Desegregation in Hungary: a case study from Szeged

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Gypsies living in Szeged – ethnic segregation

- The majority of gypsies in Szeged are not living segregated
- There are three major segregated gypsy districts:
  - Cserepes sor area
  - Area of Hunyadi square
  - Some streets in Kiskundorozsma
- There was one more, but the local government moved the inhabitants
Policy analysis
The closure of a segregating school: the Móra Ferenc Elementary School

- Móra Ferenc Elementary School was a segregating school in a Hungarian big city.
- The school served as the elementary school for the „Cserepes sor” segregated district.
- More than 80% of students came from the gypsy ethnic group.
- Worst reputation in the city, worst quality of education (among the 10 worse in Hungary).
- The number of multi-dimensionally disadvantaged students was very high.
Interest network behind the school closure

- Local government
  - Hungarian laws prohibit segregation
  - Two segregated districts are inside the city, property prices has gone up significantly
  - New houses and shopping centers were built around the segregated districts
  - Hungarian neighbors were complaining against the lifestyle of the gypsies
  - The school served as the school of the segregated district
  - Most gypsies are not politically active, their votes are not at stake
Interest network behind the school closure

- Gypsy self-government
  - Gypsy population was divided about the school closure
  - ~190 students registered in the school, only 107 attend regularly
  - They didn’t want to go against the local government
  - They followed a “turncoat” strategy – publicly they supported desegregation, privately opposed it
Parents, families of children

- They were used to the school, knew the teachers
- The school was situated close to their homes (5 minutes walk)
- The gypsy self-government ran a silent campaign among the parents against desegregation
- The teachers told them that their children will become victims of desegregation
- They were afraid of change
- They felt discriminated by the local government and the government
Móra Ferenc School Teachers

- They were afraid of losing their jobs
- They denied to learn and apply new teaching methods and techniques
- Their daily routine was being changed
- The director of the school was a member of an association for the education of roma children
- The director was working together with the gypsy self-government
Sociological research
Research of interest network around the Móra Ferenc Elementary School

- 2007 May – June
- 12 researchers participated, leader: Szűcs,N.
- In-depth interviews with teachers, parents
- Focal groups with children
- Focal groups with parents
- Participant observation in classes
Research results – social background

- Children come from extremely bad sociocultural backgrounds
  - Majority of parents only finished elementary school
  - Families live from social transfers and occasional work
  - Often only one parent has legal or illegal job
  - There are many families with 2 unemployed parents
  - Man do legal or illegal work, women care for children
Research results - schooling

- The number of absences from school were extremely high
- It makes it impossible to achieve anything pedagogically
- Teachers did not record absence of children
- Children were aware of this practice, and were making use of it
- Being late or irregular visiting of classes was common
- The number of „quasi” home schooled students were extremely high
Research results - children

- Most children had learning difficulties and behavioral problems
- Lack of discipline, motivation
- Lack of concentration
- High measure of inactivity
- Many students
  - Didn’t adopt a learning methodology
  - Lacked the ability to understand written text
  - Were inexperienced in solving exercises
  - Grades did not reflect level of knowledge – in-class hierarchy rather
Research results – the teachers 1.

- Many of them were supporters of segregated education
- They claimed that gypsies children could only be educated in the segregated way
- Most of the teachers opposed the school closure
- They argued that the gypsy children will be unable to perform in their new schools
- „Some children in the 6th or 7th grade are still unable to read or write – they are illiterate” – the teachers stated at a press conference
Research results – the teachers 2.

- Most of the teachers just wanted to „get over with” their classes
- They lacked motivation
- Methods of disciplining the children
  - Shouting
  - Threatening
  - Physical discipline
Research results – the parents

- Low number of parents showed concern for their children’s school carrier, because of:
  - Lack of knowledge
  - Desinformation about school closure
- Some parents were aware of low quality of education in school
- But they were afraid of the new school
  - Will their children be able to integrate in the new community
  - Will they be able to perform better?
Szeged Desegregation Measures I.

- The school was closed in June 2007
- 129 students were moved to eleven elementary schools in Szeged
- The criteria for the distribution of children among the schools and classes were:
  - Free places in receiving classes
  - Language learned formerly
  - The transfer of brothers and sisters into the same school
  - The decision makers were trying to regard to the closeness from living places of children (those not coming from Cserepes sor)
Map of receiving schools
Major public transportation routes

Receiving school
Móra Ferenc School
Cserepes sor

Tram line 1
Bus line 16
Bus line 90
Szeged Desegregation Measures II.

