



EUN/DOC/047

STATEMENTS on 'Migration and education'

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EUNEC

EUNEC is the network of education councils in the European Union. EUNEC brings together the expertise of advisory bodies and of the stakeholders and experts who are involved in the national/regional advisory processes. These advisory bodies give advice to the governments of the different European countries in the field of education and training.

Scope and working method

EUNEC discussed the new challenges for migration and education, together with experts and representatives of stakeholders from the member countries. The European councils gathered in Larnaca, from the 15th - 17th October 2012. Olympia Stylianou, secretary general of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, welcomed about fifty participants, coming from 14 European countries and from Québec.

EUNEC formulated critical remarks and statements on this issue. EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively to the European Commission, the European Parliament and relevant DGs. EUNEC also wants to promote actions by its members at national/regional level. These critical remarks and statements can contribute to the national advisory opinions of education councils. They should lead to reflection and action by relevant stakeholders in the field of education and training, such as providers of education, teacher trade unions, social partners and experts in the field of education and training.

STATEMENTS ON MIGRATION AND EDUCATION

Migration and diversity: changing concept, new challenges

European countries have moved away from the seemingly culturally homogeneous places they once considered themselves to be. Schools no longer have to deal with homogeneous migrant minorities. Migrant pupils come from all over the world and migration patterns are rapidly changing. Moreover, education has to cope with the reality of mobile migration: people do not move from one country to another intending to stay there for the rest of their lives; they often move again several times.

This has fundamentally changed everything in society. We have to move away from the concept of diversity in society, and thus in the classroom, to the concept of 'super-diverse societies' and classrooms. This shift has to be reflected in education policies. The challenge for education is how to deal effectively with students from 'super-diverse' backgrounds and turn diversity into educational success.

The theme of migration and education not only concerns immigration but also emigration. We need bilateral policies that share responsibilities between the host country and the country of origin. We need to find ways of cooperating and building partnerships that benefit all.

The policy level

General policies, targeted measures?

At the EU level, all the issues related to education and migration are set within the larger framework of targets intended for the general population. Commonly, migrant pupils do not achieve the performance of their native peers. This creates an unequal situation, and a risk to the promotion of social cohesion. That is why the EU has developed initiatives in order to try to bridge the gap.^{1 2 3}

General education policies do matter: MIPEX III shows that achievements for migrants are related to achievements for natives⁴.

We may be thinking too much about migrant specific education and not enough about general education. In the challenges related to the education of migrant pupils, the socio-economic status is a central factor, next to other factors, such as language and age at arrival. General policies on inclusive education can give rise to good targeted measures for migrant education. Policy measures that are working for disadvantaged pupils in general also work for pupils from a migrant background, for example, avoiding early tracking and establishing flexible pathways.

¹ Green paper on migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems, European Commission, 3 July 2008

² Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, Education, Youth and Culture Council, 26 November 2009

³ SIRIUS, European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background

⁴ MIPEX (Migrant integration policy index) III, produced as part of the project: Outcomes for Policy Change, co-financed by the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals

Targeted policy measures for migrants should not be the only answer to the challenges of migrant education, although they are needed to complement the general policies, for instance in the case of newly arrived migrant pupils.

Partnerships

MIPEX reveals that education is an 'area of weakness' in the wider field of migration policies, and that policies related to migration are not linked, and not coherent.⁵

Education policy will have to be more aligned with social policy; a shared responsibility for improved provision. There is a need for an overall policy including all relevant policy domains: employment, health, housing, welfare, integration. The case of ACIDI⁶ in Portugal offers a good example of how a national plan can help mobilize each Ministry to put the integration of migrants on the agenda. Coherence within policies will facilitate the creation of a capital of trust between the country and the migrant. This will help to create a consensus, and an awareness of the fact that migration does not have to be associated with problems.

At an international level, MIPEX can be used to enhance the understanding of differences and similarities between policies related to migration.

Participation

In the preparation of balanced policies, all stakeholders have to have their say, with an important role for the pedagogical teams who work in the field. It is also essential to get migrants involved in the way forward and to consult migrant organizations. Currently this involvement is not often the case: MIPEX shows that there are in Europe only a few consultation bodies for migrants, and if there are, they come and go and are not a permanent feature.⁷

Importance of research

The evidence base in the field of migrant education policies needs to be constantly updated. There is a need for continued research in following the educational paths of students from a migrant background and in evaluating the effectiveness of policy measures and initiatives. Schools have to be involved as more active partners in contributing to this research.

