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Reform of Public Education System in Romania

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Abstract: From an epistemological perspective, the public education system is a specially developed concept to determine qualitative transformations, superior in the pedagogical reality delimited in a macro-structural context. It reflects a virtual pedagogical reality, important through its superior, formative, open, inexhaustible methodologically and praxeological potential. The main goal of the education system is to educate the further workforce, in this macro-context it is part of the global social system and should be in accordance to the transformation of the society. Education units are the base cells where the education, training programs are design, using the existing infrastructure and human resources, placing the educational process in time and space. In this research, we aim to analyze the mission, organizational and management structures of the public education service in Romania. Unpredictable, education plays an important role in any society that focuses on knowledge. Through it, the personality of the most important resource, the man, is modeled. That is why the education system has to build to provide knowledge and skills comparable with other European Union or worldwide education units.

Keywords: *education system, digitalization, reform, efficiency, competition*

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1. Introduction

In the current context, the sphere of public services has a significant weight and role in any society that emphasizes both positive and negative human rights. Public education service represents the component of the national education system in which there are pedagogical organizations specialized in designing and carrying out the educational activity on levels, steps, training cycles, managed to optimize the available pedagogical resources, continuously developed and improved in context [8] open pedagogical and social.

From the perspective of the curriculum paradigm, the public education system defines the set of formal and non-formal pedagogical organizations and special actors involved in the development of education based on contractual and consensual relationships, credible within the family and local community [19].

2. Problem Statement and Methodology

The main issue of the education system is to adapt the education program and the teaching style to the nowadays challenges. It has to be in accordance to the socio-economic life and to respond to the requests of the day [9]. One dimensions of the education system is to provide to the scholars and students the needed skills to can easy integrate into the labour market. Cultivating an entrepreneurial behavior and thinking represents one of the goal of the education system in Romania in the last three decades, self-employment being a tool of keeping the unemployment away [10].

In our research, we will apply the working methods established for any theoretical approach, giving due weight to analysis and synthesis, comparison, critical approach, by defining the concept of public education service. The goal is to reduce the share of ambiguity, according to the Carnapian requirement. An important emphasis is placed on the mission of the Romanian public education service, on its organizational and management structure, referring to the structures of achievement and relationship of the education system and addressing the reform of the Romanian public service in the current context. The analyzed aspects are established in a theme that briefly addresses the structures of achievement and relationship specific to the public education service in Romania.

3. Public Education Service in Romania

The National Education Law no. 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and completions is governing the public education system in

Romania. It defines the mission of education, structures and basic aspects of the organizing of the education process.

Inherently, the social mission assumed by the public education service is to *"form, through education, the mental infrastructure of the Romanian society, following the new requirements, derived from Romania's status as a member country. Of the European Union and its functioning in the context of globalization"* [20] (art2.alin2.). The pedagogical mission involves the design and implementation of a *"highly competitive national human resource, able to function efficiently in current and future society"* [20].

The Romanian public education system has a permanent organizational structure at the level of pre-university education and university education. This structure includes *"levels, forms of education and, where appropriate, channels and profiles aimed at acquiring key competencies and for progressive professionalization"* [20] (art. 22, alin. 2.). Article 23 of the mentioned law presents several structures for organizing the Romanian public education service, on levels as follows: early education (0-6 years), which includes two sub-levels: pre-school and pre-school, primary education comprising the preparatory class and grades I-IV, secondary education, with two sub-levels/ levels of education: lower secondary education and upper secondary education and non-tertiary education, which includes post-secondary education.

Public education *"compulsory is 11 classes, including primary education, secondary education, and the first two years of upper secondary education"* (art. 16) [20].

The forms of organization of pre-university public education are daily-time education and less frequency education. Public academic education service is organized according to the provisions of the same organic law (art. 137) [20]. The organizational structure includes *"university programs grouped in three cycles of study"* following the requirements of the *"Bologna Process"*: bachelor's degree, lasting 3-4 years, 60 transferable credits for each year of study (art. 150, alin. 2) [20], master's degree duration of 1-2 years and doctoral studies with the duration of 3 years, with extension possibilities in specific situations. The forms of organization of university study programs are daily, partial frequencies, and distance. There are used ECTS (European Credits Transfer System) (art. 137, art. 139, art. 153, alin. 1, art. 159, alin. 3) [20].

