IN Volving Roma PArents In ThE Primary SchooL. A CoMParative Analysis Of The PRocess Of CHange In EngLaNd And CyPrus

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Changing classroom and school practice to address educational inequalities and encourage parental/family involvement as part of that has remained a challenging and not always successful endeavour. Between 2007 and 2009 we participated in an EU funded Comenius project which involved working with teachers in order to develop the involvement of parents from Roma backgrounds with their children’s schools. As part of this project we undertook research with teachers and used these data to develop a programme of professional development. This took place in primary schools in England and Cyprus; two primary schools in England and one primary school in Cyprus. Semi structured interviews were conducted with teachers and head teachers, parents and young people of Roma heritage. Reflective field journals were also kept throughout the research process. The data were analysed using a grounded theory approach.

The process of professional development and corresponding change of practice resulted in varying degrees of success. In this paper we develop an analysis of the influences upon the change process and in particular the success or otherwise of enabling the Roma parents to become more involved in and engaged with their children’s school education, from the teachers’ perspectives. Drawing on the comparative data from our work in the respective schools, we discuss a range of interrelated factors that influenced and constrained the process of change. These included teachers’ attitudes and levels of receptiveness to parental involvement and working with Roma parents in particular; their teaching experience and expertise in the areas of multiculturalism, together with the nature of school leadership and the organisation and management of the schools. We also locate the analysis within the socio-political and policy contexts of the two countries. To support our analysis we draw on the literature of school leadership and management, school effectiveness and change processes, together with teacher dysconscious racism and institutional racism.

Keywords:
School leadership; transformation and change; inequalities; Roma families
References:


