

**Who is to blame?
Causes and Effects of the dramatic drop in the Bacalaureate exam
results in Romania**

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

EU	European Union
Eurostat	European Union Statistics Centre
INSSE	Romanian National Institute of Statics
UN Statistic Division	United Nations Statistic Division
SRI	Romanian Service of Information
DNA	National Division for fight Against Corruption
Ro	Romania

Abstract

This paper discusses the main causes for which a significant percentage of high school students in Romania fail the Baccalaureate Exam each year. The analysed period of this phenomenon is from 2007 until 2014, 2007-2009 being the reference period when great results were achieved. Based on education importance and Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry and Social Constructivism, this study is looking on why this phenomenon is manifesting itself and what impact it has on short and long term on students and future generations from different perspectives.

What this paper is arguing is that without changing the current context a vicious circle that not only keep the situation with no major improvements but also might have a worsening effect in the near future. Thus, this issue needs more attention and sustainable solutions from all parties responsible.

Relevance to Development Studies

It is known that Education holds the key of a better world as well as improving it will led to find new ways and theories that will help to develop faster and in a productive way.

Although Romania has come a long way since 1989 revolution and the fall of Communism, systemic issues exist that are holding back the development of the state. Thus, education is an important sector which has a contributing role in changing the context and ameliorating the problems in the system. However, if its quality continues to decrease, all the others sectors will follow suit. In consequence, education has a profound impact over development as a whole.

Keywords

Education - baccalaureate exam- development-upper secondary level

Chapter 1 : Introduction

This paper will focus on the problems facing the Romanian development. Although there were many changes in the last 25 years, when the Communist era ended and steps towards a democratic country started to take place, a slight progress being registered, Romania is still viewed as a backward country with many critical issues which remain to be solved.

However, due to the fact that the problems that Romania faces are spread throughout all sectors, this paper cannot undertake the mission to focus on all of them. Therefore, I have decided to focus on the education sector, highlighting the upper secondary level, as I consider this to be of an utter importance, since the changes brought to it can improve the system.

Many scholars stated that education has an important impact over the development and even more so, they are interrelated. For instance “a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else”(Harbison, 1973 in Joseph, 2007: 1). Taking this into consideration, one can argue that any changes in the Romanian Education System will affect the society as a whole.

1.1 Statement of the problem

This research will be looking at the situation of the upper secondary students in Romania from a social-economic point of view. The aim of this research is to find the causes for the decline in the results of the national examination, also called baccalaureate, an exam that high school students have to take at the end of this educational cycle. The period that is going to be analysed is from 2007 until 2014 and within this period, the first two years are serving as a standard, due to the fact that the results in that period were much higher.

This exam measures the performances and knowledge acquired by the graduate high school students on the duration of either 4 years or 5 years of studying, depending on the type of high school -theoretical or vocational - that students chose to attend at the end of the gymnasium. The exam itself, as well as sitting this exam is very important due to the fact that only after having

passed this exam, pupils can enrol for higher education courses. Consequently, they can either continue with their studies, or choose to end it there. Nevertheless, in the case of the latter ones, their work status will not be as an unskilled labourer as in the case of those who do not pass the baccalaureate exam.

However, the students' failure to pass this exam because of different reasons has an impact over the quality of the training they received and thus, this implies a drop in the economic sector.

