

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Spain case study report 2

Exit: Equality in educational success and access to employment

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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>.

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Introduction

Instead of choosing five different policies to be developed in this section, the Spanish team has decided to focus its attention on one “macro-project” – **City Educational Project (PEC)** - as our first case study. The project is an umbrella-type project that encompasses a series of interesting, semi-autonomous sub-projects, some of which will be analysed in more detail as four separate case studies.

The decision to focus first on one “macro-policy” was based on the following factors:

- 1) The project is a clear example of a general, transversal social pact aimed at compensating social and education inequalities and to improve education in general.
- 2) It affects, basically, all “at risk” groups selected to be outlined in this research, through the development of eight ‘thematic work areas’ (*ámbitos temáticos de acción*) (including, for example, immigration and academic success), from which specific actions are derived.
- 3) The project includes both general educational policies based on a theoretical framework about education and social actors, and specific, local actions that are materialised through the macro-project’s lines of action (some of which will be further described in detail). These elements of the macro-project are regularly assessed and revised for continual improvement
- 4) The whole project counts on one fundamental base – full implication and participation of the social actors, thereby involving the target groups and/or related communities in the design, management and/or delivery of the actions.
- 5) It represents a good example of local and transversality of educational policies, based on the advantages of giving educational competences to local administrations (city councils and schools) due to their proximity to the community and knowledge of the specific needs of community members.

Case study 2: “Exit”: Equality in educational success and access to employment

This project entitled “Exit” (*exit* means “success” in Catalan) can be found within the PEC-B’s thematic area “Academic success and access to employment”, and its main objective is to create equality in academic success. The project highlights the general benefits of achieving universal secondary school promotion. This must be viewed within the historical context of Spanish compulsory education - which has been raised to 16 years of age. Since compulsory education was raised from 14 to 16 years of age, the main tendency has been to develop strategies to give individual attention to the students that do not adjust to the basic standards required for graduating. This has placed most of the responsibility of resolving detected difficulties of certain pupils upon the teaching staff.

Aiming to shift the focus from individuals, since diversity has been mostly conceptualised as a psycho-pedagogical matter, to the classroom and overall school administration, the “Exit” project aims to promote academic success of all the students, without any kind of discrimination. It is not, therefore, some form of support addressed to a specific typology of students, instead it must be seen as an educational tool. It does not work as a palliative for some “disadvantaged” pupils; it is meant to give all students equal preparation for their future entrance into the workforce.

The project emerged from a concern about the significant number of Spanish students who do not continue their studies to take their secondary graduate degree after finishing their compulsory studies at age 16. Statistics show that most pupils who finish their secondary graduate degree continue in post-compulsory studies; whereas an important percentage of those who leave the educational system at age 16 are often marginalised in social and labour spheres. Consequently, the project intends to change the view of secondary graduation (between 16 and 18 years of age),

from being seen as a final point to a starting point towards post-compulsory studies or entrance into the workforce. Seen as such, the universalisation of secondary promotion has, in the twenty-first century, the same importance and characteristics as universal literacy had at the beginning of the previous century. The “Exit” project aims to open a way for this universal secondary promotion.

The project was designed both as a programme for integral educational intervention, and for professional orientation for students who are not interested in higher education. The project began in 2001, with an agreement between the Catalan Government Education Department and the Barcelona City Council. The agreement outlines a plan to share data and to design a common programme that would:

- Coordinate both administration’s efforts and existing resources
- Assure pupils’ regular school attendance
- Decrease the levels of absenteeism and truancy
- Help students’ transition between primary and secondary education
- Guarantee students that have consolidated basic knowledge and attitudes before moving to secondary education
- Increase the number of students who graduate from secondary education
- Guarantee coherence between the different services offered at primary and secondary levels (pedagogical, administrative). This implies that all schools giving compulsory education share the same tutorial style, materials and resources, evaluation criteria, and a similar offer of school and extra-school services such as opening hours and schedules, dining room organisation, etc.)
- Reinforce the schooling of pupils with difficulties
- Introduce new educational resources for recently enrolled foreign pupils - especially in language learning, in order to accelerate their integration
- Support schools’ initiatives to innovate the pedagogical action
- Coordinate the actions between schools, the school neighbourhood and district and Barcelona’s Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB), so that school reinforcement programmes and recreational activities become more efficient
- Harness young people’s voluntary participation (this has taken shape in the “buddy” programme, which is a basis of the “Exit” project)
- Improve all pupils’ learning, self-esteem and socialisation
- Work jointly with the Educational Municipal Council and parent federations to increase family commitment to their children’s learning process
- Organise a service for scholastic reinforcement service for pupils attending 5th and 6th levels of primary, and 1st and 2nd of secondary (period of transition)
- Promote new forms of learning through measures such as increasing the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and learning processes
- Take advantage of the equipment in the community to improve secondary pupils’ motivation and orientation (public technological resources, etc.)
- Apply more flexible and cross-sectional evaluation criteria
- Reinforce the skills and knowledge that may allow pupils incorporation to post-compulsory studies, continued education programmes or the labour market
- Orient young people’s education towards professions that have openings in the labour market
- Offer services for the families and promote adult collaboration in school life in order to reinforce the school’s image as a referent point in the community and establish a model of integrated education
- Design teaching formulas to improve academic and professional guidance by offering more professionalised learning
- Set up job placement practice in secondary education

- Promote collaboration with the business sector to motivate and prepare secondary students towards professional life

Specific applications:

In operational terms, the “Exit” project proposes a group of interventions addressed to two decisive moments in compulsory education: the transition from primary to secondary and the last stage of secondary (therefore, the complete scope of the project goes from 10 to 16 years).

a) Workshops

The first global action, aimed at the primary-secondary transition, is composed of three workshops held after school. Each workshop is addressed to a different agent involved in this process: pupils, teachers and parents.

The aim of these workshops is to help students in the transition from Primary to Secondary stages and improve their learning skills and attitudes:

-Teaching staff workshop: addressed to tutors working on the last 2 years of Primary and first 2 years of Secondary compulsory education.

-Pupils workshop: reinforcement classes and support, addressed to students attending the last 2 years of Primary and first 2 years of Secondary compulsory education. Students are recommended for the workshop by their tutors.

-Parents workshop: addressed to the families of all pupils attending the last 2 years of Primary and first 2 years of Secondary compulsory education.

b) “Buddy” programme (amics grans):

This theme for the “Exit” project is considered to be one of the most significant bases of the project. The “buddies” are ex-students from the secondary school who are selected by the school’s staff. They return as volunteers to their old schools to help young students overcome their difficulties by helping them with their homework, new technology, music, sports, and games and so on. These “buddies” are usually doing their university studies so they serve as a positive model of academic success for younger students. Being in the classroom – sitting at the same desks as the students - also reinforces pupils’ self-esteem and has significant educational effects. The pupils see themselves as similar to their “buddies” but living different stages in their development. The continuity of the buddy’s presence in the classroom throughout the year is very important to build this positive vision: the ideal length of their voluntary mission should be between 2 or 3 academic courses. Last academic course (2006-2007) there were 118 “buddies” in 68 schools in Barcelona, working with a total of 1,070 students.

c) Workshop on Learning outside the school (Taller de Enseñanzas en Contextos No Escolares - TECNE)

This workshop targets pupils attending their last year of secondary compulsory education. It is held during regular school hours in locations outside the school (according to the tasks that are being taught) and counts on the teaching staff’s participation. The idea is to complement regular classes with professional and occupational learning, open up students to new cultural and professional interests, increase the number of students graduating from secondary compulsory education in Barcelona and to motivate them to continue studying beyond compulsory education.

