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# Reviews of National Policies for Education

# Romania

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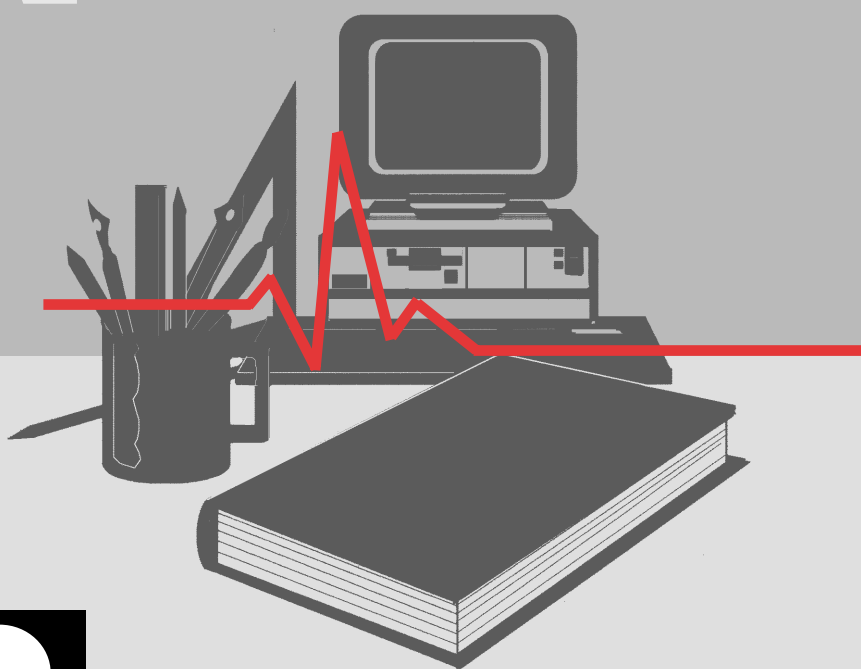

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*Publié en français sous le titre :*
EXAMENS DES POLITIQUES NATIONALES D'ÉDUCATION :
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# Foreword

The transition of Romania towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy has been marked by economic, social and political changes of extraordinary breadth and depth. The talents, skills and knowledge base of the Romanian population are crucial in this process; hence the ambitious scale and urgency of the reforms being advanced for education.

The review of education policy of Romania, undertaken under the aegis of the Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members (CCNM), covers the entire system and identifies key directions for the reinforcement of the reforms in light of the challenges faced by officials, communities, enterprises, educators, parents and students under very dynamic and uncertain conditions. This calls for a more strategic approach to Romanian education policy which should be more responsive to broad human resource development concerns and the evolving needs of the economy and society at large. Specific recommendations are offered for education goals and the transition; learning effectiveness, outcomes and the curriculum; management and governance for flexibility, responsiveness and change; and, resources and financing. This review notes that attention to communication, consultation and information flow in the change process is critical. Successful implementation of reforms will ultimately depend on teachers' feeling an ownership of the planned changes. Currently, there are signs that teachers do not yet fully understand or embrace many of the changes being introduced in curriculum and pupil assessment.

In Part I of this report, the Romanian authorities give a brief history of education in Romania and describe the development of education policies in the country since the start of the transition process. Changes have been rapid in some areas, but less substantial and even constrained in others. This part of the report was prepared within the framework of a project of the World Bank Institute. The OECD review team presents its analysis of recent trends and reform initiatives in Part II. The conclusions and recommendations were discussed at a special session of the Education Committee, convened on 24 and 25 September 1999 in Bucharest. This report incorporates key points raised in the course of that discussion.

The OECD examiners were: Douglas Windham, Rapporteur, and Terrice Bassler (United States), Milena Corradini (Italy), Alain Michel (France), Ana-Maria Sandi



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(World Bank) and Ian Whitman (Secretariat). This review received substantial financial support from the government of Austria. The World Bank and the European Training Foundation participated in the review.

This volume is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD.

Eric Burgeat
Director
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*Part* I

# BACKGROUND REPORT

# Acknowledgements

This report was prepared within the framework of the World Bank Institute project on the role of government for the delivery of education systems.

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# Introduction

This report describes the current state of the educational system and recent reforms in Romania. It describes the administrative architecture and responsibilities of the education system, including vocational education, as well as governing boards and teachers' unions. The regulatory and legal framework and informal rules, as well as the practices, of the education system are also described: personnel, curriculum, textbooks, equipment, and instructional materials, school infrastructure, student enrolment, quality control, financial administration and control. It analyses central, local, and private educational financing and allocation for primary and secondary education and establishes the context for proposals.

Romania covers 237 500 sq. km and has a population of 22.7 million people. In 1992, 45.5% of the population was under 30 years of age. More than half of all Romanians (54%) live in cities. Nearly 90% of the population speaks Romanian, the national language and the language of instruction in 96% of schools. Several linguistic minorities also exist in Romania, including Hungarian, German, and Roma (1.8%).

In the early 1990s, Romania's education system was one of the most highly centralised in Central and Eastern Europe. The Ministry of National Education (M*inisterul* E*ducatiei* N*ationale*) determined national and local school budgets, to which private sources contributed only negligible amounts, and curricula, as well as secondary school entry and leaving examinations. Its regional, or *judet*, administration included a school inspectorate (I*nspectorat* S*colar* J*udetean*) which had only administrative responsibilities but also provided teacher training according to centrally-formulated guidelines. Schools had no autonomy for planning or implementing their budgets; school directors and administrative councils (C*onsilii de* A*dministratie*) could not define school personnel policy. Local communities participated only to a very limited extent in managing schools. Elected local authorities had virtually no relationship with the local school system, nor did they want one.

In late 1989, Romania began to undergo a number of major political changes that affected education. The years 1990-92 were a period of radical change. Efforts were made to reform the education system although no clear alternative was offered. The changes were primarily attempts to satisfy education stakeholders. Compulsory schooling was reduced to eight years, secondary education was



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diversified, academic *lycées* received renewed attention, class size and teaching loads were reduced, minority language education was permitted, and education finance was reorganised.

A readjustment period began in 1992. The Ministry of National Education needed to revise curriculum and eliminate the highly ideological orientation of school programmes. It soon became clear that a thoroughgoing reform required a systemic overhaul. Romania's tradition of a highly centralised political system had created a totalitarian mentality that had been functional for the first decades of the Communist era, but was no longer so. To the contrary, this tradition and the cultural attitudes it spawned were true obstacles to change and impeded the legislation to that end. Moreover, there were too few curricular experts and no political consensus on reform directions and priorities.

The World Bank conducted its first exploratory missions to support government efforts to reform the education system from 1991-93. Ministry of National Education experts and the Institute for Educational Sciences, along with government representatives and World Bank experts, developed an institutional and procedural scenario for a systematic reform of Romania's pre-tertiary education system.

The reform began in 1994-95, before a new education law was enacted in September 1995 and was again modified in 1997. The first education reform project began in October 1994, financed jointly by the Romanian government and the World Bank. The second major reform programme began in 1995, financed by EU Phare to restructure the vocational education.

A national assessment examination service was created in 1998 to monitor national education quality, provide tests and other assessment tools to measure student achievement, and administer the two national examinations. The Ministry of National Education remained directly responsible for most management and financing of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education, established official curriculum, and organised textbook production.[1] New electives were introduced into the high school curriculum, but schools still had little authority to make changes. The many new general legislative changes were poorly disseminated; the transition has been, and continues to be, tumultuous. The legal framework for decentralising decision-making, and particularly for community participation in education, remains very loose, fragmented, and contradictory.

The Romanian Parliament is again revising the education law. Today, compulsory basic education includes the first four grades of primary school and four years of lower secondary school (*gimnaziu*), grades V to VIII. After the 8th grade, pupil take a compulsory final examination (*capacitate*) to go on to upper secondary education.

1. The Ministry of National Education names a commission and selects three textbooks per subject from among which schools can choose.



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Approximately 95% of students who complete the gymnasium continue into secondary schooling at four- and five-year academic high schools, four-year technical high schools with selective entrance exams and a school-leaving baccalaureate, or two- and three-year vocational schools. Academic high schools offer majors in mathematics, humanities, and languages, for example. An integrated school unit (*Grup scolar*), a common cluster specialising in one or two technical areas such as textiles or industrial chemistry, for example, provides technical, vocational, and, on occasion, academic secondary schooling.

Current revisions include increasing compulsory education to grade IX, which would make the current structure 9 + 3. The Ministry of National Education is also proposing new types of academic and vocational education. The new policy[2] seeks to restructure the educational system to meet economic, social, and political requirements. It touches upon the entire education system, its programmes, actors, underlying philosophy, and educational governance. A strategic vision is now forged to co-ordinate these far-reaching projects.

2. The most important lines of education policy are set out in: Birzea, C. (1993), *Education Reform in Romania: Conditions and Perspectives*, Institute for Educational Sciences; World Bank (1994), Romanian Pre-university Education Reform Programme; the governing programme's chapter "Renaissance of Romania through Education" (1996); Ministry of National Education (1998), Vocational Education and Training Reform Programme; and the educational policy papers of Andrei Marga, Romanian Minister of Education (1998).



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*Chapter* 1

# Actors and Functions: The Romanian Education System at Present

## Ministry of Finance

The Ministry of Finance (*Ministerul Finanţelor*) defines the education budget on the basis of proposals from the Ministry of National Education. After Parliament passes the national budget, the Ministry of Finance approves monthly credits to the Ministry of National Education on the basis of prior and expected expenditure, and monitors annual spending to ensure budgetary equilibrium. It is responsible for monitoring educational resource allocation and for collecting information concerning procedures for implementing central and local budgets. It works closely with the National Commission for Statistics on data collection methodology and practical administrative issues.

## Ministry of National Education

The Ministry of National Education has final authority for school governance and ensures general education administration. Sometimes it has to deal with decisions already taken by the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (*Ministerul Finanţelor, Ministerul Muncii şi Protecţiei Sociale*) and the government. The minister is assisted by a corps of advisers, the national councils, the Legal Adviser's Office, the Public Relations Office, the Control Office and the Department of International Relations, with offices for international relations, European integration, and Romanians outside of Romania.

The ministry secretariat includes three secretaries of state who divide duties. The ministry establishes expert structures and relies on national consultative bodies. These include the National Council for Education Reform, the National Council for Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates, the National Higher Education Funding Council, the National Higher Education Research Council, the National Council of Libraries, the National Council of Rectors, the National Scientific Societies, and the national commissions specialised by fields, among others.



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Wide-ranging Ministry of National Education functions cover all facets of systemic issues, from constructing schools to special needs students, academic training and evaluation, personnel, research, libraries, reform strategies, and quality assessment. Beyond national borders, the Ministry of National Education establishes international agreements for Romanian students and for validating Romanian diplomas. For pre-tertiary education, the Ministry of National Education establishes preparatory groups within pre-school education to ensure continuity from pre-school to primary school, approves schooling for non-graduates of compulsory 8-year education, develops the methodology for the national examination at the end of compulsory education, for entrance examinations in post-compulsory education, and for the baccalaureate examination. It ratifies the creation of pre-university education institutions other than secondary and post-secondary schools, establishes and names directors for secondary and post-secondary schools, establishes enrolment limits, and special classes.

### School directors

School directors, or principals, assisted by deputy directors, manage pre-tertiary and vocational public education units together with teachers' boards (*Consili Profesoral*) and administrative councils which they chair and to whom they report. They are appointed for four-year terms by the general school inspector on a competitive basis. Candidates must demonstrate some professional and management experience. Secondary and post-secondary school directors are proposed by the general school inspector, selected and named by the Ministry of National Education.

Directors represent the school to the local administration and local community, determine the use of school facilities, equipment, and other material resources, and co-ordinate all expenses. Directors adopt and apply provisions for financial and accounting regulations at school unit level. They identify and monitor investments for school infrastructure, for expenses, and for annual maintenance; justify projects and submit them for approval to the school inspectorate and local and/or county councils; develop and apply strategies for raising extra-budgetary revenues; approve expenditure after an internal audit; implement financial procedures for purchasing goods and services, and involve the school unit in patrimonial activities with the chief accountant (*Contabil ºef*).

Directors co-ordinate and monitor activities for developing, upgrading, and maintaining school infrastructure. They establish contracts with designers and private and public companies for technical documentation, undertake capital and current repairs. They are responsible for all personnel issues, define staff duties, rights, salaries, and welfare allocations, write contracts and job descriptions. In the teachers' board, directors evaluate teacher performance, design academic staff



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qualifications for merit increases, verify and sign payrolls, resolve staff issues, and apply curricular, finance, and management reform programmes.

The deputy director sits on the administrative council and the teachers' board, and chairs meetings in the absence of the director. The head teacher delegates him curriculum management responsibilities, school unit branch supervision (*e.g.* primary education) or extra-curricular activities with parents or outside agents.

Despite far-ranging responsibilities, a school director is simply a recognised teacher who continues to teach while being principal and is paid a supplement for temporary managerial tasks. Principals are not fully recognised as managers and do not consider themselves to be managers. The job is a step in the teaching career for which there is neither initial training nor professional accreditation. The Statute of Teaching Staff, issued in 1995 by the Parliament, defines teaching as well as managerial duties of the staff.

### Teachers' board

The teachers' board makes decisions concerning all teaching staff, including work plans, which teachers participate in teacher training validating student grades and assessment, and career counselling. The board involves all teachers in its processes, so that the teaching staff is actively involved in every pedagogical aspect of school unit activity. It advises and validates a director's decisions on curriculum, student relations, and academic staff development.

### Administrative council

The administrative council is the highest school unit authority and includes at least five but no more than 11 members: the unit director, deputy directors, the chief accountant, teachers elected by the teachers' board, parent representatives, and local public authority representatives. In secondary and post-secondary schools, the council should also include one or two pupils and representatives of the lessors of physical facilities for school activities. The administrative council manages the school, approves the operation plan, deals with all staff hiring and nominations, facility allocation, proposes enrolment quotas, oversees budget implementation, and generally attends to such details as the school calendar, student scholarships, textbook selection, and collective staff labour agreements.

### Chief accountant

The chief accountant plays a decisive executive role on financial oversight. The normative framework recommends that the administrative council ask for consultation on financial decisions among others. If a school unit is poorly run, the chief accountant shall become responsible for decisions. The chief accountant represents



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the school unit and the director in all negotiations outside the school, establishes quarterly and yearly plans for extra-budgetary revenues, follows up by establishing quarterly and yearly balance accounts, and analyses financial activity during the meeting of the school unit governing bodies.

### Budget centre

A budget centre is responsible for the financial and accounting procedures of up to 15 schools. It is not a decision-making body, but rather a conduit for money from the school inspectorate to the school units. Its structure is not legally regulated, thus giving the inspectorate some latitude for structuring the budget centre, depending on education level, location, etc. The numbers of budget centres differ by county, but skilled accountants staff each one.

### School inspectorate

The school inspectorate is a territorial Ministry of National Education administration for regional pre-tertiary education. The Ministry of National Education officially names all inspectors and the professional development centre director although in practice, selections result from bargaining among local politicians. The general school inspector appoints school inspectors on the basis of a competitive assessment of professional and management competencies.

All school units depend on school inspectorates for extra-curricular activities and auxiliary units for pre-tertiary education. A school inspectorate is headed by an administrative council which includes the general school inspector, assistant general school inspectors, specialised inspectors, the professional development centre director and the school inspectorate legal advisor. Each inspectorate has an advisory board that includes school unit directors, prominent teaching staff, representatives of parents, local administrative bodies, religious denominations and economic agents.

School inspectorates are responsible for finance and operations of the pre-tertiary education network, and inspect schools and teaching staff to ensure regulatory compliance. They establish public kindergartens, primary schools, middle schools, vocational schools, apprenticeship schools and ensure school attendance during compulsory education together with the local public authority bodies. The school inspectorate oversees the use, development, and protection of school facilities, ensures adequate staffing, organises continuing education for academic staff, co-ordinates entrance and graduation exams, and monitors all privately-funded pre-university education activities and services to ensure legal compliance.

At pre-tertiary level, the school inspectorate is largely responsible for inspections of curriculum, human resources, teacher performance, and financial resources. Inspections examine enrolment levels, the competency of teachers and directors,



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and how well the official curriculum is observed. School inspectorate budgetary responsibilities include approving expenditure from its own budget and from special budgetary sources; it also transfers funds to the budget centres. The school inspectorate is responsible for spending school unit allocations for capital expenditure and its budget consists of allocations from the state budget as well as its own revenues.

The school inspectorate ensures that school units run smoothly at pre-tertiary level. Local public authorities are responsible for the activities funded through state and local budgets and their own revenues. The school inspectorate establishes its own budgeting procedures and those for the institutions within its jurisdiction. The accounting department at the school inspectorate is responsible for activities related to school unit budget development, budgetary implementation, opening and distributing credits, including financial and accounting reports and statements. Funds are made available through tertiary credit unit accounts at levels established by the budgetary law.

### Local public authorities

Elected local administrations are responsible for implementing legislation in the most appropriate manner, and are accountable to their local constituencies. Local public authorities were created at the beginning of the public administration reform process. The administrative system is organised into 42 *judets* and three different types of local authorities usually classified by number of inhabitants: communes (*comune*), up to 5 000 inhabitants, towns (*ora°e*), up to 20 000 inhabitants; and municipalities (*municipii*), over 20 000 inhabitants. All act as legal bodies with their own patrimony and can take administrative initiatives in the service of the public interest. Local councils act as deliberative bodies for communes and towns.

The largest local council is the General Council of Bucharest Municipality. It has created a Department of Education that makes technical recommendations to the local council which uses financial resources provided by local public authorities. The department monitors funds allocated from the local budget, and initiates and implements programmes to develop education at municipal level. The partnership between elected and appointed local authorities (local public authorities and school inspectorates) depends on personal contacts rather than on any institutionalised structure.

### Teachers' unions

Teachers' unions are non-governmental organisations established by the 1991 law on syndicates to defend the economic, social, professional, and cultural rights of its 200 000 members in more than ten unions. This represents one-half of the nation's teaching and non-teaching staff. The Federation of National Education



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(*Federaþia Educaþiei Naþionale*) and the Federation of Free Syndicates in Education (*Federaþia Sindicatelor Libere din Învãþãmânt*) are the principal unions in Romanian pre-university education.

Teachers' unions have no decision-making responsibilities but have created a wide local institutional network and play a consultative role to the administration. They are accredited observers of the decision-making process at central, regional, and local levels and try to influence the legislative process, policy-making, education management and funding. They are on the periphery of the school system but have a major impact on implementing educational innovation through their programmes for teacher advancement. Their marginality could allow them to link school and society and facilitate the reform process but since unions concentrate on promoting teachers' economic well-being, they avoid responsibility for development and reform.



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*Chapter 2*

# Distribution of Responsibilities

The educational reform establishes an institutional structure and distributes decision-making responsibility. It foresees that the current school inspectorate will focus entirely upon quality assurance and ensure compliance with national guidelines and standards, and would make its reports public. An education department within the *judet* would run regional professional development centres as part of an independent, local training and advisory system. School units are to be locally managed to meet local needs and would be required to define and publish its plans, worked out with the local administration and used as the basis of inspections. School units could co-manage their own budgets with the local administration in view of short and long-term aims, be responsible for personnel and discretionary salary decisions aligned with local conditions, for building maintenance, and training as per staff needs. Where justified, the school unit could keep unspent funds beyond the current fiscal year. A school board including parents, politicians, union representatives, business people and, where appropriate, religious representatives, would appoint a school principal and be responsible for strategic planning and management. Rural schools, in particular, would enjoy a new autonomy and be grouped around a pivot school to become an autonomous unit with a shared school council. This is the vision.

## School infrastructure

There has been no systematic approach to planning the development of school networks at either central or regional levels. Schools do not manage their own funds for repairs or maintenance. Local authorities have great power in this area but do not want to be involved. This partnership is inefficient for lack of participatory structures and communication between actors.

The Ministry of National Education decides to build or rebuild schools. Construction costs are covered directly by the local budget. The allocation process is very complex and totally informal. It involves negotiation and influence wielding among Ministry of National Education, principals, school inspectorate, local political élites, influential persons in the central government, local government, etc. Discussions or



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media scandals serve as public accountability mechanisms. These decisions are regionally implemented by choosing a builder and monitoring construction.

The school inspectorate is responsible for administrating schools buildings and educational facilities in its area. Local public authorities are responsible for financing school maintenance and repair expenses out of the intergovernmental transfers they receive (mainly from the state budget) and from revenues collected locally.[1] In practice, different arrangements are observed. In some cases, the local council provides and directly administrates funds, and determines allocations for maintenance and repairs, estimates needs, bids for contracts, and makes the payments. This is not consistent with the legal framework, since the school inspectorate is generally responsible for these decisions. A second situation occasionally arises in which the local administration allows the school inspectorate to manage its maintenance and repair budgets. Here again, local public authorities are not playing their role. In other cases, the local public authorities and the school inspectorates form informal partnerships to make decisions on school infrastructure maintenance, depending on whether or not the local council has a specialised education department.

### Personnel

The school inspectorate takes part in decisions for all personnel issues. In the field of salaries, decisions clearly remain central (primarily parliamentary). The education act, the teaching and managerial staff status act, the wage law, the general legal framework for labour and social protection in Romania, and the acts issued by the Cabinet provide the legal framework for employees in the education system. This legal framework includes nine laws and a Cabinet regulation. Salaries, professional paths, in-service training, organisation, and evaluation are nationally regulated, although school inspectorates and universities determine initial teacher training regionally.

School units have no human resource policies and limited authority or responsibility for personnel. Local elected authorities have no power over education personnel. The teachers' unions try to influence personnel issues through the Ministry of National Education, despite the fact that it is not the main decision-maker here. School inspectorates can determine some part of discretionary teaching salary by supporting promotions ratified by the Ministry of National Education. They can also select no more than 4% of a region's teaching staff to receive a temporary 15% increment to gross salary. School inspectorates evaluate schools but have no effective appraisal system for evaluating teachers, which makes the educational community suspicious of these decisions. School inspectorates are plagued by notorious cases

1. Beginning in 1999 many other direct expenditure on school units will be supported from local budgets.



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of corruption. This is unsurprising since a school inspector has no incentive to make a good decision about human resources and many incentives for abuse.

Teachers' boards participate in establishing annual teaching staff incentives, using a point system based on teachers' self-evaluations. These incentives, which total less than 10% of the school unit salary fund, are questioned by teachers who reject the appraisal system.

**Curriculum**

Working groups of three to five or more national experts are currently designing new course syllabi for the new curriculum and should finalise an annual course in three to four months, according to the basic curriculum methodology. For subjects or fields spanning several academic years, a working group can rework the curriculum from primary school, junior high school, or senior high school.

Three co-ordination commissions – for primary education, scientific subjects, and secondary instruction in the humanities and the arts – advise working groups, facilitate their communication, and ensure the integration of new curricula. A commission reviews and modifies new curricula.

The National Council for Curriculum and Teacher Training which has been set up through the education reform project, co-funded by the World Bank (the National Council for Curriculum since 1997), sits at the apex of this pyramid. It includes experts from the Institute for Educational Sciences (I*nstitutul de ªtiinþe ale* E*ducaþiei*), high-level representatives from the Ministry of National Education, and academics. It approves the new curricula and determines whether to transmit them to the education reform co-ordination unit and initiate the alternative textbook publishing process. The national council must define and revise the conceptual and methodological elements of the reform project and manage crises or settle disputes that may arise in the process.

Until 1997, the curricular decision-making process has lacked coherence. New syllabi were developed on the basis of the prior centralised curriculum framework, and ultimate decision-making power was not clearly delineated between the National Council for Curriculum and the national commissions for different subjects which, according to the 1995 education act, could approve syllabi and submit them for final approval to the Ministry of National Education. In January 1998, the Minister of Education appointed a commission to define the curricular framework: the missing piece of the curriculum reform process was in place. To ensure that the new structures endure means amending the education act. The new national curriculum should be based on a structural reform of curricular framework based on a new vision of the role of school and of the players in an open society.



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### Textbooks and materials

The formal and informal frameworks for responsibilities at all educational levels for textbooks and materials show that in theory, all levels of the education system are involved in the decision-making process. The Ministry of National Education makes decisions and approves curricula which are the basis for new textbooks and materials. The ministry covers these costs and procures materials for general compulsory education. For non-compulsory education, the government and schools themselves, through their own or external sources, provide materials.

The ministerial Reform Project Co-ordination Unit, which administrates funds from a World Bank loan, organises the bid for alternative textbooks, and selects teachers in the assessment panel groups.[2] The Reform Project Co-ordination Unit will be replaced by a Ministry of National Education department at the end of the loan programme.

Textbook selection is handled at the *judet* level where teachers could choose from among the textbooks on display. However, information on alternative textbooks and materials is not well circulated and there are no sensible deadlines for displaying books, collecting data, and sending orders to publishing houses. While teachers and schools choose other materials, financial restrictions may confound orders and, on occasion, school principals or inspectors intervene.

The Ministry of National Education has recently issued a ministerial order to regulate the provision of textbooks for high schools. This order has opened the transition to a free market for textbooks, at this level.

### Enrolment

The Ministry of National Education organises the public education network and proposes student enrolment limits to the central government. It establishes enrolment quotas in consultation with all schools, responsible local authorities, and economic agents by centralising school projections transmitted through regional school inspectorates. The education law establishes average, minimum, and maximum class and group sizes. The Ministry of National Education approves exceptional enrolments for underpopulated rural regions and to ensure education for ethnic minorities. High school enrolment decisions can be made on the basis of bargains with a school inspectorate or with principals to hire more teachers, or for some special classes, to make the school more attractive. As a general rule, proposals coming from the school inspectorates are approved by the Ministry of National

2. Two hundred and fifty new textbooks are to be written by the year 2000. New textbooks for all subjects in grades 1 to 7 have been published since 1996.



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Education and then the Cabinet approves student enrolments for each type of upper secondary school.

School directors are responsible for verifying registrations. There are no legislative limits for school unit expansion if a school can accommodate more students in terms of space and numbers of staff. For first grade, schools make proposals based on the estimated enrolments, by evaluating proximate kindergarten enrolments. There are some difficulties regarding first grade enrolments in other than the most proximate school. For other grades, a school usually maintains the same number of classes, although enrolments can vary from year to year. Schools that work in shifts also have difficulties addressing revolving enrolment because they have no rules for it. If demand exceeds approved enrolment limits, the school usually finds ways to accommodate the overflow. Student transfers are made by a mutual agreement between two school units.

### Quality control

The education law makes the Ministry of National Education responsible for student assessment standards through the National Service for Assessment and Examination (*Serviciul Naþional de Evaluare ºi Examinare*). Curricular standards have recently been introduced for primary and lower secondary education.

The Ministry of National Education, through the National Service on Assessment and Examination, determines how to assess student progress and defines the form and contents of final exams. It also defines student graduation standards. The Ministry of National Education determines how school inspections are carried out, the *judet* plans them using a nationally-defined assessment form. Disciplinary measures are to be regulated by internal regulations. Teachers can propose school disciplinary measures that are then approved by the teachers' board.

### Financial administration and control

Budget planning begins with budget centres, then moves to the *judet* inspectorate, then to the Ministry of National Education, and ultimately to the Ministry of Finance, and parliamentary approval. Allocations follow the same trajectory, in reverse. The highly-centralised process is slow and complicated and budget chapters and articles are rigid. Starting with the 1999 budget, funds may be re-routed inside the budget lines, with the exception of staff and capital expenditure, approved and modified only by budget law. For school maintenance, the budget cycle involves local councils, *judet*-wide financial directions (services), the Ministry of Finance, the government and Parliament. Local public authorities have greatest financial autonomy. School units are also funded by the parent committee that exists in every school unit, and other sponsors.



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Financial control involves several institutions: the court of auditors, the internal control departments of the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of National Education/*judet* inspectorate internal financial control. School units and budget centres have almost no financial autonomy, even if head teachers are ultimately accountable for their expenditure.

### Vocational education and training

Approximately 10% of the schools in the Ministry of National Education network offer traditional vocational educational and training. In this 10%, the Phare-VET RO 9405 reform programme offers new training. Some largely specific vocational training programmes are funded by the ministries they serve. The military has specialised high school education, organised according to its needs and hierarchy by the Ministries of National Defence, Interior, Justice, the Intelligence Service, and other institutions related to national security. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, and other interested ministries support art and athletic training. Businesses and interested institutions finance post-secondary education upon request.

In 1994, the Ministry of National Education identified vocational training reform as a priority. It sought to create a flexible system responsive to labour market needs with regulated accreditation and certification. In addition, by integrating vocational training with the labour market, social partnerships could be forged, although legal restrictions and incomplete decentralisation block an open, flexible vocational training system. The law recommends consultation with parties interested in vocational training, but no mechanisms exist for consultation. Quality control remains in the hands of the central government and no institutions exist to establish a method for organising vocational training and certifying high-school graduation. Despite the government's declared intention, there is little suggestion that vocational training is organised according to a market analysis or is based on the interests of graduates from compulsory education. Counselling and vocational guidance is just beginning and vocational training results largely from trade union measures to provide teachers with some pedagogical norms.

### Financing public education

The 1995 education law (84/1995), completed and modified by Government Ordinance 36/1997, stipulates that the state budget covers public education expenditure for most budget lines.[3] Permanent competition for public funds has meant

3. A budget line (heading) groups the credits opened according to the budget law to cover the expenditure of a public institution (*i.e.* ministry). The financial resources must have the same characteristics in terms of source and destination of the funds.



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Table 1. **Public shares of funds by source**

| | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| As % of GDP | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.6 |
| *of which* (%) | | | | | | |
| State budget | 96.1 | 96.7 | 82.6 | 82.0 | 79.7 | 81.6 |
| Local budget | – | – | 13.4 | 14.7 | 11.5 | 9.2 |
| Other | 3.9 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 8.8 | 9.2 |

*Source*: Ministry of Finance, 1998.

that education finance has come under scrutiny, particularly given the changing demand for education and the system's evolving relationship with public and private institutions, non-governmental organisations, and local public authorities. Three major changes on education finance process have occurred since 1989. In 1991, the process became highly centralised at the level of Ministry of National Education. In 1995, the decentralisation process was begun and some expenditure (*i.e.* school unit maintenance and repairs) were transferred to the local public authorities (see Table 1). Finally, in 1999 additional expenditure responsibilities on pre-tertiary education were transferred to the local public authorities. Thus, in addition to maintenance and repairs and other such expenses, they will now be financially responsible for investments, student scholarships and other current expenditure. The Ministry of National Education will remain for compensation of personnel, textbooks, scholarships for foreign students, compensations (*sume forfetare*) for student transportation, finance of international projects (*i.e.* School Rehabilitation Project, Social Development Fund) and all expenditure related to special education.

The budget law establishes the legislative framework of the education finance process and provides annual financial resources. The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Finance each negotiate a total budget and allocate funds to budget lines on the basis of: student numbers, average teaching staff salary, equipment needs, scholarship students, etc. When ministerial proposals are different, the government has to break the deadlock before the budget is submitted to the Parliament. The Ministry of National Education receives almost all of the money allocated to education from public funds.[4] The new legislative framework on local budgets established a new spending pattern by changing the structure of financing from public funds. The state budget will remain the main source of funding with 61.5% of the expenditure but the share of local public authorities will increase to about 24% of the total.

4. The official figures are as follows: 99.2% in 1994, 98.4% in 1995, 96.9% in 1996, 96.5% in 1997, 96.5% in 1998.



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Expenditure are broken down on the basis of transfers to the school inspectorates for each of the two budget lines: current expenditure (*i.e.* compensation of teachers, expenditure for textbooks, etc.) and capital expenditure. Funds may be re-routed within the current expenditure line but the law does not allow increasing the funds for salaries and investments. Savings are not encouraged: at the end of the financial year, unspent money is transferred to the state budget. School inspectorates also collect revenues from sponsoring activities, donations, and third parties. In 1999, their own revenues should cover about 12.5% of the total funds allocated for education. The current financial system is plagued by a largely centralised decision-making process and allocation criteria. School unit needs go largely ignored by the central government, but there seem to be no clear-cut options for correcting this.

Local public authorities finance their contributions to education from intergovernmental transfers and local revenues. They receive the lion's share of their funds from state budget transfers.[5] In 1998, equalisation transfers (*sume defalcate*) to local public authority budgets were based on: total population (5%), street network length (5%), pre-tertiary school-age population (25%), etc. The spending pattern at the national level is almost the same in each region (that is, the local public authorities tend to spend about 10% of the revenues collected locally on education). The interest in education could be higher in some parts of the country but this does not compensate for the lack of the locally raised financial resources. There are no data to show that, when there is a shortage of resources from the central level, the local public authority will cover the deficit.

Regional policy has recently become a priority since regional disparities are more or less related to the political issues of public finance and intergovernmental transfers. The current system transfers money as a percentage of total local taxes, up to 50% of the amount transferred. This has primarily benefited the wealthy counties, but the system has become obsolete as populations become more mobile. It is probable that a comparative analysis of local educational expenditure would reveal major discrepancies among regions, depending on their economic development. Moreover, the current system for transferring money to the local public authority from the state budget seems to be affected by the transfer neutrality process.[6]

5. In 1998, transfers to local budgets represented 37% of all salary taxes collected.
6. A transfer neutrality process is the return to the local public authority budgets of a part of collected revenues, independent of what they collect from income and other taxes. For example, in 1998, Bucharest alone received almost 20% of the money transferred to the state budget from salary tax compared to the national average of approximately 10%.



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*Chapter 3*

# Internal Contradictions

## The ad-hocracy: many rules, poor accountability

Current institutional arrangements and poor managerial tools for education governance explain some of the system's inefficiency, lack of equity, and poor quality. Many contradictions emerge in the legislation or efforts to implement the education reform. Whereas the strictly centralised education system was shaken up in the early stages of the reform, the process remains unfinished and poorly co-ordinated. The Romanian school system resembles an ad-hocracy with many formal regulations that are poorly co-ordinated, occasionally contradictory, often unclear, and therefore difficult to apply. The paradoxical result of a system with too many rules is that many actors (*e.g.* school inspectorates) act in an independent fashion, in the best of cases, according to their own interpretation of the rules.

