curriculum (moral and civic education, European integration, school-community relations). Similarly, the RWCT trainers have developed curriculum and textbooks in chemistry, physics, and civic education. They applied RWCT approaches in parent-teacher meetings, wrote a guidebook for its implementation, and used the RWCT methodology to develop curriculum on HIV/AIDS prevention and healthy life style for vocational schools of Moldova.

Standards and variations within the certification process

The assessment and certification processes were designed to be accessible and transparent to those being certified and to those who certify. Certification was viewed as a developmental process in which participants are provided with clear recommendations and effective mentoring so that they can prepare for review. By becoming familiar with the standards and assessment processes and by incorporating them as goals into their vision for excellent teaching, RWCT-certified teachers and trainers took important professional steps for themselves and the students they serve.

Today, there is no standard structure of RWCT courses provision for teachers and trainers because it has been adapted to the context of each country. Some countries concentrated on providing short RWCT courses (Moldova, Lithuania), while others used the more traditional RWCT model (Georgia, Romania). The requirement of RWCT training for Higher Education faculty has stayed closer to the original RWCT model (more than 40 hours of training). Some of the countries (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova) provide a rather constant number of RWCT courses for Higher Education faculty members, while the other targeted countries do not provide RWCT courses for university teachers at all. The RWCT dissemination phase focused more on providing training and professional development courses rather than on sharing experiences at the national or international levels.

The RWCT project has international standards for teachers and trainers, but there are no international standards for country programs. The certification process has played a crucial role in quality assurance at the level of teachers, but has had a smaller influence upon trainers. The number of newly certified RWCT trainers is rather insignificant, and most of the countries involved the initial team of RWCT trainers (except Kyrgyzstan

which trained a new pool of trainers in 2006). Romania and Georgia report the certification of additional trainers (between two and five per year).

Challenges and solutions relating to the ERR Content and Framework²⁸

When asked about challenges encountered in applying the RWCT approach to teaching, the respondents most frequently pointed out time and classroom management-related issues. Other challenges pertain to the teachers' relations with the students, parents, fellow teachers, or school management. As expected, the trainers describe difficulties encountered earlier in their RWCT teaching experience, while the teachers and university faculty sometimes describe current difficulties.

Challenges related to time issues and solutions identified

Some teachers only teach one 45 or 50-minute period a week, which does not provide enough time to cover the curriculum, *and* to teach the students metacognitive skills. Time constraints, especially when coupled with challenging classroom settings, have prevented some teachers from using some cooperative learning. In the beginning, due to their students' lack of experience with the new methods, some teachers did not manage to finish lessons on time, nor did they manage to cover the reflection phase, and consequently were unable to achieve the objectives set. Sometimes the teachers were unable to estimate how long it would take to complete certain cooperative learning activities.

Among the solutions mentioned are to invest more time in lesson planning, to adjust the methods so that the key points remain but less essential elements are changed, and lastly to assign unfinished tasks as homework.

Challenges related to the cost of teaching resources and solutions identified

Delivering a lesson that has been carefully prepared and providing a variety of sources entails higher costs, more paper and other consumables. Often times, schools are not ready to cover such costs. Preparing fewer copies of certain materials and rotating them among the students, as well as collecting the copies after the lesson for future use seems to be a feasible solution to such challenges.

Challenges related to classroom management and solutions identified

The respondents have reported difficulties pertaining to large classroom size (Thailand/Myanmar) and desks nailed to the floor. Such conditions make it difficult to set up certain cooperative learning activities. In such cases, some teachers managed to change classrooms. Others made careful decisions about group size, or adjusted some of the cooperative learning strategies they really wanted to use.

Another challenge reported in this respect was that when the teachers first tried to use active and cooperative learning strategies it took insistence and firmness to manage group work in particular. Noise level, staying focused on the task instead of discussing irrelevant issues in groups, and observing ground rules in group work required practice to master on the part of the students. Students were sometimes unwilling to move places or work with some peers, or when they were asked to discuss issues, they were unwilling to approach discussions with an open mind.

The solutions the teachers identified involved spending time explaining to the students

²⁸

Questions 5 and 6 in the RWCT educators and trainer topic guides for interviews.

why they were expected to change seats or to discuss certain issues, and insisting on practicing the strategies. Making the ground rules as specific as possible and involving all students in agreeing on them was another solution. Some teachers are still struggling with some of the challenges listed above, but they are aware that given time, the students will get used to the new style of teaching/learning, and see its relevance.

Challenges related to fellow teachers' or school management's disapproval of RWCT approach and solutions identified

Some respondents pointed out that although in the teachers' meetings the student-centered, active and cooperative learning strategies were promoted officially, their colleagues did not have a high opinion about teachers who actually used RWCT strategies in the classroom. "In the beginning my colleagues looked at all these ideas with skepticism and viewed them as a show or simply games," stated one of the respondents. In the absence of whole-school movements, it was difficult for individual RWCT teachers to convince cynics that what they were doing in the classroom was actually learning.

The solutions to such situations proved to be inviting the principal to observe lessons; when the principal had a good opinion about the lesson, and encouraged the RWCT teacher to continue applying the strategies, sooner or later, the other teachers in the school changed their minds. As for the students, once they started enjoying active learning lessons, they demanded that other teachers use the RWCT approaches.

Challenges related to assessment and solutions identified

Some respondents found it difficult and frustrating to assess learning after using the RWCT approach to teaching, especially because the type of assessment RWCT promotes does not fit with the national evaluation system. Few respondents shared how they overcame this barrier to successful RWCT application. One solution was setting up an "assessment team" as in the case of Myanmar.²⁹

Other challenges

A few respondents stated that they had had difficulties with the parents, who demanded that all students should have the same information in their notebooks, meaning that the teachers should make sure that what they wanted the students to learn was dictated to them and recorded in their notebooks. Such parents thought that active learning was in fact entertainment. The solution to such cases was provided by involving the rest of the teachers in the school in helping make the parents understand the new approach to teaching.

One respondent who teaches at the pre-primary level described age-specific difficulties encountered in adapting the strategies to the younger years program. The solution was trying out some methods with older students first, and then making the necessary adjustments for younger students.

To conclude, the general solutions identified to face challenges in implementation of the RWCT program, especially in the beginning, have involved cooperation with fellow teachers, students, and parents. Persistence in using the strategies, even with reticent students, and determination to correct shortcomings, or make the necessary adjustments for efficient learning all proved beneficial.

²⁹ Lung, N. 'The Review of Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) in Burmese Educational Context', 2009.

TEACHERS

The first listed and likely most important goal of the RWCT project was “to develop open, collaborative, collegial, long-term relationships between educators from various cultures and circumstances, which will expand the understanding of teaching and learning for all children and lead to a free flow of ideas between peoples.”³⁰ In addition, as already stated above, the RWCT project also aimed “to engender participant confidence based on successful implementation of the program in their own educational setting.”³¹

In a number of transnational RWCT meetings participants reported that long-term involvement in the RWCT program contributes to both personal and professional development. In our review we were interested to learn how RWCT teachers and trainers perceive this growth in terms of career development, including making presentations at conferences³², accessing professional information, relationships with fellow educators at the school, national and international levels, and professional self-confidence.³³

RWCT-generated career development

The respondents all agree that RWCT has contributed significantly to their career development. RWCT *trainers* perceive that they have progressed more in their career than RWCT *teachers* have reported. Respondents shared a variety of ways in which they view their participation in the program as having been beneficial to their career development.

