



## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION AS THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL BUILDING

E. TUŞA<sup>1</sup>, M.-M. DOGA<sup>2</sup>

Enache TUŞA<sup>1</sup>, Mirela Mihaela DOGA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> „Ovidius” University of Constanța, RO

<sup>1</sup> E-mail : [enachetusa@gmail.com](mailto:enachetusa@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> E-mail : [mirela\\_doga@yahoo.com](mailto:mirela_doga@yahoo.com)

<sup>1</sup> ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4703-1763>

<sup>2</sup> ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8854-9254>

### **Abstract**

*Education is a public and common good under the care of states and it is often seen as a societal endeavor that involves an inclusive process of policy formulation and implementation. Social actors and civil society, teachers and educators, the private sector, communities, families, youth and children have important roles in accomplishing the right to a quality education. The role of states is essential in establishing and adjusting the standards and norms designed to achieve gender equality. This rights-based approach ensures not only that girls and boys, women and men have access to and promote learning cycles, but that they are equally treated in and through education. These three fundamental principles summarize not only the normative acts of the UN/UNESCO regarding education for sustainable development and for all, but also those related to human rights, generally contained in regulations. The principles transposed in the documents demonstrate that the regulation and the preoccupations in applying the established norms are the attribute of the state, the only one that has the power to generate normative acts, enact and apply, but also to ensure the consolidation of the social capital of man and citizen.*

**Key words:** *professional development, education, equal opportunities, regulations, educational policies, inclusion.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The evolution of society and continuous growth of the human needs impel as main purpose the professional development and access to resources of students, but also other direct beneficiaries of professional and educational training, who can relish the benefits offered by graduate status. Benefits and status provide the

individual with a professional position and obviously the welfare state that emerges in the context of social stratification.

Educational services are intended for all people of school age but also for adults eager to develop and improve their skills and professional status. Therefore, managing a project should mean applying benefits to all and each one. Because it is difficult to move from the ideational space of intentions to the space of the concrete, the concern that everyone be respected and educated had to take shape through a certain liberating social awareness, which gave birth to a sense of social justice. Education for all is both an ideal and a reality over time, various national and international entities regulate what is to do or what should be done.

This goal has been included in declarations, laws and international treaties that establish the right to knowledge and literacy as a fundamental right available to all human beings.

### **1. THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 26 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF 1948**

1. „Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”(<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>)

In the context of *education for all*, in order to facilitate learning, to keep pace with socio-economic development and to redress the gaps between states, 26 article provides regulatory models in the domestic law of states to include provisions on education in all forms of manifestation.

These internal regulations must be found in all stages of education, whether we talk about media literacy, educational communication, instructional management, ICT literacy or learning skills in virtual environments. Strongly related to the power and influence of international regulations, we also find provisions that prove the right to education and development in article 32 of the romanian Constitution. These provisions establish this fundamental right to education, which has a high impact on human development:

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„(1) The right to education is provided by the compulsory general education, by education in high schools and vocational schools, by higher education, as well as other forms of instruction and postgraduate improvement.

(2) Education at all levels shall be carried out in Romanian. Education may also be carried out in a foreign language of international use, under the terms laid down by law.

(3) The right of persons belonging to national minorities to learn their mother tongue, and their right to be educated in this language are guaranteed; the ways to exercise these rights shall be regulated by law.

(4) State education shall be free, according to the law. The State shall grant social scholarships to children or young people coming from disadvantaged families and to those institutionalized, as stipulated by the law.

(5) Education at all levels shall take place in state, private, or confessional institutions, according to the law.

(6) The autonomy of the Universities is guaranteed.

(7) The State shall ensure the freedom of religious education, in accordance with the specific requirements of each religious cult. In public schools, religious education is organized and guaranteed by law.”  
(<https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/europe/RO/consituition.pdf/view> )

Close examination of each paragraph of the constitutional article, one can observe the details related to compulsory education and how the obligation is established through other regulations that have the Constitution as the main source of law. In the content of the article we find details referring to schooling levels, such as compulsory general education, high school education and vocational education.

The autonomy of university education is mentioned as well as the other levels of professional training that find their place in the constitutional regulation. Paragraph 3 of the article recognizes the right to study in the mother tongue for citizens belonging to national minorities. Paragraph 4 regulates free education in the public education system in Romania, one of the first states that have introduced free education in the public education system in South-Eastern Europe. Paragraph 7 mentions religious education that may be established and organized under the law.

The right to education can also be found in European regulations that have a general character and pursue to establish a standardization of regulations in the field of education and professional training - *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. In the presentation of the text, it is said that the article is inspired by the constitutional traditions as by Article 2 of the Additional Protocol to the ECHR, which states: „No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and

teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.” (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/eu-charter/article/14-right-education> ).