The overburdened and excessively centralised system is overwhelmed with operational decisions and cannot focus on strategic planning and national policy issues. A single department manager from the Ministry of National Education runs a staff at lower level too large for effective oversight. Internally, intricate, parallel, and overlapping responsibilities among its boards lead to endlessly contradictory information. This is further aggravated by the almost complete separation of responsibilities for pre-tertiary and university education. Furthermore, the hierarchical and territorial organisation of education management obliterates communication channels within the education system. There are no institutional consulting mechanisms for public and private education. The Ministry of National Education has not yet managed to ground the consulting process among concerned parties or to mobilise available know-how.

Poor relations among the ministries also thwart the reform process. Strategies among ministries or with central agencies are not co-ordinated. For example, the Ministry of National Education defers to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on teacher employment and salary norms, and merely implements their decisions. How can too much poorly co-ordinated legislation and ineffective central power be transferred to obviously unprepared sub-national



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governments particularly when there are too many rules with too little cohesion among them?

The system is supposed to rely on central evaluation and control as the main accountability mechanism but no standardised reporting, performance grading, data analysis, or feedback procedures exist to make it happen. How, then, can the Ministry of National Education make objective evaluations? The central administration answers to citizens through parliamentary and media control in the rare moments when education comes into the public limelight. However, given that inspection reports and academic performance results are confidential, there can be little public scrutiny of school performance.

Departments and governmental organisations tend to work in isolation with little will to co-operate, little know-how, and no accountability mechanisms. Responsibilities are often spread among several administrative levels: school inspectorates, professional development centres, and universities all make decisions about innovation or teacher upgrading. School inspectorates and local governance co-operate on school maintenance and construction but this partnership is dysfunctional, even on the rare occasions when political controversy and personal rivalries are tempered. Partnerships depend exclusively on personal relationships. Schools generally take a dim view of the involvement of local authorities in education; they should attend to water, roads, and sanitation problems, which they deem more important. The only partnership between appointed education authorities, local authorities, and the social partners is the Phare Programme for Technical and Professional Education Reform.

Given this control vacuum, school inspectorates have become the most powerful institutions in the system. Inspectors are appointed by the Ministry of National Education and local political leaders can influence some appointments on the basis of cronyism. School inspection missions, objectives, and routines are regulated in a general and inconsistent way, but inspectors set their own rules. Inspections are therefore subjective and arbitrary, and are usually provoked by teachers' complaints about a principal or an administrative vendetta against a teacher. The absence of local external accountability mechanisms together with barely functional vertical reporting to the ministry further strengthens the power of the inspectors.

The school inspectorate is responsible for school assessment, administration, and budget, and has recently been made responsible for some teacher promotions. There is a conflict of interest, since school inspectorates run hundreds of schools and must also assess their own management. In addition to communication problems and the lack of will to change, the inspectorate is an apathetic bureaucratic organisation resistant to innovative changes that would reduce its power. Today, annual inspectorate reports to local authorities go unquestioned.



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Locally, there is little accountability to those who are supposed to benefit from education. Local governance is held financially responsible by the Court of Auditors (*Curtea de Conturi*) and Ministry of Finance, and politically responsible by the community (the voters), but citizens are only theoretically in control of education management. A teachers' board, which includes all the teachers from a school unit, does not really participate in school management and cannot exercise its decision-making powers. Unbalanced leadership structures promote authoritarian management, isolate school management, and hinder accountability mechanisms. School principals are not required to report to the administrative council whose meetings have no appeal to teachers or to local authorities. If parents generally heed teachers, it is because they do not see themselves as clients purchasing services offered by schools and therefore entitled to quality. And teachers perceive parental criticism as an abusive intrusion.

School ownership creates further accountability problems. School employees see themselves as school owners. Teachers' interests prevail over those of students and influence curriculum and education financing and management. More than 85% of the education budget is allocated to salaries as a result of the vacuum of lateral reporting, the absence of external accountability mechanisms and strong trade unions.

There are no incentives for improving performance or educational efficiency. School inspectorates are too burdened by administrative responsibilities to focus on education quality. Attaining or maintaining quality brings no financial reward or prestige. In fact, academic results and management performance reports are kept confidential by the school inspectorate and Ministry of National Education. An inspector can earn more from manipulating a school rebuilding service auction than from developing a better school curriculum; job security depends upon personal political contacts. Schools have no effective performance evaluation systems to reward improved learning outcomes or to help assess or improve teacher performance. Teachers are not rewarded for participating in management. So long as incentives and opportunities remain non-existent, teachers and administrators alike will be little affected by decentralisation.

### A culture resistant to change?

The decentralisation of educational services is based upon a system of shared responsibilities, a participatory decision-making process, and very intense vertical and lateral communication within the educational administration or with actors outside the administration. Decentralisation has been highly debated for about eight years, but there is little progress to show for it. A very strong paternalist tradition reflected in social and organisational habits discourages the public from



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becoming involved in public service governance. Can the devolution of power to local communities go forward without a change in this cultural legacy?

People in the education sector discuss the necessity of decentralisation, and proclaim their determination to promote more decentralised intergovernmental roles. They complain about having too little power to run their schools, but local administrators are reluctant to accept much more decision-making power. The new senior leadership of Romanian education has announced its intention to give high schools control over curriculum and admission procedures and has thereby generated a virulent coalition against Ministry of National Education reformers.

The gap between official rhetoric and practice reflects the ambivalence towards the law of local public finance and of local patrimony, or the local public authority law redefining local governance involvement in education management. In a decade of effort, neither Parliament nor, until the appointment of the new Minister of Education, the National Education Ministry Board, have managed to define the reform's legal framework by adopting coherent legal strategies to truly decentralise education.

School rhetoric displays the same demagoguery. Teaching staff express the need for greater autonomy and want school boards to be able to employ the teachers they choose, to establish flexible teaching obligations, and to apply disciplinary sanctions. They also request greater financial and curricular autonomy. However, it is difficult to evaluate how much teachers or principals believe in their own statements and how much responsibility they would truly accept. The Statute of Teaching Staff, for example, has blocked institutions from accommodating shifting enrolments and revenues. Statute provisions on teacher mobility need revision and performance-wage innovations need to be implemented.

Changes in the power structure during the decentralisation process are revealing. The Ministry of National Education recently announced three changes implying a transfer of responsibility to school units. In some representative school units (*Unităţi şcolare Reprezentative*), the academic boards would employ teaching staff and directly administer some expenditure. Beginning with the 1999/2000 school year, all school units are supposed to design up to 30% of the curriculum, the so-called "local school curriculum" (*Curriculum la Decizia şcolii*). Once the Ministry of National Education managerial team was confronted with these changes, many respondents discovered disadvantages rather than advantages and emphasised the difficulties of reform. The costs of decentralisation weigh more heavily than the benefits in their eyes.

### Remaining gaps: training and educational equity

Another stumbling block to the reform process is the dearth of appropriately trained staff. Training is needed at all levels, from teachers to principals



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to budget centres, school councils, and ministerial offices to introduce norms and values associated with educational leadership and provide essential skills such as planning, evaluation, and decision-making. Private providers could train teachers and principals and provide professional development in regional professional development centres. The Ministry of National Education would have to rebuild its training and support capacity during the reform period and provide sustainable levels of national resources for improving the quality of education, and management in particular.

Those who favour centralisation argue that decentralisation would increase disparities among schools and regions and would affect educational opportunity. Many studies point to greatly deteriorated equity because of devolution policies in developing countries. In Romania, however, under centralised educational administration, more than half of all Romanian schools (mainly in rural areas) provide no basic instruction because they lack basic teaching resources. Like all centralised educational organisations, individual special needs go unmet. There are no specific programmes for underprivileged areas, for gifted or poor students; the system tends to differentiate rather than level instruction on the basis of social and intellectual background. At the same time, principals and teachers are generally unhappy about having recently been made responsible for administering state-allocated funds to support children of impoverished families, considering this responsibility to be incompatible with their professional status. Teachers have no incentive for working with difficult students in substandard schools.

The school inspectorate does not help resolve local unequal access or develop programmes for needy schools. Some school inspectorates do not try to give schools in impoverished areas more support. To the contrary, the conservative school inspectorate tends to multiply local disparities by assigning more money to affluent schools because they have special relationships with their managers.

The system of private tutoring (*meditaþii*) for wealthy children is one of the most obvious threats to educational equity while the children of needy families have little chance of attending the best high schools or universities. No mechanisms exist to ensure equity and few incentives exist to promote it.



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*Chapter 4*

# Many Problems, Few Solutions: Suggestions for Reforms

## Introduction

Though policy makers and experts must resolve many problems, there is a limited range of solutions, implementation resources, and time. The following strategic package of governance reform options aims at improving the effectiveness of education services while remaining compatible with stakeholders' visions for change.

All changes should be relevant, sustainable, able to be integrated into current school practices, implementable for the medium and long term, successfully resolve most of the contradictions, be effective for education quality, efficiency, equity and ability to deal with change. Transforming inter-governmental roles in education should focus on four issues:

– Transferring power from the central administration and regional offices to governing bodies in individual schools enrolling more than 1 000 students in urban areas or clusters of schools, especially in rural areas. This kind of managerial consortium allows a more school-based educational governance while reducing the risk of decentralising decision-making to small or medium size schools that are still unable to manage themselves. Setting up school councils (*Consilii ºcolare*) as core governance units would not exclude local public authority involvement. The school councils would institutionalise education partnerships between schools, local public authorities, and other stakeholders. This model is based on a strong conviction that local authorities must deliver educational service from within educational communities. Romanian local public authorities will long be unprepared and unmotivated to take local school systems under their jurisdiction.

– It is possible to retain as much authority and responsibility as possible for managerial functions within the central government. Underlying this conservative approach is the belief that decentralisation must not be a goal in itself. Devolving power has to be a means to increase quality, equity, and efficiency to deal with educational innovations and reforms. Consequently, it must go



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beyond political disputes and intellectual fashions. The central government must ensure quality and equity. Keeping the Ministry of National Education or its regional offices central in certain areas is a pragmatic approach to education reform.

– Rebuilding the regional institutional network for managerial and pedagogic support, professional guidance, advisory services, and training for teachers and school managers reflects one of the current strengths of the school system which future reforms must consider. Restructuring the school inspectorate would mean cancelling current administrative responsibilities and strengthening its capacity to monitor education quality and provide technical assistance. School autonomy needs sufficient support. Improved institutional capacity to deliver this support should include regional Ministry of National Education or national agency centres, and private and non-governmental training and providers of consulting services.

– Developing staff and improving managerial systems would help make school management more professional. Redesigning lines of authority and accountability or reviewing responsibilities requires developing instruments for improved governance. Individuals and institutions need new skills, new managerial instruments and a new organisational culture to perform their duties in the best way possible.

**Decentralisation: one ingredient**

This study strongly urges going beyond the governmental pattern of deconcentration or administrative decentralisation. This option, implemented since 1990 as regional power was extended to school inspectorates, is largely responsible for the current governance problems in the school system. Indeed, the power of the school inspectorate is one of the most damaging contradictions in the governance of public education, along with the vacuum of public accountability and the gap between local authority and responsibilities. The marginal involvement of local elected administrations with education is due to a lack of means to stimulate, sanction, or control appointed inspectors. Partial decentralisation has dispersed responsibilities to regional Ministry of National Education offices or to school managers but has not simultaneously transferred authority or realigned accountability lines. It has created a cleavage between responsibility, authority, and accountability. Educational management and finance will only change if power is transferred from the central state to other public bodies that are more accountable to the public, more motivated, and better able to make decisions that satisfy national objectives, students, families, and local communities.

The current centralised education structures in Romania must change, but decentralisation is only one, albeit the most important, ingredient in a viable policy



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agenda. It is not a panacea for deficiencies in governance. The central administration must focus on strategic decisions by resolving local problems at local level. The decision-making site and the area in which decisions are implemented need to be more proximate, and information must be accessible to administrators and to teachers alike. Schools within a school unit must communicate and co-operate more effectively, must adopt new pedagogies and curricular innovations, and be made responsible for managing their scarce financial resources more efficiently. Operational costs can be reduced by reducing central administrative staff. External financial resources must be mobilised, and partnerships developed between school and communities so that schools interact more effectively with their social, cultural, political, and economic environment. The main clients of educational services must be more involved in decision-making. Education quality must be improved by diversifying supply and making it compatible with local needs. All parties need to be motivated. The transition from administrative to political decentralisation will pose a choice: school-based management or devolution to local authorities. Who must be responsible for prior state responsibilities, the local government or the governing body established at school level?

Devolution is radical decentralisation. In this model, local public authorities can make and implement decisions. This means transferring power to sub-national political institutions that sit above the local level. Delegation, by contrast, confers local, regional, or central governments (other than elected sub-national public authorities) with the power to act as agents for the central government and to carry out specific functions on its behalf. The central government maintains control and can withdraw delegated power if these bodies do not meet national established requirements.

Those who argue for devolution are primarily motivated by political considerations. However, the objective of reorganising educational governance is to improve educational quality. This is a national rather than a local problem, and must not be assessed from a local point of view. The main criterion for evaluating decentralisation is how well it serves national objectives. Delegation would transfer government tasks and functions to publicly-funded autonomous organisations (school councils and national or regional agencies) that would be ultimately accountable to the central government.

This report favours the model of delegation. Empowering the local public authority to organise public education implies costs that might exceed expected educational and economic benefits of decentralisation and important risks that could imperil the decentralisation policies. No political or sociological studies suggest that the fundamental conditions for devolution or the basic requirements for improving quality and efficiency in education exist in today's Romania.



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Many independent evaluations express serious doubts about whether local public authorities can manage education services effectively. In countries where regional and local governments have virtually no administrative ability, there is little likelihood of achieving any of the virtuous outcomes of devolution – improving economic and cost-efficiency, accountability, or mobilising more resources. Decentralising government structure can take a few months or years; improving institutional capacity takes far more time and resources.

Smooth devolution also requires a positive public attitude towards such processes. Local public authority involvement in the provision of public services is distinctly unpopular at the grass-roots level. A public opinion poll made five years ago by the Institute for Educational Sciences showed that just a tiny minority of teachers and head teachers agreed with increasing the local involvement in education. The teaching staff in Romanian orphanages, which have come under local administrative authority since 1996, refused to relinquish their status as employees of the central state. Only 30% of voters voted in the recent elections for general mayor of Bucharest. Such absenteeism proves that the public continues to view centralisation as an alternative, and values neither the election of local and regional officials sufficiently or the possibility of public surveillance of local authorities. There is no local pressure for devolution. Local élites have coexisted with the centralist order, and transferring authority for education would be doing them an unwanted favour. The pressure for devolution comes from national politicians or researchers, rather than from the heads of local communities.

Local and central cultural conservatism are therefore among the greatest obstacles to efficient devolution and can be attributed to Romanian civic and political culture. There is no local tradition of civic culture, whereas informal civic institutions, trust in fellow citizens, respect for local government, engagement in public issues, and solidarity are very important. Local communities have lost their sense of autonomy, the tradition of self-reliance, and the spirit of competition that they had prior to Communist rule. They have adopted the centralist organisation in which communication and power structures are vertical and hierarchical. Long-standing attitudes are hard to break. Local dependence on central government for resources and ideas coincides with the central administration's tradition of monopolising resources and initiatives.

Devolution requires that local governments or communities have their own sources of tax revenues and voluntary contributions, and can administrate them efficiently. Devolving power to local governments without these necessary financial conditions risks having them undertake responsibility for delivering public services without appropriate funding. Devolution will require increased transfers from the central government. Even though the new local public finance law allows the local public authorities to collect and administrate locally 50% of the revenue from the salary tax, some of them raise only negligible local revenues from this tax.



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No relevant studies on decentralisation costs have been undertaken in Romania. Besides, none of the impact studies or evaluations on devolution policies in developing or developed countries of the last decade provide any evidence for gains in educational effectiveness or efficiency. These studies do prove a decline of equal educational opportunity because of regional economic disparities. It is not at all certain that empowering local administrators to govern education makes education more efficient or more effective whereas the national school system clearly does not become more equitable for disadvantaged populations.

The expectation is that devolution would make local educational systems more accountable and responsive to local communities. Yet, it may not increase participation because local authorities might not be the most appropriate institutional facilitators for local involvement with schools. In Romania, citizens and subnational governments do not communicate. Even if locally elected authorities were to truly represent their electors, it may not be appropriate for local voters, especially when poorly educated, to select curriculum and set accreditation standards. When local authorities do make educational spending decisions, they ignore overall educational benefits and spend too little. Local politicians increase the bureaucracy or fund programmes that bring them votes rather than taking the long-term view which can worsen the financial situation of the school system. Denationalising school buildings would motivate local authorities to repair and rebuild them, but might also change the function of current school infrastructure. Furthermore, the benefits of educational services are not limited to regions or local areas, another argument for central government involvement.

School councils should be accountable to the government and to the public for providing government-funded services. Decentralisation will only improve quality and efficiency if there is accountability to the public for student achievement, needs assessments, budget management, and staffing policies.

### Public corporations: self-governance of educational communities

This report proposes that the Romanian State delegate its power and funds to public corporations, or school councils, that would govern a number of clustered school units. A school council would be an agent of central and local authorities, which would devolve money and authority to it. Local public authorities and school inspectorates would co-ordinate school associations and make them into viable managerial consortia. School councils would be responsible to local authorities, the Ministry of National Education, the local community, and parents. They would be held accountable through public progress reports, regional school inspectorate evaluations, and national tests. The school council would contract with the Ministry of National Education to be autonomous and use the rights and funds delegated to it.



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Democratically-selected school councils must be responsible for most managerial school level functions. Such radical restructuring would require clustering schools under school council control. A school council would be a registered, corporate body with its own bank account, elected chairman and vice-chairman, and employ technical staff. School councils would determine school goals and policies, and improve standards. They would run schools, allocate budgets, hire and manage principals and teaching staff, and be the intermediary between schools and the community, although school heads would manage daily school operations, and would consult with the school council for general guidance. School directors would continue to have managerial duties but the school council would be responsible for seeing that the schools under its authority run effectively, legally, and respect national and regional educational policies. After inspection procedures run by the school inspectorate, the school council would establish and implement an action plan. A school unit executive manager would be responsible for the first stages of disciplinary action, appoint, appraise, and monitor teaching and non-teaching staff, propose incentives, plan and execute school budgets, determine school maintenance, work with other heads, and seek advice from the academic boards in curricular or pedagogical matters.

A school council would include parents, local authorities, teachers, and students. The council as a whole rather than individual members, would be responsible for actions and decisions although individual members would be appointed or elected though not as any group's delegates. School councils would help schools provide the best possible education, be responsible for ensuring high quality in subordinate schools whose head teachers and staff would report on their performance. Council composition should strengthen professional control to make better use of teachers' knowledge and increase overall accountability to parents and the community at large.

Under this system, government micro-management of education financing would be limited. School budget management would devolve to the schools themselves. The school council budget would be the aggregate of allocations for salaries and operations and determined by a fair formula. Formula funding is based on objectively-measured needs rather than on past spending patterns and helps ensure equitable allocation resources among schools. More than 90% of a school's recurrent budget must be directed to the school for salary and operating costs, calculated on per capita funding. The school council would determine school policies and manage school funds, be responsible for allocating funds for operations and salaries, and have the flexibility to allocate resources on the basis of local needs. A specialised school council office would ensure school financial management and a technical staff would undertake accounting procedures and routine financial management. The school council would be responsible for strategic plans, overall financial policies, budget, routine financial management, and monitoring. Each budget



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centre would become a school council financial department. Implementing a global school budget would be a move toward student-based funding and away from a system of separate resources.

After school councils chart their educational goals, they make an action plan and produce an annual report outlining school progress and the use of taxpayers' money. Council members remain accountable to the community and to the central government. New inter-governmental arrangements should ensure improved external control aimed at increasing accountability to the central administration for the efficient use of resources.

Curricular and instructional authority would be vested in schools whose teachers, principal, parents, community members, and students would work together to develop a challenging curriculum based on high standards rather than a strictly national, centrally-determined curriculum. Converging competencies within a school council might produce better local curricula. The school council would develop and approve a local curriculum consonant with national guidelines. Schools would encourage teachers to explore new assessment methods and curricular guidelines, and to adapt courses to student interests. To support these innovations and improve teaching and learning, the school day and week would be reorganised to give teachers time for planning and peer discussion sessions. Heads would determine and the school council would approve and monitor the organisation of teachers' time, and assess the results on the basis of information supplied by head teachers.

School staff, parents and community representatives would be responsible for personnel. The school council would hire a principal every four years, sign a contract, carry out an annual evaluation, and recruit, train, elect, assign, assess and promote staff. It would be responsible for a staff development policy since funds for professional development would be concentrated at the school level to be spent on a discretionary basis to improve teaching and teacher training. Teachers' unions would negotiate master contracts with a wide range of options for individual schools. School heads would define disciplinary policy but the school council would approve it. Head teachers would deploy staff to professional duties. Setting responsibilities closer to the school would make the personnel policy more relevant for student learning needs and enable school managers to motivate staff.

School councils would have the discretion to maintain and construct school buildings to be used in innovative and community-orientated ways and select maintenance and repair providers. Schools would be free to contract for all types of services and purchasing, and would purchase services in clusters to use resources to best advantage. Schools would formulate and school councils would approve student behaviour standards, but only the head teacher would be authorised to suspend a pupil whereas the school council would decide appeals and could



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require re-admission. The school council would also request information from head teachers on any matter relating to school management.

Organising and managing schools with about 2 500 students and 100 teachers in clusters would reduce some of the major costs of decentralisation and improve school management. Merging expertise could compensate for the lack of managerial competence so often cited as the main obstacle to decentralisation. The current lack of adequately qualified financial staff in the approximately 30 000 school units forces budget centres to handle 30 to 40 schools. A school council could rely on the accounting personnel in budget centres, and the central government could thus avoid two budgets per school unit and eliminate the need for 20 000 qualified school accountants. Devolving money toward school clusters rather than to individual schools makes economically non-viable (usually small rural schools) less likely to survive. Subsidising small schools is a major source of inefficiency in the educational system. School councils could deal locally with closing such schools.

The Ministry of National Education has announced, but not yet implemented, a series of measures to bring the school system closer to a school-based management model. This model would give school management new responsibilities and greater authority to develop local curriculum, administer the school budget with greater flexibility, select in-service training and other service providers, manage school building repairs and maintenance, hire heads for the best high schools, implement educational innovations, and develop educational partnerships.

There are two risks to school-based management from the point of view of local authorities. First, there is no advantage to being a member of a participatory body in a small or medium size individual school, and local authorities have too few incentives to become involved in very small schools. Second, a local public authority in a large municipality cannot designate a minimum of one representative for every school unit under its jurisdiction. Local interests and educational demand cannot be specified for a single school unit whereas they could be for a cluster of schools covering a broader geographic area. From that perspective, the local public authorities tend to perceive many more advantages by participating in a decision-making body (*i.e.* school council and/or administrative council) set up for clusters of schools. Establishing participatory bodies for tens of thousands of individual schools, however, does not encourage local and professional interest in schools, whereas this should be the primary benefit of decentralisation emphasising local control for local needs.

Lastly, establishing school councils as managerial consortiums for geographically proximate schools resembles the situation that existed in the Romanian school system between 1980 and 1989, when clusters of schools, mainly in rural areas, were unified under a single management unit (*"coalã Coordonatoare*) which



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included representatives of local authorities and businesses. Totalitarianism led to disastrous consequences whereas democratisation could maximise benefits.

### The regional level: quality assurance and support institutions

Delegation requires schools to be self-governing with no intermediary bodies between school councils and the Ministry of National Education. Successful decentralisation, however, requires vertical links or mechanisms so that the central government continues to control and support the decentralised entity. Regional level ensures an appropriate inspection, advisory, and training infrastructure to help schools improve educational quality and operational efficiency. Effective decentralisation therefore involves strengthening governmental territorial agencies and reorienting them. In a decentralised educational system, the Ministry of National Education facilitates management through its territorial offices; schools would have budgets for outside consultants and would freely select non-governmental or private sources. If regional Ministry of National Education resource centres can effectively sell their services to the payers, the school councils, they should be kept.

The main challenge of the reform may be to redefine the role of school inspectorates. The central government must define and implement standardised inspection indicators and procedures to ensure comparability among schools, and use new information tools for public evaluations of education programmes and institutions. School inspectorate administrative functions would devolve to the school but they would continue to be responsible for teacher training, educational development and innovation, and advisory school services. J*udet* inspectorates should no longer manage schools since their involvement in finance and management biases them and undermines accountability and evaluation objectivity. The school inspectorate would only evaluate the quality of education against a normative framework, goals, performance indicators, and precise standards. Regional inspectors would be responsible to the Ministry of National Education, and supervised by the General Directorate for Education Quality, for verifying the implementation of education laws and regulations and overall inspection standards.

A new inspection model would define the types and forms of inspection, their periodicity and methodology, and include standardised inspection forms. National curricular standards would be a fundamental prerequisite for autonomy. Inspections would use published criteria, made freely available to parents and schools in published reports leading to action plans.

Inspections would determine whether national curriculum is being implemented and whether a local curriculum meets local needs, and would ensure that national standards for educational facilities, finance, assessment, management, and community relations are met. They would appraise pedagogical quality and assess student achievement, and consult parents and the community to see



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whether the school is providing appropriate services. The school inspectorate would evaluate overall school unit management, its use of human, physical, information, and financial resources, and school council appraisal systems and procedures.

The primary goal in the reform of the inspectorate would be to go from appraising individual teachers to evaluating institutions and processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses so that schools can improve the service they provide and raise student achievement levels. The inspection process and reports would determine school council strategy by providing a rigorous external evaluation and identifying key issues for action. Inspection findings would also provide a basis for the national school evaluation and the annual report of the minister, by recommending special measures for the Ministry of National Education to take in school administration, or by offering support for a school that fails to provide an acceptable standard of education.

This report suggests creating a regional department for education that would be subordinate to the Regional Local Council (*Consiliul Local Judepean*) to handle financing school maintenance and repair. The Regional Local Council would channel funds into budgets administrated by the school councils. However, widening the authority and responsibilities of local public authorities to cover personnel functions or to direct professional development centres is not a functional reform in our context. This kind of responsibility must be transferred to local public bodies able and willing to fulfil them. It is preferable to delegate power to school councils.

### Modernising managerial systems and procedures

Devolving the education budget to more than 2 500 school councils depends on the ability of the Ministry of National Education to calculate the funding for each school council and the ability of the banking system to electronically transfer funds to school council accounts. The Ministry of National Education would have to design a budgetary formula based on per capita student allocations, average staff salaries, school capacity, and area, and vary it according to specific regional needs and weighting factors. This formula would be reviewed and modified on an annual basis.

The working contracts at national level (*Contracte Colective de Muncã la nivel naþional*) that embarrass local managers have to be revised in order to make them more flexible. The Statute of Teaching Staff has made it more difficult to efficiently administrate the system because it is virtually impossible for institutions to modify their teaching staff when enrolment patterns and revenues change. Statute provisions must be more flexible regarding teacher mobility and introduce innovations that link remuneration and performance.

A school performance evaluation system is needed to assess students and to establish incentives and premiums to teaching teams that show improved learning outcomes.



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An education information management system should cover internal school performance indicators, inter-schools performance indicators for *judet*, local and national planning information, and data relevant to decision-making at local and national levels.

All schools should have an effective system for managing school performance, including the student results. For management systems to be effective, there must be performance standards and evaluation criteria. Staff roles and responsibilities must be defined on the basis of a school development plan that clearly defines the school's objectives and the criteria for measuring the success in meeting these objectives. This implies an appraisal system applied to all schools.

To improve teacher competence and student achievement, teachers and head teachers must set personal targets which would be integrated with other school improvement efforts. Teachers' professional development needs to be more consistently and systematically addressed. The central administration needs national funding standards for the school system and indicators for measuring its overall efficiency.

Legislative guides are needed to eliminate the discrepancy between administrative practices and the legal framework, and to implement the new formal rules. The legal framework needs to be harmonised to ensure its compatibility with local interpretations.

The duties of the school council and the regulations governing its relationship with heads and regional and central administration need to be clearly defined. Examples of good practice should also be included.

Reformers must help develop individual managerial autonomy so that structures work. Senior managers would continue to decide on school level issues and subordinate staff would ask for assistance from superiors. The transition from a bureaucratic culture to one that encourages people to take risks in order to get the best results is a singularly important challenge.

Beyond legislation, the issue of institutional capacity looms large. Successful decentralisation requires creating the conditions that promote it and the expertise that allows it to function.

### The role of the centre

In summary, the authors conceive of an institutional reform in which centralisation and decentralisation are not mutually exclusive. A system of centralised guidance and local initiative can be imagined wherein schools are not entirely autonomous but the state does not exercise total control. The balance of national standards and diversity would ensure high standards, support meaningful



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assessments, allow for curricular and pedagogical variety, and promote collaboration and development among teaching staff.

A central curriculum and administrative guidance is compatible with school-site management. Decentralisation paradoxically requires more central government and more sophisticated national political skills. While there is some evidence that school autonomy could increase cost-efficiency by requiring fewer teachers, less bureaucracy, and lower per-pupil expenditure, no data prove that increased effectiveness, expressed by academic achievements, would ensue. Reforms must therefore enhance the role of the central administration in quality assurance.

The reform of educational finance and management seeks to delegate the Ministry of National Education's current responsibilities for daily administration and curriculum and to recast it as an institution for national strategy and standards. It would retain overall responsibility for funding and allocate funds to school councils, which would be subordinate to its budgetary controls, according to a national, enrolment-based formula, and be responsible for technical services, monitoring and quality control in addition to its role as powerful policy maker.

The Ministry of National Education would develop a system of indicators for individual schools and school inspectorates to measure, monitor, and compare performance and would assist them by creating broad student achievement standards and providing the needed resources to help schools to meet these standards. It would also directly intervene in the school system, encourage a school culture of self-assessment and review, assume distant but necessary school oversight, monitor the educational progress at territorial or other level by conducting standardised tests. It would have final authority and responsibility for taking action where schools fail to provide standard education or equitable opportunities for quality education, and would take affirmative action through special investments and upgrading programmes.

Central institutions were organised to carry out administrative functions in a central command-based educational system. This differs from a decentralised system. Therefore, as the Ministry of National Education is re-organised, what needs to be borne in mind is the clear definition of decision-making responsibilities and the areas in which they are exercised, separating political and technical spheres of central administration, and eliminating the overlap between school management and functional departments. The General Directorate for Pre-tertiary Education and its pre-school, primary, secondary education divisions would be eliminated and new, specific, system-wide managerial functions defined.

Independent agencies would become responsible for developing and administering national exams and tests. New Ministry of National Education departments and new institutions would support the strategic reform priorities of school governance. Some of these units are consistent with the most recent decisions of the



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Minister of Education who has established the National Centre for the Development of Vocational Education, the National Services for Assessment and Examinations, and autonomous centres for teacher training, curriculum development, etc. Some proposed departments or agencies already exist, but their competencies need revision or expansion.

Implementing reform means more than transmitting papers from the Ministry of National Education to the school inspectorates. It requires specialists with more than administrative competencies. The central administration must increase its ability to manage educational reforms so as to reduce the gap between intentions and achievements.



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P*art* II

# EXAMINERS' REPORT

# Introduction

## The MoNE/OECD review

This review was requested by the government of Romania through its Ministry of National Education (MoNE), commissioned by the Education Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and administered by the OECD Secretariat. The review consisted of three main stages. Prior to arrival in Romania, the international review team was provided with background documentation dealing with the history, status and current issues within Romanian education. At the same time, the OECD Secretariat provided MoNE with a draft list of themes for the review. This list consisted of five major areas:

- Education goals and the transition.
- Learning effectiveness, outcomes and the curriculum.
- Management and governance.
- Resources and financing.
- Approaches to evaluation and monitoring.

Then, the OECD review team visited Romania from 27 September 1998 to 10 October 1998. Finally, the individual members of the team prepared materials for incorporation by the team rapporteur in the draft report. This draft report has undergone several reviews, including discussions with the Romanian authorities, culminating in a formal presentation to the OECD Education Committee in September 1999.

The goal of the review was "…to explore the problems and barriers [of Romanian education] with a view toward identifying opportunities for reform in the formulation and achievement of overall aims [economic, demographic, society] for education and training in the context of constraints on resources and the demands and challenges of economic, social and political transition". The methodology consisted of extensive document review, selected visits and observation and interviews with education and government officials.

This report seeks to provide concrete and pragmatic advice on directions for policy, taking into account the present and emerging context of the country and stressing a more strategic (as opposed to implementation control) role for education



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authorities at the national level. An emphasis on the continuity of reform and the importance of short-run decisions in establishing the facilitating conditions for, or new constraints on, longer term reform will be emphasised.

The structure of the report includes this general introduction (including a summary of the most important components of Romania's current education reform efforts), a discussion of the Romanian educational system and its social and economic environment, chapters on the major sub-sectors of the education system (pre-school, compulsory education – including primary to lower secondary – upper secondary education, vocational and technical education and tertiary education), plus a separate chapter on the critical need for development of human resources (teachers and managers) for Romania's educational system. Each of the sub-sector chapters includes a discussion of the system's structure and pupil enrolments, curriculum and instructional materials, teachers, assessment and evaluation and management and finance issues. Also, since much of this discussion is necessarily descriptive, a special section in each sub-sector chapter deals with key policy issues and recommendations.

The report concludes with a set of key summary recommendations for the education system. These final recommendations are in two sets. First, four key issues (education goals and the transition; learning effectiveness, outcomes and the curriculum; management and governance for flexibility, responsiveness and change; and resources and financing) are discussed. Second, the summary recommendations of the report will be presented under seven major themes:

– Communication, consultation and information flow.

– From "philosophy" to practice in core values.

– Institutional co-ordination, alignment and clarity of roles.

– New roles for evaluation and assessment.

– Enabling legislation, regulation and procedures.

– Managing reform and policy change as an investment cost.

– Utilising external assistance effectively for education development.

The review team can hardly expect to inform its local counterparts simply through description of a system the counterparts already know so well. However, the need for descriptive content in this review is obvious if one considers that the potential audience includes many individuals who may be unfamiliar, in whole or in part, with the Romanian system. Even in the analysis and recommendations section, much of what is proposed by the team may well already have been identified by the local professionals in education. However, here the purpose is to promote a systematic policy dialogue and a sharing of experience that will, it is hoped, be useful to both the Romanian professionals and to their international colleagues.