Using the ERR framework for planning activities has been mentioned by participants as a virtual guarantee of success in educational projects. They note here the variety of teaching strategies they have mastered and the improved classroom management skills which come in implementing collaborative learning structures. Respondents reported gaining a new perspective on the role and mission of a teacher as a guide in facilitating student learning. Some respondents report experiencing an improvement in self-esteem as they gain membership into a larger professional group of educators. As advocates of progressive education, they see more career opportunities noting the success of those who have become trainers, educational consultants, NGO leaders, authors and presenters. Many respondents report receiving increased appreciation from students, parents and the school community. Some respondents were inspired to enroll in post-graduate programs to earn advanced degrees in education. Others report that the improved skills, knowledge and self-confidence they gained as a result of the program has put them on the path to becoming school managers. Many of the respondents have initiated educational projects and contributed on the national and international levels to communicate with the broader network of educational advocates they have been introduced to in their affiliation with the RWCT program.

The respondents also listed conferences in which they participated, adding that the audience was generally interested in their presentations, asked for more details and specific examples on some aspects, crowded around the display of teaching materials shared, asked to

³⁰ See Steele, J.L., Meredith, K.S., Temple, C. *A Framework for Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, prepared for the Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking Project, Guidebook I (unpublished)

³¹ *Idem.*

³² It was one of the goals of the RWCT project to prepare participant to deliver the program to peers; this is largely achieved by the RWCT program delivery model (including training of trainers), but not exclusively done by RWCT trainers. Teachers also make presentations in various teacher conferences.

³³ Questions 8-10 and 12 in the RWCT educators and trainer topic guides for interviews.

be allowed to visit the RWCT teacher's classroom, wanted to know what school managers thought about the approaches used by the RWCT teacher, and inquired about the possibility of attending RWCT training.

Accessing professional information

In accessing professional information relating to instruction and curriculum, the respondents reported that the RWCT program had increased the availability of material. In particular they report using guidebooks which were created by the program or RWCT-trainers. Professional journals on both the national and international level began to appear. The "Thinking Classroom Journal," "Peremena," and "The Reading Teacher," were highlighted. Here, the respondents noted that they have become increasingly more sophisticated when choosing specialist literature. As one RWCT teacher explains, "My expectations of professional journals and seminars have risen."

Many of the respondents participated in conferences, both at the national and international level. They were encouraged to join professional organizations and began sharing professional information via these teachers' networks. In collaborative training groups, the respondents explored various educational topics which they then continued to research independently and share back to the group.

Relationship with fellow educators

We learned from the RWCT teachers and trainers how exposure to RWCT has influenced their relationships with fellow educators at three levels: the school and local level, the national level and the international level.

At the school level, most RWCT teachers report being asked for professional advice by peers and the school management. RWCT teachers are often asked to deliver "model lessons," in which they allow other teachers to observe them. Many respondents point out the improved communication among fellow educators at the school and local level, including in environments where traditionally the older, more experienced teachers are the advisors of the younger, less experienced ones.

In cases where the entire staff has been trained in RWCT, and the leadership of the school supports the use of RWCT, professional communication is much improved. Content-wise, respondents report the occurrence of more meaningful discussions among fellow educators in the school.

The respondents also reported situations where some educators who had not participated in RWCT training and do not understand what could be done differently felt threatened. In such cases teacher relations tend to have worsened.

At the national level, though some respondents state that their relations with fellow educators were not affected, the circle of professional contacts has widened. Many RWCT teachers have joined national professional teachers' associations and have become active conference-goers and presenters. Those respondents who have authored books or articles have reached a wide group of fellow educators. A number of respondents have become national trainers or educational consultants for their respective ministries of education and in-service teacher training programs.

As we move to the *international level*, the number of respondents who state that their professional relationships have been affected decreases. However, some trainers and a few teachers mention that they established professional relationships with educators from other countries during the RWCT training, as well as later in international conferences and projects. This was easier to facilitate in the early years of the project as there was an annual conference in existence.

RWCT teachers' self-confidence

Another goal of the RWCT project was “to engender participant confidence based on successful implementation of the program in their own educational setting.”³⁴ In the early years of the program, when the educational policies in target countries did not favor active learning and critical thinking as much as they currently do, many of the RWCT participants found themselves in educational environments where colleagues were wary of innovations. It comes as no surprise that there were challenges to face which have not disappeared completely, even though in many cases national educational policies have become more supportive of active learning and critical thinking.

Teachers consider that at first the reaction from the part of participants towards the RWCT program workshops were somewhat “sharp,” but after engaging in active demonstration and analysis of the approaches/methods from theoretical and practical points, “the reaction became smoother,” self-confidence increased and motivation strengthened (Georgia).

We asked the respondents to share their perceptions about how their participation in the RWCT program has contributed to building their self-confidence as teachers. A minority of the respondents point out that they did not lack self-confidence before their participation in the program, and therefore they do not perceive any significant change in this respect. Some others state that they did not necessarily become more self-confident, but they now have the tools and support to teach better. However, the majority of the respondents agree that their RWCT experience has made them more self-confident teachers, resonating earlier findings in Lithuania³⁵. They are better prepared to interact constructively with fellow teachers, with parents, and are confident that what they do in the classroom is conducive to facilitating better student learning. Self-reliability among the RWCT trainers is, as expected, perceived to have grown even more significantly than among teachers. To illustrate, we include some quotes:

“Using RWCT brings me satisfaction because it inspires my students, and has helped my professional growth.”

“You gain recognition as an expert from peers.”

“I can express myself better, and have more courage supporting my ideas with arguments.”

“I have become much more aware of my teaching skills.”

“A sense of contentedness – you are a different person after you go through the training.”

“I can persuade parents better that what we do has sense and that I do it well.”

“Even one single successful lesson brings the feeling of pleasure and success as I see the results of the students.”

³⁴ See Steele, J.L., Meredith, K.S., Temple, C. *A Framework for Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, prepared for the Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking Project, Guidebook I (unpublished)

³⁵ Part 1. of the 1999 Survey of Efficiency and Effectiveness of the RWCT project makes reference to this aspect.

“We have become freer. We can express our ideas in the school meetings, we can ask any questions. We are not afraid to say what we really think.”

“We are able to advise and help our colleagues, to engage all pupils in the lesson.”

“The experience of work as an RWCT trainer is useful for conducting meetings for parents.”

“We have the opportunity to interact and work with the good teachers from Lithuania and other countries.”

“When you receive good feedback from the other teachers about your former students, it is very pleasant and provides an even greater desire to use the RWCT methodology.”

“I was worried about the curriculum and teaching materials before I attended the RWCT training. [Then] I realized that RWCT can be used with any curriculum and any materials around us.”

STUDENTS

One of the goals of the RWCT project was “to increase the capacity of students to think critically, engage in critical reflection, take responsibility for their own learning, form independent opinions, and show respect for the opinions of others.”³⁶ This goal was obviously only indirectly targeted by the project through teacher training. In the present study, we have not set out to measure whether indeed the students’ capacity to think critically has increased (on this topic, see “The 2000-2001 Evaluation of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project”, commissioned by the Open Society Institute New York, and carried out by the American Institutes for Research). We have simply asked the respondents to share their perceptions about a series of aspects listed below:

- successes noted in students’ performance as a result of applying RWCT
- students’ improved capacity to think critically, including engagement in critical reflection, taking responsibility for one’s own learning, forming independent opinions and showing respect for the opinions of others
- students’ improved motivation for learning
- students’ improved communication skills

Successes noted in students’ overall school performance as a result of applying RWCT

The respondents unanimously agreed that these characteristics have become more pronounced in their students, and they listed several aspects to illustrate these improvements. According to the respondents, students who have received critical thinking lessons over the school year ask more directed questions and show more engagement in their learning. They read more independently and have mastered a variety of different comprehension strategies. In writing assignments, students create more meaningful texts, and they tend to concentrate more

³⁶ See Steele, J.L., Meredith, K.S., Temple, C. *A Framework for Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, prepared for the Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking Project, Guidebook I (unpublished)

on the ideas they wish to express. Students have become better editors of their own work, showing an increase in self-management and personal reflection. In research tasks, students have become more proficient at independently connecting different types of information and evaluating data from multiple sources. They are more prepared to engage in debate and are stronger in justifying their arguments due to improved reasoning skills.

The respondents also noted that their students seemed more capable of sustained learning. Teachers felt that their students demonstrated more creativity in general and had a more informed approach to problem solving. Teachers reported that many students exhibited more self-confidence and more initiative in school-related activities. They noted that the students appeared to be more motivated for learning out of curiosity, rather than for performance on examinations. Amongst themselves, students communicated more positively and demonstrated a more inclusive attitude towards special needs students. In group work environments, teachers reported witnessing better work overall, increased cooperation and more patience in task assignments.

Many students increasingly search for information and read more than the assigned work, which according to their teachers indicates a definite increase in self-directed learning. In addition, teachers note an improvement in the students' presentation skills. Overall, the classes tend to work better in groups and demonstrate more patience with one another. Teachers noted improvement in student cooperative learning skill and a more inclusive attitude towards special needs students.

Students' improved capacity to think critically³⁷

We asked the RWCT teachers and trainers whether they believe that their students have improved their capacity to think critically, and if yes, how that skill is manifested in the classroom in terms of engagement in critical reflection, assuming responsibility for learning, forming independent opinions, and showing respect for other people's opinions.

Students' engagement in critical reflection

According to the majority of the respondents, the students engage more readily in critical reflection and voice their reflections on the topics discussed in class both orally and in writing. They have become accustomed to backing their opinions with arguments, which is something older students, or students with more significant exposure to the ERR framework, do more spontaneously.³⁸ Younger students or students with less exposure to RWCT need more teacher guidance, however.

"If we were to compare [the situation at] the very beginning of the program and today's situation, everybody can notice a great difference. Of course it depends on each pupil and his/her motivation, skills. Pupils are able to evaluate themselves, to express their expectations, failures, to ask for help..."

One of increased student ability to reflect critically is text analysis. Teachers report that their students readily compare characters in stories to real persons, analyze characters' behavior and attempt to explain why they think the characters act in a certain manner. In addition, the students make choices and decisions that they can explain, having developed the habit of compiling facts and weighing arguments. Critical reflection is also demonstrated when the students engage in self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

Some respondents point out that the students' family background and localized

³⁷ Question 7 in the RWCT educators and trainer topic guide for interviews.

³⁸ The Kyrgyz experience reported by OSI's 2000 evaluative research, briefly discussed above, reinforces this finding.

environment are factors that also impact their engagement in critical reflection and progress in becoming critical thinkers. Children from more educated home environments are more confident when engaging in critical reflection. Some students become engaged in debates, round-table meetings, or even community projects. Their participation in such events helps them both practice and demonstrate critical reflection. In commenting on this, one trainer has found an aid in terms of choosing material. “Students reflect more deeply on topics that are well known to them. So we try to choose topics that are interesting for youth, and then they all have the opportunity, without fear, to open up and express their views.”

Students’ responsibility for their own learning

As a result of using RWCT, some respondents have noted improvement in the students’ responsible attitude toward learning. They state, however, that this is a long-term process, and it depends on both exposure to RWCT and the students’ character. Students’ increased desire to take responsibility of their own learning is demonstrated in their participation in cooperative learning activities, their eagerness to clarify issues in order to better understand, and in the planning of individual actions to grow in certain areas. Some teachers noted that after being exposed to the methods, many students began to search for information and read more than the assigned work.

The teachers do note an increase in the responsibility taking more frequently with older students than with younger ones. However, “the sooner we start with the younger ones, the easier it goes; fifth graders can independently prepare for the exams at the end of the eighth grade.” A trainer comments that though it is not easy for the younger children, “the classroom is the place where this needs to be learned. They learn to evaluate their own and others’ work, and analyze why one thing or the other failed. This is a long process.”

According to some respondents, some students not only take responsibility for their own learning, but are also eager to help others. This attitude is also encouraged in some schools by having older students make presentations in front of younger ones. Students’ increased acceptance of responsibility for their own learning shows in their participation in cooperative learning activities, in their eagerness to clarify issues in order to better understand, and in their individual goal setting.

In some respondents’ view, portfolios as a tool for assessment not only help develop students’ responsibility for their own learning, but also develop their personal management skills.

Students’ expression of independent opinions and respect for others’ opinions

The respondents agree that as a result of applying RWCT, most students feel encouraged to express independent opinions and they have frequent opportunities to do so. The extent to which they do it depends (at least) on both their exposure to RWCT and the subject matter (more specifically, their familiarity with the topic).

Some of the respondents name RWCT strategies which encourage expression of a diversity of opinions (value line, corners), and describe their use in the classroom. One respondent notes, “Even special needs children are not afraid to express their opinion, cooperate and communicate in the group.”

Some teachers admit that they sometimes find it difficult to manage the diversity of ideas expressed. Others emphasize that small group work helps the shier ones practice expressing their ideas.

Expressions such as “I think”, “in my opinion”, “I agree that”, etc. have become part of the students’ vocabulary, which is a sign of the progress they have made in this respect. Similarly, polite ways of expressing disagreement have been adopted by more students.

Statements such as, “I understand your point, but I disagree because...”, “Maybe you can explain in more detail why you say that...”, and “This is an interesting opinion but I would add ...” are becoming more commonplace in the classroom. The increased use of such statements indicates a verbal integration of critical thinking and collaborative learning concepts within the classroom.

Teachers noted that at first, the expression of individual ideas was difficult for students, especially those who have been conditioned to seek out one correct and true answer. “Initially, the students always wanted to hear my opinion, and when they understood that I would not express it, they tried to seek approval from me at least. I always encourage the students with diverging opinions to speak up and share their arguments; I often withhold from voicing my own opinion so that the students whose opinions differ would not feel bad.” The teachers also noted that they felt a responsibility in helping to model a respect for different opinions. One teacher notes that “if the teacher accepts diversity, the students will, too,” finding that a teacher’s attitude has a major modeling influence.

