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Design of scales to assess the Subjective Social Value of Education for students in primary and secondary school

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Abstract

The devaluation of education, related with multiple socio-economic and psycho-school factors may be influencing decisively on academic results. A target level is observed that the socio-economic and cultural level of families can decide the student performance, however, this international trend shows inconsistent results. In addition, in different studies, we can observe that students from disadvantaged backgrounds statistics exceed expectations in performance, surpassing the expected results depending on their socioeconomic and cultural level; and students should achieve optimal results for their family situation do not get the expected performance. An interpretative hypothesis may be that subjective social value given to education is a factor which explains these results. Such situations could be analyzed at the macro level assessment indicators that identify patterns of social and school projection given to education. Thus, from a framework of systemic research based on an evaluation model aimed at identifying the contributions of education as a means for the development of social cohesion, has worked through expert committees and work groups with 60 teachers (school, high school and college) to assess the adequacy, clarity and absence of bias on a proposed scale on the Subjective Social Value of Education. To analyze factors among students in primary and secondary education to help overcome these situations of inequality and help improve the situation for all students. Suitable results are detected and two scales of 20 items each: primary and secondary are presented. As prospectively the intention is to validate and debug to metric level (Classical Theory of Tests and Item Response Theory) to ensure her quality and application in future researches.

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1. Introduction

Whether a person has studied or been able to obtain an academic title is, at present, a key aspect for the labour market. This trend is clearly reflected in an international context, as people who have completed tertiary education are generally employed. However, people who are no longer studying or who could not complete their secondary or

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tertiary education are distributed between employment, unemployment or inactivity (OECD, 2015). For example, with regard to the Spanish case, the number of young people who neither study nor work is alarming. The conditioning factors imposed by the economic crisis have caused this group to not be able to finish their tertiary studies, for economic reasons, but it has also meant that they have been unable to enter the labour market, paradoxically also for economic causes due to the recession (Moreno, 2015). Undoubtedly there are various socio-educational factors that may also have contributed, although these factors have not been identified. The devaluation of education, arising in relation to causes at a national or international level, may be affecting academic achievement in a decisive way. Objectively, the socio-economic and cultural status of families is a key factor of different areas of the curriculum, a fact that has unfortunately been historically corroborated through different scientific studies (D'Angiulli, Siegel & Hertzman, 2004; Hoff & Tian, 2005; Gildlow et al., 2006; Casey et al., 2011).

However, this trend has been losing ground for several years and we can now see that students from low-income families achieve higher than expected results, considering the statistical expectations imposed on them because of their socio-economic and cultural status -hereinafter SECS (OECD, 2015). The optimum performance results for students from families in favourable situations is also on the decrease. This paper follows this line of research, as, depending on the importance that education is given socially, regardless of the students' background or their SECS, results can be positive (Jornet, 2012). Hence, we make special mention of the concept of the Subjective Social Value of Education (hereinafter SVE-Subjective) (Sancho-Alvarez, Jornet & González-Such, 2016), from an evaluation model focused, within the educational field, on social cohesion, defending social justice in order to avoid situations of inequality in schools and in the academic performance of students.

2. Social Value of Education

While it is true that context can influence students' performance, with objective aspects such as a government's investment in education or teacher salaries, the subjective view of that context can undoubtedly create expectations and be important to the educational process, so that in a certain way it can also have an influence. These aspects, regardless of the student's culture or economic background, are truly relevant to advancements in equality and improvements to the level of social justice for all families. This is what the present study intends to address, where the main objective is to provide an assessment tool that can discriminate the SVE-Subjective to determine contextual aspects that may be influencing educational practice.

It is necessary to undertake an evaluation of the school's process using a model that can focus the teaching-learning on social cohesion, preventing and improving different socio-educational issues. In this regard we find the proposal by Jornet (2012) to be appropriate to enable the discrimination of different contextual factors of school practices.

In this model, we define the concept of the Social Value of Education (hereinafter SVE). According to Jornet Perales and Sanchez-Delgado (2011), the SVE refers to:

the usefulness of education in a society for the development and promotion of people in the social and labour fields, as well as the advantages that it contributes as an element of the prevention of social exclusion, and as a guarantee for the development and improvement of their wellbeing throughout life (p. 53).

Also, within the concept of SVE itself, the Subjective Social Value of Education (SVE-Subjective) is immersed as a dimension that is built by "the perception that the main actors in the process of teaching and learning (students, families and teachers) have about the importance of education for social and work promotion, and personal and collective wellbeing throughout life" (p. 67).

3. Methodology

On the one hand, a qualitative analysis has been developed by a committee of experts (15 academic university staff members) in educational measurements/assessments, to discuss and select the items for each evaluation indicator in function of a set of items to do so, so that these will support, and provide initial proof of, the validity of the design and content of the measuring instruments. (Jornet & González-such, 2009). A proposal of items was also examined by two groups of judges made up of university teachers, high school teachers and primary school teachers (30 judges).

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