International Conference
The Future of Education
Edition 4

Equity and Grade Repetition

A Challenge for Education

Florence, 12-13 June 2014

Carlos Pinto-Ferreira | Anabela Serrão
Lisbon, Portugal

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

The challenge is reaching equity and quality

Education systems are facing the challenge of meeting high quality standards while ensuring that every student completes successfully nine (or more) years of schooling.

This concern for equity underlies the ***education for all*** paradigm which is now universally accepted as a key policy to promote sustainable socioeconomic development.

This policy corresponds to the recognition that equity – beyond being a matter of ethics – is a fundamental element of sustainable social and economic development.

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Several sources of inequity

One of them is grade repetition – a phenomenon that occurs only in some countries.

This research aims at measuring in what extent grade repetition impacts equity and monitoring its evolution over time.

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Equity: a definition

*Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is **fairness**, which basically means making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential.*

*The second is **inclusion**, in other words ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling school failure helps to overcome the effects of social deprivation which often causes school failure.*

OECD, 2008, Policy Brief: Ten Steps to Equity in Education, Paris: OECD

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Grade repetition: a facet of inequity

Compelling students to repeat the very same grade until reaching a set of required learning objectives.

Frequent in France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg.

It is obvious that grade repetition is an anachronistic mechanism which should not coexist with compulsory education.

Considering the negative pedagogic, financial and economic impacts of this phenomenon, the monitoring of its evolution along time is critical, in order to call the attention of policy decision makers and to help improving people's awareness.

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Methodology

PISA databases 2003 and 2012

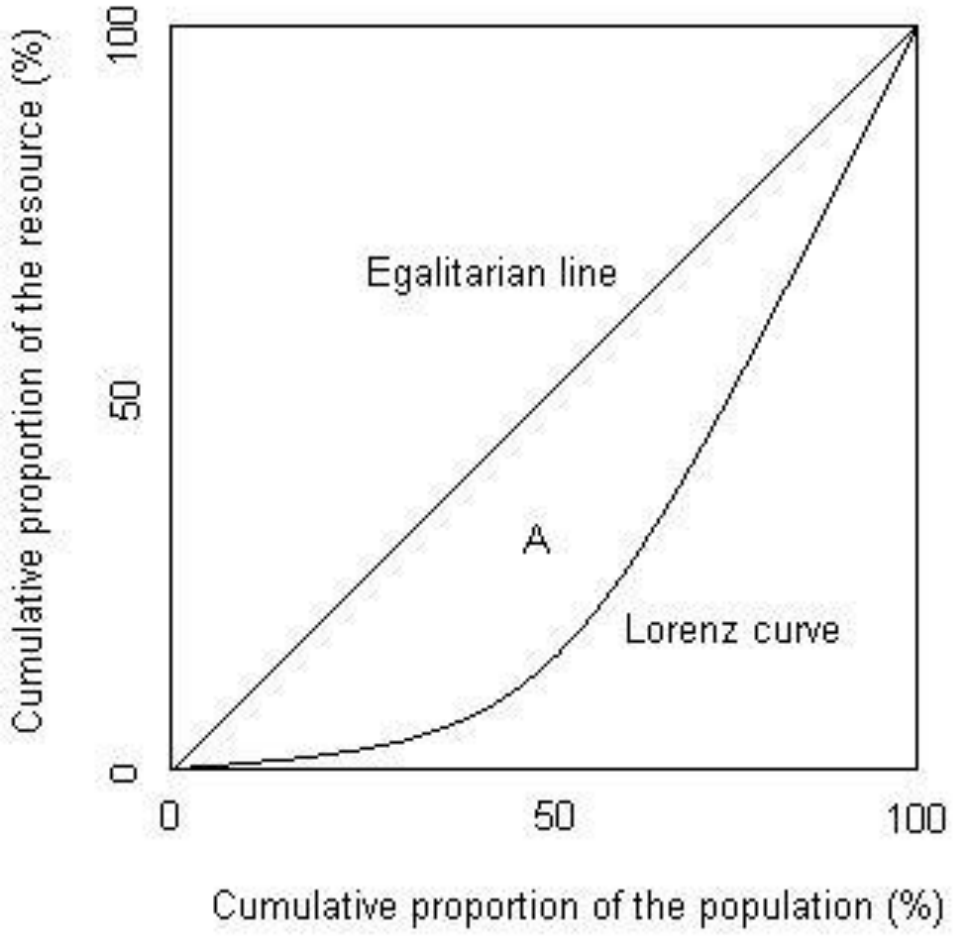
Repeat (grade repetition)

