Segmentation as a form of social reproduction of inequalities in times of inclusive education in tertiary education in Slovenia

1. From segregation to inclusiveness

When Jules Ferry in 1870 claimed the possibility of demonstrating that equality of education is an “inalienable right,” which is in the realm of the “reachable” (2006, 10), his proclamation demanded basic education for all citizens. Yet at that time even such an undemanding request for “egalitarian education has been duplicated by a thesis which is profoundly inegalitarian” (Rancière 2006, 12).

It seems that inegalitarian—elitist—conceptions of education have been one of the important reasons that Condorcet’s plea from 1791—stating that it “would be in vain to declare that all men enjoy equal rights (. . .) if the inequality in men’s mental faculties were to prevent the greatest number from enjoying these rights to their fullest extent (1791/1994, 61)”—did not echo strongly enough in societies across Europe up to the time of Jules Ferry nor enable pupils to read, write, and do arithmetic.

So, 80 years later, the task “to eradicate the last and the most horrible among the inequalities derived from birth—unequal education” (Ferry 2006, 10)—was still in the forefront of educational policy. Moreover, while the great French reformer of education had been struggling for “separation of education from wealth” (ibid.) his idea was far from successful in significantly reducing the inequality of the results reached in education. France was far from offering equal opportunities. Condorcet had been struggling only for the “education of those who have not participated in education” (ibid.) and for widening access to upper secondary education. Having proposed reforms in French education, he claimed that education is needed for the sake of social cohesion. His claim was that from the start, the inauguration of de facto obligatory education, which is free of charge, is of great importance. Furthermore, he stated that in such a school, rich and poor “should share the same desks (…) at least in some schools” (ibid.)

Demand for egalitarian public instruction, from its beginnings, has been seen not as a means of reduction or eradication of social inequalities but rather as a means of social reproduction. Almost no one had any doubt in the belief that children from lower classes of society should do worst than the ones from upper classes. The “natural order” should be in favour of such a state of affaires. Thus until late in the

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1 “Thus, for example, the man who does not know how to read, write, and do arithmetic really depends upon the more literate man to whom he must constantly have recourse. He is not the equal of those to whom education has given this knowledge; he cannot exercise the same rights to the same extent and with the same independence”. (Condorcet 1791/1994, 62)
nineteenth century, even determined reformers could share the almost universal assumption of status persistence, and do so ‘innocently’, without any conscious intent to limit mobility” (Ringer 1989, 61–62).

In that manner even Durkheim, while considering unity and diversity in society, wrote that society — to maintain itself — “requires that labour be divided among its members and to be divided among them in a given fashion rather than the other” (1922/1956, 118, emphasis author). It is because of the society and by society that “education is thus diversified” (ibid.). Although it was already then evident that the “education of our children should not depend upon the chance of their having been born here rather than there, of certain parents and not of others” (ibid.), it took decades for this belief to became a matter of policy, following a field of clashes and profound reconsiderations.

But things have changed. Only with the influence of socialist movements and (later) political parties did the idea of education as a mechanism able to create equality come to the forefront. Coq even claims that in France, for example — at least from the end of WW I, when Compagnons de l’universite proclaimed the need for “obligatory, free of charge, education for all the children from 6–14” (Coq 2002, 59), “reforms are trying to (…) realise (réaliser) equality in society through school” (Coq 2002, 58).

Today, the concept of social inclusion “includes those with disadvantages” (Evans and Deluca 2005, 1). And, more importantly, it includes “those from disadvantaged backgrounds” (ibid.). In national education, policies most valued feature is “attaining high overall performance, while at the same time, evening out disparities in performance” (Välijärvi 2002, 24). Even more, instead “of the average or top performance of a school or an educational system, the distribution of educational performance will (…) assume much greater importance. In particular, the distance of the poorest performers to the average will now be of particular relevance (…)” (Klasen 2005, 9).

Yet even in the case of high rates of inclusion in education at different levels of education, reproduction of social inequalities in education is taking place. In our paper, we present one example of such a development, which can be expected to exist in similar form in other countries too.

2. Social reproduction of inequalities in education in tertiary education in Slovenia

Based on the background presented above and theoretically elaborated on in last year’s presentation at this school\(^2\), this year, we are going to reconsider one element of the present state of education, equality, equity and fairness in education in tertiary education in Slovenia. Above all, we are going to try to “de-mask” the process of segmentation in education as a hidden process of social reproduction.

