

Measures to combat educational disadvantage: A European consultation symposium December 2011

Speaker's Report

Working Together for Equity: how to develop and implement cross-policy synergies and multi-agency partnerships.

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1. Working for Active Inclusion

Social exclusion is ... *the process of becoming detached from the organizations and communities of which the society is composed and from the rights and responsibilities that they embody.* (Room 1995: 243)

The 2011 Social Protection Committee analysis of the social dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy identifies the need to raise at least 20 million citizens out of poverty and social exclusion over the next decade. Social inclusion of young people is to occur through a policy of social integration where education has a key role in building capacity for active inclusion.

2. Prevention and Early Intervention

The preventative work which was the focus of the workshop aims at breaking inter-generational cycles of disadvantage through building the capacity of children, their families and often their wider communities to engage fully in and with mainstream society. Schools cannot achieve that aim alone.

'Early intervention' is the term most commonly associated with the inclusion agenda. It is not limited to the early stages of a child's life, but involves intervening early when there are signs of vulnerability at any time in the life of a child or young person (Home Office 2000; Rutter 2007). Often the extent of vulnerability is not recognised until one looks across a child's life, school, home, health etc. These multi-faceted problems call for multi-agency responses (Edwards *et al.* 2009).

3. Approaches to Early Intervention

There are currently two broad approaches to targeting multi-professional preventative work: child-centred personalised support for a vulnerable child or young person, delivered by a team or distributed group of professionals; or interventions targeted at

specific groups in response to national and regional policies for the social inclusion of potentially marginalised groups.

- **Child-centred collaboration:** the school identifies a sign of vulnerability in a student and works with other professions to explore the extent of the vulnerability and to develop a joint response
- **Group targeting:** local priorities identify particular groups of children as vulnerable and schools becomes sites of targeted interventions

Schools may have one of two broad functions: **as sites of direct interventions**, which are aimed at changing school practices so they become more inclusive, or as a part **multi-layered ecological attacks** on local deprivation. In both of these functions the following roles for schools can be found.

- Providing the education needed for active inclusion;
- Places where the first signs of vulnerability might be noted and other agencies called in to help; and
- Useful sites for non-stigmatising interventions.

These three roles often overlap in the work that schools do with other agencies.

- (i) **Examples where the school is a site of intervention** include LSB teams – Netherlands; School-social interventions – Sweden; and studies in the INCLUD-ED project.

Example of working directly with schools: LBS-teams Netherlands

These are multi-professional teams which are attached to schools and work with their priorities. Their work centres on early diagnosis and intervention. They aim at integrating educational services with health and human services in order to enhance the emotional well being, development, positive behaviour and educational attainment of children and young people.

The multi-disciplinary teams include professionals from the school and health and human services. They are intervention-oriented, not merely offering consultation and referrals, and are integrated into the school support structure. There has been successful implementation in 21 pilot regions with positive outcomes in most regions in achievement, well-being, service delivery and school careers. There has also been a successful up-scaling of LBS-teams in primary and secondary schools and school networks. Some challenges remain. These include: the quality of comprehensive youth policy planning in municipalities and collaboration with school boards; adequate resources such as family support, social work, mental health and youth care services; and continuous reinforcement for improved social infrastructure e.g. the reduction of other networks; balancing primary prevention, selective prevention and interventions; the urgency to demonstrate positive outcomes on a large scale while conditions for quality implementation are sub-optimal; and a massive agenda for capacity building in e.g. leadership, case management, inter-professional programmes. (van Veen 2011)

- (ii) **Examples of a more ecological approach** include neighbourhood initiatives e.g. On-Track or Total Place – UK; assets building e.g. *Unanticipated Gains* (Small 2009) – US; and community regeneration with Education at the core -

Bildungsoffensive Elbinseln and One Square Kilometer of Education – Germany.

Example of an ecological approach One Square Kilometer of Education: Berlin

Initiated in Berlin in 2006 by the Freudenberg Foundation, Karl-Konrad-and Ria-Groeben Foundation and RAA Berlin in cooperation with the Berlin Senate Department for Education, Science and Research. There are now two projects in Berlin and the idea was extended to Wuppertal, Herten and Mannheim in 2009. Evaluation so far is through monitoring and self-evaluation.

The One Square Kilometer of Education approach centres on five questions:

1. How can processes of education in a city district be organized so that they can be integrated, interconnected and ensure the success of children and adolescents?
2. How can the quality in day-care centres, youth welfare centres and schools be improved and controlled with the participation – if possible – of all groups involved?
3. How can the participation of parents be ensured?
4. Under what conditions can different approaches be integrated in and transferred from the program?
5. How can municipalities, state administrative offices, foundations and civic society cooperate in this connection?

Each initiative has a 'binding and regulated cooperation with the public authorities', which varies according to local regulatory needs. Importantly, in all the projects, municipal control groups have been established to aid integration.

(iii) Policy responses

The UK 2010 NFER international comparison of service integration observed how national political, funding and legal systems affected provision and found that centrally directed 'statist' approaches are more likely to achieve service integration than those which operate through 'subsidiarity'. Workshop discussion examined the need for this integration to also be seen at national and European levels i.e. joined up working happens in joined up systems.

(iv) Challenges

Funding challenges include:

- Short-term funding of targeted initiatives limits impact and evidence of impact.
- Too little attention is paid to identifying the root causes of vulnerability.
- Lack of attention to root causes can lead to solution-focused fixes (which can leave schools dealing with a child's underlying problems once an intervention has ended).
- Cost-benefit analyses are difficult to do, particularly for preventative activities.

Workforce and systems challenges include:

- Workers need to be able to recognise, contribute to and work with the expertise that is distributed across local systems.

- Collaborative assessments need systems-level analyses of purposes and the implications of the new tools.
- Assessments need to recognise the dynamic aspects of vulnerability and record the progress made by children and young people towards active inclusion.

(v) Ways forward

- Attention to local conditions and purposes in order to identify the (different) entry points.
- Working across departments to release local, regional national resources to both identify problems and tackle them.
- Recognising the root causes of vulnerability to avoid superficial responses which leave schools with the problem once the initiative ends.
- Avoiding seeing schools as the single solution to poverty and exclusion.
- Acknowledging the demands of ecological approaches and developing the capacity to evaluate them more robustly.

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