Plausible value in Mathematics

GINI calculated using the Vinod Thomas, Yan Wang, and Xibo Fan (1999) methodology

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

GINI – Lorenz Curve



Modal year for 15-year-old students

The modal school year of Poland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, among others is the 9th, whereas United Kingdom and New Zealand have the majority of their 15-year-old students enrolled in the 11th grade.

On the other hand, Japan, Iceland, Norway, and Canada, are those countries where almost all 15 years old students attend the 10th grade: also, a majority of countries have this grade as the modal school year.

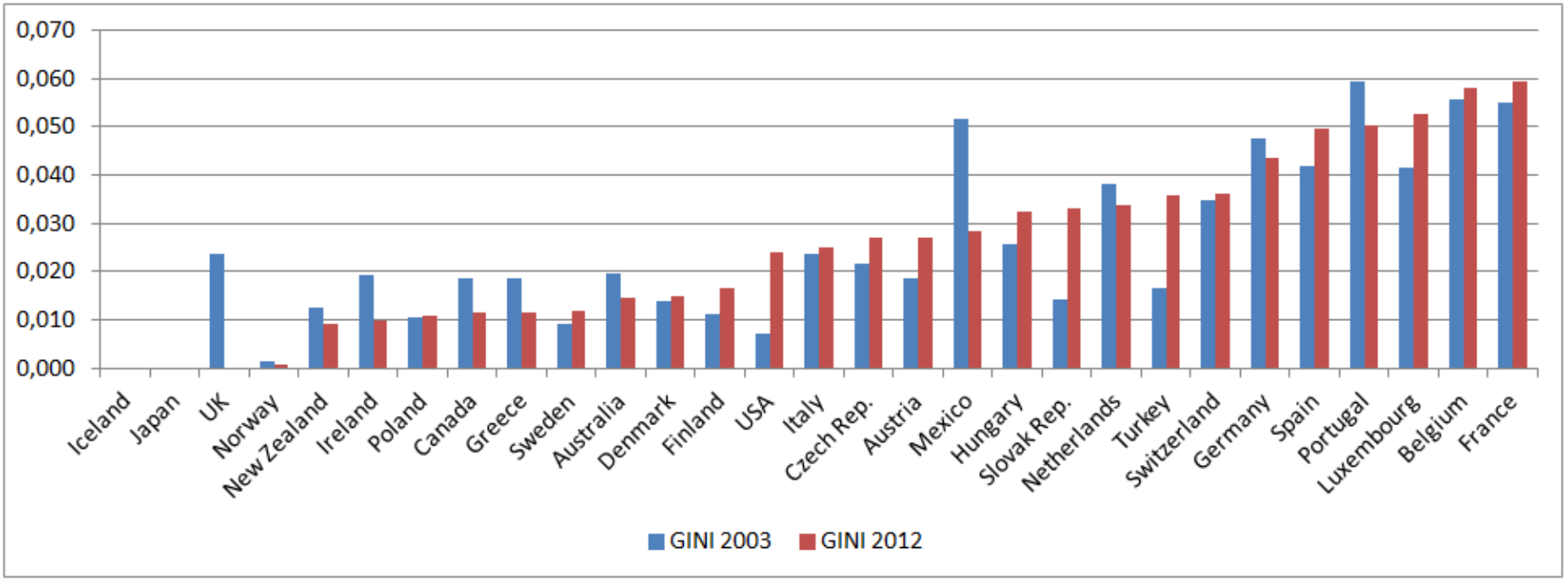
Interestingly, modal school year for 15-year-old students does not seem to be related with country performance.

