

The Reform of Education for Students with Special Educational Needs in South Eastern Europe:

Lessons and Experiences from Finland's Bilateral Support

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Some features of the Finnish education policy related to inclusion:

1. Early identification and intervention
 - In international comparison early provision of support in pre-school age (OECD Thematic Review 2005: Coordination bw. day care and preschool education would improve equal school readiness)
 - Cost-effective, mostly part-time support for both the disabled, and children with learning and behavioural difficulties
2. Equity throughout the system
 - Neighbourhood school approach (free choice of school within community, but no ranking/league tables)
 - From "positive discrimination" to relative equality of learning achievements
 - Good results especially for the lowest performing quintile (PISA)
3. Teacher education system and teacher's role
 - Well-trained (Master-level) teaching force, autonomy of the teachers (e.g. curricular issues, choice of teaching methods)
4. Consistency and stability of policies ("consensus society")



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Finland's Development Policy

- To contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty from the world (MDGs)
- Defines Finland's strengths and comparative advantages
- Focuses on the additional value Finland brings into international cooperation



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Finland's Development Policy

- In education MDG # 2 and #3 :
- ... Ensuring basic education for all, and especially promoting the education of girls; improving the quality of teaching and of learning results; increasing the demand for education; inclusive education
 - Right to education and learning (human rights-based approach)
 - In development cooperation especially education for the disabled, improvement of indigenous peoples' education, other vulnerable groups (educational equity)
 - Primary education in one's own mother-tongue
 - Free primary education (through policy dialogue)



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Development Policy in practice in South Eastern Europe

Special themes in Western Balkan countries:

- teacher education reform and inclusive education (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro)
- NGO support to many disability-specific projects through disabled peoples' organizations (DPOs)



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Bilateral inclusive education projects in 2000-2007

- Bosnia-Herzegovina:
 - Teacher Education and Professional Development (TEPD, 2000-03), and
 - CES – Finnish Co-operation in the Education Sector in BiH, 2003-06 (-08)
- Kosovo: Finnish Support to Development of Education in Kosovo (FSDEK, Phases I 2000-03, and II, 2004-08)
- Montenegro: Development of the Education Sector – Towards Inclusive Education (2005-08)
- Serbia: Teacher Education Development Programme (TEDP, 2002-2006)



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Common features

- Support efforts on the national policy and administrative levels, e.g. inclusive education policy development
- Teacher pre-service and in-service training - ranging from workshopping to Professional Development (PD) programmes to Training of Trainers (ToT) to Bachelor, Master and PhD studies (e.g. BiH upgrade from post-diploma programme to Master studies)
- Practical pilot school projects (linked with the above)

In other words:

- involvement of the whole sector from ministry/-ies of education, universities and pedagogical institutes to the school level

In addition: mutually beneficial cooperation agreements between universities in the region and with Finnish universities as a "side-effect"



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Selected results and achievements

- Bosnia-Herzegovina:
 - First project to operate in the whole country and to involve all ministries of education (plus >1000 professionals and 300 primary schools)
 - Inclusion as part of education policy, administration and school management support
 - 14 tripartite development projects (involving a teaching faculty, primary school and special school) to promote inclusion in mainstream classrooms
 - Post-diploma specialization studies in IE for altogether 80 students
 - Master's programme "Individualisation and inclusion in education" for 40 students (Mostar, Banja Luka)



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Selected results and achievements (cont'd)

- Kosovo:
 - IE within pre-service teacher education curriculum (still under development); training of faculty
 - PD (>100 participants) and TESFA training programmes for teachers and school management (attached classes and special schools)
 - Master's degree (opportunity for 12 students), one PhD student
 - Support to Faculty of Education (PU) in research facilities and international networking
- Montenegro:
 - Developed strategy and action plan for inclusive education endorsed by key ministries (still under development)
 - co-operation facilitated between line ministries and other stakeholders for gradually developing and implementing inclusive education



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Remaining challenges (as expressed by project teams or revealed by MTRs)

- Firmly establishing the inclusion policy, and practices according to the policy throughout the education system – in order to creating safeguards against sudden drastic policy changes
- Developing the various subsystems (e.g. financing) of basic education to support IE, including redefining the role of special schools and institutions (Resource Centres?)
- Raising awareness and improving the attitude among general public towards inclusive education
- Assuring quality education for all pupils in real school life and all classroom situations (implementation of policies regarding the disabled, Roma children and other disadvantaged groups)



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Recommendations to international agencies (as expressed by project teams or revealed by MTRs)

- strive for increased donor coordination to minimize overlapping and to reach all disadvantaged groups
- support regional cooperation to draw synergy and to develop tolerance
- support teacher education institutions as strategic partners in achieving good quality primary education for all



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Future bilateral co-operation in SE Europe

- Finland considers the region of Western Balkans important to the European Union, and supports the EU perspective of the countries and the concrete supportive measures that are needed in the region for this purpose.
- During its two EU Presidencies and also in the European Council, Finland has strongly committed itself to the stabilisation and association process in the region.
- In 2000-2006, the Finnish funds allocated for development cooperation projects in Western Balkans amounted to 7–10 million euros annually.
- Future support will depend on the new GoF's Development Policy (work-in-progress).
- Present (2004) Development Policy states that bilateral projects should be phased out in 2007-2008
- Thematic evaluation of Finnish-supported education sector development projects in W.Balkans started yesterday (sic!); final report by mid-July.



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Future bilateral co-operation in SE Europe

- Country and region specific cooperation will continue, with a focus on supporting regional cooperation.
- The main objective of Finland's support is, on the one hand, to foster an atmosphere favourable for development and EU convergence in the Western Balkan region by means of regional cooperation.
- Accordingly, Finland will increase its support for regional projects, aiming at both a direct development impact and more interaction among the Western Balkan countries.
- Finland will foster the impact and sustainability of its bilateral cooperation by channelling assistance through those multilateral actors and to those sectors which bring added value to Finland's earlier contributions in the region.



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