

Educational Inequities in OECD Countries in Times of Multiple Crisis

„Inequity in Education from a Global Perspective. Systemic Challenges
amidst the Multiple Crisis”

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Overview

- Results of most recent PISA reports on inequity in relation to Covid-19 crisis
- Selected results from a longitudinal study from Vienna about difficulties of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds during school closings
- Conclusions with necessary changes for more equity in times of crises

Inequality in Education

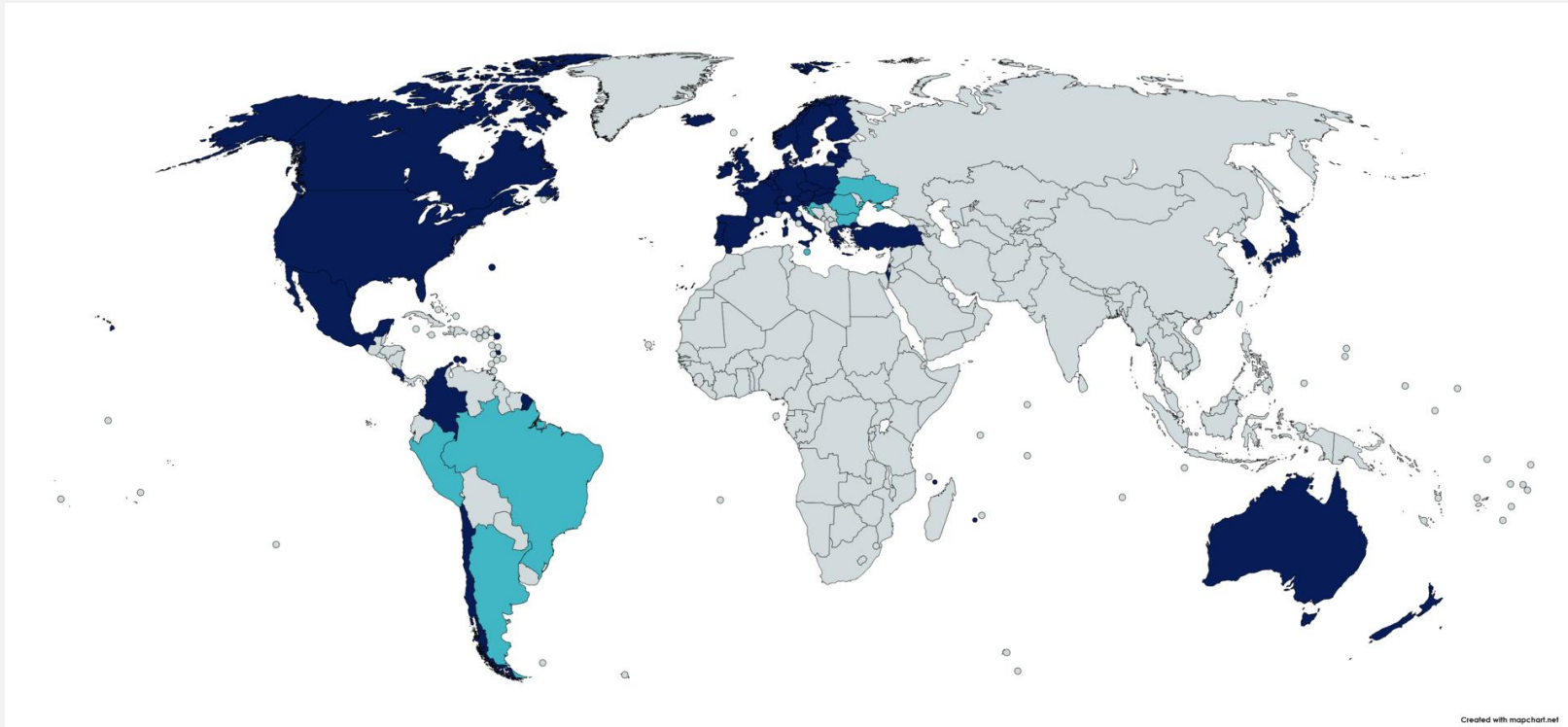
Main Problem

- Unequal distribution of money, resources and opportunities

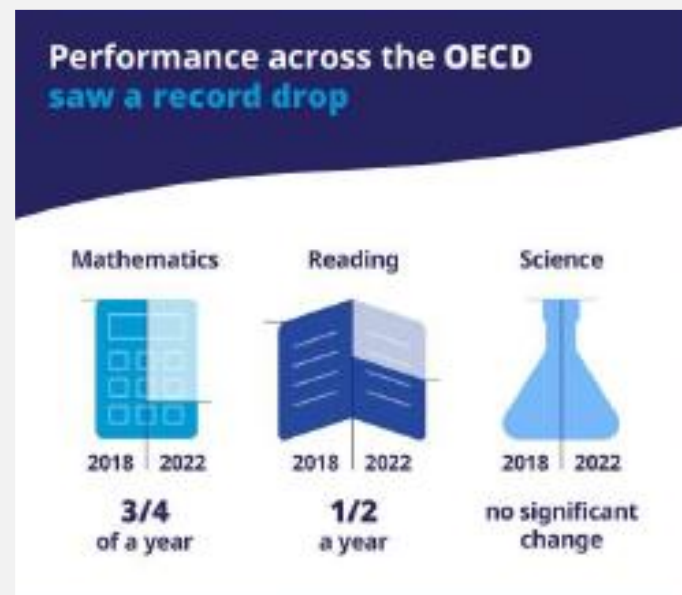
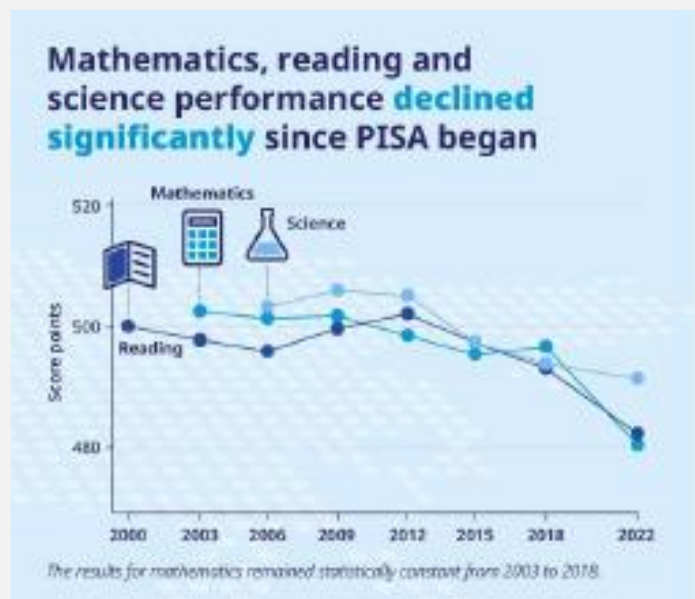
Main categories of inequality

- Class
- Ethnicity (migration, language)
- Gender
- Disability (special needs)

OECD Countries



PISA 2022 Results



PISA 2002 Results, Inequity

- Socio-economically advantaged students scored 93 points higher in mathematics on average across OECD countries. Widest performance gap in Romania and the Slovak Republic, then Hungary, Israel and Chinese Taipei.
- Percentage of lower performing students from disadvantaged backgrounds stayed approximately the same during the last PISA cycles, but increased by nine percentage points between 2018-2022.
- In eight countries the socio-economic gap in student performance has grown in the last 10 years, almost all of them are in Europe.
- Gender differences: Boys outperformed girls in mathematics by 9 score points, girls outperformed boys in reading by 24 score points. (non-binary students?)
- In most countries non-immigrant students scored better than those with migrant biographies, but when similar socio-economic and language background, the opposite is true.
- Educational systems with high performance and have high levels of fairness and inclusion are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong (China), Ireland, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Macao (China) and the United Kingdom.

Covid-19 related school closings I

- Almost 50% students frequently had difficulties in motivating themselves to do schoolwork when learning at home, about 30% frequently did not fully understand school assignments.
