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3-6 June 2024, Cagliari (Italy)

Education is a battleground of power, identity, and inequality. This volume unravels the tensions between exclusion and inclusion, privilege and marginalization, tracing how policies, epistemologies, and ideologies shape who belongs—and who is left behind.

PROCEEDINGS

01

Inequality, Inclusion, and Governance

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Vol. 1
**Inequality,
Inclusion,
and Governance**

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di Sardegna

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ADDED VALUE AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

Vincenzo Nunzio Scalcione^a

^aUniversity of Basilicata

The analysis of added value has taken on a significant role in the national debate, in relation to the need, expressed by numerous subjects, to innovate the evaluation models in use. In fact, the need to prepare tools for the synthesis of complexity, using the measurement of added value, is emerging. In the scientific community, the debate is important, focused on the models to be adopted, but above all on their didactic use, and the related fields of application, having to consider variables linked to measurement methods and tools. In this essay, therefore, we intend to proceed with the examination of the calque of added value, for the promotion of a school capable of valorizing the personal path of each student.

quality; control; evaluation; added value; student performance

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is an integral part of the teaching-learning process; it precedes, accompanies and follows the curricular paths. It activates the actions to be undertaken, regulates those started, promotes the critical assessment of those completed and takes on a prominent formative function, of accompanying the learning processes and of stimulating continuous improvement (MIUR, 2012, p. 13).

Evaluating means “giving value”, or attributing a certain “weight” to everything that happens in the school context in relation to pre-established objectives. The evaluation process takes place by taking into consideration not only the educational event and the context in which it takes place, but is linked to the content and methods of teaching that lead to implementing learning dependent on the quality of teaching and the validity of the training offer. The evaluation of the quality of the school service performed takes into account the outcomes (judgment on the possession of skills and knowledge observable in the

performances) and the processes (consistency between activities carried out and planned training purposes) (Scalcione, 2024).

1. VALUE ADDED MEASUREMENT MODELS

Within the national debate, relating to the definition of an evaluation model of the school system, added value has also assumed a central role in recent years (Silva, 2016, p. 55).

Representing an important indicator that allows pursuing the purpose of measuring and appreciating performance (Montrone, 2000), added value “in recent years is applied in goods whose quality and value is increased by high level of technology and skill in the manufacturing process” (Corsini, 2008, p. 29).

In the educational field, it therefore indicates the ability of school institutions to add value to the development of each student, thanks to the result of the different interactions between the action of the school and the factors external to it (Corsini, 2008), being therefore understood as “estimate of the contribution that a school may have given to the evolution of the skills of its students” (Sestito, 2012, p. 28).

The variability is produced by factors extrinsic to the school and by the educational action, or “exogenous” variables, which influence the results achieved and which cannot be controlled by the school such as: the socio-demographic characteristics of each student or the incoming skills (Kubler, 2012, p. 1). Its use has as its main purpose that of dividing the factors that determine an influence on the learning of students and studying their effect.

An obvious reflection that follows is that it is possible to analyze inputs and outputs within school contexts; characteristic aspects of the added value measurement model thus appear, namely: student performance considered as progress over a period of time; added value as an indicator that allows for the evaluation of effectiveness through student results; the isolation of variables, which through their effect influence the scholastic performance of students. “The added value therefore measures the contribution provided by an institution to the progress of its students net of the factors that affect their performance but which are not attributable to the school’s intervention, such as socioeconomic characteristics or their performance upon entry” (Corsini, 2008, p. 30).

2. SCHOOL AND ADDED VALUE

To evaluate the effectiveness of a school, it is necessary to distinguish the effect of the school (intentional management, organizational, didactic and educational processes) on learning from the effect of uncontrollable factors (personal characteristics of students and context) but which still have the power to influence learning (Martini, 2020).

The school effect (added value) can be measured in different ways:

- with the difference between the average raw score of that school and the general average of a certain territory;
- by measuring the average progress that students make in a given period of time (cognitive gains).
- by means of the average difference between the observed scores and the expected scores in relation to the characteristics of the students (socio-economic-cultural condition, aptitudes, etc.).
- by means of the average net cognitive gain with respect to all the contextual factors that are not controlled by the school (Ricci, 2008, p. 4).