\(^2\) Comp. Gaber 2005
2.1. In Slovenia, research into the domain of the “perpetuation and legitimization of social hierarchies” started relatively early. Toličič and Zorman published results of their research dealing with “social factors” and their “impact on school attainment” (1977) in 1970. In 1965, they took part in an international research project Coping Styles and Achievement in which eight countries participated. After Toličič and Zorman, the level of expertise reached in the field of education and the influence of the social environment on the results of pupils and students in the other countries was not maintained. While measuring social reproduction, this study has stayed inside “crude yardsticks”: measuring mainly vertical mobility in correlation with social origin.

In the last 10 years, we have faced a revival of interest in social reproduction in the field of education, and new studies appeared dealing with social and class dimensions of educational attainment. Here, we intend to contextualise and present some evidence from this research, while limiting ourselves to segmentation in tertiary education.

2.2. The growth of enrolment and “(socialist) economic nationalism”

While authors in the introduction to Culture, Economy and Society (1997) are claiming that the importance of education marked the period after the WW2 in all developed countries, this is true also for the former Yugoslavia, and even more so for Slovenia. For this country, after 1945, education became one of the pillars of “economic nationalism”. This was so until 1973—during the time of prevailing claims that the nation state on her own territory is not only capable of providing “prosperity, safety and opportunity” but it is her duty to do so.

Slovenia for decades followed similar patterns as Western liberal democracies did. The first but important digression from the line of general development took place in the eighties - in the period of deep crises of socialism. Then - in the period of downgrading of welfare state provisions in Europe – Yugoslavia, and with her Slovenia, took a decision to stimulate students to continue their studies in the fields of science and technology by administrative quotas already inaugurated in secondary education. Our first reaction to the “crisis” of the welfare state, instead of further growth in the numbers of enrolled in tertiary education, led to the restrictions in numbers. The combination of restrictions and ideological bombardment concerning “the proper studies” resulted - instead of a new push for industry—in the eighties, at least 20.000O graduates less.

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4 Comp.: Husen 1972, 156.
5 Socialism was only a special version of “economic nationalism”. Probably with and appendix: socialist.
6 Cf. Accession Strategy. 2000, 13. Supposing less than 5% growth in graduations per year, the number of graduates would have been risen for the already mentioned 20.000 until the year 1991. While we have observed the flat [the 'flat' what?? 'While we have observed a flattening out' ??] only after '95 - we have after 15 years again surpassed the number of 6400 graduates - it is relatively safe to claim that the net loss of the administrative rederection of education in science end technology reached 30.000 graduates. 30.000 graduates added to the number reached at the time of the census in 2002 would equal 14,7 % of the population with more than an upper-secondary education in the population over 15 years of age.
It was not until the independence that education gained new momentum. It has again been a combination of "economic and cultural nationalism": this time in globalised world. The importance of education in Slovenia from then on is growing: for the state and for the citizens.

It seems that we are facing second phase of modernisation in Becks' terms. In Slovenia individual citizens as well as state both count on education as a possible accommodation of growing risks in society.

The results of census from 2002 and each year's statistics are demonstrating the growing number of more enrolled and graduated citizens of Slovenia.

Table 2: Inhabitants and education attained - census 1981, 1991, 2002


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Izbrazba Educational attainment</th>
<th>Služaj total</th>
<th>brez izbrazbe education</th>
<th>nepopolna osnovna in osnovnošolska basic</th>
<th>osnovna basic</th>
<th>srednja upper secondary</th>
<th>višja short-term tertiary</th>
<th>višja dolična in podiplomska higher undergraduate and postgraduate</th>
<th>neznano unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SKUPAJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1283135</td>
<td>1725025</td>
<td>357978</td>
<td>522217</td>
<td>317261</td>
<td>16888</td>
<td>25810</td>
<td>5923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1411877</td>
<td>201421</td>
<td>350027</td>
<td>458626</td>
<td>487937</td>
<td>40136</td>
<td>44469</td>
<td>10540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1514722</td>
<td>9848</td>
<td>253649</td>
<td>451222</td>
<td>652292</td>
<td>69909</td>
<td>95240</td>
<td>12971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1633909</td>
<td>11337</td>
<td>104219</td>
<td>433010</td>
<td>89941</td>
<td>84044</td>
<td>131018</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inhabitants experienced in last 15 years upward mobility in the field of education. Society experienced the same. While the number of inhabitants with higher education has grown in 1981-1991 only for 20,671, the number in 1991–2002 doubled and raised from 65.240 to 131.018.