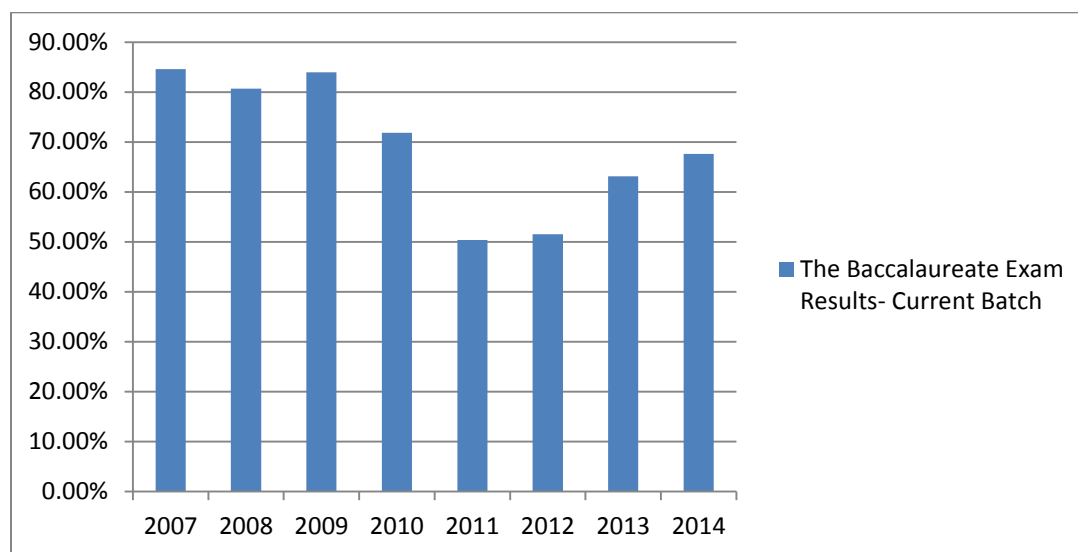
Moreover, a decline in education and implicitly in the economy would have a huge impact in the actual development of the state, as fewer students being enrolled for higher education, which has a direct impact in the labor market in terms of professionals. Also, it would have an impact in the credibility of the educational system and, most importantly, the level of culture can drop as well because of less educated people, not to mention the fact that it can have an impact in terms of arising criminal activities. All of these factors can contribute to a decline in the development of the state and of its citizens.

As the charts below show, in the past few years there is a significant decline in terms of how many students have passed the exam. Moreover, those aspects will be analysed in detail in the next chapters.

There are two charts, the first one shows how many students from that specific generation have passed the exam and the second chart shows the percentage of passing from multiple batches (the students who did not pass the exam in their batch can retake it with the next generation).

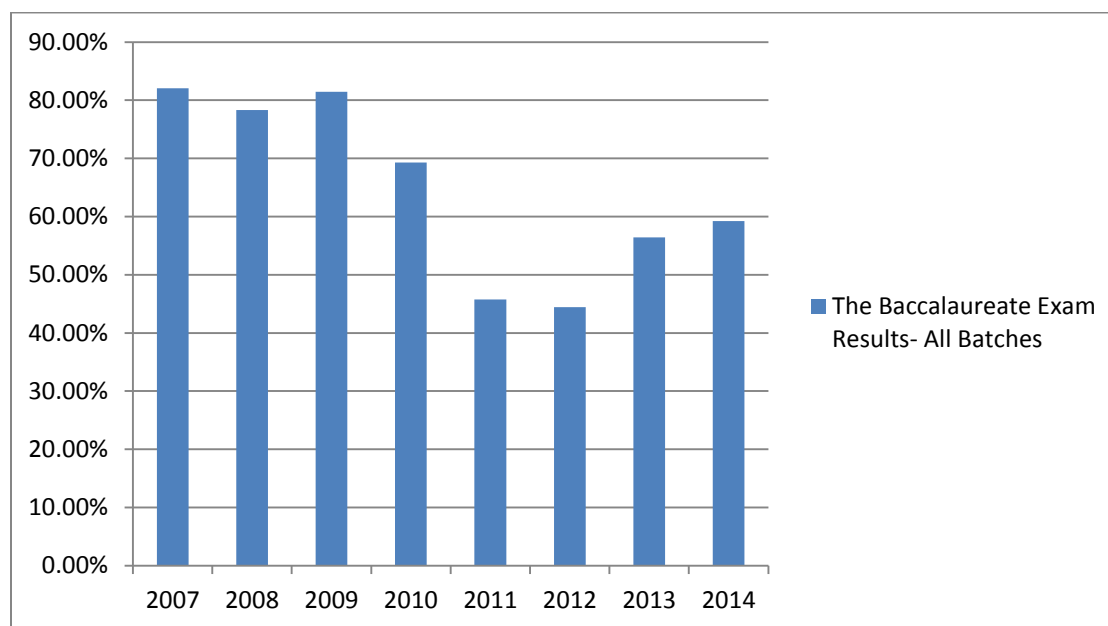
As it can be observed, from 2007 until 2009 there were no significant changes, but in 2010 there was an almost 10% difference compared to the previous year. Moreover, the year 2011 represents the lowest percentage of graduates, registering approximately 20% less than the previous year. In 2012 the situation did not alter that much, although in 2013 and 2014 the situation changes and there is a growth of almost 10 % compared to 2012, the figures almost reaching the performances from 2010.

Figure 1: The Bacculaureate Exam Results-Current Batch



Source: Own elaboration, data from Gheorghita, 2014.

Figure 2: The Bacculaureate Exam Results- All Batches



Source: Own elaboration, data from Gheorghita,2014.

