From segregation to inclusion: Roma pupils in the United Kingdom. A pilot research project

YHRMP ID
33
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Aims

To analyse the impact of mainstream UK education on Roma students who were previously placed in special or segregated schools/classes in Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Methodology

Desk based research was carried out on special education systems in Czech Republic and Slovakia and the situation of Roma within them. Data was collected between June and August 2011 and consisted of separate focus groups with Roma pupils and parents and semi-structured interviews with education staff

across 8 locations in England, including Rotherham. 114 interviews were conducted:

- 61 with Roma students at primary and secondary school
- 28 with Roma parents
- 25 with education staff

Key issues

- The benefits and disadvantages of the mainstream UK education system for Roma pupils.
- Identifying best practice within the UK education system to promote learning and integration in other areas of the UK as well as in Europe.

Conclusions

85% of the pupils interviewed had been placed in segregated schools in their country of origin but only a tiny minority had special educational needs [SEN] and there was very little difference in attainment in the UK system between Roma pupils who had attended these schools and those who had not. Furthermore Roma pupils were achieving successfully in the UK system at just below the national average. There was evidence that once Roma pupils had integrated into the classroom in the

UK there were fewer problems regarding community cohesion in and out of school. Both Roma parents and pupils reported feeling welcomed at UK schools, that there was an absence of discrimination and that teachers were helpful and supportive. UK schools and colleges have developed significant experience in working with Roma over the past two decades such that they represent some of the best practice in Europe.

Recommendations

- The predominance of Roma in segregated schools in Czech Republic and Slovakia are in no way justified and the governments of these countries must implement the judgement made by the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 to protect the rights of and ensure inclusion of Roma pupils. There needs to be a planned approach to challenge the use of such schools and this pilot research should be used to engage education staff, decision makers, practitioners and the media on this issue in Czech republic and Slovakia.
- Best practice in working Roma with pupils developed in the UK should be disseminated through the development of a new network both in the UK and in Europe.
- The pilot project should act as the basis for a larger scale research project of its kind to include Roma from all national groups.

Web Link

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Migrant Group

EU migrants

Topic

Children and young people

Children

Education

Roma

Place

Rotherham

South Yorkshire

UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element

Year

2011

Resource Type

Report

Publisher

Equality

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/segregation-inclusion-roma-pupils-united-kingdom-pilot-research-project*