

# THE IMPACT OF CAREER EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL PATH OF THE YOUNG

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## Abstract

*One of the main objectives of massification of education systems at all levels is to allow categories of the population as well access to education and making sure in this way opportunities as large professional integration. So far most education systems, including the Romanian, can support that important progress has been made toward achieving this objective. The massification education or quantitative democratization, masks but a big failure: certain specializations, profiles are still inaccessible one of the categories of the population. If individuals' knowledge shall be transmitted in different period of education, then skills, abilities with which they will enter the labor market will be very different. Inequalities in knowledge maintained the manner in which it is organized the education system shall be converted into actual inequalities professional career. In this article we propose to analyze to what extent inequalities educational career influences the professional careers of young people. From a theoretical point of view theme to offer will be reviewed from the new approach of sociology and in the economy. From the point of view empirical we will use statistical data from institutions specializing in collection and processing of such data - OCDE - but the data resulting from the qualitative research carried out in 2015 among young people aged 17-35 years.*

**Keywords:** quantitative democratization, labor market, inequalities professional path

## Rezumat

*Articolul de față prezintă rezultatele unei cercetări calitative desfășurate în intervalul ianuarie-octombrie 2015 și care a avut ca principal obiectiv analiza relației dintre inegalitățile de carieră educațională generate atât de sistemul de învățământ cât și de elemente exterioare acestuia (mediul socio-economic, familial și cultural de proveniență al elevilor, de exemplu) asupra inegalităților de carieră profesională. Este un fapt demonstrat acela că, persoane de aceeași vârstă, de același sex, care au același nivel de educație ocupă poziții diferite în ierarhia socio-profesională. Premisa de la care am plecat în analiza datelor este aceea că, parcursul socio-profesional al unei persoane se decide cu mult înainte ca acesta să fi luat contact cu piața muncii. Am constatat astfel, că părinții cu nivel înalt de educație, cu ocupații intelectuale, cu o situație economică favorabilă își încurajează copiii să urmeze instituții de învățământ secundar de prestigiu și specializări care, din punctul lor de vedere, le asigură copiilor lor cele mai mari șanse de a fi admiși în instituții de învățământ superior foarte bine cotate din țară sau din afara țării. Prin modul în care categoriile sociale favorizate din România se raportează la educație și valorifică în avantajul lor caracteristicile sistemului de învățământ (structură, mod de organizare) își*

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*asigură pentru ei și pentru copiii lor cele mai bune trasee socio-profesionale confirmând teoria inegalităților eficient menținute.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** democratizare cantitativă, piața muncii, inegalități de parcurs profesional

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of current economic education is one of determinants access and success in the labor market: a level as well as higher education do you ensure entry in the competition for the award of a place of employment, while no education or a low level you positioned under the category of person excluded or at risk of socio-professional exclusion. Under these circumstances it is easy to understand the increase in demand for high-level education in the past few years, especially among young people. Beyond the statistical data, no matter how favorable would have it, there are a series of questions which he still looking for answer: Is the education system in Romania one accessible at all levels for all categories of the population? A diploma testify to the completion of a level of education tall increases the likelihood of a person to enter the competition for employment, but it is a question which of them closer to the success? What are the criteria according to which a person decide the path educational must follow to have more chances of success in the labor market?

In this work of the aim is to answer some of the questions launched. The hypothesis from which we leave is that, the position that a person in charge in the employment hierarchy is to be decided a long time before he has to have been in contact with labor market. Whether it is about how to organize the of the educational system (specializations, profiles), whether it's about the special characteristics of socio-economic, family, cultural etc. of person is a certainty that the people to have the same level of education do not have the same positions in the socio-professional hierarchy. The objective which we proposed is to determine to what extent inequalities school path go to inequalities professional path. Analysis that we will undertake is based on both quantitative data and qualitative data, results in a research carried out in the period January to October 2015.

