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The Perspectives For Higher Education Development Reflected In The Work Programs Of The Governments Of The Republic Of Moldova (2009-2022)

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Abstract: From August 2009 and until now, the Republic of Moldova has been governed, with certain exceptions, by „Pro-European” coalitions. This period was marked by a governmental instability, expressed by the frequent change of governments. Each government team came up with its own visions and governance programs. The purpose of the study is to investigate the provisions of these government programs on the development of the education system, in general, and the higher education system, in particular. The provisions of the government programs related to the various functional aspects of the education system in the Republic of Moldova were analyzed. In general, the examined government programs contain chapters or sections devoted to education, where are described certain perspectives on the development of the system. In the case of „long-lived” governments, the efforts made can also be quantified, materialized in decisions and in mechanisms for implementing these decisions. The governing programs of transitional governments or conjunctures’ coalitions that have ruled episodically, as a rule, remain only as declarations of intent.

Key words: Republic of Moldova; government program; higher education

Introduction

A successful career and personal growth are one of the main goals of every modern person. The path to them is often available only to those who have made every effort to get a quality and prestigious education. At all times, education has been a reliable investment in the future and the main argument for a positive

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decision when applying for a new job.

Taking into account the experience of the 20th century and the colossal destruction that our society and man have undergone, first, we must return to the old idea that existed in our thoughts - that education should be aimed at a person - not at creating a certain social function, but at education of a person, as a bearer of a moral norm. Because the vast majority of the problems that we have today in our society, in its various areas, from sports to politics, are associated with the destruction of morality. And education in the first place should be directed to its restoration. Although we are well aware that all sorts of economic and geopolitical problems and tasks create a different vector. But in this, it seems to us, the government should have shown a certain firmness in caring for the country as a people, and not just as a mechanism. And for this, it is necessary to pay due attention to education. This, as it seems to us, is the most important of the global things.

Moldovan higher education, undergoing a process of renewal and reform, in many ways meets the expectations of the public. However, there are a number of tasks that require close analysis and solutions. Reflecting on this problem, a number of specific aspects are actualized, which we will pay special attention to within this article.

Research Methodology

The main method of collecting relevant data for the research was the content analysis of official documents, reports and statistics, programs and strategies of political parties, government programs of the governments that were active in the Republic of Moldova during the examined period.

As a result of the processing of the collected data, the provisions of the state programs were analyzed, which are related to various functional aspects of the education system in the Republic of Moldova.

Research Results

Introductory notes. In the struggle for power, political parties propose various models and strategies for the development of the country to the electorate. Many times, the respective programs, strategies, roadmaps are nothing more than populist

statements, theoretically unfounded and devoid of arguments. In the struggle for votes, politicians resort to methods of manipulating the electorate, putting forward false tracks and goals.

With the conquest of power and the formation of executive power, the implementation of election programs should begin, on the basis of which the elections were won and which brought this or that political party to power.

The governing aspirations of the potential government, formed by the party or coalition in power, are embodied in its governing program.

From August 2009 until now, the Republic of Moldova is governed, with certain exceptions, by “Pro-European” coalitions. The given period was marked by governmental instability, expressed by the frequent change of Governments. Each Government team came with its own visions and programs of government. The purpose of this study is to research the provisions of these government programs regarding the development of the education system, in general, and the higher education system, in particular.

If the government programs of the former Governments can be easily found in the public space, the reports about their fulfillment are more complicated to identify.

Thus, we witness a process of exaggerated promotion of future achievements and the modest presentation of the results of the activities carried out.

In the context of the globalization of modern society, national education systems all over the world have entered a stage of cardinal and dynamic transformations, closely related to the innovative economy and evolutionary changes in society. The vector of these transformations is aimed at integrating national education systems into the global educational space. An analysis of reforming the education sector in Moldova in recent years has shown that the problems, that have accumulated at the present time, require urgent solutions, based on the balance of the national strategic interests of the state and the interests of subjects of the educational services market. Decades of reforms in the Republic of Moldova of the post-Soviet period determined the concept of further development of the education sector in the country, taking into account the possibilities of financing, the demographic situation, the legislative and legal framework of the education system, providing for its maximum adaptation to the needs of society and a market economy.

