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EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN IRAN BASED ON THE VIEWPOINTS OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS AND QUALIFIED HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify the causes and effective factors which play a role in creating and strengthening educational inequality in Iran's educational system. This research has been done according to a qualitative paradigm using the grounded theory method. The data was collected using the in-depth interview method from 20 individuals in a focus group. The participants were selected by means of the purposive sampling method according to the principle of maximum variation sampling and considering the saturation point. The interpretive-abstract approach was used for data analysis. The results of the qualitative analysis showed that, on the one hand, educational inequality in the Iranian education system is influenced by the social and economic inequalities existing in society, and on the other hand, that the country's education system and the structure governing it have been a factor in strengthening and expanding inequality. According to the findings of the research, it can be said with confidence that in the current structure of education, the main framework of the country's educational system, including the principles, goals, content, method, educators, and learners, each in a specific way play a specific role in educational inequality and injustice in society.

Keywords: educational inequalities; Iran's educational system; educators and specialists of education

UNGLEICHHEITEN IM BILDUNGSBEREICH IM IRAN AUS DER SICHT VON BILDUNGSEXPERTEN UND QUALIFIZIERTEN MITTEL- UND OBERSCHULLEHRERN

Zusammenfassung

Ziel dieser Untersuchung ist, Ursachen und Faktoren zu ermitteln, die in der Entstehung und Verstärkung von Bildungsungleichheit im iranischen Bildungssystem wirksam sind. Diese Forschung wurde gemäß einem qualitativen Paradigma unter Verwendung der Methode der "Grounded Theory" durchgeführt. Die Daten wurden von einer Fokusgruppe, bestehend aus 20 Teilnehmern, mithilfe der Methode des Tiefeninterviews erhoben. Die Teilnehmer wurden nach dem Prinzip der maximalen Streuung und unter Berücksichtigung des Sättigungspunkts durch eine gezielte Auswahl ausgewählt. Für die Datenanalyse wurde der interpretativ-absorptive Ansatz verwendet. Die Ergebnisse der qualitativen Analyse zeigten, dass einerseits die Bildungsungleichheit im iranischen Bildungssystem von den sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Ungleichheiten in der Gesellschaft beeinflusst wird, und andererseits das Bildungssystem des Landes und die Struktur, die es regiert, Faktoren für die Verstärkung und Ausweitung der Ungleichheiten sind. Nach den Forschungsergebnissen kann mit Sicherheit gesagt werden, dass in der gegenwärtigen Struktur des Bildungswesens der Hauptrahmen des Bildungssystems des Landes, einschließlich der Prinzipien, Ziele, Inhalte, Methoden, Erzieher, und Lernenden, jeweils auf eine bestimmte Art und Weise eine spezifische Rolle bei der Bildungsungleichheit und Ungerechtigkeit in der Gesellschaft spielen.

Schlüsselwörter: Bildungsungleichheit; Irans Bildungssystem; Pädagogen und Fachleute für Bildung

Introduction

Educational inequality is the disparity of opportunity and of success that certain students experience in their education compared to other students. Educational assessment mainly focuses on grades, test scores, drop-out rates, college entrance figures, and college completion rates (Williams, 2003), but this approach may be missing the point. Some studies associate inequality with socio-economic, ethnic, racial, and geographic factors. These types of disparity have a long history in human life and culture and represent an important issue in the modern world that cannot be easily ignored. Educational inequality has become one of the most important political and social issues

in both industrial and developing countries. There have been a numerous attempts at reform since the 18th and 19th century, many of which are still in progress (Haycock 2001), but none can be said to have resolved the issue. It is difficult to eradicate inequality for various reasons rooted in history, society, and culture. In fact, the idea that inequality is a permanent aspect of the human condition entailing the inevitable perpetuation of unequal and inequitable conditions of human existence is rooted in humans' ignorance of the common nature they share with other human beings. As a result of this ignorance, inequality continues to affect all aspects of human life. One of the most important dimensions of inequality in the world is educational inequality. Studying the main roots and components of inequality in any educational system can be a very important step toward reducing it.

Education by definition needs to take into account individual talents and abilities, and its main target is to provide the necessary conditions for the growth and prosperity of each individual's talents, which are different in everyone. Education, as the most important aspect of preserving and cultivating community and the cultural fabric of a society, has a responsibility to provide equitable conditions for the growth and development of individual members of society and should be equally well-suited for all individuals regardless of their differences. Equality as a concept pays special attention to the dimension of humanity, and regardless of how individual differences are viewed, implementation of equality of opportunities as a standard of education is the only approach which takes appropriate consideration of the inherent dignity, pride, and humanity granted to all human beings.

When we look at the equality of opportunities in a macro and micro dimension, from a macro perspective, the standard of equality brings a humanistic and equitable standpoint to our efforts to improve the situation in society. From a micro perspective, it brings educational justice (equity) to our approach to improving the life of the individual as a mechanism that enables the flourishing of creative ideas and provides equal possibilities of developing abilities for everyone by continually adapting to take account of individual differences.

But how is the demand for equity, that is, equality of opportunity to be reconciled not only with entrenched differences in socio-economic circumstances, prejudices with regard to ethnic or racial heritage, physical ability/disability, or previous educational advantage or disadvantage, but also with positive diversity of talent, interests, inclinations, and native ability? The belief that schools and education should provide equal opportunities as a

basis for promoting individual advancement and greater equity in society has long been the focus of public opinion. At the same time, it was thought that formal education plays an essential role in creating a meritorious society in which inheritance and privilege play a minor role, and talent and effort play the major roles. For a long time, formal education was seen as a tool to reduce high-class children's privileges and to increase the chances for poor children to find equal positions in society. In other words, it was assumed that formal education could help create a talent-based community.

More than anything else, creating a popular-based community requires awareness of the injustices and inequalities in society. This awareness is shaped only under the aegis of a form of education which is popular-based, and acts based on the principles of popular education. Studying and understanding educational inequalities in society's educational system is thus critical in order that the rooting out of educational inequalities can be effective in promoting the main goals and objectives of education to engagement for social justice. Researchers believe that the current educational system in our country, by substituting non-active and non-dynamic education in which people are deprived of equality and justice for a system based on equal opportunities, has deprived the children's spirit of freedom and creative and logical thinking.

In the present system, children are deprived of the morale of freedom and creative thinking, which leads to mechanical and authoritative education. Consequently, advancement of individuals does not take place based on their achievements as measured by their unique abilities, and children do not enjoy equally the opportunities, facilities, equipment, and fair treatment according to universally applied educational principles.

In recent decades, Iran has been constantly confronted with the problem of educational inequality. This presents a major obstacle to the country's progress and development. Despite being a resource-rich nation with a vibrant economy, educational inequality continues to plague the country, especially in relation to access to and quality of education.

One of the major factors contributing to educational inequality in Iran is poverty. Income is one of the main reasons why many children in Iran are denied access to education. Low-income families cannot afford to send their children to school or provide them with necessary learning resources such as books, uniforms, and other materials. Furthermore, the high cost of transportation and distance to schools often limit children's access to education in rural areas. This problem is not confined to countries like Iran,

but also effects wealthier countries in the West. Regarding the influence of income inequality on educational equality in the US, Garcia and Weiss (2017) commented:

One of today's most pressing economic issues is the worrisome level of income inequality. Since 1979, the total share of income claimed by the bottom 90 percent of Americans has steadily decreased (Bivens 2016). In 1979, that 90 percent received about 67 percent of cash, market-based income (i.e., pretax income). By 2015, their share had decreased to about 52 percent of pretax income. The majority of income gains during this period went to the top 1 percent (EPI 2013; Mishel and Schieder 2016; Saez 2016). Polls reflect widespread concern about income and wage inequalities and associated trends and the desire for policies to address these inequalities (Alvarez 2015). Rising inequality might not be such a major concern if our education, economic, and social protection systems acted as compensatory mechanisms, helping individuals, and especially children, rise above their birth circumstances and improve their mobility. But that is hardly the case. Rather, the fraction of children who earn more than their parents (a measure of what social scientists refer to as absolute mobility) has fallen from approximately 90 percent for children born in 1940 to 50 percent for children born in the 1980s (Chetty et al. 2017). Children of certain ethnic and racial minorities who are disproportionately likely to live in concentrated poverty are also more likely to do so over prolonged periods of time (Sharkey 2013). And the close connections between education inequalities and economic inequalities cast doubt on assertions that America provides "equality of opportunities" that promotes social mobility (Mishel 2015; García and Weiss 2017).