Although the situation slightly remediated, there is a significant dissonance compared with the 2007-2009 results.

1.2 Objectives and Research Questions

Objectives

Within this paper I want to analyse and discuss some of the causes that could have led to the situation. What is important to be mentioned and will be discussed more in the next chapters is that the level of the exam dropped and the exam itself has been changed in order to be more accessible for students to pass it. Some of the causes I want to explore are how the organization of the education system influences this, as a systemically problem; also, how much the teachers have contributed to this drop and to what extent the economic crisis and budget shortages can be linked to this issue and if the credibility of the examination during past years influenced it.

The answers of my research question can be the target of all the objectives.

Research Question and Sub Questions

Which are the causes that contributed to the significant decrease in the results of the baccalaureate exam?

Sub Questions:

To what extent the economic situation of the country contributed to this problem?

To what extent had teachers contributed to this issue?

1.3 Methodology

This research paper aims to produce an assessment of the causes of a critical issue in Romanian education system regarding the upper secondary students. To be able to make the assessment I will make use of quantitative data. In addition to the quantitative data I will also analyse media sources to be able to have a broader perspective. The media sources will be articles from national newspapers that, although can be questionable and some may consider them propaganda material, they can still help to provide some answers or to draw some conclusions. The main newspapers that will be used are: Antena3, Realitatea, Mediafax, ZF.

The quantitative data I am going to analyse is provided by Eurostat (European Union Statistics Centre), INSSE (Romanian National Institute of Statics), UNESCO Institute for Statistics and

United Nation Statistics Division, UNICEF, Ministry of Education official website as well as from articles from newspapers, as the task to find data for the last 2 years may prove difficult.

My motivation in using quantitative method comes from the fact that statistics, numbers, can provide an objective view over the situation where as the literature review will fill in the gaps and the questions that numbers may raise. Thus, the conclusion drawn from the literature review, analysis of statistics and analyses and coverage of media sources will provide a complete image and will help me in answering my research question.

Moreover, it is important to mention that the data provided by Romania is might be questionable and politics of numbers may be involved I will still use it due to the fact that it will help me draw patterns and identify the issues more correctly.

To avoid its biased, I will look at this data through the filter of critical thinking, using Robert Cox's argument, that a "Theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Sage Publication, 2000-2014).

1.4 Structure of the paper

The paper is divided in four parts. The first chapter is the introductory one, which states the problem, my objectives, and the research methods. Furthermore, it will also provide a brief background of the education reforms in the past in order to understand how the education system is working.

The second chapter will represent the theoretical frame work in which the concepts will be discussed as well as the theories that apply for this research as education, labor market, high school definition and organization and some others.

In the third chapter, I will present and analyse the causes or barriers that may have been contributed to the drop of the results in the baccalaureate exam.

The last part of the paper will consists in a final assessment and conclusions of the causes.

1.5 Brief Background of Restructuring and Reforming the Educational Romanian System in past years

First of all, in order to understand how the education system works nowadays, it is important to create a context based on how the system was reformed and changed during more than over two decades.

I have divided it in three main time-frames to have a holistic view over the system and to understand better how the changes occurred and how it has been reformed. This is highly important to be acknowledged due to the fact that some aspects will be analysed in depth in the following parts.

To start with, the first time frame is the Communist Period, in which the system was reformed several times.

To give some insights of the Communist Era of the educational system, I will use the view of Richard H. Jones: “Under Communism, the whole educational system was rigidly centralized, hierarchical, bureaucratic and closely controlled by the party and state administrations. This control covered all areas of school and university life from staffing to the curriculum. Senior university academics were all members in good standing of the ruling communist party, political conformity rather than academic prowess defined professorial promotion, and ideological training was an integral part of all university courses” (2000:67).

The next time frame is the transition period, from after the fall of the Communism, 1989, until 2007, when Romania became a member of the European Union.

This period is highly important, because it shows what changes have been done to elevate the system, from a closed monitored system to a democratic system, and prepare the system to be part of the European Union.

In the beginning of the period, 1991-1992, the Romanian System still remained one of the most centralized system form Eastern and Central Europe, where the Ministry of Education was establishing the budget for education, and the education budget was always the lowest one; after 1992 the Minister of Education, forced mainly by World Bank had to rethink the whole curricula and to allocate in the same time a higher budget for the education and most important to try its best to eliminate ideological focused elements of the curricula(OECD,2000:13).