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## The reform process

While the review focuses on the current educational system, including public and private components, it is impossible to appreciate the current situation in Romanian education without an understanding of the emerging reform process. The reform, initiated in 1990, has known several stages. The education reform project (financed with support of the World Bank with supplemental assistance from the European Union – especially through the Tempus Programme, Phare and the Leonardo and Socrates Programmes for higher education – and from a variety of other bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies) has succeeded in initiating the design and dissemination of new curricula, production of improved textbooks, greater choice for teachers and parents in textbook selection and development of new expertise in curriculum design, assessment and educational management. The concurrent higher education project, also supported by the World Bank, has led to strengthening of university autonomy, introduction of formula-based financing to promote equity and openness and a competitive grants system for research and development activities. Although the reform process has been underway for almost a decade, the real impetus for reform is more recent. In December 1997, marked by the publication of *The Reform of Education Now* by Minister of National Education Andrei Marga, the ministry's efforts to implement the reform became more comprehensive and increased the pace of effective development. The reform expects four things from education: *i*) the accommodation of the contents and organisation of education within a society based on a market economy, the rule of law and the proclamation of individual freedom; *ii*) the solution, as soon as possible, of problems arising from the delayed modernisation of the country through qualifications provided by education, scientific research and educational policy; *iii*) changing schools, high schools and universities into sources of moral, cognitive and technological innovation for the country; and *iv*) making school organisation, operation and achievement compatible with European standards.

The reform is seen as necessary because the existing educational system is no longer appropriate for the new type of society being developed in Romania, one based on a competitive market economy and participative democratic processes. The existing system still too often stresses information rather than understanding, memorisation rather than use and creation of knowledge, separation rather than integration of subjects, collectivist rather than individual training choices, centralised rather than individual or institutional decision-making, general rather than specific qualifications of international quality and is based on inappropriate competition (in grades and job offers) rather than partnerships. However, even if one can agree on the weaknesses of the former structure of education, it is exceedingly difficult to reach agreement on the future alternative that should be pursued. Such agreement is even more difficult to attain in an environment characterised by a shortage of financial and human resources.



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To meet these constraints, MoNE has advocated a process of reform that will stress implementation without delay, a comprehensive reform based on expertise instead of recurrent experimentation and testing, real change rather than continued political compromise, new methods of public discussion and participation in decisions, systematic and consistent implementation of decisions and learning from the transition taking place in Romania from an industrial to a knowledge-based society. The comprehensive reform sought for Romania involves six major components:

- Elaboration of a national curriculum.
- Changing the character of education and making problem solving, innovation and scientific research the core functions of the tertiary education.
- "Opening up" educational institutions in terms of curricula, qualifications, consultation, expertise and research, all based on society's needs.
- Development of necessary infrastructure and linking institutions to national and international communication systems.
- Modification of school and academic management through decentralisation, increased institutional autonomy and "global" financing (giving institutions greater discretion in expenditure decisions).
- Implementation of joint curricular and research units through international co-operation, based on operational compatibility and performance criteria.

The goals of the reform are equally comprehensive and include:

- Substantial declines in school and functional illiteracy, strengthening of vocational programmes and increased social relevance in the work of educational institutions at all levels.
- Increases in the number of upper secondary and university students.
- Introduction of more education in non-traditional forms (distance, continuing and alternative education) as a complement to the traditional system.
- Regulation of the educational structure and making it more competitive internationally.
- Change in the character of the system in favour of problem solving skills.
- Encouraging individual tracks of study in which pupils select a combination of subjects.
- Promotion of institutional autonomy in education including establishment of local curricular components and locally controlled staffing decisions.
- Improvement of school and university funding by encouragement of more autonomous control of extra-budgetary funds and local support.
- Establishment of a modern assessment system and implementation of a system for institutional assessment.



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– Re-stimulation of scientific research in higher education.

– Use of communication technologies to access international data sources.

– Assuring that academic promotion is based solely on professional achievement.

– Increasing the effect of education on the living standards of the country.

Obviously, these goals can only be realised if the teaching and administrative force of the national education system is transformed. The upgrading of teachers will include the establishment of regional units of teacher training and a continuous teacher training national service. Teacher training content will place a greater emphasis on pedagogic, methodological and scientific training. Administrative training, assisted by international donor support, will stress the new attitudes and processes to promote appropriate decentralisation and democratisation (to the level of institutions, communities, parents and pupils) of decision processes.

A major component of the reform is to continue and expand the programmes for social and ethnic minorities. Linguistic and cultural identity will be safeguarded by the educational system. More minority ethnic members will be encouraged to continue their education to the tertiary level and use of minority languages in school (as primary or second languages) will be promoted. A special concern will be to have textbooks that are available in minority languages but are appropriate to the new Romanian curriculum.

In summary, the reform is truly comprehensive; it touches on curriculum, teachers, textbooks, admission policies, financing, staff policies and nearly all other aspects of the educational enterprise. The reform is both ambitious and challenging, but grounded in the recognition that such reform is necessary for Romania to face the challenges of the transition to a market economy and a democratic society. Political, bureaucratic and financial realities will constrain many of these efforts and possibly delay or defeat some of the reform's goals, but the commitment to the reform is one of the most positive exercises currently underway in Romania. While it is possible to assert that better communication of the effects (including potential costs) of the reform to parents, pupils, teachers, administrators and to the local and national community is essential, the review team provides the strongest possible endorsement of the need for the reform, the requirement for its rapid implementation and the team's support for the goals that have been identified.



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*Chapter* 1

# The Romanian Educational System: Context and Description

## Structure

The Romanian educational structure consists of a vertical system of schooling through the end of compulsory education that is common for all students. Beyond compulsory education, learning alternatives become more specialised at both the secondary and tertiary levels. As indicated in Figure 1, the three main components of the initial stage of education are pre-school education (*învãþãmânt preºcolar*), primary education (*învãþãmânt primar*) and lower secondary education (*învãþãmânt gimnazial*). Pre-school education is not yet part of the compulsory cycle and attendance is correlated with income and social class. The last year of pre-school is the school preparatory group and involves explicit preparation for primary education. The goal of the MoNE is to make participation in at least this year of pre-school universal for all Romanian children. The new law on education (Law No. 151/1999 regarding the approval of Government Ordinance No. 36/1997 on amendments and completion of the Law on Education No. 84/1995) maintains this goal of more generalised participation. The academic foundations created during this last year of pre-school education mean that those children who do not participate will enter year 1 of primary education already behind other pupils who attended the school preparatory year. The new law on education explicitly recognises this problem and seeks to avoid it through more general participation in pre-school opportunities.

Under the new law, the compulsory cycle of education will consist of four years of primary education and five years of lower secondary education. The pupils in 5th form in 1999/2000 will be the first affected by the change in the length of compulsory education. A national curriculum and three variants of textbooks based on the national curriculum are available for all pupils at these levels. While the nine-year cycle will be "compulsory", enforcement may not be sufficient to assure that all children actually attend school. However, the government commitment to supply education for all through the compulsory cycle appears to be a sincere one and funding inadequacies are the major barrier to greater effectiveness and equity at this stage.



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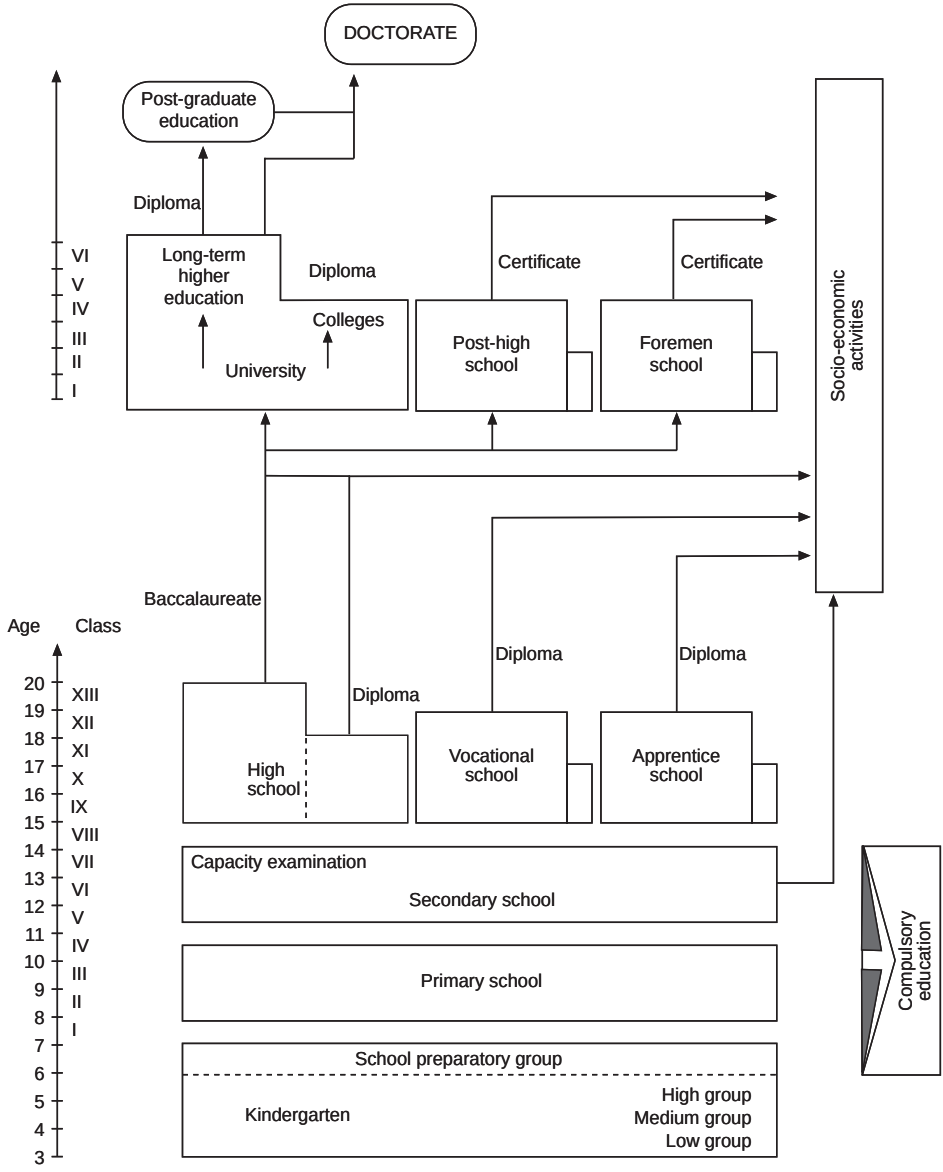
Figure 1. **National education system in Romania**




*Source:* Institute for Educational Sciences.



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Post-compulsory education consists of three main alternatives. The "academic" option consists of the four- or five-year *lycée* (*liceu*) programmes. Presently, the vocational school (*ºcoalã profesionalã*) option can include two-, three- or four-year programmes. Finally, the apprenticeship schools (*ºcoalã de ucenici*) include one-, two- and three-year programmes. Each form of secondary education has access to one or more levels of continuing education at the tertiary level. The new law on education will introduce a three- or four-year high school beginning in 2003/2004. Also, training alternatives within each form of school will be broader than has been the case before.

Tertiary education in Romania consists of three main alternatives: higher education (including long-cycle universities – *învãþãmânt superior* – and short-cycle colleges – *colegii*), post-secondary education (*învãþãmânt postliceal*) and on-the-job training. In terms of prestige, there is little doubt of the traditional pre-eminence of the universities. The college structure represents a specialised set of alternatives (*e.g.* technological or pedagogical) that are of shorter duration but may be similar in content to some training provided at the university level. The new law includes "post-high school" education (that which does not end in a diploma) as part of MoNE's primary and secondary education responsibilities.

In-service teacher certification is conducted through the local G*rade* D*idactice* programmes under the control of the MoNE and in co-operation with local inspectorates. Pre-service training may take place in colleges or universities with an increase in the average educational attainment of new teachers. One concern expressed in the schools was that new teachers who were graduates of university-based programmes were actually less well prepared pedagogically than those who were graduates of teacher colleges or other specialised programmes at the upper secondary level. While the current legislation retains the monopoly of the universities in pre-service training, MoNE intends to bring about important changes to the rules of the Statute of Teaching Staff and to alter significantly the structure and content of teacher training. In 1998, reforms opened the way for training of pre-school and primary school teachers at university colleges rather than in pedagogical high schools. As a result, 43 new pedagogical university colleges were founded in 1999.

Post-secondary education in apprenticeship institutions or foremen schools provides an opportunity for advanced vocational training for the graduates of the secondary schools. Programmes may be recurrent or specially arranged to meet the needs of specific employers. The latter is closely related to the on-going provision of on-the-job training by employers. Such training may be formal or informal, with the formal being most closely related to the post-secondary schools.

The management of the system is evolving from a highly centralised structure wherein national authorities had responsibility down to the level of instructional implementation. Now, the system, while not describable as decentralised, is



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becoming deconcentrated with greater decision-making responsibility being given to local and institutional authorities. However, the reform does envision a management structure with much greater authority for students and families and a stronger mix of individual responsibility and decision-making.

Teachers' unions play two especially important roles in Romanian education. The first is the obvious one of advocacy for concerns related to the working conditions of teachers. The second is a more social and political mobilisation role. The unions have been part of the general support for the government's reform efforts but have questioned and even opposed specific proposals which they felt unduly burdened teachers or failed to offer real opportunities for effective reform. In attempting to increase social participation in educational management and broadening the consultation process, unions, along with communities and parents, have essential roles to play.

## Demographic context

One of the most dramatic aspects of Romanian education is the rapid decline in the size of the traditional age cohort. Births in 1996 (10.6 live births per thousand) were at only 62.6% of the 1989 level. As a result, the school population fell from

Table 1. **Education participation rates**
Proportion of population in education by age and gender
Percentage

| | 1992/93 | 1994/95 | 1996/97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total population | 60.0 | 61.6 | 64.7 |
| 3-6 years | 53.3 | 55.2 | 65.5 |
| 7-10 years | 93.8 | 99.4 | 96.7 |
| 11-14 years | 86.1 | 84.6 | 94.3 |
| 15-18 years | 67.0 | 68.9 | 61.1 |
| 19-23 years | 15.1 | 14.0 | 24.0 |
| Males | 60.0 | 61.5 | 64.3 |
| 3-6 years | 52.2 | 54.3 | 64.8 |
| 7-10 years | 96.6 | 100.0 | 96.9 |
| 11-14 years | 84.5 | 85.2 | 94.5 |
| 15-18 years | 65.6 | 67.2 | 59.9 |
| 19-23 years | 16.0 | 14.6 | 23.8 |
| Females | 60.0 | 61.7 | 65.2 |
| 3-6 years | 54.4 | 56.2 | 66.2 |
| 7-10 years | 90.9 | 98.7 | 96.4 |
| 11-14 years | 87.7 | 84.1 | 94.2 |
| 15-18 years | 68.6 | 70.8 | 62.3 |
| 19-23 years | 14.3 | 13.4 | 24.3 |

*Source*: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 1997.



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5.6 million in 1985 to 4.7 million in 1995. The school population reached its peak in the period 1980-85 and the aggregate population peaked in 1990 (as a result of the forced natality policies of the Ceausescu regime) and has been declining since. Table 1 indicates the detailed education participation rates for the period between the 1992/93 school year and that of 1996/97. These rates will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent sections dealing with the individual sub-sectors of the educational system. The critical point here is that the reduced cohort size offers a "window" of time in which access and quality issues can be dealt with more easily because of the reduced population pressure on the system. Failure to take advantage of this opportunity will be a serious policy error; the next five to ten years are a unique time period for Romania to reform its policies and practices in education and to prepare the educational system and the larger society, for the challenges of the new century.

In 1995, the total resident population consisted of 22.8 million of whom 20% were under the age of 15 and 12% were over 65. The increasing average age of the population also is indicated by the statistic: in 1995, deaths per thousand inhabitants (12.0) exceeded live births per thousand (10.4).

**Economic context**

While the service sector is developing rapidly, the economy of Romania is still to a large extent based on agricultural and industrial production. Unfortunately, both face critical problems. In agriculture, the effects of collectivisation and state ownership may still be seen throughout the sector. The process of land restitution and distribution at the beginning of the 1990s led to the excessive fragmentation of land ownership. As a result, the majority of Romanian farms cannot profit from the economies of scale. Moreover, the existing production and export potential of Romanian agriculture is not exploited largely due to inefficient food processing industry. Industry, in contrast, suffers from the excessive subsidisation and protection of the Communist period and most companies in this sector fail to make profits, retaining a legacy of inefficiency (especially in overstaffing) and outdated equipment and procedures. Government services continue as a critical source of employment (even at relatively low salaries) but the private sector, while expanding rapidly from 23.6% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1991 to 52.5% in 1996, has had a proportionally smaller effect on employment than on GDP. In contrast, for example, agriculture's share in total employment increased from 28.9% to 37.3% even as its effect on GDP has remained relatively unchanged at about 20% over the same period. The major activities in this sector are cereals, oilseeds and potatoes with orchards and vineyards contributing substantially to farm incomes.

Much of large industry remains state-owned although privatisation efforts continue. A few larger manufacturing concerns operate as co-operatives. Iron and



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steel, engineering and petrochemicals are potential growth areas although the last has been affected by the current depressed market for fuels. Manufacturing has specialised in tractors and other motor vehicles, machine tools and equipment. Textiles and processing of forestry products are also areas of potential importance for employment and income generation. The service industry, including computer technology and tourism, are key growth areas for the future.

A serious labour concern is the effect on unemployment of privatisation or closing of the former state enterprises. These firms have excessive numbers of staff and many lack appropriate qualifications for their present job or for the external labour market. While pensioning of such staff is a short run solution, the long term resolution of this situation must involve a more systematic effort to promote labour-intensive production where feasible and to retrain these employees for employment in their present firms or outside in the labour market. However, this process is made more difficult in that these workers often have developed poor work habits in state employment. This requires changes in their attitudes toward work rather than simply skill upgrading.

The Romanian economy has been characterised by falling employment over the last ten years. Over 1.3 million jobs were lost between 1990-95. As a result, part-time employment (and holding two jobs simultaneously) is increasing. The rate of part-time work was about 14% with the rate higher for men and in rural areas. Other indicators of the harsh changes occurring in the Romanian economy over the last decade are: the share of income received by wage earners has declined; self-employment has grown; the number of non-paid household workers has increased; and paid agricultural employment has fallen. Education can improve the supply quality of workers but, by itself, cannot create the new job demand necessary to assure employment of new graduates. The macroeconomic policy of Romania places a priority on job creation activities but the effects are not yet dramatic.

Private sector contributions to GDP are increasingly substantial although shortages of venture capital, high interest rates and a lack of properly trained managers constrain these activities. It is important to realise that a substantial portion of current private sector activity may be unmeasured in official GDP statistics because the government economic data system was not originally designed for the purposes of tracking independent entrepreneurial activities of the types and with the frequency beginning to occur throughout Romania. In the present decade the importance of the private sector will increase both in contributions to GDP and in the proportion of total employment.

As to infrastructure, the road system is extensive but requires expansion and upgrading and is complemented by a limited rail system. Despite the construction of the largest hydroelectric plant in Europe and several nuclear energy installations, energy availability and costs remain serious problems with Romania currently



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significantly below European standards. For 1996, the most recent year for which detail was available, industry accounted for approximately one-third of GDP, down from almost 40% in 1991.

Two other important changes in the macroeconomy over the transition are a reduction in government's share of GDP use and in capital formation (the latter related to the very high rates of inflation experienced in recent years). With real GDP declining, both government expenditure and private saving and investment are contracting, thus reducing further the ability of the society to prepare for the continuing changes demanded by the social, political and economic transition. With large amounts of residual hidden unemployment (especially in state firms), a very high rate of inflation that discourages saving and continuing inefficiency in management, the Romanian economy has not yet recovered to the point where it can lead societal reform. Aided by its external partners, government is attempting to institute economic re-stimulation simultaneously with social enhancement – an incredibly challenging task. Education is the single social institution most relevant to these efforts. While education is dependent on the economy for its financial support, the economy must depend on the education system to produce the graduates whose attitudes and abilities will allow labour productivity and managerial competence to be substantially increased. This linkage of the economic and education sectors is clearly appreciated by the Romanian authorities and has informed the structure of the current education reform.

**Policies and priorities**

The major policies and priorities of the Romanian educational system have evolved over the last ten years in an attempt to meet the new and challenging demands of an emerging democracy and a transitional economy. According to the National Constitution, state education is to be free for all the educational levels and access to education is guaranteed to all regardless of ethnic or social category, gender, or religious beliefs. Although the law of education (1995) stipulated that the budget for education should equal at least 4% of GDP (a policy affirmed in the new law on education), from 1990 to 1995 the allocation amounted to only 2.5 to 3.5% and has continued to fall short of the goal established in the education law. This shortfall is partly offset by the extensive donor involvement in the education sector through loans and grants. In fact, if one calculates the present value of the future obligations assumed by the state for repayment of education loans, even at current concessionary rates, the state is doing better but the sector support still falls below the 4% goal.

A major policy success for Romanian education has been the compulsory education requirement. The policy has resulted in over 90% of cohorts beginning education on time and a high retention rate through the end of the compulsory cycle.



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However, the condition of children from the Roma population is in sharp contrast to the otherwise positive situation. Roma are much less likely to attend at all and, if they start school, are much less likely to complete the compulsory cycle. Data on Roma children are quite poor, but observation and discussions with local officials suggest the need for a targeted programme (including data collection and policy formulation) for this group.

The assurance of free education includes the absence of tuition charges at state institutions, free textbooks for the compulsory cycle, free textbooks in vocational and *lycée* education for economically disadvantaged pupils (those from families with incomes below the national minimum wage) and free medical and psychological assistance to pupils at all levels from pre-school to secondary education. The state budget finances the wages of teaching staff at all levels of education. The state budget co-operates with local authorities in the financing of boarding schools, homes and canteens and for out-of-school activities in science, sports, arts and other creative areas. Local authorities have had the primary responsibility for maintenance and repair of facilities but are free to help educational institutions in whatever ways they can. Under changes incorporated in the new law, MoNE now manages the funds for salaries and textbooks while local authorities are responsible for materials, repairs, training, and new investments.

Other state policies assure transport services and lodging for pupils studying outside their locality; this includes rail transport for day pupils. Libraries, clubs and camps, merit scholarships and need-based scholarships also are responsibilities assumed in part under the state budget. Handicapped pupils, orphans and those with special needs also are under the responsibility of the state. These responsibilities include special schools and support to such pupils and students within the regular educational institutions.

Two other priorities of the Romanian educational system are the observance of the rights to cultural and linguistic expression and the organisation of educational activities in economically depressed areas. The first priority finds expression in the right of minorities (including special education groups) to be taught in their own language (an area in which Romania is a world leader), the incorporation of the history and traditions of each minority into the curriculum and instructional materials, provision of free textbooks for compulsory education in the mother tongue of every minority, regardless of its size (a policy which raises some cost-effectiveness questions) and the training of teaching staff in the languages of the national minorities. This sensitivity toward minorities is not as obvious in regard to the Roma minority, however. A dramatic gap in attendance and achievement rates would appear to exist between Roma and other children and yet neither systematic documentation nor remedial programmes have existed to correct this situation. To help offset this, special places are now allocated for the romani population, special inspectors exist to monitor romani education, and more romani language opportunities offered



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(often in conjunction with non-governmental organisations). The second priority, on economically depressed areas, has resulted in creation of "small school" programmes in isolated areas and the awarding of supplemental benefits and wages to teachers who work in such locations. Also, special programmes for school drop-outs are being established in co-ordination with the Phare-VET Programme. These are positive steps and should be extended when and where possible.

**Finance**

The 1996 budget (in thousands of Lei per child, pupil, or student) was as follows:

- Pre-school 476.2 Lei.
- Compulsory 528.1 Lei.
- *Lycée* 969.5 Lei.
- Vocational 401.0 Lei.
- Handicapped 5 227.8 Lei.
- Orphans 5 029.0 Lei.
- Post-secondary 212.9 Lei.
- Higher education 2 119.4 Lei.

The 4:1 ratio of higher education support to compulsory education support is relatively low and is reflective of the government's strong support for the more universally attended levels of education. Vocational unit costs are artificially low because of the lack of adequate equipment and current technology; as a result the quality of many of the programmes is concomitantly low. Handicapped and orphan programmes are relatively expensive because of the inclusion of housing and food costs in addition to special educational personnel. The distribution of the state budget for education was allocated by function with 71% for personnel, 23% for material expenses, 2% for scholarship expenses and 4% for miscellaneous charges.

The financing of education in Romania incorporates a clear division of responsibility between state and local authorities. The state, operating through MoNE offices at the *judet* (county) level, is responsible for all personnel expenses. Local authorities are responsible for building and equipment maintenance, other current and capital repairs, subsidies for school boarding and, beginning in 1999, for new capital investments. Local authorities and individual schools have the right to generate extra-budgetary resources to supplement these budget allocations.

The important conclusion to be drawn from this brief introductory discussion of finance and the larger discussion of the structure of the Romanian system, is that the difficulties that exist are not due to any failure of Romanian educational professionals to recognise the nature and cause of the major problems. The economic context is extremely difficult, the social and political transition remains incomplete



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and the attitudes and values of many individuals are not yet suited to the demands of a more individualised and self-reliant social structure. And yet, as the content of the proposed educational reform indicates, the nation is prepared to engage in a challenging and even heroic attempt to improve its educational system and, through that improvement, to transform the rest of society.



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*Chapter 2*

# Pre-school Education

## Structure and enrolments

Pre-school education is designed for 3- to 7-year-old children. It is intended to provide both day care and nursery experiences at the early ages and an increasing emphasis on preparation for formal schooling at the higher ages. This level of education is provided in both public and private institutions although the large majority of institutions at the present time are under public management. Private pre-school institutions are located predominantly in urban areas.

The public pre-schools are organised by the individual *judet* inspectorates. The language of instruction is commonly the national Romanian language but instruction also takes place in the languages of the national minorities. With the approval of the *judet* authorities, local organisations (including companies and even individuals) can create and finance such institutions. As with all other levels of education, Romanian law requires that the operation of private institutions be on a non-profit basis. The supervision of the private pre-schools by the local inspectorates is intended to assure that appropriate quality standards are met.

As in other former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, access to pre-school education has been traditionally rather high, by international standards, because of the political and economic priorities of the socialist states (especially those emphasising employment of women). Because of the relatively high participation of women within the labour force, pre-school facilities were a necessity. In 1993, the share of women in the Romanian labour force was still about 50%, as against only 25% in European OECD countries. However, if rates of female participation in the labour force decline, there may be a concomitant decline in demand for the "day care" component of pre-school education.

For 1995/96 the total enrolment in pre-school education was 697 888 in 12 722 institutions. The education participation rate of 3- to 6-year-olds has increased from 53.3% in 1992/93 to 55.2% in 1994/95 and further to 65.5% in 1996/97. Females have maintained a slight advantage in education participation among 3- to 6-year-olds over time. For 1996/97, the female participation rate for this age group was 66.2% and the male rate 64.8. While impressive both in its progress over time



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and in terms of its gender equity, these participation rates do suggest that fully one-third of all Romanian children still do not participate in a full pre-school experience and some receive no pre-school training at all. For example, the participation rate of 7- to 10-year-olds in 1996/97 is 96.7% or over 30 percentage points higher than the age 3 to 6 rate. The difference represents children who enter primary school without the pre-school experiences enjoyed by their peers. The new law on education's provisions to expand compulsory education to earlier levels will help counteract this.

A critical concept of educational equity is that of offsetting a "convergence of disadvantage". It should be understood that the population of children presently excluded from pre-school education will not have this characteristic as their sole disadvantage in learning. Such pupils are more likely to be economically disadvantaged, have less educated parents, be in a linguistic minority and live in localities with fewer supplementary education opportunities (museums, libraries, etc.). In fact, one major justification for pre-school education in most countries is to attempt to use the pre-school experience to offset these other disadvantages and to provide all pupils with a more equal starting point in the formal system; understanding this point, Romanian authorities are working to expand pre-school opportunities to the full age cohort of potential participants.

Because of this situation, the last year of pre-school education in Romania will become compulsory. The education act of 1995 (Article 19), affirmed by the new law on education, proposes the gradual establishment of compulsory pre-school education to cover two preparatory years (ages 5 and 6) and one formal pre-primary year with enrolment costs to be the responsibility of the MoNE. While the intent is praiseworthy, the financial realities are such that this reform will not be implemented rapidly and pre-school attendance will continue to be a source of significant social inequity within the Romanian system as it is in many other countries.

### Curriculum and instructional materials

The main curricular objectives of pre-school education are the socialisation of children and their mental, emotional, cognitive and intellectual development. Specifically, the curriculum is designed to help children to:

- Learn and use the language (including Romanian, maternal and foreign languages such as German, French and English in selected institutions) correctly.
- Acquire the ability to work with numbers and geometry.
- Acquire knowledge regarding the natural and social environment.
- Develop abilities in sports and the arts.
- Develop creativity.
- Encourage autonomy.



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The normal programme for a pre-school is four to five hours of classes in the morning. Long programmes (eight to nine hours) and weekly programmes (five days per week) exist with the provision that only 50% of the costs of meals and maintenance is paid for by the state.

The structure of the school year parallels that of compulsory education; in fact, many public pre-schools are managerially subordinate to general compulsory schools of years 1 to 4 or 1 to 8. There are two semesters and a summer holiday; winter and spring holidays are also organised to coincide with Christmas and Easter, respectively.

Classes in nursery schools are mixed by gender and organised primarily by age (the exception to this is in localities where low population or attendance requires multi-age classes). Average class size is 15 (within a range of 10 to 20). This is intended to encourage individual attention and to promote the ability of teachers to focus on pupil needs. Official textbooks do not exist for this level of education and local authorities and individual schools have greater freedom in the selection of instructional materials than is the case for compulsory education.

### Teachers

The instructors in nursery pre-schools are *educatori* (educators); they complete a minimum of five years of study in an upper secondary teacher training school following completion of general compulsory education. Pre-schools also employ *institutori*; these are teachers trained in a teacher training college in a two-year course (for graduates of an upper secondary teacher training school) or a three-year course (for graduates of another type of upper secondary school). Over time, it is planned that a greater number of *educatori* will receive their training in colleges.

In 1995/96, for 697 688 pupils, distributed among 12 722 nursery schools, there were 38 915 teachers; this gives a pupil/teacher ratio of 17.9. From the data of 1997/98, there are 39 200 teachers (14% of the total number of teachers in pre-university education) for 659 200 pupils, *i.e.* a pupil/teacher ratio of 16.8. Other estimations give a pupil/teacher ratio of 19 on the average, with 16 in urban areas, 24 in rural areas (Crighton, 1998). In any case, the ratios in Romania are very close to the average pupil/teacher ratio in OECD countries of 17.6 (OECD, 1998). One should notice that this ratio for pre-school is much higher in some OECD countries like Korea (24.9), France (24.6), Germany (23.7) or the United States (21.9), but also much lower as in Hungary (11.7), Finland and the Czech Republic (11.9), Denmark (13.1) or Italy (13.9). The Romanian pupil/teacher ratio is about the same as in Austria (18.9), Japan (17.8), the United Kingdom (19.1), Switzerland (18.3) or Spain (19.4).

It is difficult to compare the educational realities represented by these figures among countries, because the effect of the ratio depends partly on the manner of defining what is a teacher according to each country. That is why OECD calls the



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denominator "teaching staff". A specific problem concerns the counting of part-time teachers (hired for teaching a foreign language or sports, for example). The proportion of part-time teachers may vary considerably among countries and this is partly related to the national curriculum and the local teaching practices. However, one can conclude that the situation in Romania is rather good concerning the ratio of pupils to teachers, which is an important positive factor in the perspective of increasing the enrolment in early education.

There apparently is a rather large variation among schools concerning the training of the teachers and the quality of implementing the curriculum. In particular, the implementation of a new curriculum in the compulsory education must be taken into account in the nursery schools, which means that the teachers at this stage must not be forgotten in the in-service training. It will be easier, of course, to modernise the curriculum in the initial training classes for new teachers. Teachers in pre-school institutions have a right to in-service teacher training that is guaranteed by the MoNE. Such training is provided by the upper secondary teacher training schools and by teacher training colleges. Training for pre-school teachers consists of methodology, general pedagogy and scientific and subject-specific activities.

### Assessment and evaluation

Currently, no official assessment system exists for the pre-school level of education, although assessment models from such educational alternatives as the "Step by Step" Programme are being used more widely in the schools. Physical and mental development is monitored at the school and classroom level with individual teachers having the main responsibility for the identification of intellectual, social, or psychological difficulties. Similarly, the individual teacher is responsible for design of any remedial programmes for pupils. This is a significant responsibility for teachers with this level of professional preparation.

Pupils are not required to repeat a "grade" regardless of their performance. While all pupils are automatically promoted, teachers may refer children with significant learning problems to the psycho-medical commissions which, in turn, may refer the pupils for special forms of education.

### Management and finance

As for compulsory education, responsibility for the management of pre-school education is shared between the state (through the MoNE) and the local authorities. Although the main objectives of the national curriculum are defined nationally, individual schools and teachers are free to implement it as they see fit, subject to the control of *judet* inspectors. The statute of teachers is national. The *judet* inspec-



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torate appoints every teacher, generally on a permanent contract basis, but in some cases for part-time work.

The *judet* inspectorate recommends the local school network to MoNE and with its approval can create or close schools. MoNE distributes the national budget among the 41 inspectorates, which distribute their budget among the schools. Since the education act of 1995, the local authorities use their government endowments, their own budget resources and some possible extra resources to meet expenditure related to the maintenance of schools.

Pre-school education represents about 9% of the total education budget. It is difficult to compare this share of budget among countries, because of the different ways of allocating the general administrative costs to the different levels of education and of the different structures of the schooling-systems. For example, in most OECD countries the compulsory pre-school class for the six- to seven-year-olds would be included in primary education. Obviously, as for every other level of schooling, there is a shortage of resources for financing the needs of pre-schooling. The situation is very much the same as for primary education: poor physical condition of some buildings which need urgent rehabilitation, insufficient heating in the winter, lack of transportation for children in rural areas and a lack of educational equipment, books, documentation, computers and software. The emergence of new private nursery schools, well equipped, with expensive tuition and fees, promoting innovative pedagogy, has been promoted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foundations. Other private pre-school units exist, but access to them is limited primarily to urban advantaged families because of the school's locations and costs. The issue of the school management will be analysed later with the primary schools, since most of the public nursery schools are part of such primary schools.

