



Theoretical and Practical Comparison of Educational Ideologies with Punctual Applications from the United States and Romania

Mihaela Manole, Mid Johnson

mmanole@timpsonisd.com, mjohnson@timpsonisd.com

Timpson (Usa)

Abstract

This paper discusses current theoretical and practical comparisons of educational ideologies with punctual applications from the United States and Romania. Thus, the reform of Romanian education introduced an extensive change, which endorsed levels of all system components: the structure, management, legal framework, education policy and the functioning of the educational system (curriculum management, assessment, teacher education, and methods). In the United States, one of the most promising strategies for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities. The aspects of comparison will include the priorities in each educational system to fulfill the society's needs: authentic achievement, values beyond the school, authentic student performance, dimensions of learning, instructional effectiveness and accountability of achievement. The authors will question the perspective of improving the learning qualities such as creativity through these two models of schools based on different assumptions: the Romanian one being on the level of considering that the learning process is preponderantly the student's duty and the American one considering that the teachers and educators have the duty to create an environment in classrooms that engage students in academic work that results in a high level of achievement.

Introduction

This paper presents an overview of Romanian and United States policies and practices pertaining to the level of fulfilling the society's needs by each educational system. These descriptions and discussions about characteristics and area of need in both countries educational systems are intended to serve as guidelines of reference for the development of learning qualities, as an opportunity to notice the weak links. This survey could be of interest to international scholars from various disciplines, international educators, and educational programs from the referee countries. It may suggest new directions for research, for both public and educational policy changes that could improve the approach of instructional effectiveness in both directions: students' achievement and society needs.

This paper comprises the current conceptual framework of education models: the Romanian and the American one; a brief information about the target countries; relevant policies and practices in Romania during Communism, the democratic transition, and European Union membership on one side and models of schools during a long line of democratic development of the United States of America; an analyses of two current models shape the overall creativity and independent long life learning of the student.



Conceptual framework of educational systems and types of schools in

Romania

The reform of Romanian education introduced an excessive change, which endorsed levels of all system components: the structure, management, legal framework, education policy, the functioning of the educational system (curriculum management, assessment, teacher education, methods). Educational issues specific to current situation in Romania in terms of decentralization are the level of curriculum, assessment and certification, the school network, management and administration, human resources, funding policies.

The history of American education in the second half of the twentieth century is marked by numerous attempts at reform and by increasing public concern. Despite persistent attempts to reform public education, there is little evidence to suggest that schools have become effective in meeting the society needs. The Excellence Movement of the 1980s represents a top-down improvement initiative that was based on standardization, increased reliance on rules and regulations, and detailed specifications of school practices at the expense of local autonomy. The Restructuring Movement of the 1990s based its approach to school reform on the premise that the paired concepts of national goals and local, site-based autonomy offered the best hope for genuine change. The failure of these reform initiatives has lead to heightened disillusionment with public schools.

Past efforts to improve schools have not had the anticipated results for a number of reasons: the complexity of the task, misplaced focus and ineffective strategies, lack of clarity on the intended results, failure to persist, and lack of understanding of the change process.

National curriculum in Romania has two components: core curriculum, which corresponds to the trunk from the plans and teaching curriculum at the school's decision (called curriculum development in local vocational and technical). Currently, the school curriculum, in order to determine in many cases depends on the "needs" to maintain teaching norms and it is not consistent with the options of the students/ parents, or that of the economic policy development area. Issues considered critical in the curriculum area are:

- School decision curriculum (SDC) decreased as a share of needs and interests of local communities;
- SDC structured mainly on the needs of teachers and not on those of the community;
- The low-structure expert at the central level-such as the National Curriculum;
- Centralized resources allocation for school textbooks, which leads, in some cases to the primacy of quality before price;
- The non correlation of the activities of the two structures expert at the central level – CNC (the national Council for approval of textbooks) and add new services between them and the National Assessment and Examination Service (NAES).

Regarding professional certification, evaluation is currently conducted by the teaching staff and training providers and not in all cases certified to perform this work, entering into conflict with the European standard EN 45013.

In the school network area there are some dysfunctional points that are considered critical:

- The school is based on the existing structure (branches, profiles, rules and teaching specializations): advice and guidance aren't the desired results and often decisions are taken at central and county level, without consulting the stakeholders from the local level;
- Minor role of local authorities in determining the school network.
- Under the current legislative framework, the heritage of schools- land and buildings- the public domain municipalities are in the administration of cities and municipalities and local councils / of the county in the territorial radius of which they operate. These provide the budget of local school funding. Managing current assets and funds of the school are made at the local councils, only counties pilot administration and budget execution is done at school. In this area the issues considered critical are:



- The non correlation of the school funding with the objectives of developing the local community;
- The administration's current assets and funds outside the school are at the local councils;
- Community is under-represented in the council of administration (CA) of the school;
- Director is appointed just on hierarchical succession- the DSI or MECI.
- Violation of the separation of "deliberative" and "executive" functions, meaning that the school is the CA chairman.

