

## icCSBs 2020

### The Annual International Conference on Cognitive - Social, and Behavioural Sciences

# THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION ACCESSIBILITY IN MODERN RUSSIA

Anton V. Kalachev (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Volgograd State Social and Pedagogical University, Volgograd, Russia, anvit@list.ru

### *Abstract*

In this article, the concept of «accessibility of education» is associated with the democratic principle of equality are members of society to obtaining education, that is, its accessibility regardless of social status, gender, nationality, religious affiliation. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: Everyone has the right to education. Education should be free, at least for primary and general education. It is emphasized that recently the concept of accessibility has been increasingly supplemented by the concept of quality education. One of the main goals of democratizing education in modern conditions is to make quality education available for the majority of the population, for everyone who would like to receive it. Attention is drawn to the fact that the realization of the right to education is conditioned not only by the educational policy of the state, the material capabilities of certain social groups, but also by value factors, the attitude of various social strata of the population to obtaining systematic knowledge. It is concluded that the possibility of obtaining a quality education to a greater extent than previously depends on social, cultural and subjective factors. Considerable attention is paid to the painful issue of the manifestations of social inequality in the educational sphere. The enormous level of social stratification in Russia by European standards leads to the creation of two educational systems - for the rich and for poor.

2672-815X © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Accessibility of education, types of accessibility of education, quality of education, equality of educational opportunities, right to education, educational inequality.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

Democratization is one of the main directions of education reform in the modern world. In industrially developed countries, democratization in the education system manifests itself in its most diverse structural elements and in different ways: the creation of a comprehensive school accessible to all; involvement of society in the management and determination of the content of education; self-government of students; expanding opportunities for higher education for representatives of various social groups, etc. (Sant, 2019).

One of the main problems of democratizing education has been and remains the problem of its accessibility. A characteristic feature of the development of education today is the tendency to expand its accessibility. At the same time, it is generated by considerations not only moral (justice) or ideological (transformation of education into a general civilizational value), but, first of all, economic ones (Belcastro, 2015; Ilyasov, 2019). The politicians of industrial countries have long realized that only those peoples will be able to enter the information society, which will provide an opportunity to receive quality education not only for the economic and political elite, but also for the widest layers of the population (Sardoc, 2018).

In recent decades, democratization has been one of the main directions of modernization of national education. The Law of the Russian Federation «On Education in the Russian Federation» (2012), among the main principles of state policy in the field of education, proclaims «ensuring the right of everyone to education, the inadmissibility of discrimination in the field of education» (Article 3). Article 43 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees citizens the general accessibility and free of charge primary and secondary education. But it is no coincidence that in recent years the concept of accessibility has been increasingly supplemented by the concept of quality education. The most important is the answer to the question: to whom exactly and what kind of education becomes available?

## 2. Problem Statement

Given the formal availability of general education in Russia, there is an inequality of opportunities in obtaining high-quality school education, due to the socio-economic stratification of society. Against the background of the general growth of property and cultural differentiation of the population, - experts say, - the tendency of increasing the differentiation of schools in terms of quality is becoming more noticeable ... This trend is one of the most dangerous in the current situation, it leads to the destruction of the image of a publicly available quality school, to the formation of a segment schools that will need deep social and pedagogical rehabilitation (Strategiya-2020..., 2020). In these conditions, the problem of equality of educational opportunities, the availability of quality education becomes one of the most pressing and acute problems of Russian education. The modern educational system should preserve such an important tradition of national education as accessibility (Kalachev, 2011).

## 3. Research Questions

The main question in the process of studying the problem of accessibility of education in modern Russia is the question of creating such an education system that would provide high-quality and at the

same time affordable education for the general population. Nowadays, such a formulation of the question seems premature and even contradict to common sense, convinced that the higher is the quality of education, the less accessible it is, the more accessible, the worse it is. Meanwhile, education that is really accessible to everyone is not only the most important democratic requirement and an absolutely necessary element of a welfare state, but also a condition for the movement of our country towards a society in which the educational potential of the nation becomes the main resource for the effective development of the country, a high quality of life for its citizens.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

To investigate the features of solving the problem of the availability of high-quality education in modern Russia, to stimulate interest in the content of those concepts with the help of which this problem is formulated.

