



ROMANIAN EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN TWO MILLENNIUMS

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Abstract: *THE PRESENT STUDY ANALYZES THE EVOLUTION OF ROMANIAN EDUCATION FROM 1948 TO THE PRESENT, A PERIOD CHARACTERIZED BY TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL REGIMES. DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD, ROMANIAN EDUCATION IS ORGANIZED AND OPERATES IN A SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK DEFINED BY THE SINGLE PARTY, AND AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE TOTALITARIAN REGIME IN ROMANIA, EMPHASIS WILL BE PLACED ON TRANSFORMING AND MODERNIZING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, BUT ALSO ON THE NEED TO ALIGN EUROPEAN UNION STANDARDS.*

Keywords: *EDUCATION, POLITICAL REGIMES, HUMAN CAPITAL, TRANSFORMATION, LIFELONG LEARNING*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout historical evolution, there has been functioning a relationship of determination and mutual influence between society and education. The evolution of educational ideals confirms the connection between these phenomenon's. Between 1948-1989 Romanian education was strongly influenced by the existence of the command economy and *the mono-party political system. Romania's accelerated development and modernization plans have directed this regime towards adopting a policy to promote the public access to education, in order to ensure the need for people trained for the various sectors of the national economy. As such, the politicization of education took place in such a way that it allowed the creation of the "new man" who was to be an individual dedicated to the communist state, the party and its leader.*

The sudden change in the socio-political system in December 1989 had strong reverberations on the education system. *The institutional-legislative framework needed to be changed, both in order*



to correct the *malfunctions* that occurred during time, and in order to cope with the prefigured developments at European and international level.

2. EDUCATION DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD

With the establishment of communism in Romania, the new cultural and artistic elite imagined by communist leadership in Bucharest, had to be formed in an educational system profoundly modified in relation to the traditions of the inter-guerrilla school (Vasile 2009: p. 115). The Communists understood that in order to control all sectors of society they had to exercise ideological domination first. Thus, the aim was to politicize education in such a way as to allow the creation of the "new man" who was to be an individual devoted to the communist state, the party and its leader.

In 1948 a new Romanian education law was introduced to create a new spiritual physiognomy. During the period 1948-1989, in Romania, politically and ideologically neutral education disappeared, with all educational and cultural institutions becoming annexes to public administration (Tismaneanu 2006: p. 476). Moreover, this is the period of destruction of the identity of Romanian education, when the Romanian educational system is compatible with the Soviet educational system, both from the institutional and organizational point of view and from the point of view of content (Gorun 2015: p. 42). With this meaning, the Soviet grading system for pupils and students was adopted, Russian became a subject enslaved and subjects such as Marxist philosophy, the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the geography of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have been introduced. The abolition of private and confessional schools, the organization of an exclusive education of the State, the withdrawal of religion from the educational system, the establishment of "workers' faculties", for a period of two years, complement the image of Romanian education during this period. The politicization of education has materialized, both by introducing certain disciplines of the social sciences, in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory, and eliminating other disciplines considered bourgeois, such as sociology and psychology.

The aim and ultimate objective of education in the communist period are defined by several essential means: "to educate young people in the spirit of popular democracy and raising the cultural level of the people" (Decree No. 175/1948) and "the training of high school and higher education, based on science, which should correspond to the needs of the consolidation of popular democracy and establishing a socialist society" (Decree no. 175/1948). These vectors aimed to consolidate the socialist state, as a totalitarian State.

From a structural point of view, public education in the Romanian People's Republic has been divided into: pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and higher education. Higher education included two categories of institutions: universities whose role was to prepare teachers and higher education institutions which formed technical personnel for production.

One of the main objectives of the communist cultural revolution was to create a new layer of intellectuals - "the educated man, the man who knows how to apply science and technology in production, who actively applies the Party's policy in cultural life" (Tismaneanu 2006: p. 480). For example, the children of the great bourgeois, officers or officials of the former regime were removed from the lists of scholarships, the old associations of "reactive" students have been eliminated, the organizations of young national-paesian and liberal universities have been banned, and their members have been arrested.

Another characteristic of the policy of the communist regime, both against teachers and against the population, is the application of a drastic selection based on political and social criteria. The communists used to do their utmost, all the levers at their disposal to change the composition of teachers, but also the conditions of access to education. The purge and arrests of many teachers has considerably diminished the quality of human resources in the Romanian school, being strictly



promoted people on the basis of membership of the single party. As far as pupils or students are concerned, those whose access to learning has been blocked and divided into three groups:

- Category I: children of industrial or agricultural workers, collectivist peasants or peasants with small and medium households, children of soldiers, engineers or technicians, civil servants or pensioners, children of craftsmen and cooperators;
- Category II: children of small traders or freelancers;
- Category III: children of merchants or industrialists, along with whom were listed the children of war criminals, traitors, spies, saboteurs, those who fled across the border (Tismaneanu 2006: p. 483).

Under the leisure of the 1965-1974 regime and under the influence of capable ministers, education had a period of progress, modernization and expansion, a decrease in the importance of Marxism, and an increase in the importance of exact and technical disciplines. The regime led by Ceausescu in 1965 made it possible to open and liberalize it under control. During this period, most political prisoners were released, censorship was reduced and investments were made in almost all regions of the country.

As an essential field at the service of the regime, the educational system operates and is organized according to the requirements formulated by the party's documents. Therefore, education, like the regime that imposes it, even if it does not cease to claim its ideological substratum in the "Marxist-Leninist teaching", will insist through its functions on a significant element in the phenomenization of essence - illustrating the open character of Marxism-Leninism and its possibility to develop (Gorun 2015: p. 48). Education takes place within a social, political and cultural framework defined by the Single Party and the State, which is declared through the Constitution of Socialist Democracy of 1965, with the transformation of the Romanian People's Republic into the Romanian Socialist Republic.

Thus, in 1968, the Law on Education in the Socialist Republic of Romania was adopted the law on the status of teaching staff in the Socialist Republic of Romania Act in 1969. The two laws establish a regulatory framework that establishes a relative detachment of the pressures imposed by the U.S.S.R. during the "internationalist" option, education in the Socialist Republic of Romania aimed at „acquiring, by citizens, the general culture and the knowledge necessary to exercise professions useful to society, forming their materialist-dialectical conception of nature and society, intellectual, moral education , aesthetics and physics, cultivating their love for their country and people, for their ideals, for peace and social progress ”.

The 1968 Law includes several aspects related to the modernization of the educational process, such as the introduction in Romanian literature textbooks of valuable authors banned for more than 20 years, the resumption of the study of national history and universal history in high schools and the development of research infrastructures in higher education units. At the same time, the compulsory nature of the study of Russian in schools and universities has been abandoned and replaced by languages of international circulation (French, English, German), to date very little taught.

After Nicolae Ceausescu's "Thesis" of July 1971, the Council of Socialist Culture and Education was established, whose objective was "to promote the principles of communist ethics, to cultivate a high social and moral responsibility of citizens towards the general interests of socialist society, for educating the masses in the spirit of the progressive traditions of the people, of the revolutionary traditions of the working class, in the spirit of the brotherhood between the working people of Romania, Hungary, Germany and other nationalities "(Decree no. 301/1971).

The last Education Act published during the Communist period was adopted in 1978, introducing the principle of the combination of education and production. Based on this legislative act, social and human disciplines have been eliminated from schools, high schools and faculties being



placed under the patronage of some factories, receiving production plans. Political and administrative leaders have turned students and teachers into the main workforce of construction and agriculture. Also during this period, the “youth construction sites”, the patriotic work camps were opened and the mass participation in “Daciada” and “Cântarea României” was made essential conditions for the appreciation of teachers, units and educational institutions (Gorun A. and Gorun T.H. 2014: p. 180).

The communist regime destroyed all traditional Romanian society, but during that period there were also positive aspects to be highlighted. A positive aspect, realized at the beginning of communism, was the inclusion in primary education, within a few years, of all pupils between 7–11 years (Radulescu 2006: p. 309). This represented, for this level of education, the achievement of a historical objective - the full enrolment of all children of school age. At the same time, illiteracy has disappeared, the exact less dangerous sciences that social could deepen, the number of students and young people from disadvantaged social categories has access to the book. The question, of course, is whether the number can replace quality and is literacy valuable, when you can only read just the party's name?

3. EDUCATION DURING THE POST-DECEMBER PERIOD

The political changes that occurred after 22 December 1989 were also felt in the Romanian educational system, which is in a continuous process of reorganization which is both praised and criticized.

The 31-year period, after the collapse of the totalitarian regime, has been marked by numerous legislative acts published by the Romanian authorities which, regulated issues such as the length of study cycles, forms of education, the nomenclature of specialties, forms of evaluation and selection for pre-university and university education, quality assurance of education, transposition of the Bologna program and other European programs, the status of teaching staff, curricula and school programs. It should be remembered that the Romanian education system is in a vast process of reform, transformation and modernization, a process due in particular to the events that have taken place and that continue to take place in Romanian society and which is imposed by the need to align the standards of the European Union.

The complexity of the problems of the contemporary world, on the one hand, and on the other hand the exceptional resources of education, on the other, have led to rethink, reconsider and resize in the conceptual, theoretical and practical sphere of education, starting from the complete revision of the traditional notion of education” (Bogdan and Stinga 2016: p. 129). The interdependence between the development of society and the progress of education has determined and determines the permanent configuration and reconfiguration of educational paradigms, which are valued at the macro and micro level. Education it is a national priority, and the fundamental factor in the transmission and creation of new general cultural and human values, the development of human capital and achieving educational goals, having a key role in achieving the premises for sustainable development and construction a knowledge-based society.

However, the Romanian education system faces important problems that are difficult to put an end to, such as illiteracy, dropping out of school, unequal access to education, "brain drain", unemployment.

Contemporary society is today under the impact of scientific and technological discoveries, but an important problem in Romania is illiteracy in general and functional illiteracy in particular. Functional illiteracy is characterized by the fact that the people affected have not acquired a capacity to read, write and count, sufficient to meet, with equal opportunities, the needs of everyday life with equal opportunities (Balan 2018, p. 94). The eloquent results related to the level of functional illiteracy in Romania are given by the PISA test, which showed in 2018 that the percentage of functional



illiteracy is 44%. The implications of this phenomenon are particularly serious, as the students in question have an increased risk of dropping out of school and the inability to adapt to the requirements of a minimum standard of living (Botezat 2019: p. 156).

School drop-out is another serious problem facing Romanian education, which has negative effects on the individual and society as a whole. The reasons for dropping out of school are diverse, but the most mentioned are family problems, learning difficulties and the precarious socio-economic situation. In Romania, the drop-out rate in 2018 was 16.4% (Eurostat: 2018), a worrying situation because the long-term effects of drop-out are devastating: unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and health problems.

Another worrying problem involving both society as a whole and education is the brain drain. The term brain drain indicates the international transfer of human capital and, more specifically, the migration of highly educated individuals from developing countries to developed countries (Ferro 2009: p. 216). Until 2007, the main categories of highly qualified Romanian emigrants were engineers and IT specialists, but after that, began to emigrate teachers, doctors and even students. The evolution of society and the Romanian economy will depend fundamentally on the human capital that the country will manage, not only to create but also to maintain in the local economy (Stoica 2009: p. 118).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Today's education has begun to change its role in our lives. If in the first part of the 20th century it was considered that the process of education takes place until the completion of a form of education, in today's society there is talk of lifelong learning, in response to the demands of an increasingly dynamic labor market, as well as the awareness of an internal need for the development of the individual. The strategic vision for lifelong learning in Romania is to offer all individuals the opportunity to participate in economic, social and civic life and to give them the opportunity to exploit their personal potential.



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