Students’ improved motivation for learning

The respondents were also asked for their opinion on whether the RWCT program has contributed to increased student motivation for learning, and to describe how they have witnessed this aspect.

Though quite a few respondents are skeptical about students’ increased motivation for learning and mention the home environment as a significant factor here, they admit that students appreciate interactive lessons, and they are much more open to investing work into the lesson when RWCT methods are used. In addition, the ERR framework plays a significant role in this respect, because the students can “see the use of starting from something familiar, adding to it, and reflecting on its meaning.” (RWCT teacher)

Increased motivation is also demonstrated by the fact that they now read more literature, and they understand critical analyses made by experts, about which they also have their own opinion. The number and quality of questions they ask and their eagerness to clarify are other signs of their intrinsic motivation for learning. Statements from teachers indicate that some of them do find significantly increased motivation. “I watch the kids not wanting to go home from school.” Another teacher states that, “the children offer on their own to supply information or materials for lessons, they look for answers for questions unanswered in class.”

Students’ improved communication skills

All respondents agree that the students have become better communicators. They communicate much better both among themselves, and with their teachers, which proves that they have learnt that there are rules to obey to have an efficient communication.

“While in the beginning of the school year the students had difficulty expressing an opinion, now they don’t – they express themselves with confidence, without fearing put-downs.” (RWCT teacher)

Whether the improvement may be attributed to RWCT is revealed by the following quote, “[that the students’ communication skills have improved] is obvious not only to us, but also to other subject teachers, who could compare these students to other classes, where the RWCT program was not applied.” Several respondents mentioned specific RWCT strategies that have contributed to the improved communication skills, and describe how they use them in the classroom.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

From international RWCT meetings and other conferences, as well as from country reports produced earlier in the RWCT program, it was known to us that the RWCT program had made some contribution to educational reforms especially in post-communist countries. Many of these countries were engaged in or preparing for such reforms at the time the program was introduced. The questions we asked therefore related to how RWCT influenced these reforms, and at what levels.³⁹ Most answers we received were provided by RWCT trainers, and a significant number of them are reiterations of answers to earlier questions, especially those related to career development. Many new publications in the field are RWCT-related articles, but the amount of RWCT-related research on projects is limited.

A major influence on educational reform is that the RWCT teachers and especially trainers have become leading educators in their respective countries, and many act as much valued consultants for their ministries of education. In addition, RWCT has inspired many publications – books in pedagogy and didactics, professional teachers' journals and numerous articles – as well as a significant number of smaller or larger scale research projects in diverse domains.

How RWCT has influenced the national school curriculum

The RWCT program seems to have influenced the national curricula in countries with a longer history of RWCT in two major ways. First, former RWCT trainers and participants in these countries have become active in writing the national curriculum, thereby bringing important skills and mindsets to the framework. Second, respondents note an increased inclusion of active learning and cooperative working strategies within the curriculum and its suggested delivery.

Specific examples were provided by each country. In Romania and Moldova, respondents note that critical thinking is a transversal competence now targeted by the Romanian language and literature curriculum. Having been strongly revised, this curriculum now has a much greater focus on the functional aspects of language. In Georgia, the curriculum also been influenced by RWCT-generated revisions. In Romania, the so-called Second Chance curriculum, which includes textbooks, workbooks, assessment guides and teachers' guides, was developed almost entirely by RWCT teachers and trainers who relied completely on a constructivist approach to learning. In addition, RWCT in Romania has had a major influence on teachers' pre-service training, as the leading university centers in the country have trained their education department faculty using the RWCT program. This influence upon the pre-service teacher training curriculum is also reported from Lithuania, Moldova and Georgia.

In several countries, including Georgia and Romania, the more recent versions of the curriculum for several subjects have been harmonized with the basic underlying principles of the RWCT program. Respondents report an increasingly strong focus on student-centered, constructivist activities and projects within the literature.

How RWCT has influenced textbooks

Many of the RWCT trainers and university professors who responded to this question named textbooks they (co-)authored for a variety of age groups and disciplines. It is also pointed out that there are numerous elements even in a variety of textbooks that were not necessarily authored by RWCT teachers or trainers that make use of RWCT-type strategies.

³⁹

Question 13 in the RWCT educators and trainers interview topic guides.

This indicates a major shift from the period before RWCT was active in these countries.

How RWCT has influenced teacher standards

Teacher standards proposed by the Ministry of Education do not exist in all respondent countries. However, in the countries where there are national teacher standards they have been influenced to some extent by the RWCT program. Respondents from Georgia, Lithuania, and to some extent Romania, mention this influence in their reports. From these responses we learn that teachers are expected to be able to develop students' critical thinking skills, to focus on students' learning needs when planning lessons, to use an interactive teaching style, to encourage cooperation including by the use of cooperative learning strategies, and they themselves are expected to be reflective practitioners. This is a new development, indicating a significant impact that the RWCT program has had upon teacher preparation standards.

In the Czech Republic, the RWCT affiliate has been involved in collaborating on national teacher standards and in providing a training program for school-based curriculum developers. RWCT has inspired subsequent in-service and pre-service teacher training programs, as well as adaptations of the methodologies to school-based curricula.

The RWCT program has been adapted to suit in-country needs. In some cases this involves changing program delivery for a formal educational environment. At other times, it means going outside the traditional school walls and using the methods to help deliver programming in the non-formal education sector. Respondents indicate that some of these outgrowths include application in inclusive education, multicultural education, anti-corruption education, community participation in education, and education for sustainable development.

How RWCT has influenced examinations

Although not many respondents answered this question, those who did pointed out that the tasks in the national examinations at the end of the lower secondary and the upper secondary cycles increasingly require students to demonstrate reasoning skills, often including argumentative writing and expression of original ideas, especially in the humanities. In addition, interestingly, the curriculum for teacher examination in Romania now includes RWCT strategies.

Other influences on education reform that can be attributed to RWCT

A number of more specific influences have been identified at the school level. In terms of school management, many cases were reported in which teachers and school managers have benefited from RWCT training and a subsequent "democratization" of the school. The school principals have adopted a more participatory approach to running their schools, and the teachers are more willing to apply critical thinking methods to school management issues as well. In some reported cases in Romania, school principals use the lesson observation form developed for RWCT teachers citing it as helpful in communicating about professional development.

Responses indicate improvements in classroom management. Specifically, they note improved communication and increased practice of cooperative learning. In addition, students are actively involved in classroom management issues. In this context, respondents pointed out the importance of constructive feedback. RWCT teachers have increasingly incorporated ongoing assessment of both the process and the product of learning, leading to a more holistic approach to evaluation. In addition, students are often involved in developing rubrics, and participate more frequently in self- and peer assessment.

“This program highly encouraged the introduction of many projects and initiatives that support and supplement the educational reform in the country” (RWCT teacher).

