

The educational policy in Romania

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THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN ROMANIA

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Introduction

The quality of education in Romania after 1990 has constituted a major issue because its situation continued to deteriorate each year. Even after 15 years it is still a problem tackled by the national government.¹ The results which have been obtained at the international tests (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) indicate that the Romanian educational level is at the average level or under the OECD average. The educational sector has been permanently sub financed; even if the European average of the financing for education is 5.22% of the GNP and in the case of the newly member states of the European Union is 5.31% of the GNP, Romania still allocates only 4% of its GNP. The Romanian decision factors have not yet devised coherent national strategies based on a methodical analysis using educational indicators, elaborated in accordance with the international systems.

The paper discusses the Romanian educational policies after 1990, putting a stronger emphasis on the policies elaborated after 1995 when the first important steps were taken in reforming the educational sector. Different studies, such as the one made by OECD, analyses the Romanian educational policy system and identifies the strategic directions that should be followed in applying the sector's reforms, taking into account the main obstacles that the Romanian decision factors have to overcome and the overall national social and economic conditions². The process of transition to a democratic society, with a market oriented economy, poses new challenges for the Romanian society; as a result, the educational process has to change in order to respond to the needs of the society. Romania seeks to integrate in an international context, which puts a strong accent on the quality of education, considered as the main source of development of the people.

The analysis of the educational policies in Romania is broached in this paper by the policy cycle approach, which ease the understanding of complex policies processes, as it is the Romanian educational policy. The study is divided into five parts: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, policy implementation and policy evaluation and learning, according to the framework presented by Howlett and Ramesh.³ Each part is applied at the Romanian educational policies trying to identify how specific problems have appeared on the institutional agenda, which were the actors that significantly shaped the decisions that were taken, what is the nature of the decisions that were taken, if the policies were executed as they were conceived and what types of evaluations has been made in this sector.

¹ Raport asupra starii sistemului national de invatamant 2005 (*Report on the situation of the national education system 2005*) The Romanian Education and Research Minister, Bucuresti, pg. 2. www.edu.ro/download/raport_stare.pdf

² "OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania" ("Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania"), OECD, 2000, www.edu.ro/analise.htm.

³ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995.

Agenda Setting

The agenda setting refers to the process in which certain topics are being recognized as a problem by the government, so that the government is giving them serious attention.⁴ The *first part* of this chapter deals with the policy determinants of the Romanian educational policies; *the second part* describes the models of agenda setting. In Romania, at the beginning of the 1990s, the educational system kept many of the characteristics of the former communist regime; it was highly centralized, as most of the decisions were taken by the central authorities; the national authorities, especially the Education Minister was in charge of the most important decisions; the schools, the managers, the schools administrative boards or the local elected authorities had only limited decision power.⁵ During the next decade, there have been numerous efforts to reform the system. One of the most important steps had been made during the years 1994-1995, when a new education law had been enforced, which has been modified in 1997. In 1998, a national service was created to evaluate the quality of the education; the national minister has still remained responsible for the most important decisions regarding the educational process; as a consequence, the decentralization of the decision-making has been still unsatisfactory, as the school or the local community had a low involvement in the decision-making process.⁶

The modality in which the educational policies were conceived was always *ideologically influenced*. The political parties with a liberal or a social-democratic ideologically have constructed different representations of the policy. At the time when a political party gained the power, they were usually introducing large changes in the educational policy. In 1996, 2000 and 2004 when the political power was gained by a party with a different ideology than the previous one, the educational policy was considerably revised. For example, in 2006, the governmental program in the field of education is introducing major changes.⁷

The situation of the educational system was partially determined by the overall economic conditions⁸. Compared to the year 1990, during the next ten years, Romania's economic condition had worsened. As a result, the Romanian government had allocated a low level of resources to most of the public sectors, including education. In this regard, there was an *economic determinism* which had negative effects on the educational system.⁹

The evaluation of the system and the definition of its problems are realized by the government, the political parties, the teachers and the students unions, the nongovernmental organizations, mass-media and citizens opinions (as they are observed

⁴ Ibid., pp. 104 – 5.

⁵ “OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania” (“Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania”), OECD, 2000, pg. 5, www.edu.ro/analise.htm.

⁶ Ibid., pg. 6.

⁷ Guvernul Romaniei. Politica in domeniul educatiei (The Romanian Government. The Educational Sector Policy), <http://www.guv.ro/obiective/afis-docdiverse-pg.php?iddoc=249>.

⁸ *Cartea Alba a Invatamantului*, (The White Book of the Education). Cornelia Novak, Mihaela Jigau, Romulus Brancoveanu, Serban Iosifescu, si Mircea Badescu. 1998. <http://www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm>

⁹ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 105.

in the national surveys; see for example The Public Opinion Barometer).¹⁰ Nevertheless, the most important actors seems to be the government and the teachers unions.

The most important reason for this fact is that the system still has a low degree of decentralization. The way in which the institutional agenda is established has varied during the years. At the beginning of the 1990s, the *mobilization model* was the one that could best describe the Romanian system; the officials simply initiated certain measures without requiring a feed-back from the society. But, the situation has started to change gradually; two periods had a high importance: 1994-1996 and 1998-1999, when a new series of reforms have been initiated. The local communities and the high-schools have received more responsibilities and a higher degree of autonomy. The issues that have been on the public agenda, especially those who had benefited from a mass-media campaign, have been more promptly taken into consideration.¹¹

The educational policy after this series of changes have become predominantly a *inside invitation model*; the sector representative unions usually have been asked to express their opinions before introducing new systemic measures; however, their power have been considerably limited, especially when we take into consideration the issue of financing the system. Because of the poor systematic financing of the system (low wages for professors, weak infrastructure, to name only a few), the unions have pressured the government by threatening with strikes.¹²

Mass media is starting to play an increasing role in agenda setting, by presenting impressive cases; for example, a high-school principal from a poor school left for the summer in Spain to pick up strawberries or when they are investigating the public spending for different programs. A significant part of the new issues appear on the agenda before the elections, when the political parties are trying to win the support of the electorate. So we can say that there are particular contingencies that influence the appearances of the issues on the agenda.¹³

The arrival of the issues on the institutional agenda is highly a matter of principles; depending on the ideology of the actors, the problems are conceived in a different way. We can say that we there is a *political stream* in agenda setting; before electoral periods, parties are trying to win the electoral support. Another trend exists, as between elections, governmental experts are devising programs to restructure the system. The current minister for research and education has devised several reform programs.¹⁴

One of the reasons for the high importance of the governmental action is that it uses a vast bureaucratic apparatus, employing a large number of experts. Other organizations, such as the unions, do not have the same amount of financial resources for administrative expenses. In consequence, they do not know how to respond to rather

¹⁰ *Fundatia pentru o Societate Deschisa – Barometrul de Opinie Publica (The Open Society Foundation – The Public Opinion barometer).*

http://www.osf.ro/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=49.

¹¹ *Cartea Alba a Invatamantului, (The White Book of the Education).* Cornelia Novak, Mihaela Jigau, Romulus Brancoveanu, Serban Iosifescu, si Mircea Badescu. 1998. <http://www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm>.

¹² *Actiuni si rezultate ale Federatiei Sindicatelor Libere din Invatamant (Actions and results of the Free Unions Federation from Education).* <http://www.fsli.ro/activitate.htm>

¹³ *Platforma electorala a Aliantei D.A. (The Electoral Program of the D.A. Alliance),* Partidul Democrat (The Democratic Party). www.dapnl-pd.ro

¹⁴ *Ministerul Educatiei si Cercetarii – Romania (The Research and Education Minister – Romania),* www.edu.ro

difficult problems, related to the educational policies, which requires extensive and intensive juridical, economical, political and cultural expertise. Still, some non governmental organizations have managed to obtain significant financial resources.¹⁵

Even if the government has the most important influence in determining the agenda setting, it has to struggle continuously with the political parties from the opposition, with the unions or with the non governmental organizations. The basic requests of the unions are higher wages for the teachers and an improved teaching infrastructure for the students.¹⁶

To support the financial requests, they argued that in most of the Central East European countries, the budget allocated for education is much higher than the one existent in Romania. This situation is in accord with the *convergence thesis*, as it is presented in Howlett and Ramesh (1995).¹⁷

Mass media has supported its views on the state of the educational sector with stories that were said to be illustrative for the existing situation. A case which had a vast media coverage has been the protest of the students at the “Sfantul Sava” high-school, who, against the traditions, at the farewell party of the end of the year, have claimed all their complaints related to the professors and to the school curriculum.¹⁸

Policy formulation

The policy formulation stage concerns the process of the definition, the consideration and the acceptance or rejection of the policy options¹⁹. The *first part* of this chapter presents the actors involved in the process of policy formulation in Romania; the *second part* presents the societal paradigms and the issue networks related to the educational policy. Several actors are involved in the process of the educational policy formulation in Romania: the Finance Minister, the National Education Minister, the schools principals, the professorial councils, the administration councils of schools, the school inspectorates, the local public authorities and the unions from the educational sectors.

The Finance Minister is establishing the budget for education on the basis of the proposals of the National Education Minister. The Minister is approving monthly credits for the National Education Minister, on the basis of an expenditure plan and supervises their application. *The National Education Minister* is the highest authority regarding the schools management and is responsible for the general administration of the system. The Minister is assisted in his activity by counselors, by different departments and receives the support of several national consultative organizations (for example, the National Council for the Educational Reform, the National Council of Academic Evaluation and Accreditation). *The schools principals* are administering the schools from the public preuniversity education together with the professorial council and the administration council. They are appointed on a four year term by the general education inspector, after

¹⁵ Centrul Educatia 2000+ (Center Education 2000+). www.cedu.ro

¹⁶ Uniunea Studentilor din Romania (The Students Union from Romania), www.uniuneastudentilor.ro

¹⁷ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 106.

¹⁸ “Romania Libera” (“Free Romania”)

<http://www.romanalibera.com/articole/articol.php?step=articol&id=97>

¹⁹ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 105.

a selection competition. They are responsible for the representation of the schools in their relation with the local administration and the local community, for the way in which resources are being spent on infrastructure and they have to devise projects that have to be approved by the schools inspectorates and the local councils. *The Professorial Council* takes decisions related to all the professors, administrative plans, the nominating of the professors who have to participate to the specializations courses and the evaluation of the pupils. The Council is involving all the professors in this process; also, the council is validating the principal decisions related to the curriculum and to the decisions regarding the pupils and the teachers. *The Administration Council* is the highest authority in the school and includes between 5 and 11 members: the principal, the vice-principal, the chief-accountant, professors elected by the professorial council, representatives of the pupils, of the parents and of the local public authorities. The council is administering the school, approves the measurement plan, manages the personnel related issues, approves the expenditures for the school infrastructure and supervises the implementation of the budget.²⁰

The school inspectorate is a territorial administration of the National Education Minister of the preuniversity education at the county level. The National Education Minister is appointing the general inspectors, but in practice, the political parties have the final decision on the persons who are selected. The extracurricular activities and the auxiliary units from the preuniversity level are being directed by the inspectorates. They have the responsibility to verify the schools and the professorial personnel to ensure that the rules are respected, to establish public primary, gymnasium, professional school units and monitors the use of the material base of the schools. *The public local authorities* are developing a partnership with the schools based only on personal contacts, because the law has not established the existence of institutionalized relations between the two actors. *The unions from the education sector* are organizations established with the role of protecting the economic, social, professional and cultural rights of their members. The National Education Federation and The Free Unions Federation from Education are the most important unions.²¹

In the first half of the decade, after 1990, the predominant *educational policy paradigm* can be characterized as *state-dominant*. Even if the highly ideological elements of the former communist regimes were removed, the system was still under the control of the state. Also, most of the society still kept these conceptions, so we can say that we were in the presence of a *hegemonic community*.²² The bureaucratic apparatus did not want to change the status-quo; it would have meant for them to loose many advantages and to receive more responsibilities. For example, the school principals or the personnel from the national education minister were able to use the resources to their own benefit; this situation was possible because they developed connections with people who had been supposed to control them, so that anyone gained benefits by using the system resources to

²⁰ “OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania” (“Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania”), OECD, 2000, pp. 6 - 7, www.edu.ro/analise.htm.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 8 – 9.

²² Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 130.

their own advantage; moreover, the whole Romanian society was affected by this process.²³

In the second half of the decade, after 1995, the paradigm that tried to challenge the status-quo was the one that pleaded the introduction of the decentralization of the system; the idea was supported by several studies, one of them being done by OECD (2000).²⁴ It was said that the financial and the educational management can be improved if the power is transferred from the central authorities to the local authorities, which are more interested in those issues and are more closed to the local community so they are capable of taking better solutions. The central administration must concentrate only on the strategic issues, which need national standards. Also, the quality of the education should be improved by the diversification of the educational offer and by making responsible the actors involved in the process.²⁵

All the above-mentioned actors are interacting on an institutionalized regular basis. As was described so far, we can identify the presence of a *policy network*, as was described by Howlett and Ramesh (1995).²⁶ Also, they do interact, as they are obliged by law to cooperate; there is as well a high level of restrictiveness of the membership and a high degree of insulation from other networks and the public, as usually they try to keep their activities as far as possible from the public attention; the nature of the resources they are controlling is a public one.²⁷

