Educational Resilience in the Light of International Student Assessments

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ABSTRACT

Research on educational resilience is looking into the phenomenon that certain disadvantaged students are successful at school while the majority of their disadvataged peers are not. Earlier, this research field aimed at exploring the intervention possibilities for a specific problem on the local level, however, in recent years looking at educational resilience on the system level has gained momentum. Both PISA and TIMSS analyze resilient students to some detail, and more and more secondary data analysis focuses on a specific country or on a certain group of countries. Although the number of empirical studies on resilient students is increasing, relatively small attention has been paid to examining the advantages and future potentials of this new approach. The presentation offers an overview of the studies analyzing the data of international student assessments, summarizes the most important results of educational resilience research and evaluates what further progress they offer in the field. Similar to the psychological definition of resilience, there is no consensus on the definition of educational resilience either, although the various international student assessments endeavour to standardize it: based on the composite index of the family background, students are identified as disadvantaged if they belong to the lowest 25 or 33 percent, and school performance is assessed by standardized tests. Studies suggest that the main difference between resilient and non-resilient disadvantaged students is in the perception of the learning environment as well as in the learnig motivation of students. The primary importance of the results of international student assessments is in underlining our existing knowledge, no new, system-level findings have been found, although this approach has introduced an important indicator in the field of equity in education. Furthermore, new areas to consider have been identified that will help future research. For example, the impact of the family background can vary significantly among countries, and this should be adjusted somehow for international comparisons. Different areas of performance are measured, therefore it is worth looking at how it distorts the results. This is also true for the different definitions of the disadvantaged status. Since the individual characteristics related to learning are shaped together with the learning environment, more emphasis should be placed on the role of environmental factors. In addition, the two fields, psychological and educational resilience should intertwine.

Keywords: Educational resilience; disadvantaged background; international student assessments

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