



Relationship between the inclusive center profile and academic performance of primary schools in Catalonia.

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Contribution

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This paper shows the results obtained from Doctoral Thesis titled: "Relationship between the inclusive center profile and academic performance of primary schools in Catalonia", which was developed within of a Framework Contract among the Education Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) and the Universitat de Barcelona, with whom we have done a shared work in design phase and application of the instrument to collect data.

The main objectives of the study are:

- Identify the Inclusive Center Profile, using a series of indicators about organization and inclusive practices on sample schools.
- Determine the relation between the inclusive center profile and academic achievement of primary schools in Catalonia

We also controlled the center complexity variable[1]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is framed in the Inclusive Education line, defined by UNESCO (2005) as: a process that attempts to answer the diversity of students increasing their participation and reducing their exclusion from the regular educational system. It is related to attendance, participation and achievement of all students, especially those who, for various reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized.

The main function of the inclusive model is to serve as an instrument of transformation which aims at social cohesion by ensuring an education based on principles of equity and quality for all students without exception. The inclusion aims to reduce the exclusion of a large students population who, for different reasons, have remained segregated by years from regular education, thereby also reducing rates of school failure.

The term exclusion does not only refer to profiles of students that are outside of the traditional education system, but also refers to the profile of students that interrupt their educational path or finish school prematurely without acquiring a basic set of skills due to poor education levels.

For this reason, the movement for inclusive education aims to ensure not only educational coverage but also achieving high standards of quality in education systems. For UNESCO (2007) A quality education is when it provide the resources and support necessary for all students to achieve the highest levels of development and learning, according to their abilities. This way, individuals can equally achieve access to proper education and training.

In this sense, the emphasis of our research is on the academic performance of all students from inclusive schools, which this, we are addressing two aspects closely related to educational quality. These are: equity and excellence. We are interested in how the schools whose practices stand out as being highly inclusive, achieve the excellence in learning outcomes for all students also.

Previous research have studied the impact of inclusive education in the academic achievement of all students, indicate that there is a direct relationship between these two variables, the findings showed neutral effects in most cases (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallanaugh, 2007; Ruijs, Van der Veen, & Peetsma, 2010 and Sermier & Bless, 2013;) while some studies showed positive effects (Hestenes, Cassidy, Shim and Hegde, 2008; Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007, ; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009), and a lower percentage negative effects also was found (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson, Gallanaugh, 2004).

[1] Centers Classification by the Catalonia Department of Education depending on their level of complexity, is understood as a set of combined variables (socio-economic conditions of families from schools, student diversity, teachers and students mobility and absences and matriculation demand), which provide a greater or lesser difficulty to manage the center and to achieve good results.

Method

The design of the research, was based in a quantitative methodology. To obtain data, we created a questionnaire, which allowed us to identify the Inclusive Center Profile, using a series of indicators about organization and inclusive practices on sample schools. The academic achievement was taken from the results obtained by schools on state assessments, performed each year at the end of primary education (6th grade) in mainstream school.

Characteristics of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was organized into six dimensions: Center Organization, Classroom and Center Inclusive Climate, Classroom Organization, School Support, Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning. It has 43 items, with different kinds

of answer: alternatives, rating scale and multiple choice, distinguishing between questions that are key to determining the degree of inclusion of center and that will allow us to describe the inclusive profile centre.

In the design of the questionnaire we have taken into account the previous revision of existing instruments about inclusion in schools (Both and Ainscow 2002; Duran, Giné and Marchesi, 2010; Valls 2011 nd; FEAPS 2009; Denham nd; Education Review Office 2012; Pathways to inclusion nd; "Inclusive Education McGill Questionnaire" nd). As well as we was based on several authors (Ainscow 2001; Stainback and Stainback 2004; Casanova 2011; Dyson 2001; Puigdemívol 2005), who define and describe the inclusive school and its essential elements.

The validity and reliability study of the instrument

Validity: To validate the questionnaire we asked the judgment of six experts with experience and career related with inclusive education theme

The Cronbach's Alpha was used for the reliability analysis. The result showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0,723; which is an accepted reliability according to established standards.

We got answers from 615 schools. The data was analyzed with SPSS statistics software. We hope to obtain the correlation between the highest degree of inclusion and sustained high academic performance in the last three years of the centers, also controlling the center complexity variables.

Expected Outcomes

The results have been organized in two áreas, according to the objectives:

[1] Identify the Inclusive Center Profile, using a series of indicators about organization and inclusive practices on sample schools. [2] Determine the relation between the inclusive center profile and academic achievement of primary schools in Catalonia.

The analysis of the responses has been done using the average scores and inclusion ranges previously defined, which give us a global index of inclusion of the schools and an index by dimensions considered in the questionnaire.

We are currently in process to data crossing, but we can anticipate that although many schools make efforts to implement inclusive practices, the organization and operating mode about an significant percentage of centers are far from approaches of inclusive education yet, because in most cases they are limited to ensure a diverse student access to school, without guaranteeing quality education in terms of equity and excellence in academic performance.

We hope to have a more detailed analysis of results when we present our paper and we'll can deepen about which components of inclusive school correlates significantly with academic performance, if our hypothesis is true.

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This proposal is part of a master or doctoral thesis.

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