In 1995 the first National Law for Education, after the fall of the Communism was in place, a law that “introduced new elements such as the suppression of the state monopoly in the organization of education (by allowing private schools to function, even though they were already functioning), the guarantee of education in minority languages and for pupils with special needs, and the allocation of a minimum share (4%) of the GDP” (Nicolescu,2002).

Moreover, the most important aspect of this law is “stated that academic institutional autonomy was a major principle” (Nicolescu, 2002:93). But in the light of this last point, the law did not change the ideological thinking and the way in which the resources were allocated for the public sector of Education: “Public universities did not have complete freedom over public funds. Universities were allocated public funds by the Ministry of Education on request (funds allocated had more to do with faculty costs than students' costs)” (Nicolescu, 2002:93).

After this period, until 1999, things did not move smoothly and several Ministers were changed, new reforms were tried.

From 1999 onwards, the system was thought to be changed due to the fact that they were preparing the system for the requirements of the European Union. Until 2007, researchers came into place to assess the system, to compare to other European Countries and new funds were available to elevate the system. For example, one of the assessing involved testing children and adolescents in different grades, using as a tool European exams, where Romania was always situated in the bottom of the list, still having a higher percentage of fast learning every year(InfoR,2007 1-5).

In conclusion, during this period, the main aim was the decentralization of the education system: “The decentralization of the school system is part of the national strategy of decentralization aimed at financial autonomy and administrative decentralization (Rondinelli et al., 1983) at all levels of public administration. It represents “the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources to the schools and local authorities in regard to the process of decision-making general and financial management” (Popescu, 2013:22).

The last time frame represent the years after the integration in the European Union where new standards should have been applied, new forms of funding the education were available, The European Fund of Education, programs as Youth in Action, student exchange programs.

In this period, the economic crises occurred and changed how the system was organized in terms of resources. In that period, to counter the effects of the crisis, some active measures were

implemented, but as “[i]n many cases, active measures have the effect of increasing the number and intensity of labor market barriers, increasing unemployment” (Şfichi, 2011:2).

One of the most affected sectors was the education one, where the employers had their wages lowered by 25%, with the promise of not firing personnel, but in the end, 16.000 of them were dismissed (Şfichi, 2011:2). This had a huge impact over the system, due to the fact that lowering wages and firing people will decrease the quality of the education.

As an effect of the integration a new law was approved, Law 1/2011, that is designed to incorporate new ways of teaching, west European standards, to make it easier to access education abroad with new forms of funding and the system to be more transparent (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013).

Chapter 2 : Conceptual frame-work

In this chapter several key concepts as well the theories that support my research will be discussed and analysed. It is important to have a clear view of the concepts in order to understand and to help answering the question and draw my conclusions upon these statements.

As I stated before, I will look at the causes for poor results of the students from the national exam and in order to argue the causes some terms need to be defined and understood.

First of all, there is a need of talking about education and its connection to development, what does it mean how is defined and what relevant theories can arise based on this concept.

Secondly, I will analyse briefly the labour market concept as well the phenomenon of unemployment. Thirdly, I will present a short characterization of the concept of needs, which basically is a characteristic of the people's demands from the state. Nonetheless I will show how the education levels are structured in Romania and I will be talking more about upper secondary level.

2.1 Education. Meaning and Definitions

Education it is also researched and studied within the philosophy of education. The philosophy of education represents studying all the characteristics of education as its scope, standards and the means through which it is delivered (Carlile, Jordan, Stack, 2008:6). Moreover, the concept of education is originated from two Latin terms as <<educare>> which means to prolong and fulfill potential and <<educere>> which can be translated as to teach and develop (Carlile, Jordan, Stack, 2008:6). In other words, “education attempts to develop personality in a preferred direction. ‘Educare’ and ‘educere’ came together here because development indicates growth and the preferred direction indicates a specific direction for that growth to occur” (Carlile, Jordan, Stack, 2008:7)

Furthermore, what it is important to mention is that Education, as a concept and as a practice have evolved considerably after the Second World War when significant effort was invested in

applying “the new analytical techniques to the language of educational theory, policy and professional practice”(Bailey, Barrow, Car, McCarthy, 2010:42). Taking this statement into consideration, that there were shifts in delivering education so they can develop even greater can have as a probable cause the fact that “the determination and pace of a nation’s social and economic development are contingent on its human resources and not its capital or its materials resources”(Joseph, 2007: 1).

Nonetheless, education is a complex concept and can be explained and analysed from three major perspectives.