For the last two decades, Moldova, making the transition to a new civilization based on the values of democracy and individual freedom, has been modernizing the

national education system, leaving reforms on the agenda of priority state tasks. Through an in-depth analysis of past events, intermediate results of the post-Soviet development of education, were formulated conclusions on the future strategy of the national policy in the field of education, taking into account the past legacy, made mistakes, based on the opinion of the professional community and reforming ministers. In fact, the systematization of experimental data made it possible for all interested parties to carefully consider the current structure of education in the country, the dynamics of development, progressive and regressive initiatives and formulate a new development concept for the coming years. This made it possible to start the next stage of large-scale modernization of the national education system.

It should be noted several factors of influence that have corrected the vector of development of the education sector since the early 1990s. First of all, this is the pressure of a deep economic crisis, which plunged the country immediately after gaining independence in 1991. Another factor of inhibition is the perception of innovation, as a permanent slogan for each new Moldovan government, which began its work from a new stage in the modernization of the national education system. It must be said that political ambitions in specific historical conditions remain today as a tool for the implementation of educational reforms, despite the limited material and human resources, the conditions of social and cultural asymmetry. And this is rather a positive factor.

As the Republic of Moldova is in the process of joining the EU, a step that would speed up this accession is to connect the educational system to the European one. Only in autumn 2004, political authorities from Chisinau realized that the goal of integration into the structures of the European Union would be achieved much faster, if the higher education system will be interconnected with the provisions of the Bologna process. Because, the logic and direction were taken correctly, because, due to education policy is possible to ensure the long-term sustainability of the integration process, because, this field is intended to form new economic, political, social and cultural elites, actively participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of several policies with an integrative role, as well as stimulate other areas for the sustainable development of society. With the implementation of actions to join the Bologna process, the legislative framework in the field of higher education has undergone a number of changes, thanks to which it has become largely compatible with the requirements of the Bologna process (The Bologna Process, 2020 ..., 2010). Thus, in spring 2005, the Republic of Moldova signed the Bologna Declaration, but, already in summer of the same year, were made a number of

amendments to the legislative base. However, the most important step initiated by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, is the development of a new legal framework in the field of education, included in a separate set of laws. It was published on August 2005 and became the subject of a lengthy public debate. Thus, the interested parties were able to make additions, suggestions, criticism and various options for resolving contentious issues.

In order to trace how the higher education developed after all, it is necessary to analyze what were the priorities of the Moldovan government. In the more than thirty years, 20 governments have succeeded the leadership of the Republic of Moldova. On a simple comparative analysis, we can say, on the one hand, that for eighteen years, since the proclamation of Independence, the Republic of Moldova has been led by left and extreme left parties and only for a very short period (four years) of center-right democratic parties. Which means, on the other hand, that during this whole period there was a strong confrontation between two diametrically opposed currents regarding the development path of the Republic of Moldova. The Europeanization of the education system in the Republic of Moldova began in 2005, when the Education Law (The Education Law, 1995) was amended and supplemented, by the accession of the education system in the Republic of Moldova to the Bologna Process. With the accession to this process, the quality of the educational system has become a priority, but in the structure of university education took place major changes.

Government of Zinaida Greceanii. Between March 31, 2008 and August 26, 2009, the Republic of Moldova was led by the Government of Zinaida Greceanii together with the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, which in turn, proposed an activity program “Progress and Integration”. In the Government's policy priorities for 2008-2009, education, as a medium-term objective, was mentioned. The activities, related to the development of higher education, envisaged by the Government were “further implementation of the commitments undertaken in the context of accession to the Bologna Process and anchoring national educational policies in the European and global framework of education objectives” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2008-2009, p.19). In the second part of the mandate, after July 2009, in the Activity Program was mentioned only that “the Government will ensure the proper functioning of the education system, the development of the admission process in educational institutions in accordance with the approved admission plans and the normal start of study year” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2008-2009, p. 12). We can summarize, that in the

activity program of the Zinaida Greceanii' Government didn't think much about the development of higher education.

Government of Vlad Filat. On August 8, 2009, the Agreement for the establishment of the Alliance for European Integration was signed, created by the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM), the Liberal Party (LP), the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) and the "Our Moldova" Alliance. On September 25, 2009, these four parties voted for the inauguration of the Government led by Vlad Filat. The period of government was from September 25, 2009 till March 5, 2013. During its activity, they proposed the Activity Program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova "European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare" 2009-2013 (The Activity Program of the Government, 2009-2013). This program was developed in a complicated period, which the Republic of Moldova went through. For higher education and research have been proposed both objectives and priority actions. Namely:

1. Modernization of national legislation in accordance with the requirements of modern society.
2. Ensuring the quality of the teaching and research process in higher education institutions through adequate funding, promotion of structural and essential reforms, while respecting university autonomy.
3. Reorientation of academic policies in the field of science and innovation towards increasing the capacity and competitiveness of the research and innovation system, based on technology transfer and in accordance with the concept of the knowledge-based economy (The Activity Program of the Government, 2009-2013).