School and class level

The curriculum

Difficulties of migrants are initially lined to ignorance of the language of instruction and of the school culture of the host country. The best response to these difficulties, beyond temporary specific devices to improve the language of instruction, is to develop intercultural education, which is an opportunity for all pupils, migrants and natives. Intercultural education has to do with how to learn to live together in a democratic and pluralistic society. This intercultural education has to be more than just a subject in the

⁵ MIPEX (Migrant integration policy index) III

⁶ ACIDI, Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, Portugal

⁷ MIPEX (Migrant integration policy index) III

curriculum; it has to be evidenced in whole school policy and practice. It is important to monitor and evaluate the school's ethos and the curriculum in order to check that they reflect the idea of valuing diversity and confronting prejudices and stereotypes.

The views of all those who work with migrant pupils should be taken into account, in the school and in the community, from teachers to cleaning staff, from parents to socio-cultural organizations. Intercultural dialogue is necessary with all the partners in the school and outside the school.

Teachers are crucial

The teacher remains an important catalyst for migrant students' academic success, regardless of often challenging economic conditions. Educating teachers for diversity has to be an important element in initial teacher education and in continuing professional development. Such an investment should ensure that teachers make a positive impact no matter what the general and targeted education policies are.

In order to be able to respond to the challenges of education and migration, teachers need to have intercultural competences which will enable them to manage diversity. However, competences are not sufficient; the attitude of the teacher is a critical condition for success. It is very important that the teacher believes in the 'teachability' of each pupil, as this has an enormous impact on the pupil's self-belief and can reduce any sense of futility. If the teacher sees diversity as an asset rather than a problem, this will lead to classroom practice that enhances the self-esteem of migrant pupils and empowers them.

It is not easy to deal pedagogically with the challenges of diversity and to translate this inclusive attitude into effective classroom practice. It is important in this respect, to use the socio-cultural context of the pupil as a starting point and to explore different, innovative ways of teaching, such as using team-teaching in bigger class groups and engaging the pupils through more interactive, cooperative and problem solving learning.

A commitment to educating teachers for diversity is essential. Teacher education should focus on developing teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' who will employ pedagogies to improve the learning of all pupils, including the typically underserved ones, such as migrants. The professional identity of these teachers is based on strong cultural self-awareness; these teachers consciously consider how their everyday actions might counteract social inequalities.

There is also a need for incentives so that the best trained teachers can be employed in the most challenging schools.

Multilingualism

In a European, international context, multilingualism is seen as an asset. In the case of migrants, their multilingualism is seen as a problem.

As long as education for migrants focuses only on the knowledge of the host language and neglects to view the multilingual repertoires of migrants as an asset, integration policies are doomed to fail. Withdrawing migrant pupils from the class group in order to bring them to the level of language proficiency the host country has decided to be the

norm, can lead to stigmatization. Instead, the plurilingual repertoires of these pupils can be exploited as didactical capital for learning. Attention to the mother tongue and culture will reinforce the identity of migrant pupils and enhance their self-confidence.

Education policies for migrant pupils should not focus exclusively on the proficiency of the language of the host country, but go deeper, and work at the level of identity development of those who often have to cope not only with different languages, but also with different social and cultural worlds.

Diversity is an asset

Although there is agreement that society should strive for desegregation, it is acknowledged that, in certain circumstances such as in big cities, there will be segregation, leading, to a certain extent, to 'black' schools. However, it is important that there is commitment to providing the highest possible quality of education for all pupils, whether in segregated or in integrated schools.

In order to reach this level of consistency in the quality of education, a shift in thinking is needed. Our fundamental view about diversity and education denies diversity as a starting point; diversity is recognized, but only as a condition to adaptation. Diversity is thus devalued and seen as a problem, a deviation. It is crucial that we move away from this deficit approach which often promotes the implementation of compensatory programmes and segregation measures at schools. Instead, we have to work towards a consensus in society where diversity and migration are not automatically seen as a problem, but rather as an asset.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge and express our concern that, in times of economic and financial crisis, the most vulnerable groups should not suffer most.