The first perspective from which education can be analysed is through an economic perspective. From an economic point of view, D. Checchi define education, as “being able to read, calculate and process information can be thought as a functioning necessary for conducting a normal social life”(2006:15). He also argues that “public provision of compulsory education is equivalent to the provision of any other good (Checchi, 2006:16)”. Moreover, he suggested the idea that achieving a certain level of education in order to possess basic skills that will keep the individuals within social norms and they being able afterwards to develop the society as whole it comes as a requirement directly from the state (Checchi, 2006:18).

However, there is a strong connection between the ability of one’s state to arrange and serve education for all his citizens, as “the so-called economically developed nations as a matter of course make provisions for educational opportunities from pre-school days through to higher education” and the economic development of that state (Davies, Gregory,McGuin, 2002:4). As it can be seen, if a state invests in education consistently on equal basis and opportunities, the results will be great in terms of economic and social growth.

Also, capitalism embraces some economical meaning in terms of teaching and the outcome of being educated. As Gienn Rikosky(2001) suggested, “teachers are the most dangerous workers, because they have a special role in shaping, developing and forcing the single commodity on which the whole capitalist system rests: labour power”(Kumar, 2012:72). This idea can be rather dangerous because having only an economic goal in terms of education can limit the teachers and the students in general from developing themselves.

Secondly, looking at education from a sociological perspective, there is a strong connection between it and society upraises and it represents the core of socialization as a process (Fulscher,

Scott, 1999:231). In a nutshell, Fulcher and Scott defined and highlighted the importance of education from a sociological point of view as follows:

“Education also turns children into members of society by socializing them into the common values of that society. Through education children learn the religious and moral beliefs of the society they live in. They also develop a sense of national identity through education. Indeed, this has been one reason for the emphasis placed on education by governments seeking to weld the members of diverse ethnic group into a single nation. Education has been an important part of the nation-building, for it is thorough education that children learn national languages, the symbols of nationality, and the history of the nation”(1999:231).

Furthermore, A. Giddens defines education as a way to enrich generations with knowledge and pass that the knowledge from generation to generation through direct instruction and he also states that although the process of education is known in most of societies, the education took the form of schooling-only in modern period (Giddens, 2000:625).

Thirdly, when looking at the process of education one should not dismiss the psychological dimension of it. Thus, education as a process should include also psychological elements for a complete and harmonious development of one’s personality. This means that through education, an individual should be taught also different mechanisms that will help him to uncover himself, how to shape his motivational resources, different aptitudes and his character in order to value his potential(Stanculescu, 2008:32).

2.2 Pragmatism and Social Constructivism in a nutshell

The theories I am going to discuss are John Dewey’s pragmatic theory of Inquiry and Social Constructivist Theory.

Although the theories are different, they do share some ideological aspects. It is important to understand those theories in order to understand effectively the process of delivering education, the scope and the means that can offer some insights and will help with the process of answering the research question.

Pragmatism and theory of Inquiry

John Dewey is considered to be a pragmatic and also he is renowned for his philosophical thinking.

John Dewey is also known as a great teacher and within this time frame he developed the theory of inquiry, also known as the theory to engage in problem solving in an analytical way. He thought that education and the process of educating people was one of the most important actions due to the fact that it is a tool regarding the continuation of one's society and also facilitate change.

“Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life. Every one of the constituent elements of a social group, in a modern city as in a savage tribe, is born immature, helpless, without language, beliefs, ideas, or social standards. Each individual, each unit who is the carrier of the life-experience of his group, in time passes away. Yet the life of the group goes on” (Dewey, 1916:3).

During his career he was a teacher at University of Chicago where he was offered to lead two departments, the philosophy and the pedagogy and during that time he noticed that the prior traditional method of teaching were pregnant, which involved memorizing, accurate reproduction of the taught materials, none of which was exploring an active engagement in problem solving (Bailey, Barrow, Carr, McCarthy, 2010:104-105).

Noticing all those practices he thought that the school environment should enable children to think for themselves to work with unfamiliar subjects, therefore to expand the curriculum and in the same time to foster them by giving them tools to discover what life and every day experiences can offer (Bailey, Barrow, Carr, McCarthy, 2010:105).

What it is also relevant to mention is that from Dewey's point of view “we are, developmentally speaking, in a state of ongoing growth” (Bailey, Barrow, Carr, McCarthy, 2010:106) and therefore the meaning of education itself meant growth.

