

EXPOSICIÓN

Cien Años de la Ciencia (de 1917 al 2017)
en Venezuela

UNIVERSIDAD MONTEÁVILA



ACADEMIA DE CIENCIAS
FÍSICAS, MATEMÁTICAS
Y NATURALES

Suscribirse

David Ribera-Nebot ▾

Foro

Número actual

Otros números

Sobre esta revista

Anuncios

INTERVIEW

1 de ENERO de 2021

Every Learner Matters and Matters Equally

A conversation with *Melvin Ainscow*

Melvin Ainscow, CBE, FRSA, is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Manchester and Adjunct Professor at Queensland University of Technology. He is the author of *Struggles for Equity in Education: The Selected Works of Mel Ainscow*.

 **DESCARGAR**

 **ENVIAR**

 **COMPARTIR**

What is inclusion and equity in education? Is there a commonly agreed definition of what they are?

What are inclusion and equity? What is this about? It is about making sure that every child has the right and the opportunity to go to school and receive an appropriate education. It is about

strengthening education in such a way that all children can be present in schools (in the classroom), can participate in schools (be actively involved), and make progress (learn things that will be useful). Since 1990, and with more emphasis during the last three or four years, the UNESCO, which is the main United Nations organisation concerned with education and policy, has been arguing that we need to develop and strengthen education for all children, recognising that there are still millions of children around the world who don't go to school and don't meet a teacher. Some of those children don't go to school and don't meet a teacher because there are no schools and no teachers where they live. But even when there are schools and teachers, all around the world there are vulnerable children. In parts of Africa, the most vulnerable learners are girls, particularly when they get to the age of eleven. They'll drop out of school to help at home or get married and have children. In my country, in England, the most vulnerable children are white boys from poor communities. Kids from poor backgrounds are vulnerable pretty much everywhere around the world. Children from national ethnic minorities can be vulnerable too, but not always. In the city of Manchester, in England, for example, we have over a hundred and fifty languages spoken in our schools. Some of those children from ethnic minorities are vulnerable while some of them are the most successful. Children of Chinese background, for example, usually outperform all other ethnics. So culture, ethnicity and language do not necessarily make children vulnerable. And of course, we shouldn't forget children with disabilities, who also are vulnerable throughout the world —very often they are excluded from schools or placed in a separate provision. So inclusion and equity are about making all of those children feel valued and welcome. The key issue here is that every learner matters and matters equally. Inclusion and equity are not projects. They're not separate policy. They are principles that should inform all policy. So, these principles should inform the curriculum, teacher education, the allocation of educational budget, that is to say, everything about the way the education is run.

Inclusion and equity have been made more important nowadays because of the recent pandemic. The pandemic has shed light on the inequalities in all our societies and particularly on the way in which children receive different levels of education

—needless to say that there are significant numbers of children who receive no education at all or are segregated within education. Inequalities are there in all our societies to varying degrees, and they are to do with levels of economic wealth. The evidence shows that the communities that have been most affected by the pandemic are economically poor families, and that's true here in the United Kingdom as it seems to be in every other country in the world. For example, in my country, we relied on getting children to continue their learning through the internet, through the use of computers. However, many families in this country don't have the internet and don't have computers. I heard, for example, of a family with five children all trying to do their schoolwork by sharing one mobile phone.

Do governments across the world genuinely recognise the value of inclusion and equity in education? What are the benefits of inclusion and equity in education?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which assesses the progress of the education systems in the wealthiest countries, says that equity pays off. If a country develops a more inclusive and equitable education system, they say, the country's education system will improve and all children are likely to benefit and so will the country. The country will benefit because a better education system will pay off in terms of a better workforce that can develop a stronger economy. That is a crucial argument in terms of strategic thinking. So this is not just about children and their learning—it is about children and their learning, of course—but it's actually about creating better societies and stronger economies. For many people that's counterintuitive. Many people say, "if you invest in children who need a lot more help, that will hold everything back." Well, that's not the evidence. You can look at places like Finland, Singapore, South Korea, Estonia, parts of Canada. They are very committed to the idea that every learner matters and matters equally. Of course, there are always difficulties to be faced in order to make the system work well, but we have to keep moving forward. And at the moment, with the pandemic, the difficulties are beyond any of our previous experiences. I would be first to recognise that.

Are inclusion and equity an issue of major concern to teachers and school leaders in general? Do they have a clear idea of what they are and what they entail?

Sometimes when I talk to school directors about inclusion and equity, they say to me, “well, I agree with what you’re saying, but the trouble is we haven’t got the time.” My answer is, “well, then you don’t agree with me; if you agree with me, you would find the time.” Time is the currency we use in education to decide that something is important. Time is a big problem, indeed. There is no time. Everybody’s busy. But if there is something important, we find the time. Now, if you believe, as I do, that investing in collaboration between teachers, between schools, and with the wider community will help everybody do a better job, then you will find the time. Some school directors do that because they recognise that it is important. But I stress, I don’t pretend it’s easy to move inclusion and equity forward.

Do families and society, in general, see going to school as a key to success in life? Is there much difference between the UK, Latin American countries, and other places? On what does that perception depend?

