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Educational Policies and Income Inequality

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Abstract

We design survey studies in samples of the German population to examine how exposure to data on educational disparity influences public concern and policy choices. Support for equity-oriented education initiatives is high overall and rises significantly after receiving information on the level of educational inequality. In this research, we investigate the connections between government education policy, economic inequality, and educational inequality. We demonstrate that inequality in education (measured both at the quality and quantity levels) affects wages inequality by pairing inequality measures on test scores, years of schooling, and labor earnings by nation, birth cohorts, and gender. We next factor in the endogeneity of education levels and turn to instrumental estimating based on data on policy changes made by the government. Neither apathy nor an inability to recognize the link between policies and educational disparity accounts for the modest treatment effects. The only policy having a significant positive information treatment impact is mandatory preschool, and this benefit is amplified by sharing data on the success of the program.

I. INTRODUCTION

Income and wealth inequality have grown over the last few decades in many developed nations (see, for example, Piketty and Saez, 2014). There are several factors at play here, but one major one seems to be growing salary premia for higher education and cognitive abilities (Autor, 2014). However, there is growing evidence that educational success is heavily influenced by external circumstances. Particularly, research from all over the globe shows that a child's familial history is a significant predictor of their academic success (see, for example, Schuetz et al., 2008; Björklund and Salvanes, 2011; OECD, 2016). Education policies that lessen the weight of family background have been at the focus of political discussion due to the correlation between educational disparity and economic inequality and opportunity inequality (e.g., Nickell, 2004; Corak, 2013). The assumption that equalizing school achievements would lead to decreased wealth gaps and more possibilities for children from impoverished homes is frequently cited as an argument in favor of more stringent education policies.

The term "education system" is used to describe the larger framework of formal and informal institutions where learning takes place. Preschools, elementary schools, and high schools are all examples of such institutional environments, but vocational schools and universities are also important. How people gain entry to different educational institutions, how they progress from one level to the next, and how they switch between similar institutions (such as general and vocational high schools) are all important factors to consider when analyzing educational disparities. Therefore, institutionalized contexts shape and imply 'normal' educational trajectories as well. The attributed features of students, such as gender, ethnicity, immigrant history, and class (axes of inequality), create systematic variances in numerous dimensions of educational achievement. According to the theory of Jacobs (1996), educational inequalities can be classified into three categories: (a) access to education (such as educational institutions), (b) experiences/learning processes (such as well-being in school, learning behavior), and (c) educational outcomes. disparities in monetary and non-

monetary educational returns that are also impacted by features of the education system are not captured by the phrase "educational inequalities" (see Müller and Shavit, 1998). Inequalities in returns on education address the subject of how various social groups may convert their educational investments into useful labor market positions, money, or well-being.

Because the subject of studying how educational institutions affect inequality seems to be a macro-micro problem, we shall approach it from a multilayer vantage point. First, we use a historical lens to demonstrate the gradual evolution of contemporary educational institutions and the mythic role they now play at the national level. The United States and Germany provide as instances of the diversity of route dependencies. Following Coleman's (1990) structural-individualist explanatory paradigm, we next propose the macro-meso-micromodel. Using the macro-meso-micro model, we explain how macro-level education system factors and meso-level school characteristics affect the bearing of individual traits (of students, their parents, and instructors) on students' academic performance. The following section explores personal-level causes of educational disparities. Here, we examine the reasons behind the disparity between the monetary and non-monetary benefits of education and the many ideas that have been proposed to account for it. Implications for social reproduction and social transformation are discussed at the macro level after aggregating data on individual educational attainment and returns.

This article explores the factors that shape public support for equal-opportunity education programs. Redistribution of wealth is a common tool used by governments to lessen income and other economic disparities. Economic inefficiency may result from policies that try to achieve equality of outcomes, such as progressive taxes or minimum wages, since they may influence labor supply and human capital buildup inefficiently.

Numerous research on educational disparity in connection to systemic features have been conducted as a result of the availability of data and the development of statistical expertise to evaluate it. Hanushek and Wössmann (2011) and Van de Werfhorst and Mijs (2010) provide useful summaries of the relevant literature. Inequality as dispersion (i.e., within-country variation in student test scores) and inequality of educational opportunity (i.e., the connection between socioeconomic status and student test scores in a nation) are two types of inequality that have been studied. A narrow distribution may correlate with strict placement on the accomplishment scales based on social origin, whereas a broad distribution may coincide with weak impacts of social origin on where a student would be put in the distribution. However, Duru-Bellat and Suchaut (2005) find a connection between the two in actual use.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bonacini L, Murat M. (2023), Is remote learning associated with education inequalities? We use PISA 2018 data from five France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom (all in Europe) are being studied to see whether there is a correlation between having access to distant learning resources and better academic achievements. We find that distance learning is linked with higher average education results, but also with severe and significant education disparities, after adjusting for a large number of variables, fixed effects, multiple specifications, and assessing the stability of coefficients. Our research indicates that negative disparities widen in regions where online education is increasingly prevalent, regardless of country, geography, or kind of institution. Inequalities in distant learning seem to be linked to the externalities of technology networks, growing as digital education becomes more widespread. To ensure that all students and institutions have access to the technology necessary for distance learning, policymakers must act in ways that are unique to each country, region, and educational system.

Palmisano F, Biagi F, Peragine V. (2022), Using the two waves of the EU-SILC for which data on family background is available (2005 and 2011), this analysis presents comparable lower-bound estimates of inequality of opportunity for tertiary education (EIOp) for 31 European nations. The findings demonstrate a large amount of variation, with the nations of Northern Europe displaying low levels of educational disparity and the countries of the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe displaying high degrees of unjust educational disparities. In the vast majority of these nations, the most important factors are the level of education and employment of the parents. This research makes use of the two time-series data points available in order to examine the link between inequality of access to higher education and various country-specific factors. The data shows that EIOp is inversely related to real GDP per capita, which may suggest that promoting more educational equity and fostering economic development are mutually supportive goals. We show a positive correlation between EIOp and the students-to-teacher ratio across all parameters and a negative correlation between EIOp and public investment on higher education. We do not argue that these associations prove causation, but we do believe they point to a real link between access to higher education and both monetary and non-monetary means of support.

Spada, A., Fiore, M. & Galati, A. (2023), One of the main goals of the 2030 Agenda is to reduce poverty through

improving access to education. In reality, a sustainable economy, in which sufficient levels of quality of life and equal distribution of income coexist, cannot be guaranteed without a high level of education and investment in the culture of a nation. Particularly lacking are studies that take into account temporal delays in measuring the effects of changes in important aspects like education, culture, and poverty. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to address this knowledge gap by analyzing a panel of data from 34 European nations covering the years 2015-2019 and concentrating on the connection between education, culture, and poverty. After using principal component analysis to eliminate multicollinearity, the authors used a pooled-ordinary least-squares model, a fixed-effects model, and a random-effects model to accomplish their goal. The fixed-effects estimator was chosen because it best fits the data. The findings show that elevating these nations' cultural and educational standards might help alleviate poverty. This paves the way for novel lines of inquiry and policy approaches that might use this link as a jumping off point for enacting real changes in the educational and cultural landscape.

To cite Jo Blanden (2013): One discovery is the "Great Gatsby Curve," which shows that high levels of economic inequality are associated with low levels of income mobility across generations. The Great Gatsby Curve might be a result of educational inequality; if the difference between the educational attainment of children from wealthy and poor homes widens as inequality rises, then social mobility will decrease. Therefore, we look at how economic disparity correlates with inequality in educational attainment based on family history. This connection is weak when looking at academic success. That instance, inequalities between the test scores of pupils from the wealthiest and the poorest backgrounds tend not to be larger in nations where inequality is higher. In contrast, the "Educational Great Gatsby Curve" shows a substantial and statistically significant association between income and educational achievement through generations. Insight into the mechanisms behind the correlation between economic inequality and upward mobility may be gained by noting that income disparity matters much for attainment but very little for accomplishment, as assessed by test results in school. In example, factors like financial limitations in higher education or differences in educational ambitions across families of various origins are likely to have a role in generating socioeconomic inequalities in educational attainment conditional on accomplishment.

Bjorn Högberg (2017), Modern public health challenges include widening gaps in health and well-being. This is the first paper to take a cross-national look at the institutional factors that contribute to youth well-being gaps. Using data from the European Social Survey, we examine how different types of educational policy affect the correlation between socioeconomic status and happiness. To better understand the impact of social context and policy on individual well-being, researchers have turned to multilevel modeling. The analysis focuses on four variables of inclusive educational policies: the age of tracking, the cost of education, the rate of enrollment, and the availability of educational re-entry programs. Inequalities assessed by the father's socioeconomic class are less in nations with more inclusive educational policies, demonstrating that educational policies do regulate the link between social background and well-being. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that individual-level education, activity status, and wealth mitigate the moderating influence of education policy.