## 2. Theoretical and methodological framework

Up at the beginning of the 80 's, most of the studies on inequalities in education within her focused on the relationship between social origin of students and success or failure of their school. Conclusion which has been reached is this students from origin socio-economic, family, cultural less-favored have fewer chances to succeed from the point of view education and socio-professional, either because they or their parents over estimate costs with education and understate benefits with this (*theory of the rational choice*, Boudon, 1973), either as a result of major differences between culture appeared in school through the content of education and the specific environment in which they originate

students (*social reproduction theory's*, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964 apud Mahler). Despite a reduction in socio-economic inequalities between the different categories of the population, a progressive extension of the duration of compulsory education, to increase the quality of education etc., inequalities of access and success in education of children belonging to environment socio-economic and family different do not have been reduced. Maintenance of this type of inequality can be explained only by the difference between the quantity of financial resources held by the population or by the existence or non-existence of certain abilities, skills possessed for learning. A part of sociologists, psychologists and economists have focused attention on what is going on inside of the educational system, at the school and even at the level of class of students.

The education system has always been organised on levels of education, specializations, and profiles. This is in fact the - in his opinion C. Baudelot, R. Establet and L. Althusser for France and S. Bowles and H. Gintis for US (*La lutte contre l'échec scolaire...*1994:4; Hatos, 2006:68) - an important source of limiting access and success in education for a significant part of the population. As separate specialisations and the content of education to which they are exposed students are different, as well as educational objectives pursued. Thus, both Althusser - a representative of *theory capitalist relations of work* - as well as economists Bowles and Gintis - the representatives of *theory correspondence* - are of the opinion that students who attends specializations considered less prestigious (professional schools, for example) shall be submitted to a content less complex or more distant at academic as transmitted in upper secondary level. In the case the specialisation less prestigious it is considered that the focus should fall on the training at the class of practical skills, implementation while in the case of prestigious specialisations the content is transmitted in which emphasis is placed on the critical thinking, creativity, ability, skills for making the decision. (*Lutte contre l'échec scolaire...*1994: 4). Detailed studies on this situation has shown that, at the level of several education systems differences manifest inside schools and, sometimes, they are more prominent than those at the level of the educational system as a whole. (Bressoux, 1995 apud Duru-Bellat:2003:11)

The responsibility at school, a class of students to developments in educational and subsequently the socio-professional students had been in the centre of one of the best-known movements - *School effectiveness research* (SER). (Dumay, 2004; Duru-Bellat,2003). The representatives *SER* are of the opinion that components, such as the technical equipment of the institution of education, the relationship between school and family, teaching characteristics, the relationship between teachers, between the teachers and students, of the organization of the lessons etc. (Dumay, 2004; Duru-Bellat,2003) are determinants of access to and success in education and in the life of students. Furthermore, the conclusions of studies carried out so far have pointed out that the impact of school and class on access and success in education of students is much higher in the countries in the process of development as Romania, than in the developed countries, so that, in less developed countries "school context is more important than family factors especially that first variability is stronger than variability of the second" (Heyneman, 1986 apud Duru-Bellat, 2003:9).

By masifications of education at all levels its - a process known as *quantitative democratization* (Prost, 1986 apud Merle,2000:15) - is the aim of reducing inequality and

educational career. It was considered that by extending its compulsory education, the increase in the number of places in secondary schools and, subsequently, and in higher education, the eliminate of tests/exams to the transition from one level by education to another, the population will be much more motivated to continue school for a longer period. The results obtained are so far from those expected.

Quantitative democratization of education has not meant the equalising from the point of view of socio-economic of the individuals so that those so favored from the point of view of socio-economic leverages to a greater extent opening system - especially for high level of education - than disadvantaged categories (*theory inequality maintained at maximum*, Raftery et Hout, 1993). Other sociologists are of the opinion that, as long as the system will be organized into specializations or profiles, social categories members favored will strengthen its monopoly on prestigious schools and masifications effects will be more limited (*theory inequality maintained efficiently*, Lucas, 2001).

The education system in Romania has known several waves of masifications of greater or lesser intensity, both during the communist regime and after changing political and economic regime but this process has been carried out in accordance with the conditions of maintaining structures organized by specializations, wrapping transition from one level to the other exams for admission etc. Before 1990 and after, disparities between different categories of the population were maintained at very high, reducing positive effects which they may have a quantitative democratization of the educational system..

