



**CrEE**  
**REPORT ON THE “FORM PERIOD PLAN OF ACTION”**  
**IN MONTSORIU HIGH SCHOOL**

GIRONA February 2004

## 1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

### 1.1. Relationship with the school

Of the 32 schools who filled in the questionnaire, this one was one of 9 who answered, 'yes' to the question, "Would you be interested in taking part in the CrEE project?"

At the beginning of this school year we contacted the school's headmistress to explain the project to her. We went to the school in order to deal with any potential doubts and held a meeting with her and the educational psychologist, who had also replied to the questionnaire and who was the person most involved in the activity.

The week after this first meeting, the school confirmed that it would participate and so we arranged the first interview with the above-mentioned educational psychologist. The second interview took place with a group of two teachers, who were in charge of carrying out the project. The third was held with a group of pupils and fourthly, we gathered the reactions of a group of parents.

The school, therefore, showed an interest in the activity from the outset and actively collaborated in the carrying out of interviews and the entire research process.

We believe that, from the outset, the school was very interested in working with us. They had previously used an equal opportunities project offered by the SER:GI foundation and this, therefore, made them more willing to participate. Moreover, they saw the CrEE project as a way of improving and assessing the activity.

There was a good relationship between the interviewees from the educational community and the CrEE project professionals.

### 1.2. Methodology

The methodology used was based on the interview technique and the discussion group.

We made many adjustments at the planning stage as to the size of the focus groups, their time scale and the profile of participants. This was made possible thanks to the participation of the school, who selected the interviewees according to the information we gave them.

The methodology was as follows:

Date	Technique	Participants	Duration
24 October 2003	interview	educational psychologist	1 hr 30 minutes
7 November 2003	discussion group	2 teachers	1 hr 30 minutes
14 November 2003	discussion group	7 pupils	1 hr
1 December 2003	discussion group	4 parents	1 hr 30 minutes

The first interview was held with the educational psychologist as she was the person most highly informed of the activity in the school. She took charge of collecting information and passing it on to form teachers so that they could start the activity.

With reference to the teachers, we interviewed those who took part in the activity, except one, who was called away in an emergency and was unable to stay. We interviewed a total of two form teachers from the 2nd of ESO (13-14 years). One had already worked on the activity during the previous school year and the other had only worked on it a couple of times in the current school year.

With reference to the pupils, we considered representing different years and ages, as well as gender and ethnic mix. In the case of parents, for example, we were able to interview 2 fathers and 2 mothers of pupils of different ages, in order to look at a variety of viewpoints. In the case of pupils, there were 2 boys and 5 girls from 3rd and 4th of ESO (14-16 years).

With reference to the preparation of the discussion group script, this was based on the contents of the interview or the previous group. Therefore, as a result of the educational psychologist's response, we realised that many aspects of the activity needed working on, such as the usefulness of the activity to the teaching staff and the school community's perception of discrimination.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

### 2.1. External context: description and analysis of the catchment area

Montsoriu high school is located in the village of Arbúcies, in the Selva district. Catalonia is divided into 4 territorial provinces and each province is made up of various districts. The Selva district is one of the seven districts which make up the province of Girona. This district is rich in resources and has a high general standard of living.

Arbúcies is a village of just over 5,000 inhabitants, 86.2 km<sup>2</sup> in size and with 59.4 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. In the employment area, Arbúcies<sup>1</sup> has a large industrial sector (48.98%), followed by services (40.07%), in third place is construction (6.87%), and lastly, agriculture (4.07%). The unemployment rate (3.56 % in the year 2000) is the lowest of the towns in the same area.

If we compare it to the rest of the district, we can see that industry holds proportionately more importance. This is one of the factors to take into account when considering immigration. Looking at the Selva district, we see that, after the coastal towns and villages, where there is a greater need for workers than inland, Arbúcies is the village with the highest foreign population; 5.27% in 2001. This may be due to the need for the mainly unskilled labour force required in its industries, mainly the cork manufacturing industry and water bottling plants. This percentage ties in with the number of non-Catalan speakers. 3.74% of the population does not understand Catalan.

According to the 'Diagnosi del Pla Comarcal'<sup>2</sup>, the arrival of foreign immigrants, notably from North and sub-Saharan Africa, begins to take place around Arbúcies during the

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<sup>1</sup> According to 1996 data

<sup>2</sup> Study based on the method of Participation and Action Research, carried out by the SER.GI foundation since 2000, within the Immigrant Integration Plans ('Plans d'Integració dels Immigrants') set up by the Catalan government.

eighties, and by the nineties, is present throughout the district, including in Arbúcies itself, with the addition of arrivals from South America and Eastern European countries.

