

Values, procedure landmarks and formal/public practices in non-university school management in Romania in 2008

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Abstract – The research paper analyzes the conceptual value matrix and the index of the formal pattern procedural dimensions used by the state administration of the education system in pre-university school units in Romania. The authors' core ideas are: the critical-constructive analyses of context values, the methodology and the operational practices related to the selection, the set up, the load and the evaluation of the professional – managerial activities of school managers, as well as the identification of medium-term potential evolutions of the professional education management.

Key words – evaluation, managerial competence, quality, standards

I. CONTEXT – FRAME STATEMENTS

Lately, the main actors of the education stage – students, young people, teaching staff, management staff and schools properly – have frequently highlighted the necessity of quality “education for everybody”, of quality teaching, learning and assessment, of performances and excellence in management and self-management. Each of them may have the status of standard generative paradigms in the system of quality. Everything is guaranteed by means of schooling/training, but it is also an expression of one's own strength and rational efforts, due to intelligent management and professionalism. The hereby research intends to be a contribution to the analysis of the main conceptual fields and methodological values that govern and generate quality, safety, competence, progress, freedom, competitiveness, efficiency, standards and creativity in a manager's career in the education and teaching institution system. Our main target is the school manager, as he is the first representative and responsible with the management of the human,

material, financial and logistic resources, especially from the point of view of the permanent development, of the investment in the training and assertion of the human potential.

We compete today, as a country that is a NATO member and a member of the European Union, on the economy global market based on knowledge, on information, on the diversity of intelligence range and competitive policies. Often constituted of a network of institutions, curricular, human, methodological resources and other opportunities, as well as of obstacles, restrictions or injustice especially at the level of the financial resources and many difficulties in acknowledging the added values, the current managerial pattern in the Romanian system of education aspires to a better position on the qualitative “top management” market. The main reference points of the current educational management pattern are poorly connected to the standards of quality, to the scientific foundations or to the values of the training principle, with long-term outcomes. Unfortunately, we also have to add the substance of some shades of political pragmatism, on the background of a reduced vocational selection. Nevertheless, we identify opportunities that stimulate initiative/ entrepreneurship, the managers' intrinsic motivation and the pleasure to build and/or to work in teams. We do not hesitate in asserting that “there is a felt need to introduce a substantial value code, which represents a balance of assumed responsibilities and decisions, of the projection of a job outside political affiliation but at the same time socially secure, under the control of the community, of the parents, of the direct beneficiaries.” (6)

The background of the fundamental values of a manager's work focuses mainly on the training, stimulation, development and protection of the young human resources. The starting point is represented, in the first place, by the potential of the human resources in the making: children, pupils, students, young people, as well as the values integrated into the types/forms of mental patterns at managerial level: financial, institutional, temporal, strategic, logistic, those related to partnerships, etc.

All these are or may turn into constituent values of a “good system of education” which, after having been changed, renewed and committed to the total quality system (by means of the total quality management), of the standards of quality, becomes a real and long-awaited for

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social organisation/ institution that teaches. Such a perspective involves a mixture of philosophical, social, psychological, pedagogical and cultural-axiological values that have turned into the premises of a system of education project for all children: normal, high or less gifted. Nevertheless, almost all of the above-mentioned categories need counselling, support, protection and the presence of education specialists. At the same time, there is also a great need for **character, for an ideal state, for the trust in every child's, pupil's or student's capacity of being taught**, which is also applied to any person in the teaching or administrative staff, to any parent or person interested in education.

The best practices regarding the change at the level of school/ education institution management recommend the paradigm according to which the creation/ innovation/ change process in a school/ education institution should take at least three stages (5):

context analysis (see the usefulness of SWOT, STEPE, BENCHMARKING, MAEVA methods);

setting up the urgent and necessary matters (market, competitive realities, real and potential crises, major opportunities, solutions);

setting up a guidebook or a project of the managerial team, of the alliances/ consortia as groups that manage/ coordinate the potential changes at the managerial level which, according to the received feedback, act towards their improvement or development.

II. SCHOOL MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE – AN OPEN ISSUE

A. Review of definitions

The answer to the question “what is managerial competence” will considerably cover an extended and widely accepted conceptual horizon. For the purposes of the current research study, we find it useful to point out some definitions of competence in general, and of managerial competence under its various forms, in particular.

