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# education and/for social justice

3-6 June 2024, Cagliari (Italy)

Education is a battleground of power, identity, and inequality. This volume unravels the tensions between exclusion and inclusion, privilege and marginalization, tracing how policies, epistemologies, and ideologies shape who belongs—and who is left behind.

# PROCEEDINGS

01

Inequality, Inclusion, and Governance

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Vol. 1  
**Inequality,  
Inclusion,  
and Governance**

Organizers and partners

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## **Stream G**

# **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD**

# BEING WELL AT SCHOOL: EQUITY BETWEEN WELL-BEING AND STUDENT-CENTRED PEDAGOGY

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## INTRODUCTION

The need to pursue equity in education in order to achieve an ever-higher degree of social justice is internationally shared (OECD, 2012; UN, 2015; UNICEF, 2021), but the different definitions that can be given to these terms lead to various interpretations and different educational projects. We intend to focus on equity visions that value children's school well-being (Fullan & Gallagher, 2020) and promote student-centred pedagogies (Berg & Gleason, 2018).

The topic is becoming increasingly central (OECD, 2023): we must pay attention not only to students' academic performance, but also to their unique ways of approaching learning (Spratt, 2017). In this sense, promoting pedagogical methods and organisational strategies that create a positive school climate is crucial. Therefore, education is an essential disciplinary lens to abandon an adult-centred logic and cultivate approaches based on student needs.

## 1. EQUITY AND WELL-BEING: AN ESSENTIAL LINK

Shaping a school that recognises and values students' strengths means ensuring that each person develops their potential through appropriate educational opportunities that aim not only at achieving certain academic standards, but especially supporting personal growth (Clement, 2010). Establishing a positive school climate is an indispensable aspect of making this vision of equity a reality, both at the level of teachers' professional action in the classroom (Ahghar, 2016; Cohen et al., 2009) and at the level of educational policies formulated by individual schools, also with reference to different models of leadership and governance (Allen et al., 2015; Pepper & Hamilton Thomas, 2002).

In this context, equity represents the horizon of meaning for pedagogical action and school organisation (Ferrero, 2023): it is about considering the different

variables that can affect learning pathways, not having an “average student” in mind, but being open to diverse stories and voices (Granata, 2016). Ultimately, acting from an equity perspective means focusing on school well-being, by nurturing the educational relationship, adopting approaches and methods that promote motivation and joy for learning and implementing organisational strategies based on students’ needs, with school leaders playing a pivotal role (Smith et al., 2020).

## **2. STUDENT-CENTRED PEDAGOGY: A KEY ROLE FOR EQUITY**

Adopting a student-centred pedagogy proves crucial to guarantee students’ excellent school paths in terms of well-being (Bremner et al., 2022), with significant repercussions on learning (Armbruster et al., 2009). It is a matter of considering children’s interests, their cognitive styles and their rhythms from a personalized perspective (Mincu, 2013), not giving in to the temptation of a one-size-fits-all but recognising and valuing everyone’s skills and talents.

Cultivating equity understood as the promotion of children’s school well-being through the student-centred pedagogy approach can be done on several fronts (Anderson et al., 2022). The actions concern aspects related to both pedagogical practice and organisational culture (e.g., school time and space, assessment, inclusive processes that do not create segregation dynamics or lead to compensatory pedagogy, overcoming gender stereotypes, valuing different styles of intelligence and linguistic diversity).

## **CONCLUSION**

We intertwined the constructs of equity, well-being and student-centred pedagogy through the disciplinary lens of education from a theoretical perspective. Our exploration is not self-contained, but is intended to stimulate interdisciplinary reflection. In fact, it introduces the papers presented at the Third International Conference of the journal *Scuola Democratica* “Education and/or Social Justice” (4-6 June 2024, University of Cagliari, Italy) in the panel with the same title as our paper.

Ultimately, the attempt is to answer these questions, which are not meant to be exhaustive:

- how can the construct of equity be conceptualised with reference to school well-being and student-centred pedagogy?
- what dynamics make the possibilities of school well-being unequal?

- what role do school times and spaces play in enhancing the uniqueness of each student and promoting their well-being?
- which assessment practices cultivate students' well-being in terms of reducing anxiety and supporting learning processes?
- how to plan inclusion without creating dynamics of segregation or exclusion?
- how to value diversity in all its forms (linguistic, cultural, learning styles...), without giving in to the risk of a culturalist or differential pedagogy?

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