

Education in Romania under Crisis

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Abstract

Europe's recovery after the economic crisis cannot be discussed without promoting high-quality education and training.

The disparities observed in conventional relationships between education and socio-economic structure are examined in this paper using a combination of data and education indicators for both Romania and the EU member countries. Educational systems, although having the same purpose, are analyzed and evaluated differently in each country. In the current global context, educational policy debates focus on the need to raise educational standards both in EU countries and globally, with emphasis being placed on enhancing performance based largely on skills and competencies.

Thus, in order to promote social cohesion and to create a smart national economy, policies and strategies for the development of education (especially at tertiary level) are needed.

Key words: education, globalization, economic crisis.

J.E.L. classification: A2, I20, I21, J60

1. Introduction

To emphasize the importance of education in the creation and development of social inclusion policies, it is important to know the social context.

The changes that followed the global financial crisis have redefined the fundamental style of life, people's values and behavior. Lack of economic collapse has higher social consequences, the risk of social exclusion has increased considerably, and the society suffered a loss of human resources. This may involve a high level of social exclusion that leads to increased social tensions.

A nation with higher levels of social exclusion means a population with a decline economy, where one may easily see a low level of education, productivity and innovation, as well as a rising unemployment rate. In this way, the most important thing is to commit to additional efforts and resources to strengthen social inclusion policies.

2. Social Context

The social consequences of the global financial and economic crisis are felt in all the Member States of the European Union. On the other hand, the economic crisis has strengthened the value of education.

While the level of education has always had a huge impact on employment opportunities, the financial crisis has reinforced this effect even more. On average, between OECD countries, 4.6% of people with higher education were unemployed in 2016, compared with 11.7% of those with secondary education. Noteworthy that in 2013 there was a maximum of 5.3% for the unemployment rate among people with higher education.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, a significant number of countries have cut public spending on education. Between 2009 and 2010, public spending on education institutions fell by one third and in 2014 reached an average of 4.9% for EU countries. Approximately during the same period, between 2009 and 2011, teacher salaries "froze" what can discourage performing students from aspiring to the teaching profession. According to studies and analyzes conducted in 2008 and 2011, the unemployment rate for low-educated adults increased by almost 3.8 percentage points, while

the unemployment rate for those with higher education increased by only 1.5 percentage points.

Education and training systems need to change their priorities to ensure that all the people have the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to meet the challenges and demands of jobs and modern life.

In 2010, education and training were introduced as key elements of the EU 2020 Strategy. In 2014, the Commission and EU countries reviewed the progress made, according to the 2012 joint report on which the European Commission proposed new priorities for cooperation in the field of education at European level for the period 2016-2020.

3. Data analysis

Since 1980, there has been a general trend to increase the length of compulsory education in almost all education systems in order to guarantee the knowledge of key competences. In some countries, compulsory education starts a year earlier - or even two years earlier in Latvia, while in other countries the length of compulsory education has been extended by one or two years, and in Portugal, following recent reforms, three years.

Preschool education (ISCED 0) is designed to respond to the educational and development needs of children aged 3 years or older. In pre-school education, staff must have specific qualifications in education. The crèches, playgroups and kindergartens are not included, as the staff has no obligation to have a qualification in the field of education. Primary education programs (ISCED 1) are designed to provide a basic education in reading, writing and math, along with an elementary understanding of other disciplines.

This is partly explained by the requirement to hold a general education certificate rather than a professional certificate to continue with university studies.

In the period 2000-2009, on average in the EU-27, the rates of participation of 3, 4 and 5-year children in pre-primary or primary education increased by 15.3%, respectively 7% and 6.3%, reaching around of 77%, 90% and 94% in 2009. The participation of 3-year-old children in pre-school education was almost generalized in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France and Iceland in 2009, over 95%.

At the level of upper secondary education, there is a balanced distribution of students between general and vocational education programs. At EU-27, between 2000 and 2009, the share of students in general education increased by 5.5 percent to 50.4% in 2009, as a percentage of the total number of pupils in upper secondary education.

The collection of data on the number of enrollments covers the national education systems regardless of the form of ownership of the institutions. All standard education programs are included, as well as adult education programs with content similar to standard education programs or resulting in qualifications similar to those obtained through the appropriate standard programs. The special education is also covered. Apprenticeship programs are included, but not all forms of workplace education or training with no supervision from a formal education authority.