#### **5. Research Methods**

They are determined by the specifics of the object of research and the tasks that are solved in it. Therefore, among the philosophical methods, the principle of universal connection and development, essential and phenomenological methods, procedures of explanation and understanding are used. Among the general scientific methods, traditional theoretical research methods are used: analysis and synthesis, comparison, classification, etc.

#### **6. Findings**

The problem of education of accessibility is one of the main problems of democratization of education. In Europe, the 19th century passed under the banner of the struggle for the democratization of education, for the creation of a publicly accessible mass school, and by the beginning of the 20th century, such a school was created in the West.

At that time, it seemed that the main problem of democratizing education had already been solved, but by the middle of the century doubts arose. There was even an opinion that this problem has no final solution at all. Since the 50s. XX century the problem of access to education is again actively discussed in the developed industrial countries. In new historical conditions, it is considered already as a problem of the availability of quality education, as a problem of accessibility and equality education (Shields, Newman, & Satz, 2017).

The problem of the accessibility of modern education is presented in international and Russian legislative acts. Accessibility of education is directly related to the realization of the right to education. The problem of realizing the right to education is extremely relevant both in the historical and in the modern context.

The right to education is a fundamental right of worldwide importance, which is enshrined in the UN Charter. The most important guarantee of the right to education is its accessibility. The World Declaration of Education for All stresses the need to «universalize access to education and promote equality». Accessibility of education can be viewed in the context of a particular ideology. UNESCO

defines the main task of society as the implementation of sustainable development of mankind, in which economic growth is subordinated to social development and ensures environmental sustainability (Tsiplakides, 2018). This principle has received legal confirmation – it is formulated as the general availability of education, that is, independence from: race, nationality, language, gender, age and state of health; social, property and official status; social origin; living place; attitudes towards religion, beliefs, party affiliation; having a criminal record.

Ensuring the availability of high-quality general education is one of the priority areas for the development of the educational system in Russia. A serious legislative basis for the development of accessible education has been developed. The principle of accessibility can be differentiated into the principles of general accessibility of primary and secondary education, the principle of equal accessibility of higher education.

Article 43 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees to citizens the general availability and free of charge primary and secondary education. The State Program of the Russian Federation «Development of Education» for 2018-2025 is emphasized that the country's educational system should be focused on ensuring the availability of high-quality educational services for every citizen of Russia. Within the framework of the priority project of the state program «Creation of a modern educational environment for schoolchildren», the task is also set to increase the availability and quality of general education in our country.

The accessibility of education acts as the main principle of educational policy in a democratic society, providing the population with a wide range of opportunities to receive quality education.

The development of the right to education is conditioned by the following groups of factors:

- ✓ ideological factors associated with state policy on the development of literacy and raising the level of education of the population;
- ✓ value factors, which implies the attitude of various social strata of the population to the acquisition of systematic knowledge;
- ✓ economic factors that are interconnected with the level of material capabilities of state bodies and social groups.

Differences in the accessibility of education are determined by individual differences and social differences between people for a number of characteristics:

- the level of the child's abilities;
- the quality of the education received;
- the level of awareness of training opportunities in various educational institutions;
- physical abilities of the child (for example, serious health problems, disability);
- family composition;
- economical well-being of the family;
- place of residence, etc. (Chapman, Froumin, & Aspin, 2018).

When assessing the phenomenon of the availability of education, one should take into account all the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. Let's highlight the following types of education accessibility:

- legal accessibility as a legally guaranteed opportunity to receive general education for all children;
- social accessibility as an opportunity for children from various social groups and families to receive quality education in educational institutions;
- economic accessibility as a financial opportunity to meet the educational needs of the child;
- informational (substantive) accessibility associated with the availability of technical infrastructure connected to global information networks, allowing remote education corresponding to the child's mental and physical capabilities;
- geographical (transport) accessibility associated with the territorial location of the educational institution.

