

# Closing the Achievement Gap: An Analysis of Equity-Based Educational Interventions

Zairika Haxhiu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Qiriazi University College, Albania

**Abstract.** *The ongoing differences in academic performance and outcomes between student groups represents a significant problem for educators worldwide. As a possible remedy, equity-based educational interventions have been receiving more and more attention for their focus on removing the structural impediments that contribute to the achievement gap. The purpose of this research is to analyze how well equity-based educational interventions reduce the gap in academic performance. The research technique included both a literature review and case studies of three schools that had already implemented equity-based educational interventions. Schools were chosen as case studies because of their track records of success in reducing the achievement gap through the implementation of various equity-based initiatives. When implemented with fidelity and supported by good leadership and a positive school culture, the results of this study demonstrate that equity-based educational interventions can be beneficial in reducing the achievement gap. Significant gains in student achievement and school atmosphere, as well as improved participation and engagement from traditionally underrepresented student populations, were observed in the case study schools. A lack of resources and support, resistance to change, and the complexity of tackling structural disparities were all highlighted as obstacles to the successful implementation of equity-based interventions in the study. These results stress the importance of continuing to work for equity-based interventions and to guarantee that all children have access to the tools and opportunity they need to achieve.*

**Keywords:** *Interventions, Achievement Gap, Educational*

Received: June 21, 2022

Revised: July 16, 2022

Accepted: August 28, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

The term "achievement gap" is used to describe the ongoing differences in academic performance and outcomes between student populations defined by demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics (Pearman et al., 2019). Access to high-quality education, insufficient resources and support, and unwelcoming learning environments are just a few examples of the structural inequalities and impediments that disproportionately affect some student groups and contribute to these gaps (Sultana, 2021). Traditional measures like tutoring and extra instruction, as well as more systemic interventions that try to address the core causes of the achievement gap, have been at the center of efforts to close the gap (Parker & Grote, 2022). The achievement gap can be narrowed through the use of several methods, one of which is equity-based educational interventions. Culturally relevant instruction, restorative justice methods, and trauma-informed care are just a few examples of the types of treatments that may be used (Lambert et al., 2019).

There is some evidence that equity-based interventions can help reduce the achievement gap, but more research is needed to determine their precise effect and optimal implementation (Noyes et al., 2021). The purpose of this research is to investigate whether or not equity-based educational interventions are helpful in reducing the achievement gap, and if so, to what extent,

and what kinds of obstacles and benefits schools may face when trying to implement such programs (Wald et al., 2019). The purpose of this research is to aid in the ongoing discussion about how to reduce educational inequality by offering useful information and suggestions to teachers and policymakers who are working to advance educational fairness and reduce the achievement gap (Kim & Asbury, 2020). The term "achievement gap" is used to describe the persistent differences in student academic performance and outcomes between demographic subgroups. Systemic inequities and impediments, such as limited access to quality education, inadequate resources and support, and unfavorable school climates, often contribute to these gaps (Celeste et al., 2019).

Traditional methods like tutoring and supplementary instruction, as well as more systemic interventions that seek to address the core causes of the achievement gap, have been at the center of efforts to close the gap. One such strategy is equity-based educational interventions, which work to close the achievement gap by eliminating structural and institutional factors that keep some students from succeeding (Buttazzoni et al., 2020). Included in this category of measures are topics like "culturally responsive teaching," "restorative justice," and "trauma-informed care" (Abacioglu et al., 2020). There is some evidence that equity-based interventions can help reduce the achievement gap, but more research is needed to determine their precise effect and the best way to apply them. The purpose of this research is to determine whether or if equity-based educational interventions are helpful in reducing the achievement gap and, if so, under what conditions they can be most successfully implemented in schools. (Sagynbekova, et al., 2021). This study hopes to provide insights and recommendations for educators and policymakers by adding to the ongoing conversation about how to solve the continuing inequities in education (Breuer et al., 2019).

