



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

European Conference
Closing the empowerment gap through citizenship education
How to address educationally disadvantaged groups

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Report

Workshop 1 Learning Environment – School and Quality Assurance

by **Kamila Wieczorek**
Center for Citizenship Education (Poland)

Input:

Calin Rus, Intercultural Institute Timisoara (Romania)
Arthur Ivatts, Senior Consultant to the British Department for Children, Schools and Families (UK)

Moderation:

Yulia Pererva, Council of Europe (France)

Figures – Dates – Moods/ Feedback

Session 1:

Number of participants: 4

Participant list analysis: Manuel Carmelo Rosa, Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, Portugal – practitioner working with Roma families. Katarzyna Chlewińska, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Tsunenobu Ban, Narato University of Education, Japan. Moeller Karola, school teacher, Germany.

Session 2:

Number of participants: 3

Participant list analysis: Stephan Rosinger, Pedagogical University Oberosterreich, Austria
Petia Kabakchieva, Academy of Science, Sofia University, Bulgaria
Eliska Bucvanova, Centre for Democracy in Education, Czech Republic

What is the mood in general, the debating atmosphere with one another during the workshop?

In both sessions the participants were reluctant to debate. Most of them seemed to have little experience in practice as far as education Roma children is concerned. Participants claimed that they attended the workshop to collect information. The only person who spoke about his experience with Roma was Manuel Carmelo Rosa. The question raised by him was the role of parents in children' education. He claimed that the main problem with Roma children is that parents do not agree to send or leave their children at school.



Manuel Carmelo Rosa suggested that we should focus on educating parents, which would result in higher level of school attendance among Roma children. The participants had a few questions about educational system in UK, especially about the procedure of controlling schools and school reports (SEF) and in the second session additionally inclusive curriculum. However, small number of participants and intimate atmosphere in both sessions rather discouraged people from active participation. Listeners weren't committed. There was lack of some additional stimulation for debating. There was no feedback as far as the procedure for repeating the workshop is concerned.

Content

The moderator indicated as target for the workshop answering the main question of the conference: How citizenship education can become the suitable tool for closing the empowerment gap? However, the participants tried just a bit to answer the questions or to speak about their perspectives.

Calin Rus, (Intercultural Institute Timisoara, Romania), "Enhancing quality assurance of EDC in schools with focus on Roma issues."

Calin Rus presented multicultural context of schools in Romania. He mentioned Quality Assurance of Council of Europe (EDC –Education for Democratic Citizenship) and stressed the distinction between quality control and quality assurance. He also claimed that the success of the presented project lies in the realistic approach, one need to have a vision where he wants to go and know where one is. Calin Rus suggested that in previous projects implemented in Romania the main problem was superficial treatment of the approach and avoiding difficult issues, which could disrupt routine actions. Another project, which was mentioned, project citizen and Civitas network provided Romanian practitioners with the idea of successful educational practice – students diagnose, study and propose public policy concerning the problem in society. The aim of the project presented by Calin Rus was to deal with strong antygypsism existing in Romanian society. The project was addressed to highschool students and teams of teachers. The core programme consisted of: mapping the problems faced by Roma people in the local community, identifying the problem that could be solved by public policy, preparing a project of public policy solving the problem, public presentation of the project within the participation of local authorities and local community. Main steps securing success of the programme were: training the teachers (methodology, EDC, intercultural education and Quality Assurance issues) and online monitoring the programme. The project worked and furthermore connected community and school. Eleven schools took part in it.

The project provides concrete, complex activity to focus on thus facilitating, it is both structured and opened in terms of content, has a wide visibility at school level and beyond, bring local community closer to school, attracts interest and generate debate, offers rich opportunities for reflection and stimulates further participation.

Manuel Carmelo Rosa commented the project presentation and suggested that they have different problems with Roma, low level of school attendance. He stressed that as far as Roma are concerned civic education should address rather parents than children to make them send their children to school and let them finish it. There was short but interesting and concrete discussion between the two presenters and Manuel Carmelo Rosa. The issue of the specific of Roma culture was raised. Calin Rus claimed also that the other idea, which is in process, was to integrate some elements of Roma culture in the school curricula. This way it will more truly reflect reality or the Romanian school.



*Arthur Ivatts, Senior Consultant to the British Department for Children, Schools and Families
“Two sides of a coin: what is and what could it be school.”*

Arthur Ivatts presented current policy, provision and practice in English Schools. The school ethos (legal requirement) in UK is that it should be equally welcoming irrespective of background. Each school has to have a policy on equal opportunities. English schools implement various methods to reach educationally disadvantaged groups: classes and schools integrating (disabilities), multiethnic schools, special support for SEN or EAL pupils, free school meal for poor, Pupil Premium (extra money for disadvantaged pupils), legal duty to promote community cohesion, inclusive curriculum (Black history and bilingual books etc.), duty to develop Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education of all pupils, Personal Health and Citizenship Education in all schools and part of the National Curriculum, unhindered free access to early years education, extended day and extracurricular activities, Children’s Centers (advice/adult education etc.), Quality Assurance, SEF (every school has to have the Self Evaluation Form), Raise-on-line/data (social and ethnic monitoring), routine and rigorous external inspection with focus on performance of all pupils and group of pupils. Having presented all this improvement implemented in British school, Arthur Ivatts suggested the weak points of the system as far as empowerment issue is concerned. The analysis of exclusion is not seen of relevant whereas inequality related to ethnicity and social class persists, still exists private school system for the rich. It is believed that empowerment is gained from personal performance. Whereas primary schools do empower most pupils to learning and achieve well, more selection by class and ethnicity is observed in secondary school and university. Roma/ Travellers get a rough deal generally. The conclusion of the presentation was that citizenship education just promotes acceptance. Citizenship education promotes only small changes (concerning peace, environment, drugs, diet, participation in civil society), not changing system. There is no radical analysis of causal factors of exclusion and disadvantage. Power and privilege are now unseen and institutionalized. Supposing Citizenship education is a tool for change and for challenging of power: teachers should be trained to foster equality of expectation; we should provide ambassadors and role models for disadvantaged groups. Underachievement is all about motivation, not intelligence. Citizenship education should help pupils of all ages deconstruct social injustice e.g. by engaging in political protests relevant to their lives and environment. Teachers should demand politically for an inversion of resource distribution.

Findings

The workshop ended without thorough discussion of the main issues. The presenters seemed to be disappointed by lack of vivid debate about Roma situation in educational system and different approaches towards Roma problem. Especially there was no answer to the question how we should integrate the target group’s environment into the educational framework. The moderator asked once more questions rose in the beginning. On the flipchart she wrote five main points for successful “closing the empowerment gap”. The group suggested as bullet points: need for strong policy, which helps, documents, procedures; teachers need competences and recognition; balance between control and trust. There is a need for strong policy by government to provide professional confidence for implementations. The conclusion was that we need to exchange opinions and practices in different countries. What we should do is analyzing exclusion and collecting data, provide opportunities for joint problem solving, involve family and community, monitor, support, adapt activities, partnership-development (with public authorities). At the end of the workshop the group concluded that the main finding is that in order to succeed one should develop and organize strategic plan and make sure (by monitoring and giving support on school level) it is implemented.