The gender gap is another critical issue when it comes to educational inequality in Iran. Many girls are still denied access to education due to socio-cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based biases. In Iran, girls are often encouraged to attend schools that provide them with vocational training rather than a comprehensive education. This results in a significant disparity in the number of females who attend secondary and higher education.

The government of Iran has attempted to address educational equality by enacting policies that aim to advance access to education. However, these policies have been ineffective in achieving the desired results. Investment in education remains low, and the sector receives a low percentage of the national budget. Additionally, some of the policies that aim to increase access to education have been counterproductive, such as the quota system, which limits the intake of students from certain regions in universities.

In conclusion, educational inequality continues to be a significant challenge in Iran and poses a significant threat to the country's future.

Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders in the education sector, including the government, civil society, and education providers. Measures such as increasing funding for education, improving the quality of education and expanding access to it, can play a vital role in promoting educational equality in Iran. In this way, Iran can provide more opportunities for its children to maximize their potentials and contribute to the country's overall development goals.

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the possible factors that cause educational inequality in the Iranian educational system?
- 2) What are the consequences of these inequalities and injustices?

1. Research Method

The present study was conducted according to a qualitative paradigm (Kresvel 1994, 146) with an emergent design. In emergent research, concurrently with collecting data, these data can be analyzed, and the researcher can refine the questions, the title, and the study samples during the research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this study, the data were collected through in-depth interviews. To extract the components of educational inequality in Iran's educational system, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 20 experts in the educational districts of Shiraz city and Fars province, a group of prominent high school teachers of Shiraz city (chosen by education officials) and experts in the field of education who were familiar with the school environment and educational system. The researchers used the Patton approach to select subjects through purposive sampling. The snowball sampling method was applied while observing the maximum variation sampling and the saturation principle (Lincoln & Giuba 1985; Patton 1990; Taylor & Magdon 1984; Maykut & Morehouse 1994, 56-57). Data analysis, according to Strauss and Corbin's point of view (1994, cited by Maykut & Morehouse 1994, 122), was based on an interpretive-abstract approach, which was done through the induction of data and by referring to the grounded theory method. In applying grounded theory, we encounter three stages 1. Coding, 2. Constructing the concept, and 3. Constructing the category. Finally, using the continuous data comparison method, we identified the educational inequality components in Iran's education system and presented them in a model.

2. Findings

In defining educational inequality, all interviewees agreed that equality does not necessarily imply looking at individuals as fundamentally identical. Rather, they believed that inequality occurs precisely when differences in abilities and talents of individuals are neglected, and individuals are treated as though they were identical. Also, there was a consensus that inequality also occurs when the need for development of individual talents and abilities is recognized, but adequate educational facilities, equipment, and training resources for nurturing the growth and development of individual abilities and talents are lacking. In this respect, educational inequality is related to the type of injustice which occurs when individuals without the necessary qualifications and expertise are placed in job and professional situations solely on the basis of networking and connections, while those who are highly qualified are not able to achieve a position in keeping with their qualifications. In either case, there is insufficient coordination of talents, resources, and training, resulting in a situation that is disadvantageous and detrimental to all concerned.