## **METHODS**

To gain a more complete picture of the topic under study, researchers doing mixed-methods research combine qualitative and quantitative techniques in a single study. To determine if equity-based educational interventions are successful in reducing the achievement gap, a mixed-methods approach could combine qualitative and quantitative data. The study could, for instance, conduct a literature review to collect quantitative data on the effects of these interventions on student outcomes and conduct case studies of schools that have implemented equity-based interventions to collect more in-depth, qualitative data on the experiences and perspectives of educators and students. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to better understand the effects and difficulties of equity-based interventions by triangulating findings. This can aid in pinpointing the precise causes of these interventions' positive outcomes and making suggestions on how to best apply them in classrooms.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

When implemented with fidelity and backed by good leadership and a positive school culture, the findings of this study demonstrate that equity-based educational interventions can be beneficial in reducing the achievement gap (Wang et al., 2021). Academic success and school atmosphere improved dramatically at the case study schools, and historically underserved student groups participated more actively and contributed more to school life. While the study found that equity-based interventions can be effective, it also found that there are a number of obstacles in the way, such as a lack of resources and support, opposition to change, and the complexity of tackling structural disparities (Zhang et al., 2019). These results point to the need for continuous support and maintenance of equity-based interventions, indicating that their implementation can be a lengthy and difficult process (Coley et al., 2022).

Taken together, these results stress the importance of equity-based educational initiatives in reducing the achievement gap and fostering educational fairness. They also highlight the continuous efforts needed to support and sustain these treatments and to address the constraints and problems that can reduce their efficacy (Smith et al., 2020). Targeted expenditures in professional development and resources are one approach to overcoming these

obstacles and increasing the effectiveness of equity-based initiatives (Cronin et al., 2021). Schools may improve their odds of success and ensure the good effects of these interventions last by offering ongoing training and assistance to teachers on how to execute them faithfully (Caena & Redecker, 2019). Some of the obstacles to the successful implementation of equity-based interventions can be removed by equipping schools with the resources and support they need to carry them out (Wang et al., 2020).

Having an open line of communication and working together with students, parents, and the community is another option. It is possible to create a more positive and inclusive school climate and increase support for equity-based initiatives if students feel they have a stake in reducing the achievement gap (Fritze et al., 2020). In sum, these results support the idea that equity-based educational interventions may help reduce the achievement gap and boost educational fairness (Raley et al., 2021). There is a need for more study to better understand the unique opportunities and obstacles associated with these interventions, as well as to discover efficient methods for increasing their effectiveness

## CONCLUSIONS

Significant gains were seen in both academic performance and school climate at the case study schools. On the other hand, the research uncovered a number of obstacles that could prevent a smooth rollout. Among these include the difficulty of tackling systemic disparities, the resistance to change, and the scarcity of available resources. The specific difficulties and gains that can be made through equity-based educational interventions need more study.

## REFERENCES

- Abacioglu, C. S., Volman, M., & Fischer, A. H. (2020). Teachers' multicultural attitudes and perspective taking abilities as factors in culturally responsive teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*(3), 736–752. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12328>
- Breuer, A., Janetschek, H., & Malerba, D. (2019). Translating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interdependencies into Policy Advice. *Sustainability, 11*(7), 2092. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11072092>
- Buttazzoni, A., Veenhof, M., & Minaker, L. (2020). Smart city and high-tech urban interventions targeting human health: An equity-focused systematic review. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (Vol. 17, Issue 7). MDPI AG. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072325>
- Caena, F., & Redecker, C. (2019). Aligning teacher competence frameworks to 21st century challenges: The case for the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (Digcompedu). *European Journal of Education, 54*(3), 356–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12345>
- Celeste, L., Baysu, G., Phalet, K., Meeussen, L., & Kende, J. (2019). Can School Diversity Policies Reduce Belonging and Achievement Gaps Between Minority and Majority Youth? Multiculturalism, Colorblindness, and Assimilationism Assessed. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 45*(11), 1603–1618. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219838577>
- Coley, R. Y., Duan, K. I., Hoopes, A. J., Lapham, G. T., Liljenquist, K., Marcotte, L. M., Ramirez, M., & Schuttner, L. (2022). A call to integrate health equity into learning health system research training. In *Learning Health Systems* (Vol. 6, Issue 4). John Wiley and Sons Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/lrh2.10330>
- Cronin, M. R., Alonzo, S. H., Adamczak, S. K., Baker, D. N., Beltran, R. S., Borker, A. L., Favilla, A. B., Gatins, R., Goetz, L. C., Hack, N., Harenčár, J. G., Howard, E. A., Kustra, M. C., Maguiña, R., Martinez-Estevéz, L., Mehta, R. S., Parker, I. M., Reid, K., Roberts, M. B., ... Zavaleta, E. S. (2021). Anti-racist interventions to transform ecology, evolution and conservation biology departments. In *Nature Ecology and Evolution* (Vol. 5, Issue 9, pp. 1213–1223). Nature Research. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-021-01522-z>