In his thinking, education and experience are connected and inquiry is the most common word used by him to define the learning experience, concept that has been analysed profoundly in his work from 1953 *Essays in Experimental Logic and Logic: The theory of inquiry* (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006:10). Therefore, his opinion was that “all forms of inquiry as adaptive responses to environmental conditions are for attainment of organic needs” (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006:10). Moreover, classical dualism appeared based on the perspective of inquiry

and most important is to say that the core of the concept of inquiry is underlying the importance of reflection.

From his point of view, reflection was the most upgraded form of inquiry and it is formed out “of six basic phases:

- Problematic lived experience;
- An intuitive or spontaneous interpretation of experience;
- Defining or naming the specific problems presented by the experience;
- Generating possible explanations for and solutions to these problems;
- Pondering these explanations in order to generate hypothesis for dealing with the problematic situation;
- Testing these hypotheses to determine their intellectual purchase and pragmatic value“(Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006:11).

Taking into consideration reflection and instigation to inquiry and the fact that students need to be challenged in order to achieve good results for them as human beings, he linked education with social democracy due to the fact that schools should concentrate more on engaging students in reasoning and thus arise awareness than on the actual knowledge, because in this way they can promote socialization and communities commitment that will offer them a perspective of how should they live, this being a healthy way through which they can grow and develop (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006:12).

In conclusion, Devy’s theory offers an alternative to the traditional way of teaching and as a final note he truly believed “that education has failed because it was a guilty of stupendous category mistake. It confused the refined, finished end products of inquiry with the raw crude initial subject matter of inquiry and tried to get students to learn the solutions rather than investigate the problems and engage in inquiry for themselves” (Lipman, 2003:20).

Social Constructivism Theory

The second theory that is going to be examined is Social Constructivism Theory. Critical Constructivism theory is derived from Constructivism Theory.

Constructivism is a “psychological and philosophical perspective contending that individuals form or construct much of what they learn and understand” (Bruning et all, 1999 in Schunk

2004:285). The main aspects of the all constructivist theories are that they try to illustrate the process of accumulation of information and also the process of learning. Moreover they view research on human interactions to be highly important due to the fact that observing and analyse those they can acquire more and thus helping further the processes already mentioned.

Social Constructivist theory is underlining “the role played by society and culture in learning”(Carlile, Jordan, Stack 2008:59) , due to the fact that from their point of view society is the one of the main mechanism that form the individual and not only society but the community as well. Furthermore, they believe that people can share same values and perception that will be argued and debated in different settlements and “at the same time, it acknowledges that no two people will have the exact same discussion with exactly the same people” (Carlile, Jordan, Stack 2008:59) meaning that they have the hypothesis that numerous realities co-exist.

The scholars associated with Social constructivism are Lev Vygotsky and Albert Bandura.

In terms of learning, this theory is relevant due to the fact that the focus shifts from teacher to pupils and involves self-reflection and acquiring of knowledge throughout interactive methods.

The table above represents the fundamental meaning of this theory in terms of teaching. The transmission view it can be defined through traditional methods of teaching.

Table 1. Teaching and Learning as Transmission of Information versus as Social Construction of Knowledge

Transmission View	Social Construction View
Knowledge as fixed body of information from teacher or text to students	Knowledge as developing interpretations co-constructed through discussion
Texts, Teacher as authorities sources of expert knowledge to which students defer	Authority for constructed knowledge resides in the arguments and evidence cited in its support by students as well as by texts or teacher; everyone has expertise to contribute
Teacher is responsible for managing students ‘learning by providing information and leading students through activities and assignments	Teacher and students share responsibility for initiating and guiding learning efforts
Teacher explains, checks for understanding,	Teacher acts as discussion leader who poses

and judges correctness of students' responses	questions, seeks clarification, promotes dialogue, helps group recognize areas of consensus and of continuing disagreement
Students memorize or replicate what has been explained or modeled	Students strive to make sense of new input by relating it to their prior knowledge and by collaborating in dialogue with others to co-construct shared understandings
Discourse emphasizes drill and recitation in response to convergent questions; focus is on eliciting correct answers	Discourse emphasizes reflective discussion of networks of connected knowledge; questions are more divergent but designed to develop understanding of the powerful ideas that anchor those networks; focus is on eliciting students thinking
Activities emphasize replication of models or application that require following step by step algorithms	Activities emphasize applications to authentic issues and problems that require higher-order thinking
Students work mostly alone, practicing what has been transmitted to them in order to prepare themselves to compete for rewards by reproducing it on demand	Students collaborate by acting as a learning community that constructs shared understandings through sustained dialogue

Source: Good and Brophy, 2000 in Brophy, 2002:X.