- More than 30% of students across OECD countries reported that their teachers were not available when they needed them, 40% of all students felt lonely and 50% felt anxious about school work and stated that they fell behind at school.

Problems during the school closings

Across OECD countries on average:

- 12% of students reported problems with access to school supplies
- 17% reported problems with access to digital devices
- 18% problems with finding time to study due to household work they had to do
- 19% problems with finding a quiet place to study
- 22% problems with internet access
- 24% problems with finding someone who could help with schoolwork
- 34% problems with understanding school assignments
- 47% problems with motivating themselves to do school work

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds reported these problems in higher numbers

Covid-19 related school closings

- Students who reported fewer problems with remote learning scored eight points higher in their mathematics than students with more problems.
- Teachers and schools focused more on curriculum goals than on students' wellbeing during the time of school closings.
- Students who reported more support from school during the school closures also reported greater well-being during that time period (e.g. felt more satisfied with life).

Covid-19 related school closings, Inequity

- Students, who already had difficulties before Covid-19 and in face-to-face settings (e.g. socio-economically disadvantaged students) struggled even more during school-closings.
- Socio-economically advantaged students more often agreed that their teachers were available when they needed help than their colleagues from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely than their advantaged colleagues that their schools undertook actions and activities to maintain learning and well-being during the school closures.
- Socio-economically advantaged students were more confident than disadvantaged students that they could learn well autonomously and remotely.
- Disadvantaged students' sense of belonging at school deteriorated between 2018 and 2022, while that of advantaged students stayed the same.