A disturbing finding in terms of school funding was that a parent's ability to assist a school financially (through "gifts" of computers or other items) increased the ability of a child to gain access to certain public pre-schools which had greater demand for pupil places than their capacity could handle. While government policy does not allow exclusion of pupils on economic grounds, this situation is a natural result of an imbalance of demand and supply (especially in schools where teaching is done in a foreign language). Both the parent's motivation to help their child and the school director's motivation to supplement inadequate resource allocations to provide better learning conditions for pupils are easily understandable. However, further compounding the inequity in access to pre-school experiences can hardly be an acceptable operating procedure, especially in the public sector. Whether these conditions are exceptions or more common behaviour, the MoNE needs to examine how it can assure that admission decisions are separated from appropriate attempts by schools to mobilise supplementary resources.



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## Recommendations

As in the industrial sector, effectiveness and quality in education require paying special attention to what happens at the origin of a production process. It is less expensive to prevent than to repair. As education is itself a long cumulative process, early education should be given specific attention. The school destiny of a pupil is largely determined by the first two years of schooling, for cognitive and non-cognitive reasons. The pre-school education is particularly important for developing motivation to learn and a positive attitude towards schooling and citizenship. Romania can benefit from a tradition of early schooling and from the demographic context which limits the necessary investment in new pre-school education facilities and teachers. The current pupil/teacher ratio allows for more enrolments without recruiting a huge number of new teachers.

However, the general economic and budgetary context of Romania implies the need to establish some priorities. The provision of the education act of 1995 concerning an expanded compulsory education, starting with the five- to six-year-olds, should be implemented, as soon as possible, by giving a priority of access at the age 5 to children from disadvantaged families and to all those from disadvantaged areas. The same type of affirmative action to improve enrolments should be applied later on to the children at the age of 4 or even 3. Such action is necessary for equity in pre-school education, which is obvious, but also for efficiency and effectiveness purposes throughout the later educational system.

Because, as was noted above, it is less expensive to prevent than to repair and because school failure and drop-outs are a huge cost for the economy of Romania, pre-school education should have the highest priority for state action in Romania. An investment in early education will allow for a larger proportion of disadvantaged children to leave school with a qualification. This will mean there will be less unemployment, less negative social conditions and a labour force better adapted to the new needs of the employers.

Currently, there is less and less confidence in the qualifications given by the school to assure that one will find a job later. In the present context of transition, this is particularly true in countries like Romania, where the emergence of new business sometimes provides the opportunity to many people without qualifications to make substantial sums, while the intellectual professions, among them teachers, must attempt to survive with very low salaries. In such an environment, some families, but especially those among the most disadvantaged groups, are losing their faith in the utility of education and of school degrees. This is an important issue, as the attitude of families (especially the attitude of the mother) towards education is one of the most important factors explaining school participation and achievement. The only way of overcoming such a difficulty is to start as early as possible trying to



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involve the families and the children into education. At the age of 6 or 7, it is often already too late.

The success of such a strategy depends, of course, on the quality of education and of teachers. The new spirit contained in the reform curriculum for compulsory education requires that schools must dramatically upgrade the pre-school teaching practices. An important effort of in-service training of existing pre-school teachers is therefore necessary. It is as crucial a concern as the training of new primary teachers.

In many countries (even in France where pre-school is not a kindergarten, but a real school with teachers having the same qualifications as their colleagues teaching in primary schools and a nationally defined curriculum), the transition between pre-school and compulsory school is a difficult issue. In Romania, the compulsory last year of pre-school should be the opportunity for the teachers of this grade to work with their colleagues teaching in the first year of primary and organise together activities according to the spirit of the new curriculum. The teachers of the first primary year should express their expectations and also conceive their own teaching by respecting a certain continuity with the pedagogic practices of the last year of pre-school.



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*Chapter 3*

# Compulsory Education

## Structure and enrolments

Compulsory education as defined by Article 6 of the education law of 1995 includes a period of eight years after the end of pre-school education. The new law on education expands this coverage to nine years, four of primary education and five of lower secondary education (*gimnaziu*). All Romanian pupils are obligated for this period of schooling with the educational attainment to include completion of lower secondary schooling. Pupils normally will begin primary education at age 7 but may be admitted at age 6 if they are "at an appropriate stage of mental and physical development" and have completed the final pre-school year. Pupils may leave school at age 16 even if the "compulsory" requirement remains unsatisfied.

In 1995/96 there were 1 375 510 pupils in primary education attending school in 13 817 institutions. The average enrolment figure of 99.6 pupils per school apparently indicates that, outside the metropolitan areas, the system has many "small schools" which pose both financial and pedagogical challenges to the system. However, this apparent problem of "economy of scale" (the cost effects of size) is offset in all but the most isolated areas by the fact that many primary schools are part of longer cycle institutions, either 1 to 8 or 1 to 12-year institutions. Classes average approximately 20 pupils per class within a range of 10 minimum and 30 maximum. In less populated areas teachers may, with the permission of MoNE, teach more than one class simultaneously. Class hours per week increase from 20 in year 1 to 24 in year 4 and commonly take place in the morning except in some multi-session schools.

The participation rates for 7 to 10-year-olds, the normal age cohort for primary education, increased from 93.8% in 1992/93 to 99.4% in 1994/95 and then slipped to 96.7% in 1996/97. Male participation rates exceeded those for females in this age group (96.6% to 90.9% in 1992/93 and 100.0% to 98.7% in 1994/95) but by 1996/97 the participation rates were almost identical (96.9% to 96.4%). Thus, primary education is nearly universal in its availability within the nation and gender equitable in gross access. One determinant of this success in achieving broad participation is the policy of providing child allowances through schools for the school age children.



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In lower secondary education, there were 1 130 073 pupils in 1995/96 attending 7 655 institutions. The average institution size of 147.6 is reflective of the greater concentration of lower secondary education in more urban areas and the attempt to centralise the location of *gimnaziu* to assure appropriate teachers and facilities will be available. Lower secondary education takes place in both 1 to 8 year and 1 to 12 (or 13) year institutions. Some lower secondary schools offer evening and extra-mural courses for "over-age" students (defined as two or more years above the normal age for a class).

Participation rates among the approximate lower secondary age cohort (11- to 14-year-olds) has increased substantially after a decline from 86.1% in 1992/93 to 84.6% in 1994/95. The rate of 94.3% in 1996/97 represents almost a 10% increase (and 8.2 percentage points) over the 1992/93 level. Gender parity at this level of education has been fairly consistent. Female rates exceeded those of males by 87.7% to 84.5% in 1994/95; this was reversed in 1995/96 as males exceeded females in participation rates 85.2% to 84.1%. In the most recent detailed data from 1996/97, female and male rates are closely proximate (94.2% to 94.5% respectively). Crighton (1998) found that about 17% of a cohort entering grade I will leave school prior to completing grade VIII. Of the 2 to 3% of children who do not enter school at all, a high proportion come from the Roma population. As was discussed above, the declining birth rate means that the aggregate size of the traditional age cohort for compulsory education has been declining. The next decade will be a period of opportunity for quality enhancement, equity improvement (especially for Roma and other disadvantaged groups) and cost containment that should be carefully exploited by planners at the central, local and school levels.

Two important rural disparities exist in Romania, as they do in most countries. The most obvious, of course, is the difference in resource availability and student achievement between the urban centres and the more rural areas. This can be offset, at least in part, by targeting additional funds on the rural schools. Unfortunately, deconcentration and decentralisation policies can constrain such efforts. The central MoNE must assume more explicit responsibility for the equalisation of resources among schools among the individual *judets*. However, among rural locations a second disparity exists in that some rural areas are much more prosperous than others. Therefore, evidence of need, not simply rural location, should be the criterion that generates supplementary resource allocations. The *judets* need to exercise similar discretion in assuring that appropriate assistance is given to disadvantaged rural areas within their responsibility. In 1998, MoNE launched a programme to improve rural education. The programme is presently underway and includes statistical assessment of the needs and capacities of rural communities. A joint Romania/World Bank project of $400 million will be instituted based on these findings.



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## Curriculum and instructional materials

This section is divided into three parts: 1) a description of the process of general curricular reform, 2) the specific content issues for compulsory education, and 3) the development of instructional materials and textbooks for primary and lower secondary education. The description of the process incorporates issues that underlie curricular and materials issues at other levels of the system and these will be referred to again in the appropriate chapters. More detail on the curricular reform may be found in the MoNE document *Curriculum National* (*Planuri-Cadru da Invatamant, Pentru Invatamantul Preuniversitat*), published in 1999.

### *The curricular reform*

Under the reform project, teams of subject matter and pedagogical experts and teachers developed the first revised curricula; based on these curricula, alternative textbooks were produced under an innovative competitive bidding system subsidised by the project. Teams of specialists also developed an assessment and examination system to parallel the new curricula. The curriculum development activity itself was co-ordinated by the National Curriculum Board (NCB – *Consiliul Naþional pentru Curriculum*). A primary education working group and subject-specific working groups (*Grupuri de lucru*) were established by the NCB. Two inter-subject commissions (one for humanities, *Comisia de coordonare pentru discipline umaniste, socio-umane, ºi artistice* and one for the sciences, *Comisia de coordonare pentru discipline ºtiinþifice ºi matematicã*) were also created. The new law on education formally establishes a National Council for the Curriculum as the co-ordinating body for development and dissemination of the new curriculum in Romania. The National Subject Commissions also have been reconstituted so as to avoid, or at least to minimise, potential conflicts between them.

The objective of the curriculum reform started in 1991 was to develop, validate and implement a curriculum adapted to the new Romanian society and to the needs of an open economy within the context of globalisation. By 1997, this objective was only partially achieved, due to the combination of many factors, including:

- An initial lack of political will to adopt a curriculum framework.
- The tendency to design a subject-centred curriculum: the syllabus of each subject sometimes developed in isolation from the others, instead of as part of a unitary and coherent curriculum (both on a synchronic and diachronic basis), with a systemic view of the educational track and an integrated approach to all subjects.
- A conceptual gap from a pedagogical point of view between the curricular documents for the primary and lower secondary education.
- A lack of co-ordination in the development of the curriculum at different levels.



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– A lack of experience and specific training of the persons involved in the process.

– A conflict, both managerial and conceptual, between those involved in designing the curricula for the different subjects and the members of the national commissions for each subject who had to approve these curricula, with the result that the process was characterised by compromise and incremental reform.

Between 1992 and 1997 an "interim" curriculum was developed that did not involve fundamental change but was linked to the initial textbook reform. Much of the early curriculum work became effective only after 1997 when the conflicts were addressed. In 1997, the NCB proposed the establishment of a new coherent and flexible methodology for planning, developing, implementing, evaluating and reviewing the new curriculum. At the same time, a training scheme was proposed for developing the professional skills and attitudes of the experts involved in the process of curriculum development. In the short term, the priorities were design of a broadly coherent national curriculum integrating the different subjects, the definition of a suitable balance between a national core curriculum and a school-based curriculum (allowing for the first time for an "independent" pedagogical policy of each school, according to the specific needs of its pupils and of the regional/local economic and social environment), the specification of a suitable balance between compulsory (70%) and elective (30%) courses, the development of national standards of content and of pupil performance, the adoption of an implementation strategy (based initially on a pilot basis and eventually at the level of the whole education system) and a more intensive training of the teachers involved in the process.

In a longer-term perspective, the objective of the curriculum reform is the elaboration, validation and implementation of a new pre-university curriculum from grades I to XII during the period 1999/2001 and the replacement of traditional syllabi (almost exclusively based on accumulation of information) by new syllabi allowing for more active learning and focusing more on the complexity of knowledge, on methodological skills and intellectual capacities and on attitudes and values. In 1998/1999, the new educational framework for forms I to V was implemented with revised syllabi introduced. In addition, the syllabi for forms VI to XII were revised and alternative textbooks introduced in forms IV and VI. In 1999/2000 the framework is being applied to forms I to X, with new textbooks and syllabi developed at several levels. Also, the Phare-VET curriculum is being generalised for the vocational schools. In order to attain the objectives of the reform, two sets of documents have had to be elaborated: conceptual and practical. The conceptual documents included: 1) a document concerning the educational policy in the field of curriculum (one for compulsory education, another one for upper secondary level); 2) a document describing



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the new curriculum framework in order to clarify the national debate about possible alternatives; 3) a guide for curriculum developers (coherent reference for all the working groups); and 4) general guidelines of the national curriculum: main principles and goals, objectives of the main stages of the education process and of the subjects. Documents 1 (for compulsory education) and 3 were the first to be completed; then Document 4 for compulsory education. In 1998, the framework for compulsory education was designed and approved for the first five grades and the new curriculum was supposed to begin implementation during the 1998/99 academic year. The practical documents were written for the different levels of the pre-university education to facilitate the actual implementation of the new curriculum within the schools.

During the 1998/99 academic school, there were two types of curricula being taught in compulsory and upper secondary education. From grades I to VI the new curriculum with alternative textbooks was operational but from grades VII to XII/XIII the curriculum designed during the period 1993/95 was still in effect.

The national curriculum framework (P*lan de Învăţământ*) for grades I to VIII, which was recently completed, is innovative in many ways. First, it groups subjects into curriculum areas: like "language and communication", "man and society", "mathematics and sciences", "guidance and counselling", etc. Second, it is based on the 70% core, 30% electives model, setting only a minimum and maximum timetable for each subject. Third, it offers an integrated conception of the curriculum rather than the traditional subject-by-subject approach. And fourth, it encourages cross-curricular and interdisciplinary activities and approaches. For all of these reasons, the new curriculum appears to be a positive step for Romanian education and deserves support from the nation and its international partners.

### *Curriculum content*

Primary education is designed to offer a common general education to all Romanian children. Instruction may take place in either Romanian or one of the national minority languages. The goals of the primary curriculum are to provide:

- Scientific knowledge about the world and human beings, the environment and environmental protection.
- Knowledge of the national language and, beginning in the second year, of foreign languages.
- Knowledge of mathematics.
- Knowledge of history and civics.
- Artistic education (emphasising painting and music) and development of an aesthetic sense.
- Sports and physical education.



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– Health education.

– Behaviour.

More specifically, the primary education curriculum attempts to:

– Instruct children in the national language as a means of communication (including reading, writing, speaking and listening).

– Teach pupils to count and practice the basic mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and to participate in oral and written calculation.

– Promote knowledge, respect and interest for the environment.

– Encourage the acquisition of basic scientific knowledge.

– Develop in pupils an awareness of moral and civic values.

– Promote a love of country and a respect for the historical past of the Romanian people.

– Help pupils develop their own personality harmoniously.

– Encourage pupils to acquire sporting abilities and receive health education.

– Allow all pupils to develop civilised behaviour and the moral qualities of honesty, truthfulness, respect for parents, people and work.

The curriculum is operationalised in the education plan covering five major fields of study (humanities, art, science, physical education and religious education). Half of the instructional time per week is allocated to humanities (including Romanian language, foreign languages, Romanian history and civics). Science education accounts for another one-quarter of the curriculum; the remainder is art and physical education with religious education taking only one hour per week. There is a focus on an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to the curriculum.

The curriculum for lower secondary education covers six major fields of study:

– Humanities and social education.

– Basic science education.

– Artistic education.

– Technological education.

– Physical education.

– Open discussion.

These new curriculum areas will be developed according to the framework of the national curriculum plan.

Humanities and social education account for 30 to 40% of total instructional time per week, increasing from 10 of 25 hours in year 5 to 13 of 32 hours in year 8. Within this category of the curriculum, almost half of the time is dedicated to the



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study of the Romanian language and literature. Basic science instruction increases from 8 of 25 hours to 12 of 31 hours over the lower secondary cycle. Within the science category, the most important topic is mathematics. Instruction in biology, geography, physics and chemistry also is stressed at this level. These other four content areas of the curriculum vary from one to two hours per week at the lower secondary level.

The relevance of the curriculum is being increased through the recent reforms and it is hoped that this will be reinforced at a sub-national level by allowing local authorities to contribute specific local and regional content to the new curriculum. Of course, this will depend on the resources (human and financial) available at the local level to realise these goals (disadvantaged regions and localities may need special assistance from MoNE to fulfil their role under this plan). The ability of Romania to sustain the current textbook structure is not certain and is especially a matter of concern given the continuing need to update texts and other classroom instructional materials to match the emerging curriculum and the changing social environment. However, the experience with the externally assisted textbook programme should provide a reservoir of talent and experience to help meet this challenge. The unresolved issue is where financing will come from to pay for the development and dissemination to schools of these new materials.

### I*nstructional materials*

The implementation of a new curriculum would be impossible without new textbooks and other supportive instructional materials. Under the previous political regime, the state textbook publishing house – E*ditura* D*idacticã º*i P*edagogicã* (EDP) – was the sole authorised provider of textbooks: it was a state monopoly. Shortages were not uncommon in that period but the situation worsened after 1989, partly because of ineffective distribution procedures during the transition. Because of the shortage, many classes consisted of the teacher reading the content of the book, with pupils listening and writing and with little opportunity for active learning. There were hardly any other supplementary materials and no real documentation centres within the schools. However, there was also a qualitative problem with the previous materials. The quality of books, both in terms of content and of physical condition, was poor and there was only one official textbook for each subject at each level.

Under the World Bank/Romanian government project, a real effort was made to end the EDP monopoly and to stimulate the emergence of a private publishing sector. The project component (US$ 39.3 million) is financing reform of 250 titles, or about half of the textbooks in the schools. Publishers engage in competitions to provide up to three titles per subject per grade. These competitions (tenders) are supervised by a Textbook Approval Board with panels of experts by subjects which



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assess the proposals in relation to specified criteria. Publishers who are selected may apply for training in publishing management and were initially eligible for development grants of up to US$ 10 000 by textbook, in order to finance the initial cost of a sufficient number of textbooks. As a consequence, Romania developed a functional private textbook publishing industry. These books are presented in exhibitions organised by the local inspectorates and teachers can make a choice among the three possible textbooks and order the book from the publisher through the *judet* inspectorate. Publishers are responsible for aggregating orders and submitting them to MoNE, which contracts with the publishers for the agreed quantity of books. EDP is no longer fully state-subsidised and is required to compete with other publishers in this process.

Within this new context, about 120 textbooks have been published by 19 publishers. The three leading publishers published more than 15 textbooks each. The most recent books have been designed according to the new curriculum, but some of the older books may appear obsolete, even though the curriculum developers argue that the existing books can still be used. However, the teachers do not agree. There also are issues concerning the development (including finance) of the required material for teaching the 30% local optional curriculum and the obligation of schools to use multi-year textbook series or to remain with a textbook for the three-year textbook "life" intended by the publishers and MoNE. Although there was a lack of synchronisation between textbook publishing and curriculum development in the past, an excellent beginning has been made in both curricular development and the production of appropriate instructional materials. The next five years will be a crucial period to determine if this progress can be sustained and perhaps even extended.

### Teachers

Whatever the curriculum and materials available for the classroom, the individual teacher is still the prime determinant of the instructional opportunities made available for the pupils. Teachers in primary schools (*învãþãtori*) are trained in upper secondary teacher training colleges or colleges. In college programmes the training lasts for two years for graduates of upper secondary teacher training schools and for three years for those from other upper secondary schools. In primary education, a single teacher will manage the learning process for a class of pupils. However, as in the pre-school programme, specialist teachers (*profesori*) will be responsible for such subjects as religion, foreign languages, physical education and music. In smaller and more isolated communities, multi-class teaching may occur and the availability of specialist teachers may be more limited.

The total number of primary school teachers in 1995/96 was 65 590 (61 850 of whom were *învãþãtori* classroom teachers and the rest specialist teachers); this aver-



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aged 4.7 teachers per school and resulted in an average pupil-teacher ratio of 21:1 (or 22.2:1 if only classroom teachers are counted). Such a pupil/teacher ratio in primary education is just above the average of OECD countries. But these OECD ratios vary from 31.2 in Korea to 11.2 in Denmark or Italy. The Romanian ratio is about the same as it is in Germany (20.9), the United Kingdom (21.3) or Japan (19.7). Because these class sizes are small compared to many other countries and, combined with the declining size of the school age cohort, the current situation does offer opportunities for improved instruction as well as for potential budget containment during the current economic difficulties.

In lower secondary education the teachers (*profesori*) have a diploma and will have completed a specialised long-course form of higher education (the length of training depends in part on the teacher's subject area responsibility). All lower secondary education subjects are taught by specialist teachers. Technological subjects are taught by engineers and, in rural areas, agricultural subjects are taught by biology teachers. The open discussion sessions component of the curriculum is supervised by a teacher who also has responsibility for management of the educational activities of the class and relationships with pupils' families.

In 1995/96 there were 98 776 upper secondary teachers, of whom 3 931 were instructors. There were 7 655 upper secondary institutions with an average of 12.9 teachers per school (indicating the relatively greater size of upper secondary institutions compared to the primary institutions – 4.7 teachers per school as discussed above). The average pupil-teacher ratio was 11.4:1 for upper secondary education and 15.2:1 for the full compulsory cycle (years 1 to 8). This is much lower than the average ratio among OECD countries, which is 14.8. This ratio reaches 25.5 in Korea and 20 in Canada, but is only 9.2 in Austria and 9.5 in Hungary. However, under-qualification of many teachers is also an issue at *gimnaziu* level, mainly in the context of implementing the new curriculum. A priority exists within the teachers' centres to prepare all teachers presently in the classroom with the knowledge necessary to introduce the new curriculum to their pupils. A concern of teachers, as was noted above, is that even some of the new textbooks do not appear to fit the new curriculum. The issue is further confused since older textbooks are still reprinted and may appear "new" to some teachers unfamiliar with them. The problem also may lie in the teachers' unfamiliarity with the conceptual framework for the reform (incorporating new roles for teachers, curriculum documents and instructional materials). This problem is being addressed by current teacher training and consultation efforts.

### Assessment and evaluation

In primary education, pupils are assessed continuously by the classroom teacher. Regular school examinations occur, focused on the basic subjects of the



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curriculum. Pupils may be required by a teacher to repeat a class if the classroom teacher feels that the class marks are inadequate. No leaving examination is given at the end of the four-year primary cycle.

In lower secondary education, in addition to continuous assessment by the classroom teachers, an examination (*examen de capacitate*) is given to all pupils at the end of the eighth year. Organised by MoNE methodologists, the examination covers Romanian language and literature, mathematics and Romanian history and geography. A supplementary examination is provided to pupils studying in a national minority language on the language and literature of the minority population. The examination must be completed satisfactorily for pupils to receive their School Leaving Certificate. Only pupils who possess this certificate are allowed to apply for upper secondary education.

The systemic reform of the curriculum which is being implemented does include an assessment dimension, which is related to the issue of defining standards of content and of pupil performance at this level of education. A national agency for evaluation (*Serviciul Naþional de Evaluare ºi Examinare* – SNEE) was established in May 1998. Its creation was a controversial issue for a few years, particularly concerning its relative autonomy from MoNE and from the Institute for Educational Sciences. Another concern was its cost: in order to be effective, the SNEE requires a permanent professional staff of about 20 people and a support staff of 20 to 25. The SNEE recently published a brochure giving a new framework for assessing pupil achievement at primary and secondary levels. It is titled "How to assess? How to score? How to communicate pupils' achievements?" (*Cum evaluãm? Cum notãm? Cum comunicãm rezultatele ºcolare*?). Other brochures propose criteria for assessing pupil achievement at different levels. Hence, one can say that a new "culture of evaluation" is emerging, related to the new process of defining standards of pupil performance. A main issue to be resolved is that of developing formative use of the assessment tools and the required training of teachers for utilising it properly to assist pupils early in the learning process. Teacher training already is underway to deal with this concern.

### Management and finance

Once one of the most centralised systems in Central and Eastern Europe, Romanian education is evolving into a more deconcentrated structure, but with most key policy and planning decisions still retained at the centre. In the past inspectorates and teachers' centres (*Casa Corpului Didactic*) at local levels were implementation arms of the central ministry and finance and decision-making were monopolised by the central government with very little role for local communities. The new education law modifies this but not as dramatically as some reformers may wish. MoNE remains primarily responsible for financing and managing the



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compulsory level of education (and for much of secondary and tertiary education as well – see discussion in later chapters). Flexibility and greater discretion are given to local units and authorities, but ultimate responsibility is retained by MoNE. Given the transitional status of the Romanian society, this compromise may well be the best short-term solution, but MoNE officials will need to assure that a continuing evolution of deconcentration and decentralisation are provided for in appropriate areas. Of course, it is each country's own responsibility to decide what those "appropriate areas" are.

For the whole of pre-tertiary education, the *judet* inspectorate plays a major part in the management of the schools, thus characterising the deconcentration process of Romania. The *judet* inspectorate does, however, negotiate with the elected collectivities which finance the maintenance of primary and secondary schools premises. The *judet* inspectorate is headed by an inspector general who chairs a managing board composed of the deputies of the general inspector, the director of the teachers' resource centre, the chief accountant and a legal adviser. An advisory council is composed of headmasters and principals, some teachers and representatives of parents, local authorities, religious communities and local companies.

The inspector generals and their deputies and the director of the teachers' resource centre are appointed by the Minister of Education. According to Art. 142, 143 and 144 of the education act, the main responsibilities of the *judet* inspectorate are to recommend the regional school network to MoNE; propose the creation of new primary and lower secondary schools as well as institutions for vocational training; provide the appropriate staff for the schools; organise in-service training for teachers and pedagogic research; co-ordinate the organisation of examinations; monitor the education policy within the *judet* area and the implementation of the reform; and co-ordinate the activities of the teachers' resource centre and of school libraries. The inspector general appoints school inspectors on the basis of a competitive examination for a four-year period. At the end of each academic year the inspector general writes a report addressed to MoNE on the state of education within the *judet*. The report is also addressed to the prefect (the representative of the state at the county level), the county council, local authorities and the schools.

According to Article 7 of the education act, education institutions and units are legal entities, except for schools which only have grades I to IV. Article 145 gives some provisions concerning their management. Pre-university education units are managed by directors, assisted by deputy directors if necessary. The school directors and deputy directors of pre-school, primary and lower secondary schools are appointed by the inspector general for a four-year term of office from nominations made by the "school professorial board", on professional and management expertise criteria. The professorial board includes senior teaching staff and is chaired by the director. This board makes decisions on instruction and education matters.



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There is also a school administrative board of five to eleven members: it includes the director, the deputy director, the chief accountant, teachers elected by the professorial board and representatives of parents, local authorities and of business. The director is the president of this administrative board. A nursery or primary school which is affiliated with a secondary school elects one or two teachers to that school's board. The principals at such schools have a constrained authority since they cannot hire or discharge teachers (these functions are retained by the *judet* inspectorates).

Such an organisation, where the school director is also the president of the school board, does exist in other countries (France for instance). It is sometimes controversial, however, because of the concentration of authority that may result. All operational expenditure, mainly personnel salaries, as well as the construction of new buildings are paid by the MoNE through the *judet* inspectorates, while the local authorities are responsible for financing the maintenance of buildings and can finance out-of-school activities. On the whole, compulsory education accounts for about 40% of the total MoNE budget.

The division of financing responsibility between MoNE (responsible for salaries, instructional materials – including the new textbooks and new infrastructure investment) and local authorities (responsible for facilities repair and maintenance) was discussed above. From their own revenues, schools may support educational activities but this is done under the management of the local inspectorate. The state subsidises local authority budgets based on a weighted formula that includes: school age population, 31%; total population, 15%; number of hospital beds, 27%; and other factors (length of street and road network, number of dwellings, number of medical units and number of local administrative units), 27%. Thus, for all but a few wealthy urban centres, local authorities receive more from the state than their taxes contribute to it. The funds received from the state are used to pay the local authorities share of education cost and so, in many locations, the state is, in fact, paying both for the direct state share and indirectly for part of the local share.

It has been proposed that local authorities be able to retain 40% of the income (primarily salaries) tax collected in their area. While seen as a step toward true decentralisation, the danger of such a proposal is that it would weaken the present system's attempts to equalise fiscal ability among the diverse local authorities. Specifically, the main beneficiaries would be the wealthier localities which generate large income tax payments. A possible procedural compromise would be to allow up to a 40% retention of funds at the local level that would have been received from the state in any case. It is critical to remember that even under decentralisation certain key functions must be retained at the national level. One of the most important of these is to help equalise among the various parts of the nation. Ignoring this concern would be bad financial policy for compulsory education and pro-



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mote a competitive fragmentation among the parts of the nation. A compromise policy would be to include a matching grant system for locally generated funds (to encourage schools to be more entrepreneurial and to reward increasing parental support) while assuring a guaranteed minimum resource base to all schools.

**Recommendations**

A key concern with primary education is that of the transitional nature of the current small cohorts. With the high participation rates generated by the compulsory education policy and the high social demand for education, increased demand will begin to be exerted at both the upper secondary and eventually at the tertiary levels and in advanced vocational and technical education. It is one of the paradoxes of education that "success" at the lower levels creates the "problem" of increasing demand for education at the higher (and more costly) levels. Romania needs to develop a plan now to project the numbers and financing that will be part of the future public education system. Given the nature of the economy, it is inevitable that the future financing of education, at all levels, will require increased mobilisation of non-government sources of financing, including student fees.

The next most important objective concerning compulsory education should be to aim at a 100% participation rate of pupils; this will require specific measures with respect to families in the rural areas and to Roma pupils. In some areas, transportation by bus should be improved and the capacity of school-boards increased. The 17% drop-out rate before the end of grade VIII is a critical issue. Everything possible should be done to reduce school failure, notably by organising specific tutoring for students at risk. MoNE, with external assistance, is developing a cost-effectiveness model that will allow policy simulation exercises for these types of concerns. Since the nature of the participation issue (including questions of initial access, retention and transition) may vary, adaptive solutions may well be required, tailored to particular locations and groups.

The present comprehensive reform of the curriculum is quite outstanding and remarkable in its goals, its general framework, the quality of the documents distributed to teachers and its general consistency. However, there is a real issue related to the speed of implementation. Such an overall reform is necessary in order to improve the outputs of the Romanian education system, its efficiency and effectiveness. The poor performance of Romanian pupils in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), conducted for children in grade VIII, revealed the weaknesses of student achievement in a field which was supposed to be a strong feature of Romanian education. The "tree" of some pupils' successful results in Olympiads was hiding the "forest" of the real level of attainment of a whole pupil cohort. Out of 41 participating countries, Romania came 34th in mathematics and 31st in science. Some Central and Eastern European neighbours did much better:



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the Czech Republic was 2nd in science and 6th in mathematics; Hungary was 9th in science and 14th in mathematics; and Bulgaria was 5th in science and 11th in mathematics. Such results have created a shock in Romania and were received with disbelief by many. Confrontation with international standards in order to evaluate the effectiveness of an education system is more and more required and useful within the context of globalisation and of a fast-changing world requiring new basic skills and knowledge. However, while documentation of the problem does not answer how the problem may be solved, much of that answer may already exist in the curricular and teacher training changes that are contained within the current reform.

In 1995, the MoNE started to carry out its own sample-based national assessments in mathematics and in Romanian language for pupils at grade IV. It would be very useful for SNEE to develop such surveys at different levels, particularly for grades IV and VIII, in order to be able to make comparisons among schools and *judet*s as well as over time. Romania does seem to do rather well for very good students, but the same does not appear to be true for all students. The TIMSS results show that Romanian pupils are far away from the international average both in math and science. Pupils did relatively well for formal questions and much less well on questions requiring them to apply their knowledge in solving practical problems related to real life situations. Such results have important implications for curriculum, instructional materials and teaching practices.

Another issue is the poor performance in science for items concerning borders of different subjects, because of the lack of interdisciplinary approach in the traditional curriculum. An analysis of the TIMSS results confirms the relevance of the new curriculum being implemented, as well as the necessity to change teaching practices and to promote new active learning by the pupils individually and in small groups. Another important result of TIMSS is to confirm the crucial importance of motivation to learn. This also implies new attitudes for teachers and some new relationships with parents.

The TIMSS results show that the effective implementation of the new curriculum is urgent. However, they indicate that not only content, but also textbooks and teaching/learning practices should change. This implies a progressive development of teachers' professionalism. This is a process which requires time and financial resources. Thus, one has to find a balance between urgency and realism. The implementation of a new comprehensive curriculum cannot be delayed but it must be conceived as a sustainable process of change. In this respect, the decision to implement simultaneously the new curriculum at different grades is questionable for two reasons: *i*) given the huge needs of in-service training for teachers, it would be easier to start with grade I in 1998/99, then grade II in 1999/2000 and so on; and *ii*) for the pupils, it would be easier to adapt to a sequenced implementation since education is a cumulative process, each stage requiring some prerequisites. To what extent can it be efficient to initiate a brand new curriculum simultaneously at



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multiple stages of the education process, with pupils having to make an abrupt transition from the old to the new curriculum?

Concerning textbooks and pedagogic materials, the present reform is very impressive. The emergence of a private market for textbooks and the improved quality of the alternative books are very positive factors for the implementation of the curriculum reform. However, a new balance has to be found in the way textbooks are initially designed and then modified. A greater reliance on evaluation of learning effectiveness is one means to assure that the textbooks are serving the interest of the learner.

Apart from textbooks, there is an urgent need for supplementary materials and books, CD-ROMs and other innovative teaching/learning materials in classes and in the school libraries. There currently is a lack of computers, televisions, videotapes, educational software and Internet connections compared to OECD countries. The visit of a library in a rural school showed that there was a lack of all these educational aids and that the books were nearly all academically obsolete. Some priorities should be set up in order that all schools be provided with a minimum set of supplementary books and other pedagogical aids to supplement the teacher-selected textbooks. Subject inspectors and teachers should define this minimum kit and proper use of the kits should be part of teacher training activities.

Another important aspect of the reform is the emergence of a new culture of assessment. To encourage this, a bank of assessment items is being designed at the national level and should be distributed with the relevant software to all schools for diagnostic and formative purposes. Tests should be done by the teachers at the beginning of the school year, in order to find out the main shortcomings of the pupils in terms of knowledge and methodology. From such a diagnostic the teacher could organise a differentiated pedagogy for remediation purposes. Other tests could be organised during the year for formative purposes.