Those with upper-secondary education are also up from 652.292 to 900.000. But for the collective and individual perception even more important is that after the census in 2002 trend of rapid growth didn't stop. To the contrary: “lift is still in function.” In 2004 the number of those reached degrees of tertiary education reached almost 15.000. 15000 in 2004 in comparison with 6.500 in 1995 is an important change.

And out of that fact it is to a degree understandable that Slovenia registered a growing trust in educational institutions after 1991.

Table 3: The trust in institutions 1991–2003 (sum of the answer »high level of trust” and »substantial trust«—in %

2.3. The danger of massive inclusion in tertiary education

Fast growth of the number of graduates—in the period 1998-2003 it reached 43%—is certainly good news for Slovenia. But at the same time, it produced a danger. In the period of growth an illusion—misconception—related to education as the mechanism of the eradication of social inequality, has grown. We will try to explain further the genesis and the structure of this danger.

The evidence, presented so far undoubtedly demonstrates that promotion of youth and adult citizens of Slovenia to higher levels of education is fast.

Available data also support conclusion that state is investing more in grants for students. Claims that youth and in particular the one from remote parts of Slovenia and with small amount of cultural and economic capital are not in position to cross the line of tertiary education, are evidently not evidence based.

Number of higher education programs from short cycle to the university ones, renewal of study programs etc., went hand in hand with the incorporation of students from the families previously without tertiary education degree. Not only expectations: realisation of expectations that daughters or sons are going to reach higher education than their parents became in Slovenia a rule.

And precisely here is the danger. Hopes of students and those that directed them toward education, as they have done after the WW2, are invested in education as a mechanism of social mobility. We all tend to bee blind and we don’t want to reflect the fact that despite the evidence mentioned above we are facing reproduction of social inequalities in education.

Our “blindness” is caused by already mentioned high enrolments and by the fact that reproduction of social inequalities is taking the form of segmentation which is seemingly socially neutral. Using Ringers’ (1989) concept of social segmentation, we are going to give first evidence of social reproduction in massive—inclusive and progressive tertiary education in Slovenia.

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8 In 1990, the number of state grants (Zois) was 38.000. In 2004, the number of those state grants reached 53.500 studenst. Cf: Statistične informacije 18. avust 2005/220, 2.
2.4. Ringer is using three statistical “properties” for evidence based evaluation of education systems:

a) “inclusiveness, measured in enrolments per age group” at the certain level of education;

b) “progressiveness, the degree to which students are recruited from the lower middle and low classes”—again at certain level of education and

c) “segmentation, the subdivision of educational systems into parallel schools or programs that differ both in their curriculum and in the social origin of students.”

(53)

Using three “properties” we can reach high degree of objectivation of social reproduction in particular system of education and in parts of it. In Slovenia we do have relatively precise evidence related to inclusiveness of education. On the other hand progressiveness and segmentation are not an “object of thorough research”. Unfortunately: location and definition of the nature and scope of reproduction of social inequalities in education in inclusive tertiary education is possible only with the help of research in these two domains.

For the purpose of our text we are going to presuppose growing inclusiveness and progressiveness of the system. Segmentation is the only element we are going to provide first evidence and reflect on.

According to Ringer segmentation is:

a) socially vertical—it is prevailing—at the level of upper-secondary and tertiary education it reveals disproportionally frequent incorporation of the children from upper class in the programs and schools with social prestige;

b) socially horizontal. Explaining it, author is using bourdiean concepts of economic and cultural capital. “Non-economic” part of upper middle class and lower middle class is over represented in particular in classical upper-secondary schools in relation to both species of economic middle class.

Using the concept of socially vertical segmentation we are presenting evidence of it in tertiary education in Slovenia.

As in secondary education at the end of 19th century today struggles for credentials are taking place in the field of tertiary education. Substantial under-representation of lower classes in "prestigious studies" when they are admitted to tertiary education, observed already by Passeron and Bourdieu in Les Heritiers (1964, 12), is still in place. In the process of segmentation is getting appearance of neutral—natural state of affaires. We often hear claims that there are number of different study programs and tracks (even to many of them) and students can decide among them: - in relation to their attainment in previous education (if capable and laborious);
Such a conception is widely accepted and is successfully covering the fact of social determined construction of the seemingly free choice of individuals. The amount and species of economic or cultural capital, structure of their habitus namely over-determine the decisions for study programmes. In turn—contrary to common perception—substantially determine future status of degree bearers and even of their children. In Slovenia correlation between different study programs and social origin is evident.