It must also be pointed out that in the seventies the same migratory phenomenon took place in Arbúcies as in other Catalan areas. This consisted of the arrival of people from the poorer rural areas of the Spanish state, mainly the south. Approximately 20% of the population belongs to this first wave of immigration.

It is important to add something about the political situation in Arbúcies, where, since the transition to democracy, there has always been a left-wing town council, characterised by its support for education, social involvement, integration of new arrivals and '3rd world' solidarity.

## 2.2. Internal context

Montsoriu is a state secondary school (12-16 years) with a sixth form (16-18 years) attached. This high school has a total of 358 pupils (182 boys and 176 girls) and 43 teachers.

14 students have special educational needs. When we speak about these special needs, we refer to a defined categorisation published by the Catalan government's Department of Education, which outlines those cases requiring most attention and resources. Some of these boys and girls may have a disability, psychological or physical problems, or they may be late arrivals etc. This assessment is carried out by the EAP (Educational Psychologist Assessment Teams) during the pre-term enrolment period. In theory, every state and direct grant school is obliged to accept up to 4 special needs students per classroom.

With reference to the non-Spanish pupils, there are 8 North Africans, 1 sub-Saharan, 2 Eastern Europeans 3 Latin Americans and 1 Asian.

This centre mainly contains pupils from Arbúcies but there are also students from a couple of neighbouring villages (Breda i Sant Hilari). The fact that it is a small school in a small village facilitates contact among members of the educational community and there is a good relationship between pupils, teachers and parents.

## 3. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCHED ACTIVITY

### 3.1. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1.1. Title: Form Period Plan of Action

**3.1.2. Types of Discrimination worked on:** gender, ethnic origins, special educational needs, social and economic family background and coming from a different school or a different educational system.

#### 1.3. Objectives:

The Form Period Action Plan ('El Pla d'Acció Tutorial') not only aims to fight discrimination but also contains a variety of educational objectives as well as the securing of study and relationship strategies, ecology and solidarity etc. As part of our

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<sup>3</sup> We describe the whole activity but only analyse two specific sections.; equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

stated objectives, we will outline the general aims related to non-discrimination and specific aims related to the whole activity.

The specific aims of the activity as a whole are to:

- *Foster debate and reflection around discrimination in our society. .*
- *Inform pupils about the reality of immigration from an immigrant's point of view and life experiences and the causes of immigration.*
- *Explore issues of non-violence, tolerance, pacifism, sexism, migrations and ecology.*
- *Work on cultural and gender prejudices..*
- *Encourage knowledge of and respect for Nature.*
- *Give pupils strategies for passing exams.*
- *Give pupils strategies for job seeking.*

### **3.1.4. Origin:**

The Form Period Action Plan has its roots in the Department of Education's directive to carry out a series of tutorials, once a week during the school year. The directive also specifies some of the contents, such as study techniques, career advice etc, but lets the school itself decide on the remaining subjects.

The themes specifically being dealt with in Montsoriu High School, as well as the aims of each one of these themes, is decided on by the school itself, according to each year's needs, and on the advice of the 'Compensatòria'<sup>4</sup> department, or of groups such as the SER:GI foundation, which has been helping the school's educational team along these lines.

### **3.1.5. Methodology and Actions:**

As already mentioned, these tutorial form periods take place for an hour a week during the school year.

They are structured into thematic blocks, of which we analysed those of 'sexism' and 'migrations'.

The methodology consists in handing out a series of worksheets to the pupils, with advertisements which discriminate against women in the 'sexism' block or information about immigrants in the case of the 'migrations' block. At first the worksheets are worked on individually and then a debate is started, accompanied by the form teacher, who attempts help the students reflect on what is being said.

The activities carried out last year in relation to the analysed objectives were as follows:

- a) *One introductory session on migrations.* The theme was introduced and mainly individual work was done.
- b) *One in-depth session on migrations.* The themes were opened up, along with the attitudes and comments from the first day and work commenced on discussion and reflection.

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<sup>4</sup> Educational team working on combatting educational inequality, which depends on the Department of Education.

- c) *One closing session on migrations.* The purpose of this was to draw conclusions on the theme of immigration and to work on attitudes.
- d) *One session on the theme of sexism.* The theme was introduced and mainly individual work was done.
- e) *One in-depth session on sexism.* The themes were opened up, along with the attitudes and comments from the first day and work on discussion and reflection began.
- f) *One closing session on sexism.* The purpose of this was to conclude on the theme of sexism and to work on attitudes.

### 3.1.6. People involved:

This activity mainly involves the form teachers and pupils, as well as an outside professional.