The main key factor for succeeding in the implementation process of the new curriculum is the attitude and the in-service training of teachers. The official rhetoric must of course be optimistic in order to encourage and mobilise the teachers. Realistically, however, there will not be unanimous support among teachers for all parts of the reform. As in any other countries, a significant proportion of teachers are reluctant to change their habits and teach a quite new (and demanding) curriculum. Not only does the curricular process require time for adaptation, but also an explicit strategy of communication and mobilisation, implying an active role for the local inspectorate, teachers' unions and the individual teachers themselves.

The management capacity of schools is being reinforced by a training of trainers cascade model and should be further pursued through initial and in-service training of directors and deputy directors of schools, particularly in the use of performance indicators and the initiation of school development plans. The increasing



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autonomy of schools can lead to specific pedagogical policies better adapted to the local needs (of pupils and of the local labour market) if and only if the management staff can use properly some basic management tools. The school development plan must contribute to mobilise all the stake-holders – pupils, teachers, parents and external partners – in the process of implementing the new curriculum and combating school failure. Another important aspect of the strategy concerning the quality of education is related to the present implementation of the new model of inspection for schools (it will be discussed in the next chapter, as it concerns upper secondary and vocational and technical schools as well).



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*Chapter 4*

# Upper Secondary Education

## Structure and enrolments

Upper secondary education covers general or specialised schools (in the academic or technological stream) and vocational or apprenticeship schools (vocational stream). The structure is similar to that found, for example, in France with general or technological *lycées* offering the academic and technical programmes and vocational education provided in vocational schools or in the apprenticeship institutions. This chapter deals with the general academic and specialised technical streams and the succeeding chapter will deal with vocational education activities at the post-secondary level.

General or specialised upper secondary education in Romania normally lasts four years from grade IX to grade XII in day classes or five years in evening or extramural classes. The latter two programmes cover the full upper secondary curriculum. All upper secondary schools work with two or three shifts (morning, afternoon and, in some schools, evening). There are an average of 25 pupils per class with 15 as a minimum and 30 as a maximum; by European standards this is relatively small. The almost 1 300 institutions are overwhelmingly public (99.5% in 1995/96) but an increasing number of private schools have emerged in recent years, predominantly in more urban locations. As was noted in the discussion of compulsory education, pupils must have a School Leaving Certificate from lower secondary education before they can sit for the admission examination for an upper secondary institution. The admission to day classes normally must occur within two years of receiving the lower secondary leaving certificate. Students older than 17 years may not begin day class upper secondary education. Public secondary education is free and students from disadvantaged families do not have to pay for textbooks. In some schools the teaching is conducted in the languages of the national minorities. Upper secondary schools may be independent institutions or operate as part of a larger 1 to 12 or 5 to 12-year schools. Some institutions combine programmes across curricular areas (technical upper secondary schools and vocational training schools, for example).



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As indicated in Table 2, upper secondary institutions have been of 14 distinct types. The two most common are the theoretical high schools and the colleges and industrial schools, each accounting for approximately one-third of the number of total institutions. The remaining one-third of the upper secondary institutions have had the following twelve specialisations: agricultural, forestry, health, economic, administrative and services, informatics, metrology, pedagogy, art, sports, military, theology and special education. The operation of health schools, as noted in Table 2 for 1992/93, has been discontinued, so only thirteen programme types exist currently.

Table 2. **Upper secondary education institutions**
By type, 1992-1997

| | 1992/93 | 1994/95 | 1996/97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| All upper secondary institutions | 1 238 | 1 276 | 1 295 |
| Theoretical high schools and colleges | 423 | 446 | 444 |
| Technical schools and colleges | | | |
| Industrial | 452 | 465 | 467 |
| Agricultural | 127 | 131 | 126 |
| Forestry | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Health | 26 | – | – |
| Economic, administrative and services | 48 | 51 | 58 |
| Informatics | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| Metrology | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Pedagogical | 37 | 38 | 40 |
| Art | 37 | 39 | 41 |
| Sports | 23 | 25 | 30 |
| Military | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Theological | 38 | 51 | 58 |
| Special education | 5 | 6 | 6 |

*Source*: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 1997.

In terms of enrolments, Table 3 indicates that theoretical institutions are the most popular (39.9% of total upper secondary enrolments in 1996/97), closely followed by the industrial institutions (30.2%). The smallest programmes are metrology (a single institution of 1 873 students) and special education (six institutions with only 772 students). It should be noted, however, that the latter two programmes have undergone significant growth since 1992/93 (71.1% and 36.9%, respectively).

The education participation rates of 15- to 19-year-olds, the normal cohort for upper secondary education, indicate relatively low aggregate rates (61.1%) but approximate gender equality (62.3% for females and 59.9% for males). Even more disturbing than the low aggregate rate level is the fact that the rates have declined substantially since 1992/93. For males and females in this age cohort, participation



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Table 3. **Upper secondary education enrolments**
By type of institution, 1992-97

| | 1992/93 | 1994/95 | 1996/97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| All upper secondary institutions | 714 013 | 757 673 | 792 788 |
| Theoretical high schools and colleges | 277 882 | 307 201 | 316 685 |
| Technical schools and colleges | | | |
| Industrial | 240 511 | 231 048 | 239 761 |
| Agricultural | 49 120 | 44 310 | 48 086 |
| Forestry | 2 798 | 3 034 | 3 997 |
| Health | 8 203 | – | – |
| Economic, administrative and services | 58 579 | 64 584 | 67 682 |
| Informatics | 30 355 | 49 377 | 59 002 |
| Metrology | 1 095 | 1 496 | 1 873 |
| Pedagogical | 16 598 | 19 967 | 17 928 |
| Art | 7 022 | 8 681 | 8 907 |
| Sports | 11 570 | 12 606 | 11 805 |
| Military | 3 646 | 3 921 | 3 444 |
| Theological | 6 070 | 10 735 | 12 846 |
| Special education | 564 | 713 | 772 |

*Source*: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 1997.

in education has declined by six percentage points each over that period (due primarily to declining economic conditions in rural areas). The other reasons commonly given are scepticism about the effectiveness of education on subsequent employment and earnings and higher opportunity costs because of the need for family workers in rural areas and for additional immediate income in more urban areas. Another model for analysing student enrolment is to assess student flows over time. About 80% of grade VIII (representing approximately two-thirds of the original grade I cohort) continue into some type of post-compulsory education. The highest drop-out rates are in specialised agricultural schools (6%) and industrial schools (7%); drop-out rates are generally much higher in rural areas.

In 1995/96, there were about 789 000 students in upper secondary general academic or specialised streams with about 40% of these in the general academic courses. An additional 285 000 students were in vocational or apprenticeship programmes. Analysts must be alert to the definition of enrolment figures for this sector of the education system because they sometimes include and at other times exclude the vocational students. To further complicate matters, enrolments in the post-secondary foremen schools may be included with vocational enrolments from the upper secondary level. For 1996/97, MoNE estimated there were 793 000 students in *lycées* (317 000 in the academic stream and 476 000 in the specialised schools) and 261 600 in vocational schools. The last figure is a decline from the 375 000 in vocational schools in 1991/92 and reflects the preference of students for



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*lycée* training and a growing scepticism about the ability of vocational schools to prepare graduates for the labour market.

However, it also should be noted that within the *lycées*, there has been an increasing trend of preference for the general academic stream over the specialised programmes (similar to the experience elsewhere in Europe). In fact, for Romania, the decline has been larger for the specialised programmes than for the vocational ones. The increasing inequalities among social classes, the emergence of a larger middle class and the changing needs of the labour market all contribute to this pattern. However, students may be underestimating the demand for the skills produced within the specialised and vocational programmes.

Government needs to maintain an information dissemination programme to assure that the current cohort of students do not "over-react" and produce a glut of academically trained graduates lacking the technical and vocational skills required by the market. An appropriate *balance* of academic knowledge (including critical thinking skills) and practical activities must be the goal of both curriculum designers and classroom teachers for all forms of upper secondary education.

### Curriculum and instructional materials

As was noted above, under the current education reform, a new curriculum framework and discipline-specific curricula have been developed. The upper secondary curriculum encompasses five major subject areas (with detailed subject content fields as noted below):

- Humanities and social education (Romanian language and literature, two foreign languages, world literature, history, psychology, logic, economics, philosophy, Latin, Greek, aesthetics, history of music, etc.).
- Basic scientific education (mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, biology).
- Optional subjects (examples would include laboratory techniques for physics or biology or elements of conservation or literary theory for humanities).
- Physical education.
- Open discussion (civics, health education, ecological education).

Obviously, the relative emphasis among these curricular areas will vary depending on the subject emphasis of the upper secondary institution. A theoretical school, an industrial school and a sports school will each cover all five areas but with significant differences in the time allocated to each subject area and in the learning expectations for students. Optional subjects, for example, are much more important for the art, sports and economics programmes, constituting as much as 30% of class time. Accompanying the curricular reforms, alternative textbooks have been developed and an energetic textbook industry created to lead the way to a competitive market system for textbooks.



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The school programme consists of an average of six hours per day and 30 hours per week, with some variation by school type and grade level. Pupils attend classes five days a week. As with primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary schools operate on three terms. In *lycée* for humanities (philology, language, history and social sciences schools), the humanities and social sciences represent between 50 and 60% of learning time with science having 25 to 30%. In the *lycées* for sciences these figures are reversed.

In the specialised schools, the curriculum varies according to each type of school. A key issue is the proportionality that should exist between a "core" curriculum of general knowledge for all schools and the more specialised content of a particular school's curriculum. This is an important issue in determining a graduate's opportunity to pursue tertiary education and to achieve the new competencies required by the rapidly changing labour market affected by privatisation and globalisation.

In teacher-training schools as well as in technological schools (either industrial or services), mainly in the last two years, the curriculum includes practical activities and internship. Such a curriculum with alternating periods in school and on the job is certainly relevant, but in order to be efficient it requires an effective articulation of these two forms of the learning process. After the completion of the new curriculum of compulsory education, the next major step will concern upper secondary education. According to the integrated long-term strategy of implementing a new pre-university curriculum, the new curriculum for upper secondary education should be implemented by the year 2001/02, according to the same general principles described in Chapter 3. Until that date, the curriculum being taught will be the one designed during the period 1993/95.

Concerning textbooks, the government intends that there should be a free market in the supply of the textbooks for upper secondary. This means that instead of only three titles having approval for each subject at each grade level, any number of titles could win such approval. Moreover, according to the education law, books for *lycées* are not to be free of charge, except for needy students (such an option is about the same as policy in OECD countries). This policy issue must be linked with the plan of expanding compulsory schooling from eight to nine years. The extra year (presently, the first year of *lycée*) could require providing free textbooks at this level too. A supervisory mission of the World Bank in 1998 recommended that a plan for sustainable textbook provision should be designed for the period starting after the project funds are exhausted in the year 2000. As part of this plan, the *judet* inspectorate and the *lycées* could help to organise local markets of second-hand textbooks which would reduce the cost for students and their families.



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### Teachers

All courses in upper secondary schools are taught by specialist teachers. However, each class of students also has a class teacher who is responsible for co-ordination of the students' educational activities and for maintaining communications with parents. Upper secondary education teachers should have a diploma and have completed a long course of higher education, with a curricular emphasis appropriate to their teaching responsibilities. Technological subjects are taught by engineers with training at the polytechnic level.

Table 4 presents the information on teacher numbers in upper secondary education, by type of institutions, for the years 1992/93, 1994/95 and 1996/97. Over this period, teachers per institution in upper secondary education increased slightly from 47.0 to 50.0. This reflects the concomitant increase in students per school from 576.7 to 612.0. As a result, the average student teacher ratio was unchanged at 12.3. This figure is a relatively low one and, again, has both financial and pedagogical implications. This ratio is lower than the average ratio in OECD countries for 1996, which is 13.7 for upper secondary education. This ratio varies from 23.1 in Korea to 8.5 in Austria. The Romanian ratio is about the same as in the Czech Republic (11.7), Denmark (12.1), Germany (13.1) and Hungary (11.3). The rates are higher in countries like the United States (14.7), the United Kingdom (15.3), Sweden (15.2), Japan (15.6) and Canada (19.5).

With a declining age cohort size and stabilising participation rates, will the government decide to maintain this low ratio? There are potential positive learning

Table 4. **Upper secondary education teaching staff**
By type of institution, 1992-1997

| | 1992/93 | 1994/95 | 1996/97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| All upper secondary institutions | 58 161 | 60 514 | 64 485 |
| Theoretical high schools and colleges | 17 301 | 19 248 | 19 882 |
| Technical schools and colleges | | | |
| Industrial | 26 008 | 25 185 | 26 935 |
| Agricultural | 4 764 | 4 679 | 4 870 |
| Forestry | 245 | 193 | 171 |
| Health | 728 | – | – |
| Economic, administrative and services | 3 025 | 3 157 | 3 726 |
| Informatics | 587 | 850 | 1 092 |
| Metrology | 53 | 40 | 78 |
| Pedagogical | 1 796 | 2 270 | 2 231 |
| Art | 2 084 | 2 666 | 2 834 |
| Sports | 751 | 1 002 | 1 336 |
| Military | 263 | 267 | 252 |
| Theological | 426 | 846 | 955 |
| Special education | 130 | 111 | 123 |

*Source*: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 1997.



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opportunities implicit in such low ratios, especially if they permit teachers to engage in appropriate enrichment and remediation activities. However, the current curriculum may need to be further adjusted to reflect long term fiscal realities as well as the current criticisms of an excessive variety of subject demands within each year's programme.

Improving the initial and in-service training of teachers in upper secondary, as is necessary in compulsory education, is a critical issue in the perspective of implementing a new curriculum. Of course, the quality of teachers and of teaching is the most important determinant of instructional effectiveness. Given the time-schedule for the implementation of the new curriculum in compulsory education, it is consistent to give priority to in-service training for teachers at that level. However, MoNE should make some co-ordinated effort for teachers in upper secondary in order to prepare to continue the positive aspects of the reform of curriculum at this level. Given the financial constraints, Romania will need to define priorities in terms of programmes and of teachers concerned.

For pre-university education, the creation of *judet* resource centres (able to engage in flexible contracting of training services) and a national teacher training centre are necessary. The supply of training sessions should be a compromise between the priority needs defined by the MoNE and the inspectorate (from the strategic priorities of the reform and the main shortcomings observed by the inspectorate) and the needs expressed by the headmasters/principals and by the teachers themselves. The new model of inspection for schools, which will be analysed later, is an important positive factor in this respect.

Another critical issue is to find a balance between training sessions organised within each school (in order to implement at this level the spirit of the new curriculum and facilitate team work among teachers) and regional training sessions allowing for an exchange of experience and ideas among schools. At the national level, there should be organised sessions bringing together trainers of each *judet* on specific subjects or specific interdisciplinary issues. A positive factor is the rather low student/teacher ratio which allows for organising long training sessions for some trainers. Another one is the willingness of many teachers to improve their skills and their acceptance of being trained outside working hours.

Another important concern relates to the salary of teachers. It is quite difficult to compare the salaries of teachers among countries, because of the difficulty of computing properly the working-hours and the technical problems inherent in calculating purchasing power parity among different currencies. However, regardless of technical concerns, the salaries of Romanian teachers are low according to the standards of Europe. They are also low relative to other job salaries requiring equivalent qualification. The latter is, of course, true in many OECD countries and one must also take into account the working hours (including preparation of lectures,



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assessment of students, in-service training, etc.) and the length of holidays. The fact remains that, with salaries ranging in 1998 from a low of US$ 66.50 per month for a newly graduate starting the job to a high of US$ 122.35 for a university graduate having 40 years experience, it is difficult to attract the brightest students to a teaching job at the pre-university level. Moreover, because of the high rate of inflation, the teachers' salaries have decreased in real terms over the recent period. Given the critical importance of teachers' attitudes towards their work and toward the ongoing reform and the importance of the quality of teaching and teachers for the future of the country, the issue of the relatively low salary of teachers should be discussed at the highest national level (*i.e.* in Parliament).

In any case, an increase of teacher salaries could be discussed within an overall revision of the human resources policy for the educational system, in order to increase the effectiveness of the teachers as a professional counterpart to system and institutional managers (including inspectors and curriculum designers). Fewer teachers, better selected and trained and better paid, may actually be a better investment for Romania. Complementary to this would be a decision to reduce the number of specialisations within the upper secondary curriculum, thus reducing the total number of different teachers required to deliver the curriculum.

### Assessment and evaluation

One striking feature of the Romanian educational system is the number of examinations. All pupils must pass the "capacity examination" at the end of compulsory education. Then, they must take a competitive entrance examination when applying to a *lycée* or a vocational school. Then, at the end of *lycée*, the "baccalaureate" examination is required or, at the end of vocational education, a School Leaving Certificate must be obtained by successful examination performance. Then competitive faculty-based entrance examinations must be taken for tertiary education, either short-term or long-term.

Such an importance given to "summative" and "certificative" assessment of pupils, through traditional types of examination, should be questioned. It is an expensive process for both governments and the pupils and it reflects a spirit of selection which can be particularly discouraging for pupils from disadvantaged social backgrounds. One can wonder whether such a system of successive and somewhat redundant filters is consistent with the requirement for more qualified manpower within the Romanian society and the need for increasing the general level of education of the Romanian population. It could be suggested that the education law be modified to reduce some of the redundancy within the education system by restricting the number of traditional examinations, while improving "formative" assessment procedures in classrooms and schools. Formative assessment



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does exist, as in any other country, in the traditional instructional life of the class. Continuous assessment occurs in all classes.

Continuous assessment is the responsibility of the individual teachers. This evaluation is commonly individual and communicated to the pupil and possibly parents, verbally. Pupils are rated on a numerical scale from 1 to 10. In some subject areas teachers may require term and end-of-term examinations that are written. Teachers have the responsibility to recommend if a pupil should proceed to the next grade level or should repeat a subject. The problem with this traditional assessment by teachers is that it is very subjective and that the levels of requirements may depend arbitrarily upon characteristics of the individual teacher, class, or even each school. This can lead to important discrepancies among schools and geographic areas. Moreover, there is potential discriminatory "context effect" which can increase inequalities between pupils of different schools, particularly according to the social background (including ethnicity) of the pupils.

This explains why the act of defining national standards of pupil performance and standardised testing is a very important part of the national reform. This does not mean that student achievement can be perfectly measured and any subjective opinion eliminated, but rather that it is useful to have some common criteria to help the teachers in assessing the performance of their pupils. It is also useful to have such standardised tests because they can be the outcome of a team of specialists and teachers bringing together their own experiences. In particular, some tests can be designed to be taken at the beginning of the school year for diagnostic and formative purposes, rather than summative ones. With such information, the teachers are better able to adapt their teaching to their specific audience and diversify their pedagogic approach according to the main shortcomings which were revealed by the tests. Another interest in having national standards and tests is to make significant comparisons among schools and regions, as well as comparisons of student achievement over time. In this latter case, for policy analysis, it is usually sufficient to make comparisons with representative samples of outcomes.

In the final two years of upper secondary education, the *judet* inspectorate prepares a common examination in selected subjects. Upper secondary examination ends with the baccalaureate examination. Prepared by a commission of the *judet* inspectorates and co-ordinated by MoNE, this final examination is required of all students who wish to graduate. The following subjects are covered in this final examination:

- Romanian language and literature (written and oral).
- Language and literature of national minorities (required only of students studying in one of these languages).
- Mathematics (written – humanities, theology, art and sports school students may choose a humanities subject to replace the mathematics requirement).



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– Romanian history (oral).

– Foreign language (oral).

– Two optional subjects (oral – from physics, chemistry, biology, Romanian geography).

A controversial issue is that the successful completion of the baccalaureate examination is necessary for admission to higher education, but a separate entrance examination is required by each faculty. Critics find fault with the transparency of the selection process, the apparent waste involved in testing students twice on the same subject knowledge and reasoning ability and, suggest that the expense (in time and money) of the entrance examinations act as a restraint on participation in higher education by rural and disadvantaged students. Defenders of the present system cite three major arguments for the separate entrance examination:

– Grading of the baccalaureate is not consistent from place to place.

– The baccalaureate does not distinguish adequately among the ability levels of students to allow higher education institutions to select students effectively by ability level.

– Higher education entrance requirements emphasise capacity and aptitude while the baccalaureate is an assessment of achievement (and while the two domains are correlated, they are not identical).

However, it is believed that these criticisms of the baccalaureate will be less relevant when the new national baccalaureate envisioned in the reform is fully realised. If true and if tertiary institutions can be convinced of this, there may be a way to utilise the baccalaureate as part of the admissions process in tertiary education.

In addition to admission to higher education, successful baccalaureate students may take a practical examination (including a written paper) to obtain a certificate granting access to a job. However, whereas a decade ago such certificates was of significant value, now, under the present competitive labour market conditions, the work certificate, while retaining some value, does not assure the certificate holder of employment.

Evaluation is also an instrument of management for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system. It includes evaluation not just of the students, but of the teachers and principals, of schools, of innovations and policies. True education evaluation requires a good combination of self-assessment and external assessment at all these levels as well as a good combination of quantitative (through empirical indicators) and qualitative (audits by inspectors or others) measures. The future direction for Romania should be to evolve assessment and evaluation practices that are more oriented toward assistance (whether to a student, teacher, or manager) and less directed to simply making a positive or negative judgement.



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### Management and finance

The sharing of responsibility between MoNE, the *judet* inspectorate, the local authorities and the other social actors is pretty much the same for upper secondary as it was described before for compulsory education. One major difference however concerns the specialised schools (and of course the vocational schools and apprenticeship) which require closer contacts with industry and business for defining the curriculum and organising internships for students. Everything that was said before about management and finance of compulsory education does apply to upper secondary level. Thus, the focus here will be on other aspects which are related to the issue of improving the monitoring and the steering of the educational system at national, *judet* and school levels through the use of indicators and a new management model linked to inspection.

Admittedly, some important progress has been made in recent years to develop a more complete, consistent, reliable and relevant system of national educational statistics. Another necessary step will be to create subsets of indicators at the school, regional and national levels in order to help each level to make the decisions for which they are now responsible. Some of the indicators (a core set of indicators) should be the same for all the schools; this will permit analysts to make relevant comparisons among schools and to aggregate the data at regional and national levels. Such a core set of indicators must be relatively simple (limited in number and easy to calculate). There should be different types of indicators: *e.g.* budgetary and cost indicators; some basic characteristics of the students and of the teachers; some indicators of the functioning of the school and of the social context (*e.g.* pupil teacher/ratio, number of students per computer, teacher turnover, participation of the teachers in the school development plan, absenteeism of students and teachers, etc.); indicators of outputs (results at the baccalaureate, results in the entrance examinations for tertiary education, number of students finding a job after school within six months, etc.). Some other specific indicators could be designed by schools according to their specific priorities and their development plan. Such instruments would help the debates within the school boards, the *judet* inspectorate and MoNE and promote a more open process in making decisions.

Another major step towards more efficiency and effectiveness should be the implementation of a new model of inspection for schools. The present project designed by MoNE is in this respect quite remarkable. The purpose of inspection is twofold: *i*) to help the school to improve; and *ii*) to report to the various stakeholders about the level of performance achieved by the school. Hence, the aim of inspection will now be formative as well as summative. The inspectors are expected to analyse nine different aspects:

– The performance of students.



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– The way the school supports students' personal development.
– The quality of teaching and of teachers.
– The quality of the school's management.
– The quality of the curriculum and of extra-curricular activities and the manner in which they are implemented.
– The quality of the relationship with parents.
– The quality of the relationship with the local community.
– The extent to which the school carries out its legal responsibilities.
– The attitude of pupils toward the education provided by the school.

This is a very comprehensive approach. It could, however, still be improved by looking at the overall consistency of the school policy, given its students and its local environment. This implies again some indicators and the existence of a formal (and operational) development plan, with clearly defined and measurable objectives, priorities and an implementation schedule. The new model for inspection also defines a standard of conduct for inspectors, which is an outstanding effort for stating a professional code of ethics. Such a development is very useful indeed, as the effectiveness of an inspection requires trust from the people who are inspected, this trust allowing for a real co-operation in the inspection process and a greater probability of the acceptance by the school community of the outcome of the process.

The new system for inspection defines the required competencies of inspectors for doing their job properly. It certainly is necessary that a majority of inspectors should have a real experience of teaching and a good knowledge of the subjects taught in the school. Therefore, one can only agree with the proposal of sending a team of inspectors (from to two to eight according to the size and level of the school) which would spend sufficient time within the school both to identify concerns and to design corrective strategies with the school staff. The description of the pre-inspection and of post-inspection activity is also quite relevant. The new inspection plan includes a very precise methodological guide for a comprehensive audit of a school, which should guarantee a more effective inspection. This innovative approach to inspection in Romania is inspired by the new theories of modern participative management and some of the rules and principles of quality management and assurance.

However, it should be mentioned that there are a few difficulties which could arise in implementing such an innovative model. First, it seems that most of the inspectors are specialists in academic subjects and mainly experts in teaching. Very few have any real experience in management or with conducting a global audit of an organisation. Thus, the issue of inspector training is critical. Some inspectors on the audit team should have significant experience in management,



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particularly in financial and human resources management. Second, the ultimate determinant of the effectiveness of an audit is how it is actually used by the people concerned. The new model for inspection stipulates that the school must produce an improvement plan, taking into account the inspection report, within two weeks (which is probably too short a time) after reception of this report. Such a provision is necessary but not sufficient. The real condition for effectiveness is that the analysis and the conclusions of the audit are accepted by the director and the teachers of the school. That is why the results of the inspection must be, as much as possible, associated with the diagnosis of problems and the formulation of relevant and realistic recommendations. The process should combine self-evaluation and external evaluation. And, finally, it is critically important to remember that education is a much more complicated activity than most of the other economic and social activities. In particular, it is often difficult to define and measure what are the key outcomes or objectives. That is why one must be very careful in applying some business management methods in the field of education. They can be useful but they should be "transferred" to the field of education with caution; adaptation, not simple adoption, of such techniques should be the rule.

On the whole, the general provisions which have been made for a new model of inspection can certainly improve the managerial capacity of the education system, if some more effort is made in the field of in-service and initial training for inspectors, school directors, teachers and other school administrators and in providing them with a set of operational indicators (with the relevant software). In fact, one real issue which remains is how to finance all these efforts. But it is a general problem concerning all levels of education and not particularly upper secondary education.

A special financial concern in upper secondary education was mentioned above: financing the development and dissemination of textbooks and other support materials. Parental responsibility for purchasing textbooks must be accompanied by an effective programme of assistance to those families that cannot afford these expenses. Otherwise, a discriminatory barrier will be reinforced and the government subsidy of teachers and facilities will only be accessible to those families that can afford the complementary textbooks required at the secondary level. More broadly, all students at this level are restrained by the lack of equipment and materials (*e.g.* laboratory chemicals, machine parts). Partnerships with the local community and the private sector will be necessary to help solve this problem. While much can be done at the individual school level, the inspectorate should help organise co-ordinated fund raising efforts within each community. All such fund raising should be done with the support of MoNE and with inspectorate assistance for any record-keeping and accountability requirements.



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### Recommendations

The evolution of the distribution of students among the three streams – general/academic, specialised/technological, vocational/apprenticeship – seems consistent with the future requirements of the labour market in terms of qualifications and competencies. However, one should be careful in accelerating the pace towards more students going into the theoretical *lycées*, as the teachers in the technological and vocational streams might not be adaptable to the requirements of the theoretical *lycée*, even with retraining. Moreover, the Romanian economy will continue to require technicians and middle management staff in the short and medium term as well as engineers or top management.

MoNE should develop in each stream some basic knowledge and competencies in order to allow for lifelong learning for all and the future possibility to acquire higher qualifications. It will also be necessary to establish "bridges" between the streams so that some students will have the possibility of correcting an early choice of orientation. This requires some special classes for adapting such students to the requirements of the new stream they wish to join.

The strict separation of profiles for humanities and for sciences within the *lycées* seems to have more drawbacks than advantages. Here again, the students have to make an irreversible choice right at the beginning of the *lycée*. It would be preferable if the core curriculum were larger during the first year of *lycée*, which would be a year during which the students would be able to decide their future orientation.

In all programmes a new emphasis on learner-centred activities is required. This will involve textbooks that are also more learner-centred, greater use of team activities, applying more individualistic learning theories, and reconsidering the didactic demands of each subject area. Both educational philosophy and instructional behaviour must change within classrooms.

Even if it is quite consistent to give priority to the initial and in-service training of teachers for compulsory education, given the time schedule for implementing the new curriculum at this level, one should not neglect the training of teachers at the post-compulsory level and associate them as early as possible within the process of implementing the new curriculum. The establishment of effective teachers' training centres in each *judet* and at a national level is a priority as is the co-ordination of these activities with teacher training at the tertiary education institutions. The issue of increasing salaries of teachers should be discussed in Parliament together with an overall reflection on human resources management and working conditions.

A debate should be organised in order to reduce the number of somewhat redundant examinations and increase formative assessment through standardised tests and performance standards. Some core managerial indicators for schools should be designed with the relevant software in order to help the schools monitoring their



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policy and the inspectors in their audits. Each school should design its own development plan with measurable objectives, priorities and a time-schedule, using some indicators. Indicators should be aggregated at *judet* and national levels as steering and monitoring instruments.

The very relevant and impressive new model of inspection for schools should be implemented as soon as possible. Special attention should be given to the managerial training of inspectors and directors. Self-evaluation by schools and external audits should be combined as much as possible. The new role of the inspectorate also implies new roles for communities. While each community should be free to adapt to its own resources and capacities, the inspectorate should develop a clear vision of the appropriate municipal and regional roles in the new education system.

Finally, a full review of the textbook system at upper secondary education should be conducted to assure that the cost of these materials does not represent a significant barrier to student access. MoNE, in partnership with local authorities and inspectors, should prepare guidelines for assisting schools and *judet*s in raising funds to finance necessary equipment and materials to support the instructional process.



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*Chapter 5*

# Vocational Education and Training

Understanding vocational education and training in Romania requires an understanding of the rapid and at times traumatic, changes that have occurred in the economy and the system of institutions offering education and training over the last decade. The previous "command" system depended on "orders" from state enterprises for individuals with different training profiles. However, as was common within Communist systems, the state also assured employment for graduates by requiring state enterprises to employ many graduates that they did not really need. The result was that by 1989 there was a significant level of over-employment within the state sector, worker attitudes were poor and technology and infrastructure improvements were often sacrificed to allow payment of the inflated wage bill of these enterprises.

Suddenly, under an emerging democratic and competitive market system, the state enterprises have had to adapt to changing demand and new competition (inside and outside the country). This adaptation has been hindered by outdated equipment and facilities, a scarcity of new investment capital, rigidly bureaucratic management systems and traditions and a work force trained in narrow specialisations with little ability to adjust to changing skill demands. The current problems of employability of vocational graduates and the reduced demand for this training, should not be seen as a failure of vocational education and training itself, but a failure of the previous form of education and training to adapt to the needs of the new society. This chapter details the constraints of the transition to flexible and adaptive training in vocational skills, but also makes clear that this transition is inevitable and must come soon.

## Structure and enrolments

Vocational and technical education and training (VOTEC) has a long tradition in Romania which goes back more than 100 years. In particular, during the period between the World Wars, the system, because of its structure and content, was considered quite prestigious. Before 1989, compulsory education lasted for ten years, including two years at the upper secondary level provided by the theoretical and



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technical high schools. A four-year programme (divided into two, two-year cycles) concluded with the delivery of a baccalaureate diploma after the final examination. The enrolment quotas for these schools were established by the former Ministry of Education on the basis of suggestions and proposal by other ministries and by local authorities. After the 1970s, borrowing models adopted by other Communist regimes, the tendency was to reduce the number of enrolments in theoretical high schools in favour of the technical and vocational schools. The theoretical and technical schools were classified on the basis of sectors and profiles, approved by a presidential decree. Students failing at the entrance examination of one institution were directed to another school whose quotas had not been covered.

After the first two-year cycle, students could receive a School Leaving Certificate which would allow them to continue in the same school or to go to a vocational school, with a duration of one-and-a-half to two years, or to be employed as an apprentice. The system was very selective: each progression was regulated by an entrance examination. Curricula were designed and distributed by the Ministry of Education with the indication of number of hours for theoretical lessons, practical training, etc.

During the period 1985/1990, the distribution between students enrolled in theoretical and technical high schools and in vocational schools was 71% for the former and 20% for the latter (with the remainder primarily in apprenticeship programmes). The fields covered by the technical high schools were discussed in Chapter 4 (industry, agriculture, forestry, economic, administrative and services, computer science, metrology, pedagogics, arts, sport, military, theological and special education). The VOTEC system also included, as it still does today, the foremen schools, which were organised together with vocational schools in co-operation with enterprises. Admission was open to school leavers from the theoretical and technical high schools and vocational schools with at least eight years of working experience; admission was governed by an entrance examination. At the end, through a final examination based on the development of a specific project, trainees could obtain a School Leaving Certificate giving them the right to be employed as "foremen".

A *grup °colar* has been a common institutional arrangement in Romania for vocational education and training. It usually consists of a technical lyceum, a vocational school and apprentice schools. All schools have a dual form of "co-ordination": the Ministry of Education and a technical ministry (*i.e.* Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Transport, etc.), each having responsibilities for the schools. Each ministry has a specialised department dealing with vocational education and involved in the development of curricula, which, after the approval by the Ministry of Education, have to be adopted by the vocational education and training units in order to provide the narrow specialisation deemed to be relevant to the development of each specific sector in each region of the country. The system remains an example of highly structured and centralised manpower planning.



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Enterprises and co-operatives also played an important role as "sponsors" for the VOTEC system. The enterprise not only helped support the budget of a school, but also helped define the number of enrolments and the structure of the programmes. Lessons for practical training sometimes took place in the enterprise itself or in the workshops of the school, but organised with the equipment and the trainers provided by the enterprises in accordance with the standards of production. The relationship between the school and the enterprise was often based on a contract, through which the company was obligated to provide employment after graduation. Employers also frequently provided scholarships, which were not far below the future initial salary of a young worker.

This centralised and vertical structure of planning and control (typical of highly concentrated authority and rigid manpower planning) did not allow for the development of an active and realistically based educational policy. The environment was not favourable to the growth of managerial capacity at the institutional level as there was no space for critical thinking and discretionary decision-making. However well or poorly this structure served the former economic system (a point of debate in itself), it is clearly inappropriate in a competitive labour market where individuals will bear an increasing share of the costs for poor training decisions. Without guaranteed employment, training must be adaptive and allow both the training process and the graduate to continue to adapt over time.

