



Equal Chances in Education – Rights and Opportunities For All

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The aim of this article is to contextualize the meaning of equal educational opportunities in order to understand the pattern of chances for education from a social justice perspective. Also, this paper wants to provide specific characteristics of equal rights and opportunities in education. We already know that in educational institutions, the educators and students are different in terms of various factors. These include race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, educational qualifications and socio-economic background. Equal chances in education are an important sign of a good society with an improved educational system and attention for all students to achieve objectives.

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1. Introduction

The concept of equality in the domain of educational opportunities among different social groups is one of the important aspects for the development of socio-economic and political points in every society. Education is one of the means for eradicating social problems in order to bring the people into the horizontal field of human development. James S. Coleman (1966) formulated some of the principles and concepts of distribution of equal educational opportunities in various ways. For equal distribution of education to the people, there should be some inputs such as pupil expenditure, physical facilities and source of library; there should also be outputs such as racial composition of students, teacher's morale and consideration of student's academic results as seen individually. Equal education for all children means that there should be the same curriculum in the same school. Equality measured by results of schooling and equality defined by racial integration were stressed as effective functions of schools, which bring changes in the students behaviour.

From the stage of early childhood, the individuals are taught that they need to communicate with others in a polite and respectful manner. One has to ensure that their behaviours and actions should not impose detrimental consequences upon the individuals nor hurt anybody. In the implementation of good behaviour and actions, it is essential for the individuals to possess effective communication skills, amiable attitude, approachable nature, helpful and supportive nature and politeness and decorum. With the implementation of these traits, one is able to maintain good terms and relationships with others as well as achieve personal and professional goals in an appropriate manner.

Human rights protect the dignity and freedom of every human being. Learning is regarded as the lifelong concept. The individuals get engaged into learning throughout their lives. It takes place from cradle to grave. Human rights education is also regarded as the lifelong process that continues to take place throughout the lives of the individuals. The major



aspects that need to be taken into account regarding human rights education are as follows: knowledge and skills, values and attitudes, behaviour and action (Aurora, 2016).

The values and attitudes among the individuals are enhanced either through obtaining knowledge and information from others or on their own. Through the inculcation of these traits, the individuals depict honesty, truthfulness, and decorum in the implementation of tasks and functions as well as in dealing with others. Values and norms are regarded to be of utmost significance in enabling the individuals to accomplish their personal as well as professional goals.

In educational institutions, whether individuals are heads, principals, directors, educators, staff members or students, they cannot carry out their tasks and activities in seclusion. It is vital for the individuals to work in collaboration and integration with others. To promote collaboration and integration in an effective manner, it is vital for the individuals to establish mutual understanding and good terms and relationships with each other. The educators at all levels of education encourage students to work in collaboration with each other, exchange ideas and obtain support and assistance. This would enable them to enhance their academic performance. On the other hand, when educators and staff members work in collaboration and integration with each other, they are able to carry out their job duties appropriately and incur job satisfaction.

2. What means a chance in education?

The right to education and learning is one of the most important human rights. These rights create the premises necessary for the full assertion of personality and human dignity, as well as for the development of the whole society. The level of potential of intellectual development of the person depends not only on the promotion of the person on the social scale and its social status, but also the progress of society as a whole, the evolution economic, social and cultural life.

Every person's right to education occupies a central place in the system human rights, it being a sine qua non condition for the exercise other fundamental rights and freedoms, for the effective fulfillment of personality.

One of the most well-known forms of equality in education is equal access, considered "the mother of all equality in education" (Dupriez and Vandenberghe, 2004), but soon other forms became known: equal treatment, equality of results and equality of impact (Meuret, 2002). For some equality of opportunities in education means ensuring equal conditions, prospects of success for all individuals who show the same type of skills, talent, desire and will to capitalize on them. - in this case within the education system (Meuret, 2002). Because this concept emphasizes what is known in the literature as equality of start or equality of initial position, it has been questioned by those who have questioned the fact that some people have various forms of disability that still disadvantage in this competition. from the beginning. For this reason, the French sociologist appeals to Amartya Sen's theory that equality of opportunity is what provides each individual with those skills, abilities, basic skills ("capabilities") that allow them to integrate socially.

Given this diversity of forms and perspectives on equality in education but also on the differences between education systems in terms of organization, structure, content, etc. it is very difficult to say what equal education means for all. In a document from the EU's interdisciplinary working group, GERESE, an accessible and equitable education system for all is one that "treats all students as equals and promotes a fair society in the sense that essential goods are distributed according to the rules of justice and which favors the collaboration between individuals from equal positions "(GERESE, 2005).

