

THE ISSUES OF THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BEFORE GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL

Gheorghina BÎRLĂDEANU, PhD
University of Craiova

Keywords: Educational Management, School Manager, Evaluation curriculum, decentralization.

Abstract: The importance of the Educational Management, considered a part of management theory, is given by two major aspects. The first aspect takes into consideration the delicateness of the resources the management deals with- that is children and youth. This aspect complicates the process of management itself, aspects of art and style being widely spread, without harming though, the components of scientific management.

The second peculiar aspect of the importance of Educational Management refers to the estimation of failures.

The features of Educational Management derive from the basic characteristics of the educational activity. In the teaching process, more often than in any other fields, we deal with a combination of scientific data and information about art and culture. We can talk about a specific informational structure of the management decisions. The high level of complexity, the multifunctional educational activities result in the growth of risks, which requires increased carefulness on the behalf of the managers. Another feature of Educational Management roots in the fact that not only teachers but managers as well deal with children (as growing personalities).

The Educational Management is an open concept that enriches its connotations according to the dynamics of teaching, the evolution of Romanian teaching system and its ability to generate structural reforms.

The separation of the Management concept from the leading activities happened at the end of the 19th century, USA. Management developed in the field of applied economic studies due to Frederick Taylor and Henry Fayol's contribution, later it approached the applied social studies of psychology and sociology. Even though Management took birth in small and average companies, where the owner was also the manager, greater companies allowed the separation of the owners and organizers and amongst the last category, the function of the manager gained consistency. At the beginning, management dealt with the leading of corporations and companies that used to produce goods for trade, but gradually the sphere of this activity embraced socio-cultural institutions as well.

Education as human activity and cultural act manifested itself in each historical period, gaining more and more importance in the last few centuries and decades.

In the detriment of Education, as well as in the field of other socio-economical fields, several management activities emerged.

The leading and administration of cultural institutions, especially the educational ones, permanently improved, generating various techniques, methods and strategies. The educational activity proved to be permeable to decisions because the basic term is "objectives" rooted in the social and ideal values.

Mariana Dragomir and her co-workers, considering management a formal way of leading, reached to the conclusion that School Management has the following functional fields: the curriculum, human resources, physical and material resources, the structural development and communitarian relations.

As a result, the school manager is “the one who officially leads the activities of an educational institution” [3].

In his attempt to present the purpose of school management, Sorin Cristea makes use of negative judgments, mentioning that these do not stand for a model on a cultural level and can not be understood without the accumulation of a leading experience in all levels.

Even though it is not a pedagogical concept, it is increasingly required by the Educational field, because the economical, political, psychological, sociological but mostly didactical analyses become viable “only if it’s methodological realization is dealt with by someone who has accumulated practice in the leading field on various levels” [1].

From this perspective, managers are not only the leaders from the Ministry of Education, school inspectors or school principals, but also teachers who are responsible for methodic comities, counselors from school, from the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centre and even class masters.

A great contribution in defining the “school management” term was brought by Rodica Mariana Niculescu, who demonstrated that a manager’s training shouldn’t be reduced to economic, financial and school regulation aspects because “the act of leading is a complex one-both science and art- in order to master it, one needs a complex training”[5].

In consequence, the manager must analyze and acquire the connections between his school and other teaching institutions but mostly the balance between school and social life.

A leading action implies moral values too “the awareness of the responsibilities towards himself, towards the others and the whole institution and all the changes implied by new reforms” [5].

Defining ‘school management’ as a body of functions and principles, norms and methods of coordinating educational activities, Ioan Jinga sustains that the elements used by school management are: establishing finalities, the structure of the curriculum, the projection of the institutional network and “the setting of an evaluation technique that can bring betterments to the process of learning and also helps in the optimization of results” [4].

As a particular form of social leading, educational management takes decisions regarding school activities. A manager has got many economical, financial or judicial decisions to make without being remote towards the aspects of the didactic process.

The manager’s decisions refer to the objectives of the instructive and educational activities, considering them values and purposes, thus assuring the fulfillment of the educational strategy.

The activity of the school manager includes evaluation too, because information gained through various tests is the basis for certain decisions and there is a logical connection between them and evaluation.

Hence, the activity of a school manager is connected with taking important decisions that represent informational functions among objectives, values, strategies, their launching and evaluation.

On a larger scale, management relates the elements of the teaching process to socio-economical and socio-judicial references, thus trying to integrate the school in the general process of social optimization.

In Romania, Democracy required a profound reform in the teaching system.

After removing the shallow ideologies, it has been stated that the Romanian teaching system, though it tried to keep up a constant European structure, it lacked a series of important structures. Sorin Cristea claims that the Romanian teaching system created after 1989 unbalanced the relation between general culture and the specialized one at the high school level [2].

The eagerness of finding a quick solution to deep structural issues of the teaching system, led to unexpected results.

