

A Research Plan for Pupils' Global Understanding about Educational Inequality in the UK

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Abstract: This paper delves into the UK primary school pupils' initial perceptions of global educational inequality. It aims to assess their comprehension of 'education,' 'inequality,' and 'educational inequality,' and to determine their ability to identify educational resources, which are key to addressing the unfair distribution of educational opportunities highlighted by Banzragch et al. (2019). The study seeks to uncover the pupils' awareness of these concepts, which is crucial for understanding their views on educational disparities.

Keywords: Global Understanding; Educational Inequality; UK Pupils.

1. Introduction

The focus of this research programme is to delve into the initial perceptions and understanding of global educational inequality among primary school students in the UK. In particular, the study focuses on the differences manifested in the allocation of educational resources, a key issue highlighted by Banzragch et al. (2019). The study had two focuses: First, to assess students' current understanding of the concept of "education," "inequality," and specifically "educational inequality." This includes understanding how young people understand these terms, which is crucial to mastering their awareness of wider social issues.

Secondly, the study aims to determine the extent to which students in the UK are able to identify and identify educational resources. This is critical because it directly relates to their ability to discern the fair or unfair distribution of learning tools and opportunities. By exploring their knowledge of educational resources, the study aims to reveal the depth of their understanding of tangible and intangible assets that contribute to quality education.

The study will use a variety of methods to collect data, including surveys, interviews, and possible classroom observations to ensure a comprehensive understanding of student perspectives. The survey will be carefully designed to include questions that explore students' definitions of education and inequality, as well as their perceptions of equity in educational opportunities. The interview section can give you more insight into the nuances of their ideas and the reasons behind them.

In addition, the study will introduce students to scenarios or examples, asking them to identify which items or situations represent educational resources or instances of inequality. This practical approach will help assess their ability to apply their understanding to real-world situations.

The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the cognitive landscape of educational inequality for young learners. This will reveal whether they are able to conceptualize abstract notions of inequality and relate them to concrete elements of their educational experience. By understanding their perspectives, educators and policymakers can better address the root causes of the education gap and work to create more equitable learning environments for all.

2. Literature Review

The United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No.2 "Achieve Universal Primary Education" was devoted to educational attainment and equity on a global level (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009). Sherman and Poirier (2007), two researchers in UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, compared education equity among 16 of the world's largest countries, finding that educational inequality is widespread in different countries on different continents, including both developed and developing countries. After this, our concern, namely, education inequality is a theme that appears as a centre of attraction in the educational publications in the major international agencies and nongovernmental organizations (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009). Thus, it indicates that education inequality is a global issue which are received much attention from the whole world.

As Haim and Shavit (2013) point out that education inequality results in inequality in material well-being, more accurately, inequality in education breaks the balance of the possible income equality. Thus, achieving equality in education conditions, favorable circumstances and developments have always been aims of national governments and agencies (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009). However, the efforts made in regard have not always been successful and lead to unexpected repercussions, such as the disproportion of regional educational development, inevitably producing countless inequalities (Hart, 2018). For instance, inequality in the distribution of education (e.g., length of time of completed education) is correlated with inequality of students' learning achievements. To minimize or eliminate this issue needs the long-term efforts of people now and future (Hart, 2018). Therefore, Haim and Shavit (2013) suggest that it is necessary for children to develop an awareness of the exist of global education inequality from an early age.

Even though the exist of global education inequality is not a glorious phenomenon, it is a fact of existence. From the educator's view, an education programme enables pupils to gain a clear consciousness of the differences in educational levels (e.g., education quality and education resources) around the world (Hart, 2018), broadening children's horizons of the real world. Also, when achieving the knowledge related with global education inequality, children

develop a more complete view and comprehension of the real world (Bantragch et al., 2019), instead of keeping a biased attitude. Therefore, when such an education programme is planned, it can aim attention at showing the pupils about what would be 'education inequality' to facilitate an improvement of their understanding (Xiang et al., 2018).

In order to investigate the pupils' original knowledge as well as enhance their comprehension of the topic, this educational research programme with the theme of education inequality will utilize a student-centred active teaching method combined with group discussion. Since this research focuses on the pupils' perception, applying this method will be advantageous for stimulating interaction and engagement in the classroom to get more real ideas (Baepler & Walker, 2014). Meanwhile, to avoid the limitation of individual ideas, group discussion will be an indispensable part of this process (Xiang et al., 2018). Through an exchange of views, the pupils can get more inspiration, which helps to improve their overall understanding of the topic (Fay et al., 2000). Hence, a student-centred active teaching method added group discussion will be efficient in smoothing teaching process and appropriate for primary school students.

