Education and Continuous Education

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Edited by

Georgeta Raţă and Patricia-Luciana Runcan

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FOREWORD

European education and training systems have to deal with significant challenges and questions concerning their contribution to the development of economies that are globally competitive and knowledge-based, and the way they ensure societies that are socially cohesive and equitable. Knowledge from research carried out by social scientists in the field of education concern the causes and consequences of early school leaving; the education policies and programmes for early childhood education and care that contribute to social equality and more inclusive education; the governance mechanisms delivering empowering opportunities for learners and their families; the policies, programmes and practices useful in facilitating learning opportunities and capabilities; the prevention or overcoming of inequalities, exclusion and disengagement; the prevention strategies in early school leaving; the proper guidance of education policy-making and practice; the relationship between existing cultural, economic and social inequalities and digital technologies in schools and homes; the relationship between gender and education; the social justice principles governing education and training policies concerning the distribution of life chances; the strategies that can reduce gender inequalities; the way education and training systems can foster creativity and innovativeness; the way in which different kinds of assessment practices affect learners and learning; the way in which knowledge and preparation can contribute to the smooth integration of migrant children in European schools and societies; and the way socially-inclusive models of higher education can be developed while still ensuring quality and competitiveness. The book ***Education and Continuous Education*** addresses some of these topics.

Chapter One, *Social Aspects of Education*, appeals to policy-makers and practitioners interested in promoting equity and inclusion in education and training. The first essay in this chapter focuses on the participation of rural families in the school activities of their children, involvement that should happen with the help from social workers, and relying on teams made up of parents, educators, social workers and other specialists in the field of education. As for the influence of education on earnings mobility, the conclusion of the authors is that learning prevents to some extent falling income mobility (the higher the regular education of the household is, the higher the income mobility is). The investigation of the applicability

of the constructivist career counselling model shows that school counsellors should use a tool developed in a pragmatic manner, resulting in a counselling guideline centred on "soft skills." As far as the complex therapy of speech and language disorders in both children and adults is concerned, the author of the essay on this topic recommends group constitution from different geographic areas, provision of sufficient practice instruments for all subjects or provision of the best use, formation of trainers in this matter by means of specialized courses, participation of more students in the investigations.

Chapter Two, *Adolescence and Education*, approaches three relevant aspects in the life of teenagers. First, the perception of students' school feedback depending on such variables as education level, gender, high school profile, perceived self-efficacy, satisfaction with school, self-esteem, and social background, suggests that teachers should reconsider their assessment practices. Then, the difficulty of pursuing both sport and learning at high levels—for which the answer suggested by the authors is the support of the family. The third essay in this chapter deals with teenagers' further education plans and concludes that for most teenagers, obtaining a college degree is more valuable than the subject area itself.

The first essay in *Chapter Three*, *Contemporary Issues in Higher Education*, introduces the reader into the world of pre-service social workers: the conclusion of the authors is that social work undergraduates need more flexibility and control in the management of all stages of a case and that keeping students in the same organization for more than one semester should be avoided. Another author claims that the factors determining the level of pre-service teacher training are the students' teaching skills, interest and motivation to train, the quality of scientific information, and the quality of teaching practice. Two authors deal with the importance of active-participative learning in the educational environment and reach the conclusion that teachers should help students become responsible for their own practice. One solution to achieve this goal is the ongoing training of librarians, a strategy that underlines the librarians' place in society and their importance in the information, documentation and research activities of both students and teachers. Improper training in health education, for instance, can result in the failure to recognize cultural differences in the delivery of clinical services (poor communication, misdiagnosis, and inappropriate treatment). The last two essays of the chapter deal with language education from two different perspectives: in-class performance in terms of field of study at college (in Spain), and specialised glossaries in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (in Romania).

Chapter Four, *Adult Education*, focuses on four critical topics in the field. European funds in adult education and training (in Romania) offer favourable conditions for the professional training of the current generation and ensure their sustainability for future generations in an effort to ensure continuity, thereby guaranteeing social impact on the entire population of Romania on short, medium and long term. Other authors show that the integration of deprived people on the labour market depends largely on age, education, and gender. As for the relationship between Postmodern education and the new media, the author of the essay claims that, given its strategic position in any society, education should be the last domain subject to the Postmodern thinking reforms. As for the teaching of languages to in-service administrators (in the UK), the materials and teaching strategies applied in the language classes need to be consistently amended to meet the learners and offer a variety of contexts for language acquisition in a practical way, thus enhancing the learners' lifelong abilities to perform daily tasks and enjoy better lives.

