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## IMPACT OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT ON EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES

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**Abstract:** *The alteration of the modern world's principles, the relativization of values, the vanishing of references, the invasion of the new and of the unpredictable, the hallucinating promotion of quantity and appearances to the detriment of quality and core values, the indeterminism and uncertainty – are only a few of the traits that characterize the contemporary world and that hold an impact on the human condition. In this context, the very status of pedagogy, as a science and art of education has modified, whereas the perspective of enlightenment over the paideic action has come to an end. Within the managerial type of school, learning becomes a mere transfer of useful data for the final purpose of graduating and not a process in which actors enjoy the process itself. The paradigm of the managerial type of school transforms the relationship educator – educated, from a deeply human relationship into a contract-based relationship. The application of European quality standards in the field of education imposes the surpassing of mimesis, amateurism and improvisation and, not the least, a change of mentality in all those concerned about the quality of education.*

**Keywords:** *quality management, contract-based school, education paradigm, humanist psychology*

The alteration of the modern world's principles, the relativization of values, the vanishing of references, the invasion of the new and of the unpredictable, the hallucinating promotion of quantity and appearances to the detriment of quality and core values, the indeterminism and uncertainty – are only a few of the traits that characterize the contemporary world and that hold an impact on the human condition. In this context, the very status of pedagogy, as a science and art of education has modified, whereas the perspective of enlightenment over the paideic action has come to an end. There are voices

claiming that we are now witnessing the death of pedagogy and the increasingly emphasized tendency, on behalf of the academic community, to make the move from "education, perceived as pedagogy, to education regarded as management". (Michael R. Allen "The Death of Pedagogy").

Following the same trend, Pascal Brukner states: "The more pertinent is the hierarchy of schooling institutions, based on their results, the more they become nothing else but factories producing customers and not free human beings, which finally equal the destruction of schools".

The perils are also noticed by the French thinker, Jean-François Lyotard, who realizes that the spiritual formation of a human being (*Bildung*) falls under desuetude and the process of knowledge is excessively pragmatic. Within the managerial type of school, learning becomes a mere transfer of useful data for the final purpose of graduating and not a process in which actors enjoy the process itself. The paradigm of the managerial type of school transforms the relationship educator – educated, from a deeply human relationship into a contract-based relationship. In this scenario, the professor or educator becomes an administrator of data-goods and concentrates his or her attention toward three directions:

1. teaching identifies with “goods-delivery”, which needs to be “wrapped”, to the extent in which data and its belonging abilities need to be well organized and delivered to be consumed (passively) in measured doses;
2. the “delivery” process has to be well planned and organized;
3. the information organization and the institutional organization hold the same objective, clearly defined and quantifiable: passing of exams.

The topic of quality and the formative meaning of education are omitted.

The allocation of such a “role” to an educator has overwhelming effects on medium and long terms. On the one side, there occurs a de-professionalization of educators, and, on the other side, individualized education makes room for routine and external limitations imposed by passing exams, which becomes a priority, and a target in itself.

In this context, the role of the student is reduced to a buyer’s role that has to be seduced by means of “nicely looking merchandise”. The same contract-based relationship is to be met in between school and society: the school provides society with individuals well equipped with the necessary competences for its reproduction and maintenance. School thus becomes a “manufacturer whose product is the very graduate that stands for a person who passed pre-established exams, under optimal

conditions”. The very examination tools fall under standardization. Predominant are examinations of “factual” type, the education “market” being invaded by books and other materials containing multiple-choice tests and quizzes. The educator turns into a “troubleshooter” of shortcomings, he or she supervises the successful passage of his/her clients through the bed of Procrustes: “An <<odd>> student who does not match typologies benefits from a special <<treatment>>, as if he raised a quality issue. His adjustment is experimented, whereas correction is looked for, and, should all efforts be useless, the student is abandoned and the process of education is continued” (Michael R. Allen “The Death of Pedagogy”). “Deficient products” are often concealed, in order to preserve the image of the institution on the market. The institution’s promotion takes over the trend of commercial advertisements, meant to attract financial resources and gaining of popularity by means of specialized personnel in public relations, but who are unaware of the area of education.

Pascal Brukner warns about: “Although school constitutes the place where certain useful preparations occur, which later on will be commercialized, it has to continue to facilitate the learning of some disciplines, free of cost, and which are related to one’s very personal accomplishment” (“Misery of Prosperity”).

The famous American philosopher and pedagogist, John Dewey, criticized the redundant, erudite and disconnected from reality school, and promoted the idea of progressive education, seen as reconstruction and continuing reorganization of experience, excluding any prescription of determining, external model. In “Democracy and Education”, a reference work for the twentieth century pedagogy, Dewey perceives democracy as “shared experience”. Starting from this assertion, education itself, in the spirit of democracy, implies an individual’s self-improvement, and more than that, his participation. This is the weak point of the entrepreneurial school that, ignoring pedagogy, ends up ignoring the very core of democracy.



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The contemporary education takes over the tensions and dysfunctions of society in its whole. Analysts discover the status of confusion, hyper-bureaucratization, depersonalization, demoralization of personnel, emotional weariness, fall of infrastructure, curricular stagnation and violence as being characteristics of the education system, which represent, at the same time, the mirror image of the contemporary world.

In a society based on money, placed under the tyranny of economy, all activities are filtered through the cost-profit ration, including education. Nigel Blake criticizes the approach to education as "market economy", which distorts the specificity of education, reducing its chances to oppose deviations and dangerous tendencies of society (technicism, consumerism etc.).

