

Role and Relevance of Indicators for Reporting on Education

*Educational Reporting and Evidence-Based Governance
in Education*

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- Theory?
- Example / story: european indicators of equity
- Results
- Problems
- Further developments

EUROPEAN INDICATORS OF EQUITY

EUROPEAN GROUP FOR RESEARCH ON EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS (2005). "Equity in European Educational Systems: a set of indicators", *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 4, N° 2, p. 1-151.

Baye, A., Demeuse, M., Monseur, C., Goffin, C. (2006). *A Set of Indicators to measure Equity in 25 European Union Education Systems*. (http://ec.europa.eu/education/transversal-programme/doc/studies/2003equity_en.pdf)

- In fact, « by law », very few EC in the field of education except concerning 3 main objectives: *improvement of **quality**, **cooperation** and **mobility***
- 1998-2001: *In Pursuit of Equity in Education. Using international indicators to compare equity policies* (OECD)
- 2000: European report on the quality of school education (Sixteen quality indicators)
- 2003-2006: *Equity in European Educational Systems. A set of indicators.* (EGREES)
- 2006: *Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems* (EC)

Aims of the project

- *Our objective was to open discussion, not to adopt a normative point of view. But to have an open discussion, we need **common words** and **interesting data**.*
 - ➔ *a **common framework of indicators***
- *The project was intended to offer the possibility **to measure and compare the equity of the education systems in the European Union Member States**.*
- *Thanks to it, decision-makers and users will be informed of the equity of the existing systems. This informative tool may help decision-makers to (re)define the educational policies.*

→ From equality to equity
(Equality of what ? Cf. Sen)

→ Beyond formal equality...
... an equal situation could be unfair

The report is structured into three parts:

1. Devising indicators of equity of educational systems: why and how ?
2. A set of indicators on the equity of the educational system.
3. The equity of European educational systems. An interpretation of the 29 indicators.

1) No interest in equity : « natural » and « libertarian » positions

Everybody is free to use its means for its own advantage. Freedom is the central interest. State's interventions are opposite to liberty.

2) Equality of access or opportunity

Each student must benefit from an education proportional to his/her aptitudes at the start. Inequalities of results are fair if their are proportional to initial aptitudes.

3) Equality of treatment

The wish is that the social background does not influence success at school. Each pupil must receive an equal treatment.

4) Equality of achievement or academic success

Differences in results beyond the essential skills but not for core curriculum and compulsory education.

Positive discrimination, mastery learning, formative assessment, as well as all the support mechanisms aimed at reducing the initial inequalities.

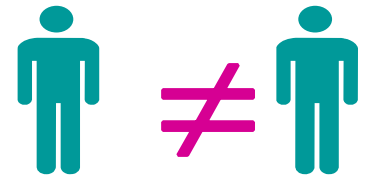
5) Equality of actualization (social output)

Different individual, motivational and cultural characteristics, but without any hierarchy existing between them.

This level broadens the perspective by putting school back into its societal context.

A model is helpful...

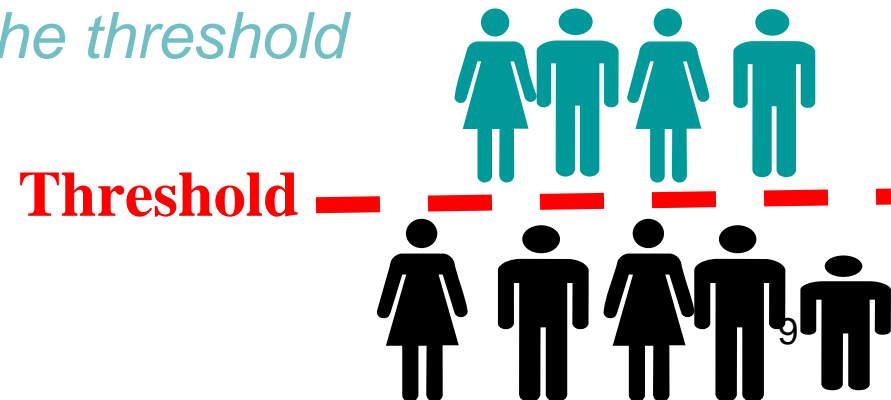
- *Inequalities among individuals*



- *Inequalities between groups or categories*



- *Individuals or groups below the threshold*



A model is helpful but it is no enough...