In addition there are other actors, but their influence is marginal in the formulation of the educational policies. Political parties attract media attention by criticizing the governments' actions. Mass media is the channel that is voicing the opinions of many actors, such as the political parties, non governmental organizations, citizens' attitudes. As we can see, a large number of actors are involved in the subsystem but state actors are dominant, so we can conclude that we are in the presence of a *pluralistic network*.²⁸

Public Policy Decision-making

The process of decision-making can be conceived through three different models: rational, incremental and the garbage can model. The chapter shows two models of decision-making regarding the Romanian educational policy. The *rational model* assumes the existence of four stages: the establishment of a goal, the identification of all possible solutions, the evaluation of their possible outcomes and the selection of the strategy that solves the most problems. *The incremental model* conceptualize the following situations: the analysis is limited to only a few alternatives, slightly different from the status-quo; there is a mutual interaction between the values of the researcher and the empirical data; the accent is on the remedy of the problems; several alternatives are empirically

²³ *Sfera Politicii (The Political Area)*, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/art1-zaicu.html>.

²⁴ "OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania" ("Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania"), OECD, 2000, www.edu.ro/analise.htm.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 16.

²⁶ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 127.

²⁷ Parteneriate ale Federatiei Sindicatelor Libere din Invatamant (Partnership of the Free Unions Federation from Education), <http://www.fsli.ro/parteneriate.htm>

²⁸ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 131.

evaluated; some of the important alternatives are analyzed; the work is divided between a number of participants. *The garbage can model* conceives that the decision is taken after a scanning of the alternatives, and then the most promising one is being explored.; also, the decision making process is highly ambiguous and unpredictable.²⁹

The measures planned to be taken by the Romanian government to reform the educational sector for the year 2000 were divided in six parts.³⁰ *The first part*, referred to the curriculum reform (educational plan, programs, courses) and its harmonization with the European curriculum. Among the main measures that were taken were: the full application of the new framework-plans for the primary and secondary educational levels and a more extensive use of the alternative courses; the generalization of the reform of the professional education. *The second part* regarded the area of improving the quality of the education and the research; some of the measures planned are: finalization of the reform of the school curricula based on the comparative analysis with the international experience, reducing the number of exams but increasing their degree of reliability; the stimulation of the research centers by giving grants based on competitions. *The third part* concerned the improvement and the development of the technological infrastructure; as measures, we can mention: the application of the School Rehabilitation program and the Program of Relaunching of the Rural Education; investments on the basis of the Special Fund for Education.

The fourth part took into account the interaction between schools, high-schools and universities on one side, and the economic, social, politic and social environment, on the other side. As measures there were: the restructuring of the school network taking into account the characteristics of the economic and social environment and the local development plans; the financing from the local budgets of the material expenses of the preuniversitary sector. *The fifth part* regarded the area of reforming the academic and school management. As means of achieving this goals, were: the promotion of the schools and high-schools autonomy to develop a part of the curriculum, the gathering and the use of the financial resources and the selection of its own personnel; the increase and the differentiation of the wages in the educational sector. The last part, *the sixth part* referred to the international cooperation. The actions that were taken were: the implementation of the European cooperation programs Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci; the implementation of the educational program for the South-east Europe from the Stability Pact.

In achieving his goals, the minister took into account many alternatives and the decision process seemed to produce unpredictable outcomes; as a consequence the *garbage can model* appeared as the one that characterize the decision-making process. The government was obliged to take measures as quickly as possible because most of the society required urgent reform of the system.

According to the types of decision-making proposed by Lindblom (cf. Howlett and Ramesh, 2005)³¹, the *analytic model* is characterizing the Romanian official decision-

²⁹ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 140-5.

³⁰ *Reforma invatamantului in aul 2000 (The educational reform in year 2000)*. Andrei Marga, The National Education Minister. <http://www.edu.ro/rinv2000.htm>

³¹ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 143.

making process, as the minister wishes to induce in the system a high amount of change, but he has a low level of available knowledge of the effect of his envisaged measures.

The Romanian government elected in 2004, has elaborated a strategic plan to reform the educational sector, which is summarized in seven parts.³² An important feature of the program is that it specifies for each measure to be taken what is its argument, the implementation period, total estimated value, the value estimated for 2006, its beneficiaries, indicator to measure the extent of the program achievement and the expected result. *The first part* concerns the establishment of the equality of chances and the improvement of the access to education. Some of the main planned measures to be taken are: building/rehabilitation of scholar campuses; optimizing the transport of the pupils by buying buses for schools; the continuation of the process of extending the use of the informatics related technologies in the educational units. *The second part* is concerned with the provision of a qualitative education and the harmonization of the national education system with the European educational system and professional formation. Measures to be taken are: assurance of the quality of education, by elaborating standards and performance indicators for the accreditation of the school units; the revision of the national system of evaluation and examination of the pupils from the preuniversity education, in a European context and the education for a career. *The third part* describes the decentralization and the autonomy of the educational system, at the level of educational units/institutions. The measure in accomplishing this goal is the administrative and financial management of the school in an decentralized environment.

The fourth part is the development of the professional formation and the permanent education. Some of the measures to be taken are: establishing the cooperation mechanisms between the centers of technological transfer with the centers of firms management; the consideration of the research and development expenses as basis of granting fiscal facilities. *The fifth part* claims the necessity of the early intervention at the preschool level and the modernization of the services that are offered. *The sixth part* is represented by the increasing of the institutional capacity, for the developing and management of projects and has as its argument the necessity to create the conditions to develop projects that will absorb the European funds. *The seventh part* is concerned with the support of the education and of the innovation, in an integrated manner, realized by correlating the research and innovation activity with the Romanian industrial activity and the prolongation of the program INFRA TECH – the extension of the national network to disseminate the results of the research and innovation and the provision of the technological transfer. The second measure is the increase of the public expenditures for the research and development sector to 1% of the gross national internal revenue until 2007.

The decisions that have been taken by the new Romanian government are best summarized by the *rational model*, as several strategies have been evaluated and their impact have been assessed. This can be characterized as a risky policy, because of the complexity of the system and its high constraints; thus it would have been preferable a strategy of incremental adjustment.³³

³² Ministerul Educatiei si Cercetarii - Strategia M.Ed.C. pentru 2006-2008 (The Education and Research Minister – The M.Ed.C. for 2006-2008), www.edu.ro

³³ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 148.

Policy Implementation

The policy implementation analyses the way in which the decision is put into practice. The *first part* of this chapter presents the description of the context in which the policies are implemented; the *second part* shows two approaches, the top down and bottom-up approach to the policy implementation; the *third part* describes the reasons for the policy instrument choice. The implementation of the policies in the educational sector is a difficult process because the system has actors with overlapping roles and due to the fact that it is highly centralized so this is creating *technical difficulties* in the implementation of the measures. The system is confronted with a *diversity of problems* since there are many operational decisions which produce troubles in creating a strategic plan and in identifying the problems which regards the national policy. Also there are weak relations between the ministers. The strategies of the ministers and the ones of the national agencies are not coordinated. The departmental and governmental organizations usually are working isolated and they are not willing to transfer between them their knowledge.³⁴ *The size of the target group* makes the resolution of the problems quite difficult; in 1999, the school population was 4.5 million.³⁵ *The extent of the behavioral change* required to accept the change is relatively high and as a result the process of implementation is problematic. The society still keeps a strong paternalistic attitude which is being reflected in the organizational and social traditions which are discouraging the public to involve in the public sector in general, and in the management of the public services, in particular.³⁶ *The existing social and economic conditions* pose serious challenges any administration who wishes to implement its policy measures.³⁷ After the collapse of communism, Romania went through a transitional period when the governments tried to introduce a functional market economy; nevertheless, this process went through many processes of trials and errors and the economic sector suffered a massive decline. In 1999 the real wage was only 56% of its value in 1990³⁸ and the GNP also suffered a drastic decline. Due to these conditions, the Romanian government allocated insufficient financial resources for the educational sector. Between different regions in Romania have existed different levels of economic development; as a consequence, the phenomenon of polarization has appeared: in the more developed regions, the schools have had higher resources, compared to the poor localities.³⁹ *The*

³⁴ “OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania” (“Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania”), OECD, 2000, pg. 13, www.edu.ro/analise.htm).

³⁵ *Accesul la educatie in societatea romaneasca actuala (The accesss to the education in the nowadays romanian society)*. Gabriela Neagu, Laura Stoica, Laura Surdu. pg. 8, <http://www.iccv.ro/romana/revista/rcalvit/pdf/cv2003.3-4.a03.pdf>

³⁶ “OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania” (“Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania”), OECD, 2000, pg. 14, www.edu.ro/analise.htm).

³⁷ *Economy and Educational Policy*. E. E. Cummins *The Journal of Higher Education*. November, 1933, pg. 397.