As the progress achieved by the Government, we can mention that in the field of education has started the process of elaborating the long-term sectoral Strategy on the development of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova (The Sectoral Strategy on the development of the educational system, 2011). The major objectives of the new Strategy, that was approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education no. 849 from November 11, 2010, were: modernization of the education system and its connection to European values and standards; improving performance management in the education system; harmonization of the structure of higher education (bachelor, master, doctorate) in the aspects related to curriculum, methodologies, management, qualifications framework, etc.; creation and implementation of the quality assurance system in higher education; strengthening the interconnections between higher education, scientific research, the labor market, the economic

environment; modernization of the infrastructure and the technical-material base of the HE institutions and so on.

At the same time, the process of elaborating the new Education Code was started, which had to adjust the educational policy to the new development priorities of the country and to create opportunities for integration in the European education system.

It should be mentioned that Government led by Vlad Filat passed a vote of no confidence, approved in accordance with the Decision of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova no 6 from January 14, 2011, after which the new government came to power.

Government of Iurie Leanca. Government led by Iurie Leanca was in power for 558 days (from May 31, 2013 to December 10, 2014) and was formed by the Pro-European coalition (LDPM, DPM and Liberal Reform Party).

Action Program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova “European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Prosperity” for 2013-2014 (The Activity Program of the Government, 2013-2014) determined the framework of the governance policy of the Republic of Moldova for the period of 1.5 years left until the next parliamentary elections. The basic task of the Government was to ensure the “de facto” integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European political and economic space. The Government has sought to accelerate the implementation of reforms called for by both society and the international community in the areas of justice, combating crime, ensuring media freedom, human rights, economic liberalization, modernizing education, social and health systems, streamlining central and local public administration, and so on.

The Government's objectives in the field of higher education were the following:

- Implementation of the principles of university autonomy;
- Creation / implementation of the quality assurance system in higher education by establishing a quality assurance agency in accordance with the European standards established by ENQA;
- Supporting and stimulating the participation of the Republic of Moldova in mobility programs;
- Ensuring the quality of the higher education system by connecting to the requirements of the labor market and integrating with the research sphere;
- Development of the National Qualifications Framework converging to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as a premise for the recognition of diplomas and qualifications obtained in the Republic of Moldova;

- Promoting distance learning in higher education;
- Strengthening the process of students' participation in decision making at the faculty / university level, as well as at the national level;
- Development of research capacities of higher education institutions;
- Improving the mechanism and facilitating the recognition of national educational diplomas and qualifications and those obtained abroad, in order to ensure better academic and professional mobility, integration and reintegration of diaspora representatives;
- Development of the National Strategy for the promotion of lifelong learning;
- Adoption of the Education Code - the defining document of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova (The Activity Program of the Government, 2013-2014).

But it should be noted that after two unsuccessful attempts – in 2008, when it was not promulgated by the President Vladimir Voronin, in 2010, when it was also blocked due to certain interest groups – on July 7, 2014, the Education Code was finally approved, but from November 23, 2014, entered into force. With the Education Code' adoption, the Education Law was repealed. The Ministry of Education proposed a new approach to the higher educational process, aimed at modernizing the education system in the context of the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova, in line with the Bologna process. The Education Code was intended to lay the foundations of a new doctrine in education, which primarily implies the availability of quality education for everyone, but also the irreversible overcoming of the involvement of the political factor.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that according to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 944 from November 14, 2014, was approved the Education Development Strategy 2014 - 2020 "Education-2020" (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 944, 2014), which is one of the most important strategic documents.

Government of Chiril Gaburici. On January 23, 2015 was signed the Agreement for creation of the governing minority coalition – Political Alliance for European Moldova (PAEM), established by the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, and the Democratic Party of Moldova. Both parties, together with the faction of the Communists Party of the Republic of Moldova, voted on February 18, 2015, for the inauguration of the new Government led by Chiril Gaburici.

On the bases of the Government's Activity Program stand the implementation of the

Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, especially through the implementation of the National Action Plan, approved by the Government Decision no. 808 from October 7, 2014.

This Government was in power for 114 days (from February 18 till June 12, 2015), when the prim-minister resigned (Government of Chiril Gaburici). The government program was developed taking into account the status of minority government.