Policy and education

Some of the elements that influence policy are explored, and the notion of a hierarchy of values might assist throw light on their relative significance. Kogan's extensive research on the policy-making process in England and Wales provides an in-depth look at the evolution of educational policy during an era of bipartisan support for and dedication to increasing access to quality education. A time of social and political agreement, during which a social democratic settlement was established on the basis of a compromise between capital and labor, the rise of Keynesian economic management, and the expansion of the welfare state. It was believed that the advent of welfarism had heralded a new era of citizenship based on the creation of new social rights (Marshall 1950), making this time of wide political agreement essentially a period of values consensus. This widespread agreement is what allowed policy studies like Kogan's to conclude that the ideals behind policymaking presented few, if any, ethical challenges. Policies were framed as means to an end, or approaches to issues, with the expectation that through discussion and compromise, a consensus of opinion might be reached. The method was technical as well as logical. The analysis's consequence was a mostly linear perspective on policy formulation, in which issues were first identified, then solutions were devised, and last strategies and interventions were put into place. This way of thinking about public policy may be traced back to the pluralist tradition, which holds that the job of government is to strike a balance between the many demands and expectations of various interest groups. The existence of conflict is not denied, but it is also not regarded as inevitable and is often seen to be controllable. Policymaking as a result of this research follows the sequential logic of Jennings' model (Figure 1).

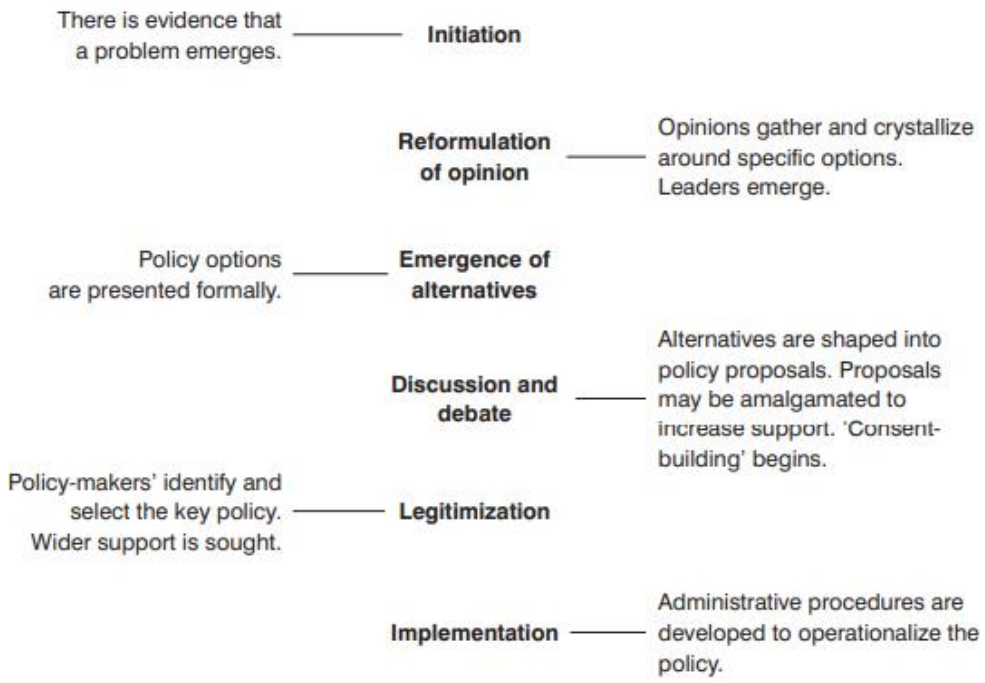

Fig.1 A linear model of policy development

Several benefits come from adopting this perspective on policy and the policymaking process. It may provide valuable insight on the inner workings of public administration because to its focus on the inner workings of policy-making agencies, particularly at the governmental level. It may also reflect the weighted influence of influential stakeholders in decision-making. However, there are a number of ways in which it falls short as a model of what makes policy and how individuals participating in the policymaking process form and experience it. In order to translate "group conflict over public resources and values into authorized courses of action concerning their allocation," as Harman (1984: 16) puts it, policy is born out of and confined within a political system. Conflict is acknowledged, but only within very specific limits. Although power dynamics are recognized, they are seldom questioned. The (unequal) distribution of power and its sources are seldom the subject of discussion. Furthermore, the pluralist focus on institutional policy processes tends to put more weight on the policy production process and less weight on the policy implementation process.