In this study, the researchers concluded that the educational inequality in Iran has two sources: “society” or “external organizational factors” and the “educational system” or “intra-organizational factors”. External organizational factors include cultural, political, educational, economic, and social systems. Intra-organizational factors are present in two clear and hidden layers. It should be noted that the factors of inequality in society result in the emergence of inequality in education, and the effects of inequality in education is also transmitted in society. From the point of view of the interviewees, the implications of educational inequality occur in both spatial and temporal dimensions. In the spatial dimension, the outcomes occur in and outside of school. The implications are both societal and psychological. Consequences such as division of students based on a unitary conception of cognitive intelligence which doesn’t take into account the natural diversity of intelligence and talents, establishment of special schools, the gap between teaching and training, distrust of the teacher, elitist practices, selective measures, and informal cliques are among the societal consequences. Student’s loss of self-esteem, depression, apathy, and loss of interest in learning are among the psychological effects. From the interviewees’ viewpoint, the consequences of educational inequality within the school are transmitted to the

students' situation outside of school, which occurs in two dimensions, the present, and the future.

The consequences of educational inadequacy have led to the need to hire private tutors, the organisation of various preparation classes for the university entrance exams, and the necessity of purchasing additional complementary books. The sociological effects of these factors manifest themselves in the form of crimes and social delinquency, cultural reproduction,¹ failure to educate people to the norms of civil society, marginalization of minorities, and institutionalization of inequalities. In the psychological dimension, these effects manifest themselves in the form of lack of self-esteem and one-sided personal development in the future. The role of the educational system as the main component in producing and perpetuating educational inequality and its consequences are detailed further in the following section.

3. The Education System

According to the participants, various factors within the educational system lead to inequalities and injustices. The factors influenced by the current centralized structure of education include principles, goals, methods, content, constructs, education management, and policies. The following factors are described in detail below.

3.1. The Centralized Structure of Education

The main reason for the centralization of administrative and institutional affairs can be attributed to political orientation. According to many participants in this research, the structure of the educational system is the main cause of educational inequalities and injustices. In fact, the existing inequalities in the foundations, goals, principles, methods, content, and evaluation stem from the structure of the educational system.

¹ According to Bourdieu, cultural reproduction is the social process through which culture is reproduced across generations, especially through the socializing influence of major institutions. Bourdieu applied the concept in particular to the ways in which social institutions such as schools are used to pass along cultural ideas that underlie and support the privileged position of the dominant or upper class (Bourdieu 1973).

3.2. The Foundation

This research aims to determine the appropriate basis for achieving more justice in education and the educational system. According to the participants in this research, pre-existing theoretical assumptions tend to create inequality in education. However, even if there is sufficient understanding of the philosophical perspectives necessary for reform, the current educational system in our country is philosophically weak because the actual implementation of correct educational principles in a specific individual and social context is a separate issue from anyone's philosophical view of education. Unfortunately, the current educational system both philosophically and practically undermines independent thinking and makes people non-thinking, non-creative, non-critical, and thoughtless beings. Hence we find ourselves in a vicious circle. On the one hand, the philosophical view that governs education in our country tends to silence the conscious mind of the people, and in this way plays a fundamental role in determining the goals that are the major cause of inequalities. On the other hand, failure to implement appropriate educational principles in a specific individual context perpetuates the persistent factors that cause inequality.

3.3. Goals

According to the respondents of this study, predetermination of a range of goals in the educational system is the primary factor in creating inequality in different aspects. We examine the relevant factors in the following section.

3.3.1. Inaccessible Goals

Educational objectives are often stated in general and vague terms and do not precisely define the programs needed to operationalize these objectives. The participants emphasized the non-fulfilment of goals in Iran's educational system. In fact, they believed that the objectives are stated in a way that they simply cannot be implemented, and one of the factors contributing to the non-implementation of goals is the ideality of the objectives. The non-practicability of educational objectives is the main reason for the failure of the education system to function properly, which consequently leads to frustration at the societal level.

3.3.2. Disparity Between the Objectives of the Educational System and Individuals' Needs

The participants in this research believed that the goals of the current education system have not been formulated to meet the needs of society. Since people live in different conditions and circumstances, they have different needs. The divergent needs of people require individual formulation of goals that are compatible with those needs. The individualized formulation of educational goals has been neglected in the current educational system and attempts to realize educational goals that are not compatible with the needs of individuals are futile.

3.3.3. Constant Goals, Variable Worlds

Educational goals are formulated in our country in a manner that is not responsive to the changing world. According to the participants, the goals in Iran's educational system are constant. In other words, the goals are contrary to the reality in society, and this is due to the traditional nature of the education system.