SUSTAINABILITY ASPECTS

The influence of changes in OSI’s support on the RWCT program

When OSI discontinued funds for the RWCT program in the investigated countries, the different countries were in different stages of program sustainability. The RWCT program in *Argentina* could not be delivered as originally designed for reasons of lack of funds (see Annex. Containing information on country RWCT program budgets for the 1997-2008 period, where applicable). In *Thailand (Myanmar)*, the RWCT program stopped receiving funds from OSI in 2005, and consequently the program management reduced the extension of the program and started looking for new sources of funding. In the “older” RWCT countries, the RWCT program had been institutionalized and sustainability was secured by the time the funding was discontinued. In these countries, the RWCT program is still provided by the owner NGOs as a regular, officially recognized, and in most cases accredited, in-service teacher training program. Here, fees are fee paid by the participants, or by donors other than OSI. In actuality, many of these donors are strongly connected to OSI, such as the Roma Education Fund in Romania.

The current EU-member countries (Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania) were in the fortunate position to be able to apply for EU funds to continue or further develop the program as the time when OSI funds were terminated coincided with the availability of pre-EU accession funds in these countries. This trend is most noticeable in the case of Romania and to some extent Lithuania, where yearly budgets steeply increased after the withdrawal of OSI in 2003 and 2004, but plummeted to under \$10,000 per year starting in 2005. In the Moldovan case, the years 2003 and 2004 also represented steep budgetary increases, but no information is available for subsequent years (see Appendix).

In each country, local NGOs assumed responsibility for delivering the RWCT methodology. Many of these organizations work with groups that fall outside the traditional target group of teachers and university faculty. Responses indicated that these organizations usually apply the methodology in addressing their target group. Originally, the RWCT standards were valid for the NGO who was the implementer of the project in the country. At this point it is somewhat unclear as to the extent to which subsequent NGOs use the methodologies when implementing programming. Additionally, it is unclear as to how much cooperation exists between the original RWCT-sponsored NGO and the new affiliates.

Current strategies for program sustainability

Program institutionalization in all the investigated cases involved ownership of the program by an NGO which was either set up for this specific purpose or had existed as an NGO prior to the start of the program.

The current strategies for further ensuring program sustainability involve continuation of RWCT program delivery using the RWCT standards and procedures for accreditation, and in many cases also complying with the requirements set by the national ministries of education for accredited in-service teacher training program.

Diversification of the training program and adaptation to the needs of a variety of target groups is another widely employed strategy. Although little is known about other target groups trained by RWCT delivering organizations, the table below reports information on the number of individuals other than educators or trainers trained between 1997 and 2009:

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Czech Republic	<i>no information</i>												
Georgia	<i>no information</i>												
Kyrgyzstan								15		163		21	
Lithuania	100		76	170	76	37	43						100
Moldova									40	80	250	450	90
Romania						12		18		25	12	24	
Argentina	<i>no information</i>												
Thailand (Myanmar)	<i>no information</i>												

Table 1. Evolution of the number of non-educators trained using RWCT approaches between 1997 and 2009

Of all countries review in this report, the Moldovan organization appears to have fared best in terms of providing RWCT training to new target groups. In part, this might be explained by the fact that the CMB Training Center, using RWCT methods and standards, has developed thematic training programs for less particular target groups than the initial ones of the OSI led RWCT project. The CMB Training Center developed training modules on: HIV/AIDS policies at the work place, Migration Management, Vote Mock Elections, Early Childhood Development, and Museum Marketing, among others. Another example in the Moldovan context is IREX: Civic Participation Project. The RWCT Program's ethos and techniques were used as a basic approach by the program director and trainers. Some of the IREX trainers were former RWCT trainers, while the others had been trained in the RWCT methods throughout the project. Between 2005 and 2009 IREX organized 1137 training activities with a total number of 16678 participants from various target groups.⁴⁰

The Lithuanian and Romanian organizations have been less consistent in providing services for target groups other than educators and future RWCT trainers, but these figures do not include RWCT training carried out by trainers for other organizations as part of other education-related projects or RWCT training delivery by private entities. In other words, the reported figures above for these two countries may significantly underestimate the amount of RWCT training having taken place in the countries listed above.

Securing funds from a variety of sources is in many cases made possible by the strategic partnerships that the RWCT-promoting NGOs have established with private and/or public institutions. According to information provided for each country, in Georgia, Lithuania, Romania and to a lesser extent Moldova, the organizations that deliver RWCT training have been sustained financially by delivering services to such partners.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that in different countries the length and, thus, content of RWCT trainings vary quite substantially. While in some countries an RWCT teacher certificate may be obtained after completing 3 hours of trainings, in other countries a similar certificate may be obtained after 175 hours of training. Similarly, trainer certificates may be obtained after a 20-hour course in some places, while necessitating the completion of a 100-hour course in other countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF RWCT

SUMMARY

In line with the original objectives, the RWCT project has made significant progress towards full achievement. It is clear that a network of educators invested in critical thinking methodology and philosophy exists, and that information travels through its canals. Though this report cannot pinpoint the exact amount of information exchange or the ease of its access, it is clear that there is a greater exchange amongst network members than before the project's implementation. Similarly, teachers describe the benefits of attending the program and its effect upon their own personal careers. They attest that they continue to use some of the methods of the original program and suggest various reasons for their usage. The content itself remains intact within the ERR framework, but has been applied to many different target audiences and expanded beyond its original content frame. Students seem to benefit from the program, as their teachers report an increased demonstration of desired critical thinking behaviors within the classroom walls and amongst the students themselves.

According to the in-country partners, the dissemination of critical thinking methodology has continued in all countries that were originally involved in the project. The number of organizations within each country that continue to provide training to teachers is significant enough to create a sustainable source of trainers. While there are fewer agencies providing training to non-educators, the presence of RWCT is still considerable in its adapted contexts.

These original country programs have gained additional support from new donor agencies and organizations that were interested in supporting further development and wider dissemination after the initial funding from OSI. The involvement of such agencies provided financial security and additionally created room for the programs to develop outwardly into non-formal educational sectors. The garnering of additional financial support has obviously helped the individual agencies survive and continue to provide programming, but it also indicates a more widespread acceptance of the RWCT practices among member nations.

Local partners agree that the adaptation of RWCT methodology to varied content areas has been one of the strongest advantages of using the program. These partners cite the effectiveness of the program and its positive impact as significant in providing a rich developmental experience. Because of its adaptability, the partners felt that it was beneficial on a multitude of levels. In some countries, the RWCT program focused on purely educational areas while in other countries it provided capacity building programs for other target groups. The RWCT program continues to be incredibly adaptable to each country's context. This is seen in the training courses provided for teachers and trainers. Because there is no standard structure of the RWCT courses, countries adapt the traditional RWCT model to suit their particular needs. Countries such as Moldova and Lithuania have focused on providing short courses to their educators while countries like Georgia and Romania have stayed with a traditional longer model. The result is a plethora of training programs, adapted to suit individual needs, which all share the common framework of critical thinking methodology and constructivist learning models.

A significant number of publications on critical thinking methodology can be found in each country. Many of the articles are related to critical thinking methods and programs. RWCT-trained teachers and programmers are among the most frequently published authors of these articles. Respondents cite these publications as helpful in creating a larger network of international educators focused around critical thinking policy. They do, however, cite the necessity for greater research on the effectiveness of the strategies.

Reports from partners indicate that they value the working relationship with OSI and the RWCT project. The cooperative experience with traditional and non-traditional educational environments has had a positive impact on their own work at the national level. RWCT teachers and trainers in the country have the opportunity to share their experiences more frequently on the national level through regular activities.

