



Perspectives on Adapting the Performance Management of Secondary Education Institutions in Romania to European Models

Mioara Enache¹

Abstract: The fundamental purpose of the secondary education system is to provide, at a higher quality level, solutions to social and individual needs such as: training and development of basic skills, indispensable for the evolution of society, training and development of values and attitudes necessary to educate active and involved citizens, pre-professionalization and professionalization for the socio-professional insertion of young people. Performance refers to achieving goals. Therefore, in educational organizations, performance is associated with the degree of satisfaction of social requirements, the extent to which its activity and results rise to the standards of the quality of education provided and the level at which it meets expectations and ensures satisfaction of education beneficiaries.

Keywords: secondary education system; education beneficiaries;

In order to determine the level of performance of an educational organization, it is necessary to analyze its performance in terms of the two defining elements of performance (efficiency and effectiveness), from two perspectives: instructive-educational and administrative, respectively in terms of quality of learning and the results obtained by the students and in terms of the quality of the institution's functioning.

In educational institutions, performance management is done at all institutional levels in order to achieve the proposed objectives and if introduced and implemented correctly, can make a significant contribution to the success of the institution.

¹ "Virgil Madgearu" Economic College, Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: mioara.enake@yahoo.com

Measuring the organizational performance of a secondary education institution, as a fundamental tool for performance management, is done by examining and evaluating - most often multi-criteria - the various performance indicators that contribute to its success. The purpose of measuring and evaluating performance is to identify vulnerabilities, or areas for improvement, in the work of the institution and to initiate measures to optimize it. Monitoring performance indicators is a complex managerial process that must be carried out continuously, and the measurement of these factors must be done using a diverse range of evaluation methods, techniques and tools.

The performance indicators that target the educational activity and that can be measured to evaluate the level of performance of an educational unit are:

- Student learning outcomes (school results, passability, proven high level of key competencies, etc.);
- The level of well-being of students;
- The degree of satisfaction of the beneficiaries (direct and indirect);
- Social results obtained by students / graduates (social / socio-professional integration of graduates, success rate in exams and admission to higher levels of education);
- The quality of the educational offer, as attractiveness and adaptation to the needs and interests of the students;
- The quality of curricular materials and digital teaching aids in the institution and especially the efficiency of their use.

The performance indicators that target the activity of the management team and that can be measured to assess the level of performance of an educational unit are:

- How the educational institution works;
- Implementing the digital transformation of educational processes;
- Leadership and decision-making skills of management team members;
- The managerial styles practiced by the members of the management team;
- Managerial interventions on areas of competence: curriculum, human resources, time resources, financial resources, material resources, information resources;
- Institutional development, organizational ethos and organizational performance;

- The image of the educational institution among the beneficiaries (direct and indirect), in the professional community and in the local community.

The secondary education system in Romania, as an organization, is a very broad system, with a complex structure and very clearly hierarchical, with a multi-level hierarchy correlated with well standardized responsibilities and in which there is a system of hierarchical relations well defined by laws and other regulations and normative acts.

The organizational diagnosis of educational institutions can cover both the systemic elements (respectively the hierarchical institutional supra-system / external environment, the organizational system of the institution as a whole and the subsystems that make it up) and the processes - goal setting, decision making, design and planning, implementation, communication, collaboration, etc. - from within the institution.

In the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the management of secondary education units is a complex process, with various fields and difficult problems, carried out on two distinct levels, on which the manager must act in parallel and convergent: teaching and administrative and financial activity for ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the unit and stimulate the growth of its performance.

In order to meet the specific challenges of the pandemic situation, school principals in Romania must adapt to the requirements of a constantly changing regulatory framework, to the specifics of the institutions they run and the environment in which they operate, and to the demands of modern management. Due to the complexity of the environment in which it operates, from a socio-economic, legislative, political and educational point of view, the management of educational institutions has at the same time a social, economic, educational and systemic character, which makes the managerial act in education an act. very complex, multidisciplinary and multidimensional. This reality, together with the diversity of types of management that derive from the management processes and from the execution processes, necessitates efforts at system level and the creation of functional mechanisms for the professionalization of managers in the field of education.

The educational management, and especially that of the secondary education institutions, has a series of particularities that come on the one hand from the specifics of the school as an organization and on the other hand from its double dimension: the organizational dimension and the pedagogical dimension. The managerial approaches and behaviors specific to the educational field differentiate

it both from the management in the economic field and from that of other public institutions. For this reason, the managerial styles and behaviors practiced in the field of education, especially in secondary education, are different, and the profile of the educational manager in secondary education differs in many respects from the profiles of managers in other sectors.

Regarding the management of secondary education institutions, even if the premises of decentralization were created through the legislative framework, by attempts to synchronize decentralization in education with similar economic and administrative processes and by developing a training program for school managers, the practical results obtained are below the forecast level. Slow and ambiguous administrative and economic decentralization, the existence of bodies that have recentralized school organizations, the establishment of national and local regulations to recentralize the management and selection of teachers, syncope in the involvement of local communities in the development of educational policies, school network and projects Institutional development and its relatively low involvement in the management of secondary institutions are just a few of the causes. Also, the problems encountered in the selection of school managers and the lack of real professionalism of most school managers have meant that, at the management level, some secondary education units face problems and lack the support of the local community. financial, administrative, managerial and pedagogical.

In order to establish the level of organizational performance of a secondary education institution and to be able to plan its growth, it is necessary that the performance parameters be measured periodically in relation to the institutional goal and objectives assumed. That is why evaluation is a fundamental process and a key element in performance management. In order for the evaluation to produce relevant, reliable data, on the basis of which appropriate decisions can be made for the development of the institution and to increase its performance, it is necessary to use professionally applied quality measuring instruments.

There are two ways to evaluate the activity and performance of an educational institution:

- external evaluation - the evaluation carried out by one or more evaluators from outside the evaluated institution, respectively by the educational authorities;
- internal evaluation - the evaluation carried out by one or more evaluators within the evaluated institution, respectively by those in the school, alone or together with

representatives of other stakeholders.

The external evaluation is performed by an entity outside the institution and may aim at either evaluating the entire activity and performance of the institution, in a holistic approach, or evaluating only certain segments of the activity / performance, depending on the purpose for which it is made.

The internal evaluation is carried out by the secondary education unit itself by persons / groups designated by the unit (possibly with the support of a consultant) and, depending on the purpose of the evaluation, may target the entire activity / performance of the institution.

At the level of national education systems in European countries, studies conducted over the last two decades have shown significant differences between the levels of development and perception of performance management systems in secondary education units. They indicated the existence and use in all countries of performance management systems, mechanisms and tools, even if their level of development, systematization and formalization is very diverse, which are sometimes similar, but often with significant differences between countries, environments (urban-rural), regions or educational units. Practices in the field of performance management are also very diverse at European level: some, sometimes not even perceived as such, are empirical and applied randomly, others are systematic and consistently applied. Their level of effectiveness varies from country to country, but there are many examples of good practice that can be taken over and adapted from one country to another, from one educational system to another.

At European level, the management teams of secondary institutions operate in diverse and dynamic educational contexts. The roles of education leaders have continued to evolve in response to new societal challenges, including decentralization and a greater need for accountability. As European countries try to adapt their education systems to the needs of contemporary society, the expectations of secondary education institutions and their leaders have changed profoundly. Many European countries have succeeded in transforming secondary institutions into more autonomous organizational entities in the decision-making process, while centralizing accountability requirements and requiring schools to adopt new approaches based on experiential learning.

European models of educational leadership have a major impact on educational performance insofar as they can proactively address the following challenges:

- ❖ *Quality assurance for the development of educational institutions*
- ❖ *Permanent adaptation of the curriculum, personal and professional development of students*
- ❖ *Teachers and educational leaders perceive the institutions in which they work as organizations focused on learning actionable knowledge*
- ❖ *Connecting to learning and collaboration networks between European education systems*

The purpose of the comparative study of good educational leadership practices related to secondary education in eight European countries is to provide educational leaders in Romania with validated models of strategies and managerial policies to increase the performance of the institutions they coordinate.

The instructional leadership adopted by high school principals in **Germany** focuses on improving the teaching profession and teachers, promoting effective teachers, and improving learning. Using teacher evaluation practices, efforts are being made to improve classroom teaching, to improve the quality of school life, to accelerate the implementation of educational programs, to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and, in general, to improve the quality of the schooling process. Transformational leadership, specific to a significant share of high school principals in Germany, shows that they develop a compelling vision and, by virtue of their exemplary, motivating, inspiring, and supportive behavior, ensure that teachers adhere to organizational goals and thus are motivated to get involved in achieving these goals.

Teaching experience plays an important role in recruiting educational leaders in **France**, but it is not a requirement for those who aspire to become the director of a secondary education institution. Teaching tasks take up the least amount of time in the management of the French school. A peculiarity of educational leadership in France is the creation of advisory boards coordinated by principals, involved in projects to develop educational strategies to benefit their high schools. These advisory boards have been implemented nationwide, in the hope that the task of improving the performance of high schools could be shared among more people and that principals will thus feel less overwhelmed by the tasks of developing educational strategies.

According to **Finland**'s policy on recruiting educational leaders, professional leadership and teaching skills are essential. Professional experience in management

and teaching is a strong point for high school aspirants, but is not included in the formal requirements. While a qualification is required, teaching experience is not considered particularly important for the work of an educational leader: under national law, the task of an educational leader is primarily responsible for operating within the parameters of the institution's expected level of performance. The professional development of educational leaders is a national priority to encourage the successful management of high schools in Finland. In this school, educational leaders are offered a variety of professional development and support programs, from participatory management of the institution to the use of information technology in daily tasks. The key feature of Finnish educational leadership is that the relationship between the state, the education sector and communities has been based on mutual trust and solidarity, framed by political consensus and pragmatic reasoning, where all stakeholders have developed the ability to pursue a common goal, namely to act in the national interest to increase educational performance.