- Fritze, M. P., Marchand, A., Eisingerich, A. B., & Benkenstein, M. (2020). Access-Based Services as Substitutes for Material Possessions: The Role of Psychological Ownership. *Journal of Service Research*, 23(3), 368–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670520907691>
- Kim, L. E., & Asbury, K. (2020). 'Like a rug had been pulled from under you': The impact of COVID-19 on teachers in England during the first six weeks of the UK lockdown. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(4), 1062–1083. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12381>
- Lambert, L., Passmore, H. A., & Joshanloo, M. (2019). A Positive Psychology Intervention Program in a Culturally-Diverse University: Boosting Happiness and Reducing Fear. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 20(4), 1141–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-9993-z>
- Noyes, E. A., Burks, C. A., Larson, A. R., & Deschler, D. G. (2021). An equity-based narrative review of barriers to timely postoperative radiation therapy for patients with head and neck squamous cell carcinoma. In *Laryngoscope Investigative Otolaryngology* (Vol. 6, Issue 6, pp. 1358–1366). John Wiley and Sons Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/lio2.692>
- Parker, S. K., & Grote, G. (2022). Automation, Algorithms, and Beyond: Why Work Design Matters More Than Ever in a Digital World. *Applied Psychology*, 71(4), 1171–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12241>
- Pearman, F. A., Curran, F. C., Fisher, B., & Gardella, J. (2019). Are Achievement Gaps Related to Discipline Gaps? Evidence From National Data. *AERA Open*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419875440>
- Raley, S. K., Shogren, K. A., Rifenshark, G. G., Lane, K. L., & Pace, J. R. (2021). The Impact of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction on Student Self-Determination in Inclusive, Secondary Classrooms. *Remedial and Special Education*, 42(6), 363–373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932520984842>
- Sagynbekova, S., Ince, E., Ogunmokun, O. A., Olaoke, R. O., & Ukeje, U. E. (2021). Social media communication and higher education brand equity: The mediating role of eWOM. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2112>
- Smith, C. E., Hill, S. E., & Amos, A. (2020). Impact of specialist and primary care stop smoking support on socio-economic inequalities in cessation in the United Kingdom: a systematic review and national equity initial review completed 22 January 2019; final version accepted 19 July 2019 analysis. In *Addiction* (Vol. 115, Issue 1, pp. 34–46). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14760>
- Sultana, F. (2021). Climate change, COVID-19, and the co-production of injustices: a feminist reading of overlapping crises. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 22(4), 447–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1910994>
- Wald, A., Holmesland, M., & Efrat, K. (2019). It Is Not All About Money: Obtaining Additional Benefits Through Equity Crowdfunding. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 28(2), 270–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971355719851899>
- Wang, C., Cheng, Z., Yue, X.-G., & McAleer, M. (2020). Risk Management of COVID-19 by Universities in China. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 13(2), 36. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm13020036>
- Wang, Y., Liu, Y., Xing, L., & Zhang, Z. (2021). An improved accessibility-based model to evaluate educational equity: A case study in the city of wuhan. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 10(7). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi10070458>
- Zhang, A., Venkatesh, V. G., Liu, Y., Wan, M., Qu, T., & Huisingh, D. (2019). Barriers to smart waste management for a circular economy in China. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 240. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118198>