Perhaps the greatest impact that the RWCT program has had has been upon individual teachers' classrooms. Through the use of innovative methods and ongoing support, teachers have embraced practices which lead their students to learn more deeply and inquire vigorously. The respondents within the network have listed qualities and behaviors of their students which have developed positively as a direct result of the critical thinking curricula, indicating that they feel a significant impact from the program's implementation.

Recommendations from the respondents

We asked the RWCT teachers and trainers to make recommendations to secure the sustainability and further development of the RWCT program⁴¹. Most of these recommendations are highly country specific. As a consequence, the following summarizes suggestions which are more generally applicable. For more country specific proposals, please refer to the specific country reports.

In terms of affecting greater change within the national systems, participants recommend that the national ministries work in greater cooperation with the RWCT teachers and trainers. Specifically, they recommend that a mentorship program be established in which RWCT-trained educators can work with less experienced fellow teachers within the system. Moreover, participants recommend that the training standards for the RWCT program be included within the national frameworks. Additionally, they feel that critical thinking should be more carefully assessed within the national examinations.

Greater cooperation and communication with stakeholders is another area which many participants feel that the RWCT program could explore. Here, they recommend greater outreach with parents within the community to help them understand important aspects regarding their children's education. Some also feel that the program has the ability to communicate more to the public in terms of what actually defines a quality education.

Recommendations for leadership programs and training courses for school managers have been made by several respondents. Interestingly, this has already begun in some cases on a country-by-country basis.

Participants note that though there is extensive RWCT training for teachers, there is still a need for more access to this training, particularly in rural areas which lie further away from national centers. Other participants have recommended that the program be adapted to newer forms of communication, such as internet and online or distance-learning programs. In itself, the location of some outlying target groups may provide the opportunity for OSI to begin developing such curricular advances.

Teachers and trainers alike state that there is a need to begin more explicit work in critical thinking with students in the younger grade levels. If programs were started within the primary schools, students would have a smoother transition from one level to the next, increasing expectations for their achievement and helping them adjust to the structures at a younger age.

Participants note that though the network of RWCT-trained educators is vast, there is a growing need for more opportunities to share experience and best practice. They recommend

⁴¹ Question 17 in the RWCT educators interview topic guides.

establishing a greater platform for communication at the national level, and finding more cooperation among international organizations to supplement it.

A final area for further study is that of effectiveness of the program. Greater study can be made to ascertain how to evaluate the critical thinking methodology and to research its effectiveness. From further study, the program can harness the most effective and efficient techniques. Additionally, an inventory of strategies and techniques could help in building a current best-practice volume. To this end, the participants suggest widening the field to include new developments within the fields of psychology and education.

CONCLUSIONS

Since its implementation, the RWCT program has built a network of local and international educators who are committed to the ideal of using critical thinking methodology within schools and higher education facilities. This network not only includes teachers in schools and universities, but trainers, practitioners and consultants who now work with officials at the national level to create and reform curriculum.

Teachers and trainers report that they have success with the methods of the program, and they additionally have noted ways in which their personal career has benefitted from their participation in the program. These participants have gone on to adapt the program from its original context as a teacher preparation program to a vast multitude of purposes ranging from community development and awareness programs to civic education projects.

What seems to be missing within the network is an overview and a communication pathway. In the years since OSI implemented the program, there has been incredible growth and adaptation. The new methods and programs listed here are arguably just a few of many which could prove incredibly useful if they were known and shared amongst educators. It is therefore recommendable that at this stage, a system be established which could record and share developments in the field. In essence, this could be a library of publications, field notes and country reports which could be accessed by member networks to help further their development. This is valuable not only for OSI's organizational knowledge, but even more useful to practitioners in the field who search for new methods and information from trusted sources. It is clear that publications and information within the network of RWCT-trained educators is available. After centralizing such a collection, it a published online library of methods, strategies or other materials would help to continue further diversification of the original RWCT program.

A second recommendation is based upon the need to address critical thinking methodology in more rural regions. Coupled with the fact that many educators who are learning the RWCT method for the first time need guided support, it is recommended that OSI consider the establishment of an online distance-learning component. While this is not seen as replacing any part of the original program, it is seen as being a complement to aid trainers and teachers in more remote areas. In this case it could serve as a means to strengthen communication among network educators, and additionally provide support on a regular basis to teachers who are in the implementation phase.

A third and final recommendation relates to the challenges mentioned from teachers who were implementing the program with their students for the first time. For many, time management and classroom management were problematic given the new structures of collaborative learning. Because the RWCT-program demands that teachers act as more of a guide and less of a knowledge source, new practitioners may find it difficult to adjust to the teacher-as-coach model of instruction. It is therefore advisable that they receive training in how to effectively manage behavior within the group work structure and strategies to use in guided divergent discussions.

In conclusion, the methods, frameworks and mindsets offered by the RWCT program, as reported in this review, have had a clear impact upon the target groups. The extent to which OSI achieved its original objectives has been noted on a qualitative basis within this document, but would benefit from further review. A clear development has taken place in the adaptation of the program to new content areas and target groups. This will help to benefit the network greatly when these new leanings are captured upon a shared platform and used to feed back into the network for greater use. The RWCT program has had a significant impact upon its target areas, as reported by members and participants, and this influence should continue to grow when evaluated at greater length.

Appendices

List of organizations that provided funding for RWCT methodology based projects:

International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roma Education Fund ▪ US Embassy ▪ European Commission ▪ IREX, USAID ▪ ERSTE (Austria), ▪ Hilfswerk (Austria), ▪ UNICEF, Mott Foundation, ▪ Lichtenstein Agency for Development, ▪ Tempus (UE), ▪ OSCE (ODIHR), ▪ SIDA Hifab, ▪ UBS Optimus Foundation, ▪ The Resource Foundation ▪ USIS ▪ International School of Prague, EU-ESF ▪ OSGF ▪ Eurasia Foundation ▪ IRA ▪ UNDEF
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Public Administration, • Private Companies (Oil companies, • Parents Associations of many schools all over Moldova • National OSI • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Foreign Affairs, • Media Support Fund • National Socrates Agency • School Network • Individuals (Burma)

RWCT-related studies or research paper and other publications

Moldova	Burma	Kyrgyzstan	Romania	Georgia	Lithuania	Argentina	Czech Republic
24 publications		3 research papers	48 publications		9 publications		3 publications
24 articles	6 articles		10 journal issues and 1 guidebook	12 journal issue			36 journal issues
			3 research papers	7 guidebooks	3 research papers		

Evaluation instruments

1. RWCT Teachers focus group Questions (7-15 RWCT teachers)

(These questions can be sent out to teachers by e-mail and anyone interested can answer in a written form. In-depth interviews can be made with selected 2-3 teachers.)

