

Book Review



Bacskai Katinka (2015). Schools on the margin of the society – Teachers of low status students [Iskolak a társadalom peremén – Alacsony statusú diákokat tanító eredményes tanárok]. Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale.

Hungarian Educational Research Journal
2016, Vol. 6(3) 131–134
© The Author(s) 2016
<http://herj.lib.unideb.hu>
Debrecen University Press



DOI: 10.14413/herj.2016.03.14.

Reviewed by Roland Hegedus ⁵⁵

Katinka Bacskai examines a truly interesting and actual question in her book which is particularly accentual in our region: what is typical for those teachers, who teach the disadvantaged pupils? We can read about this topic through 192 pages. This book stands from seven chapters: the first three concentrates to Hungarian and international literature, the next three focuses on the introduction of the database, methods and results and the last chapter contains the conclusion.

The first chapter's name is *School in space, society in the school*. In this part, the author writes about the factors which impact globally on the achievement of the pupils. The author divides the chapter into subsections, this breaking is very logical: she tries to separate one effect into one subsection. The effects are the family background of the pupils, the society status, school atmosphere, the teaching staff and student composition. The author draws attention to the problems of teachers who teach disadvantaged pupils and have a lot of difficulty in their job. The main reason of disadvantaged schools is segregation because the students with good skills and good grades will achieve well on entrance examinations they can go to selective schools while the other pupils who are disadvantaged and have bad family background will fail on this exam so they can go only to schools where no entrance examination is needed thus they will study in a school where no is selection. The segregation of pupils cause the segregation of teachers too because teacher, who has good pedagogical skills, more practice and those who are able to higher achievement, will teach in good schools and bad teachers and entrant teachers can choose only such schools where the achievement of students is low. The author writes just tangentially about the gipsy situation because high rate of disadvantaged people come from gipsy population but she lays down has the aim of the book is not to investigate the gipsy population. This chapter can serve as a basis of help in other doctoral dissertations

⁵⁵ University of Debrecen, Hungary

and thesis because we find a lot of glossary and foreign keywords which help the reader to find new foreign literature.

The second chapter is *Teachers in challenging environment*. In this, the literature focuses on the personality of the teachers, teaching profession and pedagogical chances. This chapter represents the international outlook. In this part, the author uses comparative perspective because she does literature collision between Hungarian and international literature. There we can read about the “bizarre reality” what is observed in Hungary, which things cannot be experienced in other European countries. It is a really valuable part of the book because the presentation of the reality is the truly important thing and not only presenting that fact that the teaching profession stands from positive experiences. She enumerates more studies which focus on entrant teachers. It is written in these that the entrant teachers have more tasks and work in bigger rate in students where number of disadvantaged students higher is. When the author wrote this book, the teacher career model didn't exist which offers carrier opportunities for the teachers thus earlier people considered for carrier when the teacher went from the disadvantaged school to a good school or went from the village to capital or county seat. Katinka write here about how the teachers can be encouraged for higher achievement. She tells more way how teachers can be inspired. More examples are mentioned like merit pay, skill-based pay or salary bounded to the students' performance. These are very hard part of evaluation which is elusive.

The effect of capital resources on effectiveness is the third chapter. It still belongs to the literature part where the author extracts the first chapter. She uses a lot of literature about teachers and teachers' personality. The qualification of the teacher and the level of it has a huge effect on the achievement of the students as a higher qualified teacher has wider horizon on its own subject thereby he/she can adapt easier to the skills and ability of the pupils. It is the reason that those teachers can bring out the best from the pupils. Teacher retraining has positive effect on the achievement of the students because teachers who participate on those trainings will be enriched with such a methodological repertoire which makes them able to do the best. Furthermore, the teachers need to have such a teacher personality with reflective habitus who want to develop and want to encourage its students for the best. The author mentions three things which influence the achievement of teacher namely the age of the teacher, the time of teaching practice and the quality of teacher training institutions (university or college). In the low achievement schools, the personality of headmaster is very important because it is the person who grants positive atmosphere to make students motivated in learning.

