Ireland

Good Practice: IE GP1

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"Informal Participation Project on Barriers in Education and Employment for Ethnic Minority Young People"

Main features of the GP programme:

Type of programme	Type of organisation	Field of practice for organisation	Programme scope	Programme duration	Programme occurrence/ frequency	Type of funding for GP
Informal	Hosted by specialist education service (part of local education authority)	Youth work, informal education, basic skills support, refugee and migrant youth	Initially local, reached national levels of attention	About 4 months (with some ongoing work)	One-off	Government grant for specific project

Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP) is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.

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1. What – Focus (theme, orientation)

IE_GP1 is a short-term one-off project, which was run at an education service for ethnic minority young people for approximately four months in 2016/2017. The project was funded by a government grant linked specifically to themes of education and employment. The main methods of the project were based on youth work principles, involving group work and a residential workshop. Practitioners acted as facilitators while young people themselves were in charge of deciding the focus and eventually the outcome of the project. The project culminated in the production of a video in which young people describe the barriers experienced by ethnic minority young people in education and employment contexts. These included: pressures through expectations from within their families and communities which sometimes clash with expectations by wider society; limitations of opportunities through lacking social networks (especially in a country which is portrayed as heavily relying on 'knowing someone who knows someone'); as well as direct experiences of discrimination based on stereotypes and racism.

2. For whom – Target group(s)

The project was aimed at young people from ethnic minority and migrant backgrounds. Due to short project funding timescales, a smaller number than initially planned participated in the project (5 young people), however, the work of the project involved consultation across a much wider stakeholder group (of services providers, young people, employers and other organisations).

3. Requirements and access

Because the government grant under which the project was funded came with specific conditions, targets and a short timescale within which to deliver these, the organisation hosting the project relied on their existing networks of practitioners to help run the programme and of young people with whom they (or other organisations in the field) were already in contact. Some of the young people had been in contact with youth workers over a period of years, during which the practitioners had been witness to some of their experiences. Another aspect was that specialist services wanted to explore some of the barriers preventing ethnic minority young people from accessing mainstream services (e.g. in relation to employment or education advice).

4. Elements of good practice

IE_GP1 cultivates APC above all by enabling young people to give voice to their experiences of barriers (prejudice and discrimination, including racism and sexism). Coming together with other young people, sharing their experiences and realising that they are not alone had an empowering effect for participants. The video resource produced by the project led to feedback from other young people similarly affected and reached a wider audience of organisations, including potential employers and policy makers. This has opened dialogue, which at the time of the research was still ongoing.

In many ways, and due to its particular nature, the programme can be seen as a good practice example of APC in action. This encompasses the following:

the fact that it engages young people through a participative methodology, starting from the level of their concerns rather than prescribing an agenda or target outcomes. This approach enables the project to model APC as a whole (with an emphasis on all competences, including politico-legal competences) in action. In other words, the project not only cultivates competences for APC practice, it is a form of APC practice in its own right.

While the processes and practices used as part of the project are open-ended and fluid, determined by the group as a whole rather than through an educator-learner transfer of knowledge and skills, a key element of good practice is the tangible outcome in form of the video resource.

This tangible outcome in turn has enabled the path for further APC engagement, in form of dialogue with policy makers, practitioners and a range of organisations (including prospective employers). Therefore, despite running only for a short term and as a one-off programme, the programme builds what promises to be a lasting legacy both in terms of young people's engagement in APC activities and in terms of the improvement of policy and practice.

5. Perceived challenges

Challenges experienced during the project included:
• the limited time frame and fitting in the work alongside young people's existing commitments (e.g. in other education courses or in work);
• difficulties accessing relevant data (statistics e.g. for unemployment were not sufficiently disaggregated by ethnic minority status to enable the young people to research phenomena of discrimination and barriers from a wider perspective);
• while the reaction from policymakers and practitioners to the video resource led to productive further engagement, dealing with varied responses is also described as an initial challenge, which involved courage about naming 'ugly truths' about discrimination

6. Testimonials

I felt like I was able to work well and I got to play to my strengths, which was creativity and stuff, and then [the project] ended. But I had this tangible product [the video resource], tangible thing that I can say 'here is the fruits of my labour, here is the work that I did, look how pretty it is'. And that felt very rewarding to me.

I definitely think the success as well is the fact that we also involved the youth sector practice in it. Because all the youth workers that we were talking about, like we've been working with them, and they're one of those people like if...they know, they

have full confidence in young people, they do not come in with a paper and be like 'this is what you should do'. They are like 'what are you going to do, this is it'. So they like to empower you and kind of leave you to it, and they don't like....they're probably dying on the inside but they would definitely like let you go through that process.

I just came out of my shell like, you know out of my comfort zone, it was just amazing.

It gave me the confidence to...and the hope actually, I shall start with the hope more than the confidence. It was more the hope that I'm not on my own therefore things will change because there's other people also fighting for it, that kind of idea. And the confidence to continue doing because you saw the reaction that it had at the end and you were like 'yes!', you know.

7. More Information

EduMAP project's publications:
Books and articles
Academic publications that address key themes of the EduMAP project
Deliverables and reports
EduMAP's official deliverables, related reports and publications
Good practice cases
Key features from 40 'good practice' cases from 20 countries
Working papers
A selection of findings from desk and field research in 20 European countries
Other resources
Other types of resources made for the project (illustrations, comics etc.)