Tabel 4: Participation in tertiary education and level of education reached by father—census 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathers ed.</th>
<th>Enrolled in education</th>
<th>Enrolled in education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher ed.—short cycle</td>
<td>Higher ed.—short cycle 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All levels</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary education or less</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower or secondary vocational ed.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary professional or gymnasium</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-short cycle</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional higher ed.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University ed.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 presents the share of enrolled in relation to the inner “vertical” structure of tertiary education. The three “levels” in tertiary education described are:
- short cycle (2 years) tertiary education
- professional higher education (mainly 3 years), and
- university higher education (4-6 years), which signifies the different degrees of prestige.
The data demonstrate that at least in its “institutionalised” form, the cultural capital\textsuperscript{14} of the parents (father) highly determines enrolments in tertiary education. Students coming from backgrounds with weaker institutionalised cultural capital are far more frequently opting for, and are admitted to, less “demanding” and less prestigious educational short cycle programs and professional higher education programs. In the case of university degree studies, it is the opposite. They equal 71 (university degrees), or 75.5 (in the case of masters degrees), percentage points of the enrolled from the group of fathers. And while it is evident that the number of those aiming to achieve a higher level than their fathers is higher, it is at the same time equally clear that the ones with a higher institutionalised cultural capital allotted to their fathers are far more frequently targeting higher levels. And in only rare cases did they find short cycle tertiary education programs really challenging.

And the same basic pattern is obvious from further segmentation focused on university degree studies and the degrees actually reached.

Table 5: Proportion of degrees in relation to level of prestige of study programs and education of father\textsuperscript{15}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father/Education</th>
<th>Student/education</th>
<th>Primary education or less</th>
<th>Lower or secondary vocational ed.</th>
<th>Secondary professional or gymnasium</th>
<th>Short cycle higher ed.</th>
<th>Higher ed.</th>
<th>Postgraduate ed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Statistical evidence (census 2002\textsuperscript{16}) of enrolment and the degrees reached in different programmes and tracks of study demonstrates that social reproduction of social inequalities in tertiary education in Slovenia is taking place under a seemingly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14}“Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the \textit{embodied} state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the \textit{objectified} state in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics etc.; and in the \textit{institutionalized} state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.” (Bourdieu 2006, 106)
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Table 5 is demonstrating the relation between the social origin of the student and “the prestige” level of the study he or she is taking part in. Connected to gradation of professional prestige in Slovenia, the proportion of those graduated in teachers’ education programs is descending with the level of the education of the father. The same is the case for less prestigious technical professions. But quite the opposite is demonstrated in the field of law studies: there, the proportion of graduates is higher with the higher level of education reached by the father. Both tables are the starting confirmation of the thesis that social reproduction in Slovenia in tertiary education is taking place inside inclusive, progressive, but is segmented more or less by prestigious study programs.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Statistics produced by SURS (National Office for Statistics). Many thanks to Breda Ložar, Milena Ilić and Tanja Domijan.
\end{itemize}
horizontal (they are all part of tertiary education) and socially neutral distribution (they
deserve it and have chosen it) of students and degrees. The same trends can be
seen, more or less, taking place in the transition from primary to secondary
education. Today, segmentation is a typical form under which the reproduction of
social inequalities in Slovenia is taking place. In this respect, higher education is the
final destination for which cultural capital is validated as an access pass or
credentials.

With each year, a higher number of students from families with more cultural capital
are enrolled in significantly disproportional numbers, and in more demanding levels of
tertiary education and, inside the same level, in more “demanding” studies. They are
also successful in attaining degrees. In short, when institutions of tertiary education in
Slovenia take part in the reproduction of social inequalities, they do not do it through
exclusion. They are doing it via differentiated inclusion.

While having demonstrated the fact that even in highly inclusive educational systems
the reproduction of social inequalities still exists, we are just at the beginning of “the
fact finding” part of the “job”. While trying to tackle the “evidence” problem, it is
worthwhile to remember the somewhat ironic and rhetorical opening of Les
Héritières: “Is it enough to establish and to lament unequal representation of different
social classes in higher education, to part — once for all — inequalities in relation to
school?”

Literature

Accession Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia in the Field of Human Resources


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More about: 1. What we should be aware of? 2. What we can do to minimise reproduction?
3. Involvement in curricula renewal and about support for pédagogie rationelle – while only with a
carefully elaborated and permanent approach to cultural inequalities pupils and students from lower
classes can actually benefit from the necessary but insufficient democratisation of education – cf:
Gaber 2005.


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