Walzer (1997, apud GERESE, 2005) argues that possible inequalities in education must be independent of other forms of inequality (social, economic, political, etc.), is in the same

direction. All these conceptions of equality in education involve state intervention, which contradicts the opinion of libertarians: the state must ensure only that individuals are treated equally, any other type of intervention is illegitimate (Nozick, 1974, apud GERESE, 2005). Libertarians believe that the most important thing in school is to ensure equal treatment for students, which means, at least in theory, that any individual, regardless of his or her particularities, has the right and freedom to get whatever education he or she wants in any school. Equality of results refers to the situation in which individuals who attended the same schools, with the same qualification / specialization / profile, for the same period of time to obtain identical results: "at equal effort, equal results" (Neagu, 2009). A new form of equality has been discussed - equality of impact that refers to Bourdieu's "symbolic violence": the content circulated in the school must take into account the culture of each group that forms the society in order to thus avoiding the imposition of the dominant group culture on minorities (Meuret, 2002).

Equal opportunities mean offering multiple options for different abilities and skills, "an education for all and for everyone", an education open to all people, regardless of age and socio-economic conditions, but also an education for everyone, depending on their specific needs - avoiding homogenization and encouraging diversity - This option has been supported by equal opportunities policies aimed at combating exacerbated exclusion and selection, training basic skills for all individuals, "second chance" education for those who have left the education system, integrating formal education with non-formal education and informal education, so as to extend learning situations.

This perspective on education returns today through the content of the Memorandum on Learning through key objectives and messages sent to all EU Member States.

The document no longer refers only to education and initial training, but gives education new dimensions and values, being considered as a lifelong process.

3. Education and society

Education is one of the most important means of reducing ignorance and inequality in society. It helps an individual to raise one's own social status in various ways. Knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through education help one to lead a desired quality of life. Primary education is the first step of an individual in the process of development and social progress. The ability to read, write and count has powerful effects on the quality of our lives. It provides freedom to understand the world, to lead an informed life, communicate and be in touch with others. Therefore, basic education opens the doors to the world.

It is important to realize that education is a part of society. It is not something alien, something that stands outside. Indeed, it is a key set of institutions and a key set of social and personal relations. It is just as central to a society as shops, small businesses, factories, farms, health care institutions, law firms, insurance companies, banks, unpaid domestic labor in the home, and so many other places in which people and power interact.

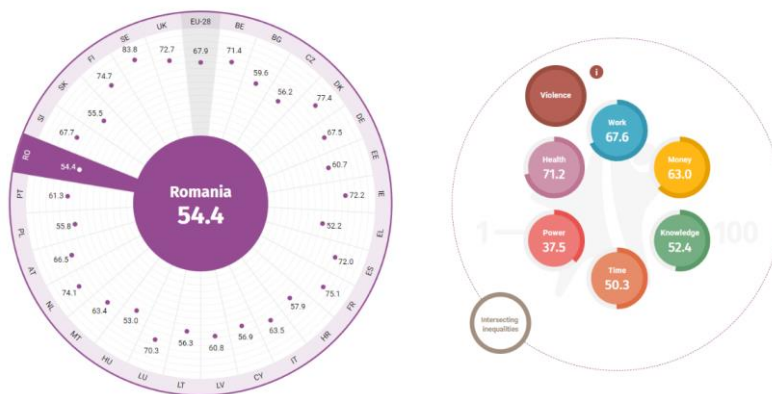
In general, education is determined by the basics economic development of society, develops and changes with it. The transformations that take place in the economic base and in social life determine changes in education, it adapts to the new social conditions created. A profound relationship between society and education can only be achieved by starting from the thesis according to which the social is a result of the interaction and coexistence of people. Into the within it, education appears to us as a social action that mediates and diversifies the relations between human and society, thus fostering human development through society and society through people. Consequently, human education and the social transformations it realize they are in a relationship of reciprocity, in the sense that the educated man, acting on

society, in parallel with its transformation, transforms itself, a result which, in turn, it reverberates on society.

Education clearly plays a key social role in the formation of identities (Apple and Buras 2006; Youdell 2006; Youdell 2011), a key point that is so powerfully recognized in the literature on the school-to-prison pipeline and in the material that is so critical of the over-representation of students of color in special education (Alexander, 2012). That is, children spend a very large part of their lives inside the buildings we call schools. They come to grips with authority relations, with the emotional labor both of managing one's presentation of self and of being with others who are both the same and different. Transformations in the content and structure of this key organization have lasting effects on the dispositions and values that we do and do not act upon, on who we think we are and on who we think we can become. Care, love, and solidarity—or the absence of them—are among the constitutive building blocks of one's identity.