### **3.Objective and analysed data**

The subject we want to analyze this will make it possible, from the methodological point of view, both a quantitative approach and qualitative approach. By quantitative data with high degree of generalization obtained from authorised institutions in collection and processing of data statistical - OECD, for example - we will highlight the impact of school characteristics inequalities of his career educational and identification determination of an association between type of institution and socio-demographic characteristics of students who attends. Quantitative data will be supplemented with those obtained by the achievement of a qualitative research in the period January to October 2015 (focus-group with the students of last year of high school and the semi-structured interview with young people aged between 18-35 years who have left the school system and are integration professional). The qualitative analysis of the data we will get a picture on the relation between school and the labor market from the perspective of those who have not had contact with economic system but they are getting ready for this step and a picture from the point of view of those who are already integrate professional. As highlight and on other occasions "combining qualitative and quantitative research contributes, on the one hand to a description much more subtle processes (...) studied and, on the other hand, the analysis existing relations between observed and measurement processes as exactly as possible the product obtained (...) as for example, performance, attitudes, behavior students." (Bissonnette et al. 2005:94).

Group of students participating in focus-group (16 students aged between 17 and 18 years of age) has a high degree of uniformity in relation to socio-demographic characteristics (all the students come from environments socio-economic, family, cultural favored, follows the same profile - mathematics-informatics, they have very good

educational performance and attends the best high school in Bacau - National College "Gheorghe Vrânceanu").

The other target group - 20 young people who were surveyed on the basis of an interview with a guide semi-structured - are characterised by a higher degree of differentiation: they come from different cities, have attended educational institutions of top but also in the category for positioned in the second half of their classification, there followed different specializations at the level of both the secondary education as well as from the top-level, belonging to both socio-economic environments, family, cultural as high as well of the least-favored. Participation in focus-group were optional for secondary school students - agreement has been requested manager of school, this has informed students about the possibility for them to express their opinion with regard to problematic dealt with in research. The selection young people who have completed studies and integrated professional has been carried out by the method "snowball" or the "chain sampling". This method is based on a simple rule: respondents recommends other respondents as possible research subjects. Although it relies on the subjective choices of respondents, sample selection is not carried out randomly, but on the basis of accurate, consistent criteria. The criteria used for the selection of the respondents are set by a researcher in agreement with the research objectives and hypotheses.

To verify to what extent we are carried out at the level of the education system with our situations to maintain effective inequalities have the choice of a school institutions of prestige and a profile of the top. National College "Gheorghe Vrânceanu" is best quoted secondary education institution from Bacau. Position held is supported by educational performance from the students: the largest number of students in the county qualified to national and international competitions, the average amount of admission in high school regardless of profile (natural sciences, mathematics-informatics, social sciences) is more than 9 - students with the highest average (more than 9,50) are to your profile mathematics-informatics - succes rate of 100 %, with an average to take the high school graduation exam is over 8 to all those.

An important element in the assessment of educational performance of the institution he represents and the rate of transition from the secondary to the university level: over 15% of the students (data from the 2013-2014 School District Bacau) have been admitted to Universities from EU states (Germany, UK, France etc.) and the others are to be found in universities in the Romania. Highlighting the existence or not of existing inequalities work career due to type of school followed by the fill in data, with views of young people who have integrated professional and have completed at least an average level of education (secondary level) but have attended educational institutions different that prestige, profile, specialisation.

#### **4. Study limitations**

The fact that the analysis will be carried out in this article is based on qualitative data do not allow us extrapolation of results at the level of the total population or at the level of some segments of the population. Also, high degree of homogeneity of the population of students participating in research - a uniformity in socio-economic family, cultural, educational environments etc. - can lead to errors in the perception on the situation at the level of the educational system but also the one related to the labor

market in Romania. The methodology used for identifying young people integrate only allows an estimate of professional features a network of populations- the population investigated - but not an estimate of the entire population characteristics integrate young professional. Also, one of disadvantages method for the selection of respondents is and that makes inclusion in the sample only of persons with with multiple relations, but leaves aside those who are "isolated".