3.3.4. Variable Goals and the Inability to Put Them Into Practice

Some goals in the current educational system are constantly changing, and the educators in charge of their implementation cannot coordinate their educational efforts with them. Therefore, even when they are well-intentioned and well-formulated, many of the goals newly set by the educational system and its associated educational principles and methods remain static. This perpetuates existing conditions, which in turn create conditions for educational inequality. Therefore, even improved goal-setting is ineffective and characterizes unwise, non-dynamic, and impractical training in individual and social contexts.

3.4. Principles

In educational reform, it is necessary to distinguish between principles and determining factors. Principles are related to the theoretical foundations of education; for example, the principle that all human beings deserve equal respect and opportunities. Principles are the guidelines by which we direct our actions, whereas factors designate specific conditions that lead to or cause a certain effect. For example, lack of physical prerequisites (such as a library, gym, playground, personal assistant for people with special needs, literate teachers) leads to the inability to implement principles and

individualized goals. According to the participants, the principles of the current education system are the key cause of inequality and injustice. In fact, principles that are based on goals, unequal conditions, and a philosophy based on inequality can clearly be a cause of inequality.

The principles mentioned by the interviewed teachers and educators and especially those who have experienced educational inequality in the educational system are mentioned below.

3.4.1. Principle 1: Disregarding the Interests, Needs, and Differences of Individuals

One of the factors leading to inequality and injustices in the Iranian educational system is the lack of attention to the interests, needs, and differences of individuals. The result of neglecting needs is subject-based learning that focuses solely on information.

3.4.2. Factor 2: Disregarding the Individuals' Ability

Another factor neglected in the educational system is the capabilities of individuals in education. The current educational system, which emphasizes only scores, degrees, entrance examination results, and the ability to perform on tests, cannot consider the individuals' actual and disparate aptitudes, talents, skills, and abilities, and socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, in the current educational system, the individual's actual abilities and capacities for progress are not taken into account. As a result, the quality of the education system by itself cannot improve, and consequently, society is also affected by this neglect of education.

3.4.3. Factor 3: Disregarding the Creative and Participatory Thinking of Individuals

An educational system that focuses only on transferring information, degrees, and quantifiable results cannot effectively promote creative collaborative thinking. In a competitive system, people strive to win and this effort to win over others creates negative and exclusive competition instead of cooperation and partnership with others. On the other hand, by fostering creative and cooperative thinking about individuals, people learn to effectively interact and work together to solve each other's problems and weaknesses. This is a kind of education based on justice and equality that causes us to apply specific principles, i.e., the principle of mutual respect.

3.4.4. Factor 4: Imposing and the Induction of Educational Materials

Equality and justice will not happen as long as the educational system fails to foster a spirit of exploration, a desire for truth, native curiosity, creativity, trust, and so on. People learn what they want to learn. Therefore, education must foster an exploratory approach if it is to encourage people to learn and promote justice in society. It does this by reinforcing mutual respect, both among students and teachers and outside of schools. This is both a factor and a principle, the principle of absolute respect for the individual and their independence, whose implementation or non-implementation is a factor in realizing or preventing equity in the contexts of education and life.

3.4.5. Factor 5: Lack of Coordination Between Knowledge and Global Information

Another factor, according to participants, that may cause inequality in the educational system is that knowledge in our country's education system is not in harmony with global knowledge. Since knowledge within the educational system in our country does not adapt to the changes in the world, the development of education and, consequently, the development of cultural, economic, social, and political systems are disrupted. (Using some examples of our experience, we may expand in more detail about this fact. For example, in what areas do we see a lack of coordination with global knowledge?)

4. Methods

The methods applied in the current educational system to help both the education process and its structural dimensions also contribute to educational inequality. Under the topic of method, we can include methods that are applied in the teaching process, those that are applied in the learning process, and the methods that are applied in the process of study and research. Speech methods, negotiations, and discussions are examples presented in the methods provided in the context of the training process. Structural methods are related to planning, decision-making, and implementation of educational system planning methods, such as curriculum design, management, decision-making, and evaluation methods, which are examples of structural methods (Sattari 2003). According to participants in the study, both structural and processing methods are both causes and effects of educational inequality in the educational system. The methods themselves do not form in a vacuum, but are influenced by existing principles, principles,

and goals. On the other hand, implementing these methods by themselves leads to inequality. Participants in this study stated that the structure of the educational system imposes procedures that disrespect individual initiative, conditions, and abilities, and as the structure itself is inadequate in this regard, the procedures and methods of learning and teaching are also weakened. For this reason, educational justice is undermined.

More than the teachers who act as the tools and channels, the educational content itself should be attractive to students and communicate with them. Therefore, educational content has a great impact on educational goals in both objective and subjective theoretical aspects (i.e., individual, social, and ethnic). What causes inequality in educational content both in written and subjective dimensions in both theoretical and historical-cultural regards is that language, culture, nationality, and geographical differences of the individuals are not taken into account, and the contents are designed the same for all strata in society. In general, the content of textbooks presents the perspective of a dominant and privileged group in society and refrains from representing deprived or disadvantaged groups, rural and ethnic cultures, and even religious minorities. For this reason, inequalities appear in this subjective dimension of educational content. In other words, the educational content is not properly differentiated according to the needs and interests of the individual, and the difference in the educational content has no place in the curriculum. Inequality in educational content hurts educational quality, teaching and learning process, evaluation procedures, and meeting educational goals.

5. Structural Detachment

According to participants in the study, several factors connected with traditional concepts of education contribute to inequality. These include the traditional separation of training from upbringing (the terms *Taalim* and *Tarbiat* designate these two aspects), the separation of teaching dignity from the teacher, and the separation of privileged schools from ordinary schools. Structural detachment certainly takes place within this form of organization and is perpetuated by the schools. The participants believed that Iran's educational system lacks a comprehensive term for and understanding of education. The English concept of education encompasses both the activity of teaching and the process of education, which means that the teacher should not forget his/her main mission, which is to educate an educated person.

However, in Iran's educational system, the role of the teacher is limited to the transmission of information and teaching materials, a point which is due to the structure of the educational system, which appoints a teacher for the purpose of education in the sense of upbringing or formation (education of an educated man, an ideal person, a desirable citizen, a moral person and so on), whereas other teachers are assigned to transfer the materials and lesson content. These teachers consider their main mission to be only the transmission of information and manipulation of the cognitive domain. The participants believed that the separation and classification of the deputies in the educational structure leads to distinction and detachment in society. At school, teachers and educators are separated from each other, which indicates the distinction between training and upbringing; in other words, the Iranian educational system gives more value to training (*Taalim*) rather than upbringing (*Tarbiat*). Another factor that causes inequality in the educational system is the existence of various kinds of schools and traditional distinctions among them according to their value in the eyes of society.

The interviewees stated that the existence of various kinds of schools in the Iranian educational system is evidence of the class gap in society. Specific schools, including gifted and talented schools on the one hand, and non-profit and private schools, on the other hand, allow certain individuals to develop in specific directions, while ordinary schools and corresponding educational methods deprive individuals of these privileges. This advantages certain individuals who achieve a better education and better positions in the community later on and disadvantages those who due to the lack of excellent facilities and a high quality of education will fail to advance and remain in their predetermined positions in society. For this reason, the status of people is fixed in the community regardless of their talents and abilities.

The third factor contributing to the detached structure is the disconnection between education and society. In other words, there is a gap between society's needs and the existing education system. What is taught has nothing to do with the existing demands for qualified people and what students learn in Iran's educational system ill-equips them to address what is happening in society.

6. Administrative Bureaucracy

Another viewpoint of interviewees was that the characteristics of administrative bureaucracy lead to injustice and inequality in the educational

system. Autocratic educational systems tend more toward bureaucracy. On the other hand, the bureaucratic system is another factor in educational inequality. One of the characteristics of the bureaucratic system is its hierarchical structure. This characteristic leads to the perpetuation of hierarchical structures within the educational system, which in turn leads to activities that are defined hierarchically, and in this educational system, the opposition between the upper and lower classes is formed and stabilized.

7. Educational Management

According to the participants' responses, inefficient educational management is one of the main causes of educational inequality. On the other hand, the executive management style turns the educational system into a dominant and authoritarian system, which leads to injustice and educational inequality. Since in the pursuit of empowerment methods, collaborative and group activities among school administrators, staff, and teachers are excluded, people in this system only work for competition and superiority over their colleagues.

8. Human Resources Management

Interviewees mentioned deficiencies in the selection, recruitment, and distribution of human resources as significant factors contributing to inequality in human resource management. Human resource management in the education department has failed to operate properly. First, the selection and recruitment methods are quantitative and at the same time not standardized; therefore, there is no compatibility with the aims of an equitable system of education. Since the ability and talents of the volunteers are not tested, the methods of recruitment rely only on the reports and memories of volunteers. Second, there are also weaknesses in the distribution of human resources. According to the viewpoint of the interviewees, human resources are distributed unfairly and unequally. The criteria for hiring and distribution of human resources in educational systems do not take into account the requisite qualifications and competency for the teaching profession. Therefore, numerous schools in our society depend on unskilled or inexperienced human resources based on the facilities, equipment, space, and training area. Non-profit and private schools, on the other hand, usually benefit from elite human resources with high qualifications and productivity. The

majority of schools in small towns and villages, however, are deprived of skilled and experienced human resources. Therefore, improper recruitment leads to unfair conditions in the distribution of human resources.

9. Evaluation

Based on the participants' viewpoint in this study, assessment in the educational system is one of the significant causes of educational inequality. Evaluation of academic achievement in our country only considers quantitative dimensions and does not address qualitative aspects, a circumstance that is partly rooted in the vague definition of the goals of education (Asare 2007, 236). The weaknesses and shortcomings of quantitative evaluation in Iran's education system that lead to inequalities include ignoring the capabilities of individuals, lack of progress in diverse educational dimensions, inconsistencies in evaluating the realities in society, non-standardization of evaluation indicators, and the like.

10. Consequences of Educational Inequality

To sum up, in response to the second question, (What are the consequences of educational inequality?), the interviewees believed that inequalities occurred in two spatial and temporal dimensions. In the spatial dimension, the consequences are observed inside and outside of schools. The implications fall within the realm of sociology and psychology research. Consequences such as the division of students according to a uniform conception of cognitive abilities, establishment, special schools, elitism, the gap between training and upbringing (*Taalim* and *Tarbiat*), distrust of the teacher, selective measures, and informal groups fall within the realm of sociology, and consequences such as students' loss of self-esteem belong to the psychological aspects. From the viewpoint of interviewees, the consequences of educational inequality within the school are also transmitted outside of schools, in the two dimensions of the present and the future. The implications in the dimension of the present have been shown to concern educational inadequacy, the formation of a social base, accessibility of private tuition, access to preparation for university entrance exams, and access to supplementary educational materials. The impact of these consequences in the future in the sociological dimension includes social delinquency, the perpetuation of unquestioned cultural norms, lack of civic education, the

institutionalization of inequalities, and the marginalization of minorities. The psychological aspect of these factors is expressed in the lack of self-esteem and the tendency to become a one-dimensional individual, i.e., in the failure to diversify and develop emotionally and intellectually.

Conclusion

As we have seen, addressing inequality does not mean looking at all people as identical. Inequality occurs when the differences, abilities, and talents of individuals are not taken into account in education itself and in assessing achievement, and also when educational facilities and conditions for the development of individual talents and abilities are not distributed equally. Educational inequality falls under the concept of Platonic injustice, according to which injustice means that nothing and no one is in their proper place or performs what is in keeping with their talent. Furthermore, lack of public access to facilities, equipment, and educational space remains an important contributing factor perpetuating inequality, even if individual talents and abilities are recognized. This study of the factors leading to educational inequality in Iran's educational system concludes that the roots of educational inequality are of two origins: "societal" or "external organizational factors," on the one hand, and "the educational system" or "intra-organizational factors," on the other. External organizational factors include the cultural, political, educational, economic, and social systems. Intra-organizational factors occur in two clear and hidden layers, the present and future. It is worth reiterating that the factors which result in inequality in society also result in the emergence of inequalities in education, and vice versa, i.e., the factors contributing to inequality in education are also transmitted to society.