The last chapter, *Theological Perspectives*, approaches a wide variety of topics. First, limiting religious freedom—materialised in the acceptance of contraceptives or the display of Christian symbols in schools. Then, Christian and Stoic morals are compared, and the conclusion of the author is that the crucial difference between the two morals comes from the different visions on the world and the human condition. Another author tackles the issue of the social dimension of the Gospel and recommends the involvement of New-Protestant Churches in social life given that the first forms of social work occurred within the church. Another essay emphasises the pedagogy of the Gospel and its role in genuine social inclusion. The final essay presents the scientific and cultural concerns of the Romanian Biblical scholar Iosif-Iuliu Olariu in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

RURAL FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL ACTIVITY OF CHILDREN

GABRIELA-FELICIA GEORGEVICI

Introduction

Family constitutes a distinct social reality. The family's specific characteristics come from its numerous functions: economic, socialisation, and solidarity, as well as sexual and reproductive (Mitrofan & Ciupercă 1998). If its moral role is also achieved (love, affection, understanding and mutual respect) this constitutes a strong family, emotionally bound, and translated into the mutual satisfaction of the two partners' needs and aspirations. This type of family will generate a favourable climate where children can be well brought up and educated.

Children's futures represent a permanent preoccupation for society: "the education of the young generations as entities in order to train them in accordance with society's expectations and finalities and also of human beings as active agents of social evolution has constituted a permanent preoccupation" (Batâr 2003, 149). Family is the social group modelling children's personalities from the very early phases of their life, also preparing their adaptation to the social environment (Mihăilescu 2003), a process in which adolescence "is the time when the developmental task of identity integration, of exploring and synthesising sense of self across contexts and relationships, begins to come to the fore" (Jones & Deutsch 2012, 19).

Family is considered the most appropriate social community for the child's formation, as it offers models and social roles they will have to fulfil (Iluţ 2005). Parents should provide models with appropriate conduct, their qualities and attitudes having a decisive formative influence. Many studies show the importance of the parental role as "[a] socialisation [agent] in the lives of children and adolescents, with particular attention focused on the protective role of parental monitoring" (Padilla-Walker, Harper & Bean 2013, 605).

Building a future for children can be done through parents' sustained action, as "the most powerful influence on the socialisation process is

achieved by the family structure and functioning" (Chipea 2001, 261), and by the educational system working together for a harmonious integration into social life. Considering the multitude of thorny situations that can occur in school, school social work should play an essential part. School social work consists in the "action of removing social-family obstacles standing in the way of education" (Stahl 2002, 100). Recent studies have shown that school social workers are "involved in prevention and leadership work" (Kelly et al. 2012, 249), and this would lead to the school's true and more systematic focus on the child, and to a better adaptation of education to the increasingly complex needs of youth.

Methods

Quantitative research was realised through a questionnaire-based sociological inquiry, conducted on a sample of parents in the rural environment. The study monitors the way education is delivered in the family, the parents' involvement in their children's school activity, and it starts from the identification of certain aspects regarding the child-parent relationship and the parents' degree of awareness of the importance of the existence of a school social worker in the educational institution.

The study objectives attempted to evaluate the bond between parents and children, the parent-school interaction in establishing a family-school partnership beneficial for the child, as well as whether parents consider it necessary for the school attended by their children to employ a social worker.

The hypotheses formulated are:

- If the atmosphere within the family is harmonious, the child's development and school adaptation are stimulated.
- If the family gets involved in the child's school activity and interacts with the teachers, the pupil's problems are known and both parties involved in the educational process act in the best interest and for the assistance of the child.
- Whether the existence of the school social worker in the educational institution is considered useful by the parents.
- If the assistance that can be offered by the school social worker is assessed positively by the parents, then the social worker can supply services in the best interest of the pupil, family and school.