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Grades	7		8		9		10		11		12		2012
Countries	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	GINI
Australia	0,0	176	0,1	363	10,8	469	70,0	503	19,1	528	0,0	555	0,015
Austria	0,3	341	5,4	409	43,3	492	51,0	528	0,1	661			0,027
Belgium	0,9	356	6,4	404	30,9	455	60,8	562	1,0	647	0,0	727	0,058
Canada	0,1	398	1,1	413	13,2	487	84,6	524	1,0	575	0,1	632	0,012
Czech Rep.	0,4	323	4,5	372	51,1	491	44,1	523					0,027
Denmark	0,1	364	18,2	461	80,6	509	1,0	535					0,015
Finland	0,7	360	14,2	468	85,0	528			0,1	690			0,017
France	0,0	286	1,9	354	27,9	406	66,6	531	3,5	589	0,1	661	0,059
Germany	0,6	355	10,0	420	51,9	499	36,7	560	0,8	586			0,044
Greece	0,3	308	1,2	321	4,0	373	94,5	458					0,012
Hungary	2,8	349	8,7	402	67,8	480	20,6	517					0,033
Iceland							100,0	493					0,000
Ireland	0,0	357	1,9	447	60,5	495	24,3	523	13,3	502			0,010
Italy	0,4	331	1,7	370	16,8	433	78,5	499	2,6	522	0,0	443	0,025
Japan							100,0	536					0,000
Luxembourg	0,7	387	10,2	417	50,7	460	38,0	549	0,5	647			0,053
Mexico	1,1	329	5,2	346	30,8	393	60,8	429	2,1	456	0,1	425	0,028
Netherlands			3,6	436	46,7	495	49,2	555	0,5	680			0,034
New Zealand					0,1	402	6,2	456	88,3	501	5,3	535	0,009
Norway					0,4	428	99,4	490	0,2	534			0,001
Poland	0,5	380	4,1	415	94,9	522	0,5	669					0,011
Portugal	2,4	358	8,2	396	28,6	462	60,5	536	0,3	621			0,050
Slovak Rep.	1,7	311	4,5	347	39,5	474	52,7	501	1,6	597			0,033
Spain	0,1	329	9,8	380	24,1	433	66,0	519	0,0	595			0,050
Sweden	0,0	331	3,7	372	94,0	480	2,2	564					0,012
Switzerland	0,6	374	12,9	447	60,6	530	25,6	577	0,2	683			0,036
Turkey	0,5	365	2,2	369	27,6	398	65,5	471	4,0	470	0,3	439	0,036
USA			0,3	370	11,7	407	71,2	487	16,6	509	0,2	556	0,024
UK					0,0	512	1,3	523	95,0	493	3,6	498	0,000