2.3 Labor Market

Labor market, in the context of this paper is highly important due to the fact that the outcomes of the education will have a huge impact regarding the direction of the market. To understand labor market, I will first define it; afterwards I will generate information about the aspect of unemployed, this being a direct effect of a scarce policy implementation regarding labor market.

Labor market, simply is defined as “the nominal market in which workers find paying work, employers find willing workers, and wage rates are determined; labor markets may be local or national (even

international) in their scope and are made up of smaller, interacting labor markets for different qualifications, skills, and geographical locations. They depend on exchange of information between employers and job seekers about wage rates, conditions of employment, level of competition, and job location” (WebFinance, 2014).

Moreover, labor market is linked closely to the concept of quality of life which is characterized by how much and in which ways the labor market is transforming due to the fact that the need of consumption represents the core component in establishing and defining what objectives and preoccupations humans have (Blaga et al, 2011:66). Thus, labor market, the place where the demands meet the offers, includes all the deficiencies that the economic system has, leading to a disproportion between supply and demand, and most important, the distortion caused by this inconsistency is translated through the phenomenon of unemployment. However, the work force is not equally affected of the labor market shifts and of the disagreement between the labor market demands and the offers of the educational system. The unemployment risk is the result of the frictions between the labor market and education markets this being a direct effect especially in youth unemployment (Serban, 2012:131).

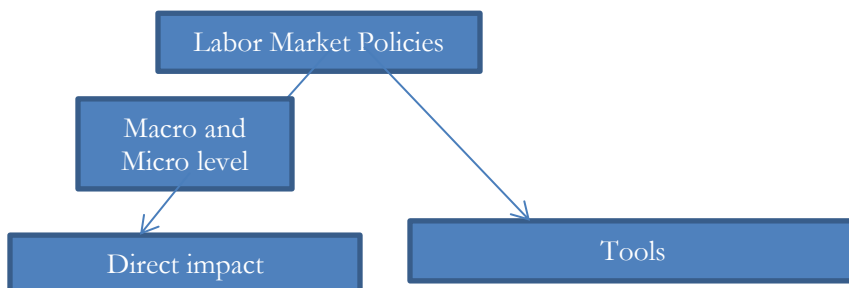
In order to control and regulate the labor market and also to ensure the competitiveness of the market there is a need for policies.

The policies that standardize now the labor market in Romania include the following areas:

- Work legislation- control and assure aspects as minimum wage, working hours, the length of annual leave, maternity leave, standards in work protection and health conditions, trainings
- Active policies- counseling and career advising, job seeking advice, formal education
- Passive policies –unemployment benefits

(Institutul European din Romania, 2005:11)

Figure 3: The map of Labor Market Policies



Volume and Structure of
Employment

Policies and active services within
the labor market
Financial aids as unemployment
benefits or other services supple-
menting the lack of resources

Source: Own elaboration, data from Institutul din Romania, 2005: 12.

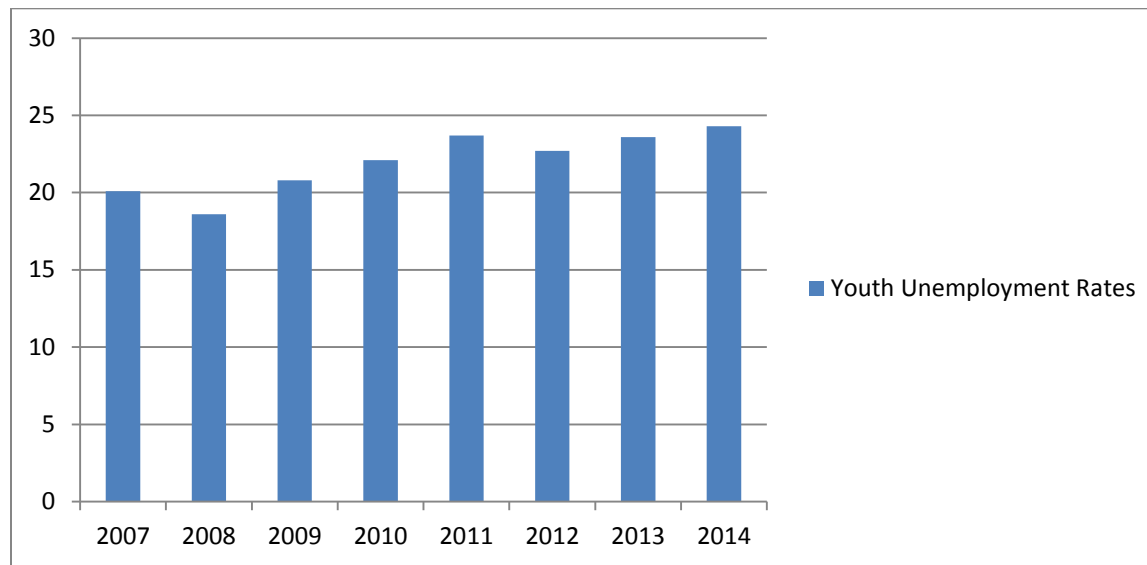
Now, the phenomenon of unemployment is characterizing by the situation in which someone is encountered, being willing to work, but unable to find a job (Jhonson, 2007:359). Moreover is important to mention that in Romania having the status of an unemployed was unheard before the Revolution and once the shifts to a democratic state began many economic and socio-political reforms were adopted the labor surplus started to ascend and this process was affecting people lives, being unable to fit in the labor market (Rodriguez- Planas and Benus, 2006:1).

