



Learning in Disadvantaged Areas: Current Challenges, Future Scenarios

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The paper aims at presenting the lessons learned from an action research project promoted by Institute of Education Sciences and UNICEF Romania at national level, in the area of increasing participation to education in social and economic disadvantaged communities. Focused on children of primary and lower secondary age not attending school or at high risk of dropping out due to a social and economic disadvantaged background, the project currently involves more than 100 schools and 30,000 students. The initiative is based on a education priority areas approach [1] as well as on UNESCO current methodology on dimensions of education exclusion [2].

Based on an integrated and complex intervention strategy, the project offers assistance to school actors in various areas such as institutional planning, curriculum adaptation/individualisation, school-based curriculum development and implementation, innovative classroom minority and intercultural education strategies, parents involvement and counselling. Besides school managers and teachers working with children of high risk, the project involves the school support staff (counsellors, school mediators), parents and community representatives, as key actors in implementation of activities aiming at decreasing the drop-out risk.

The paper summarize the main findings of monitoring process and interim progress evaluation report, highlighting both the outcomes and the challenges in promoting school participation in disadvantaged areas. Therefore the paper offers not only an interesting insight to the question what are the needs of today schools and main assistance areas for decreasing the risk of drop out, but also what could be the possible future development of these schools and what forces could shape the development of education in these communities. A special emphasis is put on Roma students, one of categories identified at high risk [3], cumulating a wide range of disadvantages, and representing a high priority on national and European policy agenda.