



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

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Finland: country-specific practical implications and recommendations

Katri Kleemola, Auli Toom, Heidi Hyytinen, Tarja Tuononen

A Finnish tendency towards enhancing education equality through inclusive and holistic policies and practices has become evident in the analyses conducted in the PIONEERED project. This approach shows a sense of coherence within the educational system as different policies and practices complement each other. Such a coherence supports the intersectional approach to equal education and ensures equal opportunities regardless of the geographical location. The holistic approach also considers the importance of addressing inequalities across the educational trajectories. The policies and practices that were introduced in chapter 4.1, namely Comprehensive school, Teacher education and Three-tiered support, are exemplary practices of this approach.

Based on the findings of the PIONEERED project, we present following recommendations for developing educational policies and practices in future:

- 1) Critical evaluation of resources
- 2) Evaluation of effectiveness

Increased focus should be put on critical evaluation of resources, including financial considerations and re-evaluation of teacher allocation per number of pupils. New policies and practices should be introduced only after the resources are secured. This seems not to be the case in, e.g., the three-tiered support. It works very well in some areas and especially on lower support needs, but it also suffers to some extent from a lack of special education teachers. While the inclusive and holistic approach to inequalities in the Finnish education is admirable, more careful allocation of resources would indicate towards more targeted policies and practices, such as, e.g., have been presented in chapter 4.4. However, this should not be done at the expense of intersectional considerations and coherence within the educational system.

Any new development of policies and practices should include longitudinal evaluation of effectiveness as an integral part. Across all PIONEERED countries, including Finland, empirical evaluation of effectiveness of policies and practices was too often lacking. Without such, it is impossible to know whether a policy or practice actually achieves its set objectives and whether it is actually implemented as intended.