³⁸ *Population income, expenditure and consumption, National Institute of Statistics*, http://www.insse.ro/anuar_2004/zip_r2004/cap12-venituri.pdf, pg. 12

³⁹ *Accesul la educatie in societatea romaneasca actuala (The accesss to the education in the nowadays romanian society)*. Gabriela Neagu, Laura Stoica, Laura Surdu. pg.12, <http://www.iccv.ro/romana/revista/rcalvit/pdf/cv2003.3-4.a03.pdf>

development of new technologies have had a major impact at the societal level; it required new skills for employment that could have been obtained by improving the education.⁴⁰

The political circumstances have affected deeply the measures taken in the educational sector. As governments have changed after elections, a new political party or coalition usually was willing to change completely the system; therefore, the existence of sudden changes has created a lot of instability. As it had been already mentioned before, *the organization of the administrative apparatus* has created many problems because of the lack of coordination. *The targeted groups* have had considerable economic resources – because they had been managing a public system they tended to increase their share of benefits, either legal, like wages, either illegal, as can be falsified public auctions. *The public attitude* had been one that supported the reform of the education.⁴¹

The implementation of the educational policy in Romania can be evaluated using two distinct approaches mentioned by Howlett and Ramesh: the top down approach and the bottom-up approach.⁴² *The top down approach* views as essential the measures taken by the leaders; then it looks at their execution by the administration. If they are not implemented adequately, we try to find out the reasons. Also, this approach assumes that the leaders have clear goals. The emphasis in the analysis is on the higher officials, rather than on lower officials. *The bottom-up approach* looks at all public or private actors involved in implementing programs, then, it examines their personal and organizational goals, their strategies and the network of contacts they have built; afterwards, searches for the motivations of the senior officials, which are creating and executing the program. I will illustrate *the top down approach* by taking into consideration the educational policy process concerning the supply for the schools infrastructure. Until 1998 there did not exist a systemic approach regarding the plans of development of schools network, neither at the central level, nor at the regional level. The National Education Minister took the decision to build or to renovate a school; the costs had to be covered by the local council, through the local budget; the school inspectorate was responsible for their administration. But, the local authorities usually did not want to cover these expenses; however, when they did, they were taking the responsibilities of administering these facilities, but this was not legal. According to the *bottom-up approach* we may take into account some of the problems faced by the didactic personnel. The main problem of the Romanian didactic workforce is the low social status caused by the low level of the wage and by the devaluation of the teaching profession; the education is often considered as a domain where you are working when you do not have a better solution or as a stage in the advancement to a better paid position. This state of fact can be exemplified by the high number of free jobs as teachers, especially in the rural area. The second problem is the lack of competences and the third is their lack of information. Until 1998 it did not exist any official way of communication and information regarding the decisions taken by the

⁴⁰ *Asigurarea calitatii formarii profesionale a adultilor in Romania (Providing a qualitative professional education for adults). Consiliul National de Formare profesionala a Adultilor (The National Council of Professional Education for Adults), Bucuresti, 2002. pg. 8.*

http://www.cnfpa.ro/Files/Asigurarea%20calitatii%20FPA/rap_romana.pdf

⁴¹ *Fundatia pentru o Societate Deschisa – Barometrul de Opinie Publica (Open Society Foundation – Public Opinion Barometer). www.osf.ro*

⁴² Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 156-7.

National Education Minister. These problems caused the lack of interest and motivation of the people who were supposed to implement the educational policies.⁴³

The choice of a certain policy instrument can have multiple reasons. A political model of instrument choice states that the instrument choice is not a technical matter, but it is related to the personal values of the individuals. The choice is influenced by the availability of the resources, the political resources, legal constraints and by the experience gained in the previous trials. Different types of instruments differ in their effectiveness according to the nature of the targeted groups; when they are powerful in terms of resources, the governments will use persuasion and expenditure instruments. When the governments will want to redistribute resources, they will use coercion, indifferent of the size of the groups. But the instrument that is the most preferred by the governments is nodality or information-based influence, because it is a nondepletable resource. The lack of the insufficient decentralization of the system can be attributed not to technical problems, but to the lack of will of the decision-makers, who preferred a system where the state could still retain the control over a significant share of resources.⁴⁴