School research in another way is the methodological chapter. We can meet here the analysed databases which are the TALIS database from 2008 which is made by the OECD and the National Competency Test from 2008 with the achievement of students on the eighth class. The TALIS contains the teacher questionnaires. In the analyses, the author distinguished three dependent effectiveness variables. The first is the academic achievement which is calculated from mean of mathematics and comprehension which is

corrected with family background index. The second indicator is calculated from the compliance of school standards and the third consists of the own assessment of the teachers work. The explanatory variables are from more dimensions of human capital, for example gender, qualification and age of teacher etc. Furthermore, there take part variables from more dimensions of social capitals like cooperation among the teachers, personal care and employees' assessment. This chapter contributes the three research hypotheses:

1. Low qualified teachers teach in disadvantaged schools, and fluctuation of teachers is more frequent.
2. The atmosphere of school has bigger effects on the student achievement than family background.
3. The integrational capital between teachers has teacher' cooperation practices have the big effects on the student achievement.

The presentation of the results starts in the fifth chapter which name is *What features the schools of low status students?* The author distinguishes the schools into three groups based on the parents' educational level. (1) Disadvantaged composition schools are where the rate of graduated parents is lower than ten percent. (2) Advantageous composition schools are where the rate of graduate parents is higher than forty percent. (3) Average composition schools where this rate is between ten and forty percent. In this part of book we can find the characterisation of these school compositions' predominantly with crosstabs and variance analysis. Schools with the most disadvantaged compositions are in small villages in Southern Transdanubia and Northern Great Plain region. These schools are maintained mostly by the state or the local government. The results prove the findings in the literature parts that these schools have younger teacher staff, the qualification is lower and the number of support staff (special education teacher, developer teacher) is lower as well. Teachers who teach in disadvantaged schools would like to get more retraining in special educational needs and discipline relations topics than teachers of advantageous schools. The disadvantaged school teachers have more administrative burden because of the disadvantaged pupils and tenders, and they have more work time in comparison with their colleges from schools with better compositions. Summary, the teachers feel that they are less successful in school and their appreciation is lower.

The *Ecology effects and the schools achievement* topic contains the introductions of three dimension crosstabs where school compositions and achievement are in the focus of the analysis. The author distinguishes the schools according to low, average and higher achievement in all compositions (Average, Disadvantaged and Advantageous). She finds that male teachers have a key role in good achievement because in those schools where the rate of male pedagogues is higher, the achievement is higher too in all compositions although it is necessary to notice that the effect of this rate is the highest in disadvantaged

composition schools. Regarding non-academic achievement, the reverse can be seen as the atmosphere is better where the rate of female teachers is higher. The results show that in schools where the rate of the novice teachers is higher, the students' achievement is lower and it is exponentially true in disadvantaged schools. In the disadvantaged schools where the class size is smaller, the students' achievement is higher while in the other compositions it does not have a significant effect. Another positive effect is that the pupils' achievement will be higher if the teacher staff members cooperate with each other. In this chapter, the author examines the achievement of the compositions along other variables, for example teacher relationship with parents, frequency of parent's meeting and teacher appreciation.

The final seventh chapter is the *Summary*, where Katinka feedbacks to the hypotheses what she stood up in the fourth chapter. The first hypothesis is mostly attested because in the disadvantaged composition schools work mainly young teachers with degree from college, so they are qualified lower. The teacher staff is more homogeneous in disadvantaged schools. The second hypothesis is true too because in schools with disadvantage composition where the pupil/teacher rate is higher and the teacher and pupil can build stronger relations, the students' achievement is higher as well. The third hypothesis is proved too as the results show that the cooperation of teacher staff and common norms are more important in disadvantaged composition schools than in other compositions. In this community, teachers accept the assessment of colleague easier than in other compositions because in disadvantaged compositions emphasis is on the cooperation and not on the competition.

On the whole, this book provides information about features and combination of disadvantaged composition schools; however it compares these compositions with advantageous and average composition schools, applying a comparative outlook. This book is offered particularly for teacher students because with scrolling this book, they can study a lot of things about education world, they can learn how to be effective and they can get information about disadvantaged schools thus they can become better teacher in these compositions. They can know what kind of trait and quality is needed to become a really good teacher in a disadvantaged composition school. Nevertheless, the reader can get a lot of information about the world of school with real images of the schools as this book displays the reality: not only the positive side of school but it is written about the hard part, the seamy side of the educational world. Finally, this book is offered not only the teachers but also to every people who would like to meet the Hungarian school system.