

Equity Vs Equality: Facilitating Equity in the Classroom

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to differentiate between Equity and Equality with clear examples of the classroom setting.

Key Terms: Equity, Equality, Classroom

I. INTRODUCTION

Equity and Equality are two different concepts when it comes to their interpretation in education setting specifically in the Inclusive Education. This paper will take you through the difference between equity and equality with clear examples for an easy understanding of the two concepts in educational setting.



II. CONCEPT OF EQUALITY

Scenario 1: Let us explain *equality* using an example. If you are the teacher of a class and have been given the task of distributing chocolates to all the kids equally, what you will do is to divide the total number of chocolates you have by the total number of students in your class and arrive at the number to be given to each child. This is what is denoted by the concept of *equality*.

Scenario 2: Supposed that you come in the classroom as a teacher and you distribute equally pencils and erasers to all students in classrooms. Pencils are distributed equally to all students in the classroom without distinction. Every student with the same number of pencils and erasers. This is equal distribution or *Equality*.

Definition of Equality: *Equality* can be defined as treating every individual in the same manner irrespective of needs and requirements (Nedha, 2011).

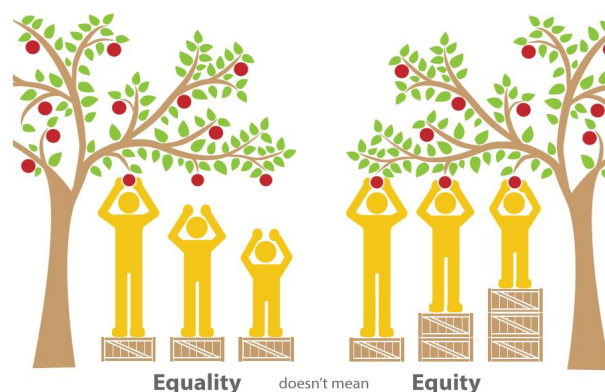
III. CONCEPT OF EQUITY

Scenario:

- Ask two students one by one what they can choose between pencils and erasers
- Give students what they have selected or chosen;
- Explain to students that you have given students what they requested and needed: This is *equity*;

Definition of Equity: *Equity* can be defined as the quality of treating individuals fairly based on their needs and requirements (Nedha, 2011). This does not denote that an equal material should be distributed to every individual. On the contrary, it highlights that things should be distributed based on the needs and requirements.

Equity vs Equality Images



Created by Kuttner (2015)

This equity image displays the clear difference between *equality* and *equity* (Kuttner, 2015). This simply means that the two terms are intimate. We cannot explain equity without mentioning equality. The difference significantly contributes to the meaning of the two key terms. The image is purposely selected for successful explanation of the equity. *The image has four important components:* the trees, the fruits, the persons, and the supportive materials. This illustrates the classrooms. In my view, the tree can stand for textbooks and other reading materials, the fruits can stand for the content and the objectives of the lessons. The persons' images with different heights can symbolize the students with special needs and students without special needs in my classrooms.

The supportive materials with different heights can indicate various supports to students with different heights.

IV. MEANING OF EQUITY IMAGE

According to the *equity image*, students have *different heights*. However, all needs to reach the fruits in the trees regardless their height. Despite different heights, the supportive materials were provided. *The provision of the supportive materials was given to each according to his height that is equity*. The shortest has been given the longest supportive materials, whereas the tallest has been given the shortest supportive material to reach the fruits. Each has been given the required and appropriate support to reach the fruits considering their heights.



Created by Kuttner (2015)

To contextualize, the classrooms is learning environment where students and teachers meet with different needs and requirements, from different socio-economic, cultural, ethnics, and racial backgrounds. All the members of the classroom have the same goals with different needs and requirements to reach the goals. Teachers are encouraged to ensure that the needs and requirements of each student are taken into consideration to ascertain the success of all students. This can be attained through equity in classrooms. Blankstein and Noguera (2015) claim that excellence can be pursued through equity. They added that “equity is not about treating all children the same but about addressing the needs of every child and discovering his or her talents” (p. 19). With equity in mind, students’ needs and requirements should be taken care of in all the learning activities especially children from poor families.

Additionally, *equity* can be defined as the quality of treating individuals fairly based on their needs and requirements (Nedha, 2011). This does not denote that an equal material should be distributed to everyone. On the contrary, it highlights that things should be distributed based on the needs and requirements.

For instance, the teacher asks two students one by one what they can choose between pencils and erasers. One chooses the pencil, another one chooses the eraser. The teacher gives students what they have selected. Thus, the students have

been given what they requested and needed. Erasers and pencils were distributed per the needs and requirements of students. This is equity

V. MEANING OF EQUALITY IMAGE

On the other hand, the *equality image* shows that students have different heights. However, all needs to reach the fruits in the trees regardless their height. Despite different heights, the same sized supportive materials were provided. The same sized provision of the supportive materials was given to each without considering their height. The shortest has been given the same supportive materials as the tallest to reach the fruits. Each has been given the same support to reach the fruits without considering their heights. The observation is that only the tallest among the three students managed to get the fruits in the tree. This shows that the support given has not taken into consideration of their height. Therefore, the two failed to get the fruits on the tree due to the inappropriate size of support according to their height.



To contextualize, the classrooms is learning environment where students and teachers meet with different needs and requirements, from different socio-economic, cultural, ethnics, and racial backgrounds. Students with and without special needs and requirements needs different support. All the members of the classroom have the same goals with different needs and requirements to reach the goals. If teachers give the same support to all students in classrooms, the part of the class might be ignored and left behind (No one size fit all).

