GSAPS THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Disparities within Policy on Equity and Inclusion across Educational Concepts and Social Groups at both International and National Contexts:

A Trade-off between Needs and Realities in Cambodia

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Background

Since the launch of the movement of Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien (Thailand), in 1990 and the adoption of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, many governments have been actively committed to achieving the six EFA goals. In tandem with this initiative, the promotion of inclusive education has been incorporated into the international agenda and issues of equity and inclusion (diversity) in education have been discussed in numerous policy documents and conferences. Furthermore, recent and ongoing international discussions on the post-2015 agenda address issues of educational equity and inclusion (diversity) from the perspectives of both access and quality. These discussions now encompass the last five to ten percent of the population, who are particularly those that experience marginalization due to their gender, ethnicity, disability, poverty and rural/urban location.

Research Purpose

This research study has aimed to make an empirical contribution highlighting existing policy disparities at the international and national (local) levels, taking the case study of educational equity concepts in Cambodia. To be more specific, it investigates whether educational equity is found on aspects of embracing inclusion (diversity) and promoting inclusive education in classroom settings for all major social groups. Furthermore, the purpose is to see whether there are disparities along factors of major social groups in relation to the educational equity concepts in the education system which have been benchmarked by the newly developed equity indicators within the framework of the pilot-SABER rubric. And very importantly, this research study has aimed to explore whether there are disparities existent within the different educational equity concepts themselves and to investigate the reasons or the questions on how? and why? those disparities arise through the eyes of the local context in Cambodia.

Research Methodology

It consists of a unique standardized policy benchmarking tool named as the pilot-SABER rubric and questionnaire/survey to assess a total of 150 policy documents at the international level. The targeted policy documents include three types; the 2000 EFA Assessment Reports, EFA National Plans of Action and the 2008 World Education Reports on the Development of Education.

Furthermore, this research study also examines the level of policy commitment of the government of Cambodia in achieving educational equity and inclusion (diversity) for marginalized social groups of children. It focuses again on five areas of systemic and/or cultural variables. It then again makes an analysis of Cambodia’s policy frameworks from four educational equity concepts including equity of access, equity of resource inputs and equity of learning outcomes for educational quality and inclusion (diversity) and inclusive education. Policy documents totaling 130 sources have been used to conduct qualitative desk review analysis through the usage of the pilot-SABER questionnaire/survey.

Research Findings

In brief, according to this quantitative and qualitative comparative policy study, issues on educational equity and inclusion (diversity) of five identified disadvantaged groups of children are not fully addressed and also practiced as it should be in principle. In other words, educational equity and inclusion (diversity) as stated in the Salamanca Statement of 1994 are not necessarily addressed in worldwide policies. In addition, it investigates the reasons on how? and why? such disparities across educational equity concepts and major social groups are existent, by analyzing which kinds of external factors such as the economic and educational status have an impact on the development of policy at the international level.

In terms of the national (local) context in Cambodia, as stated in the first part of worldwide policy analysis, Cambodia has developed numerous significant policies in terms of inclusive education for vulnerable children, particularly for children with disabilities and ethnic minorities. However, targeted groups of disadvantaged children are very limited due to main reasons associated with “budget” and “sensitivity” on the part of government policy makers involved with policy development for educational equity and inclusion (diversity). Such reasons illustrate the trade-off occurring between the needs and realities of inclusive education in Cambodia, where policies do not necessarily highlight the needs of educational equity and inclusion.

References