Since 1990 many changes in VOTEC education and training have been introduced in Romania in the law for education and further revisions are still going on. The main changes concern:

- The duration of compulsory education has been reduced from ten to eight years.
- A capacity examination has been introduced at the end of compulsory education.
- Students who have passed the capacity examination then have to take an entrance examination to be admitted to a theoretical or technical high school (with a duration of four years) or to a vocational school.
- In order to fill the gap between the end of compulsory education (at 14 years of age) and the legal age to enter into the labour market, apprentice schools have been established with a duration of one to three years. Admission is subject to a test organised by each school for students who have completed compulsory education and did not pass the capacity examination. Also, in this case, successful completion of the school cycle will provide a School Leaving Certificate.
- At the end of vocational education, through an entrance examination, students can obtain a credit for the studies completed and continue at a high school and thereby have a chance for admission to tertiary education (not possible without the baccalaureate).



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– Post-secondary schools, which were eliminated during the 1970s, were reintroduced: students who have completed secondary education with or without baccalaureate diploma have access to post-secondary education which lasts from one or two years – post-secondary programmes are organised upon the request and payment of public institutions, companies, or by the participants themselves, who obtain, after passing a final examination, a School Leaving Certificate.

– Evening classes can be organised for drop-outs from lower secondary education when the individual is two years older than the normal age of attendance.

– Students with a capacity examination diploma can be enrolled in a theoretical or technical high school only within two years after receiving the diploma and not after the age of 17.

The reform process for VOTEC has been closely linked with external assistance. The reform of VOTEC was financed with support from the European Union in the form of a Phare grant. This reform was aimed at reducing the elements of narrow specialisation provided by the VOTEC system and, thus, engendering more effective and flexible preparation for labour market entrants. The main innovations were the development of new curricula, teacher training, establishing an assessment and evaluation system and development of a policy framework for the generalisation of the reform.

The donor-supported part of the programme started in the second half of 1995 and ended in December 1998. A group of 75 schools were selected at national level as pilot instruments in the reform process. However, the sample was only representative of the vocational and post-high schools. Even though data show that, among the VOTEC system in Romania, the highest enrolment is in technical high schools, the MoNE decided not to include this type of school in the process of reform.

In 1997, the following changes were introduced in the law of education concerning VOTEC (by the Emergency Ordinance No. 36/1997):

– The possibility for other ministries, companies, institutions, etc., to organise courses for employed or unemployed people directly with schools or other institutions.

– The recognition of the need for continuing training of teachers as a top priority and the establishment of a specific system with flexible procedures.

– The recognition of the requirement for training and retraining, especially on the pedagogical aspects of the new learning process as a top priority.

– The establishment of a National Council for Initial and Continuing Training, as an advisory body to MoNE, including representatives of the social partners, public institutions, enterprises, etc.



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– The transformation, at *judet* level, of the existing consultative body to each inspectorate into a vocational educational and training commission.

In 1998, a National Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) was established by MoNE in order to provide institutional sustainability of the reform process. For the introduction of the reform process in VOTEC, the following bodies have been established with the aim of promoting co-operation among public and private institutions, social partners and employers at the national and local levels:

– A National Council for Initial and Continuing Education with 24 members who represent social partners, public institutions, schools, employers organisations, companies, etc. This council meets every three months or whenever it is deemed necessary. Within the council, specific thematic commissions have been set: for analysing the needs for development of the system, for curricula design, etc.

– Vocational educational and training commissions at *judet* levels including public institutions, companies, local authorities, social partners, etc., as members.

– Regional development committees for Bucharest, Iasi, Timisoara, Cluj, Brasov and Craiova which include representatives of the local vocational education and training commissions.

General rules and regulations govern these bodies, which in general have been set up by the central level and which are not yet sufficiently representative of the local world of work. It is critical that the realities of the marketplace and of the local social context inform VOTEC programmes. This can be achieved only through expanded participation by employers and local officials in the design and implementation of institutional plans. At present, rules and regulations of these bodies are not translated into an operational programme for one year, thus establishing few concrete and precise objectives for which these committees should be accountable. It is however necessary to mention that all these bodies work on a voluntary basis.

VOTEC enrolment for the school year 1998/99 represents 58.21% of total secondary education with the following breakdown:

– Technical high schools 33.78%.
– Vocational schools 19.12%.
– Apprentice schools 5.31%.

Post-high school VOTEC represents 28.03% of the total enrolment in post-secondary education. Among the sectors, the industrial high schools are the most popular (31%), followed by the economic high schools (8.5%), the computer sciences high schools (8.5%) and the agriculture high schools (6%).

There is a 10% drop-out rate in the theoretical and technical high schools and in the vocational and apprentice schools. Of total school enrolment in the school



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year 1997/98, 87% of those in vocational, apprenticeship, post-high school and foremen education are in public schools; 8% are in private schools and 5% in schools belonging to co-operatives. VOTEC programmes remain predominantly urban with 88% of enrolment in vocational schools, apprentice schools and foremen schools in urban areas and 92% for the technical high schools. However, it should be noted that some students in these urban programmes originate in more rural areas.

Creating a policy and legal framework for vocational education and training is particularly difficult in Romania at this time. MoNE faces a highly fluid market in terms of skill demands for graduates whereas substantial political and economic pressure exists to relieve the employment problem and the current recession. For example, there currently is no policy and legal framework for the provision of continuing vocational education and training (CVT) in Romania. The offer of CVT is spontaneous, reacting to immediate needs and to the "*ad hoc*" availability of resources, mainly financial, provided by external donors. With the Law No. 1/1991 on social welfare and vocational re-integration, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) became responsible for investing part of the unemployment fund for the provision of training to the unemployed. This training is organised at *judet* levels by the local employment offices and it is aimed at creating employment for the trainees at the end of the course. The training is provided by:

- 14 centres of the MoLSP to cover 41 counties.
- Training centres set up with financial donor assistance and which are now partly under the responsibility of the MoLSP.
- Educational institutions (vocational schools, universities, etc.).
- State owned centres, private training institutions, training and consulting companies and NGOs.

The MoLSP has a list of "registered" training providers and, when the training is required in an area not covered by one of its own centres, a local tender is organised. The primary criterion utilised in selecting a provider is the lowest price offered from among those whose proposals meet the stated technical requirements. There is no system of formal accreditation and quality control of the training delivery is an area of weakness.

Over the last seven years, only 246 000 of the unemployed (approximately one in four) participated in such courses. Attendance did not guarantee success since only 26.7% of the participants were subsequently able to find employment. Employment effects were weak even in some of the programmes organised at the request of employers (averaging only 35%). The problems cited are the economic recession, poor quality of training and a lack of prerequisite skills and motivation on the part of the participants. Of the trainees in 1997, 60% were women below 25 years of age. In concert with "job clubs" which are to provide vocational guidance, these training activities are supposed to be part of the "active" measures to



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fight unemployment. Although the law allows up to 20% of the unemployment fund to be spent on training, only 11.2% was so expended in 1996.

The National Agency for Employment and Vocational Training (NAEVT) has become operational as of 1 January 1999 while a second proposal concerning the establishment of the National Training Board (NTB) has recently been approved by Parliament. The NAEVT's main objectives are: institutionalisation of a social dialogue with regard to employment policies, implementation of employment and training policies and implementation of social protection measures for the unemployed. The agency will also administer the unemployment fund. The NTB will have as its prime objective the elaboration of training programmes addressed to adults. Both the agency and the NTB will have a tripartite support structure (government, trade unions and employers' associations). To date, the government has been more successful at establishing councils and commissions than in affecting employment. In this regard, Romania is much like many other nations.

There is no legal framework to promote the investment by the companies or social partners in continuing training. Some state companies have set up their own centres and the attendance to the training is a pre-condition for a professional career in that particular company. The biggest state companies will be privatised and policies exist for using these training centres for re-qualification of redundant workers. Because the past employment policies of the state companies encouraged a great deal of hidden unemployment and underemployment, the effects of privatisation on training needs and social support may be substantial. The strategy adopted by the government foresees only payment of "severance" allowances which consist of the payment of up to two-year salaries to the laid off workers and development of training courses.

Despite the problem of unemployment and laid off workers, there is in general a need to increase the competitiveness of Romanian labour force to international levels. In order to assess its quality, a Romanian management foundation has conducted a comparison with the European Union countries which has produced the following results:

| | In per cent | |
|---|---|---|
| | EU | Romania |
| Probable official time of work | 100 | 85 |
| Real time of work | 100 | 70 |
| Productivity | 100 | 20-25 |
| Profitability of work | 100 | 10-15 |



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The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this comparison is that Romanian productivity is poor and earnings, even if very low, do not correspond to an equivalent value in worker productivity. This is once again a heritage from the past: the system of employment and wage guarantees as well as a misdirected industrialisation policy led to high labour force participation. As was noted above, one of the main consequences of the current economic reform is the creation of a more competitive labour market, where the employers and the employees need to establish, according to a contract, the number of working hours, the task, the compensation, etc. This change in the relationship between the worker and the labour market requires a process of transformation in the mentality and in the technical and managerial preparation of the workers. New and constantly changing skills and attitudes are requested from company managers and entrepreneurs as well as for clerical and other production workers. These summarise the significant challenges the VOTEC system will face in the next decade and beyond.

### Curriculum and instructional materials

New curricula for VOTEC education have been introduced gradually starting from the school year 1996/97. The complete cycle of three years of vocational training was completed in June 1999. The two-year post-secondary education cycle was completed in June 1998 including the adoption of a new system of assessment. Within the 20 different sectors of the economy, 15 fields of basic training have been identified (such as mechanic, industrial chemistry, construction and public works, agriculture, etc.). The curricula have been developed by national commissions which included representatives from MoNE, from the relevant technical ministries, from the schools, from the companies and from the social partners. The curricula have been developed on the basis of training standards prepared by MoNE which are, in turn, based on the occupational standards produced by the Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA). COSA was established through consultation between MoNE and MoLSP.

The main innovations in the curriculum concern:

- Change in the structure of the school year (two semesters).
- Clear definition of the educational plan/week with the identification of the number of hours devoted to general and technical culture and practical training.
- Broader preparation, for the vocational schools, in the 1st and 2nd year and only selection of a specific trade (group of occupations) in the 3rd year through use of modular curricula.
- Autonomy for the school to define, in co-operation with the social partners, the contents for 30% of the curriculum on the basis of local needs.



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- Inclusion of one foreign language (two for tourism and catering) and of computer technology in the list of subjects.
- Introduction in the 2nd and 3rd year of a new subject for personal and social development, which includes career guidance and entrepreneurial skills.
- Introduction in the post-high school programmes of new modular topics which allow students to have a preparation more flexible and relevant to the needs of the labour market.
- Introduction of a more pupil-oriented teaching approach, aimed at developing the learners' capacities of critical thinking, decision-making, team work, problem solving, etc.
- Production of "learning packages" to be used by teachers and students in the adoption of the new curricula.
- Introduction of a new school leaving examination methodology following the establishment of a new certification system (the examination committees now will include representatives from the social partners).
- Supply of modern equipment in accordance with the new curricula.

Following a decision of MoNE, a process of "generalisation" of these reforms has already started, an additional 47 vocational schools and 51 post-secondary schools adopting the new curricula in the school year 1998/99. However, because of financial constraints in updating the equipment and in providing the necessary training to the teachers for the adoption of the new curricula, the reform cannot yet be generalised to all vocational and post-high schools. Unfortunately, there was no financial provision for the production of textbooks in the agreement signed with the EU. Therefore, the textbooks used in the schools do not match with the curricula and they are frequently outdated, in particular for the vocational subjects.

**Teachers**

In the school year 1997/98, the teaching staff for vocational, apprentice, post-high school and foremen schools equalled 11 045 individuals, of whom 6 781 were teachers and 4 264 were instructors-foremen. There is an average of one teacher for each 30 students. The teaching staff for technical high schools equalled 36 661, with one teacher on average per nine students (compared to 1:12 for general high schools). The low teacher ratio in vocational education may be justified but raises a legitimate cost-effectiveness question.

Despite the decrease in the enrolment in the VOTEC system, the number of units and teaching staff has increased considerably. This has allowed schools to reduce the student/teacher ratio and, in theory, to allow for improvement in the quality of teaching. The prerequisite for holding teaching positions are the following: a teacher in a vocational school must have a degree from a higher education



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institution or a teachers' college for a duration of study of at least one and a half years. A teacher in a secondary school or post-secondary school must have a degree from a higher education institution. A foremen-instructor will normally have a post-secondary School Leaving Certificate in the specific field for which he/she is responsible and on-the-job practical experience of at least three years.

With the process of reform, short training courses have been organised for about 5 000 teachers and principals in the following subjects:

– Training standards and curricula development.

– School partnerships.

– Information technology.

– Entrepreneurial skills.

– School management.

– Modular training.

– Evaluation and assessment.

– Vocational guidance and counselling.

– Specific teaching subjects.

The courses were based on the use of a "learning package" produced for the new curricula. This package provides to the teachers the tools for developing and testing an innovative learning approach by the pupils. These courses were organised with the support of universities, research institutions and enterprises with the objectives of training trainers and establishing a group of well qualified and experienced teacher trainers, which should be integrated into the institutional teacher training system.

Just as training of VOTEC students must prepare them to adapt to a changing labour market over time, the training of VOTEC teachers must incorporate this ability to adapt to change. It will be essential that teacher training deal explicitly with the attitudes of teachers as well as their skills. Too many teachers have operated within a system where neither market nor student interests have played a role in determining teaching content or style. The vast majority of teachers can adapt but need help to do so. The problem of teacher adaptation is made more difficult by the salary and recruitment systems for VOTEC teachers. The pay (poor and especially unattractive for those teachers who have the most marketable skills) and failure to recruit and retain the best teachers are problems nearly all VOTEC systems face, but the degree of difficulty is especially great in Romania because of the current fiscal crisis. Still, long-term strategies must be put in place now so that in a decade the system will not face the same constraints.



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**Assessment and evaluation**

Teaching in VOTEC programmes in the past was based on an encyclopaedic approach and was teacher rather than pupil oriented. Only quantitative indicators were applied as there was no provision for the evaluation of performance of the teachers as well as no standard national system to evaluate students. The proposed assessment structure for VOTEC will have to correct these weaknesses.

However, in a first step to orient the reform process of VOTEC education to needs of the social context, MoNE has carried out, for the first time, an analysis of labour market requirements. This analysis is based on the elaboration of the statistical results of the quarterly Romanian labour survey "Amigo" as well as on the field survey carried out in Brasov in 1998. The main outcomes of the "Amigo" survey include:

- Current official unemployment stands at 8.8%, with significant hidden unemployment particularly in the agricultural sector.
- 60% of the unemployed fall into the 15 to 29 age range of which 48% are in the 20 to 24 age bracket.
- 70% of the unemployed in the age group 20 to 24 are first time job seekers.
- 56% of first time job seekers are women.
- Critical employment constraints exist in some regions; for example, in the north-east region (Moldovan Tableland) where unemployment is officially at 15%.
- 20% of school leavers in rural areas exit the education system with no formal qualifications.
- 68% of unemployment is concentrated in urban areas and the percentage grows to 74% for the first time job seekers (this reflects the aforementioned concentration of underemployment in the rural areas).
- People who have only completed compulsory education represent 32% of the unemployed, followed by high school graduates (30%) and people holding vocational school certificates (25%). University and people without schooling represent 5% and 8% of the unemployed, respectively.
- The educational level of the labour force is generally high – 37% have completed compulsory education and 23% have a baccalaureate diploma from a technical or theoretical high school.
- The transition period has been characterised by a sharp drop of the employment level in all branches of the manufacturing sector and a consequent increase in the services sector.

The aim of the Brasov survey was to analyse the interface between vocational schools leavers and the labour market requirements in Brasov, a city representative



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in Romania of a locality at a medium-high level of economic development. Almost 500 interviews were carried out in February 1998 with all the vocational school leavers of the school year 1995/96. Two hundred enterprises also were interviewed, representing small, medium and large enterprises and covering almost all the main sectors of the economy. The survey highlights the following:

- In the last two years, employment had fallen in Brasov by 12.5%. All sectors reflected the same negative trend with the exception of transport which had increased by 12.5%. The sectors with the most loss demand for employment were: industry (18%), services (16%) and trade (8%).
- The educational level of the parents of the vocational school leavers interviewed revealed 27% of the fathers and 38% of the mothers had completed only compulsory education, while 47% and 33% respectively had attended vocational schools.
- 60% of the parents worked in state companies.
- After 21 months, 65% of the interviewed were working, 27% were still looking for a job and 9% were not in the labour force (50% of these were in the army, others were following additional courses and many of the women were out of the labour market for family reasons).
- Women represented only 23% of those interviewed and this is consistent with the gender structure of vocational school enrolments at the national level.
- Only 20% of the women interviewed were currently working and 37% were not active in the labour force.
- Among the employed, men and women, 53% worked in the industrial sector (17% of these in the construction sector), 21% in commerce, 11% in transport and 15% in other service activities.
- Among the employed, 82% worked for private enterprises and 18% for public companies.
- 86% of the employed earned between 250 000 to 750 000 Lei per month – on the average, women earned less than men.
- On the average, those employed in the private sector earned less than those in the public and those employed in the industrial sector earned more than those working in services.
- Among the unemployed: 51% were former workers and 49% were first time job seekers.
- Among the unemployed, only 7% were seeking an opportunity in an independent entrepreneurial activity, the majority preferred an "employee" position.



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– As far as the reasons for unemployment were concerned, 60% thought that this was due to a lack of demand, 20% to an inadequate qualification and 20% felt it was due to a lack of adequate support from their families.

– The average time required to find a job had been almost ten months.

– The main channels used to find a job included: 30% support from relatives, 14% assistance from influential persons, 22% direct links with companies, 11% newspapers and 9% labour offices (the last two mainly used by women).

– Only 25% of the employed have a job coherent with qualifications obtained from the vocational school.

– People with qualifications in light industry (wood, textile, mechanic industry and catering) had an unemployment rate higher than the average; and people with qualifications in the construction sector, men and ladies wear and services had a level of unemployment lower than the average.

– Formally qualified workers, even if there had been a reduction, were the dominant feature for the employed in all the sectors – they represented 86% of the total in the transport sector and around 62% in construction. Non-qualified workers had been reduced in all the sectors and in particular in the industry sector. Also technicians registered a large reduction (down 30% in other services and 22% in industry). Economists and engineers registered a decline of 46% in industry and 32% in other services.

The employment situation is worsening as indicated by the reported rate of registered unemployment of 10.3% in September 1999. Thus, while these two surveys contain much useful contextual information (and they should become base line data for future recurrent surveys of graduate success and market demand), there also is an immediate need to assess the effectiveness of classrooms and schools and then to link these effectiveness studies to the contextual findings. This is a very large responsibility and MoNE is constrained both financially and by the scarcity of researchers who can do this type of analysis. MoNE should begin by creating clear expectations for the teacher-learning process and have these expectations monitored at the school and classroom level by both school directors and inspectors. These data should then, on a sample basis, be linked to the success of different graduate cohorts. Simultaneously, more accurate and more detailed labour market data should be made available to managers, teachers and students. All participants in VOTEC must come to understand that the goal of this information process is not to make exact predictions about specific occupations and detailed skill requirements but rather to alert the future graduates and their teachers to the ranges of skills and occupations that will be available. Effective adaptability of the graduates, not precision in job forecasting, will be the ultimate goal of the VOTEC institutions.



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### Management and finance

The management of VOTEC programmes is characterised by several rigidities from the former Communist system. In general, the system continues to be supply-driven: decisions on the type of training provided and the number of students trained are based on the previous experience of the schools, the existing (often narrow) capacity of the teaching staff, the availability of equipment, etc., not on the future needs of the society. Companies face serious financial problems and they can no longer "sponsor" the schools, especially in the absence of fiscal incentives to subsidise the necessary investment in training. When possible, companies will agree with the schools to organise practical training for the pupils but the firms simply do not have the resources for direct support of VOTEC programmes.

The technical ministries are no longer actively involved in the provision of the VOTEC system, which now is completely administered by MoNE through the local inspectorates. The inspectorates allocate funds to the schools, approve the qualifications provided and monitor compliance with official training standards. Local authorities are responsible for maintenance and repair of the buildings, while new investment, when it does occur, is again the responsibility of the inspectorates.

This is a classic example of a deconcentrated system. The problem is not the lack of full decentralisation, *per se*, but the failure of the central authorities to be able to allocate sufficient funds to make the deconcentrated structure effective. The two critical management needs within the present system are better information and management training including an emphasis on the mobilisation of communities, employers and social partners to support the VOTEC programmes.

VOTEC programmes, as with the rest of the public school system, is financed from the central level, maintaining a rigid system which in the past has constrained any setting of priorities by the school management itself with respect to the budget. The legal framework concerning a school's ability to generate its own income has been quite rigid and has not allowed staff to take any advantage from any additional income generation. The expenditure on VOTEC, including technical high schools, was only 0.52% of the total spending on education in 1996. This present level of expenditure on VOTEC programmes is inadequate to assure good quality and relevance from the training system.

Through the Phare Programme, a significant investment has been made to modernise the equipment of 75 schools. In many cases, this has allowed the schools to become very attractive for the enterprises, which are more willing to co-operate with a "modern" institution. In some cases, the limited availability of funds has not allowed the schools to buy the materials and supplies necessary for effective use of this equipment. Some fiscal mechanisms should be identified to provide enterprises and social partners with incentives for supporting VOTEC school expenses of this type. This also would strengthen the spirit of co-operation



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between education and business and reinforce the partnership model promoted by the MoNE reform effort.

**Recommendations**

Romania needs to continue to reform its VOTEC system:

– To develop the competitiveness of its labour force.

– To improve the employability of young school graduates through the provision of flexible skills, in particular in those areas where there is potential economic growth.

– To develop training as a systemic tool to foster active employment and the development of economic and social cohesion.

In order to assure a complete and coherent reform, MoNE should address the effect of the extension of compulsory schooling to nine years and a consequent reduction in the duration of the different levels of VOTEC (this issue is included in a proposed revision of the law of education presently under discussion at the Parliament). MoNE will need to continue to build on the achievements already made in the process of VOTEC reform. It will be essential to include in the process of reform all the levels of VOTEC, in order to reach a comprehensive model of development. This model should be the result of the collection and thorough analysis of data including demographic trends, projections of future economic development at local levels, present and future needs of the labour market, social expectations, etc.

Actions will need to be undertaken. First, reconsideration should be given to the role of VOTEC within the overall education and labour system in the context of improving access to lifelong learning for all. Second, improvement is needed in the transition from schooling to working life; use of a national qualifications standards for both initial and continuing training and developing a comprehensive and transparent approach for assessing competencies will help greatly in this regard. Third, a reanalysis is required of the level and quality of qualifications provided by the VOTEC system and their coherence with the requirements of the labour market; this should include re-adjustment or development of new curricula, staff development for teachers and administrators, development of quality control mechanism, etc. Fourth, MoNE should develop a list of recognised training occupations based on international classification systems such as International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO); the list should be based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities between social partners, relevant ministries, enterprises, research institutions and other partners. Fifth, the process of reform should be extended to all levels and forms of VOTEC education and training. Sixth, a policy for the dissemination of the results so far achieved by the reform should be developed and implemented.



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Seventh, improvement in the management of the VOTEC system can be achieved through increased information and training of administrators in resource mobilisation and participatory management. Eighth, innovative financing should be encouraged through the identification of other sources than the state budget – stimulating, through appropriate mechanisms, the investment in training by the employers, social partners and others. Ninth, MoLSP should give consideration to establishing a national policy for continuing training; this should involve all appropriate ministries, regions, counties and social partners and identify their roles in the promotion of relevant adult training actions and related mechanism (*i.e.* financing, delivery, etc.). Tenth, the training dimension in the elaboration of regional development plans should be made more explicit and make use of the positive experience within the training institutions. And eleventh, quality and innovation will need to be promoted by the training providers (vocational schools, public and private training centres, etc.) and this quality will need to be documented and disseminated to potential partners and students.

These eleven recommendations may appear excessively demanding, but they represent necessary steps in the process of rationalising the VOTEC system and in moving Romania into a dramatically improved linkage between VOTEC education and training and the needs of the Romanian society. Implementing these recommendations will require financial resources, time, effort and skill but the failure to pursue these improvements will have even greater costs on the economy and the people of Romania.



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*Chapter 6*

# Tertiary Education

## Structure and enrolments

Tertiary education in Romania extends back to the middle of the 17th Century and the founding of the Academia Vasilana (1640) by Prince Vasile Lupu as a higher school for Latin and Slavonic languages. Tertiary education in the Romanian language was established in the 19th Century when courses for topometric engineers were established in Moldavia (1824) and Wallachia (1818). The first true universities were the University of Iasi (1860) and the Bucharest University (1864). By the end of World War I, Romania had a rapidly developing tertiary education sub-sector. Laws passed in 1924 to 1928 were intended to regulate tertiary education as a part of the larger education sector.

After 1948, with the introduction of Communist rule, tertiary education and especially the universities, became part of a more unified and centrally administered structure. While, in theory, free and universally accessible, economic constraints inhibited the development of the tertiary education sector over much of the next half-century. However, by the 1970s there were 42 higher education institutions, including the seven universities of Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iasi, Timisoara, Craiova, Brasov and Galati, with total enrolments of 164 567 students.

With the end of Communist rule in 1989, major reforms in programmes and management were established by the institutions themselves, within the framework of the new education legislation that continues to evolve. An explosion of private higher education institutions led to the creation of an accreditation council, under the Parliament. In 1996, under the higher education reform project, the implementation of the accreditation system began. New "buffer" councils were created, block grant financing was developed and a competitive system of incentive grants for research and development activities was introduced. From its origins in 1990, and with increasing effect from 1997, the new reform of education has the following key objectives for the tertiary education institutions:

– Additional decentralisation of budgetary funds.



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- Further elaboration of diversified, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study programmes.
- Increased market orientation of the curriculum and of institutional services.
- Preparation for European integration.
- Introduction of information technology and quality management systems.
- Accreditation and transferability among institutions and programmes through a credit transfer.
- Promotion of scientific research in universities.
- Enhancement of the capacity for higher education enrolment by diversifying the financial support granted to higher education and increasing the forms and types of higher education.
- Creation of a new perspective on finance and social services for students.
- Development of additional opportunities for post-graduate studies, including organisation of new schools for advanced studies.

The legislative framework for reform, established in 1990, has the following broad objectives:

- Changing the relationship between the government (MoNE) and the institutions by enhancing university autonomy.
- Modernising and improving the quality of education.
- Creating mechanisms and procedures for academic assessment and accreditation of institutions.
- Introducing new financing mechanisms.
- Establishment of centres of excellence and of technological and innovation transfer.

The new relationship will be one in which MoNE plays a facilitating and regulating role but where individual institutions and the tertiary education sector generally take greater responsibility for planning, management and finance. With autonomy of administration must come accountability for effectiveness. The new legislation and the current institution-based reforms are designed to promote this balance of authority and responsiveness to social and individual needs. Specifically, MoNE has the responsibility to co-ordinate the development of the education system (including tertiary institutions), establish a framework for institutional competence through the evaluation of quality and through performance-based funding and prevent from blockages and distortions created by inefficient institutions. For the future, MoNE will have an increasing role in information provision to both institutions and students and to employers and the public as well.



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In structure, the tertiary education sector consists of both private and public institutions of six types:

- U*niversitate* (university) – The largest tertiary institutions include a broad number of faculties and programmes and award advanced scientific and professional degrees while combining teaching and research responsibilities.
- A*cademie* (academy) – A higher education institution training specialists, normally in a single general field (*e.g.* Academy of Music).
- U*niversitate* P*olitehnicã* (polytechnical university) – This name was given to former polytechnic institutions after 1990 (programmes emphasise technical and practical fields of study).
- I*nstitut* (institute) – An institution which awards professional degrees based on study and professional experience in limited specialisations.
- C*olegiu* U*niversitar* (university college) – Institutions offering two- to three-year courses leading to a diploma but not qualifying graduates for admission to post-graduate study (may either be part of a university or operate autonomously).
- Post-graduate schools independent from the universities.

The tertiary institutions' programmes are divisible into short-term (ending in the *diplomã de absolvire*) and the long-term education (*diplomã de licenþã*). The university colleges operate in connection with the universities. Universities can develop short-term studies in any of the specialisations for which they have authorisation for long-term courses. Universities should apply for accreditation for these specialisations. Short-term courses exist for the five broad fields of science, engineering, medicine, social science and economic science but the number of accredited sub-specialisations is increasing and a danger of fragmentation of initial training is a concern to both MoNE and the institutions. Long courses are available for science, engineering, medicine-pharmacy-dentistry, agriculture-veterinary medicine-forestry, humanities, social sciences, law, economic sciences, architecture-fine arts-sports and political science-journalism-communication science. In addition to offering more broad specialisations, long cycle courses offer more sub-specialisations as well. For example, in science, long cycle courses are available in mathematics, computer science, physics, chemistry and technological bio-chemistry while short courses are only offered in computer science.

In addition, individual institutions may offer continuing education courses (up to one year in length and focused on specific employment skills), advanced studies for university graduates (one- to two-year masters degree programmes), post-graduate studies (two- to three-years to provide increased professional specialisation) and doctoral studies (four to six years for those institutions authorised by the National Council for Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates).



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The private sector of tertiary education consists of over 50 institutions (in more than 30 towns) that have been established since 1990. The state sector of tertiary education consists of 49 institutions (35 of which are universities) with 324 faculties. The university sub-sector consists of "general", technical, medical-pharmaceutical and agricultural institutions. In addition, the sub-sector consists of:

- Academies of art, music and drama.
- Academies of economic studies.
- Colleges of agriculture and civil engineering.
- Business college.
- Sports college.
- College of public administration.
- The civil marine college.
- The seven military colleges.

Since 1990, non-traditional forms of tertiary education have expanded rapidly in Romania. The education law specifically encourages the formation of such programmes either under the direction of a higher education institution or in collaboration with another organisation. At present, these programmes result in a study certificate or attestation. While not equivalent to traditional degrees, such certificates are recognised in the labour market, although no formal legislation requires this. Open and distance education in Romania is aimed primarily at adult students. A major focus of such programmes is the training of pre-academic teachers (about 80 000 persons are involved in such training nation-wide). By 2000, six regional centres will be operating to provide access to open/distance education opportunities. The centres will make use of communication and instructional technology and, in addition to teacher training, will emphasise programmes in journalism, management and applied informatics. Private, open and distance education also exists at the tertiary level. The private sector offerings have emphasised business management, finance and accounting, public relations, marketing and personnel management. The certificates offered by these programmes, both public and private, ultimately will be judged by the market as to their quality and relevance. The role of the state, in the form of MoNE, is to monitor the value of the certificates and disseminate this information to potential students.

Admission procedures at the initial level of tertiary education are based on the entrance examination. Each institution establishes its own minimum requirements for each major study area. The examinations are developed and graded by the individual faculties. The rector of the institution is responsible for this process and authorises the admission of students. The number of students to be admitted in a given year is decided by the institution in collaboration with MoNE. MoNE's budget allocation is only partly based on the number of students (unit cost in the special-



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isation is the other major factor in the funding formula) admitted so there is a reduced incentive for institutions to increase aggregate student numbers for financial reasons except where students pay the full cost of their education. Admission to post-graduate education is more regulated with public financing only for the number of state-authorised places. In private institutions, financial concerns play a relatively more important role in admission decisions and in some cases this results in more students than an institution can accommodate effectively.

The enrolment of students in 1996/97 in public universities and colleges was slightly over 261 000, including approximately 14 000 foreign students. Students are enrolled in day, evening and extra-mural courses with the latter two requiring longer (usually at least one year) periods of study. Table 5 indicates the number of universities/faculties and proportion of public and private enrolment in the major centres of Romania. Almost one-third of all public university students and over one-half of private university students, attend classes in Bucharest; however, the location of the institution does not indicate the origin of students since students frequently migrate from their home city to attend tertiary education elsewhere. This is especially the case in centres such as Bucharest, Iasi and Cluj-Napoca which draw a national student body. Since 1989/90 there has been an increase by 58.7% in the number of students with day course attendance increasing by 150% from 94 952 to 237 993. Evening course attendance dropped over this same period from 59 342

Table 5. **Tertiary education enrolments by location and public/private status, 1996/97**

| | Public universities | Faculties | % | Private universities | Faculties | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bucharest | 12 | 78 | 32.1 | 22 | 80 | 56.9 |
| Iasi | 5 | 41 | 12.1 | 5 | 8 | 7.5 |
| Cluj-Napoca | 6 | 40 | 11.6 | 3 | 9 | 6.8 |
| Timisoara | 4 | 32 | 8.7 | 3 | 15 | 5.1 |
| Craiova | 1 | 15 | 6.1 | – | – | – |
| Brasov | 2 | 13 | 4.0 | – | 3 | 1.1 |
| Sibiu | 3 | 12 | 3.4 | – | 1 | 1.3 |
| Oradea | 1 | 13 | 4.4 | 1 | 6 | 3.9 |
| Constanta | 3 | 12 | 3.2 | 1 | 5 | 1.3 |
| Galati | 1 | 8 | 2.6 | 1 | 1 | 1.1 |
| Targu-Mures | 3 | 8 | 1.3 | – | 5 | 1.8 |
| Pitesti | 2 | 5 | 1.3 | – | 1 | 1.9 |
| Suceava | 1 | 5 | 1.1 | – | – | – |
| Ploiesti | 1 | 5 | 1.5 | – | – | – |
| Petrosani | 1 | 4 | 1.1 | – | – | – |
| Tirgoviste | 1 | 6 | 1.3 | – | – | – |

*Note*: Thirteen other towns have public and/or private higher education offerings in addition to those listed here but with relatively small enrolments.

*Source*: Ministry of National Education (undated), "Romania: Profile of the National Higher Education System", Bucharest.



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to 8 656. These numbers reflect both a strong preference among students for full-time day programmes and the restrained labour market opportunities for graduates of upper secondary education. Without attractive employment choices, young people are opting to continue their education full time rather than combining work with part-time study.

The enrolments in private tertiary education in 1996/97 were 93 434 (including 172 foreign students). Bucharest's 22 private universities (with 80 different faculties) accounted for 56.9% of all private enrolments indicating the relatively higher degree of geographic concentration in the private versus the public sector. Only 176 private students participated in evening courses but 35 108 were in courses with variable meeting times; 58 150 of the private students attended day courses, up from 47 730 in 1995/96 but almost the same as enrolment for 1993/94. Graduates of private higher education institutions are requested to pass a final examination at one of the state universities.

