

Chapter 7

Strategies for Achieving Equity-Based Education: Towards an Equitable Education System

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on strategies for achieving equity-based education. The concept of equity-based education has been examined. Factors that influence equity in education which include funding, access to high-level curriculum, teacher quality and discipline have been discussed. The discussion revealed that funding is a distinct indicator of equity in education, hence, establishing sustainable partnerships between the government and other potential funders is advisable. The chapter also revealed numerous equity strategies such as free and compulsory primary and secondary education for children, providing access to excluded groups of learners, improving the quality of teaching, adopting various forms of assessment strategies, increasing resource allocation, creating equitable learning environments, and creating an equity framework. The chapter suggests solutions and recommendations, and provides future research directions. Finally, conclusion is drawn from the arguments posed by literature observations.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the role of education cannot be overemphasised as it has proved to be the bedrock of democracy. Public schools have the mandate of providing equitable access to education and ensuring that all learners have appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, irrespective of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, language proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability (Barth, 2016). It has been observed that in an equitable school environment, learners of all backgrounds, for instance, race, nationality, gender and many others, have the same opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge and skills. In creating an equitable learning atmosphere in schools, it is important for educators to be culturally proficient and possess the ability to communicate and work effectually across cultural

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6386-4.ch007

lines (Hanover Research, 2017). Hence, equity in education is usually linked to equal access to formal education opportunities and resources.

According to UNESCO, (2014) the right of all children to education is proclaimed in several international treaties, and has been confirmed by both legally binding and non-binding instruments. States therefore have responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the right of all learners to education (UNESCO, 2014). This, therefore, suggests that fairness, impartiality, and justice should prevail in schools to enhance equity in the education systems. Hence, schools should be concerned with fairness, such that the education of all learners is seen as being of equal importance. Thus, this chapter intends to establish strategies that enhance equity based education. The chapter looks at the background and concept of equity-based education, factors that influence equity in education, strategies for achieving equity based education, and challenges encountered in achieving equity based education. The chapter suggests solutions and recommendations, and provides future research directions. Finally, conclusion is drawn from the arguments posed by literature observations.

BACKGROUND

The field of education is making a shift from thinking about academic achievement based on academic deficits to one that holistically meets students where they are in terms of academic, social and emotional learning, and developmentally. (Sturgis, & Jones, 2017). According to UNESCO (2018) education has long been recognised as a basic human right and a critically-important requisite for the productivity and well-being of individuals and for the economic and social development of entire societies. Sturgis and Jones (2017) add that the role of public education is the bedrock of democracy. In this regard, the importance of equal access to education has been emphasised repeatedly in international conventions. It is further stated that access to education and learning outcomes should not be affected by circumstances outside of the control of individuals, such as gender, birthplace, ethnicity, religion, language, income, wealth or disability (UNESCO, 2018). However, the failure to provide an equitable public education that enables equal access to opportunity unravels the American dream. There is, therefore, need to focus on competency-based structures for education which are unique powerful models for fostering equity (Sturgis, & Jones, 2017).

Ainscow (2016) mentions that a recent Education for All Global Monitoring Report indicates that, despite improvements over the last 15 years, there are still 58 million children out of school globally and around 100 million children who do not complete primary education. Further literature observation reveals that whilst this situation is most critical in the developing world, there are similar concerns in many wealthier countries, where almost one of five students does not reach a basic minimum level of skills to function in today's societies. It is also noted that students from low socio-economic background are twice as likely to be low performers, implying that personal or social circumstances are obstacles to achieving their educational potential (Ainscow, 2016). Accordingly, Levin (2003) affirms that current data indicate that despite expansion in access to learning opportunities in most countries, educational equity has proved highly elusive. There is evidence that countries vary considerably in the proportion of young children who have access to good quality care, in the proportion of students completing secondary education, in participation in postsecondary education and in opportunities for adult education and workplace learning. Thus, inequity in various learning outcomes varies across countries (Levin, 2003).

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