Government of Valeriu Strelet. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Moldova no. 1698 from July 30, 2015 Mr. Valeriu Strelet was appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova. The Cabinet of Ministers led by Valeriu Strelet governed the Republic of Moldova from July 30, 2015 to January 20, 2016. On October 29, 2015, he was dismissed by a motion of censure by Parliament on suspicion of corruption.

The Government led by Valeriu Strelet continued the activity program of the previous team. The Activity Program, which was the basis of the Strelet Government's activity since 2015-2018 years, proposed, as main objective, the increase of welfare, security and quality of life of citizens, especially by: developing the economy and facilitating the creation of well-paid jobs, eradicating corruption and guaranteeing the rule of law, ensuring personal security, strengthening the country's defense capacity, providing accessible and cost-effective public services, ensuring social protection for vulnerable groups of the population. In order to fulfill the desideratum, the implementation of the Government Activity Program was based on the implementation of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, especially through the implementation of the National Action Plan, approved by Government Decision no. 808 from October 7, 2014.

In order to ensure the functionality of the educational system, the program provided:

1. Implementation of the Education Code;
2. Implementation of the Education Development Strategy 2014-2020 "Education-2020" (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no.944, 2014);
3. Elaboration and implementation of a national program for increasing the quality of human resources in education, including by rethinking pedagogical education;
4. Development and implementation of a motivating salary system for human resources in education;

5. Creation and structural and functional consolidation of quality assurance institutions in education;
6. Consolidation of research activity in higher education institutions;
7. Integration of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (The Activity Program of the Government, 2015-2018).

Government of Pavel Filip. The Government led by Pavel Filip ruled the Republic of Moldova for 1144 days, from January 20, 2016 until March 9, 2019 (Government of Pavel Filip). The governing coalition consisted of the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) and the European People's Party of Moldova (EPPM).

European integration was one of the government's top priorities. To this end, the government proposed to create “the necessary prerequisites that will ensure the right of the Republic of Moldova to obtain the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2016-2018).

Regarding the higher education, the Activity Program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova mentioned: “strengthening research activity in higher education institutions by promoting partnerships between university-government-business and facilitating internationalization” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2015-2018, p. 46).

At the same time, by Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 890 from July 20, 2016, was approved the Government Action Plan for the years 2016-2018 (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 890, 2016), where have been planed the actions, related to the modernization of higher education, namely:

- Raising the prestige of the pedagogical profession by elaborating and implementing a salary system, oriented towards motivating performance, career, educational autonomy and integrity;
- Streamlining the process of professional training in pedagogical education by reviewing the network of higher education institutions;
- External evaluation and accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs;
- Modernization of the Curriculum in the field of Law in accordance with European standards;

- Promoting the competitiveness and employment opportunities of students by introducing new teaching methodologies (Problem-Based-Learning (PBL), Enquiry-based learning and simulations (EBL));
- Implementation of extended university autonomy through:

a) creation of the Ethics and Management Council,

b) creation of the Councils of institutional strategic development for ensuring the duality of the university governance structures;

- Strengthening research activity in higher education institutions by promoting partnerships between university-government-business and facilitating internationalization;
- Implementation of the third cycle, Doctoral studies through the development of doctoral schools, the realization of new doctoral programs and the involvement of young doctoral supervisors;
- Creation of the National Register of Qualifications for technical professional and higher education;
- Involvement of the business environment in the development of the National Qualifications Framework, in the university governance structures, in the organization of the internships, the development of the university infrastructure, etc. (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 890, 2016)

The obtained results of the Filip's Government over the years were visible, namely:

- Revised and modernized over 139 curricula for Bachelor studies and over 142 curricula for Master studies within 12 higher education institutions;
- 25 Bachelor's programs accredited, for a period of 5 years, and provisionally authorized 8 Bachelor's and master's degree programs;
- Started the external evaluation processes in order to accredit the Bachelor's degree programs on certain strategic fields, requested by the Ministry, such as: Education Sciences, Economic Sciences, etc.;
- Developed the digital educational contents for the higher education programs for I, II cycles. Thus, within 24 institutions, digital educational contents are applied to 553 Bachelor and Master's degree programs (Report on the activity of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020);
- The National Register of Qualifications approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 1199 of 5.12.2018.