### **CONVENTION on the rights of the child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations**

This international agreement includes two articles: 28 and 29, both with extensive provisions and norms applicable worldwide in favor of the intellectual and biological development of children. The document specifies many aspects related to the applicability of the regulations contained in the two articles that explicitly specify the child's rights to education and human development. At the end of the examples, the arguments for the precise application of the provisions highlighted by the Convention are also presented.

„No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.” (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>).

In other words, the chance to be equal or have equal opportunities means ensuring access to quality education and participation in the institutional system of education and its benefits (*Vrășmaș, T, pp. 16-19*). A distinction could also be made between the terms „equalization” and „equality”: while the first denotes the process of making people equal and belongs to the concrete space, the second implicates the „being equal process” conceptualization, therefore it corresponds to the ideational/desirable space.

The equalization process and the ideal of equality are closely related to education for all, because, both conceptually and praxiologically, the whole (society, group) does not represent a homogeneous entity, but a sum of specific individuals, with heterogeneous traits, who are ideologically identical in rights but must also be concretely accepted by others as equal.

The balance of trajectory between the space of ideas/norms and the space of manifestations/perception is achieved through all, but for each. Thus, equality is for all, but it is applied to each. To realize this desideratum, the main problems consist of the limited opportunities for education, the conceptual limitation of the system and the beneficiaries of education, the existence of specific groups with a high degree of exclusion risk.

In order to reduce the discrepancies between everyone's right to be equal and the concrete reality, it is necessary to apply collective/political measures to equalize opportunities, specific measures for certain areas or types of disadvantaged groups, targeted measures to identify each unique case. If no action is taken at the level of societal mechanisms, group interactions and, of course,

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individually, efforts to equalize education for all tend to have no effect (*Vrășmaș, T., 2004, pp. 26-27*).

UN/UNESCO has made tremendous efforts to normatively standardize and to apply nationally the paradigm of education for all, starting from 1990. The next step is to evaluate the reference moment of the 21st-century beginning and then to continue the intentions of education for 2015-2030. It is important therefore to link the broad concept of inclusion to that of equity and introduce quality education and lifelong learning. In this sense, we can enunciate the following general principles (UNESCO Guide):

- a) inclusion and equity are overarching principles that guide all educational policies, plans and practices;
- b) - the national curriculum and its associated assessment systems are designed to respond effectively to all learners;
- c) All partners who work with learners and their families understand and support the national policy goals for promoting inclusion and equity in education
- d) Systems are in place to monitor the presence, participation and achievement of all learners within the education system.

Although there is a delimitation in the plan of ideas, from a practical perspective, they converge in the application plan, involving all educational actors, together with the school - as a functional space of education to which the local community is added.

### **2. THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION IN BUILDING EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL**

Following the same direction of what has been explained above, when we discuss about inclusion, we can accept that inclusion is a permanent process, but also a way to respond to the needs of diversity. (*Vlăsceanu, 2019*). It should be noted that the important thing is to live with the difference, the explicit acceptance of the other and grasp from this difference to fully realize that our identity – as a group or individual is related to otherness.

Social and educational inclusion is concerned with identifying and removing barriers, collecting, comparing and evaluating information from a variety of sources and statistics. There are also other elements of the educational system such as: the presence of students - in terms of space and time, their participation - in terms of the quality of the educational act, school success, academic achievements. All there are similarities and differences between the concepts of equality and equalization, inclusion and equity, integrated education and inclusive education. However, there are also certain differences between equality and equity.

The first difference could be defined as the state in which the impartial and fair treatment of all actors participating in the educational act, in our case, the students, is ensured. The second difference is represented by the state of

distribution of resources to groups and individuals, regardless of particularities such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, disability.

In other words, equality is equivalent to the treatment of everyone according to the normative system and equity is represented by the treatment of everyone according to their needs and particularities. Equality is about similarity, uniformity, norming, ideational and desirable space according to which everyone has the same rights. This situation provides a normative point from which everyone could start in building social capital. These elements support the concept of inclusion and building social capital.

To be more precise, equity could be perceived as an effect of equality, strongly bonded with concepts such as non-discrimination, impartiality, ethics, individuality. Returning to the UNESCO 2015-2030 educational project, we can affirm the fact that equity and inclusion represent capital concepts, without whom the education of the 21st century could not face the moral imperative of education for all.

Ultimately, the quality of education must be achieved at the level of the entire education system for all members of society who want to build their social capital. Whether we are talking about inclusion, equity, quality or lifelong learning in education for all (EFA), it is essential to contextualize these aspirations in the wider context of the world in which we live. This signals to us that the educational approach is not only an ideational one, understood as theorizing, conceptualizing and elaborating policies, but also a real one, with educational actors involved in it.