I’ve never met a family that doesn’t want the best for their children. They may not know how to go about getting the best. Sometimes the way they do that may be unpleasant and create conflict, but parents and families want the best for their children. There are always cultural factors playing their part. We all reflect our history, biographies, and so on. In China and many other Asian countries, for example, families see education as the key to the future not just of the individual but of the family. Other cultures don’t perceive education as important. Now, I think we have to work with all families to convince them that it’s in everybody’s interest for their children to be supported and encouraged in doing their best. Culture is not fixed. Cultures can change. I think we have to try to work with communities and families to bring about those changes. Those in schools, the professionals, have got to open the doors, reach out, bring families to meetings and discussions, and show that they respect what families offer. However well a teacher knows a child, it will never know the child as well as the parents and grandparents do.

Teachers have to respect the knowledge that families have and show that they think that that knowledge can contribute to what's going on.

How important are the attitudes of governments, schools, and families for inclusion and equity in education to gain ground? Is the support of all of them essential?

Improving inclusion and equity can be driven from different places within the education system. It depends on the local situation. On occasion, schools can be the drivers, although it's often difficult for them. Teachers, in particular, don't have much time. They are busy with their classes all day. But if there is leadership from within the school, that can be helpful. I think local district administrations can be very helpful in coordinating. I also think voluntary organisations, such as charities, can also be very helpful. So leadership can come from different places, but nothing will happen without that leadership. It's crucial that it is created. And I think demonstrating what's possible can help create that leadership. Local examples of good practice that people can go to and have a look at how things are done are important. If I were sent to a country which is trying to develop a strategy, I would try to create some working examples of good practice. University researchers can be quite helpful here. University researchers can make assessments and evaluations and write accounts of what is happening. Government has to create the conditions and provide encouragement to make that happen. It has to happen at the local level. Governments have to recognise that the real leadership for this to happen has to come from the local level, not from the parliament.

What would you say are the main barriers for inclusion and equity to move forward? How different are they between rich and poor countries?

There is a guide published by UNESCO in 2017, called *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*, that provides some very useful definitions for those who want to move policy forward in their country. This guide, which was produced by a team of international experts that I led, describes the process of moving inclusion and education forward as a process that helps overcome

barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners. Some of those barriers may be physical barriers. Some children may not be able to get into school, or maybe they are not able to get to certain parts of the building, or maybe some children may not be able to see or hear what's going on. Those barriers can also be of another kind. The curriculum can be a barrier if it's not devised with all children in mind. The assessment systems we use can be a barrier if they do not celebrate the progress of all children. The quality of our teaching can be a barrier if we don't know how to organise the classroom to include all children. And, of course, the most difficult barriers—difficult to define and difficult to deal with—are the barriers in our minds, that is, the limitations of what we believe is possible. And please be careful, I am not talking about barriers within children. I am talking about barriers within the context in which children are educated.

In relation to these barriers, they may vary from country to country and they may vary within a country—they may be different in a rural district than in the city, for example. Economic factors are crucial. But when it comes to overcoming these barriers, the most important factor is the commitment of people—families, local leaders, politicians, policymakers, communities, and most crucially teachers. It seems to me that the most important factor is the collective will for inclusion and equity to move forward. It's not necessarily about economic resources, although clearly, that is a factor. The countries that are making progress are making progress because of a commitment to the guidelines coming from UNESCO. There's been, for example, great progress in Portugal, Estonia, parts of Africa, and parts of Asia. We know from international comparisons that the most successful countries are those where teachers are valued, respected and given support in the work that they do. The teachers I'm talking about are not necessarily the highest-paid people in their communities. The important thing is they are valued and respected because it is recognised that they are important. So if you want to move the education system forward in relation to inclusion and equity, as I'm sure you do in your country, then you need to invest in teachers. That starts with initial teacher training and must continue through the careers of teachers. You also need leadership at different levels. You need

the leadership of governments, you need the leadership of local politicians, you certainly need the leadership of headteachers. You need leadership at all levels of the education system.

To what extent would strategies that work in one country also work in another country? How could a country go about finding a solution to improve inclusion and equity that works for the country?

I have worked with education systems in different parts of the world, including in my own country, of course, trying to answer the question: how do you move an education system forward, at national, local and school level? My colleagues and I have created what we call an ecology of equity. This is a framework for analysing the particular situation of an education system. The ecology of equity involves three sets of interconnected factors. The first factor is what happens in schools: the good practices that can be built upon, the barriers that need to be addressed, and the resources, especially human resources, that can be used to address those barriers. The second factor is what happens between schools. The nature of this varies from place to place. Schools may carry on without reference to other schools or may compete with each other. What we have seen in many parts of the world is that if you create partnerships of two, three, or more schools, those partnerships can create value. Schools support one another and learn from one another in moving their own practices forward. The third and possibly most important set of factors is what happens beyond schools. We need collective community efforts to support schools in moving in a more inclusive direction. Schools have to work with families, community leaders, religious organisations, universities, politicians, local businesses and industry. We have seen progress in those places where these three sets of factors have been given great attention. Improving inclusion and equity is, as I call it, a journey, a process. Every school is at some stage on that journey. Every country is at some stage on that journey. You see, every school is inclusive to some extent. You start from where you're at, you analyse your situation, you find good practices and you build on them. It is a social process of learning, and that's why I stress the importance of leadership in making this happen.

COMENTARIOS

ENVIAR

Desarrollo para la Ciencia y la Tecnología, C. A.
J-29989504-0

Apartado Postal 2005
Maracay 2101-A
Aragua, Venezuela

info@revistaforo.com
+58 (0) 414 492.09.50

Depósito Legal: AR2016000116
ISSN: 2610-7864