

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Belgium/Flanders case study report 3 Parent and Child Programmes for Young Children in At-risk Groups

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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GOK – Parent and child programmes for young children in at-risk groups

1. Description

Country	BELGIUM, Flanders
Title	GOK – Parent and child programmes for young children in at-risk groups
Funded by	City of Kortrijk and Flemish Community
Action implemented by	City of Kortrijk
Partners	Cel Onderwijs Onderwijsopbouwwerk City of Kortrijk
Cost 2006-2007	€130,000 (first and third circle)
Where did it operate? Local, regional, national ...	First year (experimental implementation): 8 primary schools in Kortrijk
Target group (theme, or other)	Pre-schoolers (second and third year)
Theme (of 7 strands)	Ethnic minorities, linguistic minorities, religious minorities, indigenous minorities, gender, socio-economic disadvantage, disabilities
Duration from	2006
to	→

1.1 Rationale for action

Large cities as Kortrijk are often confronted with an increase and a higher concentration of *GOK*-pupils in primary schools, especially in the centre of the city. A research (*LOP BaO Kortrijk*, 04) points out that in Kortrijk more than 14 percent of the pupils in the first year of primary school have a “lag” in education. On Flemish level they are only 12 percent. In the following years of primary school the percentage still increases to 19 percent in the third year. It also seems that the percentage of pupils who have a lag in education is comparable with the percentage of *GOK*-pupils. Schools that have a lot of pupils who have a lag in education are at higher risk to lose other pupils, something that can lead in turn to a decrease of quality. To prevent this problem it is necessary to start action in pre-school. Action in pre-school is more effective if parents get support to guide their children in a better way.

1.2 What is GOK – a lag in education – pre-schoolers – parents

The project started as an experiment (January-June 06) in those primary schools in Kortrijk where there are more than 35 percent of *GOK*-pupils. In 2006-2007, the project was continued.

The project aims to give guidance to pre-schoolers who are at risk to start primary school with a lag in education. Guidance is given individually or to a group of pre-schoolers. Parents get support as well: in group sessions, school involvement is increased and information is provided about the problems and guidance their children are experiencing.

The project is a first circle of a global concept with three circles. In the second circle a course in Dutch is organised for parents from allochthonous origin. In the third circle parents and children are integrated in society by leading the way towards social networks such as youth movement, sports club, etc.

1.3 How does it work?

The teacher assigns the children to participate in the project. The children are in the second and third year of primary school. The project is meant for those who are most at “risk”. In the project it is emphasised that action is taken for the children as well as for the parents. The project wants to give special attention to people from allochthonous origin.

The children get intensive guidance (three to six hours a week) to prevent a lag in education and to get pre-schoolers ready for the primary school. If necessary Dutch language is taught as well. Counsellors and teachers confer on which guidance is necessary.

The parents get support from the project. Parents are empowered so that they can support their own children in a better way later on. If necessary, special attention is given to the Dutch language. Support is given at informal contacts at the school gate, at home visits and at activities organised for the parents at school.

To guide children and parents, peripheral events are necessary such as consultation between the teachers, addressing parents to get them to come to school, aftercare for the children and their parents, making a progression report, etc.

There are four full-time counsellors for the children and the parents. One person is responsible for the follow-up. The counsellors are seconded teachers. One of them is also a social worker.

2. Results

The project is evaluated in different ways:

1. Every Friday, the counsellors evaluate the past week and make arrangements for the following week. Every fortnight, a representative from the city attends the meeting.
2. At the end of the trimester, an evaluation with the school principals takes place.
3. The project was thoroughly evaluated in July 2006 after the experimental phase, and again in July 2007.

During the school year 2006-2007 some children who needed further guidance to make a smooth transition to primary school were selected and were given extra guidance. Increasing the involvement from parents in the school is also a priority. For the next year “support parents” are taking this over from the counsellors.

It is clear that the project is fulfilling a need. The project is evolving in a positive way. The parent guidance is getting more effective but still needs attention. The counsellors get the chance to access extra training when required.

Long terms goals to be evaluated in the future are:

- A decrease in lag in education when beginning primary school.
- A decrease in the percentage of GOK-pupils in the participating schools because other pupils don't change schools.
- Empower involvement of parents in school. Be able to welcome more parents from GOK-pupils at school activities or festivities.
- A decrease in participation of parents from GOK-pupils in school.