From a statistical point of view, the measurement of added value occurs through the study of the effect of the school and the teachers, which represent the independent variables, on the students' performance through the administration of standardized achievement tests that represent the dependent variables. The variables are inserted into an even broader relational context in which there are in turn other variables that determine relationships and influences and this is why these should also be considered and kept under control in the measurement of the school effect.

This relationship is then expressed through the linear equation of the straight line:

$$\hat{Y}_i = \alpha + \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i \text{ (Silva, 2016).}$$

The effect of schools and classes by means of added value will therefore be expressed as the unexplained part of variance, or the sum of the regression residues aggregated at school and class level. If this formula includes the variables detected relating to the socio-cultural level of students, as the literature widely recommends, it will be necessary to refer instead to a form of linear regression called multiple or multivariate:

$$\hat{Y}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \varepsilon_i^1 \text{ (Silva, 2016, p. 39).}$$

The two regressors are therefore indicated by β_1 and β_2 , to indicate the incidence of the two control variables: previous performance and socio-cultural level. At a theoretical level, the added value is defined as the difference between the observed result and the expected result: in this equation, the concept is expressed from a statistical point of view by the difference between Y and $\hat{Y}_i$. This difference is also called the regression residue and therefore represents the part of Y that cannot be explained by the regressors considered in the model.

2.1 Added value as an indicator of school efficiency and effectiveness

If efficiency, as a measure of how an activity achieves its objective by minimizing the use of resources, corresponds, at school level, to the construction of an optimal balance between means and ends, with a positive balance to be achieved in order to activate and use available resources and the identified purposes, effectiveness considers and measures, instead, the degree of impact of educational action and its capacity to transform and increase available resources (Miniello, 2012, p. 216).

The need to report data on school effectiveness, to show how education can influence students' progress beyond their social, cultural and economic background and the need to understand which factors allow determining the influence have allowed the birth of an important line of research: School Effectiveness Research (SER) (Rosa, 2013), today declined through:

- Research on effective schools, which attempts to study the variables related to the school;
- Research on instructional effectiveness, which instead deals with the teaching/learning processes that take place within classrooms.

These are approaches that investigate different effectiveness factors that influence instructional processes but share the objective of highlighting the ability of schools to significantly influence student performance beyond personal and entry characteristics.

¹ Where: $\hat{Y}_i$ = expected exit performance of student i ; α = intercept or constant (value assumed by Y when X_1 and X_2 are equal to zero; β_1 = first regression coefficient (average change in Y associated with a unit change in X_1 holding X_2 constant, i.e. net of its effect); X_{i1} = entry performance of student i ; β_2 = second regression coefficient (average change in Y associated with a unit change in X_2 holding X_1 constant, i.e. net of its effect); X_{i2} = socio-cultural level of student i ; ε_i = regression residue (difference between Y_i and $\hat{Y}_i$, i.e. between observed performance and expected performance).

It is therefore a question of predicting the use of multilevel regression models, capable of “allowing, unlike classic ones, to take into account the hierarchical nature of the data” (Rosa, 2013, p. 17).

These models are characterized by observing the hierarchical nature of institutions, paying attention to considering students belonging to classes and classes to schools. Furthermore, they consider the effect and influence of the environment on the individual and on their performance, taking into account socioeconomic characteristics (Corsini, 2008).

In multilevel regression models, the “classical” linear regression formula is extended to the case of hierarchically organized data, where student i is considered a first-level unit and schools j are considered second-level units:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0j + \beta_1jX_{ij} + e_{ij} \text{ (Corsini, 2008)}$$

In the hierarchical formulation, a student’s performance is therefore a function of the average performance of the school, the effect of the relationship with the socio-economic status within his school and the residual of the regression.

In this way, multilevel analyses can pursue with greater precision the two fundamental objectives in SER research:

1. Establish the net effects of each of the variables in play, that is, net of the influence exerted by the other variables considered that affect student performance.
2. Attempt to identify, keeping under control the characteristics of the students and those of the context, the school variables (those that we could define as process variables: organization, relational climate, teaching methods, etc.) that have a significant influence on the results.

