

Editorial

In 1966, the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare commissioned a study to assess the availability of equal educational opportunities to children of different race, colour, religion and national origin. This study, carried out under the leadership of Prof. James Coleman, was undertaken in response to provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and, as Coleman himself emphasised, was designed to assess “the amount and sources of inequality of educational opportunity by race in the schools of America”. The survey’s important findings have had a major impact on all significant subsequent education policy initiatives dealing with the education of students from non-dominant minority groups, e.g., students with special educational needs, etc. At the same time, its publication has had a decisive influence on a wide range of theoretical, empirical and policy aspects associated with equality of opportunity and public education in the US and abroad. As Robert W. Heller emphasised around the time of its publication, the “Coleman” Report is “one of the most significant sociological research endeavors of our times”. Several decades later, as Geoffrey Borman and Maritza Dowling have succinctly pointed out, it is generally accepted as one of “the most important studies on schooling ever performed”.

Fifty years on, both the survey’s topic and its major research findings continue to inspire – as well as to divide – both scholars and policy-makers on a wide range of questions associated with equality of educational opportunity, e.g., What are the major obstacles to achieving equality of educational opportunity? How should the process of equalising individuals’ opportunities (levelling the playing field) be carried out? What is a fair starting position to compete for advantaged social positions? What type of disadvantage is eligible for compensation? etc.

This focus edition of the *Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal* brings together six articles that examine both the legacy and the impact of the Coleman Report in educational research and policy-making, on issues as diverse as inclusive education, education of students from a minority and migrant background, Roma education, etc. Moreover, these articles deal with conceptual, normative and practical issues associated with equality of educational opportunity and related issues.

The edition starts with the article “Equality of Opportunity and Equality of Outcome” by Zdenko Kodelja. The introductory part of his paper contextualises the Coleman Report and challenges the interpretation of “Coleman’s redefinition of equality of opportunity, which abandoned the then prevailing conception of equality of educational opportunities as equality of starting points and

replaced it with the concept of equality of educational opportunities as equality of educational outcomes". The article then argues for a distinction dividing authors working in this area of scholarly research, i.e., that equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes are two different types of equality. If they are different, Kodelja argues, "then the interpretation that Coleman has redefined the concept of 'equality of educational opportunity' turns out to be incorrect".

"Equality of Opportunity, Cultural Diversity and Claims for Fairness", authored by Mitja Sardoč, examines some of the tensions, problems and challenges associated with claims for equality of opportunity. The introductory part identifies three separate forms of justification for public education, including that associated with equality of opportunity. The author then identifies two basic questions stemming from any conception of equal opportunity: (1) what an opportunity is, and (2) when individuals' opportunities are equal. This is followed by a presentation of the two basic principles of equality of opportunity: (1) the principle of non-discrimination, and (2) the "levelling the playing field" principle. The next part takes up the multiculturalist hypothesis advanced by minority groups for the accommodation and recognition of cultural diversity. This is followed by the identification of a set of claims composing the "fairness argument". The last section of this paper focuses on the "currency problem" associated with cultural diversity as a form of "unfair disadvantage". Sardoč then examines two of the major shortcomings associated with the multicultural conception of equality of opportunity, while the concluding part identifies a set of questions to which any conception of equal opportunities needs to provide an answer.

In their article "Coleman's Third Report", Marjan Šimenc and Mojca Štraus analyse the (third) Coleman Report on private and public schools. As the authors emphasise, this article suggests "that there appear to be two reasons for the narrow interpretation of the relationship between public and private schools in Coleman's third report". The first reason is associated with "Coleman's notion of contemporary society as a constructed system in which every individual actor holds a place in the structure and requires incentives in order to act to the benefit of society". The second reason, Šimenc and Štraus argue, "is Coleman's vision of sociology as a discipline aiding the construction of an effective society".

In the first part of their article "The Age of Studies and Reports: Selected Elements Concerning the Background of Encounters Defining the Power of Education", Slavko Gaber and Veronika Tašner discuss the historical context in which the Coleman Report, as well as other reports and studies, appeared as mechanisms considering the power of education in the Western world to reduce inequalities in societies. This contextualisation is, in the second part of

the article, extended by the authors' considerations of the reach of the socialist positioning of simple equality at the centre of the socialist project of education as one of the main promoters of socialist equity and equality. Their (somewhat provocative) conclusion is that simple equality as a regulative idea of the socialist education project in Yugoslavia, and in particular in Slovenia, significantly diminished the possible reach of the comprehensive education inaugurated as the first step towards a more equal education for all of the strata in the supposedly more just society as early as in 1958.

In their article "Social Capital and Educational Achievements: Coleman vs. Bourdieu", Silvia Rogošič and Branka Baranović compare some elements of the two most influential accounts of social capital by James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu. The basic aim of this paper, as the authors emphasise, is to "establish appropriate research contexts for researching and explaining the influence of social capital on an individual's educational achievements under Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and through Coleman's theoretical concepts, and to determine whether combining the approaches is possible".

In the final article published in this focus edition of the CEPS journal, "The Sources of Inequity in the Education System of Serbia and How to Combat Them", Ana Pešikan and Ivan Ivić discuss the impact that the Coleman Report has had in Serbia. In particular, the authors argue that the Coleman Report was linked to "a wave of optimism that some educational measures" would help to achieve the aim that each and every student would "have an opportunity to receive quality education". The central part of this article analyses the "systemic sources of inequity in the education system of Serbia".

The *Varia* section of this edition of the CEPS Journal includes two articles. The article by Maja Kerneža and Katja Košir examines the effects of the systematic use of comics as a literary-didactic method on pupils' reading literacy and reading motivation, as well as its impact on the reduction of gender differences in reading literacy. Based on a survey carried out by the authors, "no reduction of gender differences in reading literacy and reading motivation was found"; however, as the authors emphasise, "when the four-way structure of the research (taking into account the age and gender of the pupils) was considered, some subgroups showed a statistically significant increase in reading interest and attitude towards reading". The authors highlight the complexity of the use of comics at the primary level of education, as well as providing some guidelines for further investigation.

The article "An Analysis of Critical Issues in Korean Teacher Evaluation Systems" by Hee Jun Choi and Ji-Hye Park analyses the three different teacher evaluation systems that Korea has implemented since the 1960s. Based on the

findings of their survey, the authors propose an improved system of teacher evaluation that is both effective and efficient.

This focus edition of the *Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal* ends with Darko Štrajn's book review of *Bottlenecks: A New Theory of Equal Opportunity* authored by Joseph Fishkin. Here the book is examined from the perspective of its alternative outline of a theory of equal opportunities, i.e., opportunity pluralism. While, as the reviewer succinctly points out, the book offers a valuable intellectual tool to examine equality of opportunity in a wide variety of contexts, it would have been even more useful if it had taken into account some of the other contemporary approaches in sociology and political theory. Nevertheless, as Darko Štrajn concludes his review, the book "demonstrates the power of an analytical methodology, which makes particular social situations, the legal system, individual institutions, a range of practices in a multitude of policies, and social controversies and conflicts better visible in their detail".

MITJA SARDOČ AND SLAVKO GABER