Thus, on the general level, competence represents **the capacity of selecting, combining and properly using, shaped as an integrated and dynamic ensemble, of the knowledge, the abilities (cognitive, action-related, relational) and of other acquirements (values and attitudes) with a view to successfully sort out a certain category of difficult issues, in various contexts and on conditions of efficiency and effectiveness (see 7).**

As per the rationale of the managerial pattern, competence may be described analytically (6) as being:

a person's **capacity** to carry on a responsibility or to carry out a task, more or less explicitly defined (see the settlement of various issues or problem situations);

aptness complex structure, at least bimodal, with its roots in the complex, cross informational and operational patterns, which allows a manager to be successful in performing a function, an occupation, a situation or some professional roles;

the acquired, trained quality, as a result of a/ of some

qualifications with acknowledged, validated educational certification;

referential performance, proven by reference to an established professional “standard”;

a competitive, intelligent mental pattern, developed on elements of the useful, operational knowledge economy and on the unity of the answer values specific for the practical actions in a school institution (how to do + when to do + what one can do + who to do with + who to do for + for how long);

the symbol of “excellence” and of “authority”, acknowledged within a field or set of activities, actions, tasks;

a synthesis of coordinated abilities, with a mixed composition – knowledge (cognitive structures), operational abilities and schemes, experiences that process and settle specific issues;

availability to “mobilize the knowledge, motivations and capacities in order to sort out various ranges of problematic issues and to carry out some projects” (J.L. Dufais); “competence does not consist in the resources (knowledge, capacities) which must be mobilised, but in the very mobilisation of these resources; competence refers to the idea of ‘to know how to mobilise’” (Ph. Perrenoud);

a modus operandi, consisting in the efficient mobilisation of resources – knowledge + capacities + attitudes + values, expressed under the form of “to know” + “to know to do” + “to know to be” and “to know to become”;

a technical operator with a fundamental role in applying, transferring and coordinating the essential principles and techniques of a subject domain/ field in some practical situations (7).

B. Integrating approaches and focused analysis centres

The best-known main approaches in the domain of the educational management are either the expression of the basic domains, or that of the core areas that have become referential for the human resources management. The following approach models are to be analysed and taken into account, as they are considered to be useful for educational situations.

If we also take into consideration the international analysis context, the competences of the future educational manager reconfigure the factorial ratio in the base core – knowledge (theoretical, technical, practical) + experience + values + attitudes, while adding up elements of vision, of constituent factors and, naturally, of elements of the holistic approaches, as well as the requirements of the standards relating to the institutional or inter-institutional networks (management without frontiers).

In a modern configuration, we may tackle the following simplified project/profile of the new competences, associated to the already analysed ones. Thus, we introduce the following bi-factorial pattern in the equation:

Skills

professional – multiple, integrating, complementing;

social – relational and inter-relational, teamwork, team building;

management of decentralised behaviours and decisions, effective and efficient;

global marketing and the use of entrepreneurship behaviours – market, mobility, competitiveness;

Pro-social and favourable attitudes regarding

quality, especially process and product reliability;

creativity, innovation, value added by means of the management of change;

horizontal and vertical network managerial coordination;

intrinsic motivation (commitment, involvement), self-reliance, trust in the team and in the subordinates;

The prospective vision in the area of the human resource training highlights, at least for the experiences of the Romanian system of education, the **evolutional** shifts from ... to ... :

-- the setting up of the education costs and staff-oriented policies (specific to the 60's), to

-- the compatibility of the educational models with the economic and market ones (specific to the 70's), to

-- the linear, narrow planning management, economically restrictive (education represents a service that costs money, specific to the 80's), to

-- the strategic-theoretical management, shaped on the transition reforms, liberal and democratic in point of profession (the 90's) and, today, to

-- the constant, integrating development of the network compatibility and harmonising (specific to the 2000's).

The most important basic statements in the area of school managers in the Romanian schools are linked to the **co-variation of the motivation-generating vectors**, to the ideological affinities of the reforming actors, to the change of the context values, to the trust, not supported by resources, in the formative-creative potential of education, to the progress made regarding the decentralisation reforms (a perspective brilliantly analysed by prof. N. McGinn, taken over and partially implemented in Romania by one of the authors of the hereby research study, PhD. prof. I. Neacsu, who met him in person at Harvard University) and have begun to have fruitful results (see 4). The above-mentioned ideas are also the options of the hereby authors, as they represent support elements for the proposed priority objectives.

III. THE MANAGER'S POSITION IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – PARTICULARITIES AND METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

Recruiting teaching staff in order to fill up the position of school manager in Romania has become a difficult task, especially for the schools in rural area. For the coming years, this managerial position could become more and more attractive, due to the stimulative effect of the salary grid, to the afferent allowances, to the possibility of developing initiatives, innovations, as well as especially to the possibility of making decisions in compliance with the

recent stipulations regarding the financial and decisional decentralisation in public schools. Such reforming stipulations in the school administration, school financing and management are experimentally being applied in eight pilot counties, based on a new methodology that was set up in a Government Decision in 2004, which started to be applied in 2005.