Policy Evaluation and Policy Learning

Policy evaluation assesses how the policies are working. The evaluation of a policy is the next stage after its implementation and it is continued with drawing conclusions from the applied policies. The *first* part of this chapter tackles the types of the Romanian educational policy evaluations; the *second* part considers the process of learning for the above mentioned policy. There are three main types of policy evaluation: administrative, judicial and political.⁴⁵ *The administrative evaluation* is realized within the government, by the specialized departments, but it can be done also by private consultants. The main purpose of the analysis is the evaluation of the efficiency of the delivery of government services; its purpose is to ensure that the policies are accomplishing the policies' goals at a minimal cost for the citizens. The evaluation necessitates the gathering of detailed data. The administrative evaluation can be divided in five types; *the first*, effort evaluation, tries to assess the quantity of program inputs; *the second*, performance evaluation, considers program outputs rather than inputs; *the third*, adequacy of performance evaluation, evaluates if the goals are being attained; *the fourth*, efficiency evaluation, estimate the costs of the program and calculates if the goals could have been achieved at a lower costs; *the fifth*, process evaluation, analyze the organizational methods. An example of *the first type* is the evaluation realized by the National Education and Research Minister regarding the public expenditures for the education. Romania has the lowest percentage of GNP spent for education, among the European countries. In 2001, the highest percentages were allocated by the Nordic countries and the European average per cent is 5.22, while Romania is allocating only 4% of the GNP; for the year 2001, the most recent year with comparable data, Romania and Bulgaria had the lowest per cent of

⁴³ *Cartea Alba a Invatamantului, (The White Book of the Education)*. Cornelia Novak, Mihaela Jigau, Romulus Brancoveanu, Serban Iosifescu, si Mircea Badescu. 1998, pg. 23.
<http://www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm>.

⁴⁴ "OECD. Analiza politicilor nationale in domeniul educatiei: Romania" ("Reviews of National Policies for Education: Romania"), OECD, 2000, pg. 16, www.edu.ro/analise.htm.

⁴⁵ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 170-5.

GNP allocated for education amongst the European countries.⁴⁶ For year 2001, 82.95% of the total expenses for education were represented by the personnel expenditures.⁴⁷ An illustration of the second type evaluates the participation in the educational process, as the evolution of the number of the pupils and the students. In the period between 2000 and 2005 the school population has reduced with 159 thousand pupils and at the gymnasial level the number of the pupils is much higher – 295.5 thousand pupils.⁴⁸

The judicial evaluation examines the legal issues related to the application of the governmental measures. The actions are realized by the judiciary branch and they evaluate the possible conflicts between the governments actions and the rights of the individuals or groups. The Free Unions Federation from Education after trials with the Romanian governments have obtained several financial rights.⁴⁹

The political evaluation is done by anyone who has an interest in politics. The analysis doesn't have to be systematic or technical. Usually they support one side or another, trying to declare a policy as a success or as a failure. During elections, the citizens express their general feeling towards the overall activity of the government; if its policies are not appreciated by the people and the government is ignoring the citizens' opinions, they are at a high risk of losing the elections. In Romania, most of the governments didn't react adequately to the general public feeling, so most of the political parties at the government have lost the power – in 1996, 2000 and 2004.⁵⁰

The purpose of the policies evaluation is to discover their advantages and disadvantages and to try to improve them. Essential in this procedure is the *process of learning*. It can be conceived as an iterative process of active learning on the nature of policy problems and their solutions. It is debatable whether this process occurs endogenously – when political actors learn from past experiences, or exogenously – when the learning process is a result of factors outside the policy process.⁵¹ An example of the exogenous learning is the measures that have been taken by the Romanian minister as a result of the actions taken by the European institutions. The Recommendation of the Council of Ministers regarding the education for a democratic citizenship is such a case.⁵²

The favorable circumstances for changing policies are especially after elections due to promises of change in policies made by the competing political parties. Indeed, this was the case in Romania, where most of the changes in the educational policies have been made after such key moments.

Conclusion

⁴⁶ Raport asupra starii sistemului national de invatamant 2005 (*Report on the situation of the national education system 2005*) The Romanian Education and Research Minister, Bucuresti, pg. 35.

www.edu.ro/download/raport_stare.pdf

⁴⁷ Ibid, pg. 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pg. 57.

⁴⁹ *Informare privind actiunea FSLI pentru anularea circularei MEdC 40301/2005 (Information regarding the abrogation of the MEdC decision 40301/2005)*. Federatia Sindicatelor Libere din Invatamant (The Free Unions Federation from Education), www.fsli.ro

⁵⁰ *Structura Camerei Deputatilor pe legislature (The Structure of the Deputies Chamber by legislatures)*. Camera Deputatilor din Romania (The Romanian Chamber of Deputies). www.cdep.ro

⁵¹ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy. Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 176.

⁵² Council of Ministers, www.coe.ro/recomandare.pdf

The analysis of a complex policy process such as the Romanian educational policy can be tackled adequately by dividing its study into a series of stages: the agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation.

