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Narrowing the Attainment Gap through Parental Engagement

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 6 May 2020

Revised: 13 May 2020

Accepted: 24 July 2020

Published Online: 31 July 2020

Keywords:

Attainment gap

Parental engagement

Equity

Policy

Social commitment

ABSTRACT

Based on the selected policy of Scotland Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education (2016a) with its context in related concepts and literature support. This essay will focus on the engagement of parents as a part of narrowing the attainment gap with socio- economic and political factors and what is provided by schools to promote social commitment and achieving equity during the Scottish education process. Critically analysis and reflection of the policy implementation and the way to look forward. As for the main part, the author explains what attainment and attainment gap is, the aim of the policy and discusses the reasonable of the policy through offered evidence. Following the interpretation of “policy as discourse” approach, and whereby how will the Scottish Government and Education Scotland support children and families to closing the attainment gap in this policy. The theory of the forms of social justice will be addressed in this policy. For example, equity, redistribution, recognition, capabilities. After that, the challenges and struggles of the policy implementation will be indicated. Connecting with the practitioner's current situation and concentrates on the relevant skills that will be improved, applied as a practitioner for professional development and the way to cooperate with children’s parents in the context of early years setting. That is why this policy was chosen by the author. Finally, a conclusion with the critical points of the significance of parental involvement during the process of closing the attainment gap will be offered.

1. Introduction

Based on the selected policy of Scotland Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education (2016a) with its context in related concepts and literature support. This essay will focus on the engagement of parents as a part of narrowing the attainment gap with socio- economic and political factors and what is provided by schools to promote social commitment and achieving equity during the Scottish education process. Critically analysis and reflection of the

policy implementation and the way to look forward^[1-3]. As for the main part, the author explains what attainment and attainment gap is, the aim of the policy and discusses the reasonable of the policy through offered evidence. Following the interpretation of “policy as discourse” approach, and whereby how will the Scottish Government and Education Scotland support children and families to closing the attainment gap in this policy. The theory of the forms of social justice will be addressed in this policy. For example, equity, redistribution, recognition, capabilities. After that, the challenges and struggles of

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the policy implementation will be indicated. Connecting with the practitioner's current situation and concentrates on the relevant skills that will be improved, applied as a practitioner for professional development and the way to cooperate with children's parents in the context of early years setting. That is why this policy was chosen by the author^[4-7]. Finally, a conclusion with the critical points of the significance of parental involvement during the process of closing the attainment gap will be offered.

According to Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) (2016a), Scotland began to focus on expanding educational opportunities and achievements for all as early as the 18th century, despite the gender, socio-economic disadvantage and cultural difference. Individual achievement differences are concerned in Scotland, especially the socio-economic background mattered more, which includes family circumstance and family economic standard (OECD, 2007a). Therefore, here provides a context in which Scotland depends on the equity and the impact of its schools with children and families.

One of the visions of the framework ensuring every child achieves equity through closing the poverty attainment gap, the core action aims at strengthening practitioners, parents, schools communicate to deliver multi-agency working^[8-10]. Particularly the critical and equal role of parents and families of narrowing the attainment gap (The Scottish Government, 2016b). Here, linked with the policy as discourse, the Scottish government has the framework, the right to define.

Policy as discourse is created by writers to determine who has power and how constraints limit progressive change (Bacchi, 2000)^[11]. Policies exercise power by generating "truth" and "knowledge". Policy aims to control what is a fact, what can be thought, said and heard and who has the authority does it (Bianco, 2005; Levinson et al, 2009; Ball, 2015)^[12-15]. However, the policy here also included priorities by highlighting the school leader, professional teacher and parent responsibility these key drivers of the National Improvement Framework areas require progress for all learners (The Scottish Government, 2019). Meanwhile, in order to achieve diversity and take care of different communities, the emphasis needs to be placed on the curriculum that has long-term educational value and shows the potential of children (OECD, 2012). Therefore, reflecting the differential power here of what is appropriate to display, and critically, who is allowed to ask and answer all of these questions and how dominance is reproduced and transformed in this society. To improve policy justice, efforts can be made to establish context-

sensitive governments, a diversity of actors, more active citizenship, and the particularity of public affairs and all these aspects require progress for all learners (UNESCO, 2015)^[16-19].

The Scottish education system is effective for most children to make real progress in their studies (OECD, 2007a; The Scottish Government, 2016b; SPICe, 2016a). Nevertheless, many children living in poorest communities in Scotland perform much worse at all levels of the education system than children in the richest communities. According to the National Improvement Framework (2019), there is still an attainment gap between the progress made by people living in the least and most deprived parts of Scotland (The Scottish Government, 2019)^[20]. It is not simply income poverty. However, it can be a lack of access to adequate education, skills and training, health care, housing and basic services (The Scottish Government, 2015). This means that children in the situation should be given more attention. For example, the health of the nation and individual, social commitment rather than merely economic growth and employers' perceived needs. This is associated with Fraser's (1988) point of view that social interests, different class as redistribution and recognition justice both (Gale & Molla, 2015). Accordingly, Adaptive aspirations theory indicates that resources are given according to the different needs of each child; hence vulnerable children need more support. However, providing resources for children is not the most important thing. The more important is the skills that are delivered to children (Fraser, 1988; Gale & Molla, 2015)^[21]. Likewise, families with different education levels and cultural backgrounds need to be distinguished from different types of support practice.