1. Do you apply the ERR framework? Why Yes or Why No?
2. Please name the strategies you most frequently use (at least once a week). Why?
3. What are the successes you have noted in students' performance as a result of RWCT methodology application?
4. How has RWCT contributed to your career development?
5. Have you had any difficulties in the application of RWCT methodology?
Provide examples;
6. How did you overcome these difficulties or why couldn't you overcome them?
7. Has RWCT made any difference or has it increased the students' capacity to think critically:
 - a) Do they engage in critical reflection? How?
 - b) Do they take responsibility for their own learning? How?
 - c) Do they form independent opinions? How do you handle diversity of opinions?
 - d) Do they show respect for opinion of others? How?
 - e) Do students have a more increased motivation for learning? How do you observe it?
 - f) Have they improved their communication skills? How?
 - g) Has their school performance improved (grades, attitudes, opinions...)?
 - h) Describe any other impact of RWCT methodology on your teaching experience.
8. How has your relationships with fellow educators been affected by your engagement in the program?
 - a) at the school level:
 - b) at the national level:
 - c) at the international level:
9. How has your participation in the RWCT Program contributed to your accessing professional information?
10. Did you make presentations during conferences/meetings about your RWCT related practices, experiences? What was the reaction of the participants?
11. Did you refine RWCT framework and strategies? Have you developed any new strategies/techniques?
 - a) List any other developments you did to original RWCT methodology;
 - b) Have you undertaken any initiatives at the educational policy level, textbooks and curriculum development, assessment, etc? Please describe.
12. Has your involvement in the RWCT program changed your self confidence as a

teacher? How?

13. Has the RWCT program influenced Education Reform in your country, especially:

- a) School curriculum. How?
- b) Textbooks. How?
- c) Teacher Standards, How
- d) Examinations. How?
- e) Other:

14. Has the RWCT Program exerted any influence on your school in terms of:

- a) School curriculum. How?
- b) School management. How?
- c) Classroom management. How?
- d) Examination. How?
- e) Other:

15. Has there been a decrease or increase in the RWCT methodology use amongst your colleagues in your country during the past years?

16. What were the main causes for these changes? (please provide a short description on this)

17. What are your recommendations vis-à-vis making RWCT methodology sustainable and further developing it at the level of:

- a) Country education policies:
- b) School and teachers:
- c) University:
- d) Other recommendations:

**2. RWCT University Teachers Focus group Questions (7-15 university teachers)
(These questions can be sent out to teachers by e-mail and anyone interested can
answer in a written form. In-depth interviews can be made with selected 2-3
teachers.)**

1. Do you apply ERR framework? Why yes or why no?
2. Please name the strategies you most frequently use (at least once a week). Why?
3. What are the successes in students' performance as a result of RWCT methodology application?
4. How has RWCT contributed to your career development?
5. Have you had any difficulties in the application of RWCT methodology? Please provide examples;
6. How did you overcome these difficulties or why you couldn't overcome them?
7. Did RWCT make any difference or increased capacity of students to think critically:
 - a) Do they engage in critical reflection? How?
 - b) Do they take responsibility for their own learning? How?
 - c) Do they form independent opinions? How do you handle diversity of opinions?
 - d) Do they show respect for opinions of others? How?
 - e) Have students increased their motivation for learning? How do you observe it?
 - f) Have they improved their communication skills? How?
 - g) Do they improve student performance (grades, attitudes, opinions...)?
 - h) Describe any other impact of RWCT methodology on your teaching experience.
8. How has your relationships with fellow educators been affected by your engagement in the program?
 - a) at the university level:
 - b) at the national level:
 - c) at the international level:
9. How has your participation in the RWCT Program contributed to your accessing professional information?
10. Did you make presentations during conferences/meetings about your RWCT related practices vs. experiences? What was the reaction of participants?
11. Did you refine RWCT framework and strategies? Have you developed any new strategies/techniques?
 - a) List any other developments you did to the original RWCT methodology;
 - b) Have you undertaken any initiatives at the educational policy level, textbooks and curriculum development, assessment, etc? Please describe.
12. Has your involvement in the RWCT program changed your self confidence as a teacher? How?
13. Has the RWCT program influenced Education Reform in your country,

especially on the:

- a) University curriculum. How?
- b) Textbooks. How?
- c) Teacher Standards, How
- d) Examination. How?
- e) Other:

14. Has the RWCT Program exerted any influence on your university in terms of:

- a) University curriculum. How?
- b) University management. How?
- c) Examination. How?
- d) Other:

15. Has there been a decrease or increase in the RWCT methodology use amongst your colleagues in your country during the past years?

16. What were the main causes for these changes? (please provide short description on this)

17. What are your recommendations vis-à-vis making RWCT methodology sustainable and further developing it at the level of:

- e) Country education policies:
- f) School and teachers:
- g) University:
- h) Other recommendations:

3. RWCT Trainers Focus group Questions (7-15 RWCT trainers)
(These questions can be sent out to teachers by e-mail and anyone interested can answer in a written form. In-depth interviews can be made with selected 2-3 teachers.)

1. Do you apply ERR framework? Why yes or no?
2. Please name the strategies you most frequently use (at least once a week). Why?
3. What are the successes in students' performance as a result of RWCT methodology application?
4. How has RWCT contributed to your career?
5. Have you had any difficulties in the application of RWCT methodology? Please provide examples;
6. How did you overcome these difficulties or why you couldn't overcome them?
7. Did RWCT make any difference or increased students' capacity to think critically:
 - a. Do they engage in critical reflection? How?
 - b. Do they take responsibility for their own learning? How?
 - c. Do they form independent opinions? How do you handle diversity of opinions?
 - d. Do they show respect for opinion of others? How?
 - e. Have students increased their motivation for learning? How do you observe it?
 - f. Have they improved their communication skills? How?
 - g. Has students' performance increased (grades, attitudes, opinions...)?
 - h. Describe any other impact of RWCT methodology on your teaching experience.
8. How has your relationships with fellow educators been affected by your engagement in the program?
 - a. at the school level:
 - b. at the national level:
 - c. at the international level:
9. How has your participation in the RWCT Program contributed to your accessing professional information?
10. Did you make presentations during conferences/meetings on your RWCT related practices vs. experiences? What was the reaction of the participants?
11. Did you refine RWCT framework and strategies? Have you developed any new strategies?
 - a. List any other developments that you made to the original RWCT methodology;
 - b. Did you have any involvement at the level of educational policy, textbooks, curriculum, assessment, etc? Please describe.
12. Has your involvement in the RWCT program changed your self

confidence as a teacher? How?

13. Has the RWCT program influenced Education Reform in your country, concerning:

- a. School curriculum. How?
- b. Textbooks. How?
- c. Teacher Standards, How
- d. Examination. How?
- e. Other:

14. Has the RWCT Program exerted any influence on your school in terms of:

- a. School curriculum. How?
- b. School management. How?
- c. Classroom management. How?
- d. Examination. How?
- e. Other:

15. Has there been a decrease of increase in the RWCT methodology use amongst your colleagues in your country during the past years?

16. What were the main causes for these changes? (please provide short description on this) What are your recommendations vis-à-vis making RWCT methodology sustainable and further developing it at the level of:

- e) Country education policies:
- f) School and teachers:
- g) University:
- h) Other recommendations:

4. RWCT Coordinator Questions

1. Number of active RWCT Teacher Trainers?
2. List RWCT Teacher Trainers institutional affiliation?
3. List all RWCT institutional partners and beneficiaries (other than schools and universities);
4. Describe Teacher Trainers RWCT related initiatives?
 - a. initiatives at the policy vs. curriculum vs. examination levels, others;
 - b. initiatives at the level of school culture, management or curriculum;
 - c. any other RWCT related initiatives;
5. How did the changes/modifications in the financial support from OSI affect program delivery?
6. Describe the RWCT sustainability model chosen in your country?
7. Describe the RWCT Program's in-country sustainability strategies?
8. What was the role of RWCT Project for the Educational Reforms in your country?
9. Describe any changes produced at the level of textbooks, curriculum development, teachers' standards, examination, regulations that came as a result of RWCT initiatives?

