

RESILIENCE IN THE HUNGARIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: RESULTS OF A LONGITUDINAL PROGRAM

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The link between socioeconomic status and school performance is well-documented, and as the results of international studies indicate, the impact of the family background is especially strong in Hungary. However, some disadvantaged students still perform well at school, that is, they are resilient students. The phenomenon of educational resilience is more and more often used to describe the role of the equity of education systems. Although the Hungarian education system is not effective in compensating for the disadvantages, the issue of resilience has not been addressed in Hungary. The aim of the present study is to overview resilience in Hungary by examining the level of resilience, the school career of resilient students, how resilience changes over time, and to characterize the impact of some background variables. We analyzed the data of the 2003–2011 cohort (N=4322) of the Hungarian longitudinal program (Csapó, 2014), based on the results of mathematics, reading comprehension, inductive reasoning and science tests. We followed the PISA methodology (OECD, 2013) in defining the concept of educational resilience and identifying resilient students. The results show that the proportion of resilient students differs to a great extent among the domains examined. We find the lowest proportion of resilient students in the domain of inductive reasoning (5.3–5.5%), while it is the highest in reading comprehension (7.4–8.8%), meaning that the disadvantage compensation role of the school is the most influential in this domain. There is no great difference in the proportion of resilient students in the domains among the age groups examined, however, the population of resilient students in the different domains varies to a great extent. From those defined as resilient at the start of the school, only about 50% was categorized as resilient in reading and science and 40% in mathematics at the end of primary school. The proportion of those who performed well only on some measurements is quite high. According to the cluster analysis two resilient profile types were identified. Considerable differences were detected between the two profiles in math (7.0–20.8%) and inductive reasoning (4.0–9.0%) tests. Our results show that girls are at advantage in reading comprehension among disadvantaged students in all age groups, however, in other domains no differences could be identified in terms of gender. In general, the difference between rural and urban regions was not significant in most of the domains, while the proportion of resilient students in the capital of Hungary was generally much higher than in other places; in some cases the differences are more than 20%. The results provide valuable new information about how the Hungarian education system performs in compensating for the disadvantages of students. The data we collected can help to improve the Hungarian education system, which faces serious problems in terms of equity in an international comparison.