A Case Study for the Second Chance Program School in Romania

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Contribution

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Abstract This paper explores some aspects of inclusive education of the Roma population in Romania. In the first part, we provide a brief historical background of the Roma population in Romania and their social integration or lack of, as presented in the surveyed literature. In the second part, a case study for social inclusion in primary education is presented. In particular, we examine 'Education for a Second Chance', a program implemented in Romania by Phare and the European Union in 2004, to benefit disadvantaged groups of the population. We found that this program is a step forward in a country where minority rights is a fairly new concept; however, some shortcomings of the project are presented. Introduction The European Commission proposed the Second Chance Schools scheme in 1995 in order to combat school failure and social exclusion. Four general characteristics of the program are: partnership with local authorities, social services, associations and the private sector; a teaching and counseling approach focused on the needs of individual pupils; stimulation of active learning on their part; flexible teaching modules; and a central role for the acquisition of skills through new technologies. Around 80 pilot projects were started in 1996 and at the end of 2000 the number was over 300. EU countries such as United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Italy and Romania were interested to promote these pilot projects. Education for a Second Chance in Romania The objective of the program called Access to education for Disadvantaged Groups was to transform traditional schools into inclusive schools. Inclusive schools are meant to welcome all children regardless of their abilities, cultural or ethnical background, and foster the learning needs of every child through active learning, cooperation and team work in the classroom. At the same time, it involves parents, schools and communities, in the effort of providing quality education for all. Special attention is given to training educators and directors of programs. The program was implemented in 250 schools across the country (MOE, 2006) A continuation and completion of Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups is Education for a Second Chance, a program that had an experimental character between 2005 and 2006. Based on the experience gained during the pilot, and following close monitoring and evaluation, the program was
reformed so it could be extended nationwide. This study explores how was implemented this program in a Romanian school what teachers believe about it.

Method

We considered a qualitative naturalist research. A case study following Cresswell, (1998) methodology was developed. It explores activities that takes place in a school placed in Romania. For collecting the data we collected official documents, school documents, and teachers reflections. We selected our official documents from the program on the following secondary sources: documents published by the Romanian Ministry of Education, information provided by the European Union Committee for Education, an information flyer advertising the program into communities called Scoala Incluziva (Inclusive Schools) and an evaluation guide provided to the teachers (Boca et al., 2007). Two teachers were interviewed in an interview that lasted approximately 90 minutes. Debriefing and follow up were done for the purpose of clarifying the research findings.

Expected Outcomes

Education for a Second Chance has many of the ingredients proposed by some authors for a successful educational project: a flexible program, Rroma mediators (Ringold et al., 2005), a history of Rroma culture and traditions (Hancock, 2002), and interactive group work (Claveria & Alonso, 2003). One of the teachers involved in the Second Chance program says that it is successful, and that the students are motivated to learn and feel comfortable in these classes. The unintentional segregation is one of its shortcomings, but considering that the non-Rroma students continue to discriminate Rroma students in the mainstream classrooms, and that many teachers are not prepared or willing to adjust their teaching style, we would call it ‘positive’ segregation. We consider it positive because full integration of Rroma into schools right now is not realistic, and indigenization/internalization of such policies is still hindered at the informal social level.

References

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