

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Slovak Republic case study report 1 A Roma People Oriented Curriculum

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December 2008

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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The project “A Roma people oriented curriculum” is a project organised by State Institute of Education (*Štátny pedagogický ústav, ŠPÚ*), Pluhová 8, P.O.BOV 26, 830 00 Bratislava. The main funders are two: EU and Ministry of Education. The project focuses on socio-economic and linguistic inequalities of the Roma people. As for more specifics of the target group the project is aimed not only at the people of Roma community generally but at upper secondary education students, in particular. Therefore, secondary education students aged 15 to 20 are the main target group. What the project aims at as well as counts on further is pedagogical workers and other experts producing materials and testing materials, translators, methodologists etc.

The project started in 2005 and lasted till 2006 (22 months). The main incentive for the project seems to lie firstly in the need to increase the number of grammar school graduates – Roma language speaking aspirants to university teacher-oriented study programmes in order to produce more Roma language speaking pedagogues or at least pedagogue assistants to work in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Another incentive is related to the first one but focuses more general level of the linguistic, socio-economic and ethnic inequalities of the target group. Another incentive concerns the effort to minimise the linguistic barrier and cultural disadvantages, as well as to improve low mobility and low social and economic situation of some Roma families (ŠPÚ).

However, the project has a kind of its forerunner too. The National Institute of Education (*Štátny pedagogický ústav, ŠPÚ*), Bratislava, started one pilot project “*Experimental Verification of the Effectiveness of Roma Language and Literature Curriculum at Basic and Secondary Schools*” already in 2003. The project was approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and in the following year 2004 the institute ŠPÚ initiated verification of another project “*Experimental Verification of the Effectiveness of Roma People’s Life and Institutions Curriculum at Basic and Secondary Schools*”. Both projects count on participation of some selected basic and secondary schools. As for the schools, there were six schools participating. At the phases of testing the programme and materials there were about 600 recipients. However there is a prospect of a higher number of recipients in future.

The key objectives of the project are (ŠPÚ):

- To support equal approach to education and employment for Roma people.
- To increase the educational level attained by the Roma population as a prerequisite of assertion at the labour market as well as of complex integration.
- To contribute to creation of job vacancies further to the state policy in the field of Roma people education.
- To create job vacancies after completing secondary schools in the following positions: teacher assistants, educational and re-qualification programmes lecturers and social workers etc.
- To create a new Roma people-oriented study programme at secondary education level.

The project is struggling to create a new Roma people-oriented study programme at secondary education level and completion of the study programme is a chance to provide both general qualification including foreign languages and Roma studies special qualification. The Roma people special qualification covers these issues:

- Roma language,
- Roma literature and history,
- Roma life and institutions.

The project tried to prepare a complex and verified teaching content in the fields of Roma language, Roma literature, Roma people’s life and institutions. The teaching content covers a comprehensive system and structure of a school subject:

- teaching curricula and syllabi,

- study texts,
- teaching materials,
- teacher education principles.

The fields of Roma language, Roma literature, Roma people's life and institutions are viewed as standard school subjects at basic and secondary schools. The pedagogical documents and study materials were prepared and verified by teams of teaching methodologists and experts on Roma language, literature and Roma life and institutions not only from Slovakia but also from abroad. The main guarantor of the project is Seminar of Indian Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, Prague (Czech Republic). Roma language, Roma literature and Roma people's life and institutions are taught by Roma teachers as experts on subjects in Roma people studies. The teachers' preparation is guaranteed by State Institute of Education (ŠPÚ).

The project main outcomes might be divided into the following parts (ŠPÚ):

- provisional pedagogical documents: teaching syllabi, teaching curricula, educational and outcome standards,
- provisional study texts, teaching methodological materials and teaching aids.
- creation of a basic documentation collection of Roma culture, language and history,
- higher qualification and increased employment rate in Roma communities,
- new secondary education study programme focusing Roma issue.

The project's outcome also concerns creation of conditions facilitating better acceptance of this type of activities by the Slovak society. This type of outcomes is proved mainly by increase of the centres focusing Roma culture studies. For example, on the grounds of cooperation from the project dated 2005–2006 there was newly founded a Roma people studies centre in Košice in October 2007. The centre aims also to develop tests suitable for Roma children at the beginning of compulsory school attendance (Romano Hangos, 2007).

References:

Zvýšenie kvalifikačného potenciálu príslušníkov rómskej komunity zavedením nového študijného zamerania "Romistika" do systému vzdelávania stredných škôl. Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav. Available at: http://www.statpedu.sk/buxus/generate_page.php?page_id=1100 [cited 20/2/2008]

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