

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE DISPARITIES: CASE STUDY OF LATVIA

Ilze Saleniece¹, Dace Namsone²

¹*University of Latvia, The Interdisciplinary Center for Educational Innovation (LATVIA)*

²*University of Latvia, The Interdisciplinary Center for Educational Innovation (LATVIA)*

Abstract

The research aims to have a more nuanced look at student performance disparities and the influence of educational leadership on those disparities both at the municipal, as well as school level. The case study of Latvia is based on student assessment data in Mathematics for Grade 3 and Grade 6 in the academic year 2019-2020 in three municipalities in Latvia. Authors outline that the leadership approach and decisions taken at the municipal level primarily influence the disparities among schools, and the leadership approach and decisions taken at the school level primarily influence the disparities among student cohorts of the same year. By applying mixed methods' research, authors arrive at the conclusion that there are distinct "low performing schools", and there are distinct "low performing cohorts" within the same grade of a particular school, and indicate an especially worrying trend with disparities being identifiable already at the Grade 3 level, thus shedding the light on potential systematic segregation of a particular school or a particular student cohort. Authors mark the combination of the two – a low performing cohort in a low performing school – as the situation of "the two-level inequality threshold", looking from a perspective of a child/student who wants to access a high quality education.

Keywords: school leadership's influence on student performance, school leadership practices, student performance disparities, academic inequality, equal educational opportunity.