

## *Particularities of Management and Quality Assurance in Education*

*Andrei Octavian PARASCHIVESCU*  
*George Bacovia University, Bacau, ROMANIA*  
*adiparaschivescu@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** *The paper addresses some aspects of the quality education, the problematics and the complexity of quality assurance in education, the centring of quality management as value added in education and progress. We are moving towards a form of value creation, a system in which value is not created by companies and shared with the client, but it is created by the collaboration of the two parties. Referring to the two sides, we will fully justify the need for education through and for the quality of both the educator and the beneficiary of education.*

*Priorities and approaches are in line with the EU education programs as well as the new ISO 21001 standard. It demonstrates how the quality of education is primarily a management, a pedagogy, a culture, a present and future issue.*

**Keywords:** *quality, education, quality management, quality assurance, ISO 21001, self-evaluation*

### **Introduction**

Debates on the quality of education at European (and not only) level are becoming more and more alive today and the responsibility of the actors involved is unequivocally expressed: "The quality of an education system cannot go beyond the quality of its teachers and school principals, as learning pupils is, ultimately, the product of what is happening in class." [6]

A recent EU Education Report confirms the necessity and importance of the subject. We are very far from a European or international consensus on what a "good school" means. **"Making high-quality education a reality for all young people is an essential concern for the future of Europe."** [13]

School is a space of humanism and professionalism in the heart of society. It cannot exist without responsible, creative, coherent and proactive involvement of teachers and those who benefit from the services of the education system: primary school pupils, secondary school students, students, parents, employers.

Each national education system has introduced, over time, different elements of management and quality assurance, but if we try to compare the different national initiatives, we will find very few common elements. "This lack of unity is due to the fact that one cannot speak of a quality of education "in itself", but of the values promoted in society and at the level of the school organization; of the **education policies and strategies** at national, regional and local level; of the existing situation, defined by contextual factors, culture and traditions, etc., of the evolution of the concept of *quality* " [7].

However, "the paradox felt dramatically by educational practitioners - increasing quality in education becomes impossible due to the over-dimensioning of quantitative requirements imposed bureaucratic at all levels of the system and of the educational process." [3]

Not all evils can be attributed to the system in general, even if it is complex and conservative (with very high reaction time). Quality occurs in school, in the teacher's direct relationship with the student, so if we feel a minus in quality, the problem is either the teacher or student, or the interaction between them. **At the level of education, of school, major changes are needed in culture and quality management. We cannot talk about quality in education without reference to the quality of education and the educator.**

Do we have a **quality** school? Do we want a quality school? Do we want a better future? In the field of **education quality**, very few researches and analyses have been undertaken at national level, although the requirements in this field are increasing.

The fundamental pillars of education: "learning to learn", "learning to do", "learning the rules of cohabitation," and "learning to be" receive new formative content and require new teaching-learning strategies. "Learning to know" can be concretized, first by creating the learning conditions specific to the knowledge society for every inhabitant

of the planet. Consideration must be given to the understanding of one's own destiny and the essence of the human being in order to adopt a dignified, sociable and responsible behaviour.

The approach to this work of quality in the school is argued by the desire to discover ways to achieve quality in education and performance in editorial management. There is a close link between these two components, because a performance management of the school inevitably leads to a good education of the pupils in the school.

Treating the evaluation / self-evaluation process is very important for analysing the way in which quality is measured in a school unit. Starting from this fact, the analysis areas in the school institution evaluation were proposed at the national level and the level of performance of the analysed school could be determined according to the data obtained at self-assessment.

Today, education is not limited to youth. Lifelong learning is a new fundamental requirement. Vocational training and lifelong learning become essential elements of the education system.

### 1. The General Concept of "Quality" and its Application in Education

According to Cristea [3] "the evaluation of the quality of education implies a set of common, universal, universal axiomatic criteria. The most important ones are *the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of education* at all levels of the system and the educational process."

Efficiency and quality of education are fundamental prerequisites for social cohesion, active citizenship, economic growth and human development for the transition to a knowledge society. The development of these benchmarks is based on the legislation already developed in the field of quality assurance of education and is the concrete way in which the legal provisions in force will be translated into the methodologies, guides and other instruments which, according to the law, are or will be elaborated in the immediately following period.

Quality definitions are numerous (over one hundred ...).

"**Quality** means good work, good product / service, satisfied customer, conscientious workers, performance management, excellent quality management.