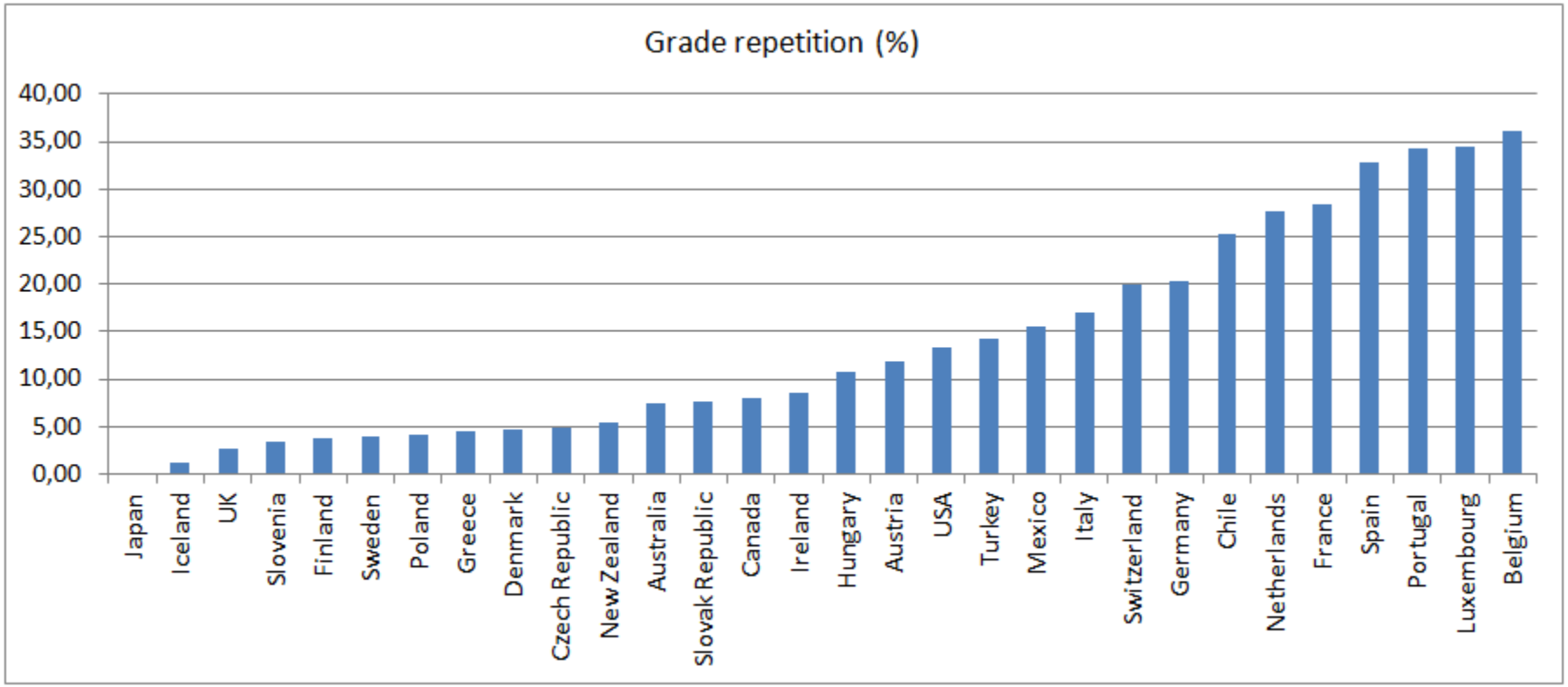
EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

GINI – 2003-2012



EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Grade repetition – 2012



EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Conclusions (I)

From the first inspection of these columns it is salient that the values of the GINI are exiguous – but no negligible – ranging from zero (Japan and Iceland in both cycles) to a maximum value of 0.059 (France, 2012 and Portugal, 2003).

This indicates that, as far as grade repetition is concerned, the inequity is not very high in OECD countries, except for France, Portugal, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg.

Conclusions (II)

Of more concern is the fact that off the 29 countries considered in this analysis, only 11 exhibit better figures in 2012 than in 2003. On the other hand,16 countries are in 2012 worse off, in particular, United States, Slovak Republic, Turkey, Finland, Austria and Sweden.

This drastic change in the GINI index deserves further scrutiny to determine the reason(s) underlying these observations.

As repetition rates changes as a result of policy measures, it should be interesting to understand what orientations were transmitted to these education systems to explain such a variation.

EQUITY AND GRADE REPETITION – A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

Thank you!
Questions?

Carlos Pinto-Ferreira: cpf@isr.ist.utl.pt
Anabela Serrão: aserraopt@gmail.com