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THE INCLUSIVE DIMENSION OF EQUITY IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

In this article, we want to present some of the results obtained from the activities carried out so far under the project "Supporting Opportunity in Schools: Promoting Educational Equity", no. 2017-1-ES01-KA201-037990, funded under the Erasmus+ Program, Strategic Partnerships, project running from 01.09.2017 to 31.08.2019. This is primarily about addressing the concept of equity in education, a concept that is increasingly used in the last period of time as it is an indicator of a quality education process. In this paper, the concept of equity in education is presented in close connection with the term inclusive education. This approach is due to the connection and interconnection that exists between the two concepts but especially the results obtained in the educational practice following the observance of these principles: equity and inclusion.Within the project activities the dimensions and subdimensions of the concept of equity were developed, as well as the highest level of their application and recognition in an educational institution. We will present these details of the concept of equity.

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Keywords: Equity, education, dimensions, evaluate of equity, indicators, project.

1. Introduction

The concept of equal opportunity for all has been widely shared and promoted across many countries around the world. It advocates that everyone should have the chance to reach their full potential and enjoy the fruits of their hard labour, regardless of their circumstances in life.

The reason why inequality is on the rise is due to the global economy has become more knowledge intensive. Together with skills-biased technological changes, globalisation and the growing influence of the financial sector on the economy, the demand for high-skilled workers and jobs with non-routine tasks has increased over the last three decades. The attempt to identify educational, economic and social policy strategies to implement the concept of equity in all segments of society represents an ideal objective that would provide a chance for education for each individual.

A critical question is whether learning opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of economic and social background. This report finds that the progress different countries have made in providing educational and skills development opportunities to disadvantaged individuals has varied widely. Only a few countries have been successful in providing lifelong learning opportunities. Most have offered sporadic interventions at certain stages of life, rather than continued support over the course of an individual's lifespan (OECD, 2017, p. 12).

2. Problem Statement

Policies and systems that focus on empowering individuals can achieve long-lasting, inclusive economic growth and social cohesion. Such policies include providing, especially to implement of the inclusive education system, disadvantaged individuals, healthcare and lifelong opportunities to improve skills relevant to the labour market. Policies that empower low income individuals to obtain high-quality, stable jobs can mitigate inequalities, especially if efforts are directed at those who earn the least.

Inclusive education prefigures intervention strategies tailored to all situations in which children are located to ensure optimal access to and integration into society.

These policies can also make inclusive and sustainable economic growth more feasible. In addition, dealing directly, at an earlier stage, with the root causes of income inequality, such as education and skills inequality, is more effective than trying to fix the symptoms at later stages of life, through redistribution policies like taxes and transfers (OECD, 2017, p. 20).

3. Research Questions

In Romanian psycho-pedagogical literature the term of equity is used quite rarely. The scientific papers in which this term emerges address the following themes: inclusive education, intercultural education and gender equity. In the Practical Pedagogical Dictionary, the term of equity appears in the syntax of gender education, gender equality and equal opportunities. The analysis of the contents of these terms, as found in the mentioned dictionaries and the specialized papers, leads to the idea of overlapping the term of equity with that of equality of opportunity. "Type of education that promotes the principle of gender equity and gender equality in education, gender education, non-discrimination education based on the elimination of gender inequality, on gender equality and equal opportunities for girls and boys/women and men" (Bocos, 2016, p. 56). A closer use of the current approaches to the term of equity in education is

found in defining the concept of inclusive education, according to which inclusive education implies a permanent process of improvement of the school institution with the purpose of exploiting the existing resources, and especially the human resources, to support the participation in the learning process of all pupils in a community (Vrasmas, 2001, p. 31).

Today, all the interpretations of the educational phenomenon lead to emphasizing the importance of the student's learning process. Learning is therefore an active process in which students convert and modify the information they circulate. The quality of the learning process depends greatly on the positive socio-emotional support climate in which all students are honestly respected and respected (Sirignano, 2019).

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aims at analysing official educational documents in which the concept of equity in education is approached. We also intended to follow the implications of the usage of this concept in everyday educational practice.

5. Research Methods

5.1. The dimensions of equity in education

Equity in education is a very complex concept involving the identification and interpretation of many dimensions. These dimensions have been analysed differently by specialists. We will present some approaches to the dimensions of equity in education.

Within the project activities the dimensions and subdimensions of the concept of equity were developed, as well as the highest level of their application and recognition in an educational institution. We will present these details of the concept of equity.

5.1.1. Fairness

- **Right to education**

All UNCRC children's rights are embedded into the school policy and everyday school practice. Learners, parents and school staff are all aware of these rights and respect them in the framework of an educational pact.

- **School policy**

School leaders value and have a positive attitude towards fairness and equity, acting as role models. This reinforces a shared school ethos. They facilitate and monitor implementation of strategies and resources in order to achieve this.

- **Grants and funding management**

Funds are appropriately spent and resources are appropriately employed according to learners' needs and participation. All possible grants have been requested and made available to targeted learners and the school has depleted all funding opportunities.

- **Participation**

The learner's voice is active in school decision-making and participation activities and they have access to a range of formal school councils or associations.

a. Inclusion

- **SEN learners**

Laerners with SEN follow the mainstream school curriculum with specific adaptations of learning objectives, activitiess and assessment to enhance their learning and support their succes according to learners' abilities and needs.

- **SES learners**

The school and the social services monitor and manage, the home environment conditions of low SES learners including housing quality and availability of learning and digital resources.