"**Quality** is a philosophy; it involves a profound cultural exchange that determines the participation and involvement of all, as well as the implementation of management systems that put the customer first." [4, p. 24]

**Quality** is done by people who continually master / assure / control / improve quality according to the documents that prescribe it. Quality must meet / meet market / consumer requirements / requirements that can change over time. This change takes place in three planes corresponding to the three dimensions that characterize the quality:

- Cultural dimension
- The strategic dimension
- Operational dimension [11, 140]

In TQM, the quality of products and services is defined based on customer focus. This requires TQM to build on the creation of a quality culture, with key action being **continuous improvement** in this context. **Quality** = "the set of characteristics, the characteristics of the educational process (in which all available resources and environmental factors are involved), which gives it the ability to meet current and future needs in the knowledge, skills, performance of individuals, enterprises, society and the state" [12].

"The pedagogical concept of **quality in education** defines the capacity of the system and of the educational process to accomplish their general functions (with an objective character, which determines the basic structure of education / correlation teacher - educator, teacher - student), at higher parameters, employed in positive sense through the finite (subjective character), value-designed at the level of philosophy and education policy.

We have in mind:

- a) the function of maximal generality (training-development of the personality of the educator for his short-, medium- and long-term psychosocial integration) and the main functions of social (cultural, civic, professional) and psychological (cognitive, non-cognitive) formation;
- b) the finality of the educational system (the ideal of education, the general and strategic goals) and the educational process (general and specific objectives, operationalised by the teacher in each specific activity / lesson, etc.)". [ 3]

**Quality in education** is therefore *the set of characteristics that demonstrate the extent to which the objective, implicit (general functions of education, the basic structure of education) and the subjective, explicit (the objectives of the education / training activity employed by the designer are fulfilled or satisfied pedagogically) at all levels of the system and the education process).*

Currently, at the level of the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF), there are three working definitions, considered to be compatible, respectively:

- **The technical and regulatory definition** (provided by Law 87/2006) - *"the quality of education is the set of characteristics of a study program and its provider, which fulfils the expectations of the beneficiaries as well as the quality standards."*
- **The definition formulated in the European Quality Assurance Framework in Education and Vocational Training** - *"quality in education and training is not only a technical aspect, it depends on specific political, institutional and individual goals and goals, achievable in different time units."*
- **The definition adopted in the EU Phare programs for the modernization of vocational and technical education**, according to which *quality* is presented as a *"level of satisfaction in relation to the offer of education and training, determined by compliance with the standards and achieving the expected level of excellence and made by beneficiaries and other stakeholders"*.

The shift to the relative sense of quality requires public institutions to provide quality education to all pupils, including those in the farthest part of the country. This also means a change in the mode of quality assessment: the quality of the system must be defined and evaluated not so much on the performance of the "peaks" but in terms of the overall performance of the "base".

## 2. Quality Management in Education

In all the European Union Reports (since 2010) and of our country, regarding education, quality is at the forefront, and strategic quality management is the sure way to follow. Processes aiming at improving quality have been schematized in the literature in several ways (Figure 1):

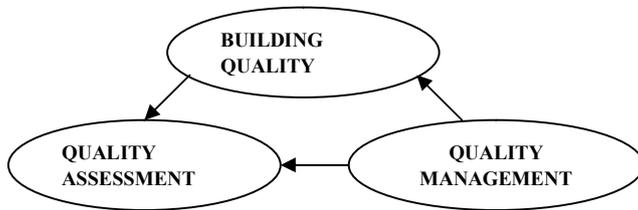
- *Quality Triangle - Juran Trilogy* [9, 14], (Figure 1a).
- *Deming's Wheel - PDCA Principle* [2, 186], (Figure 1b).
- *Mastering quality - the Euler diagram* [5, 58], (Figure 1 c).

Each of these representations also has special meanings for quality education management, but Deming's wheel is the most representative, with the PDCA principle accepted both by theoreticians and practitioners as a means of leading continuous improvement, which is suggestively illustrated by the slope of progress.

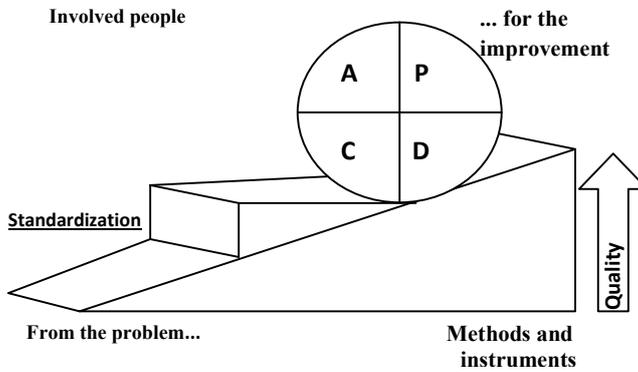
TQM is a managerial strategy that is based on culture / consciousness of quality across the organization. In education, TQM takes, for example, the curriculum shape at school decision, the extreme diversification of curricula and curriculum pathways, multivalent teacher training and the application of the concepts of (*"school improvement"*) and *"organization / school ("learning organization – "school that learns")* - all leading to a permanent renewal of the school life and a permanent adaptation of the educational offer to the changing educational needs of individuals and communities.

