

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Greece Case Study 4 Social Care and Development Programme: Working with minorities

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Social Care and Development Programme: Working with minorities

The Social Care and Development programme was implemented by the Department of Social Administration of the Democritus University of Thrace in cooperation with the local authority of the Municipality of Sapes. Thrace is an area in northern Greece where the only officially recognised minority, the Muslim minority of Thrace is located. Also in the early 1990s, a large number of repatriates from the former Soviet Union were relocated and resided in the same area.

Sapes is a town in Thrace, in the Prefecture of Rodopi, located 21 kilometres from the city of Komotini (the capital of the prefecture). Sapes is a multicultural community. The population consists of Muslims, Christians and people that have repatriated from several countries that were part of the former Soviet Union (Kazakhstan, Georgia etc.). The Muslim population is categorized to be Turkish origin Muslim, ROM and Pomacs. People are faced with poverty and high levels of unemployment, problems with the communication between the different cultural groups, the ageing of the population and the social integration of the repatriates. The programme has no actual funding. The Municipality of Sapes provides the buildings and technical infrastructure. The programme started in 1999. The programme is still in progress with some differentiations concerning the educational projects.

Its basic purpose is to promote community programmes and the networking among community services at the local level. Additionally it seeks to advance the communication between the different cultural groups and the mobilisation of the local community.

A central activity of the pilot project is the function of the University Social Service in the City of Sapes. One professional social worker and a group of social worker student trainees' in the Department of Social Administration are employed. The purpose of the Social Service is to provide counselling, psychological and social support to individuals, adults, children and youths and their families. In addition the Service implements community programmes such as extra teaching assistance for repatriate students. It also promotes networking among local organisations and services. This task of actions is accomplished with the advancement of cooperation between the University, the Social Service, the Intercultural Primary and Secondary Schools, the Day Care Centre for the Elderly, the Association from Repatriates from Pontos, the programme "Assistance at Home" and the Mobile Unit of Mental Health Provision. Furthermore, research whose aim was to evaluate the needs and the problems emerging in the local community has taken place. It's clear that this kind of projects aim to give a holistic approach to address the actions undertaken. It's a good example of networking and advancing cooperation between different professions. Moreover this local initiative made it possible for citizens of the municipality to work together (repatriates, Muslims and Christians) but also to work with an "outsider" (the University and the student trainees).

In the framework described above, two programmes related to education were organised and implemented. The first in cooperation with the Intercultural Elementary School, in which trainees social workers worked with the children in the school unit's classroom and the second in cooperation with the Intercultural Secondary School in which a programme of "extra teaching assistance" was developed and implemented in after school hours. The participation of the students was voluntary. The teachers responsible for the teaching assistance were volunteers, students of the Department of Philology of the Dimocritus University of Thrace and the lessons took place in the University's Social Service. At the same time (in the breaks) social workers worked with the students through role playing games, group discussions etc.

The extra teaching assistance programme was open for every student to participate. The participation was voluntary but in the end only repatriate students participated. The programme stopped in 2003 because of the implementation of the EPEAEK programmes: "Educating Muslim Students" and "Integration of Repatriates and Foreigners Students in Secondary Education". While the educational aspects of the programme were replaced by the aforementioned projects, the "Social Care and Development programme" continues to function.

References

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