In the **UK**, educational leadership is conceptualized as a process of influence that leads to the desired goal: Successful educational leaders in UK countries develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision on every occasion and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are oriented towards the realization of this common vision.

Transformational educational leadership contributes to improving the quality of educational services in the **Netherlands**, indicates the intention to use the results of the evaluation to improve the functioning of the organization and change it, and this can be done both from the perspective of external control (responsibility) and management. internal (process improvement). The management of the schools is entrusted to the teachers, but the final decision-making power is entrusted to the governing body which, in the field of public education, is the local authority. Both general and deputy directors must be qualified teachers and must have adequate teaching experience and management experience.

Educational leaders in **Spain** can have considerable influence in the context of their schools, given that they have the autonomy to develop the school curriculum, and their leadership is recognized because they have been elected on the basis of a validated management program. They can thus contribute to change by updating and promoting curriculum updates, changing teaching methods, developing new approaches to the use of educational materials, and promoting different ways of

evaluating student learning outcomes. They can also have an impact on teachers' job satisfaction and their ability to adopt and use innovative work practices.

Italy's educational leaders set guidelines for school activities and are their legal representatives. They are responsible for the overall management of the school, the use of financial resources and the quality of education provided by their institutions. Educational managers go through a one-year probationary period, and their salaries are based on a fixed input and a variable input that depends on their responsibilities (85% based on the size, type and socio-economic environment of the school and 15% on based on their school results) [119]. The managers of the Italian schools are assisted in their duties by the directors of the general and administrative services.

The selection of educational leaders in **Hungary** involves a public competition for candidates to meet the following professional requirements: qualification for school management as a result of specialized training in Management, at least four years of professional experience in teaching and full-time employment as a teacher for a period indeterminate. During the competition, the candidate is asked to present a management program based on the analysis of the current situation and the development strategy of the educational institution. Although there are no formal requirements for the content of the management program, it is generally expected to contain a clear institutional vision and be based on the self-assessment of the director and the institution. Candidates for high school leadership positions must present strategic objectives and how to achieve them, indicating criteria of effectiveness and accountability.

Although in a process of modernization and transformation, the secondary education system in Romania is facing persistent challenges (increasing school dropout, increasing functional illiteracy, obtaining poor results in national / international assessments and examinations, the issue of integrating students with requirements special education, the insertion of graduates on the labor market, etc.).

Improving institutional performance and ensuring the success and progress of secondary education institutions can be achieved by developing and implementing effective and modern performance management strategies and systems. The relative congruence of educational ideals in secondary education in Europe and a number of similarities in the structure, organization and educational and managerial practices in European education systems allow the adoption, transfer and

adaptation by secondary education institutions in Romania of good practices. and performance management models and tools used in the practice of similar institutions in European countries.

Aware of the value of transformational leadership and collective responsibility, managers in secondary education in Romania must implement mechanisms for systematic and continuous involvement in the decision-making process, while ensuring that attention and support are given to members of teaching and non-teaching staff who feel excluded from participating in decision-making.

References

- *** (2012). *ETUCE School Leadership Survey Report - School Leadership in Europe: issues, challenges and opportunities*. <https://www.csee-etuice.org/images/attachments/SchoolLeadershipsurveyEN.pdf>.
- *** (2018). European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems. *The ET 2020 Working Group Schools The final report and thematic outputs of the ET2020 Working Group Schools*. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs6-Full>.
- Brauckmann, S.; Geißler, G.; Feldhoff, T. & Pashiardis, P. (2016). Instructional Leadership in Germany: An Evolutionary Perspective. *International Studies in Educational Administration. Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM)*, 44(2).
- Derring, A.; Brundrett, M.; Slavíková, L.; Karabec, S.; Murden, B. & Nicolaidou, M. (2005). Educational leadership development in Finland, the Netherlands and France: An initial comparative report. *Management in education*, 19(5), pp. 34-37.
- Figuroa, D. T.; Golden, G.; Giovinazzo, M.; Jankova, B. & Horvathova, M. (2017). *Education Policy Outlook. Italy*: OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Italy.pdf>.
- Klein, E. D. & Bronnert-Härle, H. (2020). Mature school cultures and new leadership practices—An analysis of leadership for learning in German comprehensive schools. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, Springer, 23(5), pp. 955-977.
- Szekeres, G. & Căldăraru, A. (2021). The influence of financing on results in the pre-university education system. *Journal of Financial Studies*, 10(6).
- Tulowitzki, P. (2013). Leadership and school improvement in France. *Journal of Educational Administration*. Vol. 51 Issues 6 pp. 812 – 835. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JEA-03-2012-0026>.
- Uljens M. & Nyman C. (2013) Educational Leadership in Finland or Building a Nation with Bildung. In: Moos L. (eds) *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership. Studies in Educational Leadership*, vol 19. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_3.