The legitimate intention of shattering ideologies in the teaching system degenerated into a persecution of teachers who taught Social Studies. The decentralization in the system was slow and both Elementary and High Schools are still depending on the Inspectorate.

The policy of underpayment in the teaching system carried on, and the teaching conditions worsened by means of giving low wages to teachers. Schools kept on functioning on a shortage of legitimacy and with a low public image. Authentic values, the preparing for a life and a profession that only school can assure, counted less than material success obtained by all means.

Teachers suffered from a process of social marginalization due to an anguished and uninterested society towards culture and education. Under these circumstances, there was a growing danger that Romanian schools could not fulfill their social and economical requirements.

Even though the Romanian Teaching System needed a coherent legislative frame, many years had passed and yet no final conclusion has been reached at, about what is good or what is wrong, what should remain and what should be replaced.

Gradually, the teaching reform crystallized: a new teaching plan and curriculum have been issued. The political attitude towards Education gained consistency by means of prohibiting any political activities in schools, the study of foreign languages had been re-introduced in Elementary schools, the psycho-pedagogical training of teachers gained importance and many Preparing Departments have been organized with the support of the Ministry of Education and the Inspectorate.

Important steps in Legislation have been taken in 1993. Universities have been authorized and accredited by law, thus introducing order at private universities as well. The law issued in 1995 for the teaching system created an adequate frame for its reorganization, offering a balance in teaching plans in order to answer the needs of learners. Unfortunately, the legislative regulations failed to be efficient; this is why the Romanian Teaching System remained with an overloaded curriculum.

Law nr.128 issued in 1997 concerned with the Status of the Teaching Staff improved the working conditions and the professional reputation of teachers without solving any deeper concerns.

A great importance holds the period 1997-2000, when new programs have been created. Andrei Marga, the Minister of National Education from that period, struggled to obtain greater funds from the budget and European funds through the grant system; also he tried to intensify the communication flux between Romanian and European schools.

The curriculum improved, being freely structured by every school and optional courses were introduced, without solving the problem of the overloaded teaching program.

Some specialists consider that Andrei Marga's reform would have been more successful if the stress had been placed on evaluation instead of the curriculum. It is believed that "the Romanian Teaching System would have been more efficient if objectiveness in evaluation had been assured during the capacity, baccalaureate and graduation examinations" [6].

According to Andrei Marga, the modern teaching system should have emerged from the head to an extremity, which means starting with the Ministry and Inspectorates.

Another method was the introduction of alternative textbooks.

Due to organized actions, the teachers eventually reached the desired 4% of the Gross National Product (GNP) in year 2000. The salaries and the social reputation of schools increased.

The strategy of development in the pre-university teaching system for 2001-2010 includes an elaborate program for the fathoming of the Educational offers, beginning with the learner's needs of personal development, the respect of equal chances policy and the desire to provide a good environment for the teaching and learning process.

Important progress has been reached in the quality of counseling and orientation services and all the children, especially those from the country side, were attracted towards school and learning by permanent bus service and the "milk and roll" program.

On the management level, the actions undertaken as part of the teaching system reform have led to spectacular results.

If during the old times the management decisions were concerned only with administrative issues, nowadays the manager's concerns are wider. Even if a manager's decisions usually refer to economical administration, nevertheless they sometimes are involved in issues concerning the curriculum or evaluation.

One of the reform's achievements was that schools could organize themselves the content of the curriculum. The manager had the opportunity to examine the pupil's and parents' opinion regarding the quality of the new subject matters and to compare their impact to those of the previous ones. The number of a manager's decision gradually increases.

A new decisional area that gains importance is the one concerning evaluation. The Ministry of Education and Research together with the National Service of Evaluation and Examination stimulate the introduction of knowledge tests in schools, to assure a highly objective evaluation and to standardize them in schools.

Such procedures can't be materialized, unless managers acknowledge their importance, militate for their introduction in schools and communicate correct information about them to the centers. Managers can choose between the traditional systems of evaluation, miming the new techniques or they can go for a systematic action of introducing the national tests, thus adapting the process of learning to the new regulations.

Managers of educational institutions have a greater autonomy in obtaining financial support. Many Romanian schools obtained considerable European funds for endowment, through the grant system or by direct collaboration with foreign schools.

School managers can prove their creativity by intensifying the parent-school relationships, by attracting various personalities willing to help schools or by obtaining

funds from different companies. But due to legislation shortcomings, the lack of certain traditions and mostly because of many administrative problems dealt with by managers, such activities and partnerships are rare.

Spreading the method of giving the budget subventions to pupils (and not to the institutions of education), sustained by the democratic principle of the necessity to bring a social openness in education (thus giving parents and children the opportunity to choose among several schools), implies many changes on the management level and managers can be in a constant competition, struggling to keep the children in schools or moreover, to attract new pupils.

In the Romanian Teaching System, it seems that due to political and economical constraints, we have the tendency to *improve* rather than impose radical changes even if it were desirable. A series of aspects need clarification, such as:

- The modifications from the educational legislation that the Ministry is willing to initiate in order to issue the program of the reform.