The managerial structure of the public education service developed on its vertical is realized at the top, intermediate and first level. At the top level, the Ministry of National Education is *"a specialized body of the central public administration subordinated to the Government"*. It fulfills functions such as: elaboration of the Strategy for the implementation of the Government Program in the field of education; managing resources for implementing

policies in its area of activity; evaluation, coordination and control of the implementation of policies in the fields of activity; elaboration of the normative, methodological, functional, operational, institutional and financial framework, necessary for the achievement of the strategic objectives; national and international representation on behalf of the Government; communication with the other structures of the central and local public administration and with the civil society [23].

At the national level the management of the education system is leaded by the Ministry of National Education. The top leadership is hold by the Minister, the State Secretaries, General Secretary and specialized directorates.

Territorial, education system has a middle management lever represented by the regional inspectorates, they are coordinating the managers of the education units. The evaluation and guidance functions are performed at the level of school inspectors in the field of management, school inspectors in the field of curriculum and school inspection. In contrast to, the universities have academic autonomy, they are only subordinate to Ministry of National Education. It represents *"decentralized public services of the Ministry of National Education, with legal personality"* (art. 95, alin. 1) [20].

All the certified education units, public or private owned, are integrated in the national education system in Romania.

Pre-university education is run at the grassroots level by boards of directors, principals, and deputy principals. In carrying out their specific functions, boards of directors and principals are working with the teachers council and parents committee, and local public authorities (art. 96) [20].

University education is run, at the first level, by the university senate and the university board of directors, by the faculty council, by the department council. The specific top management are rector, the vice-rectors, and the general administrative director. The middle management is assured by the deans, the vice-deans, the directors of the departments (art. 114, 207) [20].

Improving the management of the education system involves the activity of horizontal structures of the public education system that have as a defining function of the processing and provision of information necessary for the optimization of managerial decisions.

The structures are technical, based on research and pedagogical and community improvement actions, based on information actions, acquired in conditions of continuous evaluation of the state of the system, carried out from the perspective of beneficiaries: teachers, students, parents.

Technical structures that provide information for optimizing higher managerial decisions within the national education system are: the Institute

of Education Sciences [24; 26], the National Center for Evaluation and Examination, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (art.14) [22], Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Certified Continuing Education Centers in the languages of national minorities (art. 45, alin.11) [20], National Center for Differentiated Education [21], National Children's Palace.

Technical structures that provide information for optimizing managerial decisions at the intermediate level within the national education system are Teaching Staff House, Educational Resource and Assistance Center (county/municipality of Bucharest), Palaces, and Children's Clubs (art.100) [20; 25; 27].

The technical structures that provide information for optimizing management decisions at the base level are departments/methodical commissions permanent commissions in schools (art.65-67, art.79) [27].

Community-type horizontal structures could be approached from the scope perspective as well as *community-type structures that provide information for optimizing top management decisions*: National Federation of Associations of Parents in Pre-University Education, National Council of Students, General Association of Teachers in Romania, Association of Teachers in Romania, Association of Librarians in Romania, *community structures that provide information for optimizing managerial decisions at the intermediate level*: county associations of parents, council county of teachers, county associations of teachers, county associations of teachers and *community-type structures that provide information for optimizing management decisions at basic/school level*: teachers' council, the general meeting of parents, associations of parents, student council.

4. Structural Relationships of Romanian Public Education

The managerial structure of the public education system is determined by the need of efficiently use of resources needed for the design and implementation of specific activities. It refers to informational, human, didactic - material, and financial resources [14, pp. 14-15].

The information resources have as constitutive elements the framework plans, the school curricula approved by order of the minister, school textbooks, and auxiliary materials for deepening learning in the context of differentiated training.

Human resources in pre-university education are represented by teaching and auxiliary teaching staff (art. 249) [20]; in university education, it is represented by teaching and research staff (art. 285) [20].

Within the didactic-material resources are found the space and the pedagogical time necessary for the development of the previously designed activities (art. 94 and 136) [20].

In pre-university public education, financial resources come from core funding, supplementary funding, and additional funding (art. 107, 109 and 110) [20] as well as from own income from specific activities, as required by law, from donations, sponsorships, or other legally constituted sources (art. 108) [20]. For public university education, the financing system and procedure is stipulated in articles 222 and 223 of the same law.

The relationship structure of the national education system is open to organizations specializing in non-formal education, to social actors that can organize specialized schools, to the family, and to the local community. It refers to lifelong learning which is defined as the totality of learning activities performed by each person during their existence in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts [13].

As societies are in a constant search for identity, it is necessary to adapt to the public education system to the expectations of actors from heterogeneous backgrounds. This becomes desirable through reform.