In order to form the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Moldova (NQFRM), which aims to ensure the development in the national system of education and training of skills necessary to support a competitive human resource, able to function efficiently and adapt to changing requirements of the labor market, a series of constructive actions have been carried out:

- Development of the draft version of the National Qualifications Framework (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no. 1016, 2017) in new wording, adjusted to the new Recommendations of the Council of the European Union on the European Qualifications Framework, in order to promote automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and results of periods of study abroad on key competences for lifelong learning;
- Elaboration of the prototype of the Automated Information System of the National Register of Qualifications, which aims to ensure the transparency and credibility of the national education and training system, both nationally and internationally;
- Approval of the Methodology for elaboration, revision and validation of qualification standards, in order to train specialists in accordance with the requirements of the labor market (Report on the activity of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020);

Government of Maia Sandu. The Government, ruled by Maia Sandu was formed as a result of a “temporary political agreement” between two political forces with different views - the Electoral Bloc NOW and the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) in order to de-oligarchize and restore the state constitutionality of the Republic of Moldova. The Government was invested on June 8 and dismisses on November 12, 2019, being in power for 157 days. (Governments of the Republic of Moldova)

The Sandu’ Government, in the elaboration of the Government Program, started from the premise that the Republic of Moldova was going through one of the most difficult periods in its recent history, with a “state captured by the oligarchy, where state institutions take decisions for the benefit of a group of people” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019).

In order to return the country to the people, the Government has outlined several major priorities, including the education system. The Government's vision of the education system was formulated as follows: “equal accessibility and opportunities

for all citizens, relevance for life, for society and the economy and a high degree of quality” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019, p. 5).

The Sandu’ Government formulated its governance objectives, being aware of the possibility of a restricted temporary framework of activity and perceiving the existing situation as one of “maximum urgency” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019, p. 6).

In order to ensure the functionality of the educational system, the program provided: a) ensuring the fairness and attractiveness of the salary system in education by assessing the possibilities to amend the law on the unitary salary system in the budget system and b) ensuring the real debureaucratization of the processes in the educational system, thus giving teachers the opportunity to devote themselves primarily to the education and training of students' personalities.

Regarding the higher education, we found only one mention: “we will ensure the modernization of the content in higher education in order to connect it to the requirements of the labor market” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019, p. 17).

Government of Ion Chicu. The Government, ruled by Ion Chicu was in power for 405 days (from November 4, 2019 until December 23, 2020), when the Prime-minister resigned (Governments of the Republic of Moldova).

The Government program was developed taking into account the status of minority government, and the time horizon limited to the period until the presidential elections in November 2020.

The program, reflected the Government's vision of immediate action, to be taken in the coming weeks in order to “restore the functionality of the central public administration, which has deteriorated significantly in recent months”, given that “low level of citizens’ trust in public institutions” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019).

The Government's immediate objectives in the field of higher education were the following:

- Approval of the draft law on amendments to the Code of the Republic of Moldova on Science and Innovations;
- Approval of the Methodology for institutional financing of public organizations in the fields of research and innovation, including state higher education institutions;

- Starting consultations with the Council of Rectors of Moldova for the elaboration of the National Program for the Support of Higher Education (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019, p. 7).

The priority directions of activity were also outlined in the governance program. Important objectives in the field of higher education were summarized as follows:

- Increasing university autonomy, while strengthening accountability and transparency in higher education institutions;
- Initiation of a draft law on university consortia;
- Increasing the quality and relevance of university study programs;
- Ensuring the conditions for conducting fair and impartial elections at the level of university management;
- Creating functional mechanisms for monitoring the professional career of graduates;
- Elaboration of the action plan for the development of doctoral studies;
- Starting the evaluation process of doctoral schools;

Strengthening the international prestige of universities in the Republic of Moldova, in order to attract foreign students, as well as strengthening the traditional relations between Moldova and various international bodies in the field of education and research;

Creating a coherent institutional framework and a plan of measures to capitalize on the potential of higher education graduates and researchers in the Moldovan diaspora (The Activity Program of the Government, 2019).

Government of Natalia Gavrilita. The Government led by Natalia Gavrilita governs the Republic of Moldova since August 6, 2021 and until now. The Government is monochromatic from a political point of view, being invested with the vote of 61 deputies of the Party Action and Solidarity, the majority party in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. In the early Parliamentary elections of July 11, 2021, the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) obtained a majority of 63 out of 101 seats in the legislature, while the Socialist and Communist bloc has 32 seats, but the Șor Party - 6 seats.

In order to ensure an “efficient, democratic, transparent and responsible government, as well as to achieve the development goals set”, the structure of the Government was changed by increasing the number of ministries: from 9 to 13. The following tasks were assigned to the new format Ministry of Education and Research: a) developing and promoting policies in the fields of education, research, youth and

sport to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education; b) training qualified staff for the national economy; c) developing lifelong learning opportunities, d) increasing the quality of scientific research and the relevance of scientific results to the business environment, e) developing opportunities for young people, developing of mass sports and performance sports (The Activity Program of the Government, 2021).