As concerns the main **requirements** a candidate must observe in order to become a school manager, stipulated in MERY's official acts, it is important to mention those considered to have "a cumulative status". In this respect: (i) education, depending on the school structure; (ii) titular teacher in the education system, with at least teaching certification level II; (iii) five years teaching experience; (iv) professional, managerial and moral qualities, ranked as "good" and "very good" in the last three years;

(v) no disciplinary sanctions in the current school year; (vi) no sentence for crime commitment and no deprivation of the right to teach because of a final law decision of criminal conviction ; (vii) medically fit to perform the job; (viii) the age should be four years before the maximum age of retirement due to age limit.

The synthetic matrix pattern of the managerial position and the main conditional reference points of this position (valid in 2007) may be analysed in Table 1.

Normative-explanatory specifications

a. In the Romanian system of education, only a titular teacher of a school with legal personality can be a school manager. The teaching career involves the following ascendant stages: Basic Teacher's Certification, after two years of probation, with mandatory examination; Teaching Certification Level II (examination after four years, optional) and Teaching Certification Level I (after four years, optional);

b/* The number of managerial positions in a school: 1 full manager and 1-2 deputy managers, depending on the levelling structure of the institution, number of students/ groups of students, refectory, hostel.

.**** It is recommended that in the schools with instruction in the language of minorities, one of the managers should know the respective language; in technical schools, it is recommended that one of the managers should be specialised in the area – engineer, economist, doctor; in vocational schools and in special education schools (children with special educational needs) it is recommended that one of the managers should have the specialty corresponding to the school profile.

c***. The teaching workload is, on average, 16-18 hours (50 minutes) classes with the students. The teaching workload for the teaching staff in a managerial position varies, depending on the managerial obligations. Consequently, the manager's status may be: i) without direct activities; ii) with some direct teaching activities (4-12 hours), depending on the number of groups of students, on the school activity volume and level of complexity;

Table 1 The basic matrix of the managerial system in the public pre-university education system 2007

School type	Managerial function and duration	Selection: requirements, unitary tests** the institution that validates the results	Teaching workload/norm	Payment	Observations particularities
Kindergarten 3 – 6/7 years	Manager/ 4 years + 90 days trial period	Examination; 5 years teaching experience; teaching certification level II/ unitary tests ***/ISJ	With or without exemption of the teaching workload **/	Salary + allowance + other increments	Pilot counties ****
Primary and lower secondary compulsory school (I – VIII / X)	Manager + deputy manager**** +90 days trial period	Examination; 5 years teaching experience; teaching certification level II/ unitary tests ** -ISJ	With partial exemption of the teaching workload	Increments + salary + allowances + other bonuses	Pilot counties
High schools (4, 5 years); Schools of Arts and Trades (3+1 years), Post graduate schools (1- 3 years)	Manager and 2-1-2 deputy managers/ +90 days trial period	With or without teaching workload; teaching certification level II/ unitary tests / MERY	With exemption of the teaching workload	Increments + salary + allowances + other bonuses	Pilot counties

CSI: County School Inspectorate

MERY: Ministry of Education, Research and Youth

d. A teacher can put in several candidatures for the manager position;

e. The examinations for the manager's position are organised by the County School Inspectorate, which is compelled to advertise the vacancy in the local and central press.

f. **The managerial and institutional development project of the institution of education** represents an element of major importance in the application file for the evaluation and obtaining of the principal/manager position.

g. **** The subjects of the examination are:**

(i) **Curriculum Vitae:** its analysis and evaluation are made based on the items and on the score shown in table 1 (evaluation-40 points).

(ii) **The interview** regarding the knowledge about school legislation and educational management (evaluation - 65 points).

(iii) **The analysis of quality** of the management and institutional development project proposed by the candidate (evaluation - 30 points).

(iv) **Communication competences** in an international language (text translation) – (evaluation - 5 points).

Total, maxim: 140 points. Minimum score: 90 points.

The analysis and evaluation of the Curriculum Vitae, based on criteria and maximum scores, are shown in table 2:

Table 2 Curriculum Vitae evaluation - school managers

No	CRITERIA	Maximum score Manager	Maximum score Deputy Manager
1	EDUCATION AND TRAINING	3	3

	Education	0,5	0,5
	Long-term university education	0,5	0,5
	Short-term university education	0,25	0,25
	Specialised training		
	A) in the field	1	1,5
	Doctorate	0,5	0,5
	Post-university courses/Master's Degree/ Graduation from second university, professional orientation post-university studies within the Rural Education Project	0,25	0,25
	Teaching certification level I	0,25	0,25
	B) in educational management and financing	1,5	1
	Doctorate/ Post-university courses /Master's Degree/ Training courses in educational management accredited/ approved by MYRA	1	0,5
	Management courses abroad approved by MYRA	0,5	0,5

2	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	3,75	3,75
	A) professional activities and affiliation	1,75	1,75
	Members of the school inspectorate working parties /MYRA/social dialogue committees Methodologist teacher/ responsible with teacher training activities/ school counsellor	0,25	0,25
	Evaluation of the results in the last three years	1,5	1,5
	B) technical skills and abilities	0,5	0,5
	Computer operating knowledge demonstrated in the interview	0,5	0,5
	C) Organisational skills and abilities	1,5	1,5
	European / international integration projects	1	1
	Inspector/manager/deputy manager Member in the administration council/responsible of the teacher training committee/ union leader	0,5	0,5
3	OTHER PERSONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	1,25	1,25
	Published pedagogy/specialty works (books/research studies/articles)	0,25	0,5
	Published educational management works (books/research studies/articles)	0,5	0,25
	Inter-institution projects/ Community projects/other projects (at local/county/national level)	0,5	0,5

* The document is official; it stands for the agreement between MYRA, the Unions and the Social Partners; in practice, managers use the European CV.

IV. ELEMENTS OF MANAGER EVALUATION METHODOLOGY. INDICATORS, PERFORMANCE

The school manager's evaluation shall be performed on an annual basis by the General School Inspectorate, based on the following documents:

- (1). The job description.
- (2). The managerial and institutional development project of the school (for a period of four years, divided for each year).
- (3). The evaluation sheet of the manager.
- (4). Evidence/ proof/ documents of some partial evaluations, inspection reports of the management inspector or of some representatives of the local administration, as well as of the ministry (MARY).

(5). School documents, elements of the portfolio that are related to the effective achievement of the main components of the manager's activity, of the teachers', of the students', of other actors' involved in the life of the respective school, partners, community, etc.

For a better understanding of the level of profoundness, extension and evaluative effectiveness, we present first the framework structure of the Evaluation Sheet, which includes the analysis of the main indicators.

By making a careful and focused processing of the official documents present in MYRA's portfolio, developed in collaboration with the representative branch unions and other partners, there can be shaped the set of performance criteria and coefficients/ competence descriptors, together with the maximum score that can be given by the evaluator (table 3).

V. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In point of management, the school of tomorrow in Romania (currently, laws regarding the pre-university and university education system are being developed) shall be liable to answer several delicate questions for decision-makers. In this respect, we may enumerate: to what extent is it right to train a body of professional people in the educational management, people who come from qualification areas other than the education sector? (it is well-known the attitude of rejection of the unions and even of the teaching staff against this change).

How will the political actors react to the proposal to take out the selection and even the appointment of school managers, school inspectors from the influence of politics? (there are some attempts, but lethargy and political games do not allow it many hopes).

To what extent will the sources of the mental pattern referring to school managers, to the strategy of their training and their evaluation best use those practices that were considered to turn into "good practices", known in the education systems in countries with long-established democratic tradition (U.S.A., Great Britain, Finland, The Netherlands, Denmark, Germany etc.), such as: the balance in favour of decentralisation, the strategies of the total quality management, school principles based on the management (v.1), the managerial profile based

Table 3. The evaluation sheet of the school manager on types of activity (synthesis of official documents)

