6th International Conference on Research in
TEACHING and EDUCATION

RTECONF
16 - 18 December, 2022
Oxford, The United Kingdom

School Autonomy for Equity: The Italian Case

Valerio Ferrero

University of Turin

Abstract

School's contribution for the democratic project is considered essential by the Constitution of the Italian Republic. An excellent education for all that guarantees the acquisition of the skills for the exercise of citizenship is an indispensable condition for achieving an ever-higher degree of social justice. Therefore, the entire school system must act under the banner of equity, but old and new inequalities impact students' schooling. Social reproduction is still active: children tend to replicate their parents' educational and life trajectories (socioeconomic and sociocultural status are considered classic causes of inequality). Today, then, non-traditional factors of inequality emerge. They are produced by the school itself due to organizational and operational choices; ethnography of education often highlights the equity-distorting effects of school culture. Non-traditional factors act under the radar, insidiously, very differently from one context to another: it is crucial to understand how to circumvent them. In the Italian context, school autonomy absolutely represents a resource in terms of equity: each institution can make autonomous choices in the organizational, financial, managerial and educational spheres, drawing up educational policies based on the needs of the target school population. A conscious and creative use of this regulatory tool can lead to appreciable reductions in inequalities and an increase in the degree of equity; conversely, a prudential use unsupported by pedagogical intentionality risks aggravating the situation of inequity. The intervention will analyze good practices in the use of school autonomy, demonstrating how worthwhile it is in mitigating the most prevalent nontraditional factors of inequality.

Keywords: democratic schooling, education, local educational policies, non-traditional factors of inequality, social justice