The policy states that narrowing the achievement gap must move beyond the classroom and across the community and the wider public service from early learning to schools and to colleges, universities and other areas. Family learning as a method which is put first in the parent engagement part to support the improved academic performance in the policy, the pursuit of excellence and equity, and its impact provides lasting impact and improved results (The Scottish Government, 2016c). Family learning is an early intervention and prevention method for the most vulnerable communities. Family learning can help to block the achievement gap by breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low attainment, and can bring positive results for both children and adults (Education Scotland, 2018). However, the manipulation of the execution process needs to be

reflected. How to determine whether children's learning outcomes have improved by participating in family learning. The extent to which parents feel inclusive and effective ways for parents to participate in early years settings or schools. It is more relevant that the family learns whether the plan formulated matches the demands of the child and the family to the greatest extent compared with the target (The Scottish Government, 2016c)^[22].

Especially for disadvantaged children, such as English as Additional Language (EAL) children need more attention from practitioners and caregivers (Strickland, 2006; Pinkney, 2013). The parents of these children are multilingual who share different languages and cultural background. Early years settings should encourage children to speak English while fully affirming children's right to express their willingness in the mother tongue or home language (UNICEF, 2010). This is because the children's home language environment encourages children to use their mother tongue in a nursery. Here can further reflect a freedom-based rather than a resource-based approach, that is, the real opportunity and freedom that people need to accomplish their lives (Gale & Molla, 2015). Strengthening human agency is the opposite of human capital formation, which indicates rising the development of children's autonomy and the decision-making ability in later life, rather than solely giving children with the basic learning resources (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; Deprez & Wood 2013). Furthermore, the behaviour that children speak English spontaneously when returning home from the nursery should not be allowed or controlled (Leung, 2001; The Scottish Government, 2016b). Practitioners should respect children's free use of language while parents should actively cooperate with practitioners to improve their children's language and literacy development and release more possibilities of children (Pinkney, 2013)^[23]. This is additionally an effective action to reduce the achievement gap through the shared participation of families with early years settings or schools.

In addition, parents are concerned about their children's progress and achievement during class. Here, ParentZone as transparent online support including a series of key indicators, such as the rates of attendance, children's learning progress and school inspection performance system came into being (Education Scotland, 2018)^[24-25]. Moreover, the Scottish education community lacks a national evidence-based to understand how evidence is used and what professional development is. This will support practitioners distinguish between validated,

promising and unproven methods and choose the appropriate curriculum plan, resource allocation, and methods to monitor and evaluate that affect practice (Ellis, 2014). Additionally, effective parent participation programs focus on parents being helped to adopt suitable approaches to promote children's learning at home reasonably and making progress, rather than parents simply seeking the requirements and expectations of their children's education (Kirk, 2011; Sosu & Ellis, 2014). Although there are multiple educational policy and political concerns about social justice, a lot of programs that support parental involvement to narrow the achievement gap have been introduced, the ultimate goal is to make it functional and practical.

Practitioners and caregivers were part of the team in the early years environment. The policy here mentioned a lot of approaches to encourage parents to engage. National campaigns and gifting plans, for example, Bookbug, PlayTalkRead and Write, Count are aimed at assistant parents to support their children from the early stage. Beginning in November 2016, reading, writing, and counting procedures were donated to P2 and P3 households and expanded to P4-7, where deprivation is higher (The Scottish Government, 2016b). Teachers with multi-agency workers to secure transparent and constructive connections with children's parents. Therefore, every single role on the partners can be processed on the same page (Doherty, 2005)^[26]. In addition, it helps a lot when parents know they are not alone and have others trust that cares about children's wellbeing and success. Mutual understanding is a power, a positively reflective application, and a belief that every child is equally important (Scottish Government, 2019).

2. Conclusion

The Scottish education community is better at creating and sharing knowledge in a way that concentrates on the attainment of underprivileged children. Various interventions shared by The Scottish Government, Education Scotland, local authorities, schools and universities have narrowed the achievement gap (The Scottish Government, 2016b). Raising and sustaining a centre on equity needs targeted decisions and practices. More reliable assessments will support practitioners designing course and planning decisions to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged groups (Sosu, 2014).

A summary of research (Driessen & Smit, 2005; Kirk, 2011; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Pinkney, 2013; Sosu & Ellis, 2014) stressed the significance of parental

engagement in closing attainment gap working. Parental engagement is achieved through parental involvement of children at home, at school, moreover in the wider community. Parents using what they have done to support children learning and offer a supportive home learning environment (Education Scotland, 2018). Family background, religion, ethnic origin, class, and gender should not be barriers to children's educational attainments, but sometimes these factors do hinder the attainments of children. In particular, children from nondominant families, such as those from immigrant families, whose parents have different cultural backgrounds often suffer from adverse educational impacts (Hyland, 2010). Communication and discussions between practitioners and parents support the parental association while the evidence is further needed to prove the way works most effective in Scotland (Ellis, 2014).

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