Effects of education are, to a great extent, the qualities of professional staff members, the degree of commitment in fulfilling their responsibilities for educating students. And although the local community and school leadership are first concerned by the quality and the effects of education in school they lack in present decision concerning the appointment, the rate setting and staff salaries.

The involved schools are the first responsible for the quality and effects of the educational process, but decision regarding the selection, hiring staff members and release belong to DSI and MECI; the salaries and staff members are rigidly determined by law; the school management had the opportunity that a rate setting and flexible wages to meet the needs of mobility, changing curriculum or inducement teachers performance.

The issues developed in this area are:

- the local community and even the school director are deprived of any decisional authority as far as the teaching staff concerns; the major decisions being taken on central level;
- the restrictive legislation frame concerning the wages and the norm of teachers' staff;
- the centralization of the professional training and development of staff and its non correlation.
- The funding system outlined by the normative acts stipulations adopted in 2004 presents some limits, which generate failures, as the following:
 - -the impossibility of funding based on formulas and standards due to legislation;
 - a circuit considered still difficult of school financing;
 - the methodology of calculation of standard costs does not take into account the criteria of quality and educational performance;
 - the system for collecting, processing and transmission of data is not sufficiently credible and effective in order to provide an objective basis for the decision-making process.

Starting from the recognition of these dysfunctions, the current strategy of decentralization of the educational system talks about the improvement, responsibility and resources transfer concerning the organization, administration and financing the business units of education, from the central level to the schools. Centralization and decentralization are two contradictory but complementary structuring principles of the administration, among them being necessary to find an optimum balance.

Decentralization has become a general phenomenon in Europe, and it can be said that at the end of the first decade of the 21st century about 75% of Europe's population will live in countries in which not the state but sub-national level will act directly on growth of economical factors. In the table below we offer the evolution of the population weight of the federal states and decentralized in Europe.

| | 1950 | 1990 | 2010 |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Centralized (in %) | 75 | 66 | 25 |
| Federal-decentralized (in %) | 25 | 33 | 75 |

Decentralization and deconcentration "live" in numerous modern administrative systems; this joint could be found in Romania, too.

The decentralization is based on the idea that autonomy and the direct management of the resources relating to the local authorities ensure a better quality in education. The process of decentralization counts on the achieving of some requirements specific to the assurance of quality, namely: the assumption of some certain objectives, making the actors (teachers, students, administration,



community) responsible, autonomy and public responsibility. In order to create an organized educational system that fulfills the society needs it is required that the achievement of a management based on flexible programs, the bureaucracy being reduced but not on artificial structures.

The effectiveness of decentralization should be reflected in the added value in education, materialized through the capacity of the young graduates' integration in the society on the basis of professional skills acquired according to the labor market at a local, national and international level.

Conceptual framework of educational systems and types of schools in United states of America

In the United States the accountability movement has been growing over the last few decades. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk*, was published by the National Commission of Excellence in Education. In the report, the United States was given a bleak prospect for the future in terms of maintaining economic and political influence in the world. Reports such as this added fuel to a fire in America that began to focus the educational community on how to improve education in the country. As a result, the United States began a campaign that demanded accountability in the public school setting.

There is no greater example of this than the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* Act of 2001 passed in 2002. This law portrayed the essence of the national accountability movement by targeting the perceived need to increase academic proficiencies, as displayed through standardized testing, of all students in the United States or face negative national consequences (Smith, 2005).

This is an important aspect to understand about the educational environment in America. The accountability prescribed focused upon creating high standards of learning for all students, even reluctant or challenged students. To many educators and teachers, this is unfair to educators and to students. Despite these beliefs, the current educational accountability systems focus on educational achievement for all students, especially struggling ones (Goertz, 2005).

For some, the issue of accountability has become a sore topic because of its use of testing as a sole means of determining proficiency and learning. These proponents argue that accountability testing has led to stringent systems where curriculum has been narrowed to the point it deducts from the creativity of students and teachers and leads to educational decline (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Heilig, 2008). Nevertheless, the current trend in America is to prescribe academic success as measured through a series of testing in the core areas of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts. Testing is given to all students at various grade levels to determine proficiency and needed intervention by the school to ensure all students are performing.

An important element of this process includes the belief structure that teachers and other educators are responsible for student outcomes because of their ability or lack of ability to create learning environments that make students want to learn and become successful (Dufour & Eiker, 1998).

On the other hand, romanian teachers consider that the learning process its the students and family responsibility. Can be this more appropriate to encourage the students to develop their own studying strategies? To determine an increase in students creativity and adaptability at the new conditions and in continue change of the society?

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