

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Czech Republic case study report 2 Learning with the Police: Addressing youth delinquency

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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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The presented project “Learning with the Police” focuses social-pathology prevention educational activities for children and teenagers. The aimed phenomena include drug abuse, bullying, gambling, extremist groups and youth criminality. The target group consists of primary and lower secondary education pupils, and special attention is paid to those coming from socially disadvantaged background. As for the time framework the project is a long-term one, it was launched in the school year 2001/2002 and it is ongoing. The project was realised as a pilot one since September 2001 at 12 basic schools of the Pardubice region. Since October of the year 2002 the project started to be realised in selected classes of the fifth and sixth forms of basic schools in all districts of the east-Bohemian (the fifth and sixth form age seems to be the “fault line” and during the school year 2002/2003 the project was realised at 14 basic schools in eleven districts. As for the project participants, the project involved 930 pupils. The extended project involved forms 1 – 9 of the basic school, divided into three categories, at ten basic schools; this extended project version involved 2,500 pupils. Already in the year 2002 there was a prospect of making the project a national one. Each class participates in eight to ten hour-long educational programmes per school year; the educational programme is divided into eight to ten meetings (policemen meet their class eight times a school year at the minimum (during the period of eight months, from October till May). The main funders are Ministry of the Interior, Hradec Králové Region, and Police of the Czech Republic.

The selection of schools was criterion-based; the main criterion was the highest incidence of youth’s criminal offence. The project proceeded from the assumption that an effective realisation of the project needs agreement and cooperation of the school management as well as of the other school teaching staff. Therefore the directors of schools in problem areas were addressed already before to the school year openings. They were both informed about the project and offered the possibility to participate in the project.

The project is oriented on the following aims:

- to familiarise children with the police’s work and competencies,
- to show impact of the social factors on behaviour of individuals in terms of consequences and crime occurrence,
- to raise children’s awareness of committed crimes latency,
- to increase children’s and teenagers’ social and problem-solving competencies,
- to create positive social climate,
- to facilitate pupils’ opinion and attitude formation,
- to encourage their self-esteem and open mind,
- to decrease the rate of delinquency by raising children’s legal awareness.
- to facilitate children’s respect for healthy lifestyle in order to minimise the first contact with drugs as a precedence to drug abuse,
- to realise suitable information campaign.

Together with other experts, the authors prepared the project especially for the endangered groups of children coming chiefly from disadvantaged backgrounds who have already encountered drugs, violence or crime, and so on.

Primarily, the project should unite the conceptual policy of the Czech Police prevention workers at schools of the Hradec Králové region. In addition, within a suitable framework for coordinating both the state and non-state institutions operating in this area it should coordinate police prevention workers’ activities with the social-pathological phenomena methodology workers. It also represents one of the prevention projects functioning as a tool to address the general public.

The project was prepared and run by the Czech Police workers Mgr. Renata Šanderová, Bc. Hana Kvasničková and Bc. Dana Dolanová. However, there are many other police officers helping with a valuable contribution as the project co-authors. The project’s chief consultants were PaedDr. Zdena

Kašparová and PhDr. Pavel Vacek, Ph.D from University of Hradec Králové, they guaranteed the pedagogical aspects.

The project is divided into two formal parts. The first one offers a general knowledge background for the lecturers, children and parents, including stories, questionnaires, worksheets and games accompanying individual experience with social-pathology. The other part of the project consists of methodology guidelines for the eight basic topics covering the three age groups included in the project (6-7 years, 8-11 years, 11-14 years). The lecturers might not only find practical instructions for working with children there, but there are also additional worksheets, puzzles, quiz competitions and tests prepared separately for each topic. All of this is accompanied by an overall summary of all the basic information for the given unit, which was one of the intended project aims, too. The realisation of the teaching methodological principles represents, in a way, the third part of the project.

Part Two includes teaching methodology of eight fundamental topics for three age groups: between 6–7 years, 8–11 and 11–14 year old children. Modules can be applied separately. The key teaching methodology includes: interactive and project methods, role plays, didactic games, problem solving etc. Video recordings are also employed, for example to introduce police work, transport integrated rescue system (IRS), alcohol and non-alcohol toxicomania and bullying. To make the topics more realistic and more attractive for children: lecturers illustrate the topics with some real examples and cases, further there are art and literature competitions organised etc. Working with children is highly individual. What must be respected in particular is the children's age and individual features. Obviously an advantage of the project is the integrated concept complementing other school prevention programmes.