Total quality management in education has traditionally focused on *the product / process model*. This model follows the analogy with production:

- entrance = students / students
- process = education
- product = graduates
- Quality control = assessments / self-assessments
- customers / stakeholders = employers / consumers, society.

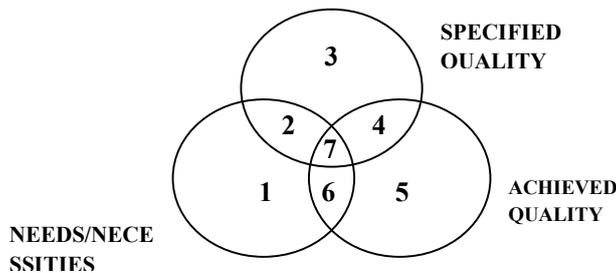


**Construction:** defining what we want and how to achieve quality  
**Assesment:** quantifying differences between what we have achieved and what was intended  
**Management:** administrating continuous improvement of education quality



**P "Plan":** forecasting, planning, building  
**D "Do":** achieving  
**C "Check":** checking, assessing  
**A "Act":** action, corection, continuous improvement

1 b - PDCA principle (Deming – Shewart cycle)



- 1- needs that are not specified by the customer and are not achieved
- 2- needs that are specified by the customer
- 3- part of the product useless specified and not achieved
- 4- useless specified part of the product and achieved
- 5- part of the product that is not specified, it is useless and it is achieved
- 6- needs that are not specified by the customer and that are achieved
- 7- mastered quality

1 c – Governing quality

Figure no. 1. Schematising the process of quality improvement

Total quality management also includes a *service / process* model. Education is perceived as a service for pupils / students who provide it for themselves. In this model, the primary stakeholder is the one who learns how to use his service. An educational institution needs to identify and work with several stakeholders and more customers. Continuous improvement and innovation underpin the new *quality management strategy in education management* [8, 648] (Figure no. 2).

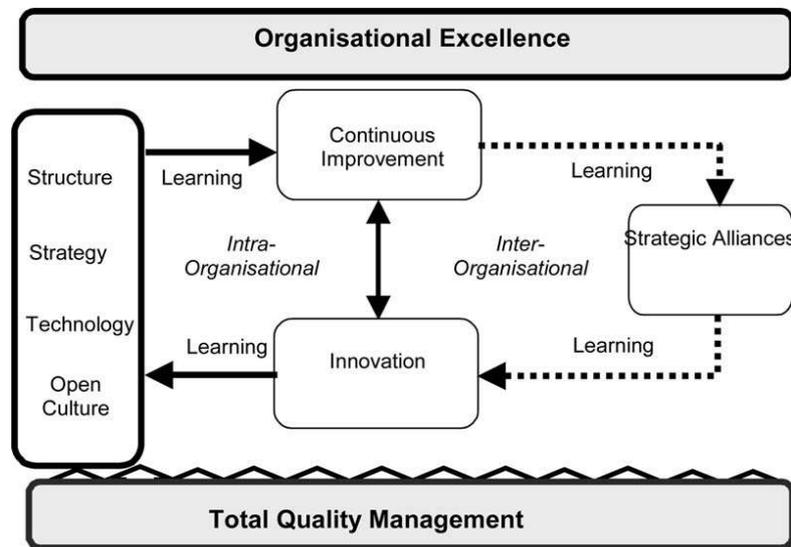


Figure no. 2. The Interaction of Learning Activities

*Educational management* is "the science and the art" to prepare human resources, form personalities, according to finesse accepted by individual and society or a certain community. It includes a set of principles and functions, norms and methods of leadership that *ensure the achievement of the objectives of the educational system (as a whole or at the level of the component elements), at the highest standards of quality and efficiency.*

### 3. Quality Assurance

**Transformational vision of quality** means that the entire management and insurance system evolves together, influencing each other, in orders to satisfy the needs and interests of the beneficiaries. An educated beneficiary who is effectively involved in quality management will demand quality educational services that will in turn make the customer more demanding and involved in quality management.