The questionnaire for the parents comprised sixteen questions, with closed, semi-open and open answers, focusing on parents' involvement in

their children's school activity, and if they consider it necessary for the school to employ a social worker and what they think of their role. The target group is represented by the parents of the primary and middle school pupils from three schools of the Forotic commune. The sample was made of all pupils' parents, i.e. 558 persons, but the parents with more than one child attending these schools answered the questionnaire only once. Thus, 488 parents answered the questionnaire, comprising the research target group. The questionnaire was applied with the help of primary school teachers and form teachers in the three schools during the parent-teacher meetings. The identification data were gender, religion and age of the respondent parents.

Results

Parents are currently confronted with numerous problems in children's education and many a time they are clueless as to approaching them in order to reach the most efficient solution, with long-term positive effects. Consequently, a harmonious relation, full of love and trust, confers safety to the child.

Parents permanently influence their children through their example of attitudes and behaviours, by advice offered and requirements formulated, by the life model exhibited, by the way of communicating and expressing their feelings, and finding problem-solving resources. From the study we remark that the parents perceive their family as being balanced (44%), normal (38%), loving (10%), harmonious (8%), and 79% affirm that their relationship with their children is good or very good, agreeing that if the family atmosphere is harmonious, the child's development and school adaptation are stimulated.

The very good relations between parents and children describe those types of bonds that permanently optimise the education process, the pupils finding an effective permanent and sustained support in the family. The percentage of good and very good relations (76%) highlights the parents' interest for such relations with their own children and the avoidance of unsatisfactory or conflictual relations, prejudicial for both parties.

The development of a relation based on trust and sincerity leads to school success and the maintenance of a good self-image. Building and developing such sentiments require patience. The family atmosphere is important in the child's development, a fact found from the parents' answers as 69% of the parents consider the family climate very important for child development.

The quality of family education leaves its mark on the development of individuals' personalities from early childhood, influencing the opportunities of school success and ulterior affirmation. As for the factors accounting for children's education, more than half of the parents (67%) consider that this task is first the family's responsibility, and only 21% affirm that it is the task of school and community.

Within the division of family roles, the mother maintains the connection with school. An important condition of school success is motherly affection. Its absence or, even worse, maternal rejection, influence both immediate success and long-term results in a negative manner.

The mother's educational style is favourable when she manifests proactive conducts taking into account the child's capacities. The mother's attitudes stimulate the school development and adaptation when she manifests tolerance and prudent confidence in the child's possibilities, and acknowledges and respects their presence. Most children (41%) resort to their mother for help and problem solving, which shows the strong bond existing between mother and child at this age. From the viewpoint of personality factors, the most important are emotional stability and a good command of emotional states, a good adaptation to the family environment, maternal perseverance and energy.

School success depends on a parental style characterised by a combination of affection and support for school activities, as well as control and exigency in evaluating the child's activity. We remark that a high number of pupils are helped or controlled while doing their homework (71%), as support is necessary at this age. The mother is the one in charge of the child's school preparation and homework assistance (49%), and she attends parent-teacher conferences more often (60%), the father occupying a second place (19%).

From the analysis of the answers received we may conclude that most parents are content with the school attended by their child (87%), with the teachers' activity (82%), participation in the activities initiated by the school (71%), attendance of parent-teacher conferences (85%), and relations with the primary school teacher, form teacher and the other parents. The connection with the school is manifested by the school requirements at the parents' demand or whenever thorny situations require it. The mother, as a factor of affection and equilibrium, is usually in charge of maintaining the connection with the teachers and other specialists from school. Families who responsibly answer school requirements and demands and get involved in school activities are factors generating very good results in the children's school activity.

Although the school has not yet employed a school social worker, the parents (87%) consider it necessary for the educational institution to employ such a specialist. The help offered by the Mayor's Office social worker, who intervenes when called, cannot cover pupils' daily needs. Furthermore, from the answers received we may affirm that the parents (81%) would appeal to and co-operate with the school social worker if the child had problems, or for their school orientation and career counselling. The parents consider that the social worker in school should observe their children, how they get along with the other children, should find the causes of poor results or the child's behaviour, and remark if the child is scared/withdrawn in school, if they have learning difficulties, if they manifest non-adaptation in school, or have conflicts with other children.