Education participation rates for 19- to 23-year-olds, the traditional cohort for tertiary education, increased from 15.1% in 1992/93 to 24.0 in 1996/97. Participation has increased for both males and females with the rate of increase higher for females. In 1992/93 participation rates for males exceeded those for females, 15.1 to 14.3%; in 1996/97 these rates were 24.0 and 24.3 respectively. This aggregate increase in female participation is also reflected in a broadening of the types of course specialisations in which females enrol. Compared to most other countries, the gender equity record for participation in education is quite good. A major gender equity concern remains in employment of graduates where males appear to retain an advantage.

Table 6 presents data on current enrolments in higher education and projections through 2002/03. It should be noted that 1999/2000 new enrolments exceeded the projection of 66 000 by approximately 19 000 because of the introduction of additional places for private payment of costs. Adding the 25 000 first year students from the private sector, there are approximately 110 000 first year students in Romanian tertiary education. Through the year 1999, increases in population, participation rates and availability of new places have been rather low, each constraining the potential growth of new higher education enrolments. However, beginning in the first year of the new century, participation rates will begin to increase rapidly and, by 2002, the age cohort will begin to increase. The result will be a dramatic change in aggregate participation in higher education from 13.1% of the age cohort in 1996/97 to over 30% in 2002/03. The private share of higher education will increase from 26.2 to 29.9% and the private institutions' share of first year students will increase from 22.5 to 29.9%. Government will face two profound but distinct challenges from this. First, financing partnerships (including student fees and loan systems) will be necessary if the expansion of public higher education is to grow as anticipated. Second, MoNE must improve its assessment and information dissem-



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Table 6. **Higher education enrolment data and projections, 1996/1997 – 2002/2003**
Thousands

| | 1996/97 | 1997/98 | 1998/99 | 1999/2000 | 2000/01 | 2001/02 | 2002/03 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18-year-old cohort | 383 | 380 | 368 | 340 | 301 | 306 | 339 |
| Total upper secondary pupils | 792 | 760 | 727 | 804 | 812 | 958 | 1 035 |
| Pupils in grade XII | 190 | 192 | 203 | 176 | 160 | 161 | 200 |
| Total public higher education students | 261 | 263 | 272 | 330 | 388 | 446 | 505 |
| Total private higher education students | 93 | 93 | 93 | 123 | 153 | 183 | 216 |
| Total higher education students | 354 | 356 | 365 | 454 | 543 | 632 | 721 |
| First year public students | 62 | 50 | 65 | 66 | 77 | 98 | 101 |
| First year private students | 18 | 18 | 18 | 24 | 30 | 36 | 43 |
| Total first year students | 80 | 68 | 83 | 90 | 107 | 134 | 144 |

*Source:* Ministry of National Education (1998).

ination capacity if it is to protect the interests of private (and public) students in the new market for higher education.

### Curriculum and instructional materials

Each university *învãþãtori* is supposed to have a strategic development plan. As part of this, each institution should prepare a *plan de învãþãmânt*: this "teaching plan" is an official document that stipulates the range of disciplines and subjects offered and details such matters as the years of study, contact hours per week, forms of teaching activities, the structure of the academic year and the system of assessment. National standards require that fundamental and general disciplines should account for 15 to 18% of all fields except in sciences where they represent 30% of the instructional programme. Specialisation disciplines represent 50 to 60% of programme content except in medicine where specialisation courses account for 75 to 80%. "Complementary" disciplines make up 5 to 10% of all programmes of study. Private institutions generally follow the same pattern in their programme offerings.

Teaching methods within universities and colleges consist of lectures, seminars, student essays, research activities and other such approaches. The individual department and sometimes the individual instructor, decides on the appropriate mix of such approaches and on the textbooks or other instructional materials to be used. Shortage of laboratory equipment and materials for experiments and demonstrations is a common problem encountered in tertiary education institutions and is most severe in some of the smaller private institutions.



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The academic year commonly runs from 1 October through June and is divided into semesters of approximately 14 weeks each. National standards set the total class time per week at 24 to 28 hours. The duration of programmes vary by specialisation. Science, humanities, economic and social sciences, law and communication sciences require eight semesters for their long cycle programme. Engineering, agriculture and forestry take ten semesters and architecture, medicine and veterinary sciences require 12 semesters. Short-cycle programmes are four semesters for the social sciences and six semesters for all other fields.

### Teachers

The teaching staff in colleges and universities include five ranks. The *preparator* is a junior assistant and is the lowest rank of teacher. The *preparator* commonly has responsibility only for practical courses. The *asistent universitar* is a junior academic post involving both teaching (generally lower level and practical courses) and research responsibilities. A*sistenþii universitari* are generally selected from a competition among *preparatori* but the individual is expected to be at least a doctoral candidate. The *lector universitar* also must be a doctoral candidate and will have more substantial teaching and research responsibilities. A *conferenþiar universitar* (associate professor) is selected based on possession of a doctoral degree and "recognised" scientific and teaching prestige. The highest rank within the institution is that of *profesor universitar*; a doctoral degree and original published work are required for candidates to this level.

All teaching positions are awarded on a competitive basis. The teaching staff are supported by non-teaching personnel as follows: department auxiliary personnel (21.8%), personnel auxiliary to the teaching process (12.87%), clerks and administrative personnel (42.84%) and hostel and canteen personnel (22.45%).

A symbiotic relationship exists between the public and private sectors of tertiary education. Many teachers at public institutions teach at private institutions (especially in evening and extra-mural courses). This provides the private institutions with a higher quality faculty and greater prestige than they could afford if they had to pay a full competitive salary. Similarly, if not for the supplemental earning available in the private colleges and universities, some public institution teachers might have to leave for other employment. The danger, of course, is for students (who may have less access to faculty outside normal class times) and to research (which may be foregone or postponed because the teacher is engaged in two sets of teaching responsibilities).

### Assessment and evaluation

In all tertiary education programmes, students are commonly assessed by their teachers by means of written and oral examinations. For example, universities



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organise three student evaluation sessions for each academic year. Examinations may be taken up to three times, but a failure on the third examination will require the student to repeat the particular subject. Students must pass all end of year examinations if they are to continue to the next year of study. If students initially fail these examinations, they may retake the examination but must be successful by one month prior to the beginning of the next academic year. The following degrees are awarded to students completing the various programmes of studies:

- Graduation examination diploma.
- Certificate of long-term university studies for the graduates of long-term tertiary education who fail in the graduation examination.
- Certificate of short-term university studies for the graduates of short-term tertiary education who fail in the university examination.
- Diploma of further studies with the same specialisation as the initial training, for the graduates of post-graduate studies of a one-year duration.
- Master diploma for the graduates of further studies with a duration of one and a half to two years.
- Diploma of post-graduate academic studies for the graduates of post-graduate programmes.
- Doctor's diploma for the recipients of the title of Doctor.

Law No. 88/1993 assigns the task of evaluation of the tertiary education system to the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation. With members appointed by Parliament, the council operates nine commissions (each focusing on selected specialisations) to evaluate all faculties and colleges every five years, in accordance with criteria related to the pedagogical process, research activities and student-teacher ratios. The only major concern with this process at present is the limited dissemination of the results of these reviews to consumers (students and their families). This sharing of information on costs and effectiveness will be necessary for a true market for higher education to operate efficiently and equitably.

### Management and finance

Tertiary education, like many other public functions in Romania, had long been centralised. However, since 1989 a series of steps have been taken to promote a more appropriate balance between central and institutional interests. As was noted earlier, MoNE's role is increasingly one of facilitation and co-ordination, rather than of overt control and detailed planning. MoNE is assisted in its tertiary responsibilities by a variety of advising bodies, including the National Council for Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates, the National Council for Quality Management in Higher Education, the National Higher Education Research Council, the Social Agency for Students and the National Higher Education Funding Council (including



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the National Agency of University Management Information). Scientific associations also dialogue with MoNE as do student associations and staff unions.

Within institutions, there is a distinction between academic management and institutional administration. Academic management is primarily the responsibility of the academic staff, in the form of the senate, faculty councils, assisted by the rector, vice-rector, deans and other administrators. Student organisations also participate in this form of management. At the institution level, the board of administration co-ordinates the academic activities while the general administrative director of the university deals with day-to-day administrative concerns. Since 1989, new laws and regulations have attempted to make the process of selection of academic leaders more transparent and democratic (including student participation). The Rectors' National Conference and the Vice-Rectors' Council on Student and Social Issues have provided a means for institutional personnel to have greater input on national policy deliberations.

On the basis of the authority granted in Act 10/1991, MoNE establishes the amount of state funding to be allocated to each institution (based in part on advice from the National Higher Education Funding Council). Institutions may decide for themselves the internal allocation of the funds they are given, have complete autonomy over creation and expenditure of their own resources and have the right to assess fees on students. Internal institutional sources include revenues from service and research activities, contributions from individuals and economic agencies and fees paid by students. External resources for tertiary education have increased in recent years, with the World Bank Project, the Tempus Programme, bilateral assistance and the Soros Foundation being the major sources of funds.

Financial aid for students comes in the form of merit scholarships, study scholarships and grants-in-aid. The first two are awarded on the basis of academic performance while the last is need-based and related to the student's social status. Since 1994, post-graduate scholarships have been awarded, again on the basis of merit, with the programme extended to doctoral study in 1996. Students receive free medical assistance, subsidies for dormitories, canteens and sports facilities and price and tariff discounts. The education reform proposes the possibility of student loan by banks, scholarships financed by foundations and other organisations, contracts and sponsorships between institutions and industries and local community co-financing. The goal of these efforts is to introduce broader access and maintain and improve the quality of the educational experience at the tertiary level.

Private colleges and universities have even greater autonomy than do state sector institutions but still must have their education plans and curricula approved by MoNE. Also, by law, private institutions must be not-for-profit, non-discriminatory by religion and national origin and must fully comply with national academic standards. Private institutions depend almost exclusively upon tuition and other



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student fees and sponsorships (for example, by firms desiring specific training for their employees). However, accredited private institutions (those which have achieved *acreditare finalã*) may compete with state institutions for state financed development and research funds and for post-graduate scholarships. Internally, the academic quality of private colleges and universities is quite variable; some institutions are comparable to public institutions but others barely qualify under national standards. Only 5 to 10% of private tertiary staff work solely for the private institutions. As was noted above, the majority of staff are from public institutions. Graduates of authorised private institutions (those recognised by the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation) may sit for the *diploma de licenþã* examinations in a publicly accredited institution.

The major financial reform in tertiary education is the shift to "global" financing. This means that the funds provided by the state will not be dedicated to highly detailed uses which allow little if any discretion on the part of the institution. Instead, institutions will qualify, according to a common formula, for a certain level of funds and will be held accountable for the effectiveness with which these funds are used, not for a detailed accounting of how each amount of funds is expended. While normal accounting and auditing procedures will be maintained to protect against misuse of funds, the institution will be the primary decision maker on expenditure of resources.

From Minister Order No. 3132 of January 19, 1998, state funding of the higher educational institutions will include *core* and *complementary* funding; these state funds will be supplemented by extra budgetary sources such as self-generated income, donations, sponsorships and other revenues and service incomes. Core funding will be the global component and will be determined based on net unit cost per equivalent student. Core funding will be used by the institution for staff and material expenditure. Complementary funding is allocated for social expenditure for students, investment in new buildings, capital repairs, modernisation of existing buildings, purchase of laboratory and teaching equipment, scientific research and subsidies for accommodation expenditure. Core funding currently will account for approximately three-fourths of the total.

A weighted formula is used in the calculation of "equivalent" students. For example, a student in doctoral studies count for three times the weight of a student in a college and distance education and foreign language training count for 25% more than regular college training. The net unit cost is based on the anticipated cost of a student given the requirements of the training (class size, required equipment and materials, etc.). Obviously, any such formula is inherently subjective in that someone must determine the "appropriate" level of costs for each major field. The process is made no more objective by accepting current unit costs as the standard; this would simply reinforce current programmes that have high costs because of inefficiency.



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In an attempt to assure greater accuracy and fairness, the National Higher Education Financing Council will have responsibility for research on unit costs and will make specific recommendations on cost levels for the various fields and levels of study. The relative costs per field will be multiplied times the number of weighted students in that field to calculate the amount of funds for which the institution is eligible. Summing across all fields of study will give the total funding for the institution. Obviously, if the total allocation justified for tertiary education by the formulae exceeds the amount available from the state, proportional reductions will be made. However, the formula funding system will retain the benefit of greater predictability for the institution, link funds to students more than to faculty (thus introducing a market test for programmes) and will provide a more transparent budget mechanism than has been the case heretofore. The disadvantages to the system are the same as one finds in formula funding in such countries as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The formulae remain in part subjective (and potentially arbitrary depending on the work of the parties recommending weights and unit costs) and do not take into account the need to develop new or enhanced programmes which may have initially high costs and few students.

In part, the complementary funding stream can offset these weaknesses in the formula-based global financing system. New allocations can be included specifically to upgrade existing programmes and to create new programmes. This function must not be ignored in the development of the new system. Tertiary education is an evolving system and the need for a more equitable and efficient financing scheme for existing programmes must not be allowed to become a constraint on that evolutionary process.

The complementary funding categories are characterised by a competitive structure. This applies to capital expenditure for new construction and for maintenance and repair. Institutions apply for such funds and provide support justification. MoNE selects from among these proposals based on priorities established in conjunction with its consulting councils. Scholarship funds are allocated on a proportional basis related to the equivalent student units. A problem here is that merit based funding will continue to have a dominant role. The amount of "merit" involved in an economically advantaged student performing well is highly debatable. More emphasis should be given to having those students who can afford to pay their costs (through immediate payments or by loans) not receive state subsidisation and to expend a greater proportion of funds on a joint merit/need basis. This will increase participation as more students will receive funding and greatly enhance the equity of tertiary education as assistance funds will be targeted more on the neediest students.

A key area of concern is the competition for university scientific research. Because this process was perceived as profoundly unfair prior to 1989, great attention has been directed to the design of the competitive mechanism. Approximately



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15% of the state budget for higher education will go for academic science research. However, one must remember that much of graduate education is inherently linked to such research so this funding does incorporate a significant teaching component. There are three components to sponsored research: *i*) competition based on projects administered through the National Higher Education Research Council (NHERC) and through external bodies such as Tempus; *ii*) competition of joint funds provided by NHERC, the World Bank and the Romanian government; and *iii*) competition for funding from MoNE's complementary funds. The complementary fund will be based on an algorithm that incorporates data on instructional personnel, programme and student characteristics. Initially, rather simple formulae are being used with complexity increasing as data quality permit. Institutions also are free, of course, to engage in private research and to generate extra-budgetary funds from such research.

A related matter to these funding concerns is the proposal to create "centres of excellence" within the tertiary system. Under this proposal, selected staff or departments may be identified as a centre of excellence. Under this designation they would receive additional funding and certain guarantees of research support to allow them to pursue their research over an extended time. If implemented according to MoNE's intentions, such a programme can increase the efficiency of investment by focusing on selected centres and reducing duplication and waste. However, the selection of such centres must be done in a transparent and equitable manner. The fact is that such centres of excellence may evolve into monopoly or oligopoly enterprises and the benefits of competition reduced or destroyed. It is important to have a mechanism for objectively-based review of such centres and the ability to remove the centre of excellence designation if the staff or department fail to maintain their level of productivity.

In a sector as complex as tertiary education, it is impossible to deal with the internal detail of the sector in a review such as this. However, the Romanian approach to higher education emphasising market relevance, internal competition for state resources, support for entrepreneurial efforts and a focus on student issues – including equity concerns – appears appropriate. The one caveat to be given applies to all the education sectors: planning and implementation is not to create a new rigidity to replace the old one but to create a fluid and adaptable process that can adjust to the expected and the unexpected in Romania's future.

**Recommendations**

The tertiary sector of education must be concerned with five critical issues in the coming years:

– Increased accountability to government and to students.

– Effective exploitation of the new financial authority and autonomy.



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– Promoting greater equity in access and attainment.

– Balancing the development of the public and private sectors.

– Assuring that graduates have the skills and attitudes to contribute effectively to the society, political system and economy of the nation.

Dealing with these issues successfully will require the continued evolution of MoNE into a centre of expertise that assists, rather than directs, tertiary education and the recurrent assessment of laws and regulations to assure a proper legal framework allowing tertiary education to fulfil its social role. Both management reform and significant investments in information technology and management training will be necessary.

Increased accountability to government will require two forms of activities for tertiary institutions. First, they must provide evidence that they have used state funds in a manner which matches the intent of government. While greater latitude may be given to institutions in the allocation of government monies, it still will be necessary to maintain detailed and transparent records of expenditure to reassure both the state and the citizens that funds are being used appropriately. Second, the institutions must collect and assimilate effectiveness data to show the benefits being generated through investment in tertiary education. It is important to remember that many of the effects of education are diffused and delayed over time; however, institutions should be able to show the effects of instruction (learning achievement, employment and access to further education) and research (financial and social effects). Tertiary education cannot claim their benefits are "unmeasurable" and still expect to receive massive social investments. A recurrent analysis of tertiary education benefits requires that baseline data be acquired now and be supplemented over time by sample and census data collections.

Increased accountability to students can make use of this same data to provide evidence of the benefits from tertiary education for individuals. Student counselling should be strengthened and institutions should play a greater role in the use of assessments to identify student needs and not simply to advance or deny student progress. As students have more choices in the future, institutions will realise that student accountability is not only an ethical issue, it is a basic requirement for market survival.

Institutions must be prepared to exploit successfully the new financial autonomy promised by MoNE. Autonomy brings with it a new responsibility for decision-making; too many institutional administrators have been developed as implementers not as true managers of their institutions. Institutions must select and train a new generation of managers who can take advantage of the opportunities inherent in the new funding schemes. Greater freedom in the use of state funds and greater license to acquire external funds will not be meaningful unless institutional administrators have the skills to acquire and use these funds in innovative ways.



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Perhaps no other task is so challenging for tertiary education than that of promoting greater equity. Most educational inequities are created early in the education system (if not, in pre-education home conditions). Admittedly, tertiary education is constrained in that its equity activities apply only to those students who have succeeded at the earlier levels of education and gained access to the tertiary level. However, there are three major steps that tertiary education can take.

First, it can assure that its selection and financing schemes and instructional programmes do not exacerbate the existing inequities. Special subsidies and tutoring assistance should be available to disadvantaged students to encourage their participation and maximise the probability of their academic success. Second, institutions can shift from solely academic merit as a determinant of financial assistance (the subsidy of tuition is the largest single form of financial aid) and place a priority on financial need. It is inefficient as well as inequitable for wealthy students to receive subsidies that are not necessary for them to attend tertiary education while needy students are barred from tertiary education because present subsidies are not sufficient to meet their needs. And third, tertiary education can work with schools at the pre-tertiary level to help these schools better meet their obligations to needy students. Such university-school partnerships have been successful in many OECD nations and have been shown to benefit both the schools and the tertiary institutions.

The relationship between the public and private sectors was described above as "symbiotic." However, it was also noted that this relationship posed risks for students and for the research activities of the tertiary institutions. Attaining a proper "balance" between the public and private sectors is not a matter solely of how many students are in each type of institution, but rather the creation of appropriate incentives and information so that both sectors operate effectively (and perhaps even in co-operation with one another). The lack of sufficient funds to pay teachers at a level that does not require second jobs is a major constraint to this rationalisation. However, it is not unrealistic to require teachers to inform their "home" institution of their additional obligations for another institution or even to create a policy where such arrangements are formally designated as different in status from full time teaching at the home institution. If effective assessment procedures existed to monitor and reward teacher performance, these concerns would be considerably less. The new financing scheme should be used by managers to concentrate research and external funds on those teachers who make the most substantial contributions to the institution and its students. The present pay system simply fails to provide any powerful incentives for positive performance and almost no effective sanctions for poor performance on the part of teachers.

Nations do not have tertiary education because they want to have students, they have them because they want to have trained graduates. The ultimate justification for tertiary education is the quality and relevance of its graduates and the



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research of its faculty. In the new environment of Romania, this requires institutions to monitor the success of their graduates and also to advise new students on the emerging fields which they should be considering. Also, as was the case for VOTEC, students need to be trained to adapt to new occupational demands over their career. Learning to learn is a more important graduate skill now than it has ever been before.

These recommendations may appear demanding for an economy and society still undergoing the transformations of the types experienced in Romania. However, reassurance exists in the progressive leadership that already exists in MoNE and the institutions and the various governing and co-ordinating councils and committees. In fact, progress is already being made on each of the five concerns. The ultimate challenge to Romania is to institutionalise the spirit of reform so that it is an ongoing aspect of state and university/college management. The 1990s can not be the apex of the reform effort but should simply be the foundation for recurrent improvements in the tertiary education sector.



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*Chapter 7*

# Development of Human Resources for the Education System

## Introduction

The implementation of the reform programme in education in Romania will require a dramatic upgrading in the quality of human resources available for the system. However, this improvement in human resources must occur as part of a broader improvement in the organisational development of the system. Laws, regulations, organisational procedures, and institutional practices will all need to be reformed if the improvement in management training is to have the desired effect. The human resource improvements are divisible into two main categories: improvements in teachers and improvements in managers. The latter category refers to management personnel from the level of the school and local inspectorate to the administration of the system level activities within MoNE, including curricular design activities.

The importance of human resources in making the reform a success is re-emphasised by the role that greater decentralisation and individual decision-making will play in the emerging structure and operation of the Romanian education system. Decentralisation will shift to local authorities and schools some of the decision responsibility that has in the past existed within the central government in either a concentrated, or more recently, in a deconcentrated structure. Rather than a responsibility solely for implementation, these local personnel must now involve themselves in data collection and assimilation, decision-making procedures, implementation and assessment and evaluation. And this process will be a recurrent one. The reform envisions an education system capable of continuing change and improvement; reform is not a single event but is a continuing activity that greatly increases the administrative burden on local personnel. The benefits of improved decision-making from decentralisation are both real and substantial; however, they will not be realised unless the personnel responsible are properly selected, trained and supported.

For administrators at the regional and central level of education management, the nature of their responsibilities will change as well. MoNE and its



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regional offices will have the responsibility for strategic planning, evaluation, synthesis of findings and accreditation. It also is the major, if not sole, authority which can monitor and reinforce efforts to assure equity within the education system. This shift from control to facilitation requires new skills but, perhaps more importantly, requires a totally new attitude toward other participants in the education system. Incentives, not orders, will be the primary tools needed under this new structure. Training in incentive-based management must be provided to assure that central managers acquire the requisite skills and attitudes for their new responsibilities. The World Bank project has already provided basic training to principals and inspectors.

For teachers, there is a new responsibility to play a larger role in decisions about pedagogic approaches and selection of instructional materials. This shift from a passive to an active role has already occurred for the more progressive teachers; however, many teachers remain unsure of the new demands and continue to teach much as they did under the previous system. Teachers, in concert with local inspectors and curriculum experts, will play an important role in defining the content and delivery of the local component to the new curriculum. A special responsibility envisioned for teachers is to communicate effectively with parents. This communication involves explanation of the benefits and costs of the reform changes and more effective transmission of the information on the progress of individual students.

For both managers and teachers, there will be a major conditioning variable to consider – the increased democratisation of decision-making. At all levels (managers dealing with staff subordinates, central authorities communicating with local authorities and teachers working with parents and students), education personnel cannot expect automatic acceptance of what they wish to do. Explanations and justifications – not simply announcements of intentions – must characterise the new system.

These changes are difficult enough to accomplish even when they occur in social environments which have not undergone a half-century of centralised control and discouragement of many of the individual decision skills and sense of initiative that the reform will demand. However, Romania is fortunate in that its longer educational and social traditions are ones which emphasise quality and respect for fairness. There is a reserve of qualified individuals who can be depended on to help prepare the human resources necessary for the reform. Also, the effective partnerships which exist within Romania and between Romania and its external partners are a source of support and encouragement. The ultimate effectiveness of the education system and of the present reform will depend upon Romania's success at preparing the human resources necessary to manage the new decision-making systems.



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**Management training**

The goals of the current decentralisation and management enhancement efforts of government are:

- Increase the effectiveness and accuracy of MoNE activity in strategic planning (including monitoring, evaluation and accreditation).
- Develop new and more efficient financing systems for education.
- Refining the role of the inspectorate as a quality assurance office for the system.
- Increasing collaboration (especially on financing issues) between the inspectorate and local authorities.
- Increasing the autonomy of local school units so that the responsibility for and impact of decisions will be more congruent.
- Increasing the responsibility of the school administrative council, head-teachers and, for curriculum, the teachers council.

Within the local inspectorate, the functions of inspection, finance and administrative review and staff development and support will become more discrete. It is exceedingly difficult for the same individual to become both a policeman and a teacher; and yet the responsibilities of inspectors have often forced them into conflicting, if not mutually exclusive, roles. While quality assurance functions of the inspectorate must continue, it is important to separate these functions, wherever practical, from the job of teacher and administrator support.

The inspectorate is expected to shift selected responsibilities once held by MoNE to the local authorities or to school administrative bodies. Regional education policies are to be created jointly among these three groups, not by the inspectorate acting unitarily. School bodies are expected to take greater responsibility for curriculum (increasing relevance to local conditions), finance (more autonomous budgets), human resources (greater local control of staff recruitment) and school development (assuring better servicing of local community needs).

One reform where little progress has been made is in the creation of local school boards. Head-teachers and inspectors commented to the review team that the functions of these bodies are unclear and, where they have been performed, they have not played an important decision-making role. However, this is the first year these bodies will have a clear role to fulfil (in review of the local curriculum component). It may be hoped that the activity and effectiveness of school boards will continue to increase. Training for school board members has been shown to be a positive determinant of effective board operation.



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The primary training needs that result from the reform of education and the restructuring of management responsibility are:

- Educational information collection, processing, assimilation, analysis and dissemination.
- Changes in attitudes and behaviours to promote decentralised and democratic decision-making procedures (including communication skills).
- Revenue generation, accounting and auditing.
- School manager decision-making and leadership.
- Inspectorate roles in finance, inspection and professional development.

Obviously, this change in the administrative culture must take place over time. The challenge to Romania is to accelerate the process of reform without losing sight of the need for appropriate sequencing of the individual reform steps. One of the great threats to acceptance of decentralisation and democratisation of decision processes is that the devolution of responsibility precedes, rather than follows, appropriate preparation of personnel to assume these new responsibilities. The development of human resources must take precedence over changes in structure; to ignore this precondition of systemic improvement is to weaken the effects of the reform in the short run and to damage public support for the reform in the long run. It can be accepted that a "shock effect" was needed in the past to initiate real reform and to break the system and its personnel, out of its former rigidities. Now, however, the reform must be properly sequenced. MoNE cannot afford to have popular resistance to the reform based on lack of information. Communication and a proper lead time for training prior to implementation will be important components to the social marketing of the reform.

### Teacher training

The national curriculum framework groups subjects into curriculum areas (such as "language and communication" and "mathematics and sciences") which will have important implications for how teachers are prepared in pre-service and in-service programmes. Also, since it is based on the 70% core, 30% local options model, setting only a minimum and maximum timetable for each subject, greater discretion is given to schools and individual teachers and proper use of this discretion also will require appropriate skills. The cross-curricular and interdisciplinary activities and approaches in the new curriculum also will be unfamiliar to many teachers.

The articulation of the new curriculum emphasises the need to shift from the "informative to the formative", developing the learner's thinking skills for lifelong learning. A need is seen for education to cultivate sensitivity to human problems and ethical-civic values. Interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning are to be introduced, moving away the strict separation of subjects that dominated the



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past. It is intended that teachers will have greater freedom in shaping curriculum, choosing methodology and teaching materials. This assertion of these values is important and necessary to set and guide the direction of education in Romania. These newly articulated values are certainly more in line with the aims of education systems in most OECD countries.

The new curriculum represents a major shift from expectations of classroom practice in the past, from the way teachers were trained to teach and from what students and parents valued as successful performance at school. What has been valued in teaching in Romania is the teacher's success in coverage of the syllabi and textbook and the student's success in mastering the ability to recall what was covered. Teachers were given few options of what and how to teach; students were preoccupied with getting the right answer and getting more answers right than their fellow pupils in class and on examinations. Individual choice and responsibility on the part of teacher and pupil was unknown. In many respects the education system served to reinforce the former political system and did little to challenge or change prejudices or tensions pertaining to ethnic minorities in Romania.

The new assessment system underpinning the reforms is perhaps one of the most profound shifts underway. It moves from a norm-referenced to a criterion-referenced approach. This means that a successful teacher should be teaching to make sure that all of the pupils satisfy the learning targets set forth for all pupils. Traditionally in Romania, teachers are much more likely to receive recognition for teaching a small elite corps of excellent pupils or coaching an Olympiad champion than for enabling the majority of their students to meet the learning requirements for that particular grade and subject. Again, training of teachers must precede the realisation of the full benefits from the new curriculum.

Being such a radical shift, realisation of its objectives will take considerable time to be fully implemented. It is not surprising, therefore, that this new philosophy is enshrined primarily in policy but not yet widely modelled in Romanian classrooms, either in the behaviour of teachers, the behaviour expected of pupils, or in the programmes of pre- and in-service training of education professionals. The difficulty in making this shift is evidenced in the lack of successful spreading of alternative models of education which have been introduced on a small scale in Romanian education since the opening up of the country in l990. These alternative models include Waldorf and Montessori schools, foreign language education using models from Europe and the United States, the child-centred "Step-by-Step" preschool programme of the Soros foundations and others. Many of these models reflect the newly articulated values of education in Romania and the child-centred approaches to learning that are widely practised in OECD countries. By and large, however, all of these initiatives remain in the so-called alternative sector of Romanian education, having little widespread cross-over impact into the practice of mainstream classrooms.



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There will be many challenges in the coming years. It will be necessary to increase understanding of the new approach to education and its implications for classroom practice and teaching/learning methodology. There will need to be better monitoring of classroom practice and skilled support for teachers. Pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes will need to be overhauled to incorporate the new approach. The system will need to identify ways to reward learners and teachers who exemplify the new values.

**Recommendations**

Managerial training must be redesigned to place an emphasis on democratisation, incentives and participatory processes. While there is a significant skill component to be acquired (especially in mobilisation of resources and funds accounting), it is the changes in the attitudes of managers that will be the most important determinant of successful implementation of the reform. Managers at each level of the system must adopt these new attitudes and behaviours and the change will not be easy for the central administrator, the local authority, or the institutional administrator.

Curriculum expertise will need to be blended with assessment and evaluation skills of inspectors more than has been the case heretofore. An advantage in this regard is the relatively high quality of staff motivation within the inspectorate offices. The inspectors face the challenge of changing themselves at the same time they act as change agents for their schools and local authorities.

There will need to be a concerted effort among national and local institutions to debate the articulation of the new approach to teaching and learning and its implications for the classroom and to convert this articulation into a framework for the requisite teacher training. The implementation of the new approach to teaching and its impact on learning must be monitored in classroom-based research that is disseminated and debated as part of the recurrent review of both classroom performance and teacher training needs. Finally, MoNE and other key national institutions must seek to ensure that the new core values of teaching and learning are indeed understood, modelled and rewarded in the policies, programmes and out-of-school activities of teachers and pupils (*e.g.* pre- and in-service teacher training programmes, assessment tools, reward and selection mechanisms).

No social institution is as dependent on the quality and effort of its personnel for determining success as is education. Even as instructional and communication technology improves and becomes more common in Romanian classrooms, teachers and managers of educational institutions will still be the ultimate arbiters of what happens in the learning process. There is no effective means to protect students from inferior education other than to assure that human resources in the education system are adequate in quality and number and that they are utilised within a management system that offers appropriate rewards and sanctions.



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*Chapter 8*

# Summary Issues and Recommendations

## Introduction

For a country of its income level and political history, the education system in Romania delivers an impressive public service and is engaging in far-reaching change to improve the quality of learning, teaching and the overall organisation and management of education. Since early 1998, MoNE has accelerated reforms in virtually all sectors of the education system. While change is always unsettling and serious secular and psychological constraints to effective reform continue, the major dimensions and directions of the current reform deserve support. This concluding chapter of the review is divided into two parts. First, there will be a summary discussion of the key issues originally identified during the review: education goals and the transition; learning effectiveness, outcomes and the curriculum; management and governance for flexibility, responsiveness and change; and resources and financing. Second, the summary recommendations of the report will be presented within seven major thematic areas: communication, consultation and information flow; from "philosophy" to practice in articulation in core values; institutional co-ordination, alignment and clarity of roles; new roles for evaluation and assessment; enabling legislation, regulations and procedures; managing reform and policy change as an investment cost; and utilising external assistance effectively for education development.

## Summary issues

### *Education goals and the transition*

Romania survived one of the harshest totalitarian regimes in the region; even after ten years, many people remain passive and uncomfortable with active social or political participation. Industrial and agriculture privatisation and restructuring are slower in Romania than in other Central European countries, inflation is high and poverty is increasing. Under these conditions, it is difficult for the education reform to advance as dramatically as desired in such areas as managerial and financial decentralisation or community and parental participation in curriculum decisions.



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Current needs include clear identification of external factors which block education reform measures, constant monitoring of the evolution of these factors, use of adaptable planning strategies; lobbying for rapid adoption of laws and regulations supportive of the education reform; and the introduction of adaptable solutions (for example, the establishment by MoNE of necessary executive agencies, with clear mandates, but also with needed flexibility).

An articulation of a new "philosophy" or values in teaching and learning appears in major policy documents in Romanian education of the past several years (these include the education law, l995 and the new National Curriculum Framework, l998), as well as in the rhetoric of many Romanian educators. A challenge of the coming years will be to increase understanding of this new approach to education and its implications for classroom practice and teaching/learning methodology, to monitor classroom practice, to ensure that pre-service and in-service training programmes model the new approach that has been articulated and to identify ways to reward learners and teachers who exemplify the new values. There should be a concerted effort among national and local institutions to debate the articulation of the new approach to teaching and learning and its implications, to support the implementation of the new approach, to assess its impact on learning and to ensure that the new approach is indeed modelled and rewarded in the policies, programmes and even out of-school activities of teachers and pupils (*e.g.* pre- and in-service teacher training programmes, assessment tools, reward and selection mechanisms).

