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Foreword of the Editor: Fundamentals of Education. Equal opportunities for all or fair chances to all in education

There are a lot of doubts and disagreement concerning the idea of equality of opportunity in education (Lazenby, 2016). Children with different social, educational and geographical backgrounds have different educational opportunities. However, almost everyone agrees on the fact that the more effective the educational programmes and institutions are, the more successful their students could be in terms of their opportunities during school years and later in their working lives. In other words, the long-term outcome of effective education could be happy future citizens as a result of social and emotional fulfilment. However, harmony and happiness are not terms that are normally considered within the aims and purposes of education, which is hard to understand as these are universal purposes of man. Who wouldn't like to be happy and who wouldn't wish their children to be so? The reason for this dilemma could be that happiness and harmony cannot be measured easily and in contemporary educational systems everything has to be assessed and evaluated. Testing is a broad area of educational practice and research. Despite the wishful thinking that we all share at some stage, it is not a happy ending we are yearning for but a harmonious lifetime, which can be guaranteed mostly by adaptive and differentiated education systems, even if it is difficult to test and evaluate them effectively.

Although most educational experts are aware of the importance of the learners' needs when teaching them, the issue of the degree of centralization and standardisation in public education arises from time to time. What and how should studies be organized into standardised programs? To what extent should the state intervene in schooling? How should it be funded? These are the fiercely debated questions that have often been the focus of the social discourse since the state was considered responsible for public education.

School closures from February 2020 to June 2022 speeded up innovations and research in education worldwide. The most often debated issue was the lack of physical presence in institutional schooling. How has that affected children and teachers and the whole of society? How could students be developed socially without everyday physical contacts? Home-schooling had to be examined under the new circumstances. Again, equal opportunities in education came into the focus of both educational practices and theories. Home-schooling had to be compared with institutional schooling (Lawrence, Vijayakumar, 2021). Innovations had to be introduced to substitute traditional schooling, frontal teaching was removed entirely from everyday practices and most traditional evaluation methods proved to be useless. Instead of three-dimensional, multi-sensory experiences, two-dimensional audio-visual ones were available for learners. Students' homes, as the private sphere of families, were intruded by institutional education taking place through a "peeping" screen. While the losses were investigated worldwide (Engzell, Frey, Verhagen, 2022) paradigm shifts were suggested by more studies (Bodonyi, Pazonyi, 2022, Lawrence, Vijayakumar, 2021). This rather unusual educational situation in lockdown happened in most countries to highlight the many problems of education. It turned out that the gap between students in prosperity and those in poverty had widened dramatically.

At this point it must be emphasized that what we are looking for are studies that focus on theoretical approaches, methods and techniques that may increase students' progress rather than articles investigating the consequences of school closures. Studies that would enhance the opportunities in students' lives and so diminish the widening gap in educational attainment.

We believe that when the institutions closed, the new shifts in paradigm had already started with the fast changes happening in the world. But what are these changes and how should education adjust to them? The most important one is probably the existence and functioning of artificial intelligence. A lot of new phenomena in learning and teaching are somehow the consequences of AI or a response to these consequences. These paradigm shifts have been visible since the recognition of the importance of the key competences, which were recommended by the European Parliament and the Council in 2006 (2006/962/EC). Since then, it is widely accepted that it is fundamental flexibility, adaptability, and mobility that should be acquired in the school.

Our essential question is what response education provides to all these changes while trying to ensure fair chances to all (or equal opportunities for all)? This question is philosophical, political, theoretical, and methodological at the same time.

Fundamentals of Education (Podstawy Edukacji) is an annual, reviewed, scientific journal organized around a current topic and is published by Jan Długosz University in Czestochowa since 2008. It provides a high standard platform to researchers and experts to share and discuss their ideas on the given theme of the year, which this time is, as written above, equal opportunities for all or (at least) fair chances to all students in education mostly from the academic, scholarly perspective. Any pedagogical, psychological, sociological and philosophical studies dealing with the above pedagogical issue in the broad sense are welcome. This 16th issue of the journal is to contain theoretical studies and research articles of about 20–30 thousand characters in English that are connected to the above detailed topic. Review articles on this subject of about 15–20 thousand characters are also accepted for the journal.

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