- *The teaching staff:* The form teachers, who are also the pupils' subject teachers, carry out the activity, although they are not involved in its creation and are unable to change its contents. Teaching staff who are not form teachers are not directly involved.
- *Pupils:* The activity is directed at them. They do not participate in the organisation of the tutorial sessions, but are solely on the receiving end of them.
- *Parents:* They are aware of the activity, know their children have tutorial sessions one a week, but are unaware of the details.
- *Other professionals:* The educational psychologist is responsible for gathering information, organising it into tutorials and giving it to the form teachers to carry out.

### 3.1.7. Resources:

This activity is part of the school's Educational Project ('Projecte Educatiu') and is totally integrated into the school curriculum, so needs no extra resources.

### 3.1.8. School assessment:

The activity is assessed by the staff and management team on a termly basis.

## 3.2. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AIMS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.

### 3.2.1. What Is the "problem situation" which has led the school to foster anti-discrimination activities?

All the individuals interviewed (teaching staff, families, pupils) stated that there were no problems of discrimination or exclusion within the school. According to some of the interviewees there is a group of pupils who discriminate against others but who are perceived as aggressors, as they behave aggressively towards others and the school in general, rather than towards a specific group.

However, one of the interviewees commented, "*A North African kid has to demonstrate his/her worth as a person or student much more than another student, because being different means everyone focuses on him/her and s/he has to make more effort to gain recognition.*"

The situation which leads the school to promote these activities is:

- *The social situation of the area.* The school's village, Arbúcies, has a high number of immigrants compared to other Catalan communities. The activity is seen as a preventative measure against potential discrimination.
- *Sexist attitudes.* The school has detected certain positions, comments and specific attitudes of contempt towards girls. It is felt that this is not just a school problem but one which exists in society in general and that it was important to work on the problem by analysing advertisements.
- *Level of consciousness raising and implications for the school.* In this case this is not a problem situation but a factor to be taken into account when assessing the reason for carrying out these activities. Montsoriu High School and the village of Arbúcies in general showed interest in the fight against social exclusion and this is why form periods were used to work on these issues.

### **3.2.2. Are these activities suitable for the promotion of anti-discrimination and equal opportunities in the school?**

We feel that the activity encourages the fight against discrimination because it aims to improve relationships and coexistence among the different pupils. We feel that the aim is to break down stereotypes and create an integrated social network.

However, it should be stressed that some interviewees were of the opinion that it is counter-productive to bring up sensitive issues if there are insufficient resources to deal with them correctly. According to some teachers and pupils it is very difficult to change people's ideas and talking about discrimination could reinforce racist and sexist opinions.

*We therefore feel that, in theory, these activities are suitable for meeting objectives in the fight against discrimination and that they promote equal opportunities. However we must be able to assess whether the result of these activities are creating changes in this area.*

## **3.3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF ACTIVITY**

### **3.2.3. What are the assessment criteria used to collect the results of the activity and their relation to the anticipated aims of the activity?**

The **Assessment Criteria** which enable us to analyse the success or failure of these activities and which we have looked at in the research are as follows:

- Pupils' opinions regarding discrimination and equal opportunities and if they feel discrimination exists inside and outside the school.
- Parents' opinions regarding discrimination and equal opportunities and if they feel it exists inside and outside the school.
- Pupils' opinion regarding other cultures.  
Teachers' opinion regarding the attitude of the teachers, parents and students towards other cultures.
- Children's opinion of their High School.
- Participants' satisfaction with the activity.

About the methodology:

- Awareness and clarity of the professionals involved in the setting out of the aims of the activity.
- Participation of the various educational professionals in the decision-making phase (design and evaluation) of the activities.

- Resources used.
- Results gained
- Usefulness to pupils.

### 3.3.2. What are the results of the activity?

#### a) General assessment

The overall aims and objectives of the activity regarding the theme of discrimination is *to work on different themes in order to allow students to reflect on sexual and racial discrimination.*

The majority of interviewees believe the activity is positive, although it is difficult to assess whether specific results have been achieved in this sense. They feel there is no discrimination in the school for various reasons. The parents think it is a small school in a small town and that because of this, the few immigrants who arrive are quickly integrated, both in the town and at the school. However, they feel that if immigration increases, there could be problems of discrimination and integration.

The teaching staff feel that when discrimination occasionally arises, it is barely visible and difficult to deal with.