Equity, rights and public policy

Because of the many positive outcomes that may result from education, as discussed in the introduction, international law now protects the right to an education. This may seem to move the conversation on public policy outside of economists' typical territory. However, regardless of one's disciplinary orientation, it is helpful to be reminded of several issues that distributional policy has to confront by taking a closer look at the concept of rights related to education in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international instrument of all.

All transition nations, and all but two of the world's sovereign governments, acknowledge the right to education "on the basis of equal opportunity" since they have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Providing classrooms and instructors to every corner of the nation is just the beginning of what this philosophy entails. The right to education is emphasized in other broad Convention values. Among them are (i) a lack of bias, and (ii) "the best interests of the child" being prioritized in policymaking.

There is a broad range of factors that might be associated with "discrimination" in schooling. The Convention specifically names gender, race, and disability as three prominent instances. However, the list is missing crucial information, such as household income and location. Except at the elementary level, where it is expressly prohibited out, the Convention does not prohibit charging under the public educational system for school or college spaces on the basis of income. The freedom to create private schools is also protected by the Convention, hence private education is not prohibited. However, this does indicate that low-income households need help paying for public services.

One of the most glaring examples of the primacy of "the best interests of the child" idea is the widespread agreement among developed nations that all children above a certain age must attend school. To those who believe that

expanding parental options should be a top priority when formulating educational policy, here is an illustration of why that view is flawed.

Using either direct estimation of a reduced form (where I(y) is directly regressed onto the reform variables vector Z) or a computational approach to estimate the total effect of educational reforms on wage inequality, our policy implications are summarized in Table 1. Most of these outcomes are in line with the existing literature: reforms that strengthen early (pre)schooling, postpone the start of compulsory education, and strengthen educational standardization by introducing standardized test scores all lead to a decrease in income inequalities observed in the labor market years later. Instead, wage gaps expand when schools and universities are given more leeway to decide on curriculum, how to hold teachers accountable, and how to allocate resources. Two further measures (adding more years of schooling and postponing tracking) do not seem to have a statistically significant impact on wage disparities, according to the reduced form estimate. Although we are unaware of similar findings in the literature, we can remark that these minor findings go counter to conventional wisdom, at least in terms of academic accomplishments.

Table 1: Effects of policies on income inequality

	estimated from reduced form		computed from columns (5) and (6) of table 5	
	Gini index dependent employment earnings	Gini index on total labour earnings	Gini index dependent employment earnings	Gini index on total labour earnings
reform on public pre-primary schooling	-0.346 [0.078]***	-0.407 [0.083]***	-0.225	-0.272
compulsory education (start age)	-0.200 [0.053]***	-0.226 [0.056]***	-0.155	-0.193
compulsory education (end age)	0.001 [0.007]	0.008 [0.008]	0.022	0.026
tracking age	-0.007 [0.008]	-0.005 [0.008]	0.019	0.022
introduction of standardised test	-0.178 [0.076]**	-0.232 [0.088]**	-0.195	-0.230
reform on school accountability	0.176 [0.099]*	0.232 [0.102]**	0.060	0.088
reform on school teacher autonomy	0.100 [0.031]***	0.125 [0.032]***	0.067	0.081
reform of university access	0.077 [0.052]	0.104 [0.055]*	0.152	0.167
Observations	82	82		
R-squared	0.83	0.85		

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Figure 2 displays the reduced form coefficients (column 1 of table 1) multiplied by a one standard deviation change in the reform variables, allowing us to gauge the scope of these effects. Results are highly consistent with those of Braga et al. (2013), who found that some reforms (which they call "inclusive") reduce earnings inequality, with the expansion of public pre-primary education having the greatest impact, while other reforms (which they called "selective") raise income inequality, via increased variability in both dimensions of human capital in different educational institutions. Figure 3's horizontal measure units are to be interpreted as Gini points, so while some of the effects are small and not statistically significant (such as tracking age, the variation in compulsory education end age, or university access), the remaining effects have meaningful magnitudes.

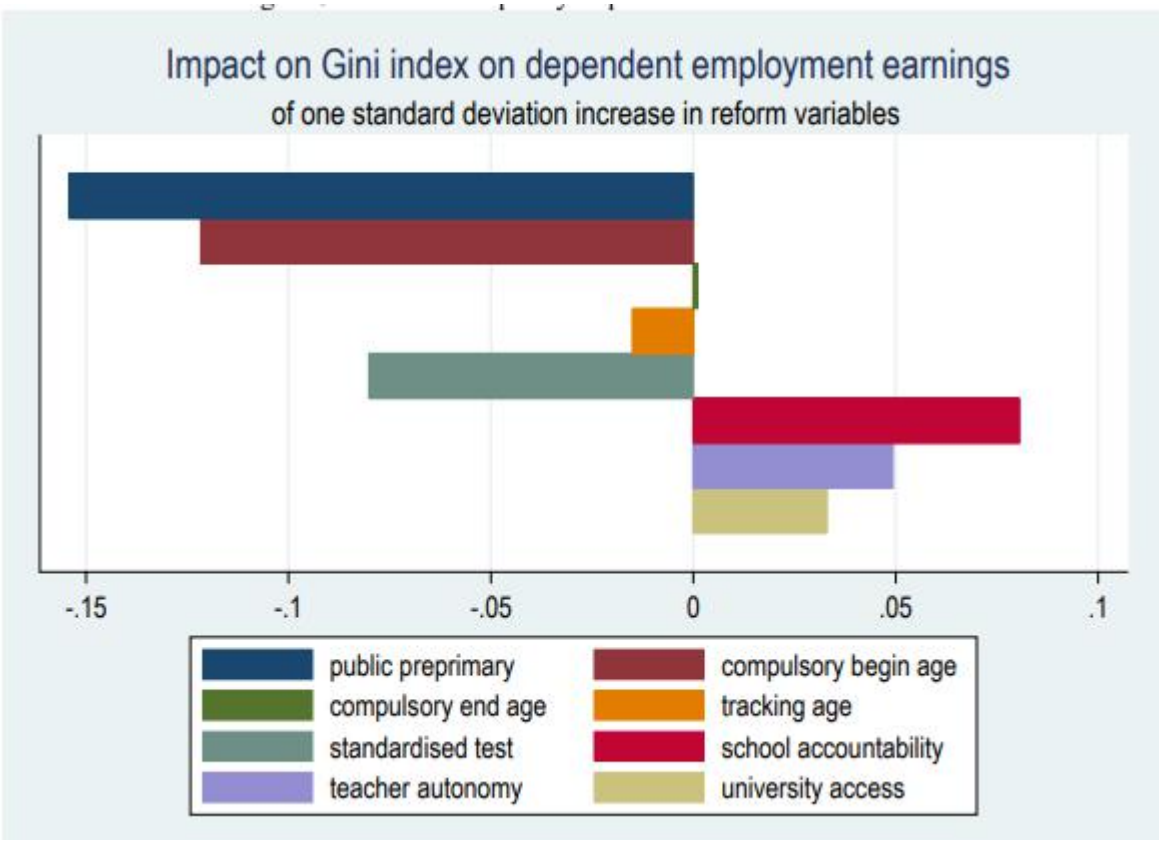

Fig.2 – Income inequality impact of educational reforms

Our findings do not rule out the possibility that disparities in educational attainment contribute to differences in wage distribution across two variables (quality and quantity). We have also shown that educational interventions may reduce both quality inequality (as evaluated by students' test scores) and quantity inequality (as measured by years spent in school).

Information Provision and Public Policy Preferences

Next, we look at whether or not the public's heightened concern about educational disparity is correlated with a greater desire for measures that expand access to excellent education for all students. Before presenting our experimental estimates, we first conduct an investigation into the link between worries and policy preferences.

Different equity-oriented education initiatives have public support, which is consistent with the high degree of concern about educational disparity in the control group. The control group averages shown in Table 2 show that just two of the eight policies studied (bonuses for teachers in disadvantaged schools and whole-day education) do not enjoy majority support. Previous research have shown that policies aiming at equality of opportunity are rather popular, especially when contrasted to policies aiming at equality of results, and this level of support for education programs is consistent with that finding.

There is a tight relationship between worries about educational disparity and a support for programs that aim to reduce it. Preferences for policy are regressed on the baseline set of worries in Table 2. Columns 2–9 include dummy variables with values of 1 if the responder (strongly) likes the policy in question and 0 otherwise. The index for this strategy, seen in the first column, is the average of these output measures. If respondents see educational disparity as a (very) severe issue, they are more likely to support any policy that addresses it (column 1). Seven out of the eight different insurance plans show statistical significance between these two variables. Although the German public is generally opposed to raising teachers' salaries, respondents concerned with inequality may be more skeptical towards bonus policies, with the exception of the proposal to provide bonuses for teachers who teach in schools with many disadvantaged students (column 6).

Table 2: Correlations between concerns about educational inequality and policy preferences

Support for education policies:	Preschool			School					University
	Policy index	Free pre-school for low-income children	Com-pulsory preschool	Spending for disad-vantaged schools	Later tracking	Bonuses for teachers at disadvan-taged schools	Whole-day schooling for all students	Coeducation of children with/ out learning disability	Need-based scholarships
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Concerned about educational inequality	0.122*** *(0.021)*	0.141*** *(0.033)*	0.133*** *(0.036)*	0.176*** *(0.032)*	0.163*** *(0.035)*	0.032 *(0.036)*	0.099*** *(0.036)*	0.095*** *(0.037)*	0.137*** *(0.031)*
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Control mean	0.630	0.761	0.643	0.773	0.666	0.427	0.482	0.500	0.800
Observations	1,106	1,106	1,106	1,104	1,102	1,103	1,102	1,103	1,102
R^2	0.049	0.027	0.019	0.043	0.029	0.001	0.010	0.009	0.028

Experimental Results

Although there is a robust correlation between worries and policy preferences and big effects of the information treatment on worries, we do not find substantial effects of the information treatment on policy preferences. Using equation (1), Table 3 displays regressions of support for various educational strategies on treatment indicators. Support for equity-oriented education policy improves by a marginally significant 2.4 percentage points (from a baseline support of 63.0 percent, column 1) when more information regarding the level of educational inequality is provided. Support for the plan to institute obligatory preschool rises by 4.2 percentage points (from a baseline of 64.3 percent, column 3), making it the only policy of the eight with a (marginally significant) treatment effect. All other policy estimates are likewise favorable, albeit none are large enough to be statistically significant.

Table 3: Effects of information treatment on education policy preferences: Share supporting respective policy

Support for education policies:	Preschool			School					University
	Policy index	Free pre-school for low-income children	Com-pulsory preschool	Spending for disad-vantaged schools	Later tracking	Bonuses for teachers at disadvan-taged schools	Whole-day schooling for all students	Coeducation of children with/ out learning disability	Need-based scholarships
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Information	0.024* *(0.013)*	0.013 *(0.021)*	0.042* *(0.023)*	0.032 *(0.020)*	0.029 *(0.023)*	0.019 *(0.024)*	0.025 *(0.024)*	0.007 *(0.025)*	0.017 *(0.020)*
Information+Connect	-0.016 *(0.013)*	-0.019 *(0.022)*	0.003 *(0.023)*	-0.024 *(0.021)*	-0.006 *(0.023)*	-0.013 *(0.024)*	-0.017 *(0.025)*	-0.013 *(0.025)*	-0.041** *(0.021)*
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control mean	0.630	0.761	0.643	0.773	0.666	0.427	0.482	0.500	0.800
Observations	3,269	3,264	3,266	3,260	3,251	3,259	3,257	3,254	3,257
R^2	0.115	0.057	0.051	0.066	0.049	0.079	0.089	0.050	0.076

Explaining the effect of educational systems on inequalities: the macro-meso-micro-model

For the reasons stated above, it is necessary to view education systems and educational disparities, as well as status achievement and life chance inequalities, from a multi-level perspective that accounts for the interconnections between these several levels. Coleman's structural-individualist explanatory schema, which builds on earlier models by McClelland, suggests such an approach. The core premise of this concept is that social phenomena affect individual circumstances and behavior, and that behavior at the individual level affects society in ways that are both planned and unexpected. Institutions at the meso-level provide communication between the larger societal level and the more intimate level of the person.