It turns out that the possibilities of obtaining a quality education depend on a greater extent on social factors (place of residence of the family, social ties of parents), cultural factors (education and occupation of parents, quality of school training) and subjective factors (self-esteem of a child, level of his personal ambitions, chosen life strategy).

The task of ensuring the accessibility of education facing modern Russian society prompts us to turn to a more detailed examination of the manifestations of social inequality in the educational sphere. Social injustice in the field of education, according to foreign researchers, is a global trend in modern education. The issue of equal access to education for people from different social groups is invariably at the epicenter of modern discussions about the equality of educational opportunities. The challenge of education accessibility is to enable everyone to reach the level that best suits their potential (Frumin, 2006). Lack of equal access to education actually means the consolidation of economic, social and cultural inequality, blocking the way for children from the lower social strata to the upper ones. The most vividly and openly unequal access to education is manifested in legal inequality, that is, in the inequality of rights enshrined in law. Not so frankly, but much deeper and more significantly, unequal access to education is determined by socio-economic inequalities caused by the socio-economic characteristics of various groups of the population.

The history of the development of education all over the world shows that the fight against legal inequality in the educational sphere has always been more successful and effective than the fight against socio-economic inequality. It is no coincidence that the problem of «social inequality and education» today is one of the main ones in the sociology of education, and the concept of «accessibility of education» is used here quite widely. It is not surprising, by the way, that it is among the representatives of the sociology of education that there are attempts to elaborate the content of the concept of «access to education» more thoroughly.

The overwhelming majority of scientists (and practitioners too) rely, one might say, on an understanding of the accessibility of education that is «accessible to all». When this concept is encountered, then everyone understands what is at stake. For example, one of the leading Russian specialists in the field of sociology of education Konstantinovskiy (2008) writes that in his book the subject of the analysis of the accessibility of education were the differences between social groups in the possibilities of obtaining a high-quality general education, the factors that determine these differences and their dynamics.

Contemporary foreign authors E. Gutman, D. Goodlad, L. Darling-Hammond, D. Kozol, D. Coleman, D. Cooper (USA), D. Crosland (Great Britain), B. Levin (Canada), J. Schneider and I. Boehm (Germany) comprehensively investigated the problem of social justice, social inequality in Western education. Of particular note is the work of the American researcher James Coleman, who came to the conclusion that, despite all calls for complete educational equality, education always remains, to one degree or another, a tool for stratification of society and differentiation of people (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1966).

In foreign Western education, ensuring the availability of quality education is implemented in the following areas:

1. The presence of various types of schools in the structure of general education, both in the content of educational programs as funding;
2. The important role of free of charge general secondary education;
3. Geographic accessibility of education;
4. Inclusive education;
5. Much attention is paid to the inclusion of adaptation of migrant children into society (Dolgaya & Tagunova, 2019).

The noticeable social inequality that exists in modern Russia is certainly reflected in the education system. Of course, the Law «On Education in the Russian Federation» contains norms aimed at limiting educational inequality, but under the influence of growing social polarization, public school education not only reflects social stratification, but also reproduces it. This is facilitated, first of all, by the division of schools into private (with high tuition fees) and general public schools.

The growing commercialization of public school education is manifested in the expansion of paid services in the field of general education (additional educational services in various areas of developmental creativity, circles, and sections). A new contradiction is gradually consolidating - between the relative democracy of school educational systems and the social factors of education (the social status of the families of students, the socio-professional status and education of their parents). In Russia, in fact, two school systems are taking shape: one is for the educated and wealthy (mainly city dwellers) and the other is for poorly educated and poor parents (mainly in the countryside).