*"The discrimination I sometimes see in the classroom is so subtle that the person discriminated against feels it intensely but is sometimes unable even to express him/herself in words. Some kids discriminate against others for any reason at all...they discriminate against each other for a thousand different reasons, because s/he is fat, or weak or ill, or even because of racism".*

On the other hand, not all the form teachers are convinced it is an effective activity. Let's look at what some of the interviewees say:

*"..I was really frightened of doing this activity. My group has already been pointed out as having racist attitudes...I'm afraid these attitudes will be reinforced when the subject is brought up".*

Some pupils remembering the form period sessions are of the following opinion:

*"In the debate about immigration, the boys with the most racist attitudes dragged the group down quite a lot".*

This opinion is shared by the family, who feels that because of the secondary school age of the children, speaking about certain subjects, such as sexism and racism, can lead to the 'class leaders', those who stand out most, taking advantage of the situation and expressing their opinions. Other children, who may not have thought about the subject, may end up sharing their opinion and siding with them.

The families believe that the objectives should be worked on in a more global manner, working within the framework of general education, the neighbourhood etc. *The general opinion is that these activities help to raise the consciousness of those who already tend to be respectful and accept difference but, on the other hand, they also help to reinforce racist attitudes and prejudices etc.*

Regarding the children's attitude towards the school itself, they feel that they are highly 'controlled' by the teaching staff. They complain that as it is a small school, where

everyone knows each other, they are constantly watched over and are given little freedom. This extends to the family, who is immediately informed if they miss a day of class.

With reference to the decision making of all the professionals involved, it must be said that there is a lack of participation from the teaching staff, who receive the prepared activity without having previously contributed anything to it. They view it negatively because the activity is not seen as their own educational resource.

This is closely related to the subject of resources. One form teacher was of the opinion that more resources were needed to meet the aims of the fight against discrimination and other form teachers feel it would be better to use their own personal resources, used on a daily basis, and not to do it in the form of a specific activity with specific guidelines to follow.

However, the Form Period Action Plan, with all the modules it contains, has been judged as necessary by all the participants, although it is felt that the methodology for the sexism and racism sessions needs revising. This judgement basically takes two criteria into account:

- The level of satisfaction with the activities developed by the school expressed by the various professionals.
- The level of pupil and teacher satisfaction with the activity.

#### **b) Assessment of achievement of objectives**

According to the measures described and the professional interviewed, the results of the activity are:

- The understanding of cultural difference has improved among some pupils.
- Pupils have worked on the prejudices shown to other cultures through debate about and reflection on discrimination in our society.
- Pupils were made aware of the reality of immigration from the point of view of immigrants' own life stories and the circumstances which led to their leaving.
- Pupils worked on prejudices towards other cultures and the opposite sex.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding discrimination, we can conclude that Montsoriu High School experiences very little discrimination among its pupils or families. It must be stressed that the reason for this, according to the school community, is the low level of immigration.

It must be stressed that when we broached the subject of discrimination with interviewees, the issue of immigration automatically arose. There is very little awareness of the various types of discrimination. However, it is also felt that sometimes discrimination is not due to something visible and external, but because the person is weaker etc.

The fact that inside the school serious problems of discrimination among pupils do not arise, according to the teachers, may also be due to certain characteristics of the school. It is a small high school with a family atmosphere where each problem is dealt with on a personal basis. The history of the town and school means that they have used these values, in the form of school activities, in a very integrated way when dealing with families and pupils from excluded communities. In this way, the participation of immigrant parents is encouraged when community activities are organised.

We can conclude that at the level of equal opportunities, some pupils feel disadvantaged as they do not identify with the educational system and therefore stay on the margins and suffer from structural discrimination. The teaching staff feel that the school curriculum should be adapted so that all boys and girls feel valued according to their abilities and skills.

Much importance is given to human values, by both parents and teachers, as the key to peaceful coexistence and non-discrimination. It is also felt that difference should be seen as *something of value*.

Regarding the activities analysed, they are regular activities, of an informative and educational nature that *help reflect on certain specific themes and that encourage pupils to look at their previous attitude to them*.

Although the activities are carried out at a low level of intensity, the activities analysed work towards the promotion of equal opportunities and the fight against discrimination. In this way they are useful as strategies to:

- Improve the knowledge of other cultures.
- Encourage the participation of all pupils in the decision-making process.
- Improve the self-confidence among pupils who feel discriminated against.

With regards to the methods used to develop these activities, the potential importance of the informal educational framework (family and neighbourhood) should be taken into account. They are learning environments for discriminatory or non-discriminatory attitudes. It must be stressed that the teachers alone are unable to change attitudes and outside professionals can contribute greatly, as can the presence of education in the family environment.

We must also emphasise the involvement of the school when working on these activities with outside professional support, associations, the Department of Education etc.

We realise, however, that at this level, there are several factors to be taken into account which could improve the intensity of working on this methodology:

- Work on the search for educational resources for all professionals involved, with regard to the aims of the activity.
- Involve the families, boys and girls and all the teaching staff in the design and assessment of the activity.
- Increase the number of hours dedicated to working on these objectives.
- Work on the subject of discrimination more intensively and on a more individual level.