The Inequality Project

Non-governmental tools for teaching economic inequality in the classroom

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Abstract
Economic inequality is a growing problem in North America, and the results are visible in neighbourhoods, cities, and across state and provincial lines. It is vital to understand this phenomenon in our societies. The first step towards widespread understanding of the issue could be in our own backyards: by teaching about economic inequality in high schools across Canada and the USA. But, is this a topic that is explicitly mandated in government curricula?

The Inequality Project is offering the first in-depth study into where, why, and how high schools in Canada and the United States of America teach about the subject of economic inequality. This portion of the project will examine what alternative curricula, resources, tools, and frameworks have been proposed to facilitate learning about economic inequality. Resources from teaching groups and topic groups will be collected to discover what type of non-governmental tools exist for assisting with the teaching of this complex subject. This research will assist the long-term goals of The Inequality Project by providing a selection of approaches and learning objectives that reflect the positions and interests of civil society in youth knowledge. As well, it will postulate alternatives to the current government curricula and challenge the status quo of learning for students in North America.

Introduction
This project takes on the search for alternative resources that teach about economic inequality, which are available in the public domain for teachers’ use in the classroom.

This project examines non-governmental curriculum and classroom resources to examine the propositions and suppositions of civil society when discussing economic inequality.

Methodology
This research was completed by searching with key words combining economic inequality and teaching materials, in order to find resources that have been proposed by non-governmental organizations. Based on the coding criteria developed by the research team for the review of the state and province curricula, an appropriate cross-section of categories were selected to be coded. Due to time constraints, not all documents could be coded at this time. However, as most organizations presented more than one resource, the resource most explicit in its focus on economic inequality was coded as an exemplar.

The coding was based on independent conceptual mentions of a topic, rather than by every mention of a word. Word phrasing, however, has to be exact, unless otherwise mentioned as a “general reference”, where in this case, was coded for the concept, due to the extreme variance of language.

Conclusion
Non-governmental teaching aids, curricula, and lesson plans are challenging to find in the public domain. They do exist, but they vary in outlook, quality, type of resource, and learning standards used.

The resources, much like has been found so far in the state and provincial curricula, vary significantly in their content and conceptions of economic inequality, especially in their stipulations of the consequences of economic inequality, and their explanations for its existence and manifestations. The mentions of economic inequality are infrequently explicit, and are few compared to the amount of references to income inequality and poverty.

More research must be done on this topic to infer conclusions regarding the access, content, and quality of non-governmental teaching materials about economic inequality. The documents found must be analyzed further, and it will be interesting to look at the political, regional, and organizational influences on their content.

This research will eventually play a role in discovering who teaches about economic inequality in their classrooms, and what potential resources they may be using.

Selected References


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For more information about the project, please email theinequalityproject@gmail.com, or visit theinequalityproject.com.