

ROMANIAN EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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The education is helpful for society because it can offer a critical thinking of the contemporary world, being an instrument to disseminate knowledge, develop competences and create values. Recent studies show the fact that the adults professional excluding has the roots in their pre-school and primary education deficiencies and in their parents' social integration grade. The characteristic of the actual educational system from Romania is the fact that it reflects the uncertainty of the entire economical-social environment existent in present. What it is the most grave is the fact that we assist at an upsetting of the society values where the money and power have gone on the first place, irrespective of the methods used for their obtaining, and the honest work and even the persons with a high level of socio-professional training are marginalized by society many times. Here is one provocation to which the society has to cope with and this as soon as possible.

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The human capital consists in those skills of individuals which are characteristic for them and remain the same in any social environment, being possible their valorisation in exchange for any type of economical resources on the labour market. This is formed by educational capital (skills obtained by individuals inside and outside the school briefing process) and biological capital (individuals' physical skills synthesized the most often by the state of health). The human capital theory, whose remarkable exposition was made by Becker (1964), sustains that the individuals' incomes increase considerably, depending on their educational level. In the present days, Mincer and Becker have generally limited their approaches about the human capital to the analysis of the educational capital. Blaug (1976) shows that in fact, the education represents the essence of the human capital actually, its importance being superior to the associate components of the health. When a nation develops the educational system, it contributes at the equalization of the chances and favouring of the mobility for the ones considered as possible capable, contributing only marginally at the absolute equality. In the new models and approaches of the contemporary development, the secret of the future society is education; and no any type of education, but a permanent one, because the education itself gains new valences. In the context of the human development, it is underlined the education role as instrument capable to extend the choosing area, to allow the social changing and to facilitate the cohesion and social integration. A lot of researches show that for, any problem that appears in the development of a child, the earlier the intervention is, the bigger the remediation chance is. At the same time, the later the intervention is produced, the bigger the associated costs are and the prognostication can be unfavourable.

In this context, analysing the percentage of the non-promoted pupils in the primary education and the untimely leaving rate of the school (youths being 18-24 years old) in Romania in the last years, it is ascertained that these have high relative values in comparison with EU states. Last year, UNESCO made the counting: 774 millions of illiterate persons on the entire earth. When we say illiterate persons, we surely think to Sahara Africa, Arabian countries, Cuba or Argentina. But, even the countries that are proud because of their high level of civilization have their illiterate persons. About Romania, EU says that 53% of the teenagers do not understand what

they read. In full civilization, the phenomenon of the functional illiteracy takes amplex (it is not about the inability to read, but the inability to be understood what it is read). These persons become subjects of the social marginalization, present a bigger risk of being taken ill, stress and they have smaller incomes. At the same time, there is a correlation between crime and functional illiteracy: 70% of adult prisoners and 85% of juvenile delinquents that are in the American prisons were classified as functional illiterate persons in 2000, according to National Institute for Literacy. The yearly report - published by European Commission (EC) in July 2008 - regarding to the education community systems, place our country at the end of the list as far as concerned the book knowledge criterion. The conclusions were drawn on the basis of the following indicators: university education graduation, untimely giving up at school, understanding and interpretation level of the read texts, number of mathematics, sciences and technology graduates, as well as the participation of the adults at the learning activities during the entire life. In 2000, at Lisbon, EC proposed a reducing of illiteracy with at least 20% and 90% of the pupils not to abandon the school untimely (at 18-24 years old), respectively 85% of youths to graduate the high school till in 2010. After eight years from the concluding of the treaty, Romania is counted among the European Union (EU) countries that have to resit education. One of two Romanian teenagers being 15 years old have reading and understanding difficulties of a text, 53% of the Romanian teenagers are functional illiterate persons, this percentage being two times bigger than the EU average (24%). „It is a real problem. The capacity to read is a key-competence for the continuous learning”, declared the European commissary for Education, Jan Figel. Actually, the illiteracy trend from 41.3% in 2000 to 53.3% in 2008 is more alarming than this percentage. Excepting Bulgaria that is placed with 51% on the immediate next place, the rest of the states from the former communist block have better results than Romania, Czechia registering 24%, Hungary 20% and Poland 16%. The teenagers who have the best reading level are the Finns, only 4.8 % having reading problems, being followed by Irishmen and Estonia. At the level of the entire European Union, the population percentage with understanding problems increased from 21% in 2000 to 24% in 2008.²⁶³

One of five Romanian youths has only eight classes. The rate of the youths who interrupt the studies after the finishing of the gymnasium places Romania among the first five European states that are confronted with the untimely school abandonment. Regarding to the number of the ones who give up at school untimely, Malta and Portugal are on the first positions and most youths who are interested in the continuing of the studies are in Czechia, Poland and Slovakia. If 19% of the pupils leave the school untimely in our country, we can speak about a rate of 42% in Malta and a percentage of 39% recorded in Portugal. In 2006, about six millions of European youths left the educational system untimely, although the European Commission proposed itself to reduce this figure at only two million. In Romania, the rate of school abandonment was tripled in 2007 in comparison with 2000,²⁶⁴ and now more than 70,000 children have to work instead of study, according to a study made by “Safe the Children!” non-government organization. The works in which the children are involved transform them in an extremely vulnerable social category. In order to survive, they are obliged to beg, distribute drugs, wash the cars windows or to have sexual relations and risk to be physique and psychically abused daily. One third of the children obliged to work are illiterate persons, 40% have a reduced level of writing and reading abilities, one of five children like these were never at school and eight of ten children who do not go to school are gypsies. Only 1% of Romanians learn during all their life and no more than 11% of the Romanians being 25 - 64 years old can be proud with a university diploma, these representing half of the EU average. The percent is double for Bulgaria and three times bigger for Estonia. Even Croatia, which is not an EU member state, has a better result than Romania (16.3%). The participation at the learning programs during life places Bucharest on the last place

263 <http://ec.europa.eu/publications>.

264 www.salvaticopiii.ro.

in EU. Only 1.3 % of the Romanians being active age do not limit at the obtaining of a diploma, they attend different qualification stages and this percentage is equalized only by Bulgaria. For example, in Sweden, one of three adults has participated at the continuous training programs, Denmark records 29%, Great Britain – 29% and Holland – 15%. In EU, the average of adults who resort to active learning during life is increasing from 7.1% in 2000 to 9.7% in present. “Almost one third of the community manpower did not finish the high school studies and about a fourth of the European children being 15 years old cannot read. These millions of Europeans will meet with difficulties bigger and bigger regarding to the own development and the finding of a working place” has warned the European official, Jean Figel.

The national evaluations undertaken into consideration say the same thing in Romania. According to OECD International Program for Pupils Evaluation, Romania is on the position 34 of 42 participant countries. According to EDU CER evaluation from 2007, the Romanian education is come to a stop in the paradigm of the old mentalities. The SAR appreciation from 2007 is clear-cut in the same manner: the Romanian education is an autochthonous factory of mediocrity.²⁶⁵ If the school education is neglectful, “it can cause prejudices at least as bigger as corruption, but in very long term and very difficulty to be remedied” drawn the attention the former chief of European Commission delegation in Romania, Jonathan Scheele. Within 2004 – 2005, only about half of the youths being among 15 and 18 years old belonging to the poorest categories were entered a school. More than this, only 37% of the poor youths (of 15-24 years old) attended the school in 2006, while others were in a vulnerable situation on the labour market, being employed illegally (30%) or unemployed (15%). The social mobility has also increased further to the new economical processes that have been developed at the global level and which have caused the unprecedented opening of the western countries, especially to the assimilation of the manpower from the less developed countries. This phenomenon facilitated the appearance of some significant economical inequalities among the immigrations from the first or second generation which are in poverty and live in the districts of the poor towns, and natives. The poverty risk decreases substantially with a higher education level, reaching almost zero for the adults with university education. About 70% of the poor adults (being 15 years old or more) graduated eight classes or less. Obviously, the poverty risk is the highest for the persons who have not a formal education (59%).²⁶⁶

Education costs. The difference between the member states average of EU and Romania has decreased regarding to the public expenses for education, as % from Brut Intern Product (BIP).²⁶⁷ Romania has continued the increasing tendency of the funds allocated for education, succeeding in significant approaching by the member states average of EU regarding to the public expenses for education, as % from Brut Intern Product. Together with Bulgaria and Czech Republic, our country records a sensitive increase of the public investment in education, while states like Estonia, Lithuania, Italy, Slovakia or Spain record an opposite tendency. On the basis of the budget for education in 2008, % from Brut Intern Product has the approx. value of 6% this representing a level closed to the European average. After the situation in which it was firstly respected the minimum legal percentage of Brut Intern Product that has to be allocated to education in 2006, other premiere was recorded in 2007. Thus, according to the official data, the education has reached 5.5% of BIP further to the budget amendments, in increasing with more than one percentage point in comparison with the previous year. At the same time, the increasing of BIP value in comparison with the previous year had a positive effect on the budget for education. In this way, it was possible the initiation or extension of some main programs and projects coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Instruction, including the supplement of

265 www.educer.ro.

266 www.worldbank.org.ro/poverty evaluation report.

267 Ministry of Education, Research and Youth – Report about the status of national education system, Bucharest, 2008.

some funds for education infrastructure. Although the highest in the period after 1989, the BIP percentage allocated to education in 2007 is still inferior with half percentage point in comparison to the one stipulated in the new legislative package. The recent reports draw attention on the direct connection between the level of public investment in education and the level of participation to education and training of population, Romania continuing to be after the majority of EU members from this point of view. Romania allocated more than 17% of the total public expenses to education, being one of the highest financed public service. Denmark, Holland, Slovakia and Sweden registered the most important increasing of the education expenses percentages in public expenses. The lowest expenses percentages are in Greece, Italy, Germany, Czech Republic (less than 10%).²⁶⁸ Within 2000-2007, the school population decreased with 158.9 thousands of persons, the most drastic reducing being recorded at the level of the gymnasium education – 396.8 thousands of pupils. But, the school year 2007 / 2008 marks an increasing of the school population with almost 48 thousands of pupils and students in comparison with the school year 2006 / 2007.

Participation to education. The participation rate of the population being 5-29 years old to all the education levels (ISCED 1-6) continues to situate Romania on the last place in comparison with the other European countries, excepting Bulgaria. In 2006, the comparisons with the European countries show that Romania was on the penultimate place regarding to the participation of the population being 5-29 years old at all the education levels, only Bulgaria being after our country. The value of the rate recorded 50.5% in comparison with 63.8% – Lithuania, 60.2% - Poland, 62.0% - Slovenia etc., the average of EU-27 being 59.2%.²⁶⁹ The brut rate of school including in all the education levels (ISCED 1-6) points out a continuous ascendant tendency during the reference period of Report, the difference between its first and last year being of 10 percentage points. In school year 2007/2008, the indicator reaches the maximum value – 76.6%. The ascendant tendency is visible in case of both the feminine and masculine population, the differences on sexes being maintained in the favour of feminine population during the entire analyzed period. As a matter of fact, the participation rate of the feminine population to education is superior to the one registered by the masculine population in case of high school, after high school and university education. The differences on sexes tend to be emphasized to the end of the interval: from 2.5% in school year 2000/2001 to approx. 5% in the last school years. Nevertheless, Romania continues to be situated on an inferior place in comparison with other European countries regarding to the school life hope. The international comparisons have to be made cautiously under the circumstances of differences between the education systems from different countries regarding to the début age of schooling, education classes period, participants percentage to the programs with integral or partial time etc. Beyond these cautions, the school life hope in Romania is more reduced than in many countries from EU-27. The increase recorded a continuous ascendant tendency at the last year level of the reference period, having attained 16.3 years – including the pre-school education. Although the attending duration of education increased in the last years, Romania is still situated on an inferior place among the countries from European Union (EU-27).

At the OECD-PISA evaluation in 2006 (that is made every three years), Romanian pupils obtained smaller scores than in 2001, continuing to be under the medium scores of countries from both OECD and EU. The pupils' scores at reading situate Romania on the place 48 of 57 participant countries, preceding only 9 countries among which Montenegro, Azerbaijan or the Argentine are counted. Superior scores, but closed to the Romania's ones, were also obtained by the pupils from Serbia or Bulgaria. Romania is situated on the place 44 of 57 participant countries at mathematics, preceding only 12 countries, among which Bulgaria and Montenegro are counted. Romania is situated on the place 47 of 57 participant countries at sciences, being

268 www.oecd.org/reports.

269 www.edu.ro/reports.

preceded by countries like Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovakia or Turkey.²⁷⁰ At the OECD-PISA evaluation in 2006, Romania was situated on the place 47 of 57 participant countries with an average of 418 score points reported to the average of 500 of the European countries. Thus, it is established that the pupils from Romania obtained scores inferior to the ones from 2001 (when Romania was situated on the place 34 of 43 participant countries) at all the fields for which the evaluation was made. The biggest decreasing of performance is ascertained in case of European indicator referring to the rate of the ones who obtain low results at reading / interpretation. In this way, if more than 40% of the pupils included in children sample were situated at the level 1 (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest level) or less in the reading / interpretation field in 2001, this percent reaches to 53.3 % in 2006. Regarding to the differences on gender, also in 2006, Romania is framed in the general model of all the participant countries according to which the girls reach better performances than the boys.

Results of education and professional training on labour market. Thought the occupation rate of population being 15-64 years old increased with half percentage point in 2007 as compared to the previous year, this continues to be at a distance of 12 percentage points compared to Lisbon target (70%). Recent estimations show that about 30% of the working places will ask for university education and almost 50 % will request at least high school education till in 2015.²⁷¹ At the same time, it is foreseen that the working places that ask for a reduced qualification level are to decrease significantly in this period. The unemployment phenomenon affects significantly the youths being 15-24 years old, including the ones with a superior level of education. Although a decreasing of the unemployment rate can be noticed abreast of youths in 2007 in comparison with the previous year, the problems of youths insertion on the labour market represent an important challenge for most member states of EU. Romania has a rate superior with three percentage points to the average of the member states. The youths being 15-24 years old continue to be confronted with the biggest difficulties regarding to the professional insertion. However, it has to be pointed out that the unemployment rate for these youths reaches 18.9% in 2007, this value being similar to the ones registered in the first reference years of report, when the indicator value knew the lowest levels – approx. 18%. On averages, the biggest differences can be observed for the persons having a reduced level of education (without studies, primary or gymnasium studies) – over 16 percentage points in the favour of the population from the rural environment. The differences on sexes have increased significantly in comparison with the previous year, the unemployment rate at men being with 8 percentage points higher in comparison with the one registered for women. The relative high level of this rate emphasizes the necessity of a closer connection between the education & training system and labour market. The finalization and application of the monitoring technologies for the insertion of the graduates from the different education forms (professional, high school or university education) is a priority, as well as the development of some more flexible and efficient organization systems of the pupils / students practice. Not on the last place, it is to be waited for a more attentive analysis of the competences considered mainly for their companies' success by the Romanian employers and adapting to the educational and training offer to this.

The brut rate of including the children being 3-6 years old in the pre-school education continued to increase with 1.4 percentage points in the school year 2007/2008 in comparison with the previous year, so that the registered increasing would be more than 11 percentage points. Concomitantly, the percentage of the pupils entered first time in the class I – pupils who attended continuously the kindergarten – continue to be over 90%. At the level of 2006, the average of EU-27 regarding to the participation to the pre-school education of the children being over 4

270 OECD International Program for Pupils evaluation - PISA 2006. Report of National Centre, CNCEIP, Bucharest, 2008.

271 CEDEFOP, 2008.

years old was 86.6%.²⁷² In countries like Belgium, Italy and France, the rate value was 100%. At the same time, Spain, Malta, Luxemburg and other 12 countries recorded values that exceed Barcelona's goal of 90%. In the last years, many countries recorded main increasing of the participation at the pre-school education of the children being over 4 years old. It is also Romania case: from 60.3% in 2000 to 75.8% in 2006 – value closed to the average of EU – 27. The average of the attending duration for the pre-school education registers an ascendant tendency (this value reaching 3 years in the last two years), being generated by the increasing of the including specific rate at all the ages. The including in the pre-school education of an approx. percentage of 86% of the population being 5 years old signifies the generalization of the school preparatory group on the whole. First time after the implementation of the measure for extension the compulsory education duration at 10 years, the school year 2007/2008 highlights positive signals regarding to the participation to education at this level. Under the continue increasing circumstances of the school abandon rate in primary and gymnasium education, the reaching of the target established in the offing of the year 2010 by EU – the reducing of the untimely leaving rate of the education system at less than 10% - still remains a problem. The comparative data regarding to the rate of early leaving of the education system by the youths being 18-24 years old show that Romania continues to be situated more under the level of most states or countries which adhered recently to EU. At the level of 2007, the value of the indicator for Romania recorded 19.2%, as distinct from countries like Slovenia – 4.3%, Poland – 5.0%, Czech Republic – 5.5%, EU-27 member states – 14.8%. However, Romania has an advantage in comparison with Spain (31.0%) and Portugal (36.3%) at the level of the same year. After a continuous descendant tendency, the school abandon rate increases both in the high school and professional education in the school years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. The high rate of abandon registered in the professional education (8.2%) involves an important impact on the intern efficiency of this education system segment. At the level of school year 2006/2007, the percentage of the youths who finish the high school, with or without baccalaureate examination increases with more than 4 percentage points in comparison with the previous year, reaching the highest value during the entire reference period. The discrepancies on sexes are still kept at a high level, the girls who graduate the high school presenting an advantage of approx. 11 percentage points against the boys. The school leavers register and promote the baccalaureate examination in high constant percentages. On average, only 3% of the graduates from high school do not register at the baccalaureate examination, while approx. 6% of school leavers do not promote the exam. The participation rate of adults being 25-64 years old at the education and professional training is kept at a reduced level, this being 1.3% in 2007.

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