



NEPC Policy Lab 2010

November 12th 2010, Brussels

Policy Lab „Migration and Education” was organised by Network of Education Policy Centers in cooperation with Education International in order to ensure exchange of expertise and opinions among stakeholders on solving policy challenges related to equal access to quality education of students with migration background in the EU.

The participants of Policy Lab „Migration and Education” that took place in Brussels on 12 November 2010 have come to the following conclusions concerning the current needs in related research and policy areas:

Evidence:

1. There is a need to expand the methodology of studies of the education performance of students with migration backgrounds, to include, where possible, the data about education levels of parents and grandparents.
2. More focused research is needed in order to achieve understanding of what is happening in schools. For instance, in some schools, despite disadvantageous social background and segregation, the students with migration background are doing academically well, while in many other schools with similar characteristics the level of academic performance is low.
3. In some countries, students with migration background are outperforming ‘native’ students (as shown by OECD data). There is a need to understand what factors in the education system and in wider social context make it possible.

Practice:

1. There is evidence that ‘distributed leadership’ in schools improves the school’s achievement and is good for all students, including students of migrant background.
2. There is a need to mobilise stakeholders to support higher quality standards for students from socially vulnerable groups, including migrants. A compelling story and repetitive effort, including effective interaction rituals (meetings, rallies, cultural events) is needed to mobilise teachers, parents, communities and to convince them that they can make a difference.
3. There is a need for more emphasis on individualised learning approaches and formative assessment (rather than impersonal learning approaches and summative assessment). Education policy makers have to be convinced to give full support in action and funding to this much-needed shift.
4. There is a need for teacher ownership of desegregation policies. Teacher training should include elements of practical engagement – teachers should be encouraged to become a pressure group for

more ‘mixed’ and more equitable schools (where working conditions are less hard). Teacher training should also warn teachers against making early assumptions about students of migrant background or having low expectations.

5. There is a need to promote the value-added model of measuring school performance and to avoid simplistic measures of school performance (measures driving only the performance of ‘high-end’ or best-performing students).

6. Parents who have much cultural capital (education, jobs) should be brought in as career counsellors for all students, including those whose parents do not have these advantages.

Political Will and Beliefs:

a) Situation

Political will and beliefs are closely interrelated and they affect each other very much. Citizens’ beliefs are used in orientation of political will and political will (and its corresponding rhetoric), supported by media, in many ways determine the common beliefs. Therefore, if the political will shifts its course or changes rhetoric, it will influence the common beliefs, and it can produce change of public opinion and of political climate.

When we apply this to the context of migrants and the migrant education, the beliefs and the political will correspond in a way that the creators of the political climate and those that enable them to be in that position – the voters, are mostly interested in those policies that can bring a short-term profit and fast results, and form their beliefs accordingly, not thinking in a long run. However, education and inclusion can ‘only’ give long term goals. Therefore, in forming of political decisions and in sending the political message it is crucial to show why is it important to act favorably towards the education and inclusion of migrants or those with low socioeconomic background in general.

b) Proposal

The policy makers should send the clear message to people showing them both short and long term profit for the inclusion of migrants in general. The ongoing demographic changes, such as population ageing and its’ effect on changes within working-age population, create the new context for the citizens’ (everyday) lives and require new policies that will take this context into consideration. This means that *the clear message* should refer to the citizens’ desire to maintain the current life style and life standard by explaining that for it is necessary for such maintenance to compromise their beliefs and to sustain the policy changes that increase the inclusion of migrants. It should be also very clearly stated that, if such changes are not done in this moment, very soon it will be necessary to compromise their life standard instead.