5. RWCT Institutional Partners Interview Questions (3-7 partners)

(Other than schools and universities – NGOs, other institutions that received RWCT related training)

1. What type of partnership did you have with the RWCT Program (name the institution that represents RWCT in the country)?
 - a. RWCT training;
 - b. Other trainings/consultancy (please list the content areas covered);
 - c. Educational policy cooperation;
 - d. Any other (please list);
2. What are your general impressions about the RWCT methodology? Has it contributed to the success of your program? How?
3. Did RWCT methodology satisfy your training/consultancy needs? How?
4. What were participants' reactions?
5. How can you compare RWCT methodology with other learning methodologies/approaches for training delivery? What are the strengths of the RWCT methodology?
6. Has RWCT made any differences or has it increased the capacity of participants to think critically:
 - engage in critical reflection;
 - take responsibility for their own learning;
 - form independent opinions and show respect for the others opinions;
 - participants have increased their motivation for learning;
 - improved communication skills;
 - improved training outcomes (grades, attitudes, opinions...);
 - list any other impact of RWCT methodology.

Document review

I) Based on all available Internal and external reports (please attached digital or hard copies of available reports)

1. Number of teachers and trainers trained

Year	RWCT Teachers Under 40 hours of training	RWCT Teachers 40 hours or over	Number of newly certified RWCT Trainers in the given year	University teachers Under 40 hours of training	University Teachers 40 hours or over	Number of other target groups trained
1997						
1998						
1999						
2000						
2001						
2002						
2003						
2004						
2005						
2006						
2007						
2008						

2. What is the total number of hours of the RWCT course (valid to receive an RWCT teacher certificate):
issued by your organization or a nationally accredited teacher training institution

3. What is the total number of hours of the RWCT course (valid to receive an RWCT teacher trainer certificate) **issued by your organization or a nationally accredited teacher training institution**

6. List RWCT course adaptations to various content areas (except school and university content areas):

- a) Civic Education:
- b) HIV/AIDS:
- c) Management:
- d) Gender Issues:
- e) other

7. List the name and type of institutions that deliver RWCT related courses

- a. for teachers:
- b. for other target groups

8. RWCT project budget

Year	OSI Funding	Other sources	Service provision	Total
1997				
1998				
1999				
2000				
2001				
2002				
2003				
2004				
2005				
2006				
2007				
2008				

9. List organizations that provided funding for RWCT projects

a) International:

b) National:

II) Secondary sources: research papers (Studies or research paper and other publications), any RWCT-related publications.

(Please attached digital or hard copies of available studies, research papers and other publications)

1. Number of RWCT related publications

RWCT related studies or research paper and other publications

<p>Title (paper details, publication details, year)</p>	<p>Main conclusions Has RWCT increased the students' capacity to think critically, i.e.: <input type="checkbox"/> To engage in critical reflection; <input type="checkbox"/> To take responsibility for their own learning; <input type="checkbox"/> To form independent opinions; <input type="checkbox"/> To show respect for opinion of others; <input type="checkbox"/> Has RWCT increased students motivation for learning; <input type="checkbox"/> Has RWCT improved students' communication skills; <input type="checkbox"/> Has RWCT improved students' school performance (grades, attitudes, opinions...) - list any others conclusions here:</p>	<p>Main recommendations</p>
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Annex 2. Country RWCT Program Budgets for the 1997-2008 period

Total Budgets (USD)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Czech Republic	<i>no information</i>												
Georgia	n.a.	80000	80000	80000	80000	10992. 75	9640.8 1	8415.5 4	1193.8 5	9314.2 8	7651.4 1	5958.1 2	
Kyrgyzstan	<i>no information</i>												
Lithuania	18081	42031	29870	96789	18564 7	50344	12976 4	18856 9	58247	9009	2667	7362	
Moldova	n.a.	7562	53536	80000	61024	6000	38000	51190					
Romania	50000	50000	50000	50000	13000 0	3000	86000	20350	68600	56650	96750	73600	24000
Argentina	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	23000	15000	18190 1	14193 9	15702 3	
Thailand (Myanmar)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	31595	31595	68500	50000	72000	64000	15000 0	18000 0

Number of active RWCT trainers:

Country	No. of active RWCT trainers
Argentina	30
Burma / Burmese refugee camps in Thailand	12
Czech Republic	75
Georgia	18 (this figure was provided for 2007)
Kyrgyzstan	<i>no information</i>
Lithuania	33*
Moldova	15**
Romania	18***

* By active trainers the Lithuanian coordinator means trainers who have delivered RWCT training in the last 3-5 years.

** This number is of trainers that are affiliated to NGOs, but there are more active trainers in state institutions.

***By active trainers the Romanian coordinator means trainers who have delivered RWCT training through the Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association in the last 3 years.

Program Outgrowth Areas

Name of the course	Details/brief description
1. Civic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for Local Youth Councils; • Education in the spirit of tolerance; • Ways to involve youth in decision making process at the local level (for young community leaders), • Debates, • School mediation, • Education for integration in Europe, • Education for Community development • Vote Mock Elections. • Civic education for children and youth (children rights)
HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing young people about ways of transmission and ways to prevent HIV/SIDA (by peer education). Young trainers were taught, so they could apply the strategies of RWCT. • HIV/AIDS policies at the work place; • HIV/AIDS and safety at the work place; • HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum for vocational schools of Moldova (on-going now).
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School management • Art Center management • Project management (elaboration and implementation), • Communication in the organization, • Team working skills, • Strategic planning, • Presentation skills, • Conflict resolution • Organizational culture • Leadership styles
Gender Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for gender equality
Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration management; • The rights of Migrants; • Children affected by migrating parents; • Countries of origin vs. countries of destination migration policies; • The rights of the migrant working women.
Other courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community school (elaboration plan of the institution as a community center);

	<p>Developing teaching' skills activities with Children with Special Needs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance towards Children with Special Needs; • Elaboration of projects for integration different disadvantaged social groups (Children with Special Needs, senior people, victims of trafficking); • Communication in Sales, • Fund Raising, • Social Entrepreneurship; • Advocacy Activities; • Kindergarten – Family Partnership; • Early childhood development programs; • Museum marketing. • Environmental education • Leadership and Management in Education • Bible Studies • Buddhist Literatures • For Parents (how to support children’s learning, how to start parents association) • Second Language Acquisition Courses • School Library in the Change: Promoting Critical Thinking; • Critical Thinking for Health Education, • Critical Thinking for Successful Future Career • Training for curriculum developers • Ethics for teachers and students (anticorruption) • Family reading (ToT and training for parents) • Youth research skills • Youth leadership • Training for deputy assistants • Teaching for innovation (training for school inspectors) • Case study • Ethnic program for youth • Journalism and tolerance
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