Chapter two of the Government Program entitled “The main development challenges of the Republic of Moldova” among the challenges, facing the Republic of Moldova, is listed as an “education system insufficiently adapted to the needs of society”. Among the major problems of education are listed the following: a) insufficient quantitative and qualitative link between educational supply and labor market demand, b) acute shortage of qualified and motivated teachers and managers, c) too much focus on formal education and ignoring sources of informal and non-formal education, d) insufficient promotion of intercultural education and equality, entrepreneurial skills, civic and critical thinking skills and children's life skills, e) too slow progress in adopting and adapting new educational technologies, f) poor quality of lifelong learning.

Regarding higher education, it is mentioned that many higher education institutions “being focused on the teaching process, have not developed other essential functions, including research, ending up facing existential dilemmas due to the decrease in the number of students”. At the same time, it is noted that there are a number of institutions “that have developed impressive international partnerships for teaching, research and academic mobility, as well as training institutions that work closely with private employers and give reasons for optimism about multiplying these practices” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2021, p. 4).

The need to invest in human resources in education is considered by the Gavrilița' Government as a priority and aims to increase the status of educational institutions and pedagogues in Moldovan society. The attractiveness of studies and the teaching profession for young people will be ensured through adequate salaries and improved working conditions. But teachers and managers “will be motivated and supported to achieve professional performance” (The Activity Program of the Government, 2021, p. 34).

In the field of higher education, the government plans to carry out the following priority actions:

- Improving the financing mechanism of higher education institutions, streamlining public expenditures by improving tools for forecasting the training needs of specialists for the priority state areas;
- Increasing the capacities of higher education institutions that train specialists in priority areas for the society development, through support programs for the development of study programs that meet the needs of the business environment, training teachers and increasing business cooperation with higher education institutions;
- Ensuring compliance with the principles of ethics and academic integrity in higher education and research institutions, by implementing measures to prevent and eliminate fraud and plagiarism;
- Streamlining the activity of institutions with attributions of quality assurance in education and research (National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research and National Agency for Research and Development);
- Reviewing and modernizing the regulatory framework for streamlining the national research and innovation system and increasing the impact of scientific research on business environment and society;
- Elimination of discrimination and intimidation of teachers and managers due to political choices;
- Development and implementation of a single digital platform for online submission of documents for admission to all higher education institutions in the country (The Activity Program of the Government, 2021, p.36).

In order to achieve the outlined objectives, the Gavrilita' Government adopted on July 13, 2022, the *Decision on the reorganization through merger (absorption) of some institutions of the fields of education, research and innovation*, which provides for the consolidation of the university network by absorbing smaller institutions, the merger of research institutes with universities – keeping research funding separate, as well as directing public spending of higher education and research to increase the salaries of academics and researchers. According to the Government, the reform will contribute to the consolidation of human resources and financial resources by redistributing them in accordance with programs for advanced training and training of highly qualified specialists. In these conditions, the modernized universities will attract more young people in the process of building a prosperous future at home (Structural reforms in education, research and innovation, 2022) As a result of the reform, 11 state universities, instead of 16, will be active in the Republic of Moldova.

The reform was not accepted by the employees of the research institutions and the teaching staff of the absorbed educational institutions, generating protests and addresses to the governors to stop the merger of those institutions.

Discussions

In general, the examined Government programs contain chapters or sections, dedicated to education, in which are described certain perspectives for the development of the system.

In the case of “long-lived” Governments, the undertaken efforts can also be quantified, materialized in decisions and in mechanisms for implementing these decisions.

The governing programs of transitional or conjuncturist coalition governments, that ruled episodically, as a rule, remain only as statements of intent.

Conclusions

Seeing the changes that are taking place now in all areas of activity and in higher education, the situation may change radically in the coming years. But, it is important to remember that education is about people. But training and education of people is not accomplished quickly, it takes years. The school does not tolerate fever. This is heavy work every day. But it is possible to invest funds to achieve some result in areas that the state may consider strategically important.

Thus, the development and improvement of the education system depends on the will of the Moldovan government and the administration of universities. Crisis is a time for change. Namely in crises, the brilliant ideas were born, grandiose transformations were accomplished. Now universities form the political, economic and cultural establishment of the nation, and the future of the country depends on how this establishment grows.

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