5. Reform of the Public Education in Romania

According to the opinions established in the field, referring mainly to Sorin Cristea's contributions: "education reform is a global change, superior in terms of the education system's purposes, and it is the content of the education process" [5, p. 101; 6].

The research of the differences between current and global changes, periodic in education, achieved through education reform can be done, says the same researcher, depending on the consequences on the scale of the education system/process and the factors involved. It can be defined from a synthetic perspective "a structural and systemic innovation within the education system" [18] as well as, from a descriptive perspective, "a change of the education system at the level of education aims, structure, the content of the process education" [7].

Education reform projects a type of change in education, superior by its global, innovative character; it appears as a necessary strategic solution when the education system signals a major crisis at the level of its functioning structure [11] The crisis is determined by multiple factors that manifest simultaneously or successively, and it is an expression of the historical evolution of the Romanian society and school, of the world crisis of education [4].

Referring to the last century of human civilization, we identify two types of education reform: the reform of the first half of the twentieth century, which aimed at adapting to the essential changes that occurred after World War I, partially changed the structure, acting successively "at the level of primary, secondary, vocational education" emphasized the "extension of basic elementary education by 1-2 years" [1] and the reform of the second half of the twentieth century emphasized in Romania, but also in other countries, the orientation towards all levels of the system. The change has been institutionalized through "specialized services" from the perspective of education [17].

In the European Union and implicitly in Romania reforms in the last two decades have focused on equal opportunities (access to education for all children, continuing education, inclusion and non-discrimination [16].

The general principles of the reform was to restructuring in an innovative way the teaching process and to focus on the skills and abilities of the subject [5, pp. 105-106].

The process of designing and implementing the education reform involves the succession of normative, strategic, operational, legislative, administrative approaches, each having its role in different national and social contexts [12].

New education reform could take place in the near future, through its digitalization, which could lead to a poorer quality of learning. During the pandemic, online education was a challenge for both teachers and students. Although it was wanted to continue the traditional way of teaching, this encountered certain challenges such as lack of technology in certain areas of the country; lack of interaction between teachers and students; low interest of pupils in participating in courses; lack of concentration; physical overload; intellectual fraud due to lack of objectivity on evaluation; isolation and loneliness and distraction [2].

The digitalization period also accentuated the inequality of opportunities in education. As the main learning tools in the pandemic period were television, internet, computer, telephone, and tablet, in Romania there are still a large number of students who do not have access to these tools. Online education does not provide a favorable framework for the educational activities, the quality, and pace of classroom lessons being superior to online. Probably the biggest challenge is connecting teachers and students who are no longer constrained and controlled to learn. Thus, teachers need to redefine themselves from the people who teach and evaluate them into people who understand the needs and connect with the pupils/students to facilitate their learning process [3].

The low involvement of the Ministry, through the lack of an obligation to study at home, as well as the weak approach to the teaching methods and the framework program lead to the accentuation of the pupils/students' lack of motivation to learn.

On the other hand, the digitalization of education has led to an increase in the parents' role in the teacher-student-parent relationship. If the pre-pandemic education style focused on teaching, testing, and assessment, the online one focused on student assistance, communication, connection, and collaboration. That is why the presence of a parent with the role of the pedagogue is necessary.

If the online study brings a series of challenges, we cannot overlook the opportunities offered: the possibility to learn in different places and times; to follow the materials several times, which facilitates the understanding of the content; formation of independent spirit; to communicate with people from different cultures, a step towards multiculturalism; low costs; developing complementary skills such as technical ones; a variety of programs and courses.

6. Conclusions

The Romanian public education system is a reflection of the socio-economic environment, it can contribute to a sustainable development by using other countries best practice. Also the desire for genuine change through reform because man must establish himself in the public policy, implicitly educational.

The reforms of the last decades of the twentieth century have emphasized, at the national and international level, the extension of compulsory, basic education, supported curricular by the *"common core of general culture"* [28].

The process of designing and implementing the education reform requires the presence of a normative framework, which generally sets out: the general principles, the strategic objectives, stages, actors, implementation procedure, stakeholders, expected results, assumed risked [15].

The strategic objectives pursued in the pedagogical construction of the education reform, in correlation with the above-stated principles, should be the establishing of the education reform's premises, the update of the fundamental and operational pedagogical concepts necessary in the elaboration of the education reform project, the elaboration of the reform project at an ideal level - the type that includes the new finalities - the new structure of the system, and the new curriculum.

Education reform is the expression of the openness that the education system must show, including the public education service, to offer individuals and human communities the opportunity to define and become aware of the meaning of becoming.

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