

DEVELOPMENT, COMPETITIVENESS AND EDUCATION OF HIGH QUALITY IN A CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

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The achievements in the social-economic development of Romania in the last 18 years represent an integrating part of a process that certifies the existence of a competition, which builds itself under the limits of what we call holistically today globalization; Romania is on the first place in Europe, regarding the favorable reform of the business environment.

The coherent politics, which are based on competition, innovation and education, represent the fundament of some social and individual changes that are being produced and will be produced in the contemporary Romanian society. Starting with these wishes and with the fact that before having a solid business environment, namely a competitive market, innovation, research and digital literature as well as a developed economy, the authors of the paper sustain that education represents the fundamental factor, which has to find its place on the political agenda in Romania.

If the strategy from Lisbon has a set of coherent rules on its agenda that stain the competition, this fact being reflected by the dynamic of the companies and by an economy that adapts itself, then Romania up-grades itself along the way as a constituent part of the European Union and will be part of such a conglomerate sooner or later; from the conglomerate the existence of a strong educational segment detaches itself, as well as the development of some viable research bases and the facilitation of intelligence access at a performant, qualitative educational system. "A Europe of knowledge is now unanimously recognized as an irreplaceable factor for the social and human development"- Bologna 1999.

The contemporary society presents important valences regarding knowledge and informing, and the production of material values, as well as immaterial ones is assured by a continuously rising number of people, who mainly produce and evaluate knowledge.

In this context, the knowledge becomes the principal privilege for performance and competition. School, in its typology of a social system, sends signals in two directions: the first is the one that belongs to cumulative cognoscibility and the second one underlines the existence of dissemination through an evaluation of the human resources, both part of the economical, social and cultural development.

Education represents an integrant part of the socio-cultural complex, which has the goal of affirming personal identity and winning performing autonomy, building intellectual, moral and physical qualities for every individual, this way helping him to live in society. In the present era of globalization, which we are crossing at a very fast pace, education seems like a pragmatic domain, which contributes directly to the development of societies.

The essential objectives of the modern school aims the passing on of information and knowledge to pupils and students, making it possible for them the configuration of a rational projection upon the world, a processing and practical use of the individualized competences.

The human personality as an expression of the impact between biological and social is also built through the agency of educational patterns. The educational process represents the guarantee of becoming and of developing some abilities and skills, which form an argument of the insertion of individuals in the contemporary society. Learning, in general, has an evolving and improving base. Besides the access to culture, economy and the computer environment, this base allows the constitution of some acquisitions won under the command

of education, acquisitions that allow working and participating in the public life, as well as the identification and valuable diversity of human behaviors.

The human being is multilateral and polyvalent open to the world and education can have as a result not just the recognition of some skills and abilities, but also the achievement of competences, the key-factor of performance. Regarding the performance obtained at the same time with the institution of pedagogical configuration, which aims toward the evaluation of the potential of students, the effort put into this being equally shared by both sides: the student and the teacher. Performance can become this way of affirming the personality of students, which is a decisive factor that guides competitiveness.

Generically speaking, the social actors have to be educated as social and cultural beings and the educational system has to be adjusted to the fluid context, in which they live according to the requirements of integration in a community (may it be European). Conscious, productive learning, as a characteristic of every person, guarantees the own independence, self-respect and last but not least the quality of life.

In this meaning, education plays a major role socially and economically, promoting important values for human individuals, proving that performance is a quotidian necessary good in a contemporary society. The educational dynamics of countries in the European Union imposes that Romania joins some requirements, that have the goal of aligning the autochthonous perspective of the pre-college / college education with the possibilities and methods used in the European educational system. Without prejudicing the Romanian instructional system with everything it has good, won for previous / present generations and through a curricular compatibility brought at European level, present Romanian education has the role of facilitating a symbiosis of the educational plans with a strong national character and the European comprehensible necessary. The desire mentioned has as its primary goal a finalizing through reciprocal recognition in tandem with the countries of the European Union (and not only) of scholar documents (diplomas, qualifications, titles, certificates, etc.), fact that will be found in a practical way reflected through the opening of a competition market of hiring human resources.

