

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE CLASS PERSPECTIVE: THE BULGARIAN CASE

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ABSTRACT

The main idea of the article is to show the importance of education as a factor in identifying the middle class. The basic issues of the present paper are: 1) Prosperity in society depends on the increased share of the middle class in social context. 2) Education is a prerequisite for individual and social mobility and well-being. 3) Education involved in the reproduction of the middle class.

The people with middle class status are involved in various structures of society and they have reached prestigious positions respectively which in turn affect the extent of their inclusion in society. Middle class representatives have complete and successful career realization, and they are significantly more influential from a social point of view in comparison to other individuals who are less integrated and less successful following the public indicators of personal success: education, income, prestige and power.

The paper is primarily based on the results obtained through the European Social Survey (ESS) under the 2006, 2009 and 2013 carried out in Bulgaria.

Findings of the present article are that quality education is not only a function of effort, ambition and persistence, but also of parental involvement, culture capital and family background. Educational achievements are stimulus for middle class expansion because they present investment in social contacts and competition on the labor market.

Key-words: middle class, education, Bulgarian education system, social structure.

Middle class adds stability to social structures and neutralizes inequalities, contributing to guaranteeing sustainability of the society. The growth of middle class could be observed through the 20th century in West European countries (Edgell 1993, 66; Lee and Turner 1996; Li 1997, 2-3). Shortening distances between 'top' and 'bottom' changed *class ratio* in economic and power aspects. Nowadays middle class shows growing proximity between classes in the social stratification (Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000, 126; Domanski 2006, 87-100; Hanhinen 2001, 13-16). 'The middle class is a macro social group, consisting of

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