No.	Roles/Functions	Performance indicators/ synthetic competence descriptors	Maximum score
I	CURRICULUM		
	1. Designing	- Objectives, the correlation of the territorial system, school level; - the school curriculum, local and regional development; - Out-of-school curriculum.	5
	2. Organisation	- Curricular documents: textbooks, programs, auxiliary packages, logistics etc.	5
	3. Operational management	-Implementation of school documents, curricular developments - Timetable schemes; school offer monitoring - Supervision of extra-curricular activities.	5
	4. Control/Evaluation/Inspection	- Educational Offer; Performance – Indicators; - Alterations of the local curriculum; Final examinations; - Official Documents; archiving, security.	5
	5. Motivation/Involvement/Participation	Founding of the local developments; stimulates personal, group and community experiences.	4
	6. Personal professional training/ development	- Self-development, in-service curricular training, consultancy, colleague counselling;	3
	7. Group/ team training, communication	- Organisation of groups, team; promoting project teams	2
	8. Conflict negotiation/settlement	- Curricular coherence; discipline coordination, modular/teaching staff; - Conflict settlement, harmonisation of interests	1
II	HUMAN RESOURCES (H.R.), teaching staff, auxiliary teaching and administrative staff		
	1. Designing	- Development project (H.R.) – recruiting, selection, use, motivation, layoff; - Effectiveness, practical criteria implementation.	3
	2. Organisation	- Chair/vacancy fill in procedures; inclusion of children in subsystems of the educational system; - Education forms (established by the law) - coordination; - Examinations: vocational orientation; - Medical assistance services, labour protection.	3
	3. Operational management	- manages work contracts; job descriptions, staff quota and use; coordinates the activities of educational class/ counselling and orientation/ applies disciplinary procedures; issue solving in specific contexts; applies in-service training procedures, as well as layoff and retirement procedures.	3
	4. Control – Evaluation	- Regular evaluation of the subordinate staff; managerial record documents, thematic reports, official documents regarding the human resources, school document archiving.	3
	5. Motivation/Involvement/Participation	- Best appointment on the position; attribution assignment and delegation; stimulation salary package; stimulation to participate in training, in-service training, decision-making, innovations.	3
	6. Personal professional training/ development	In-service training; counselling, information by means of spreading the scientific, psycho-pedagogical and methodological news.	3
	7. Group/ team training and development	Method commissions, interpersonal communication, loisir activities in common.	1
	8. Conflict negotiation/settlement	Transparency, effectiveness, stress relieving, tension and conflict settlement.	1

III	FINANCIAL, MATERIAL AND LOGISTIC RESOURCES		
	1. Designing	- The school budget, procurement and equipment project; - Identifying of the extra-budgetary financing sources; - Documentation for the school buildings and investments.	4
	2. Organisation	- Budget distribution; obtaining and distribution of extra-budgetary funds; distribution of fixtures and inventory objects, according to planning.	4
	3. Operational management	- Carrying out budgetary execution, of the equipment, of scholarships, distribution of allowances, forms of support, of the extra-budgetary funds.	4
	4. Control – Evaluation	- Procurement plan, the use of extra-budgetary funds, technical documentation, financial management, financial document archiving.	4
	5. Motivation/Involvement/ Participation	- Consultancy services, expertise, alternative sources, executive transparency.	3
	6. Personal professional training/ development	- Specific training, programs, administrative consultancy.	2
	7. Group/ team training and development	- Establishing the managerial team, domain commissions. (for instance, the quality assurance commission, etc.)	2
	8. Conflict negotiation/ settlement	- Negotiating the financing and budgetary execution requirements; sponsorships; extra-budgetary funds.	2
IV	DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS		
	1. Designing	- Identifying the educational needs of the community and possibilities of satisfying/planning/programming of development; general, thematic and special inspection planning; projects, innovation.	4
	2. Organisation	- Fund distribution and use; contracts with economic operators, NGO, services for students, parents, interested institutions.	4
	3. Operational management	- Reform programs; innovation projects; regulation documents; relations with the local authorities, with the interested institutions, appropriateness of the educational offer, projects/programs; security, safety, prevention of risk behaviours.	4
	4. Control – Evaluation	- Annual inspection plan; monitoring criteria; quality assurance criteria; innovation projects; semi-annual and annual activity reports presented to the community, to CSI, to decision-makers.	4
	5. Motivation/Involvement/ Participation	- Offer, consultancy, community activity programs, unions, parents, NGOs, churches, etc.; educational offer.	3
	6. Personal professional training/ development	- Forms of professional reorientation; courses, training courses at the demand of the community.	2
	7. Group/ team training and development	- Teams, mixed groups, participation in community local, regional, national and international development projects.	2
	8. Communication/ Conflict negotiation/ settlement	- Requirements for community support; quick, appropriate, transparent and effective conflict settlement.	2

NOTE:

The total score is 100 points. As a result of the annual, analytical, portfolio-based evaluation, there shall be given a mark to the respective scores, as follows:

86 - 100 mark: VERY GOOD

71 – 85 mark: GOOD

61 - 70 mark: SATISFACTORY

0 – 60 mark: UNSATISFACTORY

For the evaluation of deputy managers, the 100 points shall be reallocated according to the job description developed by the manager of the education institution, preserving the ratio from the evaluation sheet.

If the mark given during the school year inspections or at the annual evaluation is UNSATISFACTORY, the position shall become vacant.

The mark UNSATISFACTORY does not offer the right to participate in the examination for the manager/ deputy manager position in the following two years from the moment this mark was given.

The position becomes vacant after two consecutive years of SATISFACTORY marking.

The persons involved shall be informed about the final score and about the mark.

on competences, character, and authority based on responsibility; the student-centred school pattern? Answer will come sooner or later.

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