Discussion

Family education starts when the child is born and continues permanently—we cannot afford breaks and holidays in education. Parents' involvement in their own child's education and development is not their problem alone—it should become a permanent and joint action of all specialists working with children.

Parents' contribution to the school training effort can be found on a scale ranging from the attendance of all types of activities to participation in occasional school festivals. The measures to be taken in each school in the social assistance office should be in optimising pupil-parent-teacher communication relations, identifying and meeting children's social and emotional needs, and efficiently using the resources provided by school and community.

The help that can be offered by the school social worker is considered beneficial by the parents, and hence it would also be advisable to realise the co-operation between family and school through the social worker. The social worker is a bind between pupil, family, school and community; their activity in school is complex, consisting in the observation and identification of pupils with school adaptation difficulties, prevention of school abandonment and juvenile delinquency, pupils' school orientation, counselling for pupils, parents and teachers, promotion of educational programmes for the prevention of alcoholism, drug use, violent conducts, etc. The social worker can exercise their role in the consolidation of relations between family and school in order to raise awareness about parents' interests in their children's education, as well as increasing cohesion between family members.

The necessity of forming a team made of teachers, parents, social workers and other specialists in view of combining educational influences is justified by the parents' responsibility for their children's futures, as well as by the benefits for child socialisation, in accordance with society's norms.

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INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON INCOME MOBILITY IN ROMANIA

ANA-MARIA ZAMFIR, CRISTINA MOCANU, EVA MILITARU AND ELIZA-OLIVIA LUNGU

Introduction

Inter- and intra-generational social mobility or immobility represent a central characteristic of societies. Recent research has been characterized by an increasing focus on mobility in household incomes. According to human capital theory, education influences access to employment, labour market success, productivity and wages. Following this idea, several studies show that education has a positive effect on household welfare (Himaz & Aturupane 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the patterns of income mobility experienced by households in relation to the education of their members during 2006–2008. We aim to understand if the education accumulated over a lifetime influences the movement of households between income quartiles, or in other words if education has a positive impact on income mobility during times of economic growth. Thus, our data do not allow us to see whether higher education protects households against downward mobility during economic downturns.

We analyse the Romanian EU-SILC micro-data collected in 2007, 2008 and 2009 (with 2006, 2007 and 2008 as reference years) to understand how the accumulated education influences patterns of income mobility of the households in times of economic growth. We estimate the movements of households between income quartiles by calculating continuous time Markov transition matrices, based on discrete Markov transitions probabilities. Overall, our results show a reduction of inequalities and that the higher education of individuals is conducive for the upward income mobility of their households.

The next section of the chapter provides a literature review regarding income and social mobility, wherein we briefly characterize the economic background of Romania for the period of analysis, while in the fourth

section we describe the data and the methodology of the study in detail. The main findings are to be revealed in the fifth section, and we conclude in the last section.

Theoretical Background

The distribution of life chances, incomes and opportunities represents a major topic in sociological studies and numerous scientific contributions on the causes and justness of inequalities that have emerged in the last decade. Within this research strand, scientists have studied the probability of movement along the social hierarchy in order to assess the chances of individuals belonging to various social groups climbing or slipping down on the social "ladder" (Svallfors 2005).

The concept of social mobility was used in 1927 for the first time referring to the circulation of individuals along the social space (Sorokin 1959). There are two classes of studies assessing mobility at inter-generational and intra-generational levels; however, most theoretical models and methods are similar for both levels of analysis.

Functional theories explain the expansion of the educational system as a response to the need of the society to reward individuals fulfilling important positions. From this point of view, educational attainment represents an important mechanism in reaching higher positions in society (Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992). Within the models of status attainment, education represents an important way to acquire better jobs and higher levels of income.