In the *agenda setting* stage we have seen that there exists an *objective problematic situation*, as the education sector in Romania is confronted with multiple issues, such as the lack of decentralization, the ideologically biased reform of the sector and the overall negative economic conditions. The modality in which the institutional agenda has been established could be best described by the *mobilization model*, although later the *inside invitation model* was the one that has fitted better the agenda setting process. The arrival of the problems on the institutionalized agenda follows a *political stream*, because before elections political parties are dealing with these issues.

In the *policy formulation* stage, it were mentioned the actors who are shaping the educational policy process; the policy paradigms were identified, the first one being *state-dominant* with its subsequent competitor, that have tried to promote the idea of decentralization. Due to the fact that a large number of actors are involved in the subsystem, but the state actors are dominant, it results that we are in the presence of a *pluralistic network*.

In the *decision-making* stage, the *garbage can model* can be used to describe the policy process started in 1996, as the minister tried to take into account many alternatives with unpredictable outcomes. The *analytic model* characterizes the official decision-making process, because the minister wished to introduce many systemic changes, but he has had a low level of knowledge of his envisaged measures. The decisions taken by the new government (2004) are typical to the *rational model*, because several strategies exist and their impact has been evaluated.

In the *policy implementation* stage, we witnessed a *description of the problems* created by the technical difficulties, the size of the target groups, the extent of the behavioral change needed and the existing social and economic conditions in implementing the policy measures. The *top down approach* and the *bottom-up approach* were taken into consideration in trying to explain why some policy measures were not working adequately. In the choice of the policy instrument we saw that the *political model* fits best to the reality, because the lack of decentralization appears because a lack of will of the political factors.

In the *policy evaluation and policy learning* stage, the *administrative* and *political* evaluations are the ones which have the most extensive use; the *judicial* has only a small part in the overall evaluation of the educational policy. The *process of learning* can be exemplified in the Romanian case by the influence exercised by the European institutions on the shaping of the national educational policy.

The complexity of the Romanian educational process has been easier dealt with by using the policy cycle approach, which divides the analysis into a series of stages. The paper has shown that the educational policy was not adequately reformed, in order to improve its quality; nevertheless, some steps have been done in this direction but the government must continue to improve the educational policy.

Addendum: Policy Instruments

In the policy implementation stage the decision-makers have used different types of policy instruments to achieve their goals; the instruments used can be classified in three different types: voluntary, compulsory and mixed instruments. Next, are presented the instruments that have been used in implementing the Romanian educational policy

The first instrument used is the utilization of *subsidies* of the public education, which is a mixed instrument, as the state has been financing the educational costs for the organizational units under the government control. In the *Report on the situation of the national education system 2005* of the Romanian Education and Research Minister it has been mentioned several times the way in which the public funds are allocated for each educational sector.

The second instrument used is *the direct provision*, which is a compulsory instrument. The state has contributed to the PHARE –TVET program, in 2005, by providing material equipments, such as IT related equipments and other related materials. In the *Project for the Rural Education* the government has provided this type of IT related equipments. Also the state has been the supplier of the goods for the rehabilitation of the schools, for the provision of minimal facilities, in the project *PIR – 273*.

The third instrument used is *legislation*, which is a compulsory instrument. In 2005, the number of the approved legislative proposals have been: 2744 Decisions of the Romanian National Education and Research Minister, 79 Government Decisions and 2 Emergency Ordinances.

The fourth instrument is *information and exhortation*, which is a mixed instrument. In 2005 in its relation with the Romanian Parliament, the National education and Research Minister has responded to 187 questions and interpellations made by the senators and deputies. In its relation with the unions, the National education and Research Minister has had 13 meetings, in which has been given approval on 26 legislative acts referring to education and 32 documents referring to research.

The fifth instrument is *the market* which is a voluntary instrument. By projects financed by the Romanian government and the World Bank, a substantial effort has been done to end the monopoly of the state editor of school books and to stimulate the emergence of a private sector in this area. A considerable number of private educational units has been established, offering an alternative to the public educational sector.

The sixth instrument is the involvement of the *voluntary organizations*, which is a voluntary instrument. The organization “The Center Education 2000+” has developed many projects to support the improvement of the quality of the education, such as the “Second Chance”, in which, young people who had not finished the compulsory educational program have been helped to finish their basic education, in order to be able to sustain the capacity examination.

The seventh instrument is the participation of the *family and the community*, which is a voluntary instrument. The local authorities have been partially involved in the management of the schools, and on a occasional basis, they have been financing various educational programs.

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