## **5. Results**

In this article we focus first on the level of secondary education (ISCED 3- 4) that consider him to have the most impact of the routing educational and socio-professional of a person. Primary schools (ISCED 0-2) are levels that, in modern society, are frequented by all the population of school-age and are part of the life compulsory education while attendance at upper level of education (ISCED 5-6) has always been at the option of population. Also, the level of secondary education (ISCED 3- 4) reflect, on the one hand, the degree of accessibility of education at the level of a country, so that life is compulsory education and transition from one level to another is carried out through the support of tests/exams and on the other hand, path to access to the top, is "measure" quality of education pre-university. In Romania, the high school graduation degree to allow people to join the competition for the award of a place in higher education, while professional level is most often the path for labor market.

As in many other countries and in Romania many institutions of school education (ISCED 0-4) can be distinguished from the other by school results obtained, in terms of the inherent characteristics teaching, by the conditions of learning etc. and which, as a rule, are monopolised by the categories of the population favored. If at the primary and secondary education authorities have imposed on some of those measures, which would lead to an increase in school population diversity (an obligation to join the child at the school closest to your home, for example) on the secondary level is difficult to intervene with such measures.

Difficulty is greater access to this level is conditional on the results of school students: students are assigned to secondary level based on the results obtained from the tests of capacity and the average for the last 4 years of schools. According to the data PISA (*Program for International Student Assessment*) - almost half of change in performance students are influenced by differences between schools - 46,8% - but also of those which manifest themselves within the same schools - 44,2%. (PISA, 2009:187) Thus, the transition from level education at lower secondary shall be carried out on the background of differences of educational performance, over time, tend to accentuate.

It is not only the resultats school, but also options students and parents on the institution of secondary education are importants for educational path of young. The choice of the most appropriate educational institutions requires system to become familiar with the features, the ability to predict trends in the labor market etc.

The results of research carried out under the coordination of The Ministry of Education and Research shows that there is a significant difference between the level of education of the pupils' parents in the rural areas as compared to those in urban areas: education average of a family in urban areas reach 12,1 years of study (a higher education level high school) and 9,7 years of study in the case of rural family. (Novak et all. 2015) A

low level of education has the effect that not only the devaluation of education as a source of successful occupational and social, but also difficulties in understanding the mechanism of operation of the system of education. It is clear that students who come from families in which parents have a level as well as higher education will receive a support in defining educational options.

One of the first topics debated in conversation with secondary school students of affected means by which they have chosen to learn the education institution. Students participating in focus-group have confirmed that his parents had a decisive role in the choice of secondary education institution:

*"Very serious teachers ... Vrânceanu...it's a way of life."* (student woman, 18 years old)

*"It's got most of them olympic."* (student woman, 18 years old)

*"It's insisted on the idea of performance in any field ... performance that vision of the future."* (student woman, 18 years old)

*"Is not necessarily a problem of training, but also the flexibility of options."* (student man, 18 years old)

*"If a teacher noticed certain qualities, skills distinguished from a student come with more opportunities for it"* (student woman, 18 years old)

*"Many parents when orient their children to a high school shall be taken and after environments (environments for the admission in high school and at a certain profil)... and media is much less there (it is about profiles socio-human)"* (student man, 17 years old)

As already mentioned, students parents participants to research have a high level of education which means a high capacity of assessment and evaluation of teaching institutions after clear criteria and consider long-term objectives. Analysis of the data research reflects the fact that, the options expressed by students and their parents for this high school have been based on the prestige criteria primarily, based on historical performance of educational institution.

These opinions expressed by students who are now in the last year of the high school and that remember competition, interest shown by teachers, in a safe manner shall be circulated and outside their high school and, as they and their parents have been taken into account, and generations that will follow will take account of them. The impact is all the more great as students declare that these expectations for that institution chosen have been satisfied: *"I have been exceeded expectations in the sense that I participated in competitions...we are in competition with students from high school but also within the class motivated ... and thanks to teachers who have managed to make me I shall like subtle or even to certain subjects that I didn't like in classes V-VIII"* (student man, 18 years of age old)

Students were referred to the fact that the age of 14-15 years (the one to which completes the qualification) is not the most appropriate for them to take decisions so important and that the talks with the parents are decisive:

*"We have to get away from the base ... that is my mother and father and they told me to choose mate-info because I open more opportunities"* (student woman, 17 years old)

*"For example, I have intended to follow a socio-human profile, but my mother tells me I choose the real for that gives me more opportunities and indeed now I haven't changed and the option.. I don't want to follow Polytechnic Institute and I am well aware that if I were to socio-human."* (student man, 18 years old)

It is clear that, the decision related to the institution of secondary education and the profile followed with a view to long-term objectives: higher education. Drawing up plans

in the medium and long term is part of how to think and act on these students: *"I have noticed that in our days you've think long before to what you want for that time passes very quickly, and you can't make plans on the last hundred meters, because they do not have time to prepare you for what to do about it"* (student woman, 18 years old).