The economic perspective and management applied to education result in the aggressive reduction of the teaching action and educational relationship's depth and complexity, of school's culture and ethos. The industrial type of management cannot become a paradigm for the educational reality administration, without ignoring the human infinite diversity and the human excellence.

The antidote could not have come but from the field of humanities. Thus, an ample process of establishing a new educational paradigm has begun, and it was designed so as to diminish the radicalization of consequences of modernity, while improving the human condition, paradoxically subdued to hardships.

The post-modern paradigm of education belongs to the interpretative movement of humanities and education sciences and it consists of the existential-humanist paradigm and the interactional one.

The existential-humanist paradigm reflects the society's effort to recover the human side

("homo-humanus" – Karl Jaspers) by promoting the education centered on people and based on the humanist psychology.

At the core of the humanist psychology lies the human being, considered to be a free being that possesses a growing and development potential in need to be valued through education. An emphasis is laid on the uniqueness and the infinite diversity of the human beings, on their freedom to choose and to build their own existential path.

In this context, the abusive use of scientific, statistical, exclusively quantitative methods is considered to be inadequate for the study of the human being.

The role of psychology and, implicitly, of education is to help people to maximize their potential of psychological growth and to support them in reaching their psychic and social maturity. Moreover, the humanist psychology offers an optimistic perspective on human beings and their becoming, and is able to increase their pedagogical optimism, whose efficiency has already been proven in the educational action.

Nevertheless, knowledge and understanding of the human being, together with his entire personal and relational life, of his subjective and conscientious experience, do not represent a purpose in itself. They are but the premises for the drawing of action methods for the purpose of surpassing internal or external obstacles, and appreciating personal potential.

Starting from the humanist psychology, new models of psycho-pedagogical action have been designed, and their common trait is the individual-centered approach, an individual found in a double status: object of formation but also subject of his/her self-formation.

To the opposite pole are the supporters of standards application and of recommendation

for quality assurance in education. They appreciate that any rejection act reflects isolation, lack of realism or lucidity. Denial of criteria is not justified so long as these criteria hold only an orientation character and are perfectible.

Although “quality” in the industrial era is approached exclusively in relation with the technical field, (something that may be controlled, incorporated within a product as the result of manufacturing), after the Second World War, through voices of E. W. Deming and J.M. Juran, we witness an expansion of the term, a new interpretation, outside the manufacturing process. Going beyond this utilitarian meaning of the term, quality aims at activities, processes, organizations etc., giving them some attributes capable to satisfy specific requirements. Thus, the term is used in reference to the quality of a university, consisting of the quality of education activities taking place within the university.

Even though the idea of evaluating organizational performances of universities is European, it came to be used on the American continent as well. At the middle of the twentieth century, Sir Arthur Norrington, Chairman of the Trinity College of Oxford proposed a classification of universities into three categories, based on their value standards (quality of educational processes), proposal that led to numerous oppositions. Still, the idea is accepted in the USA, where an agency is founded – “College Connections” and fifty publications take care of rating the best American universities. Only in 1998 are debated reconsidered in England, and in 1999, sixteen indicators of performance are applied to universities.

Education quality standards need to be clearly formulated, they should be clear and concise, but realist, that is, they must be applied to the school realities at a specific time. These standards constitute an important instrument for the education institution management, but also for the teaching staff and students engaged in the educational process. Their teleological value lies in the clear formulation of objectives to be reached. *Where do I want to reach? How do I reach there? How do I know that I reached there?*

They are an extrapolation of any teaching action, irrespective of the nature of the contents transmitted. Following the same manner, the rule of 3Ms (methods, means, materials) can be applied so as to identify the necessary resources for the accomplishment of the objectives proposed.

The closest to the “core” of education are the standards regarding the personal dimension (human), including behavior and attitude within the educational endeavor of those involved in it. These aspects, harder to be quantified, are finally reflected in the quality of education. One’s personal set of values, philosophy of life, attitude toward the human being, toward self, own profession etc. are dimensions belonging to the human nature and which have an impact on the quality of the actions performed.

The harmonization of the education actors’ expectations (teachers-students) is also an important aspect holding major consequences in the quality field. Accomplished expectations lead to satisfaction, whereas unaccomplished ones become source for frustration and disappointment. Even though these standards are the result of the economic and managerial thinking application within the field of education – an activity profoundly spiritual – the heart of the issue remains connected with the human psychology. Those who design and apply into practice their projected ideas are the people. In the absence of an anthropological approach, there is the risk that the issues of quality in education remain a mere slogan, an abstract requirement, an extra load of bureaucracy, with no effect on the real world.

The basic principle of the quality management is “Describe what you do and do what you describe!” Therefore, any significant change in the quality of education starts with the teachers. These are the ones to apply what they do. We belong to the former stage: describe what you do, which results in emitting some impressive quantities of documents that nobody has the time to apply into practice. We are caught in this whirlpool of documents like in a trap, our own trap that consumes our powers.



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Maybe the system in itself is not a bad one, yet, the manner in which it is applied is wrong. The mechanical application, lacking criticism, of some models and their implementation within the Romanian space reveals not only incompatibilities but also weaknesses of the Romanian people, which Constantin Radulescu Motru spotted. The Romanian thinker identifies the *lack of perseverance* as a characteristic of the Romanian soul, which becomes visible in the nineteenth century, once with the reorganization of the Romanian state. At that time, the "professional improvisations epoch" started, through imitations from other foreign nations.

The application of European quality standards in the field of education imposes the

surpassing of mimesis, amateurism and improvisation and, not the least, a change of mentality in all those concerned about the quality of education.

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