In this manner, we integrate into an educational culture that has certain characteristics: a certain degree of development of culture and civilization, a certain geographical and demographic determination, various types of collective mentality but also variable ability to use exhaustible resources (*Vlăsceanu, 2019*). Rephrasing our ideas, it is imperative to keep a neat balance between the use of the human resource, which is theoretically inexhaustible, and the use of the material/natural resource, which is, as it has been observed in the last decades, exhaustible.

Every human activity involves resource usage that leads to change, evolution and/or development, and for the long and very long term, it must be sustainable or rational. These desiderata were included in several projects and programmatic documents at the international level. One major event is the 1990 UNESCO World Conference "Education for All" held in *Jomtien*, Thailand. The main issues, objectives and future plans were discussed, reaffirming community's commitment to ensure the right to education for all people (*UNESCO Final Report, 1990, pp. 43-49*):

- expansion of preschool and early childhood education activities;
- universal access to education and completion of primary education;
- improving learning results;

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- reducing adult illiteracy;
- expanding basic education and training/cultivating skills for children and adults;
- increasing the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences for a better life among individuals and families;
- universalizing access to education and promoting equity;
- the multiplication of learning spaces/environments but also the strengthening of partnerships
- universal access to education and the promotion of primary education at a rate of 80% by the year 2000; - halving the adult illiteracy rate and increasing the share of female literacy by the year 2000;
- improving learning outcomes so that the passing rate increases (beyond primary education);
- expanding basic education and skills training/cultivation for children and adults to include poor, disadvantaged and/or disabled young people/children”.

(<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243724>.)

The second important moment is represented by the 2000 World Forum for Education, organized in *Dakar* in Senegal. States representatives as well as the organizers elaborated the principles for an extensive and effective education and raised the standards, in accordance with the partial achievement of the targets set in 1990. Additionally, the qualitatively and quantitatively expanded educational principles of the 21st century and the new millennium were developed. The main issues, objectives and aspirations discussed at the meeting are encompassed in UNESCO's The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000.

We should mention here another turning point in the field of education, namely The Incheon Declaration and the Framework Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development which is a follow-up of ideas expressed at 2000 World Forum for Education. The 2015 World Education Forum (WEF) adopted the *Incheon* Declaration, committing to undertake steps toward promoting education opportunities for all by 2030. WEF 2015 took place in Incheon, Republic of Korea and set out a new vision for the next 15 years. Discussions were centered around five themes: the right to education; equity in education; inclusive education; quality education; and lifelong learning. In accordance with this document, the proposed objectives seem to be extremely ambitious. (pp.20-21). We will reproduce 4 outcomes as they are expressed in the programmatic documents:

„The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. ([https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en\\_2.pdf](https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf) )

Therefore, it is expected a reasonable time interval to achieve a real equality of opportunity regarding education, to give access to all those who are interested in human and intellectual development. Decisions and proposals, debates in various educational meetings are based on people's desire to be able to develop, evolve, and be involved as citizens in the societies in which they live.

## CONCLUSIONS

*In this study, we have tried to include some elements that define the school infrastructure but also regulations regarding education in the internal and external plan. On a different note, I have mentioned several international forums and conferences where principles regarding education have been decided and outlined.*

*The objectives of these strategic targets are not new, but they gather and synthesize a unified vision of the United Nations on what is desirable to happen in the medium and long term. At the same time, there is no axiological distance between the goals of education for all and those of education for sustainable development. Social capital is strengthened due to the fact that the educational process takes place in a space-time continuum with limited resources. Unlike the previous education prognosis and expectancies, the 2015-2030 period, includes higher demands, compared to the last one.*

*In this context, we mention that primary education no longer represents an ambiguous target, but an achievable and partially achieved one. Moreover, the transition between secondary and tertiary education is framed in a vision that includes regulations that allow generic student to have access beyond the ideal of basic education and fulfill aspirations toward higher-level qualifications. In this way, the present position towards university education shows us that, indeed, we are talking about a sustainable education and education for sustainable development.*

*Furthermore, the expectations regarding a post-secondary education are not without purpose because they are connected to the labor market, especially through the concern for the practical aspect of technical or professional training; in other words, insertion into the labor market represents an intrinsic objective to*



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*sustainable development, because, as we have mentioned above, there is an organic link between the economic and social-educational spheres. Last but not least, international cooperation and qualified training for educators/teachers are positive factors that help the learner gain more efficient and complex skills, so necessary for society to evolve.*

*According to the same programmatic document adopted at Incheon (Target 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. p. 28), the goals or targets listed above can be transposed into the following principles: „- education is a fundamental human right and an empowering, enabling right –to fulfill this right, countries must ensure universal equal access to inclusive and equitable quality education and learning, which should be free and compulsory, leaving no one behind; education should aim at the full development of the human personality and promote mutual understanding, tolerance, friendship and peace”, but also should aim to strengthen social capital.*

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