Lecturers cooperate also with police psychologists, probation officers and other partners in the field of secondary prevention. The project includes eight main topics:

- 1/ safe behaviour,
- 2/ bullying,
- 3/ racial discrimination,
- 4/ legal awareness,
- 5/ children's rights and duties,
- 6/ drugs and other addictions,
- 7/ extremism,
- 8/ social system of norms.

Some of the topics can be used even at the upper secondary schools and vocational training schools.

The part consisting of rather practical teaching techniques and advice is a comprehensive series of educational activities:

- regular lectures for primary and lower secondary education pupils (*první a druhý stupeň základní školy*), eg mainly for children between 6–14 years of age,
- regular workshops for primary and lower secondary education pupils (*první a druhý stupeň základní školy*), eg mainly for children between 6–14 years of age.

The lectures and workshops were held annually from October to May. The first lectures are information-oriented and try to establish mutual trust between the police officer and students since the mutual trust and safe atmosphere is necessary for more serious and sometimes even personal issues and topics. Only in safe atmosphere the topics, such as bullying, drug abuse, criminal offence, violence, racism, alcohol, toxicomania, and gambling, can be dealt on the basis of personal experience, which is of vital importance as for the prevention activities' effectiveness.

The key outcomes of the project include:

- better pupils' knowledge about the issues of legal responsibility,
- developed skills to communicate and resist manipulation,
- higher pupils' responsibility for their behaviour,
- improvement in the field of practical skills, such as emergency calls, helplines, model situations etc.

The project's effectiveness was checked on several levels using an anonymous questionnaire and an experiment, in particular. Other used techniques as evaluation sources include in-class tests, work sheets, quizzes. The main technique seems to be the attitudes-oriented tests, including questionnaires, designed to survey the three key components of attitudes: affective component (which involves a person's feelings/emotions about the attitude object), behavioural (or cognitive) component (ie the way the attitude influences how we act or behave), and cognitive component involving a person's belief/knowledge about an attitude object.

The final experiment-based evaluation at the end of a school year compared the results attained by a student group participating in the project (experimental group) and a non-participant student group (checking experiment group) from the same school and grade. The empirical research showed a statistically significant shift in students' cognitive, affective and behavioural components of attitudes:

I. Cognitive component

The participating students showed more knowledge about the integrated rescue system (IRS), delinquency, racism and safety. The issues of drugs, bullying and thefts showed no significant difference in either of the groups.

II. Affective component

The attitudes changed in the IRS area (preferred keeping Highway Code rules and safe driving although complications may occur, such as a late arrival). Also, the participating students were more inclined to agree that cigarettes should not be sold to the under-aged (the non-participants tended to leave the matter up to the individual freedom of every person). There was a significant shift in their attitudes towards drugs (the participating group refused them as such, including anabolic). Even the attitudes towards racism changed (the participating students preferred equality to the superiority of certain groups of people).

III. Behavioural component

Changes were noted in the area of the society norm system (the participating students preferred fair behaviour to a behaviour leading to a personal harm, for example, they would return a prize which had been won unfairly). Another change appeared when the question of bullying was brought up (the participating students would refuse to watch such a behaviour, they would stand up to help the victim and they would contact and tell an adult person). The participating group also knew the safe behaviour rules, learnt about their criminal liability, they were able to communicate as well as deal with manipulation attempts more easily and they felt more responsible for their own actions. They also proved better practical knowledge about using helplines and crisis behaviour.

Also on the basis of observable outcomes of this project the project Learning with the Police has been approved by the Department of Delinquency Prevention of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (*Odbor prevence kriminality Ministerstva vnitra ČR*) for use in the primary and secondary schools on the whole territory of the Czech Republic from the year 2007/2008 onwards.

Schools are very interested in participating in the project. Thanks to the police role in the project, it is possible to show pupils the reality of criminal offence and punishment, to make pupils aware of their own criminal liability too.

The project *Learning with the Police* was awarded in a prestigious competition “The Best Police Officer of the Year 2005” organised by the Minister of the Interior and the Police President. The project won the title “The Best Police Project of the Year” thanks to its complexity, uniqueness and coherence.

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