Regarding the mobility and movement of students and teachers in the Romania of the past 18 years, in a context of international educational dynamic, remarkable is the fact that these are produced in a fairly big registry, reflecting a behavior more toward than way from the exterior. The contact with other cultures and civilizations represents a chapter where Romanian students adhere according to their possibilities, but in a large number, statistics showing approximately a number of over 50.000 people, many of which being successful in Olympic exams (of course that the existence of a scholarships system represents a trigger).

In this situation we can mention about a representative segment in the educational domain, where the studies lead by young Romanians outside of Romanian borders are diverse, specialized and already recognized by other countries. However, the Romanian offer of education attracts a series of foreigners but at a much smaller scale, that mostly constitutes itself around the Romanian Diaspora. This act is reflected by the requirements imposed by the social mobility of Romanians, who in the past years have had formal access to the European working environment. The implementing of some forms of Romanian education in countries like Spain, Italy has an important contribution to maintaining the perception of Romanian spiritual values, of identity among children, pupils and students, who join their parents in the mentioned process.

The integration in the European tendencies and politics regarding the development of educational systems brings in discussion -- from a theoretical point of view -- decentralization and from a practical view point, the fact that school is becoming the major factor of decision, keeping in mind the conditions in which the participation and consulting of those interested

are exposed to. Decentralization represents a fundamental component of reforming school and a premise of its modernization.

Regarding this chapter, Romania still has to reconfigure and implement legislative and situational desiderates regarding the educational process as a decentralized process characteristic for the educational system. Having the principles inserted in the European Book as an example, which define the local autonomy as being “the right and effective capacity of local public administration authorities to solve and clear, within the law, in a proper name and in the interest of local population, an important part of public business” considering that “the exercise of public responsibilities has to generally and favorably get back into the hands of those authorities most close to the citizens”, a series of regulations have been elaborated regarding decentralization and the transmission of certain attributes but also of a financial support for sustaining those, towards local public administration. In this context, it has been planned that in the duties of local public administration there will appear attributes regarding the pre-scholar and pre-college educational system (first the patrimony and then the salary of didactical and non-didactical personal), health, child protection, social protection (including the guaranteed minimum income), the computer-skill evidence of a person, communitarian police, etc.

In the project “Four exercises of educational politics in Romania, Topic#1: The management in the context of the decentralization of the educational system” (Iosifescu, 2005) there is a reference to the fact that decentralization has as a principal objective the transfer of decisional authority down in the hierarchy of an organization or outside of it. More accurately, decentralization has two big essential dimensions : “ non-concentration , which refers to the delegation of authority of decision from the central levels toward the regional and local levels, and the true decentralization – non-evolution - in the species at the public local representative authorities. In this way, the non-concentration would mean the transfer of decisional authority from the Ministry of Education and Research to the inspectorates and scholar units, as organizational levels of the educational system, and true decentralization would mean the transfer of decisional authorities to the local council and to the mayors”.

The model of decentralization must constitute themselves as a reflection of the situation of Romanian school system, that needs the including of some criteria, of which the most important refer to: the position of power, namely the autonomy in taking decisions, the historical organizational-cultural constituents, the capacity of refining information, qualification of management at the average level, geographical diversification along with superior level of professionalizing of the members of the organization. The calendar of implementation of decentralization was initially proposed to have as a start-point the year of 2005-2006, considered as a pilot-year (trial-year), afterwards this period being extended until 2010.

In the Romanian educational system the process of decentralization assumes the improvement of administrative and financial management at the level of the education units, efficient management of resources and the responsibility of local actors through the transfer of decision from the central to the local plan. The objectives of the educational school’s decentralization aimed, step by step, the modification of the scholar curriculum, the scholar network, the administration of the educational units, next to the politics of financing, as well as by the distribution of functions at levels of decision. This system gives especially mayoralities a set of responsibilities much larger as a working area and means of decisions. Decentralization has an administrative and financial management as a basis, specific for each unity of the educational system, that can be optimized in two directions: first as a management changed in what regards the resources, and second a direct responsibility of social actors involved through the equation of decisional central-local transfer. The reform of

education includes in its decentralization structure, and this fact is connected to a modern approach of educational institutional events.

From an economical perspective, in Romania decentralization (in school) can be realized in direct connection with the development of communities through a concurrent presence of the educational systems with the management of companies or entrepreneurs. Of course that this process needs clear legislative and political regulations.

In the present, in the educational system (as well as in the social one) the situation is that of a partial decentralization, where there are meeting up exclusive attributes of the local public administration as well as attributes shared with the central administration and some delegates (defined in the law 195/2006, regarding decentralization), which leads to a superposition of authority but also to a minus of financing. As a matter of fact, the most important problem at the moment seems to be the dimensioning of the financial resources (even though a decision by the government exists in this sense – OUG 45/2003). In a practical way, the process of decentralization was started in all domains (education, health, social life) but was not finalized in any of these.

The report of the presidential commission for analyzing and developing politics from the domains of education and research realized in 2007, called “The Romania of education, The Romania of research” underlines a serious situation regarding the Romanian educational system.

The results of this report (made public) attract the attention mainly upon the fact that for right now the Romanian educational system has problems of “efficiency, equity, relevance and quality”. The report brings to attention a series of solutions for solving these problems and makes a direct reference to the fact that the implementation of these can be made based on the allocated budget of 6% of the PIB as well as through using the European funds.

In the problem of decentralization from the pre-college education, the report mentions that approved by the government is “the strategy of decentralization of the educational system – 2005”, but without being put in use. This way, the pre-college educational system configures itself further as a super-centralized system, the school units not having access to the construction of its own budget and also not the possibility to operate changes according to the necessities. Schools still depend on the centralized power of decision, not having the possibility to make hiring according to the performance of subjects, and the curriculum at the disposal of the school being “semi-existent”. Also, the educational system is offered only to the children, students, youngsters without taking into regard the necessities and expectations of adults interested in continuing/ perfecting their studies (constant learning). The connection that should be set with the local communities is almost inexistent, and the after-school program (promoted by many of the private forms of elementary education, as if to prove that intelligent, economic moves exist in Romania starting with the most “fresh” levels) appear very rarely and inefficiently.

The solutions proposed for a true process of decentralization aim: financing per student (for example in 2005 the state offered for the education of a student between 15 and 17 million lei per year). The sum included costs for textbooks, transportation, teachers’ salary, school improvements, and also scholarships); decentralization for the three components – financial, human resources and curriculum; respecting the standards of quality put in the service of education and not of local interests.

Decentralization can bring the pre-college school back to a role of beneficial guiding of the whole society. This way, it is necessary that school becomes a center of education for all the generations, children and adults, brought to light being the fact that there is an infrastructure and human resources that can promote the access to a competitive education or to one of the type “a second chance”. It is necessary to implement an after-school program,

assuring conditions of learning and recreation of own students, offering this way a securing space for these and helping parents this way. The insertion into an active communitarian life of students represents another solution proposed in the mentioned report. This refers to the active introduction of voluntary work, partnership with non-governmental organizations, groups of social support, mainly the development of civil structures of society through direct implication of students. Having such a communitarian model, the school will optimize its functions and most of all will form them to fit the new social pattern of the formation of human personality, a pattern often found in the European Union's countries.

Therefore, by the level of year 2008, it is being discussed in Romania about a partial decentralization of spending in the educational system but not of the decision as well, fact that materialized itself through the allocation of necessary funds, as a result of some tensioned moods produced in the educational society. It is also being discussed about a process of non-concentration at the local level (and not decentralization) made concrete through the existence of some programs of national interest managed by several ministries (sport halls, computers, child protection, infrastructure program in the rural space).

Education and educational management have the role to direct the efforts of the children, students toward the formation and development of personality, this leading to the optimization of individual and collective life quality. Regarding the educational progress, besides a democratic approach, a pattern of the educational system's adaptability frames itself, regarding necessities, interests and abilities of the "young apprentice" through creating a community of learning with his mentor or based on extra attention, trust, collaboration and support.

To offer every child or student the possibility to confront themselves with tasks of stimulation learning and according to his or her abilities reflects the essence of the idea of democracy. Democracy does not mean only right to education, but also the right that society is morally obliged to assure for all citizens through assuring the freedom to be different from the rest and through respecting the rights of the individual to live his uniqueness and characteristic.

In this context, the possibility of mixing knowledge and the method of systematic analysis of each youngster needs a guide, a practice, lead by a didactical personal very well prepared.

Viewed as an activity, education represents a system of formation and development of human personality, to which finality is added as well as the modalities of organization-coordination-evaluation, reflected by the educational management. Educational management is based on important resources and tries to answer the problem of efficiency and finality of the education of people involved in such a process. The ones presented in the lines above greatly define the system of excellence of the educational system, which originates in the education of excellence offered in a first segment to the exceptionally gifted students.

In Romania, almost 5% of the youngsters are exceptionally gifted. However, many get lost on their way to performance, not being discovered. One of the solutions that work in over 40 countries, including Russia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, is the creation of special centers of research, that work with these gifted children. Such countries have created a system of education based on programs with a specific goal to cover present needs. The exceptionally gifted children are a challenge to society and her mechanism for answering adequately to their high intellectual potentials and to their supplementary needs when it comes to education, and the sign of a true democracy consists in the approach of this problem without prejudice. The exceptionally gifted children's problem and that of the educational system, that is reserved for them, needs a new, more broader approach, which constitutes the topic of another paper.

However, extra poling this concept of excellence in everyday school life, with the desire to refresh and reinstate the superior quality of the pre-college educational system, we propose a new perspective in the educational system.

The standard approaches applied until now in the Romanian educational system are not adapted to the individual needs of the students; actually, in the education of excellence it is started from the premise that each person (child or student) has a kind of potential, a personal mental luggage, that includes a certain degree of development of intelligence, a series of abilities and qualities that are just waiting to be stimulated to be recognized and developed to become competences.

In this situation, if the guides are also involved, if they are true mentors in such a process, they will be able to offer the youngsters the start-u they need to become true performers. This is one of the conditions for youngsters to be able to build and develop later, innovate the economy and the globalizing world without which the society could not exist. This is one of the conditions that later, youngsters can become competitive, functional and trained adults, who can offer counseling to future generations as well.

Methodology of work:

During the process of research it has been set up as a principal hypothesis that the existence of a significant and positive relation between decentralized education and the system of excellence, which would allow a real improvement of the Romanian educational gestalt. The capacity of adapting that individuals have, is tied to the level of training they have, to the modality in which the assimilation of a certain amount of knowledge was made and to the depth and power of everyone's psychic to use the received information.

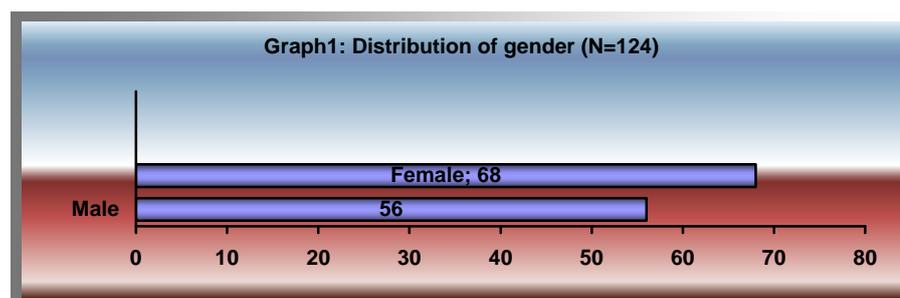
The questioner of perception of decentralization (short-CPD) and the questioner of perception toward the system of excellence (CPSE).

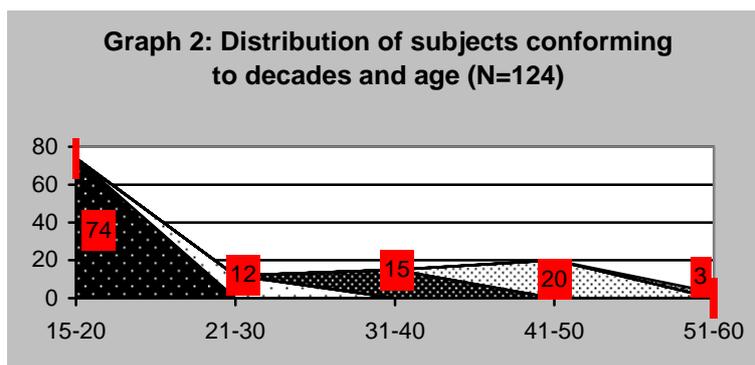
In the period of October 2007-January 2008, the experimental tryout developed itself through the application of a methodological set on a sample of 124 individuals (N=124), chosen at random.

The selected subjects are students of The Technical College "Edmond Nicolau" from Bucharest, in 10th and 11th grade (N=74), as well as a number of 50 didactical staff (teachers of different levels), who teach within the school mentioned above. The locations in which the battery of tests was applied, were the ones familiar to the respondents. The subjects were asked if they are pressured by time, if they can participate in the filling out of questioners without attracting unpleasant situations in case they were at the place where they were currently doing their activity, or in the educational unit (high school).

The investigated group included 56 males and 68 females with the ages between 15 and 23, the mean age being of 29.6. We mention the fact that the subjects participated in a voluntary way to the filling out of the questioners, they are not receiving any kind of financial reward.

The data of demographic identification are represented in the graphs below, as follows:





The statistical interpretation underlined the fact that there are significant differences between the result of students and the group of teachers, regarding a series of items from the questioners. This way, the group of students agree in a stronger way with the fact that managerial change has an important role in the process of the educational system ($t=2.41$, $df=20$. $P=0,05$).

At the same time, the group of questioned students agree more with the fact that didactical resources play an important role in the educational procedures ($t=2,51$, $df=20$. $P=0.01$); also, the group of students notify a powerful agreement with the items, which refer to the fact that “ school is a guarantee for development” ($t=2.92$. $df=20$, $p=0.05$) and with the one referring to the institution of an autonomous school, from a financial and managerial point of view ($t=2,51$, $df=20$, $p=0,05$).

Put differently, the group of students gives a lot of importance to the content of selected items towards the position of validation expressed by the attitude of the staff.

Regarding the second questionnaire (PQES), we notify again the presence of significant differences, when it comes to the level of perception that students have/ the level of perception that teachers have to the enunciations that have aimed the underlining of students’ ability during the process of the educational system ($t=2,44$, $df=20$, $p=0,05$), the more powerful desire expressed toward the flexibility of the school program in the future ($t=2,21$, $df=20$, $p=0.01$), the importance of the dynamics of school management ($t=2.91$, $df=20$, $p=0,05$), as well as the recognition of the fact that the teacher’s style has a big influence on students ($t=2,41$. $df=20$, $p=0.05$).

From another viewpoint, the registered results from the investigation of educational-pedagogical quality, did not have any significant statistical differences, but an optimal validation from both investigated parts. Once obtained, this information of statistical relevance, it has been passed on to the testing of work hypothesis, referring to an analysis of correlation to study the intensity of the relationship between the variables chosen in the research.

In this case, the calculation of the Pearson coefficient of correlation was used. The analysis of the correlation showed that a significant correlation detaches itself between the subjects’ perception upon decentralization and the system of excellence as well as upon the educational-pedagogical quality, where $r(124)=0.729$. $p<0.000$, bilateral. (see Tabel 3).

