

How to Critique an Article

A review of the article: Exploring Equity in Ontario. A Provincial Scan of Equity Policies across School Boards

“The education system cannot address what it does not acknowledge” (Shewchuk, and Cooper 942). Ontario, a province in Canada, understands this and has come up with an initiative and policies to improve equity in their schools. To achieve this, they have implemented an Equity and Inclusive Education (EIE) strategy. The practical purpose for EIE strategy is to ensure that in Ontario there is inclusive education, in which there are no biases, barriers, or power dynamics that discourages student learning possibilities. Acknowledging a problem and committing to finding its solution is the first step an administration can do to be supportive of their education system. However, the proper thought, research, and policy guidelines should be formulated to ensure the policies and strategy are inclusive of the potential issues, and have room for expansion. The procedures proposed are religious accommodative, anti-discrimination, and harassment of any kind. The policy should have a sound technique of how it will be implemented and reviewed and monitored after. Ontario has done just that, and the purpose of this article is to evaluate how well the equity program has been implemented in the province in attempts to foster equity in schools.

The EIE strategy requires school boards to create and implement EIE policies and administrative procedures and steps. One of the reasons the Ontario Ministry of Education is doing this is the fact that different districts and schools have different needs which are best known by their school administration. However, on the other side of the spectrum, there are different kinds of disadvantages or inconveniences to allowing school boards to develop their own policies. First, if we are talking about equity in the province of Ontario, all the schools should be governed by the same equity rules, other than having individual school boards come up with their own guidelines and policies. There is a problem when you leave the same person or body to develop policy guidelines, implement them, and even review them. The result of this is that there is a significant possibility that the critical matters or equity factors in which they happen to differ with does not implement.

Another issue is the review of the implementation, to best achieve this the Ministry of Education should take the initiative and perform the inspection and compliance themselves. The Ministry of Education of Ontario should have come up with a well-detailed policy and guidelines of the equity strategy implementation. To solve the issue of differences in district needs, then extensive research should have been done, and specific requirements for specific needs get highlighted. The school boards' participation should be incorporated through consultation.

The Canadian education system is one of the most equitable systems in the world, but despite these statistics, the literature review has shown that there remain many problems relating to equity. Students with a disability have in many times run into barriers when going to school and physically moving around in schools which curtails significantly on achieving equity. On the literature review, students with common medical conditions such as Anaphylaxis often feel stigmatized. Canada has a very highly diversified population which has diverse needs as result issues with discrimination are very high. Race disparities and discrimination have contributed to varying incomes which in turn lead to those students living in poverty drop out of schools. Another aspect of equality that has come is the matter on LGBTQ2+. Discrimination, victimization, and prejudice are all forms of inequality that students face from time to time in Ontario, Canada. A further literature review from this article shows that there are some disparities involving teachers. First, there should be equity in the demographic divide on the distribution of teachers from minority groups. They should correspond to the number of students from minority groups. Another fact that affects teacher productivity and the overall state of education is workplace violence and harassment.

Another potential challenge to the implementation of EIE strategy is the lack of political support for the education boards. Leaving the efforts to the boards alone proves a difficult task because due to the financial and other resources constraints – for example, the adequate training on equity that teachers need to get. For example, to have infrastructure friendly to disabled students is a huge problem because it requires significantly higher resources to implement. With the absence of much-needed support from the government for implementation, the policies are viewed as just symbolic and with not much of an effect on the overall improvement of the equity situation in Canada and Ontario specifically.

EIE strategy requires that teachers, education leaders, and other relevant education stakeholders such as students, parents, and the community, in general, are well trained to be aware of their roles in ensuring equity is achieved in Ontario school systems. Research conducted in Ontario shows that school leaders do not receive adequate training on providing equity, and they are faced with resistance in their attempt to move through the equity policies and implementation schools. Another aspect that brings out the flaws in the implementation of the EIE strategy is the fact that despite educators receiving primary education, there are no plans to have in-service teachers trained. For the specific equity factors to be eradicated, an equal school system must be achieved. Then, all the stakeholders and specifically teachers should be well trained and aware of what to expect and how to handle the situations when it arises.

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In this article, the authors conducted a policy scan which was mainly performed on web search and content analysis. For the web content, they scanned school district websites for EIE policies. The article admits that the use of data gotten from the district school websites offers just a "snapshot" of the policies and procedures listed on the website boards. One problem with the systems and process is that stating them and even listing them on the schools' website does not translate to implementing and following them daily. With the directive coming from the Ministry of Education the listing can be a show confirm that they have complied with the requirements for the EIE with really doing it in practice. Therefore analyzing the data from this article one should have in mind the possibility of unreliability.

Results from the study article show that most of the equity issues are under-represented on these policies. To display a few out of the 785 policies and procedures, such problems as anti-racism and ethnocultural equity were included in just 3.05%. 1.52% of the policies and procedures were concerned with inclusionary language, while documents related to anti-discrimination protection for the LGBTQ2+ minority were barely at 1%. These are but a few of the issues left out by the school boards as they formulated their equity procedures and policies. To adequately solve this, the Ministry of Education should have come up with an inclusive and detailed plan and process that will be implemented by the school boards to avoid the disparities that arose when school boards were given the mandate to come up with individual strategies and procedure to execute.

In light of this article, it is difficult to generalize the results for the rest of Canada. However, Ontario gives an overview of Canada's state of equity in education. On top of developing policies and procedures, the schools should develop instruments and systems they will use to monitor equity issues in their various schools together with ways they can be addressed best. The proposed equity lens in identifying these challenges is a practical approach which will give the administration upcoming issues and how to deal with them. For the fight for equity to be won, Canada and Ontario should embrace the concept from the top administrators who, in their support, will offer resources and legal frameworks to help achieve it. Equity in Education is not fully achieved yet, but Canada and Ontario have explicitly made great strides towards achieving equality in the province and the country in general. The first step towards achieving this is acknowledging the issue exists. After which further research should be conducted deal with the problem of data gaps which occurs as a result of lack of information. With the current system, equity may not have been fully achieved, but it is important to note that change is always progressive and every day presents a chance for change.

Works Cited

Shewchuk, Samantha, and Amanda Cooper. "Exploring Equity in Ontario: A Provincial Scan of Equity Policies Across School Boards." *Canadian Journal of Education* 41.4 (2018): 917.