- To work out a supervising system of the general legislation that bares an influence upon the activities and organization of schools (financial legislation, legislation of work and local administration, etc.) and the opportunity to express a personal point of view in the interest of national education.

- The subsidizing of the school system contains a series of shortcomings such as:

- The structure of the teaching system-after primary and elementary schools- is too complicated and the management procedures are laborious;

- Educational legislation is very vast, limited and contradictory and it requires a great interpretation effort on the local level, implying certain risks (many problems occur due to inconsistent information, thus allowing various interpretations and ways of applying them; the legislation lacks unity in its structure);

- The Inspectorates have too many and general responsibilities, though some of them could be passed over to schools;

- The analyses of the needs in schools is basically inexistent; priorities in giving funds are unjustified;

- Financial staff is showing a deficit- in number and training-because of low payment and motivation;

- The role of managers in the financial activity is unclear: though they are responsible for the spending of the budget yet they don't have enough authority to decide how much and in what way the money should be spent;

- The informational system for educational management is in the configuration process and there are many shortcomings and inadequacies for there isn't a coherent strategy that would select: the information/data the ministry would need to pin down major decisions, the information/data required by local authorities to establish basic rules concerning the sharing of funds for school activities, the information/data the inspectorates need to settle down decisions on tactfulness etc.

- School administration, the activity of the manager and of the collectives in charge with various functions (The Administration Council, The Teacher's Council), each of them is submerged to the administration and are highly bureaucratic. The school principal should lead not administrate. Even more, though he has no authority of decision in key areas (such as the budget and the employment of the teaching staff) he is responsible for everything that happens inside the school including fields he has no authority upon.

➤ The functions and attributions of the collectives in charge (The Administration Council and The Teacher's Council) are not clearly defined.

➤ The training of managers (and even teachers as classroom managers) is low. The dominating preconceived idea that a good teacher is automatically a good principal is often invalidated by the existing reality from schools. There isn't a National Training System (with structures, plans and standards) or a proper stimulation (financially included) of principals or of those who joined a training program accredited by NCTTS (The National Center of Training for Teaching Staff from pre-university education).

➤ Concerning the inspection system, the bureaucratic control is predominant and exemplified by: "standard" description of the job, strict norm of teaching and fragmentation of activity, hierarchic control and retroactive approach having as purpose a positive or negative feedback upon the activity. In addition, the quantitative aspects are valued and the stress lays on paper work so that the rules and procedures tend to be more important than the actual outcome. There is an obvious tension between the manager and the teaching staff as the first one focuses on stability, productivity, the maintenance of internal constant features (for each process and for the entire system), discouraging innovations and any change, except for the ones hierarchically imposed . All these features determine the standardization of teaching and the corresponding control: managers as well as teachers are employees on different hierarchic levels.

A certain policy implying strategies for decentralization of the teaching system by fulfilling the aims is necessary.

- The reassessment of the Inspectorate's role-on a tactic level-by redefining it as an institution for ensuring quality in education.

- The role of the local administration authorities should increase in terms of financing-on a tactic level, together with the role of school inspectorates.

- Bringing the decision closer to the places where it should be applied by increasing the autonomy of schools and the competence of managers: The Administration Council and the Teacher's Council.

- Decentralization of the continuous training system of the teaching staff and raising the ability of counseling and general training in teaching and educational management on the local level.

In achieving the first target, it is necessary to consider The Ministry of Education and Research as an organism for strategic decisions, synthesis, evaluation and accreditation.

The second objective should take into account the fact that the Inspectorates function as institutions meant to ensure the quality of education. Hence, the functions of inspections-quality ensuring should be clearly delimited from the financial-administrative and personnel functions. Also, it should be taken into account that the responsibilities of the inspectorates must be reassessed so that together with the local authorities they should define the local policy in education by applying the national objectives according to the local situations and needs-including the financial side-as well as the transfer of some competences towards local authorities and schools.

The next objectives can be fulfilled only if the decisional competences developed in the following fields: curriculum-by adapting the national curriculum to the local needs; finance-through budgetary autonomy; human resources- by participating in decisions regarding teaching staff employment; general development of school-through self made plans that take into account the existing needs.

REFERENCES

1. Cristea S. - *Managementul organizației școlare*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, 2003.
2. Cristea S. - *Pași spre reforma școlii*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1991.
3. Dragomir, Mariana and co-workers, Textbook - *Educational Management for principals of teaching institutions*, Ed. Hiperborea, Turda, 2000.
4. Jinga, I. - *Managementul învățământului*, Ed. Aldin, Bucharest, 2001.
5. Niculescu, R. M., - Textbook - *Autoformare a managerului școlar*, Ed. Scorpion 7, Bucharest, 1997.
6. Strungă C. - *Politici educaționale*, Ed. Politehnică, Timișoara, 2003.