The TECNE workshops are between 20 and 30 total hours, divided up on a weekly basis during one trimester. The learning and evaluation processes are transversal, thus go beyond specialised knowledge areas. Although these workshops cover a wide range of possible professions (jewellery-making, carpentry, web page design, video-making, sailing, etc.) they share the same objectives and requirements:

- Learn the basic tasks of each activity
- Develop a written project and present it to the class

- Bring interesting ideas into the classrooms, starting from the newly acquired knowledge
- Encourage the use of ICT
- Help pupils discover their own skills as well as learn about new possibilities
- Widen students' perspectives about job opportunities

Evaluation of the pupils is both individual and group-based. This has a significant impact in the students' final year results and includes the design of a "Professional life project". These are research reports that require active participation in the workshops and in simulated job interviews and must display the knowledge they have acquired about the professional context. Since its first year of implementation (2002-2003), the number of districts and school centres where these TECNE workshops are carried out has grown significantly:

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
districts	3	7	8	8	8
students	164	562	850	1150	1260
groups	8	12	16	36	40
hours	3608	6744	10200	13800	12600

w3.bcn.es/.../V01SubPresentaciolniciCtl/0,2155,60797962_60832205_1_84603864,00.html?accio=detail

"Exit" Project evolution and evaluation

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation was part of the design of the project, beginning with its "pilot" stage between 2001 and 2005. Evaluation covers all the action points as well as the social actors involved in the project (tutors and teaching staff, "buddies", coordinators, families).

The main conclusions of the evaluation carried out during the academic course 2004-05 were:

- Improvement in pupils' learning, visible in positive curricular evaluations, especially in their knowledge of Catalan and the use of new technologies (ICT)
- Improvement in pupils' adaptation to the academic pace (visible in added self confidence and relationship with classmates)
- More efficient use of the institutes and community resources: pools, summer camps, technological equipments, etc.
- Requests from other communities, districts, and schools to extend the programme
- Increment in amount of involvement and collaboration from local socio-cultural associations in learning reinforcement and recreational activities

Specific outcomes

- "Èxit-Smart" group: This was a joint initiative to sum up efforts towards programmes to reduce school drop-out known as "school failure zero". This was a result from an encounter between the "Exit" project (Barcelona) and "Smart Cities" project (New York City). Participating institutions include Barcelona's Municipal Education Institute (IMEB), the Institute for Learning Technologies (ILT) from Columbia University's Teachers College and the Department of Didactics and Educational Organisation of the Pedagogy Faculty of the Barcelona University (UB). Outputs include:

- Written and audiovisual materials about learning reinforcement
- Design of a formula to evaluate new teaching-learning models in the last years of secondary compulsory education
- "Èxit-Smart" group web page
- Participation in teacher training at the Psychopedagogy Department,
- Post-graduate course called "La tasca educativa en el marc de l'Administració pública i local", at the UB
- Press releases and articles in academic journals and daily press

- On-line course about 'attending diversity'
- Research group on new formulas for on-line learning
- Attendance to several seminars organised by City Councils from Spain, Italy, Finland and other countries
- Counselling for several city councils
- Participation in European projects to fight school failure
- Presentation in European seminars as an example of "good practice"

Current state:

After this evaluation, "Exit" is currently engaged in a generalisation phase (2005-07), aimed at extending the project to all the city districts, thereby converting it into Barcelona's main programme against school failure.

Challenges for the future:

Attending the multiple requirements for a phase of further expansion will require careful planning and implementation as will the intent to improve and widen the areas of shared training (cross-curricular) for orientation and motivation of pupils attending the last years of secondary compulsory education. Another challenge lies in following up the framework established by the "Exit-Smart" group and to incorporate the use of ICT into regular classrooms, all of which will require some significant re-designing of school organisation.

References:

Project webpage:

http://w3.bcn.es/V01/Serveis/SubPresentacio/V01SubPresentacioIniciCtl/0,2155,60797962_60832205_1_84603864,00.html?accio=detall

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