Numerous studies analyse social mobility in relation to the industrialization process. Evolution of the mobility rates is understood as a proxy for the permeability of the social structure and for the accessibility of the socio-economic opportunities. In addition, the level of mobility shows the predominance of the status attainment vs. status prescription processes within a given society. The industrialization theory considers that countries characterized by a similar level of industrialization display similar rates of mobility. From this point of view, economic growth determines changes within the occupational structure that affect income distribution and produce mobility. Such a process implies a multiplication of the number of occupations requiring higher education and the movement of the population in better-paid jobs (Blau, Duncan & Tyree 1978). Thus, the most important hypothesis of this theory says that education has an important effect on the occupational status of the individuals (Treiman 1970).

Brief Overview of Economic Conditions in Romania

In order to get an overview of the Romanian economic and social background for the period our analysis refers to, we should briefly describe a couple of commonly used indicators.

Between the years 2001 and 2008 Romania experienced strong economic growth (6.3% average yearly growth), 2009 being the first year of economic downturn. The unemployment rate varied between 5.8% and 8.4%, but displayed a downward trend beginning in 2004. In 2009 the process of economic recession was accompanied by a significant increase in the unemployment rate. Employment and activity rates displayed rather modest levels, registering around 51%, and respectively 54%.

The analysis of the wellbeing of the Romanian population points out that it has benefited from economic growth, and even more than that the growth was pro-poor in the sense that the relative income growth of the poor was higher than the average income growth for the entire income distribution, or the relative income growth, of the rich. The most vulnerable to the risk of poverty were large households, poorly educated individuals, rural area residents and jobless individuals or households.

Positive changes in the analysed period at the level of income distribution are mainly due to the improvement of the economic conditions in Romania. However, starting from 2009 the economic downturn has brought about some important changes affecting social and economic life, but they are not the subject of the present chapter.

Data and Methodology

Data

We use EU-SILC micro-data collected in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 (EU-SILC is the EU reference source for comparative statistics on income distribution and social exclusion) for Romania. The reference years for income are, respectively, 2006, 2007 and 2008. In Romania, the EU-SILC is designed on a four-yearly rotated panel scheme in which the sample is divided into sub-samples, similar in design and size and representative for the whole population. Each year a quarter of the sample is replaced. The scheme allows for the tracing of households and individuals for up to four consecutive years. The data is based on nationally representative random samples of both households and individuals aged over sixteen. Our analysis is built on a panel of 3,957 households.

We build a synthetic measure of household education—the average education of the household—computed as the average years of education for all household members aged over sixteen. We further split the outcomes into three educational categories: low—general education (up to eight years of school), medium—high school and vocational schools (from eight to twelve years of school), and high—tertiary education and more.

Income mobility is assessed through the movement of households along the income distribution, which is divided into quartiles based on the yearly household income per adult equivalent.

Because of the one-year difference between income reference period and data on household members' education, we have to assume that the average education at household level is not changing between two consecutive years.

Methodology

We attempt to capture the transition of households among income categories between 2006 and 2008 by educational categories, computed as averages at household level. Following Geweke, Marshall & Zarkin (1986) we estimate continuous time Markov transition matrices based on discrete Markov transition probabilities, viewing transition as a continuous random process. The space of states is defined by the income categories in quartiles, and we assume that the movement of households in this space of states is a continuous time homogenous Markov process, thus the observed states are discrete states derived from this continuous process (Fougere & Kamionka 2005). Therefore, our aim is the estimation of the continuous process based on the discrete time process.

The first step is to construct the discrete time transition matrices, P, for the period 2006–2008, as the maximum likelihood estimator for the probability of moving from state i to state j, thus $p_{i,j}=x_{i,j}/x_i$, where $x_{i,j}$ is the total number of transitions from state i to state j over the time Δt and x_i is the total number of individuals found in state i at the previous moment t.

Then, we estimate the continuous process when $\Delta t \to 0$, and we compute the transition intensity matrix Q from the differential equation

$$\frac{dP(t)}{dt} = Q * P(t)$$

with the solution $P(t)=e^{tQ}$ or equivalently $Q=EVE^{-1}$, where E is an n×n matrix containing the eigenvectors of matrix P, while V is an $n \times n$ diagonal matrix, $V=diag\,[(\log \alpha_1)/t,(\log \alpha_2)/t,\ldots,(\log \alpha_n)/t]$, where α_i are the eigen values of matrix P. The elements of the intensity matrix are interpreted as the instantaneous transition rates between states. We computed the