This way of thinking is evoked and in the literature which demonstrates that, the population which he can make plans in the medium term and long-term objectives which include schooling of children is part of favored groups from the point of view of socio-economic. Social categories favored from the point of view of socio-economic have at its disposal the financial resources necessary support of long-term objectives and the level of education high help them understand the importance in investing these resources in the education their children. In this case, the correlation between educational performance levels they students, the type of school attended and the profile socio-economic, cultural and family of their indicate the existence of disparities effectively maintained: social class top planned to keep the positions held by the guideline their children to educational institutions and specializations best rated.

While in high school work three specializations: mathematics-informatics, sciences natural and the socio-human profile, the best students, evaluate environments after admission in high school are to be found in the profile mathematics-informatics. In the same way as in other country, and in the case at hand, most students belonging to medium socio-economic, family favored opt for scientific sectors - usually mathematics-physics, mathematics-informatics. Specialists' conclusion is that this orientation of children of intellectual occupations by scientific sectors can be explained only through the school results (Landrier & Nakhili, 2010:24) A survey carried out in Portugal has come to the conclusion that graduates of informatics and engineering and found them in the shortest possible time a job by comparison with other specializations graduates. (Gaio Alves, 2005:38). It is also an effect of process technology accelerated to the level of all fields of activity. Parents who have a high level of education, occupations intellectual positioned at the top of the hierarchy socio-professional are current with these developments socio-economic and orient their children to specializations in the future. In the case of the investigation we have identified our more of the reasons which have been the basis of the choice of this specializations: *"I and artistic skills and I thought about high school of art but it wasn't a high school that I fail to ensure that the future...so I chose a high school and profile that gives me real chances to more universities...may choose and artistic profile but may choose something also.."* (student woman, 17 years old) In other words, attendance at this profile open more opportunities to continue studies at higher level.

The discussion relating to school plans long-term started with the question relating to their intention to continue their studies but first remark made by students was saying that *"it would be more appropriate question how many of us will want to continue their studies on the profile followed in high school"* (student woman, 18 years old) I have found that students participating in research have very clearly defined options related to the high level of education: in a 100% they will continue their studies in educational institutions from UK, Germany etc. or in the institutions of higher education in Romania of the category of those which are considered the top. And as regards specializations toward which will orient the situation is already known: medicine, law, international relations, architecture. Analysis of these data allow us two relevant remark: on the one hand the choice of

educational institutions both of the secondary-level and top-level is part of a *social logic* as a called Duru-Bellat - "elections shall be entered a state chooses pedagogical logic when reflect relationships pupils with certain disciplines and entered in a social logic and may be treated as a real strategies, when affects access to the best classes or in the best educational institutions".(Duru-Bellat & all,1997 apud Landrier & Nakhili,2010:26).

In the analysis of the data our research shows that students have been concerned to ensure that greater opportunities successful school and professional and less or not at all interested in the suitability of passions, their passions and the profile followed in high school. On the other hand, if we think about the pupils' parents and occupations options related their specializations from the top-level we can see that we are dealing with a transmission inter-generations of status. Admission to higher education institutions is strongly linked to the environment of origin as shown by the data of research carried out over the last years: 27,3% of students in Romania have parents who have completed higher education compared to just under 2% of those whose parents have no more than grammar school, 6,1% have parents with professional school and 2,3% parents who have not completed high school. (Paunescu at all, 2011:22).

Influence of socio-family of origin is also reflected by analysis of the data resulting from interviews with young people integrate already from a professional view point.