Because of social and economic problems, an increasing number of pupils are leaving the education system prior to completing the compulsory cycle. The result of this will be increased social exclusion not just from education but from a wide range of economic and social activities. MoNE and the MoLSP must work together to assure that complementary and alternative training opportunities are available for such individuals to assist them in securing their future.

Pre-school education appears to have been excluded from the current emphases within the education reform (perhaps because compulsory education starts with the primary level). This oversight may induce high long-term costs in the education system; in a country with a rate of poverty of more than 22%, there is a significant probability of large gaps developing between the preparedness for primary school of children coming from different social strata. Ignoring this fact is detrimental for the students and wasteful of system resources. MoNE should prepare a reform strategy for pre-school education that will address the equity requirements as well as the need to change the present outdated pedagogical models sometimes used at this level and to increase the linkage between the pre-school activities and the new curriculum within compulsory education.



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There is a need to create a better fit of the educational and economic development strategies of Romania, given the need for economic development to support both the finance of education and training and to absorb the newly created manpower from these programmes. The result of the present situation is that often training fails to achieve employability, not necessarily because of any inadequacy in the training activity, but simply because of the lack of absorptive capacity in the labour market. Operational definitions of economic and educational objectives, greater co-ordination of external and local support and improved monitoring and evaluation of activities are required.

An adequate legal framework must exist for the participation of social partners within education and training programmes, especially in regard to financing. Without this framework, the advice and support of social partners and employer groups is sacrificed and the relevance and effectiveness of human resource development are undermined. An appropriate legal framework, including financial and other incentives for greater social partner participation, should be prepared and implemented in a timely fashion.

At present, pre-service teacher training appears to be predominantly the domain of university faculty unconcerned with the needs and conditions of teachers; the tradition of recruiting secondary teachers from university graduates who attended a limited number of courses in pedagogy, logic and psychology is not seen by many participants as serving the needs of the education reform. Under the assertion of university autonomy, pedagogical departments in universities have evidenced little motivation to adapt their curricula to the changes in the new curriculum for schools and the evolving social environment. In the short term, MoNE should establish clear occupational standards for new teachers, based on the requirements of the education reform; these standards should be communicated to students and professors in universities, encouraging pedagogical departments to adopt more pro-active attitudes. In the longer term, a new system for initial teacher training should be created, better suited to the needs of attracting more highly qualified students into the teaching profession.

### *Learning effectiveness, outcomes and the curriculum*

The present educational system places excessive emphasis on selectivity and the performance of the best students and provides inadequate attention to the learning needs of the disadvantaged pupils (by social strata, gender, ethnicity – including the special case of Roma children – or location). The result is that education, despite its substantial accomplishments in promoting minority languages, fails to fulfil its roles as a source of equity among social groups and for the development of civil society. A change in the attitudes of teachers and administrators, achieved through improved selection, assignment and training, is needed to



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emphasise the equity considerations of access, retention, career development, pedagogy and classroom treatment of the socially disadvantaged.

As is the case in most countries, the link between teachers' qualifications and their competency in the classroom is uncertain. A teacher training strategy must be based on an objective analysis of the capacity of the training suppliers, including universities, to respond to the real needs of teachers for specific subject matter and pedagogic competencies. The MoNE needs to take the lead in reforming the curriculum and delivery of teacher training for all pre-university teachers based on the relationship of teacher qualifications to student learning achievement. Also, both school directors and inspectors must become more of a resource for teacher support.

The Romanian educational system, from pre-school through tertiary education, is rapidly adapting to changes in learning and communication technology. Financial constraints may continue to limit this adaptation, but this has been partially offset in recent years by the priority assigned to this area by the international and bilateral support agencies and by local parental support. A national plan for use of communication technologies in teacher training, distance education and other learning activities should be formulated to help assure that these investments produce improved learning and greater, rather than reduced, equity in learning achievement.

The results of the reform initiated in the field of textbooks are already visible: in compulsory education teachers have a choice of more than one textbook per subject, textbooks were based on the first round of the new curricula and a private textbooks publishing industry has developed. At present, however, the long-term policy of textbook production is unclear and the means for assuring textbooks to disadvantaged students at the post-compulsory levels has not been resolved. Under the education law, textbooks are given free of charge to students in compulsory education, but needy students in *lycées* have no such assured subsidy. Also, once the externally financed project ends, will government be prepared to take over the subsidy of books and the monitoring of textbook availability? MoNE should prepare, in consultation with teachers, parents and publishers, a sustainable strategy in the field of textbooks; this strategy should include a detailed cost analysis and consideration of textbook vouchers for needy students and delegation to schools of the responsibility of purchasing textbooks for compulsory education (subject to effective decentralisation of financing resources to the level of schools). Finally, evaluation of textbooks in terms of learning effectiveness should become the foundation for revision and continued use of the present generation of materials.

Romania lacks badly needed college level education, based on local needs of communities and the special requirements of poorer families who lack the funds required for sending students to a distant institution. However, existing colleges are sometimes perceived, often incorrectly, as institutions inferior to universities, not as distinct institutions offering a different type of quality education. Romania



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has an impressive number of newly established private higher education institutions; many such institutions, while they may not receive full accreditation as universities, could evolve into colleges, able to offer short-cycle higher education linked to regional needs and appropriate to local conditions. MoNE should prepare a strategy to encourage the development of such colleges and MoLSP should agree on the appropriate status of the college graduates and their certificates.

Higher education faces the challenge of developing "new fields" of study during a period of financial and administrative constraints. Training in areas such as the market economy, democratic processes, civil society and computer sciences can be greatly advanced if the universities and colleges take advantage of the substantial amount of young people being trained abroad or in more creative programmes within Romania. Special incentives to recruit, develop professionally and retain such young academics will be a priority for the full transformation and modernisation of the higher education curriculum.

### *Management and governance for flexibility, responsiveness and change*

There are an insufficient number of education professionals in the country with the knowledge, skills and experience of the kind of information management and consultative decision-making that are increasingly the basis of education system change and development within OECD countries. However, as the pace of educational change accelerates, attention to the quality, relevance and understandability of communications is essential. There should be increased attention, priority and incentives given to improving two-way flows of communication and consultative decision-making at all levels of the education system; this recommendation should be implemented even at some cost in the speed of the introduction of additional reforms.

The least developed area of general education reform is the overall strategy and policy formulation for the professional development of teachers, administrators and policy makers. This aspect of the reform programme is trailing the strategic and institutional change effort in curriculum, textbook and assessment systems. An overall strategy and policy framework is required immediately for teacher/administrator education and training to inform and guide priorities for institutional change, programme development, public expenditure and NGO and donor support for teacher/administrator education and training; this strategy will need to be based on an informed analysis of the numbers and competencies required in the education sector staffing for the future and on the existing qualifications of teachers.

Despite significant progress in privatisation and decentralisation in the human resource sector, there remains a lack of clarity or consensus as to the final desired distribution of education and training authority among the various levels of government (central, regional and local) and between the public, private and NGO sectors.



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Once decisions are made as to the appropriate responsibility for each level and type of management, it is critical to prepare existing and future managers for the new responsibilities that privatisation, decentralisation and incentive-based management will bring. An explicit strategy, accompanied by time schedules of implementation and detailed training plans, must be debated and agreed to before substantial further progress in effective decentralisation and privatisation of education and training can be made.

The pre-university education system is managed by a combination of institutions inherited from the past and bodies that have been created at different times to support the delivery of change; the existence and functioning of these institutions is often based on guidelines inherited from the past or altered only slightly through political compromise and inter-institutional bargaining. The education law has affected some but not all of these institutions and the functioning of the newer institutions needs to be continuously reviewed and adapted with experience. MoNE should undertake a holistic, system-wide review of these institutions, their functions, inter-relations and the efficiency of operation to determine if these need to be "remapped" further in line with the envisaged reforms in general education and streamlined to address the resource constraints in the education sector. A three- to five-year implementation timetable of general education reform priorities and activities could be developed to increase the links between efforts of the major national institutions and to better inform, prepare and mobilise institutions at the *judet* and school level.

Effective planning of education requires information on potential labour demand for various specialisations. MoLSP is the appropriate agency to engage in recurrent tracer studies of graduates' employability and economic success and to share this information with planners within MoNE and with institutional personnel in schools, colleges and universities responsible for advising students and designing curricula. However, a rapidly evolving economy such as that of Romania is likely to undergo frequent and dramatic changes in the structure of labour demand. Therefore, attempts to improve the predictability of manpower supply and demand estimates should be secondary to the production of more adaptable graduates (based on broader curricular structures or multiple specialisations).

In Romania, a dramatic shift is taking place to a regionally-based development strategy. National education and training policies will need to adapt to this but this centralised adaptation may not be adequate. MoNE and MoLSP should follow through on their current efforts to give a greater regional emphasis to education and training plans and to co-ordinate closely with the emerging strategies of the regional development agencies.

A major obstacle to timely, effective and efficient development of education in Romania is a legislative, regulatory and procedural web that is overly rigid,



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constraining to institutions and individuals and leaves little room for flexible adaptation of newly introduced changes. The education law of Romania is highly detailed in comparison with the more general framework laws common to most OECD countries. Constraints stem not only from legislation, regulations and procedures in the education sector but also from those in related sectors (public finance, court of audits, taxation and duties on imported goods and services). Romania should consider a proper division of responsibility between legislation (emphasising goals and general strategies) and regulations (detailed strategies and approaches) to create more enabling and flexible policy frameworks and procedures.

MoNE is not routinely using detailed data analyses for designing its policies and for decision-making. This is partly a continuance of old management practices and partly a response to the frustration of a lack of timely and accurate data. Although the reform orientation of MoNE management is welcome, policy and decision-making not substantiated by real data and feedback from the system may become detrimental. There is a need for development, as soon as possible, of a reliable educational management information system, complemented by the use of MoNE's new education cost-effectiveness analytical model, explicit consideration of the opportunity costs of alternative policies and actions and prioritisation of reform measures.

### *Resources and financing*

Grant and loan financing of education change by external sources in Romania is substantial on a per capita basis and in relation to the levels received by neighbouring countries in East Central Europe. There is no doubt that the presence of these assistance agencies and projects has provided both an impetus and support for educational development, especially when political will to reform was lagging in recent years. The technical assistance and local and external training provided to Romanians through externally financed projects has also left a visible improvement in the capacity of the education sector. Nevertheless, there are issues and lessons from recent experience in external financing of education in Romania that need to be addressed. The external assistance agencies and MoNE, working co-operatively, should ensure that there are clear financial transition strategies and sustainability plans for the impact of early "projects" for education reform; this process will be advanced by increasing MONE's ability to design longer term policies and its capacity to monitor, assess and co-ordinate externally-financed activities in education.

The proposal to allow local authorities to retain 40% of the income tax generated in their area will increase substantially the funds potentially available at the local level for some more prosperous areas. However, there also is the possibility that this change will aggravate already significant inequalities in revenue availability by region and rural\urban location. The government also will need to encourage



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wealthy counties to reallocate funds to poorer areas under their responsibility and itself will have to provide supplementary funds from central sources to poorer counties to keep them from falling even further behind the more advantaged areas.

The new proposals for formula funding of higher education recurrent instructional costs and for competitive funding of research and investment costs are positive in terms of increased transparency and predictability of institutional revenue. Unfortunately, these reforms may also continue existing inequities in funding among institutions and discourage young researchers and smaller institutions from participating in the grant competition. Special expenditure "set-asides" are needed within both the recurrent and the research\investment programmes to assure greater equity and to allow all institutions and researchers to have the opportunity to benefit from the new financing scheme.

Financing issues in Romania are fundamental and profound and will, in large part, determine whether other reforms will have any chance for success. Without adequate resources and incentives for their effective use, no reform effort will succeed. Money obviously will not solve all educational problems, but a lack of funds and inefficient use of available resources will aggravate existing problems and create serious new ones.

Given this set of issue-oriented conclusions from the field visit, the review team has attempted, following further document review, discussion and analysis, to formulate a set of summary recommendations under the aforementioned seven thematic areas. The rationale and recommendations presented here do not simply repeat the recommendations from the earlier chapters. Each set of summary recommendations is preceded by a rationale for that set. The goal is to provide an integrating synthesis of analysis and recommendations within which the interdependent nature of the reform process itself is made obvious. Reforms will not be successful unless participants understand their rational foundation and individual reforms, whatever their benefits, can always be made more effective if they are achieved as part of a co-ordinated reform strategy. It is the development of that logically-derived strategy that is the key objective of both the government and its international partners.

## Key thematic recommendations

### *Communication, consultation and information flow*

Education development in Romania is encumbered by the legacy of the Ceausescu regime. "A social sector usually characterised by prolonged apathy, the Romanian educational system still holds elements of 'residual communism': attitudes, mentalities, social relations, structures and even whole institutions" (Birzea, 1997). There are still few education professionals in the country with the



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knowledge, skills and experience required for the education system to which the current government aspires. Grappling with this legacy is problematic as MoNE tries to undertake very far-reaching, fundamental reforms in a short time. The pace of decision-making and change in education policy is increasing in Romania under MONE's new leadership. Practices in information management and consultative decision-making that are used to formulate and reinforce education system change in OECD countries are new to Romania and may themselves be the object of mistrust and alienation of stakeholders. Attention to communication, consultation and information flow in the change process is critical.

Reformulation of curricula, examination, textbook and other education policies before and since l991 have been conceived mostly by relatively small teams of "experts" (this is less true in VOTEC than elsewhere). In recent years, these teams have usually consisted of Romanian and foreign specialists, with little widespread or substantive participation from the practitioners and those most affected by change – teachers, head teachers, inspectorate staff, pupils and parents. To some extent, such a process is understandable and has been inevitable, given the culture of communication in the past, limited capacity for facilitation, poor telecommunications within Romania and the expense of broad consultative processes. The expectation of schools and teachers is more one of willing acceptance than real engagement in debate about creating change and adopting new practices.

Successful implementation of reforms will ultimately depend on teachers' feeling an ownership of the planned changes. There are signs that teachers do not understand yet or embrace many of the changes being introduced in curriculum and pupil assessment. Teachers expect that parents will have difficulty accepting the new assessment system, which assesses primary school pupils qualitatively (very good, good, sufficient) and replaces the one to ten grading system and ranking of pupils used in the past.

Information to *judet* level inspectorates and schools arrives mostly through a cascade of formal circulars from MoNE and meetings to convey instructions verbally. Inspectorate staff spend a great deal of time trying to digest and master circulars and regulations and find efficient ways to pass them on to schools. "Administrative" communication usually takes priority over professional discourse on the new policies and real professional support to schools and classrooms. Bottom-up feedback into decision-making is lacking at all levels; at the same time enormous bureaucratic demands are placed on lower levels of the system to provide data upward for MoNE use. Information flows need to be based more on analysis that informs management and decision-making. With decentralisation envisaged, there is attention being given to piloting a data interchange agreement, modelled after practice in Scotland. The scheme relies heavily on the doubtful availability of expensive information technology at the inspectorate and school level and a strong culture of open information. The intent or principles of the



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model, however, might well be able to be adapted for trial or use in the Romanian system with existing data and institutional capacity.

It will be important in the near-term to enable teachers to see and reap benefits to themselves in the new policies. To some extent, this has been occurring in the introduction of teacher choice among alternative textbooks and the new 30% optional curriculum at school level. Being enthusiastic about change is understandably difficult, however, when teachers earn low salaries and may perceive new policies in terms of extra work for no extra reward. Feedback loops might be used to recognise exemplary teachers' professional contribution to implementing reforms at the classroom level. Problems that many teachers and other stakeholders seem to agree on is the need to reduce curriculum "overload" and to increase the relevance of schooling to further study and ultimately to the labour market. Communication and consultation about the new policies, both internal to the education system and more publicly, might focus on potential advantages of education reform in these areas.

There is a visible difference in the frequency and style of MoNE communications compared with previous years. MoNE is increasing the spread of documents with information and analysis about the education system, a vision for the future of education and detail on the actual reforms being undertaken. Practical, informative booklets have been issued on the new curriculum framework for general education, curriculum reform in primary education and a new assessment system. Some of these include questionnaires seeking feedback from users, especially teachers and head teachers. Information technology and the mass media are being used more proactively by MoNE. MoNE envisages also the use of television to support introduction of reforms. There is discussion of creating a National Council of Parents as a way to increase the voice of parents in education policy-making.

The changes underway are necessary but not sufficient. Effort and time need to be devoted to balancing top-down information flows with improved bottom-up and horizontal communication, especially at the *judet* and school levels, and to strengthening consultation and feedback mechanisms so that teachers and administrators view their own participation in education change as meaningful. Unless this is achieved and the constituency for education change is better engaged, efforts to improve education in Romania risk being more a succession of sporadic, politically-driven (or stalled), ministry-led initiatives than a continuous long-term process with a common national purpose.

*Recommendations*

– Increased attention, priority and incentive should be given to improving flows of information and consultative decision-making at all levels of the education system. Such effort should be implemented even if it requires



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some reduction in speed of the introduction or formulation of additional reforms.

– Affordable means of improving data collection, flow and use of information within the system should be piloted.

### *From "philosophy" to practice in core values*

There is articulation of a new "philosophy" or core values in teaching and learning in major policy documents in Romanian education of the past several years. These are embodied in the education law (1995), the new National Curriculum Framework (1998), the new system of evaluation in primary school (*Evaluarea în Învãþãmântul Primar*) (1998), the Guidelines for the Reform of Education in Romania by Minister Andrei Marga (1998) and other documents, as well as in the rhetoric of many Romanian educators. The articulation emphasises the need to shift from the "informative to the formative", developing the learner's thinking skills for lifelong learning. A need is seen for education to cultivate sensitivity to human problems and ethical-civic values. Interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning are to be introduced, moving away the strict separation of subjects that dominated the past. It is intended that teachers will have greater freedom in shaping curriculum, choosing methodology and teaching materials. This articulation of new values is important and necessary to set and guide the direction of education in Romania. These newly articulated values are certainly more in line with the aims of education systems in most OECD countries.

The new assessment system underpinning the reforms is perhaps one of the most profound shifts underway. It moves from a norm-referenced to a criterion-referenced approach. This means that a successful teacher should be teaching to make sure that all of the pupils satisfy the learning targets set forth for all pupils. Traditionally in Romania, teachers are much more likely to receive recognition for teaching a small elite corps of excellent pupils or coaching an Olympiad champion than for enabling the majority of their students to meet the learning requirements for that particular grade and subject.

Being such a radical shift, realisation of its objectives will take considerable time to be fully implemented. It is not surprising, therefore, that this new philosophy is enshrined primarily in policy but not yet widely modelled in Romanian classrooms, either in the behaviour of teachers or in the behaviour expected of pupils, or in the programmes of pre- and in-service training of education professionals. The difficulty in making this shift is evidenced in the lack of successful spreading of alternative models of education which have been introduced on a small scale in Romanian education since the opening up of the country in 1990. These alternative models include Waldorf and Montessori schools, foreign language education using models from Europe and the United States, the child-centred "Step by Step"



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pre-school programme of the Soros foundations and others. Many of these models reflect the newly articulated values of education in Romania and the child-centred approaches to learning that are widely practised in OECD countries. By and large, however, all of these initiatives remain in the so-called alternative sector of Romanian education, having little widespread cross-over impact into the practice of mainstream classrooms.

*Recommendations*

- There should be a concerted effort among national and local institutions to debate the articulation of the new approach to teaching and learning and its implications for the classroom as well as for the training of teachers, inspectors and school managers.
- The implementation of the new approach to teaching and its impact on learning needs to be monitored in classroom-based research.
- MoNE and other key national institutions must seek to ensure that the new core values are indeed understood, modelled and rewarded in the policies and programmes in schools and in pre- and in-service teacher training programmes.

### *Institutional co-ordination, alignment and clarity of roles*

The pre-university education system is managed by a combination of institutions inherited from the past and bodies that have been created at different points in recent years to support the delivery of change. Institutions from the past include MoNE, the *Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică* (State Textbook Publishing House), the current structure of the inspectorates and their related institutions such as the *Casa Corpului Didactic* (CCD) and Centre for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance. Newer bodies (many created as part of the education reform project) include the Institute for Educational Sciences, National Council for Curriculum, National Board for Textbook Approval, National Service for Assessment and Examination, National Teacher Training Board, National Board for Education Management and Finance, National Vocational Education and Training Council and Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment. Many of these councils are evolving into independent agencies concerned with such matters as curriculum, assessment and teacher training. A national network of regional training and innovation centres is also currently on the drawing board. Most of the national boards were created under the World Bank education reform project and Phare vocational education and training project, both formulated nearly five years ago. (The supremacy of the state textbook publishing house as a central national institution has given way to a competitive tendering for textbook provision among private publishers, in which the state publisher now participates as a quasi-commercial entity.)



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For most of the l990s, the existence and functioning of the inherited institutions has been based largely on guidelines, practices and even personnel from the pre-l990 institutions or altered only slightly through inter-institutional bargaining. Some of the newer organisations were an awkward result of political compromises since l991 between those in government or Parliament who favoured reform or separation of functions at the national level and those who opposed it. The newer institutions have had to be established or delegated their authority through legislation. Virtually all of the newer institutions have relied heavily in their early development on long-term foreign technical assistance, often providing advice and organisational development from the orientations of professionals from different individual countries (*e.g.* assistance on assessment from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, occupational standards from Australia, textbooks and education management from the United Kingdom and teacher training from the United States).

The formal efforts in Romania to establish institutions, develop leadership and staff capacity, clarify responsibilities and inter-relationships and to generate reform-oriented policies and programmes represent impressive progress in less than a decade. Nevertheless, the stage that has been reached remains one of an institutional patchwork with institutional visions, structures, priorities and programmes that are not always well-stitched together or forming a coherent whole around a common, co-ordinated view of institutional roles. The review team did not have time for in-depth study of these institutions. However, several clear issues did emerge. Co-ordination amongst the various national institutions is essential and could be improved. A steering committee comprised of representatives of the various national boards is convened under MoNE leadership. There does not seem to exist, however, a clear set of priorities and sequencing for the continued implementation of reforms in the coming years or an overall calendar of critical steps reform implementation. A particular problem has been co-ordination between the timing of the articulation of new curriculum and the timing of publisher submissions for new textbook development to the National Board for Textbooks.

Several of the national boards, particularly those created for implementation of the education reform project may need to evolve into more carefully conceived, full-fledged institutions with stronger operational capacity. The National Council for Curriculum and the National Board for Teacher Training (which recently became national agencies) are two such examples. The functions of the National Board for Textbooks may need to be rethought as external support comes to a close and textbook provision operates more as a free market among approved textbooks. Leaders of the various national boards are relatively young, recently trained and assuming very challenging roles. There will be a need for continued training and other support, including external technical assistance, to reinforce capacity-building and assist these managers with implementation issues that will emerge.



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The initiatives of all of the national institutions taken together place enormous pressure for change and delivery on the *judet* level inspectorate functions and, in turn, on schools. Yet there does not seem to be a common approach or process or sequence of steps to reconceptualising the role of the inspectorate. A new model for school inspection has been developed, but this does not encompass a rethinking of the entire inspectorate body as one that facilitates quality assurance of education at the school rather than one that controls and administers the system. Furthermore, it does not articulate the relationships of the inspectorate to the new national institutions. If any decentralisation is to occur from MoNE to the inspectorate or from the inspectorate to the school and its staff, this conceptual shift is essential.

There does not exist a clear, dedicated policy analysis and support function to inform ministerial decision-making. Rather, many of the national institutions and individuals appear to combine their operational roles with assisting MoNE leadership in policy formulation. While this integration of various efforts is desirable, it is not sufficiently rigorous and ongoing to support the pace and complexity of education policy change in Romania.

*Recommendations*

- MoNE will need to undertake a holistic, system-wide review of institutions, their functions, inter-relations and the effectiveness and efficiency of operation to determine if these need to be "remapped" further in line with the envisaged reforms in general education and streamlined in view of the resource constraints in the education sector.
- A detailed three- to five-year implementation timetable of general education reform priorities and activities should be developed to increase the links between efforts of the major national institutions and to better inform, prepare and mobilise institutions at the *judet* and school level.
- The top-down pressures on the inspectorate to change need to be complemented by bottom-up efforts to reconceptualise the entire role of the inspectorate in the face of the system change and to clarify what kind of new responsibilities and support the inspectorate will require to make the shift.
- MoNE might consider forming a dedicated body for independent analysis to inform education policy-making.

### *New roles for evaluation and assessment*

Performance on national and international Olympiads have long been regarded in Romania as evidence of the quality of Romanian education. Romania's participation in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) has



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been important for changing assessment practice and popular perceptions. Participation in TIMSS, co-ordinated through the Institute for Educational Sciences, has helped to developed the capacity of Romanian specialists in the techniques of assessment more widely used in OECD countries. Out of 41 countries participating in the study, Romanian pupils scored 34th in mathematics and 31st in science. These results have raised debate about the quality and relevance of schooling in Romania.

In relation to practices in most OECD countries, examinations in Romania were mostly of low technical quality and did not form a fair and reliable basis for certification and selection, especially at the entry into differentiated secondary education and at the interface between secondary and tertiary education. The former examination system, with its emphasis on recall of vast amounts of factual material covered in the syllabi, gave rise to widespread private, fee-based tutoring of students by teachers outside of school hours, known as the "parallel system" of education. Out-of-school tutoring and even formal, commercial examination preparation are, of course, found in many OECD and developing countries. In the Romanian context, however, this practice was linked very much to the opportunity it provides for teachers to augment low salaries. Various abuses are possible, of course, when parents are paying the very teachers who may also be expected to administer the examinations at the school. The so-called parallel system almost certainly disadvantaged students whose parents were unable to afford the tutoring that has become necessary for successful performance on the exams.

MoNE is to be commended for the priority it is placing on improvements in assessment and examination through both policy-making and institution-building. After years of controversy and debate within the government and Parliament, a National Assessment and Examinations Service (NAES) was formally established in 1999 and is busily assembling staff and facilities with which to carry out its work and enable it to increase security around the administration of exams. Since l991, there has been considerable technical assistance and training of Romanian specialists in assessment through the education reform project and bilateral assistance programmes, primarily of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. These newly trained specialists form the core of the NAES.

The NAES has led the introduction of new classroom assessment practices in primary schooling to correspond with the curricular changes introduced in the l998/99 school year. In the l999/2000 school year, NAES will administer the examinations at the end of lower secondary schooling (*capacitate*) and the secondary cycle (baccalaureate) as national examinations, identifying a network of testing sites and better trained administrators, so as to reduce room for abuse. An intention of the MoNE policy in nationalising the delivery of these two examinations is to reduce the role of school-based entrance examinations for secondary education and faculty-based examinations for selection to university, which are regarded in many



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cases as duplication of effort and unnecessary for student selection. The format and individual items of tests are being reconsidered in light of the aims of the reform and the desired learning outcomes within the new National Curriculum Framework. Aligning what is tested with what is intended to be taught and learned in the classroom is essential to the implementation of the overall reform.

The NAES envisages a national assessment, based on a sample of schools, that will inform review and adaptation of the new curriculum. NAES has already completed a baseline assessment for this work. More ambitious national assessment efforts would follow and NAES would become the natural partner in Romania for international assessments such as the TIMSS. As this role develops, it will be important that the accountability of NAES be constituted in such a way that its assessments are free from any undue political pressure to endorse or to criticise Romanian schooling or reform efforts.

Quite prudently, the NAES sees its near-term priority as the reform of the two major high-stakes examinations in pre-university education. The credibility of NAES and to some extent the credibility of the overall reform in pre-university reform, rests on the NAES being seen as capable of delivering valid, reliable examinations. Some problems in the delivery of the baccalaureate in June 1998 pointed out the sensitivities and high visibility of the MoNE effort to reform the examinations. It would be unwise to put achievement of a new institution at risk by trying to initiate and carry out too many activities simultaneously.

*Recommendations*

- MoNE will need to continue to place a high priority on the work of the NAES, especially on ensuring that it has the resources sufficient for the revamping and smooth delivery of the two major national examinations.
- The policy debate must continue around identifying possibilities for further reducing the selection examinations within the system (especially the school-based entrance examinations at secondary level).
- The role of NAES should evolve over the medium-term into that of an agency which is accountable to the public for the critical assessment of the performance of the education system; it would be inappropriate for the NAES to develop solely as an internal agency of MoNE.

### *Enabling legislation, regulations and procedures*

As seen before, a major obstacle to timely, effective and efficient development of education in Romania is a legislative, regulatory and procedural web that is overly rigid, constraining to institutions and individuals and leaves little room for flexible adaptation of newly introduced changes. The education law of Romania is



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highly detailed in comparison with the more general framework laws of most OECD countries. At all levels of the system, from classrooms to school councils to inspectorates and MoNE officials, frustrations are expressed about the constraining nature of policies and procedures.

Programme implementation and funding flows from both the World Bank and Phare projects have been substantially delayed due to procedural constraints. Constraints stem not only from legislation, regulations and procedures in the education sector but also in related sectors (public finance, court of audits, taxation and duties on imported goods and services). Such obstacles are particularly serious when they delay unnecessarily the disbursement of loan funds, for which the government must pay substantial commitment fees.

*Recommendations*

- Romania should adopt wherever possible policy frameworks and procedures that enable the various actors in the education system to fulfil their potential roles and responsibilities more efficiently and effectively.
- Romanian government, in dialogue with its international partners, should take steps to facilitate and streamline the implementation of external assistance for education development.

### *Managing reform and policy change as an investment cost*

Major decisions about education reform and policy change in Romania are not sufficiently based on analysis of their potential costs as investments and as investments with annual recurrent cost implications. In the sector's highly constrained budgetary situation, there are also trade-offs to be considered in which reforms to undertake and in what sequence. The calculation of budgetary requirements to support reform appears more often to follow decision-making rather than to precede it. Dialogue about reforms may not always be well-connected with analysis of potential costs and the cost-effectiveness of previous decisions or initiatives.

Each of the following policy options, under discussion or in early stages of formulation or implementation, have major cost implications over the medium-term and long-term and have likely to pose difficult trade-offs for MoNE:

- Moving to a "free market" in textbooks with the state continuing to finance textbooks in basic education.
- Upgrading the two major examinations, with each pupil receiving his/her own individual exam paper produced by the NAES.
- In-service training to support new roles, responsibilities and expectations of inspectorates, head teachers and teachers, including the creation of a national network of regional training and innovation centres.



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– Scaling up the innovations of the Phare VET Project by equipping a wider number of secondary schools and ensuring adequate budget for their recurrent costs.
– Widespread upgrading of rural schools and unqualified teachers.
– Creating a national distance education programme for teacher upgrading.
– Implementing a new management information systems nation-wide.
– Amendments to legislation that would add an additional year to compulsory education either at grade IX or in pre-school.

*Recommendation*

– As a matter of urgency, capacity must be developed within MoNE or a policy support institution to model sector investment options and analyse the cost implications of various reform policies. Collaboration between MoNE, World Bank and International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has recently begun in this area.

### *Utilising external assistance effectively for education development*

Grant and loan financing of education development in Romania by external sources is substantial on a per capita basis and in relation to the levels received by neighbouring countries in East Central Europe. A study prepared by the Institute for Educational Sciences estimates that more than US$500 million equivalent has been committed to education in Romania in recent years. The largest among these commitments are from the World Bank (General Education Reform Project, US$50 million; School Rehabilitation Project, US$70 million; Reform of Higher Education, US$50 million) and an EU Phare Project in vocational education and training (VET) of ECU 25 million. Additional financing has been provided through numerous bilateral programmes, foundations and NGOs.

There is no doubt that the presence of these external assistance agencies and projects has provided both a support and impetus for educational development, especially when political will to reform was lagging in recent years. The technical assistance and local and external training provided to Romanians through externally financed projects has also left a visible development in the capacity of the education sector, although primarily in national-level institutions. Nevertheless, there are issues and lessons from recent experience in external financing of education in Romania that need to be addressed.

The "project mode" of international assistance, which may have been appropriate for Romania in the early and mid-l990s, should now give way to assistance that is better integrated with an overall strategy and priorities for the education system and rooted in Romanian institutions. This is now possible with a clearer policy



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and curriculum framework in general education, a strategic direction and new funding policies in tertiary education and the network of reform capacity and new institutions created under some of the earlier projects. There is now vast new need and potential for effective external assistance in school improvement, teacher training and community involvement in schools.

As several of the major early projects are coming to a close (Phare VET in December 1998 and the General Education Reform Project in the next several years), it will be important to ensure that there are clear follow-up and exit strategies by the external agencies and plans for the sustainability of project impact and scaling up of programmes where appropriate. Examples of areas where attention is needed are the scaling up of innovations successfully introduced at the 75 "demonstration" schools of the Phare VET Programme and the sustainability of the new system of textbook provision for compulsory education through competition amongst publishers. Both of these efforts currently depend on the implementation capacity of *ad hoc* project management units in the MoNE.

There will need to be better information and co-ordination at the national level of the efforts of major providers of assistance in education. In the past, the counterpart relationship for external assistance and responsibility for implementation were assigned in an *ad hoc* and fragmented way, often linking projects to the most interested or qualified person in MoNE or other appropriate agencies. With the new national level institutional structures, these relationships can and should be better grounded in appropriate agencies and offices. MoNE will also need to move into a more proactive role in establishing priorities for external assistance and directing external support to areas of need and appropriate implementing institutions. MoNE can also help to foster linkages and partnerships among various efforts. MoNE could also play a greater role in evaluating and disseminating information on what has and has not succeeded in the early and ongoing efforts and why.

*Recommendations*

- There will need to be clear follow-up or exit strategies and sustainability plans for the impact of early major projects for education reform.
- MONE's capacity and attention to assessment and co-ordination of externally-financed activities in education must be enhanced.

It would be inappropriate to end the report of this review with these recommendations without a restatement of the review team's great respect for what Romania has achieved and is now accomplishing in the education sector. Of all resources available to Romania in the future, the quality of its people, their respect for the value of education and the commitment of its national and local authorities to improvement are the most valuable. External observers cannot help but be impressed as much by what has been done as by what remains to be done.



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Although it is inevitable that a policy review has focused more on the latter, the review team's optimism about the potential for further improvement in Romanian education is based in large part on the excellent beginning that has been made.



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OECD PUBLICATIONS, 2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 PARIS CEDEX 16
PRINTED IN FRANCE
(14 2000 05 1 P) ISBN 92-64-17635-7 – No. 51181 2000