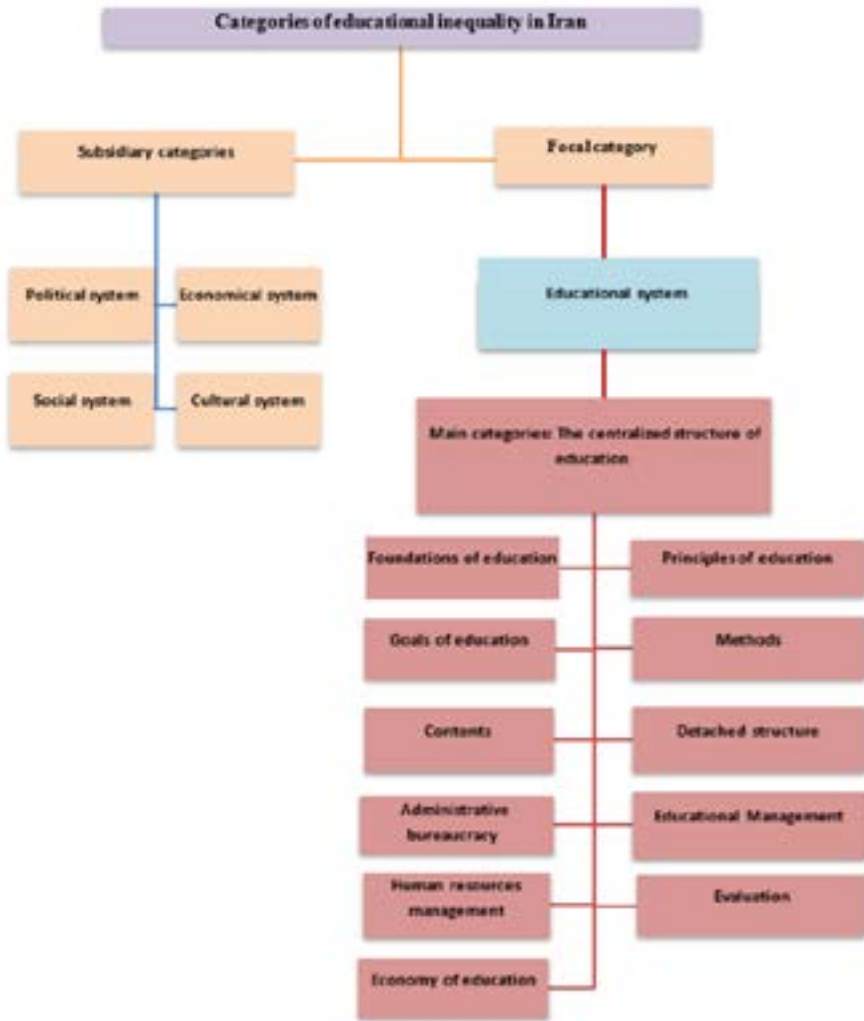


Table 1: The main category of educational inequality in the educational system and related categories

Centralized structure of education and training		Main category	Related categories
	1	Foundations	Weakness in the philosophical foundations of education
	2	Goals	Impractical goals
	3	Principles	Ignoring real needs of individuals, neglecting abilities, marginalization of ethnic groups
	4	Methods	Imposed procedures and methods, undifferentiated executive methods, and ...
	5	Content	Unequal subjective content, unequal ideas, and ...
			The inadequately adaptable written content, contradictory written content, and ...
	6	Disaggregated structure	Various schools at the community level, the separation of teacher from coaching, alienation of education, and community
	7	Administrative bureaucracy	Theory of bureaucracy, education bureaucracy, and ...
	8	Education Management	Human resource management
Lack of efficient education manager			
9	Evaluation		
10	Education economy		

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