- **Newcomers**

The school has a welcome plan and a language plan with clear objectives, specific activities and an evaluation system that fosters continuous improvement for migrant learners and learners with different linguistic profiles. These plans are fully embedded in the school and foresee actions with both learners and families.

- **Gender**

The school vision and leaders ensure the coeducation principle, established in the plans and policies of the school, to promote gender equality and respectful relationships. The school makes always visible female role models in teaching and learning activities to engage more women in the scientific domain and to overcome gender cultural issues.

- **Ethnicity**

The school guarantees the progress of learners belonging to different ethnic groups with specific actions and plans, which include prevention of absenteeism and drop-out, promotion of expectations, family commitment, and participation in extracurricular activities.

- **Intercultural issues**

Multiculturality is embedded in the school vision to foster social cohabitation, so that the cultural background of learners become learning experiences that are content relevant. This is shared with the school community, which has an active role in this vision.

b. Acces

- **High quality education**

The school ensures that most learners have as many years of schooling as possible, from pre-primary until post-compulsory studies.

- **High quality teaching**

The school has the most competent teaching staff by using all the available resources according to each country's recruitment systems.

- **Prevention of absenteeism and dropout**

The school has efficient mechanisms to monitor, track and prevent absenteeism.

- **Access to resources**

The school guarantees that the allocation of resources and the access to provision is equitable to all learners, based on relevant available information about each learner's personal and family background.

c. Opportunity

- **Support & intervention activities**

The school embeds effective support and intervention activities to help learners make progress. They include personalised learning and second chance strategies if they mean opportunity for social promotion.

- **School projects**

School projects foster learners' talent development where engagement and growth is achieved following the learner's own path of learning. International collaboration is used to broaden learners' minds and expectations to de velop interculturality.

- **Extracurricular activities**

The school ensures a wide range of extracurricular activities that offer the same opportunities to all the learners. Activities may be related to arts and crafts, sports, languages, science and technology, cooking, activities with parents or other members of the community. These extracurricular activities provide an added value to the learning process.

- **School environment**

The school, the staff, the families and the community are engaged in each learner and mobilise some of the internal and external resources to help learners to succeed in their personal, social and academic attainment.

d. Personalised learning

- **Pedagogical aspects**

The school offers a wide variety of inclusive methodologies centered on the learner and his/her own learning process where the teacher becomes a coach or facilitator. The methodology used responds to the learning needs of the learners, based on a prior diagnosis of the needs.

- **Organisational aspects**

The school organisation adapts, distributes and assigns available resources according to the needs of the learners. This affects the organization of time, spaces as well as the teaching staff. The organizational flexibility of the school ensures efficiency in the distribution of the different resources oriented to the success of all the learners.

- **Curriculum and teachers' flexibility**

The learning process takes into account each learner's motivations, concerns, aptitudes and personal aspirations. This guarantees the success of all learners.

e. Personal and social development

- **Learners' expectations**

Teachers develop a positive, effective and respectful relationship towards learners to influence their own beliefs and aspirations to improve their competencies, effort and achievements.

- **Learners' wellbeing**

The school has a range of provision to develop healthy bodies. This includes healthy eating initiatives, medical provision, opportunities for physical activities and physical personal wellbeing.

- **Lifelong learning**

The school has a learning ecology framework that supports learning to learn and lifelong learning through reflection and awareness on the learners' learning process. Learners are capable of planning their learning

path and organizing their learning process, including effective management of time and information in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a range of present and future contexts and situations.

Socio-emotional skills

Learners are explicitly taught how to develop socio-emotional skills to empower and develop their personal attributes such as self-confidence, communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, collaboration and leadership, socio-cultural conventions, awareness and work ethic

Each educational relationship represents a context that generates or obstructs learning and a particular and unique affective relationship (Galanti, 2001, p. 1). From here we can deduce the complexity of the learning process, which we must address in the light of all the conditions that influence it.

6. Findings

Evaluation of equity in education can be done at macrostructural and microstructural level. At the macrostructural level, approaches from different European countries could be observed. Based on these dimensions, subdimensions and levels of achievement at the optimal level of equity indicators in educational institutions, any school and its activities can be evaluated. These indicators highlight both the conception, teacher training and their psycho-pedagogical skills in the process of implementing some theoretical and practical theories.

Currently, each educational institution tends to respect as many indicators as possible of a quality educational educational process. These include those on equity in education. Respect for equity in education is closely linked to inclusion. Inclusion seeks to adapt the school to the needs of all students so that they can achieve their individual goals, achievement in relation to their abilities and interests.

For all these principles to be applied in school practice, a quality teacher training is needed. This can be done both at the initial training level and at the level of continuous teacher training. Therefore, we recall that elements of equity and equity assessment in schools should be included in the teacher training curriculum.

7. Conclusion

Careful analysis of the inequality of learning outcomes is always a very good starting point for understanding the functioning of the training system. A gap between the skills acquired by students may be a symptom of the inequality of the resources they receive. Surface assessment is based on the level of commitment and individual abilities.

The strategy of producing a fair educational system is not simple and involves initiatives that cannot be left only in the hands of teachers, but solutions must be found by involving education specialists, school managers, parents, etc.

School is the institution where, in addition to knowledge, future citizens are formed, tomorrow's adults who ought to be responsible citizens. To do justice is to create equal opportunities: to put everyone in the position of best expressing their individual abilities, eliminating obstacles that prevent their expression, full fulfilment and overcoming difficulties. The school should identify the strategies and actions that need to be taken to recover the children in difficulty.

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