Educational inequality, whether we like it or not, will exist as long as there is social inequality. It is a part of social reality and is reproduced according to the same laws as, in general, the stratification of society (OECD, 2018). A promising point of view of a number of authors seems to be that the guideline of educational policy should be not the fight against inequality, but its management (Osipov & Matveeva, 2015). It should be a daily practice of interaction between the main subjects of education: students and teachers. The teacher must first of all be able to work taking into account the individual and social capabilities of the student. Preservation of the humanistic traditions inherent in Russian education should be a condition for mitigating educational inequality and its transfer to the plane of social partnership.

## 7. Conclusion

So, in modern Russia there is a steady increase in the inequality of educational opportunities for citizens, the stratification of education continues into mass and elite. In these conditions, the problem of

equality of educational opportunities, the availability of quality education is becoming one of the most pressing problems of Russian education. The article reveals the availability of education as one of the most important social human rights, which should not be formal, but real, aimed at the implementation of social justice.

## References

- Belcastro, A. T. (2015). Rebalancing Quality Education in a Democratic Society. *Creative Education*, 6, 428-439.
- Chapman, J., Froumin, I., & Aspin, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Creating and managing the democratic school*. Routledge.
- Coleman, J. S., Katz, E., & Menzel, H. (1966). *Medical innovation: A diffusion study*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company.
- Dolgaya, O., & Tagunova, I. (2019). Dostupnost' kachestvennogo obrazovaniya dlya vseh kak mirovaya tendenciya v obshchem obrazovanii. [The availability of quality education for all as a global trend in general education] // *School technologies*, 1, 3-10. [In Russ].
- Frumin, I. (2006). Osnovnye podkhody k probleme ravenstva obrazovatelnykh vozmozhnostei. [The main approaches to the problem of equality of educational opportunities]. *Issues of education*, 2, 5–22.
- Ilyasov, M. (2019). The quality problem in education: from tradition to innovation. *Azerbaijan Journal of Educational Studies*, 689, IV, 11–26. [In Russ]
- Kalachev, A. (2011). Demokratizatsiya obrazovaniya v dorevolucionnoj Rossii [*Democratization of education in pre-revolutionary Russia*]. Volgograd: Peremena Publishing House. (In Russian).
- Konstantinovskiy, D. (2008). Neravenstvo i obrazovanie. Opyt sociologicheskikh issledovaniy zhiznennogo starta rossijskoj molodezhi (1960-e gody – nachalo 2000-h). [*Inequality and Education. Attempt of sociological research on the life starts of the Russian youth (1960th – beginning of 2000th)*]. Moscow: SFC. [In Russ].
- OECD. (2018). *Equity in Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility*. PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Osipov, A., & Matveeva, N. (2015). Institucional'nye bar'ery i mekhanizmy dostupnosti obrazovaniya: koncepciya i regional'naya dinamika. [Institutional barriers and mechanisms of education accessibility: concept and regional dynamics] // *Sociological research*, 7, 37-48. [In Russ].
- Sant, E. (2019). Democratic Education: A Theoretical Review (2006–2017). *Review of Educational Research October 2019*, 89(5), 655–696.
- Sardoc, M. (2018). Democratic Education at 30: An interview with Dr. Amy Gutmann. *Theory and Research in Education*, 16(2), 244–252.
- Shields, L., Newman, A., & Satz, D. (2017). *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Edward N. Zalta (Ed.). In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Strategiya-2020: Novaya model' rosta — novaya social'naya politika. Itogovyj doklad o rezul'tatah ekspertnoj raboty po aktual'nym problemam social'no-ekonomicheskoy strategii Rossii na period do 2020 goda. (2020). [*Strategy 2020: New Growth Model – New Social Policy (2020)*]. Final report on the results of expert work on topical issues of Russia's socio-economic strategy for the period up to 2020]. Book 1; under scientific. ed. V. Mau, Ya. Kuzminova. Moscow: Delo Publishing House, RANEPА.
- Tsiplakides, I. (2018). Social Inclusion and Equity in Modern Information and Knowledge Societies. *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2(1), 9-13.