In light of these considerations, we constructed the macro-meso-micro model of education systems and inequalities (see Figure 3), in which we locate macro-level features and disparities in the whole education system. The features of schools and the manner in which educational institutions create laws and regulations fall under the meso-level. The educational system (and related educational policies) impacts people's lives at the micro and meso levels. Individuals' cost-benefit analyses and their judgments about which schools to attend are influenced by the institutional frameworks that define the resources that make education acquisition possible. Higher-level variables also determine how an individual's degree of education impacts their socio-structural positioning (e.g., their prospects of work, income, marriage, and social class status) or cultural aspects (e.g., their worldview, societal values, lifestyle, and so on). The logics of aggregation state that the cumulative effects of human actions and choices have an impact on societal structure (in the form of shifting employment patterns) and culture (in the form of shifting value systems). The presence of social inequality is a crucial effect at the macro level related to our study question.

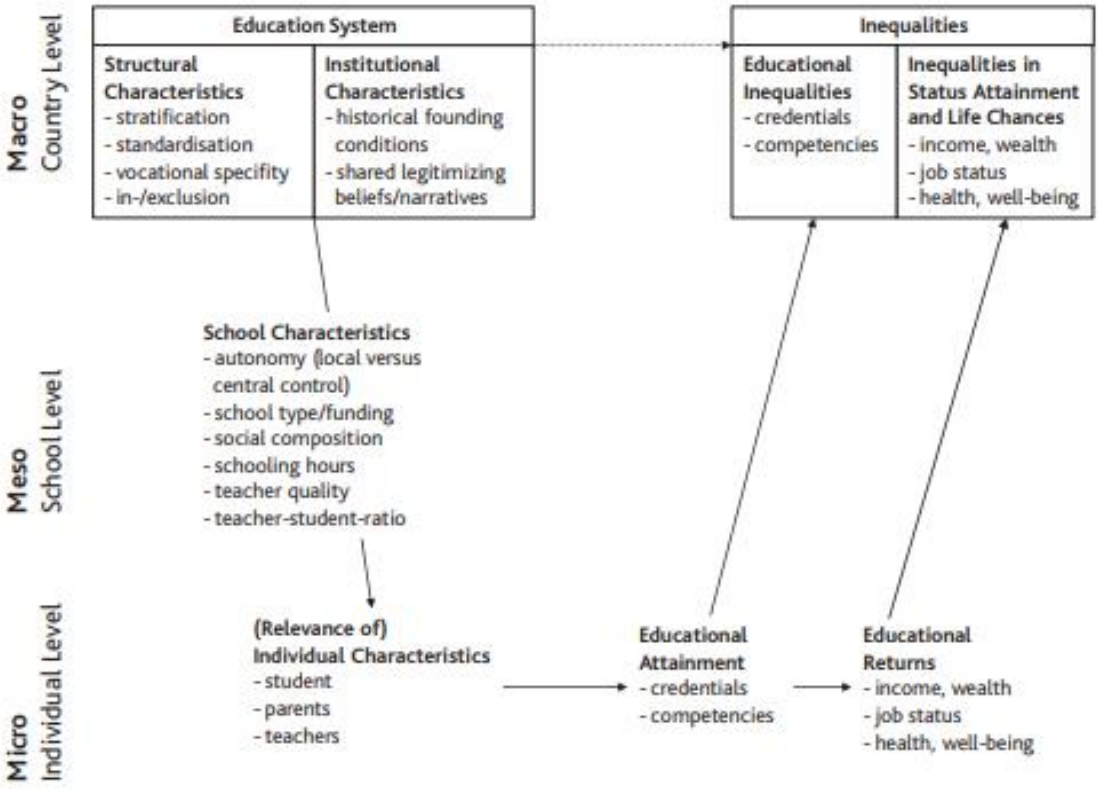

Fig.3: Education system and inequalities: macro-meso-micro-model

III. CONCLUSION

We looked at how different policies, distributions of education, and economic inequality are all connected. We tested whether educational reforms affect education and, by extension, the distribution of incomes in society by adopting a framework in which educational distributions have both a qualitative and quantitative dimension, with quality referring to student performance on standardized tests and quantity referring to the level of education attained. Our findings showed that educational changes actually influence how much and how well people are educated. There is a correlation between the degree of income/earnings inequality and the distribution of skills and achievement. Thus, educational policies affect the salaries and incomes of the population. This research lends credence to the theory that educational policy might be a useful tool in the fight against inequalities in pay and wealth. One possible reason is that educational programs' potential to improve equality won't be realized until a very long time from now. This is in contrast to other redistributive measures like tax changes, which are intended to have more immediate and short-term benefits on social inequality. Understanding the viability of education policy change may need further study into the political economics of reforms whose benefits accumulate over extremely lengthy periods of time.

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