- The students received season passes for the local transportation to ease their schoolgoing.
- Their teachers were transferred with them as „mentor teachers” to their new schools.
- The students received a one time stipend for their schooling.
- An association of roma parents, L.I.F.E. Association received funding to ease the burden of desegregation at the Cserepes sor.
- The National Network of Educational Integration provided free methodological trainings about integration for schools (4+2).
Student Mentoring Program

- University of Szeged and the DARTKE Association are responsible for the running of the project
- Project donor: Roma Education Fund
- Website: [www.mentorprogram.eu](http://www.mentorprogram.eu)
- Project leaders: Fejes, József and Szűcs, Norbert
- 2007/8: 35 pre-service teachers (student mentors) helped the integration of pupils into their new classes.
- 2008/9: the project was extended to Hódmezővásárhely, 40 mentors participate
Aim of the Mentor Program

- The aim is to support the educational and social integration of the former pupils of the Móra Ferenc Elementary School into their new schools, and to provide helping staff to the mentor teachers and the institutions.

- Student Mentors spend 6-8 hours a week in schools. Their job involves regularly meeting with mentees, monitoring the development of mentees, tutoring mentees, being in contact with mentees’ parents, organizing programs to foster community building.
Selection of student mentors

- The mentor students were selected in an admission process. The selection criteria were the quality of their:
  - motivational letters
  - CV’s
  - personal interviews

- They are third, fourth and fifth graders in teachers training. Most of the chosen mentors have former experience of working with elementary school children.
Experiences of mentoring work

- 123 students were registered into 11 new schools
  - 4 didn’t show up
  - 2 moved away from Szeged
  - 11 do not attend school regularly
  - 7 are home schooled

<table>
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<th>Attends regularly</th>
<th>No show</th>
<th>Does not attend regularly</th>
<th>Home schooled</th>
<th>Moved away</th>
<th>Finished studies</th>
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</thead>
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<td>98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>1</td>
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Educational Integration

- Most pupils were cooperative
- There were two ways of mentoring
  - After regular classes
  - The mentors took the students out of classes
- Both practices can be justified:
  - Pupils are tired after the regular classes, they are unable to concentrate. Sometimes they are unable to follow the classes.
  - If they are mentored during regular class times, they lose the opportunity to achieve successes and establish connections with other students.
An example of an educational test

Reading comprehension of integrated and original students (%p)

Grade

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<th>Integrated</th>
<th>Original</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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The reports of mentor students state that most of the pupils are getting integrated suitably to the society of their classes. However, there are difficulties:

- Social integration is slower in senior grades.
- Social integration of girls is usually more problematic, especially in senior grades.
- Some boys exercise aggressive behavior against their classmates, they do not establish connections.
- The situation is critical in the case of ¼ of the pupils.
Threats to social integration

The goal was to handle pupils from Móra Ferenc Elementary School together with their new classmates.

This was not always possible, because of:
- most of the other students in the school were not present in the afternoons
- schools could not (or would not) provide enough empty rooms
- In communal program, the number of former Móra pupils exceeded far the number of other pupils
Achievements of the Student Mentoring Program, 2007/8

- In some of cases close personal relationship formed between student-mentors and pupils
- After the start of the mentoring (according to student-mentors, teachers and parents):
  - mentored pupils have more positive attitudes to school and to learning
  - mentored pupils’ academic achievement increased
  - mentored pupils’ absenteeism rate decreased
  - positive change in social behavior in their interactions with teachers and fellow pupils
Achievements of the Student Mentoring Program, 2007/8

- In most classes the processing of social integration is satisfactory.
- All students who received help in the preparation for their exams to be retaken were successful in passing them during the summer.
- We were able to enhance our work relationships with teachers.
- The Student Mentoring Program might have beneficial effects on the overall system of teacher training.
Goals for 2008/9, the second phase

- The project was started in Hódmezővásárhely, by the invitation of the local government (the conditions of higher level of cooperation are present)
- In this next school year we would like to establish a public space independent of schools for creative exercises. It can also function as the lieu for a professional workshop for the mentor students.
- We are trying to develop a standardized methodology of disadvantaged pupil mentoring
Goals for 2008/9, the second phase

- We would like to provide an accredited training with innovative pedagogical methods for the mentor students.
- We have started the mentoring of high school students, and we are planning the extension of the project to the high school level.
- We are transforming the project to a fully volunteer – based undertaking.
- We are trying to foster the acknowledgement of our project in our cities, and integrate it to the work of our partner local governments.
Thank You for Your Attention!

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