**The transformational quality assurance model** has emerged over the last two decades with TQM. Quality assurance is understood as a continuous and evolutionary process of meeting the changing customer requirements, including the social responsibility of the supplier. The producer / supplier is no longer satisfied with the overall satisfaction of the needs of a particular target group of clients, but tries to meet the individual needs of each customer. This can be done only by considering **organizational culture and staff motivation** as the essential resources of this new meaning of quality.

Contemporary education can only support this concept: increasing the quality of education leads the beneficiary to be more demanding, demanding an even higher level of the quality of educational services. Evaluation and quality assurance cannot be achieved exclusively through external evaluation (inspection), which rarely can effectively prevent the occurrence of major dysfunctions and which, obviously, cannot keep pace with rapid social change. As a result, in the quality assurance systems, there is an increasing emphasis on **inter-evaluation** and, above all, on **self-evaluation**.

Between management science and pedagogy as a science of education there is a similarity determined by several factors, which have a pronounced interdisciplinary character [1, 12].

On the boundary between the two areas, a new discipline can be outlined and which is going to be defined and applied, that is the *educational / pedagogical management*.

*Pedagogical management* is a system of concepts, methods, guidance and leadership, coordination, used to achieve the objectives of education, at the level of the expected performance.

*Pedagogical management* knows, integrates and adapts the data provided by related sciences: economics (organization and efficient use of education resources in relation to objectives), sociology (management of organizations, groups, relationships, social phenomena generated in the educational field), psycho-sociology (the dimensions of personality the role of the manager in the exercise of roles), political science (making decisions, organizing, leading groups according to objectives, finding solving strategies) [1, 13].

*Pedagogical management* is the science and art of moving from the empiricism of leadership, to its rationality and creativity. It can be developed, theoretically and practically, on the dimensions: conceptual, procedural, situational-operational, functional, methodological, psycho-sociological, and creative-educational itself, creative.

**The new requirements of management and quality assurance in education aim at the comprehensive reform** of education in Romania conceived as a set of measures regarding [1, 10]:

- Curricular reform (curriculum, programs, manuals) and European compatibility of the national curriculum;
- Switching from reproductive to creative learning;
- A new connection between schools, high-schools and universities, on the one hand, and their economic, administrative and cultural environment, on the other;
- Improving infrastructure and connecting to the electronic communications of the world today;
- Reforming school and academic management through decentralization and creating institutional autonomy of educational units;
- The initiation of advanced forms of international cooperation

There must be taken into account the combination of autonomy and quality assurance. [13] Building a quality assurance system in an education provider is based on some **guiding principles** that will build specific *criteria, standards, indicators and procedures*. *All this requires*: customer focus, accountability, results (value added, value created), individual and institutional autonomy, empowerment, dialogue, valorisation of resources (human and material), supplier - inefficient partnership, innovation, continuous improvement.

#### 4. A New Standard of the Management System for Educational Organizations

Education is not only a basic right, but a fundamental part of society, so that the **quality** of educational providers is the concern of all. However, an educational organization can never guarantee the success of its trainees. There are, however, a number of ways in which it can respond more effectively to needs and can contribute to better learning outcomes.

ISO 21001, *Educational Organizations - Management Systems for Educational Organizations - Requirements for use*, is a management system standard that is partially aligned to ISO 9001: 2015 for quality management systems. It provides a common management tool for educational organizations to improve processes and address the needs and expectations of service users.

The new standard will also help education providers to align their activities effectively with their mission and vision and provide more personalized learning, both benefiting not only trainees but also through improved processes and a system of improvement in time, the contribution of educators, parents and other stakeholders who will / will also improve the quality of the results.

#### Conclusions

The recent history of service quality management is rich in lessons: "listening" and customer respect, the need for team value-enhancing, continuous learning and the learning organization, the application and development of the institutional and regulatory framework, the need to inform and capitalize on information, continuous quality and excellence improvement.

At present, in the quality management of educational services there is a resizing of quality notions in direct relationship with educators and educators, with regulations related to educational management, knowledge management, participatory management, and strategic management.

Despite the unanimous agreement on the importance of the quality of education, there are still many mistakes, problems, disagreements, "overshadowing quantitative requirements imposed bureaucratically at all levels of the system and the educational process" [3].

The quality of education will always depend on organizational culture. According to Nguyen, [10, p. 92], organizational culture is considered a key element of success or failure in the quality approach. Improving the quality of education will lead, through the qualifications provided by education providers, to the adequacy of educational services to the expressed and implicit needs, and to the **satisfaction growth** of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the educational services offered.

The conclusion is that in order to change well what happens in school / class, in order to "produce" quality, each teacher must know his weaknesses, understand good practices in the field, be motivated to improve them.

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