*"I think it would be a small ... so it was natural for that in our family, with both parents with a higher education.. "* (a woman, 34 years old, an economist)

*"All the time I did not know that I don't stop after completion studies high school. Both parents are graduates of higher education"* (man, 35 years old, the research analyst)

One of the questions put up for discussion in the interviews carried out with young people integrate professional affected the process of transition from the grammar school level to the secondary level. All the young men interviewed claimed they had been obtained good results and very good to the tests of capacity or - those aged over 30 years - to the admission test. The difference between "good" and "very good" in tests has been translated into a high school attendance at mid level school one of the prestigious school. That differences in performance tend to place special emphasis on time is supported by young people participants responses to this research: those who have obtained very good results in high school time, they have got the same type of results and in faculty. The motivation was different for each of them, but most of the respondents have associated educational performance with responsibility, the desire to your motivation to do well in what they are doing. Analysis of the data research supported the idea that the educational institution's prestige, quality education, attract prestige and quality: regardless of age on respondents, both women and men who have claimed that they have attended an institution of secondary education (high school) reputation ("high school of top") and were part of a class of students quoted as being the best of the institution concerned and continued studies in higher education immediately after high school graduation.

*"There has been no time to think that I am not going continue their studies after high school. I have found that it will be best for my future, to go as far as it will go with studies"* (woman, 30 years old, an economist)

Most of them, not only that they have continued studies, but have opted for higher education establishments rated as being very good: universities with tradition, single

college with specializations at national level. Both groups surveyed - students and young people integrate professional - have indicated before all the reputation of higher education institution on which it intends to attend or who have attended it.

Under the conditions masification education system in Romania of higher education, young people are becoming more aware of the fact that the value in the success school diploma professional related less to the level of education on which it certifies and increasingly institution prestige, the specialisation followed. (Draelants & Artoisenet, 2011:4)

Supporters of the *theory of the signal* for example, (Arrow & Turow apud Nauze-Fichet et Tomasini, 2002:4) are of the opinion that not only diploma level of education completed by a person shall be taken into account by potential employers when assessing candidates for a job, but also the institution which has managed (released) that diploma. The employer does not know which are powers held by a candidate but school results obtained by it may give clues about the level of involvement, commitment with which addresses objectives and responsibilities assigned to it. In Romania, after 1990, an expansion of the educational system has been one important that meant, including private development of education (especially at higher level). A quarter of a century has proved but a period insufficient for new educational institutions to win people's confidence, especially the favored from the point of view of socio-economic, family, cultural etc. Furthermore, public institutions of higher education with long tradition in the landscape Romanian educational process will withstand masification. Although the school-age population is declining and obtaining baccalaureate has become a problem for a significant proportion of young people in Romania, many of these institutions of higher learning, still maintain the admission contest while the competition for employment is high. I have also noted that the trajectory educational and professional on respondents who have attended an institution of prestige is one linear - studies secondary education, higher education and employment in less than 1 month after completing full school. The trajectory young people who have attended an institution of secondary education be considered as being of medium level regardless of the fact that they were part of a class quoted as being very good, it has proved to be in several cases one fragmented (secondary-level education, entry into the labor market or return to the system after a period longer or shorter time, or attendance at certain institutions of higher education in parallel with the carrying out of a professional activity etc.) Respondents who have attended a high school of average level but were part of the best class of the institution or of a class of the same level as the high school have chosen universities as a function of the ease with which to carry out admission, were directed to schools post-secondary education or have taken into account the distance between home and school or have entered immediately after graduation on the labor market. This means that at the level of the educational system in Romania - in this case we refer strictly to the secondary education - "*the school effect*" has a greater impact of the route educational and socio-professional of the population than "*the class effect*".

#### **4. Conclusions**

The results of the analysis of the data obtained by qualitative research confirm what has been demonstrated and other occasions by means of the quantitatively research type

(Hatos, 2012; Voicu&Vasile, 2010): inequalities at the level of the educational system shall be transferred and socio-professional level. Attendance at a secondary education institutions of prestige, membership of a class in which performance is a "way of life" determine the students belief that social and professional success is possible, and, most of them both, and getting. At the level of a system of education prestige not teaching institutions and their educational success is a problem, but also the fact that access to such institutions shall be conditional on students belong to a certain category of socio-professional.

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