Tabel 1. T-student DPQ (N=124)

Items: Decentralization perception questionnaire (DPQ)	Group of students		Group of teachers		T-student
	N=74		N=50		
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation	
1 Do you consider that the democratic values are part of the educational system?	2,79	1,10	2,76	1,01	-0,42

2. Do you believe that the potential of every student should be exploited by the teacher?	3,06	1,07	2,93	1,15	-1,32
3. Do you consider that the formation of didactical staff is a requirement of Romanian society ?	2,42	1,21	2,52	1,20	-0,02
4. Do you consider that teachers take the requirements of the students and of the community into account?	3,12	1,03	3,06	0,97	-0,44
5. Do you think that the school structure can be build after a debate in a community?	3,03	1,08	3,10	1,00	0,79
6. Do you consider that the managerial change influences the educational system?	2,81	1,24	3,03	1,21	2,11*
7. Do didactical resources play a role in the process of education?	4,52	0,62	4,37	0,83	-2,41*
8. School curriculum has to follow the demand on the work market?	4,04	1,19	3,97	1,17	-0,75
9. Do you consider school to be a guarantee for your development?	3,81	1,00	3,57	1,01	-2,92**
10. Do you think that financially and a managerially autonomous school is desired?	3,48	1,42	3,18	1,41	-2,51**

After the application of the Decentralization perception questionnaire (DPQ – tabel1) and the perception questionnaire towards the excellency system (PQES – tabel 2) a series of data was obtained, which were tabled and worked on statistically (with the help of the SPSS program, 13.0) as it follows: for every item of the questionnaire the mean and the standard deviation were calculated, applying afterwards a comparative statistical calculation of type t-student, in order to be able to compare the results registered on each item within the two groups (independent samples) of students (N=74) and that of didactical staff (N=50).

Tabel 2. T-student PQES (N=124)

Items- enunciations: Questionary of perception versus the system of excellency (QPSE)	Group of students N=74		Group of teachers N=50		T-student
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation	
1. Professional and personal development of the didactical staff is important in the educational system.	2,67	1,06	2,71	1,03	-0,47
2. The level of implication from the students must be different from that of teachers.	2,05	1,01	2,82	1,11	-1,41
3. The personal abilities of students have priority in the learning process.	4,49	0,60	4,36	0,81	-2,44*
4. Efficiency comes from individual study.	3,09	1,02	4,06	0,96	-0,48
5. Motivation for performance comes from the teachers.	3,03	1,08	3,10	1,00	0,79
6. The flexibility of the school schedule is a characteristic of the school of the future.	2,71	1,22	3,01	1,23	2,21*
7. The activity and communication from school are satisfactory.	2,39	1,11	2,51	1,18	-0,05

8. The feedback from students to teachers for modifying the school program is welcome..	3,95	1,09	3,78	1,12	-0,86
9. School management must be in motion.	4,81	1,03	3,47	1,04	-2,91**
10. The style of the teacher has a decisive influence upon the students' behavior.	3,37	1,31	3,17	1,40	-2,41**

Tabel 3 : Pearson Correlations

Correlations CPD - CPSE - Quality E-P

		CPD	CPSE	Quality E-P
CPD	Pearson Correlation	1	.729**	.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	124	124	124
CPSE	Pearson Correlation	.729**	1	.627**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	124	124	124
Quality E-P	Pearson Correlation	.648**	.627**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	124	124	124

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The obtained values indicate a tendency of positive and significant association between the perception upon decentralization and the system of excellence by the investigated individuals, fact that permits us the validation of the hypothesis of research and theoretical and moral support for starting an investigation at a greater scale.

We consider that in a first phase of research, the used sample was a representative one, and the results confirmed from a statistical point of view challenges us to go in depth with this study, in order to obtain an even more scientifically correct vision of the variables we worked with.

The investigation shows its efficiency, becoming a basis for putting together a project-program with practical, and real destination, regarding the phenomenology of decentralization of the educational system, as well as the introduction of approaches of excellence in the educational process.

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