Vocational education covers the education through which participants are trained to practice specific occupations without any form of vocational training. General education programs are not designed for a specific class of occupations, and less than 25% of the content of the program is professional or technical. At least 25% of the content of the pre-vocational programs is professional or technical but these are mainly designed to familiarize the participants with the professional world and do not lead to a relevant professional or technical qualification. Students are included in both day and part-time education.

Most 15-year-old students in Europe attend schools with a large number of pupils. In half of the countries surveyed, the average number of pupils per school increased by 50 to 100 pupils compared to 2003. In Belgium (the German-speaking community), Austria and Poland, there is a decrease of over 70 pupils per school. As a general trend, between 2003 and 2009, the number of pupils in very large schools registered a slight decrease (OECD, PISA 2009).

In 2009, almost 90% of 17-year-old Europeans were still included in education, and rates of participation in post-compulsory education improved or remained stable over the last ten years.

The annual growth index is calculated by dividing the number of students for the year in question by the number of students in 2000 and multiplying the result by 100. All full and part-time students are included at ISCED levels 5 and 6. This indicator shows the enrollment rate in education (all ISCED levels) for each country, at the end of compulsory education up to date. Students are included in both full-time and part-time education; the table shows the number of people. The collection of data on the number of enrollments covers the entire education system regardless of the form of ownership of the institutions. All standard education programs are included, as well as adult education programs with content similar to standard education programs or resulting in qualifications similar to those obtained through the appropriate standard programs. All special education is also covered. Apprenticeship programs are included, but not all forms of workplace education or training with no supervision from a formal education authority.

Bulgaria, Malta and Romania, the three countries with the lowest participation rates one year and two years after the end of compulsory schooling in 2000, are among the countries with the most significant improvements over the last decade. However, the turnout rates in these countries were still under 80% in 2009, one year after the end of compulsory education.

4. Romania

In the EU countries, there has been an increase in demand for education, mainly at vocational school level, improvement courses and higher education. This has been observed especially among people over 25 years of age.

The number of EU-27 graduates in 2010 was nearly 4.5 million. By domains, the social, economic and legal sciences group holds the first place, with 35.7% of all graduates, higher than the equivalent of the students enrolled in these fields (34%), which can be highlighted either that the number of candidates for these areas has fallen in recent years, or that abandon rates in other areas have been higher.

It should be noted that in Romania the trend was opposite, the share of social, economic and legal sciences being over 60% of the total number of students.

At the EU-27 level in 2011, the share of graduates with higher education in the total number of employees in the 15-64 age group was about 30%, with significant variations between states.

Ireland (46.4%), Lithuania (42.1%), Cyprus (41%), Finland (40.9%) and Luxembourg (40.4%) are the best. There are also developed Western European countries where the share of employees with higher education is very low, such as Italy (17.2%), Austria (18.1%), and Germany (26.4%).

In Romania, the share of graduates in the total number of employees is 24.2% and is comparable Central and Eastern Europe countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria). The statistical figures on the share of graduates with higher education in the total number of employees would be much better if all graduates could be properly trained. However, there is a significant proportion of graduates working on medium-sized jobs as well as those who are over-qualified for their work. Their share may reach about 20% (according to Eurydice), especially after the completion of studies.

In Romania we can appreciate that the share can be much higher, especially in the conditions of the economic crisis. This clearly affects the public performance of education, but quantitative studies are still not available to estimate the number of graduates who are over-qualified for the jobs they have. The share of students enrolled in math, science and technology is another important indicator for the economic development of a country and which counts for progress in achieving development strategies.

Although Romania has registered a relatively high proportion of enrolled students in the early 2000s, it dropped rapidly over the past, reaching 17% at present, below the European average, but close to that of the neighboring countries.

In the Horizon 2020, it is estimated that approximately 35% of jobs will be for graduates with higher education (CEDEFOP 2010), so we can talk about a positive outlook for the higher education market in the European Union.

5. Conclusions

In terms of incentive measures, their targeting is mainly to vocational education, advanced training and higher education. We can see this evolution as normal given that the labor market situation requires first and foremost measures with short- and medium-term effects.

In the case of Romania, the trend is considered relatively similar. While it is noticed that in recent years a slight increase in the level of enrollment in education and a drop in school drop-out rate, on the other hand, the EU through the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development (SOP HRD) available to Romania 3.5 billion euros in the 2007-2013 period for skills upgrading and growth programs.

But let us not forget the demographic decline that Romania faces in the past 20 years, a process that causes a drop in the school population at all levels of education. Certainly this situation will persist and worsen in the years to come.

In Romania, as in many countries, the crisis has led to the acceleration of the pace of reforming the education system, with policies adopted to bring major changes to the educational system, with long-term effects.

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