4. Some facts of Romanian educational equality

Since, to some extent, gender equality contains subjective elements, what related to personal experience and perception, it is difficult to quantify it. With all however, discrepancies between women and men at EU level are measured by the Index Gender Equality of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), an institution of European Union. The 2020 index places Romania on the penultimate place in the EU, with a score of 54.4 (where 0 represents total inequality and 100, total equality), followed only by Hungary and Greece, the European average being 67,9¹⁴⁸. In terms of the field Knowledge¹⁴⁹, Romania has a score of 52.4, calculated according to the level of education and participation in non-formal education - equal for women and men, but the lowest in the EU, respectively the degree of segregation by fields of study - students dominating in continuing the fields of education, health, humanities and art, like is shown below.



National statistics indicate that we can not talk about discrepancies between girls and boys in terms of participation in education: the net coverage rate for the 2018-2019 school year was 51.3%, even with almost 4 percent higher among girls¹⁵⁰. Girls and boys participate

¹⁴⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2021). Gender Equality Index 2020- Romania. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>

¹⁴⁹ The index measures the following dimensions: Work, Money, Knowledge, Time, Power and Health, analyzing also two satellite dimensions: Gender Violence and Intersecting Inequalities.

¹⁵⁰ The net school enrollment rate is the number of children / pupils / students of official age corresponding to each level of education, included in these levels of education, calculated as a ratio percentage of the resident population of the same official age group. " Source: National Institute of Statistics. (2019). The educational system in Romania. Synthetic data, p. 20.

approximately equally in pre-school, primary, secondary and high school with slightly higher pass rates and slightly lower dropout rates in girls' turn. Great differences are observed in vocational education, dominated by boys, respectively in girls-dominated post-secondary education. In terms of education higher, at all ISCED levels (6, 7 and 8, bachelor, master and doctorate), weight students was superior (54.2%) for the academic year 2018-2019. With all however, education is a feminized field in terms of the proportion of staff female teachers: in 2018-2019, women accounted for 90.6% of the total of teachers in primary education, 73.3% of secondary education, 71.7% in high school. At university level, unlike other levels of education, is characterized by a gap of only 1.8% percentage points by gender (the share of female teachers was 50.9%, and the share of male teachers was 49.1%)¹⁵¹. The majority of students enrolled in 2018-2019 in undergraduate education was made up of Romanians (95.9%). The distribution by ethnicity shows that 3.5% were Hungarians, 0.2% were Roma and in equal proportion Germans, Turks and Serbs (each by 0.1%)

5. Conclusions

For teachers, especially if they are far from sources of information, managing the relationship with children from vulnerable groups can be very difficult and can it meant considerable effort, especially given that schools have few resources (human and material). Therefore, one of the most effective ways in which the teacher can act is to call on external actors to support or support him guide in situations where he has difficulties. Outside of school, in most cases there is expertise and availability. Therefore, we recommend the collaboration of the teacher / the principal / teacher with specialists in the field of special education, with O.N.G.s which aims to integrate children with disabilities or Roma children, or those specialized in human rights, gender equality. At the same time, most often the family can be the most important support, as well, in the case of children with disabilities, the specialists (personal assistants, psychologists, doctors) who have them in care.

Romania is making important steps in terms of approaching classroom education in the spirit equal opportunities. For now, this translates mainly at the level regulations (prohibition of ethnic segregation, the right of children with disabilities to participate in mainstream education, equal rights of both genders in education, non-discrimination legislation, etc.), but are rarely present in the educational process elements that realize, day by day, the process of an education in the spirit of diversity and equal opportunities.

Equal opportunities involve: resolving the discrepancy between the right to self-determination and the actual experience of self-determination. This discrepancy is due to lack opportunities of individuals for whom different circumstances of a personal, social and economic nature, is outside their control, which leads to inequality of opportunity. The theory of "equal opportunities" (Dennis E. Mithaug, 1996) justifies correcting social injustices (social redress) in favor those at a disadvantage, stating that:

- ✚ all individuals have the right to self-determination
- ✚ psychological and social conditions derived from experimenting freedom causes some individuals and some groups to experience incorrect advantages in determining their own future compared to others;
- ✚ diminishing the chances of self-determination of those who are in a disadvantageous situation it is due to forces socially beyond their control;
- ✚ consequently, it is the duty of the community / society to promote improved chances of success in the process self-determination for the disadvantaged.

Therefore, it is essential that collective action includes optimization chances of success in the process of self-determination by:

¹⁵¹https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/sistemul_educational_in_romania_2018_2019_0.pdf



- ✚ improving autonomy capacities in the thinking and action of all individuals
- ✚ increasing the spectrum of opportunities of choice and action
- ✚ optimizing the individual capacity ratio and social opportunity by eliminating obstacles and construction encouraging opportunity to a greater extent expression of self-determination.

The ultimate goal is to reach the stage of perfection / excellence by all individuals, by promoting equality and freedom (existence of a favorable framework non-discriminatory).

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