This means that *Equality* can be defined as treating each individual in the same manner irrespective of needs and requirements (Nedha, 2011). This is to say that whatever the necessity of the individual is, it is ignored to promote the ideals of fairness and equal treatment.

For instance, the teacher can distribute pencils and erasers to all students in classrooms. Pencils are distributed equally to

all students in the classroom without distinction. This is equal distribution.

Let us also illustrate by an example. If you are the teacher of a class and have been given the task of distributing chocolates to all the kids equally, what you will do is to divide the total number of chocolates you have by the total number of students in your class and arrive at the number to be given to each child. This is what is denoted by the concept of equality.

VI. DISCUSSION

6.1. Why Equity in classrooms?

Equity in classroom is among the significant factors that improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. Wood, et. al (2011) stated that “equity is an intrinsic part of quality in education and a key factor in achieving it. Equal opportunities and access for all children to quality teachers, schools, and teaching materials and facilities enhances the overall learning outcomes for children, and their well-being, social development, and reinforces the quality of the education experience” (p.6).

Students differ in terms of their socio-cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, and their life experiences, which may have differential influences on their educational outcomes. However, the principles of equity suggest that any differences in educational outcomes should not be dependent on factors such as student background, or quality of educational input, over which students have no control (Perry cited in Wood, et. al, 2011). This shows that all students should be given the equal opportunities in learning through equity regardless their gender, income and socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigeneity, culture, religion, language, geographical location, conflict and war, malnutrition, physical health and ability, mental or psychological health and ability, sexualities, and education level of parents.

It is very important to develop equity in my classrooms to enable students have the same opportunities in learning and make the classroom environment conducive for learning regardless students’ various backgrounds. *Equity in classrooms is very important* for several reasons: Learning success increases when learners have access to required supports, reducing social, ethnic, sex, age, religious, gender, and disability discrimination. It promotes social cohesion and trust classroom environment. Equity helps teachers to fight against social, linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, family, and instructional inequity.

Factors Leading to Inequity

As a teacher, I should fight against the factors that cause the inequitable opportunities and outcomes in my classrooms. There are many factors that influence inequitable opportunities and outcomes in education around the world, including gender, income and socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigeneity, culture, religion, language, geographical location, conflict and war, malnutrition, physical

health and ability, mental or psychological health and ability, sexualities, education level of parents (Atweh& Brady, 2009).

Equity Initiatives and Strategies

Equity in my classrooms affects my teaching in various ways. The carefully selection of content that I teach is very significant when deciding what to teach to avoid unnecessarily hurting my students. I avoid as much as possible to use the content that reflect the racism, segregation, and discrimination based on sex, and social classes in my classrooms. The examples that I use in class are not discriminatory in nature. I avoid favoritism and to be biased when making students copies. I try as much as possible to avoid discrimination in my teaching materials.

Equity Initiatives Unit (2010) recommended that teachers should avoid discrimination when implementing the content and strategies in the classrooms. Teachers should display and use materials that reflect all students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds year-round, displays supplementary books that reflect students’ racial and cultural backgrounds. They should display products and props from student’s home and community background. Teachers should avoid to remain in the same area or part of the room. Teachers are encouraged to use multiethnic photos, pictures, and props to illustrate concepts and content, use appropriate technology to illustrate concepts and content, and not allowing students to always self-select partners or small group members, use random grouping methods to form small groups, provides written feedback that allows students to revise and improve their work. Teachers should ensure that all students equally receive individual support and are given the same opportunity.

As a language teacher, I use short stories, group discussion and poems to demonstrate the negative consequences of discrimination in the classrooms. I try as much as possible to be the role model of my students in terms of peace, unity, and fairness. I always encourage students to avoid any forms of discrimination and prejudices based on gender, income and socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigeneity, culture, religion, language, geographical location, conflict and war, malnutrition, physical health and ability, mental or psychological health and ability, sexualities, education level of parents in my classrooms.

VII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, as a teacher, we need to ensure that the needs and requirements of each student are taken into consideration to ascertain the success of all students in my classrooms through student interest survey and observation techniques. This can be attained through equity in classrooms. Lesson plans and objectives mainly take into consideration of students’ needs and requirements. The various teaching strategies will involve much participation, interaction of students and cooperative learning in groups due to the different learning styles among students. Then, several activities are organized focusing on speaking skills that is

much needed by my students in English language learning as a second language to them. I increase time and attention of personalized support to students with special needs. The continuous students' needs assessment is done to insure the success of implementation of the changes to cater across all the students' needs in my classrooms to support the notion of excellence through equity.

In a nutshell, equity in classrooms is a significant factor that contributes to the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in the classrooms. It allows teachers to create the conducive and supportive learning environment for students regardless their gender, income and socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigeneity, culture, religion, language, geographical location, conflict and war, malnutrition, physical health and ability, mental or psychological health and ability, sexualities, education level of parents.

VIII. YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Differentiate the following situations and discuss whether they are situations of equality or equity.

- In the cafeteria, each student picks up a tray of the exact same lunch.
- At home your mom gives your older brother 3 pieces of pizza and gives you 2 pieces of pizza.
- Your teacher gives pencils to the students who need them.
- Your teacher gives the same homework to every student.
- Your teachers ask you to do some extra work to help you in math.
- Your teacher gives you extra help in reading during lunch.
- Your teacher gives same rules to the students,
- Your teacher gives special rules to girls,
- Your teacher gives special attention to students with disabilities,

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