

# EQUITY – THE EXPECTED IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

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# No quality without equity, no equity without quality

- The two most extended and severe educational problems in the world – educational quality and educational equity – are intertwined.
- No unequal educational system can be considered a quality system. Equity is one of the components of quality. Basic education, being compulsory, has to achieve its objectives with all children. In order to do so, in the light of diversity, it must treat each child and each context differently.

# No quality without equity, no equity without quality

- Equity is not possible without quality. Equity is, in fact, the distribution of quality. If an educational system is not a quality system, it will be in no position of attracting and especially of retaining – students who are reaching school for the first time.
- Quality entails dealing differently with diverse populations in order to achieve educational objectives that are universal and educational objectives that are specific to certain groups, without creating, as a consequence, new causes for inequality.

# Weak policies regarding equity

- However, while quality education seems to be the object of many public policies – curricular reforms, teacher professional development, production of educational materials, it is not the same with equity.
- Well known causes of inequality are still in place in many countries:
  - Expansion that follows the trickle-down model
  - Less resources for the more marginal (instead of the opposite)
  - Little attention to marginalized groups in the population (internal migrants, street children, cultural minorities, disabled...)
  - Segregated sub-systems that easily become second-rate
  - Homogenizing trends that actually conceal heterogeneous, i.e., unequal, attention.

# Weak policies regarding equity

- There are very weak and not yet comparable measures of inequality.
- All educational goals should be accompanied by equity goals, and this is hardly ever the case.
  - For example increasing the reading levels achieved by children **AND DIMINISHING GAPS** between relevant sectors of the population (rural, urban; mainstream, marginal; native, migrant...)
  - Or increasing the net enrolment rates in higher education. **BUT WITH GREATER REPRESENTATION OF ALL SECTORS OF THE POPULATION.**

# A complex approach is needed

- Equity cannot be achieved if we treat different populations differently, giving them less.
- Equity cannot be achieved if we treat different populations homogeneously, offering them the same
- Equity cannot be achieved if we treat different populations differently, giving them more but trying to achieve sameness

# A complex approach is needed

- Equity necessarily implies recognizing and valuing diversity.
  - Eradicating the deficit perspective
  - Accepting the need for growth from within.
  - Recognizing both common and different educational objectives.
  - Recognizing different ways of accessing knowledge
  - Doing this from the centre of the educational system, not from its margins.

# Policy implications

Some of them are

- A supporting system that accepts diversity within and between schools and contexts.
- High levels of community involvement and participation.
- Benchmarking equity
- Monitoring and evaluating equity

# International Conferences

- Comparable measures
- Equity goals
- Diversity approach – the axis of a paradigm shift. A new educational language
- International experiences
  - Western Europe and others, for example, gives more to schools that need it most. Latin America gives less to schools that need it most.
  - Korea decided to mix its secondary schools
  - Bolivia is making progress in responding to indigenous needs and aspirations
  - And so many more.
- Not least, global community pressures on unequal educational systems.
  - Based on research findings
  - And good practices

# International Conferences

- Need to relate and articulate their contents into coherent intra and intersectoral policies:
  - With lifelong learning: Intergenerational effects, culture of inclusion building, role of family and community participation in schools.
  - With higher education
    - Need for understanding equity in higher education as the ability of the subsystem of representing within it, in its enrolment, the different sectors of the population.
    - Need for a clearly intercultural higher education for all.
    - Need for forming high-level professionals among all sectors, including minority marginalized sectors of society.

# International Conferences

- With sustainable development
  - Need for a balanced regional development with community participation and regional professionals.
  - Need for including and valuing indigenous knowledge – cultural biodiversity.