

Examining the Integration of Public Education Through the Example of a Model Institution

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In my research, I examined the institutional implementation of integration in public education through the example of an integration model institution, with particular emphasis on the organizational and methodological operation of the Integration Pedagogical System (IPR). As a starting point for the study, I reviewed social science discourses that emphasize that the education system is not exclusively a setting for social mobility, but also constitutes an institutional context in which social inequalities are reproduced. The educational opportunities of disadvantaged students may be shaped jointly by family background, differences in patterns of socialization, residential and institutional segregation, as well as the intersection of ethnic and social disadvantages. In my analysis, the IPR is presented as a set of educational policy and pedagogical measures aimed at the integrated education of disadvantaged children, differentiated development, and a change in institutional attitudes and approaches. The research is situated within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. During the data collection process, several-hour-long focus group interviews were conducted with the institution's former and current leaders, while data were also collected through an individual interview with a current teacher. I processed the interview data using thematic analysis and supplemented the findings with an analysis of institutional documents in order to provide a more comprehensive account.

The results indicate that, in the institution under study, the IPR contributed to transformations in both pedagogical culture and institutional functioning. Cooperative learning, differentiated development, and the application of project-based and drama-pedagogical elements became systematically embedded in the institution's methodological practice. At the same time, my study points out that institutional-level efforts toward integration alone cannot eliminate social and territorial inequalities. Family background, the peripheral situation of the settlement, and structural deficiencies within the education system continue to affect students' educational opportunities. The findings of the research may also contribute to understanding the significance of integration in early childhood education, as early socialization and learning support may create opportunities to mitigate disadvantages already present at the beginning of schooling at an earlier stage.

Keywords: integration in public education; Integration Pedagogical System; Roma students; intersectionality; disadvantaged status