

State of the "art" in the sphere of Inclusive education in the Republic of Macedonia

Dr. Ognen Spasovski
Department of Psychology
State University in Skopje

Questions

- Is the existing policy framework regarding inclusive education adequate?
 - Yes, but...
- Is it being implemented?
 - Somewhat...
- Are there gaps and challenges in the implementation?
 - A lot...

Policy framework

- The OECD's three focal groups (diverse, disabled, and disadvantaged students) appear to be satisfactorily addressed in Macedonia's policies. With the notable exception of children with moderate to significant disabilities, there are policy proclamations supporting virtually every population's inclusion in mainstream schools.
- Macedonia has no specific laws referring exactly to inclusive education, but:
- CRC articles and other international documents and conventions address the rights of children with special education needs are incorporated in the 2008 *Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary education*

Policy framework (2)

- *National Strategy for the Development of Education (2005-2015)*: the most wide-reaching attempt to improve education systems for all students.

It is designed to improve physical access to education;

to reduce discrimination within schools (on the basis of sex, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, political association, or religious affiliation);

to improve educational experiences and outcomes for all children;

to expand care for children with special educational needs;

and to expand both pre-school education opportunities and the number of compulsory primary school years (specifically, expand primary school from eight to nine years).

Specific policies in regard to three focal groups

- Educational policies focused on ethnic minorities:
 - Framework agreement (Ohrid 2001) reflected in:
 - *Law for Protection of Children* (a social welfare-focused policy), which requires that ethnic minorities children have the right to learn in their native tongue in kindergartens. In addition, native tongue instruction is found in the *Law on Primary Education (LPE)*.
 - In 2004, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) outlined the *National Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia*

Specific policies in regard to three focal groups

- Educational policies focused on children/students with disabilities:
 - The *National Strategy for Deinstitutionalization in the System of Social Protection in the Republic of Macedonia* (2007) placed explicit demands on the Ministry of Education to create conditions for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in special and regular schools.
 - In order to accomplish this goal, the *National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005-2010* called for an increased emphasis on teacher training in the area of special needs education.

Specific policies in regard to three focal groups

- Educational policies for Children who are Economically Disadvantaged:
 - The Macedonian *National Strategy for Poverty Reduction* (2002) emphasises that education is imperative because lack of access to education may be an effect of poverty and inadequate education may also be a cause of poverty.
 - Primary and secondary education is obligatory and free of charge (including the textbooks, scholarships).

- Pushers

Gaps and challenges in general

- Insufficient coverage of Inclusive education in the HE curricula
- There is misunderstanding in various stakeholders what the concept of *inclusive education* means;
- Major stakeholders are satisfied to have the children **just** enrolled in schools;
- Inclusive education is not a general practice mainstreamed into education, but a sporadic/specific intervention addressing one disadvantaged group or other.
- “Segregation” in responsibilities

Gaps and challenges

- Actual state of education in relation to the ethnic minorities:
 - Even more severe segregation in the educational practice and school life
 - Poor results from *Decade of Roma*
 - Lack of qualified teachers and educational materials in minority languages (UNICEF, 2008):
 - one Macedonian teacher for each 14.5 Macedonian children.
 - the ratio of Albanian teachers to Albanian students is 1 to 19.7
 - Turkish students have a ratio of 1 teacher to 29.8 students,
 - Roma children have a ratio of 1 to 524.5.

Gaps and challenges

- Actual state of education in relation to the children/students with disabilities:

- Although:

“...The National Strategy for Deinstitutionalization in the System of Social Protection in the Republic of Macedonia (2007) placed explicit demands on the Ministry of Education to create conditions for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in special and regular schools. ... In order to accomplish this goal, the National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005-2010 called for an increased emphasis on teacher training in the area of special needs education”.

- Children with disabilities under-identified or overtly excluded in Macedonia
- There is lack of trained teachers and lack of continuing teachers’ training, what results with poor education for children with disabilities.

Gaps and challenges

- Actual state of education in relation to the children who are economically disadvantaged:

"...The Macedonian National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (2002) emphasises that education is imperative because lack of access to education may be an effect of poverty and inadequate education may also be a cause of poverty".

- Although there have been policy attempts aimed at reducing the role of poverty in education, many studies highlighted that inequalities in access to education still exist from the sides of both supply and demand (FOSIM, 2011, 2012; UNICEF, 2007).
- The enrolment rate in primary education for Roma boys is 65% and for Roma girls 57.8%.
- Lack of clarity often emerges between Roma students and students with special educational needs. Late entry at school, lack of native tongue opportunities, and invalid assessment mechanisms, may lead to a large percentage of Roma children being inappropriately labelled as "student with special educational needs"

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION