SCHOOL FAILURE IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION: FROM THE STUDENT TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

School failure has been a central concern of European educational policy for decades, as it is closely linked to the social, economic, and ideological transformations of each era. In the past, failure was often interpreted in terms of individual inadequacy or lack of effort approaching school achievement as the result of innate abilities and personal will. However, as early as the 1960s, research began to highlight the decisive role of social capital and class position in academic success, challenging the dominant narrative of individual responsibility.

The shift towards a more systemic approach has been reinforced in recent decades, with European Union policies focusing on preventing student dropout and reducing educational inequalities. The concept of school failure has been transformed from an individual issue into an indicator of the structural weaknesses of the educational system, acknowledging the influence of factors such as educational policy, social background, and the school environment.

This article explores the transition to the current understanding of school failure through a historical and political analysis of European education, focusing on the educational policies that have shaped the perception of the phenomenon. The analysis centers on the theoretical dimensions of school failure, educational inequalities, and policy interventions aimed at addressing the issue, examining the strategies and tools developed to reduce disparities and enhance access to education for all.

Keywords: School failure, educational opportunities, social inequalities, European education, academic success

1.0 INTRODUCTION

School failure has been the subject of systematic study within the social sciences and educational policy, as it reflects both the structures of the educational system and the socio-economic conditions that shape the learning experience. Perceptions of school failure shift in response to historical and social developments, influencing the interventions adopted to address it. In the early 20th century, failure was regarded as the result of individual shortcomings or insufficient effort, mirroring the dominant beliefs of the era regarding meritocracy and personal responsibility. Social Darwinist theories contributed to the formation of educational practices centered on selection and classification of students, reinforcing the notion that school failure stems from innate differences in individual abilities rather than from social factors (Coleman et al., 1966).

Broader social and economic changes, such as industrialization, the rise of the welfare state, and the shift from agrarian to urban societies, shaped educational policy and led to a re-evaluation of the concept of school failure. Emphasis gradually shifted away from individual capacities toward social inequalities and the structures of the educational system. The work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) highlighted the relationship between educational inequalities and social reproduction, demonstrating that students' success or failure is not solely determined by their individual abilities. Instead, it is also shaped by the extent to which their cultural heritage, that is, their linguistic, social, and educational references, aligns with the values, expectations, and structures of the educational system. Educational failure thus came to be understood as a consequence of social position and unequal access to knowledge, challenging previous interpretations rooted in individual-centered approaches.

Contemporary perspectives emphasize the complex nature of school failure, acknowledging the importance of structural factors such as educational policy, socio-economic inequalities, and school culture. Research by Field et al. (2007) and Blossfeld et al. (2016) has underscored the dynamic relationship between school failure and social exclusion, documenting how failure often contributes to the reproduction of broader social inequalities. Policies that focus exclusively on improving performance without considering the social and economic conditions that influence the learning process fall short of addressing the issue at its core. Recognizing school failure as a social phenomenon has led to the formulation of educational policies aimed at reducing inequalities through interventions that strengthen student support and adapt the educational system to the diverse needs of the student population.

Education constitutes a fundamental factor in shaping modern social structures, acting both as a mechanism for reproducing social hierarchies and as a potential vehicle for social mobility. The dominant perception in the early 20th century portrayed schools as neutral institutions that reward effort and individual abilities, reinforcing the ideology of meritocracy, which was closely linked to industrialization and the organization of national educational systems (Bernstein, 2003; Bowles & Gintis, 2011).

The establishment of mass education systems was accompanied by the strengthening of the narrative of equal opportunity, an approach that, to a great extent, downplayed the impact of social inequalities on academic performance. Post-war research revealed the decisive role of social background and cultural capital in shaping educational trajectories, calling into question dominant assumptions about the neutrality of schooling (Bourdieu, 1984; Burger, 2019). School failure cannot be analyzed solely as an issue of individual shortcomings or lack of effort, as it constitutes a symptom of broader social and educational inequalities reproduced through the very structures of the educational system.

The understanding of school failure has also evolved at the level of modern educational policies, especially within the European context. European institutions, recognizing the importance of equal access to educational opportunities, have focused on combating student dropout and creating inclusive and resilient educational systems that respond to the needs of all students, regardless of their social background or economic status (European Commission, 2010; OECD, 2018). The shift from a perspective of individual responsibility to a broader understanding of social and educational inequalities has given rise to a range of policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all students. Measures such as strengthening early childhood

education, implementing multi-level and differentiated teaching, and increasing social support for students from vulnerable groups aim to reduce educational inequalities and create a more inclusive school environment (Heckman, 2006; Gorard & Smith, 2004).

This transformation in the perception of school failure is reflected in contemporary European educational policies, where combating student dropout and fostering fair and inclusive educational systems have become central objectives. The transition from an individual-responsibility framework to an acknowledgment of social and educational inequalities has led to the development of policies that promote equal learning opportunities, such as expanded preschool education, flexible and differentiated teaching methods, and enhanced social support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (European Commission, 2010; OECD, 2018). Analyzing this shift with historical and political depth reveals the connections between educational policies and broader social and economic transformations, illuminating how educational strategies and approaches are shaped within the contemporary European landscape.

2.0 EVOLUTION AND TRAJECTORY OF SCHOOL FAILURE IN EUROPE

School failure, as a social and educational phenomenon of particular historical interest, reflects the continuous evolution of educational systems in relation to prevailing socio-economic conditions. Prior to the 20th century, education was not regarded as a universal right or a necessary prerequisite for social participation, but rather as a privilege of a limited elite, closely tied to the social hierarchy and the structure of the economy. The configuration of the educational system was strictly hierarchical, tailored to the social, political, and economic needs of the time, promoting educational stratification and the classification of students based on their social status. Those from higher social classes had greater access to advanced educational opportunities, while those from lower strata were often excluded or restricted to rudimentary education (Bowles & Gintis, 2011).

At that time, school failure was not perceived as an indication of dysfunction within the educational system. On the contrary, it was linked to the individual abilities and efforts of students. The individualized conception of school failure was grounded in the notion of "natural" selection, according to which a student's educational trajectory depended solely on their innate abilities and personal effort. Those who failed to meet the system's demands were led to educational exclusion, a consequence viewed as natural and expected.

The Industrial Revolution in the second half of the 19th century had a transformative effect on educational policy. The demand for skilled labor and the expansion of industrial production led to the establishment of compulsory education, intended to supply the workforce necessary for industrial development. Education was transformed into a tool for reproducing the social and economic relations of the time, while also being regarded as a means of rewarding individual effort and capability.

Despite the growing emphasis on meritocracy, distinctions among students remained pronounced, largely enforced through performance-based assessments (Dewey, 1916). School failure was not considered rare or exceptional but was instead an integral element of the educational process. Students' "inadequacies" were interpreted as reflections of their individual weaknesses, reinforcing the view that failure was necessary and functional for preserving educational hierarchy (Bernstein, 2003).

However, the concept of school failure was not solely the outcome of individual student factors. It also stemmed from a system that rewarded and categorized children based on their school performance, mirroring societal structures. This perception persisted until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when educators began to acknowledge the role of social conditions in shaping children's learning capacities. School failure began to be understood not as the result of individual inability or lack of effort, but as a consequence of social inequalities, unequal access to education, and limited educational resources (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Educational inequality was no longer confined to disparities in student performance, but was now seen as part of a broader social problem rooted in deep-seated inequalities within the social and economic system.

The spread of compulsory education and the gradual extension of educational rights to broader social groups created the conditions for a significant shift, moving the interpretation of school failure away from individual responsibility and toward social and political parameters. In 19th-century society, school failure was closely linked to the maintenance of social divisions and class hierarchy. The transformative changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of education sparked the first reflections on the deeper social causes of school failure, laying the groundwork for contemporary discussions on the structure of the educational system and strategies to address inequality (Foucault, 1977; Coleman et al., 1966).

The early 20th century marked a significant transformation in the understanding and functioning of educational systems, particularly in the aftermath of the two world wars. Mass education was established as a fundamental right for all citizens, leading to radical social and political changes. Education was no longer seen as an exclusive privilege of the upper classes but was defined as a state obligation to ensure equal opportunities for all students, regardless of social or economic background. Nevertheless, despite the formal establishment of universal education, the social factors affecting student performance remained largely unchanged, maintaining the association between school failure and social inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Durkheim, 1956).

Émile Durkheim, one of the most influential theorists of the 20th century, recognized the relationship between education and social parameters. For him, education was not merely a means of social advancement, but a critical institution for maintaining social cohesion and order. Social origin, family circumstances, and cultural capital largely determined an individual's educational path. Durkheim argued that the educational system functions as a mechanism for reproducing social inequalities by determining individuals' social positions through their academic performance (Durkheim, 1956).

On the other hand, theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron expanded on the study of social and cultural parameters that influence educational success. According to their theory, the educational system serves as a tool for reproducing social inequalities, as students from lower social strata lack the "cultural capital" required to succeed in school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Their analysis shows that academic performance depends not only on individual effort but also on the social and cultural conditions that shape students' access and opportunities.

At the same time, the 20th century saw the emergence of the psychometric approach in education, which focused on evaluating students through examinations and psychometric tools

such as intelligence and aptitude tests. This perspective held that academic performance was the result of innate abilities, highlighting a distinction between "able" and "unable" students based on their exam results (Sternberg, 2009).

However, the psychometric approach faced strong criticism from educators and sociologists who argued that it overlooked the social and cultural conditions that influence learning. Intelligence tests, for example, often exhibited cultural biases, as students from more privileged social backgrounds had better preparation and greater access to educational resources, advantages that gave them a significant edge over students from less advantaged socioeconomic environments (Gould, 1981).

The criticism directed at the psychometric approach paved the way for a deeper understanding of the social dimension of school failure and led to the development of a new theoretical perspective that recognized the importance of social parameters in shaping academic performance. The distinction between innate ability and social conditions became a central issue in the theoretical analysis of school failure, resulting in the development of more inclusive and socially responsive approaches in educational policy (Foucault, 1977).

Post-war educational reforms in Europe are a key aspect of this restructuring of education. These reforms, shaped by new social needs and political demands, aimed to establish universal and free education. In countries such as France and the United Kingdom, the institutionalization of free and compulsory education became a primary tool for promoting social mobility and combating inequality. The post-war period marked the recognition of education as a fundamental right and the gradual overturning of the perception of education as a vehicle for reproducing social divisions and exclusions (Ferreira & Serpa, 2017).

This change was decisive for the subsequent development of school failure as a phenomenon, in the sense that failure began to be recognized not only as an individual issue, but also as a consequence of broader social and institutional conditions. Acknowledging the relationship between social parameters and educational success contributed to the formation of policies aimed at equalizing educational opportunities for all, regardless of social class, gender, or national origin (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

3.0 ADDRESSING SCHOOL FAILURE IN THE EUROPEAN AREA

The institutional response to school failure in Europe has been deeply shaped by shifting social and political conceptions of education. During the 19th century, school failure was primarily associated with individual student characteristics, such as "laziness" or lack of ability, reflecting the dominance of the discourse of personal responsibility. Society viewed students who could not integrate into the educational system as weak or incapable of meeting school demands.

This approach was strongly influenced by the industrial era, during which the educational system was structured around the need to train a labor force, emphasizing efficiency and hierarchy. Consequently, failure was considered almost "natural", a necessary outcome of the presumed inadequacy of the student reinforcing the notion of education as a mechanism for rewarding individual effort and competence (Bowles & Gintis, 2011).

However, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of the sociology of education, represented by key figures such as Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, challenged this perspective, redirecting attention to the social and cultural dimensions of the phenomenon. Bourdieu (1984), through his theory of "cultural capital", highlighted the role of social inequalities in the educational process, arguing that school failure is not merely the result of individual shortcomings, but a product of structural inequalities embedded in society.

His approach emphasized the social conditions that shape the educational experience, such as family background, economic circumstances, and cultural differences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Subsequently, educational policies in Europe increasingly began to incorporate sociological theories, focusing on the need for a more inclusive and equitable approach. The shift from interpreting school failure as an individual issue to understanding it as the result of social and educational inequalities led to a series of reforms prioritizing expanded access to education and the elimination of social barriers. The concept of "equality of opportunity," though at times bearing a utopian dimension, served as a foundational principle for many policies aiming to reduce social exclusion from education, whether through compulsory schooling or through enhanced social and economic support for vulnerable groups (Field et al., 2007).

In 1966, the publication of the Coleman Report in the United States sparked a broader debate on the connection between social factors and educational success and failure. It challenged the belief that individual abilities and efforts were the primary determinants of educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966). The study demonstrated that academic performance is not solely influenced by personal characteristics such as intelligence or effort but is significantly shaped by factors like socioeconomic status, family and community environment, and the quality of the educational system.

The recognition of these factors reshaped the understanding of education, showing that inequalities in learning outcomes are not simply the result of personal failure, but of systemic social structures and mechanisms. This realization was pivotal in prompting social and political reforms in Europe aimed at reducing inequality and integrating marginalized groups into the educational system, with an emphasis on improving the conditions that influence the learning process (Heckman, 2006).

In the post-war period, European education policies played a decisive role in redefining school failure from a matter of individual responsibility to a broader social and political challenge. The establishment of free and universal education in most European countries acknowledged the need for a fairer distribution of educational resources and opportunities. From the 1960s onward, education increasingly emphasized equity, differentiated instruction, and the elimination of structural inequalities contributing to school failure.

Policies aimed at enhancing social support such as free school meals, scholarships for students from lower social strata, and strengthened educational programs in vulnerable areas, highlighted the necessity of collective responsibility in tackling school failure (Gorard & Smith, 2004).

The combined influence of educational sociology, post-war social reforms, and the growing need for more inclusive and equitable education policy made it clear that school failure can no longer be interpreted solely as a matter of individual inadequacy. Rather, it requires an examination and acknowledgment of the social and cultural factors that shape it.

Modern institutional discourse on school failure, therefore, moves away from notions of personal fault and instead recognizes the structural inequalities that affect academic performance. The development of European educational policy has been a multidimensional and dynamic endeavor, adapted to the constantly shifting social, economic, and political landscape of the European Union (EU).

From the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which expanded the EU's role in education, to subsequent strategies and frameworks, education has become a central pillar for enhancing social cohesion, promoting competitiveness, and supporting individuals in developing skills throughout their lives (European Union, 1992).

The Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992, marked a milestone in European policy as it introduced "education" and "training" as areas of EU policy, even though responsibility remained primarily with the Member States. The incorporation of these domains into EU policy reflected a recognition that education is not limited to personal development, but is a fundamental factor for the well-being of societies and for achieving key EU goals such as social cohesion, economic growth, and increased employment.

While the Treaty promoted cooperation among Member States in the field of education, it did not establish common policies or strategies. Nevertheless, the growing need for a stronger European identity and a more coordinated strategy for human capital development contributed to the elevation of education as a key component of the EU's growth agenda (European Union, 2002).

The Lisbon Strategy, adopted in 2000, was a turning point for European educational policy, as it acknowledged the importance of strengthening education and training in addressing modern social and economic challenges. Special emphasis was placed on preventing early school leaving and enhancing opportunities for lifelong learning.

The strategy aimed to reinforce Member States' educational systems by increasing graduation rates, reducing social inequality, and boosting the skills of young workers. It also sought to align education with labor market needs and promote social inclusion through policies that ensure equal access to quality education for all children, regardless of their social or economic background (European Parliament, n.d.).

However, the strategy was met with criticism regarding its effectiveness, as substantial improvements in reducing early school leaving and social inequalities were not consistently recorded (Blanke et al., 2008). Nevertheless, it highlighted the need for further reforms emphasizing differentiated and personalized learning, as well as upskilling opportunities at all stages of life to enable citizens to adapt to an ever-evolving labor market.

Another important framework shaping modern EU educational policy is Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), which was adopted in 2009. Its goal was to strengthen cooperation

among Member States and integrate education and training into both national and EU strategies for development and prosperity. Within this framework, the EU promoted the need to improve education quality, foster innovation, and support lifelong learning in order to prepare Europeans for the challenges of the digital era and globalization (European Commission, 2019). The program included quality and inclusion indicators as well as initiatives to enhance teacher competencies and develop new learning formats, especially through technology.

More recently, the European Education Area (2025) emphasizes the importance of inclusive education and strengthening social cohesion. Its objective is to create a unified and coherent educational space across the EU, where all learners have equal opportunities to participate in educational activities regardless of their social or geographic position, and where educational systems are adapted to the needs of students of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

The strategy promotes student and learner mobility, multilingualism, and cross-border collaboration in education. It also incorporates the need for systematic inclusion of vulnerable groups, aiming to eliminate educational inequalities and create a space where social and economic mobility is enhanced through education (European Commission, 2020).

The European educational policy of the 21st century is shaped by comprehensive and multi-level approaches designed to address contemporary social, economic, and political challenges. EU strategies regard education as more than just a tool for social cohesion. They understand it as a fundamental driver of personal empowerment, economic competitiveness, and social mobility.

Through a holistic and flexible approach, EU countries are reshaping their education policies, adapting their systems to the changing demands of a globalized labor market and the evolving social expectations of their citizens.

4.0 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

The modern European educational landscape is shaped by emerging challenges and contradictions that significantly affect the effectiveness of education policies aimed at reducing school failure and promoting social cohesion. New technologies, the rise of personalized learning approaches, and persistent socio-economic exclusion, which continues to affect large segments of the population, render educational policy making in Europe particularly complex and demanding.

At the same time, the necessity to adapt policy to the realities of social and economic life makes the continuous revision of educational strategies imperative. This revision must focus not only on academic achievement but also on inclusion and social integration (OECD, 2020; European Commission, 2021).

Technological advancements have acquired a pivotal role in mitigating school failure, offering new opportunities to diversify teaching methods and improve access to education. Through digital tools and learning platforms, students can work at their own pace and in ways that reflect their individual needs, thus reducing performance gaps and fostering personal engagement in the learning process. Technologies such as online courses, interactive whiteboards, and applications that support remote learning provide students with the means to overcome

difficulties in subject matter that may not be adequately addressed by traditional teaching methods.

Simultaneously, personalized instruction and the ability to adapt the learning process to each student's pace enhances self-esteem and reduces school failure, provided that differing learning needs are systematically taken into account (Selwyn, 2016; Erlangga et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, despite the opportunities afforded by new technologies, socio-economic inequalities remain a decisive factor influencing educational success. Students from more vulnerable social and economic backgrounds are often disadvantaged in terms of access to new technologies and support within the educational process. Digital inequality, lack of access to computers and high-speed internet, and the absence of supportive social structures present significant obstacles to reducing school failure. Recognizing these inequalities is crucial for developing strategies that integrate technology as a tool to promote educational equity.

The link between educational success and students' socio-economic status is indisputable and demands comprehensive policy interventions that respond to the diverse needs of different social groups (Bourdieu, 1984; Gorard & Smith, 2004).

The need for personalized education that aligns with the variety of learning paces and preferences has emerged as one of the most significant concerns in contemporary educational planning. The integration of alternative learning methods such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and open educational practices allows students to participate in educational activities with greater autonomy. These approaches enable learners to engage with content in ways that reflect their individual needs and abilities.

Such methods promote critical thinking and creativity while also enhancing student participation in the learning process and reducing failure. They offer every learner the space and opportunity to develop their skills based on their unique potential.

Personalized instruction is a vital tool for equalizing educational opportunities and strengthening the learning process for all students (Gardner, 2011; Tomlinson, 2001).

Finally, the future of European educational policy appears to be closely linked to social cohesion and the strengthening of social inclusion through education. The educational policies of the European Union continue to focus not only on tackling school failure but also on recognizing the role of education as a tool for promoting social justice and equal opportunities.

The integration of the concept of social cohesion into EU education policy underscores the need to create inclusive and equitable school environments that support all social groups, regardless of racial or ethnic background, gender, social class, or other characteristics.

The strategies being promoted aim to provide equal educational opportunities for all, addressing social inequalities and reinforcing the cohesion and resilience of European societies as a whole (European Commission, 2020; Boudon, 1974).

5.0 CRITICAL REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

School failure, as a concept, has followed a complex and long-standing trajectory within European educational thought and policy. From its earliest conceptualizations, where "failure" was directly associated with the student's individual responsibility, to modern analyses that focus on social, political, and educational conditions, the notion of failure has evolved into a concept with broader social and political significance.

The approach to school failure has shifted from focusing on students' individual shortcomings, where the educational process emphasized the measurement of abilities and performance, to recognizing the social parameters that shape learning conditions.

The European history of school failure is intrinsically linked to social and structural inequalities in education. Since the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution highlighted the need for mass education, yet society viewed school failure as the result of individual shortcomings, disregarding the deeper social conditions and political inequalities at play. Meanwhile, the expansion of compulsory education contributed to the recognition of failure not only as a matter of individual capabilities but also as a result of the social and institutional dynamics that shape the educational process.

The transition into the 20th century, with the institutionalization of mass education and the emergence of sociological analyses of school failure, marked a significant shift in the understanding of the phenomenon. School failure came to be seen less as the outcome of personal deficits and more as a social issue shaped and influenced by structural inequalities within the educational system. Sociologists such as Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Passeron, through their theoretical perspectives, emphasized the social dynamics that influence access to education and success. They demonstrated that students are not evaluated solely based on their abilities, but also according to their social position, cultural background, and economic circumstances.

School failure can no longer be considered natural or self-evident, nor can it be isolated to individual-level explanations. Instead, it must be understood as the result of social and structural factors, necessitating its response through collective strategies and targeted educational policies.

This shift in perspective was also shaped by critiques of psychometric approaches that focused on evaluating students' "innate abilities." These critiques became a central element of 20th-century educational reform. Critical and sociological perspectives underlined the need to reassess the role of both school and society in reproducing inequality. School failure is no longer seen as an individual issue, but as a social phenomenon requiring educational policies that address its systemic causes and challenge traditional, individual-centered views of education.

While numerous educational strategies have been implemented by the European Union to combat school failure, it becomes clear that efforts to eliminate educational inequality may not be sufficient in themselves. The Lisbon Strategy and the Education and Training 2020 framework, though focused on expanding access and broadening opportunities, failed to produce the deep structural changes necessary to address fundamental social and economic disparities. Despite recognizing the value of education, these strategies did not succeed in

eradicating the root causes of school failure, allowing social and educational inequalities to remain largely unchanged.

Lifelong learning, promoted through Education and Training 2020, offers citizens opportunities to develop their skills throughout their lives. However, its implementation, coupled with the inability of educational systems to reduce inequality, highlights the persistent impact of socio-economic disparity on educational success.

The issue of school failure cannot be addressed solely through the expansion of educational opportunities. On the contrary, it requires targeted and structural policies that identify and address the deeper social inequalities affecting both students' access to education and their capacity to succeed within it.

School failure remains a complex and multidimensional social challenge for Europe, revealing the deeper inequities and injustices embedded in its educational systems. It is not merely the outcome of individual inadequacy but rather an expression of the systemic social and economic conditions that determine access to education and learning opportunities.

The value of analyzing school failure lies not only in its impact on students' lives but also in its ability to expose the structural weaknesses of societies and the need to revise the social paradigms that lead to unequal opportunities. School failure functions as a mirror of social inequality, and its analysis enables us to understand the root causes of social and educational exclusion. It highlights the significance of education not only as a means of acquiring knowledge but also as a tool for social inclusion and mobility, as well as for active participation in public life.

Europe is called upon to reconsider its stance on school failure and the structural causes that sustain it. European Union as a society can no longer ignore the systemic inequalities that persist within their educational systems, as these affect not only educational processes themselves but also the prospects for students' future integration into society and the labor market.

Addressing school failure requires an approach that goes beyond superficial educational policy changes, one that directly links education to broader social and economic restructurings. The need for a more holistic view of the phenomenon is increasingly urgent, as inequality in learning opportunities penetrates the very core of European societies.

A broader understanding of school failure as both a social and educational challenge is a necessary condition for ensuring fair and equitable opportunities for all. It also underscores the importance of education not only as a source of knowledge but also as a mechanism for inclusion, social mobility, and active civic participation.

Within the European context, addressing inequality and school failure requires cooperation among Member States, continuous policy review, and the strengthening of institutional structures that guarantee equal opportunities for every student. Only through sustained, coordinated, and politically committed efforts can real equality in educational opportunities be achieved and the social inequalities that undermine Europe's education systems be effectively reduced.

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