3. REPORTING THROUGH ADDED VALUE FOR A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

The Coleman Report (Rosa, 2013), to measure school effectiveness, when the school’s objective is to lead to reaching the learning levels desired by students, deals with measuring and considering student performance (output) as a fundamental parameter of school effectiveness. When one wants to obtain information on the effect of the school on student performance, then all exogenous variables that determine an influence on the educational processes are taken into consideration (Kubler, 2012).

To determine a measurement of student performance and the quality of educational institutions, one can use added value.

With reference to the issue of school effectiveness and its measurement, added value indicates the specific contribution of the school to the progress of students “net” of other factors that, although “external” to the educational processes, significantly influence such progress (Rosa, 2013, p. 35).

Among the various variables, two types of these have a very important value: the socio-economic-cultural level and previous performance. Research has widely highlighted how the disadvantage that resides in the family environment can influence the performance of students and how previous performance is a predictor of subsequent performance.

These factors within the learning context are intertwined with numerous other variables but to determine the effectiveness of an education and training system, an analysis must be put in place that allows the starting conditions of students to be included and that cannot be limited to considering exclusively the results achieved by students (Capperucci, 2017).

In recent years, greater interest has developed in added value as an indicator of school effectiveness, this aspect has led many States to base their reporting systems on the detection of added value with the production of models that allow the overcoming of those previously mentioned.

Evaluation systems that allow institutions to meet their external reporting needs have been adopted by many countries around the world and have used scientific and methodological results to identify tools and procedures that could lead to a “valid, reliable and fair system evaluation” (Rosa, 2013, p. 22).

As a result, measurements are carried out on different students each time and it is not possible to observe whether changes between one measurement and another determine progress or regression in the school or student performance.

Using the longitudinal approach, students’ progress can be determined using multiple measurements over a period of time, in this way it is possible to adopt the added value and separate its contribution to students’ progress by comparing it with other schools that present important conditions such as entry skills and the socio-cultural background of students (Rosa, Silva, 2014).

The differences between the various accountability measures are represented by a different approach to the evaluation of school effectiveness, but these can use incentives to support self-assessment with a view to improving the institutions (Castellana, Corsini, 2018).

By proceeding in this way, it was intended to obtain results (expected values) relating to the districts or constituencies of the school system; their comparison with real values allows us to detect the effectiveness of each institution, and the possibility of creating tools that allow us to have a more profitable relationship with experience, subjected to empirical control (Dewey, 1959), creating contexts that put users in a position to exercise their own choices.

Over the years, added value has been used to respond to the need to evaluate teachers and managers based on effectiveness and on their ability to determine an additional value to student learning, thus promoting authentically democratic institutions, to the extent that they allow each user to exercise informed choices.

However, this aspect is determined within multi-colored contexts characterized by heterogeneous groups that are influenced by factors that are correlated with each other and that are not included in the models of added value (Corsini, 2012). Finally, another aspect, detectable in the American debate, has highlighted how the measurement of added value does not offer the possibility of knowing the ways in which teachers can make a contribution in terms of learning for their students, since it only records data that allows the school to be classified as effective and ineffective based on the value produced (Covi, Olivero, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Evaluating the effectiveness of a school allows us to determine how much an educational reality is able to influence the improvement of each individual student. Added value allows us to further clarify this last aspect because it collects information to detect the effectiveness of a school and leads to filtering the results obtained by students from factors over which the school cannot exercise control. The ever-increasing autonomy with which schools are equipped has allowed us to pay greater attention to this type of evaluation, which is why in several countries the systems for evaluating school effectiveness have been based on added value. The aspects outlined above are still alive in the debate that concerns the investigation in educational contexts. Attention is paid to combining the quantitative dimension that is detected by measuring added value with a qualitative dimension determined by the observation of what happens within schools (Corsini, 2008) and which regulates the teaching/learning process.

Added value measures often record untrue values because the rewards or

sanctions stipulated for teachers lead to concentrating the work in the classroom to teach ways to students to face structured tests. Surely in the future, within the debate, there will be new aspects to consider such as: the influence of added value as a means to motivate or on the contrary, not motivate students in achieving objectives.

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