

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Spain case study report 3 Vocational Education and Work Placement for School Leavers

This report was written by Melinda Dooly and Claudia Vallejo
on behalf of the Spanish Country Team



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Barcelona, Spain

October 2007

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.

The project has been funded with support from the European Commission. Each report within the overall project is the responsibility of the named authors.

The EPASI project was conducted by the following institutions:

- The Institute for Policy Studies in Education, London
- Metropolitan University (UK) (Coordinator)
- Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen (Belgium)
- Univerzita Hradec Králové (Czech Republic)
- Montpellier III - Université Paul Valéry (France)
- Panepistimio Patron ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ (Greece)
- Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona (Spain)
- Malmö högskola (Sweden)



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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 3: Vocational education and work placement for school leavers (Plan joven de formación-ocupación)

The purpose of the Barcelona City Council's “Vocational education and work placement for school leavers”, initiated in the year 2000, is to facilitate school-workplace transition for those young people who have just completed secondary compulsory education without a diploma and who have left the school system at age 16. As part of Barcelona’s City Educational Project (PEC-B) within the thematic area “Academic success and access to employment”, the plan facilitates mechanisms which favour job placement for these youth, through a personalised programme with multiple phases: information, orientation, training, and insertion.

Its training/employment task relies on the resources arising from the coordination of various municipal institutions, such as Barcelona’s Institute of Education (IMEB), the Institute of Education and the Department of Youth, the Youth Council, the Occupational and Professional Training Board and the labour agency known “Barcelona Activa”. It has also created a regular connection between the secondary schools and the occupational resource network of the city in order to foster the transition of young school leavers into the labour market.

The programme aims at taking care of a significant number of young people who leave secondary education every year without a diploma by encouraging them to take professional training and use available resources for aiding their entry into the workforce. The programme gives assistance and guidance to approximately 2,400 young people each year by helping them with training and employment resources. It is aimed at young people from 16 to 18 years of age who have left secondary school before graduating and who do not have the resources to create their own job-training itinerary or find jobs. The risks for this sector of the population are evident:

-In the environment of a large city with neighbourhoods where the actions of the municipal administration can be limited, there is a large possibility of an increasingly large sector of the population with very little training.

-Young people between the ages of 16 to 18 have a difficult time in finding their first job, especially when they lack a secondary school diploma, which is the case of the target group of this programme.

The plan also recognises the urgency of creating positive expectations amongst young people, in the possibility of gaining access to their first job, the quality of the job, the flexibility of the timetables and the number of hours they have to work, among other elements.

In more general terms, the plan responds to the social needs of young people. Some of the Plan's objectives and actions are:

- Help pupils who have left school and are uncertain what they want to do by showing them the different professional opportunities available to them.
- Help them find out what they would like to do professionally and help make it possible for them to achieve it
- Provide them training in a trade they may enjoy
- Jointly create a plan specially designed for each pupil, to help them tackle the future
- Advise them in their work schedule design
- Promote young people's employment
- Facilitate the transition to an active professional life or reintegration into the school system through a series of assistance designed to help them gain access to training resources. Also provide support for a personal job finding programme through a process of individualised tutorials
- Consolidate the connection between the public and private secondary schools in order to work jointly on the transition from school to the work place and help young school leavers
- Bring the city's resources closer to young people
- Take advantage of the existing city resources when developing the different phases of the programme

As regards the methodology of the plan, the training/employment plan works in a coordinated fashion with the existing labour-related resources in the city of Barcelona and acts as a mediator between the young people and those facilitating the transition of these young people into active employment. In order to get closer to the young people, the plan is organised into a network of centres of "Barcelona Activa", a municipal company fostering local job development, and "4 Youth Information Points", covering the different districts of the city.