3. Research Questions:

1) To what extent are the British primary school pupils understand of the terms of 'education', 'inequality' and 'education inequality'?

2) To what extent do the British primary school pupils recognize which are educational resources?

4. Research Design and Methodology

During the introductory preliminary school visit of the class in a primary school (Year 3) in North Leeds, West Yorkshire, we find that they seem to have a basic and superficial understanding of the term 'education'. However, for 'inequality' and 'education inequality', there are obvious unawareness and misunderstanding, since the two are academic terms that they hardly ever learned in the past.

This study is designed to use a mixed method combined with both quantitative and qualitative techniques, including class observation, questionnaires, surveys and other various range of research methods. However, because the participants in this study are pupils in Year three (about seven or eight years old), the specific techniques will be designed as interesting and colourful as possible for their age and cognitive level. For example, a game of clapping hands following the beat is designed specifically for collecting the data about educational resources instead of the boring interviews. Meanwhile, the survey (see appendix 1) is presented as a poster to write or draw any item pupils think is relevant to the topic. Also, considering their limited language skills especially the spelling of words, the handout of this study (see appendix 2) mainly uses symbols (e.g., ✓) instead of writing sentences to ensure the smooth running of the research.

Additionally, tallied and analyzed based on the research questions, triangulation analysis will be adopted to discuss and summarize results, involving multiple sources of information aiming to increase the validity and believability of data.

4.1. Process

Preliminary visit: to get in touch with the target pupils,

establishing more reliable and familiar connection with pupils; to introduce research procedure and topic briefly, adding appropriate explanations about the topic if it is necessary.

Baseline assessment: to investigate how much pupils originally know about the three key terms in the topic (i.e. 'education', 'inequality' and 'education inequality'), as well explore their basic knowledge of recognizing which are educational resources.

In future research efforts, it will be necessary to consider a range of complementary variables in order to more fully understand educational inequality among elementary school students. These include students' socioeconomic status (SES), which can reveal links between family income, parents' education levels, and their perception of education gaps.

Additionally, the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of students should be examined to understand how diversity might shape their perspectives on education and inequality, influenced by unique cultural values and experiences.

Access to technology and the students' proficiency with digital tools, given their growing role in education, is another significant factor. Meanwhile, the presence and engagement in extracurricular activities offer insights into educational opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.

Because children often imitate and compare themselves to their classmates, peer influence plays a key role in forming opinions about education and inequality. The role that media exposure plays in shaping students' understanding of global issues, including educational inequality, is equally worthy of investigation. Assessing students' awareness and perceptions of educational policies can shed light on the effectiveness of current measures aimed at addressing disparities.

The psychological well-being of students is an important area of exploration. Students' mental health, including their self-esteem and motivation, may be affected by perceived educational inequities.

Finally, longitudinal data collection, which tracks students' evolving perspectives and experiences in the education system, is invaluable for a deeper understanding of the development of their views on educational inequality.

4.2. Research Setting

Participants

The participants are Year-3 students (approximately seven to eight years old) in a school in Leeds, West Yorkshire, being 17 British pupils including 5 boys and 12 girls. All of the class pupils were born and growing in the UK, using English as their native language. There are total two teachers in the class: one class teacher and a teaching assistant.

Primary School

This Primary school is located at the southeast of Leeds urban area where has clean, peaceful and quiet environment as a traditional town in England. This school is small but modern, being able to provide students with the necessary modern teaching equipment, such as a touch screen, a computer, colourful stickers as well other teaching and learning equipment. Moreover, this school expects to develop confident, successful and responsible citizens.

After the preliminary visit, the researchers found that pupils here have been taught how to develop their comprehension skills and particularly those of inference. Those (i.e. participants in this study) that the researchers listened to read did so accurately, with fluency and increasing expression. They were able to answer comprehension questions related to the text accurately.

4.3. Ethics

Approval is required for such research to enter elementary school classrooms. The module manager consulted with the partner school in advance and arranged the research schedule. Researchers should also avoid discrimination or bias when asking questions (Cohen et al., 2000). All forms of data, such as questionnaires and surveys, will be collected anonymously. The privacy of study participants will be well protected, such as their image rights, their answers, and any type of chat and audio recordings. If necessary, permission should be obtained from the head teacher before using the recording.

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