Research in the German speaking area

There have been several studies about remote learning during Covid-19 (e.g. Altrichter / Helm 2022; Gerhards et al. 2020; Holtgrewe et al. 2021; Pessl / Steiner 2021; Reiter / Spiel 2021; Schober et al. 2020)

Selected results concerning inequity:

- Holtgrewe et al (2021: 20) stress that older students, girls resp. young women, children of single parents, students from multi-lingual backgrounds and students with lower-skilled parents are more insecure and rather oppressed than other groups of students.
- Several studies record that students that already had difficulties before the school closings, had higher chances of failing during the school closings (Reiter / Spiel 2021: 137; Steiner et al. 2021: 51)

Pathways to the Future, Sample

20 problem-centered interviews with the following young people:

- 6 male, 14 female
- Btw. 17 and 21 years old
- One young woman lives in a girls'home, another one in a communal residence with colleagues, the others live with their families; very different living situations; five do not have a room on their own
- Different backgrounds in regard to migration: 1st generation: 5; 2nd generation: 11
- Class Background: Mostly non-academic background of parents, mostly lower class jobs by parents (building, cleaning, selling)
- Different educational paths: 7 young people do vocational training; 4 attend schools for intermediate vocational training (BMS), 3 academic secondary schools (AHS), 4 colleges for higher vocational education (BHS), 1 in measurement for young people searching for apprenticeship (AusbildungsFit), and 1 is unemployed. 19 out of 20 students attend some type of school or training.

Living conditions and resources

Most students had little or no quiet room to participate in online sessions or to study. Some shared their room, some shared laptops with other family members. Even if they had a room on their own, the rest of the apartment was often very loud (due to remote learning and homeoffice of other family members), so concentrating was difficult.

„...during the pandemic we all had to stay at home. And at that time I shared the room with my two siblings, it was not a big room. Our apartment is rather small, You can live and survive here, but at a certain point, there were complications, for example (...) when there are online meetings at the same time (...) yes, it was all very chaotic, actually.“ (Dahlia Adel)

„Well, sometimes it is stupid, because we had only one laptop at home. My second sister, she often uses it for her school, because she often has online meetings and she cannot do this on her mobile phone, because she also has to write down things (...) so that I could not use it (..) and could not participate in online meetings.“ (Zehra Music)

Learning during the pandemic

Many students told us that it is much easier to understand new issues at school than via online sessions. Teachers explained less and there were less questions and less answers. Concentrating was much easier at school than at home. Motivating themselves and learning independently was difficult. Interestingly these stories are very similar in all types of school: academic and vocational.

„it was much better with explanations and understanding issues when we were still at school“
(Sabira Hadi)

„Well, learning as in really understanding, was not possible for me – except for those subjects that have always been easy to me.“ (Elena Leitner)

„It is hard, I have to say this honestly, because it is much better when I am at school, when I have my peace and I can listen.“ (Zehra Music)

„When you are at school in person, you learn much more and you can understand everything much better“ (Alexandra Radu)

School is a social space

Basically all students complained that schools were closed and described this as a loss of social contacts and of learning opportunities.

„at school you could talk to the other students. You had contact with them, now everyone is at home, you feel lonely.“ (Sabira Hadi)

„Well, I miss the atmosphere at school, I have to say. Just being there. It is different, sometimes it is a relief not being in my room all the time. I miss my friends. That I cannot see them every day is very hard.“ (Manar Al-Kaysi)

Dealing with stress and excessive demands

Three different strategies

- Increasing resignation and overall feeling of oppression (leading to repeating the class or school drop out)
- Strategy of minimal waste of energy
- Searching for support
 - Peers (e.g. via chat groups)
 - Parents
 - Teachers (if available)
 - Internet (e.g. youtube videos instructions or explanations)

PISA: Necessary changes for more fairness and inclusion

- Removal of barriers for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Explicit support – money, resources, support personnel (eg. social workers, psychologists, etc.) at schools and especially at schools with a high number of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or students with special needs
- More diversity in school staff, school administration and educational policy
- Changes in teacher education to include more knowledge and more self-reflexivity about diversity in classrooms and the mechanisms of inequality in schools

Additional ideas for changes

- Schools as social spaces for learning shall not be closed. Learning at home is not a sufficient substitute for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Teachers should be aware that they are important as contact and support - especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Additional options for support (chatgroups, online platforms, video tutorials etc.) shall be provided in advance.
- More participation in decision making on school issues by disadvantaged students, especially those students who are at the edge of dropping out of the school system or have already been dropping out.

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