The programme works in four phases: information, orientation, training, and insertion, and its services are organised through the following stages or actions:

- Once the interested youth arrives at one of the district information points in the city, he/she is required to give personal information and a first meeting is settled to begin to draw up a joint work plan.
- During this first individual interview a job diagnosis is made for each participant in the plan. In this phase, the service evaluates the ex-student's expectations, the possibilities of fulfilling them, and the programme best suited to help him/her achieve them.
- A technician or a group of experts informs, advises and orients the young person towards the different resources that are available in the city. They also discuss his/her possibilities to participate in a new training or continued education course to acquire more professional skills or competences or to initiate an occupational activity.

- There are 8 people located in 7 offices of “Barcelona Activa”. These experts must follow up the development of the youth if any problems arise.
- Afterwards there are group seminars for job orientation.
- The Plan presents a large selection of training resources to help the young person aim for the future, or, if he/she prefers, choose the option of returning to the educational system. Depending on the profile of the participants, they are streamed towards a particular employment resource or another: workshop, school or skills centres (job and training centres in which the young unemployed person receives occupational training courses combined with professional practice), occupational training, social welfare courses (courses in job starting, training and employment, professional workshops, in collaboration with the municipalities, secondary schools and NGOs), job transition plan (type of social welfare programmes designed to provide young people with personal and professional resources so that they can find a job and/or continue their training) and others.
- During the training period there are many techniques, contents, objectives and time-periods, so that each youth can obtain tangible success in their programme and find their place in the job market and as citizens. The young person can also take part in practice placement in a company, institution or organisation or, even take part in professional training abroad.
- After job training and work place entry, the plan has a monitoring mechanism and tutorial systems for each individual case in order to guarantee that the resources are being used adequately and that the action is a success (up to 18 months to support the job-finding process).

State of the project:

The Plan is currently in its seventh year. Data for this last academic year 2006-2007 is the following. 2,268 young people participated in the plan; 65 percent were male and 35 percent were female. This corresponds with the fact that there tend to be more male school leavers. 34.95 percent of the participants were 16 years old, 33.5 percent were 17 and 15.89 percent were already 18 years old when they participated. 1203 participants were returning from a previous stage in 2005-2006 and 1065 were incorporated during the first 10 months of 2006. Most of the youth (52.28 percent) have been directed to non-regulated training resources, in particular to Social Guarantee Programmes (557) and Occupational Formation (246). Significantly, 501 young participants chose to follow the preparation of the access tests to Medium Degree Professional Formation (Junior college). 140 participants so-called Workshop schools (*Escuelas Taller*). Young immigrants represented 31 percent of the people who participated in the Plan in this period.

Results, outcomes and evaluation

According to [BIDCE –International Documents Bank of Educational Cities](#), during the 5 years Barcelona City Council's “Vocational education and work placement for school leavers” has already been implemented; more than 7,000 young people have gone through the programme, which has made it a benchmark for integration and participation of young people and their start in life as citizens. 22 percent of these young people go back into the school system, particularly into Vocational Training, through an entrance exam, and 39 percent find their first job or maintain contacts with the working world.

The programme has managed to set up permanent links of collaboration with the schools, and, accordingly, all the young people at risk (16-18 years old) can get involved if they do not have other resources. It has also created a regular connection between the secondary education schools and the city's network of employment resources to favour the transition of young people with a high risk of school failure or early school leavers into the labour market.

Nonetheless, there are still some challenges to be met. When the programme was set up there was not as much immigration in Barcelona as today. Currently, immigrant groups make up 31 percent of the programme. Immigrant participants often find themselves in a legal limbo - if the immigrant youth who leaves or graduates from school have legal work permission, the programme can help them in the same way as any other resident; but this is not usually the case and, therefore, different solutions must be sought for this group. The plan is looking into legal assessment and trying to negotiate easier routes to work permission with the local government.

References:

Project's webpage: <http://www.bcn.es/imeb/plajove/>

BIDCE –International Documents Bank of Educational Cities:

<http://w10.bcn.es/APPS/edubidce/pubTemesAc.do?idtem=81&pubididi=2>

Other Websites:

<http://www.bcn.es/imeb/plajove/ingles/index.htm>

<http://w10.bcn.es/APPS/edubidce/pubTemesAc.do?idtem=81&pubididi=2>