- To have a common vocabulary (glossary, definitions...)
- To know very well the (potential) data sources → international and multidisciplinary group of researchers
- To have at least a « users'group »
- To have a permanent contact with « the center »
- To keep in mind the general and central objective
- To have a good balance between the « researchers' interests » and « policymakers' and stakeholders' interests »

→ Principles (see Meuret, 2001)

FROM AN IDEA TO A SYSTEM OF INDICATORS PRINCIPLES

The indicators must enable to discuss in the context of various existing principles of justice.

The framework must allow for discussion from the point of view of diverse conceptions of justice.

Some of them are local ones...

- Equality of treatments
- Equality of results (Compensatory education)
- Meritocracy

Others may be related to general theories of justice...

- Sen : equality of capabilities
- Rawls : democratic equality
- Walzer : Simple equality and complex equality
- Roemer, Fleurbaey : Responsibility (talent, effort and resources)
- Utilitarianism : Effectiveness (inequalities have to promote effectiveness)
- ...

Relevant inequalities are of three kinds:

- Inequalities between individuals must not hinder social cooperation on an equal basis
- Inequalities between social groups must be compatible with equality of opportunity
- No one should leave education without a minimum set of skills

The more relevant social categories are those from which the individual cannot escape :

- social origin
- ethnic origin
- gender

Among the assets distributed by the educational systems, we need to concentrate on those of which fair distribution is more important for individuals or for the society

Since we intend to evaluate the equity of educational systems and not only to measure educational inequality, we have to measure also inequalities upstream the educational system and those that affect the teaching process itself.

Why?

Two educational systems may present the same level of inequalities, while the first reaches that level by struggling successfully against very high contextual inequalities (inequalities of resources, expectations, cultural habits among households) while the second reaches it by an uneven delivery of the educational services in a more even context.

Educational systems do not only deliver knowledges and skills, they are also an important part of the students life.

Therefore equity means not only that educational assets have to be distributed in an equitable manner, but also that students have to be treated in an equitable manner by the system, its employees and by their classmates.

Because a just educational system is also a system that favours social equity, indicators must relate not only to educational inequalities, but also to the social and political effects of those inequalities

The system of indicators must measure inequalities, but it must also identify the judgment of citizens and of the systems users about the equity of the current education system and the criteria underlying that judgement

Discrepancies between facts and opinions may be a sign of alienation or of ignorance but opinions have to be measured :

- because we cannot pretend to measure all relevant inequalities
- because principles are uncertain and have to confront themselves with «our considered judgements duly pruned and adjusted » (Rawls, 1971,4)

Therefore, we have to allow for a confrontation of facts and judgements.

The framework, the indicators

	Interindividual inequalities (1)	Inequalities among groups (2)	Situation of the weakest pupils (3)
Context (A)	Dispersion of family wealth (A21; PISA)	Gap of cultural resources among social groups (A32; PISA)	Percentage of children below the poverty line (A21; LIS)
Process (B)	Interdeciles inequalities of schooling expectancy (B11, OCDE)	Support from teachers; gap among social groups (B21,PISA)	Classsize for students below the skills threshold (B12, PISA)
Inequalities (C)	Reading skills, standard deviation (C11, PISA)	Social inequalities of school career (C31,lannelli)	Sen's indice of weakness (C12, PISA)
Effects of inequalities (D)	Contribution of the most educated to the situation of the most disadvantaged (D21, PISA + EVS)	Feelings of justice towards the educational system : gap among social groups (D33, QS)	Feelings of justice towards the educational system of the weakest pupils (D32, QS)

The framework, a synoptic reading

1. Importance of educational inequalities
2. Social gravity of educational inequalities
3. Where do the educational inequalities come from : context or process?
4. To what extent do educational inequalities benefit the disadvantaged?

FROM A SYSTEM OF INDICATORS TO A SYSTEM OF DECISIONS / ACTIONS

- **Till now:** no direct and concrete application on an European level (« the idea is moving », see e.g. the Commission communication on equity & effectiveness (2006), informal Council of the Ministers of Education (2005), NESSE network...)
- **Studies:** EUROPEP (on priority education)
- **National** (in Belgium): evolution of national indicators, experimental « Educational areas », positive discriminations & differential way to finance schools according to objective indicators...

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POLICY (european & comparative perspective):

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- AUBERT-LOTARSKI, A., DEMEUSE, M., DEROBERTMASURE, A., FRIANT, N. (2007). Conseiller le politique: des évaluations commanditées à la prospective en éducation, *Les Dossiers des Sciences de l'Education*, 18, 121-130.
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