As I mentioned above, youth unemployment, 15-24 years, is a delicate aspect of the unemployment mostly because of its high rate, almost three times higher than unemployment in general. For this age group, with the added disadvantage of a lower level of education or at most an intermediate one, the issue of security work place may arise, being considered as part from the category of the most underprivileged work force (Serban, 2012:131). Furthermore, here are three out of the most relevant explanations for this phenomenon: “

- new entrants in the labor market are generally young, and suffer from reduced job finding rates if the economic cycle is weak;
- young workers are more likely to be hired with temporary contracts, and more easily dismissed during recessions for this reason;
- even in case of hiring with permanent contracts, the young are dismissed more easily, in light of ‘last in, first out ’practices in individual or collective dismissals “(European Economy, 2013:37).

The following chart is showing the evolution of youth unemployment rates from 2007 to 2014(July).

Figure 4: Youth Unemployment Rates in Romania



Sources: Own elaboration, data from The World Bank Group, 2014 and ANOFM, 2012.

As it can be seen in 2007 the rate is 20.1, decreasing slowly in 2008. Although starting with 2009 the percentage is growing steadily until 2011. In 2012 there is a decrease of 1% but in 2013 and 2014 the rate started to grow, reaching in 2014 the higher rate of 24.3.

All in all, for this paper youth unemployment is important due to the fact that some students that did not graduate the Bacalaureate exam will seek a job and when the rates are so high and maybe the demand on the market is for at least people that graduated from high school, the importunacy of the exam arises again.

2.4 Needs and Education

This concept is important to be discussed and presented here, due to the fact the nuances that the term has, explains the urge of being developed, the state obligations, thus assuring people, and most significant students, that a certain level of quality in education and in life itself has to be reached.

In order to evolve and grow physically, personally and professionally all people have various needs that they have to meet. Consequently, needs are tightly connected to the state's attributions as it is education.

This concept is often perceived as something natural, normal, given the fact that everybody has basic needs and the social system must ensure the satisfaction of these needs. Many consider they are naturally entitled to these services, without reflecting upon the fact that unless they received the assistance, the situation would dramatically change (Langan, 1998:4).

Noel and Rita Timus define this concept as a frequently used term in the social welfare domain, considered fundamental to understanding actual social policies and the welfare state (1982:127). Furthermore, from K. Blakemore' perspective, this concept raises some scientific problems, because it is not easily to define it. Every individual has their own individual needs, needs which might not correspond to the needs of other people. Doyal and Gough state that it is fairly easy to establish a list of needs, but a lot more difficult to decide which ones of them are universal, unanimously accepted and which one of them is different in other countries and cultures(Doyal, Gough in Blakemore, 1998:30). They also add that in the hierarchy of needs, physical health and autonomy are the most important, further mention, decent residence condition, safe work environment, medical centers, economic safety, safety norms and quality services regarding children upbringing and education (Doyal, Gough in Blakemore, 1998:30).

The concept has great complexity, being marked by “high degree of subjectivity, being at the same time strongly socio-cultural determined” (Pop, 2005:33).

Scientists have created throughout time various classifications of these basic needs, as follows:

- *Abraham H. Maslow (1954)* creates and presents a hierarchy of needs, starting with physiological needs, followed by the needs of safety, belonging/love, self-esteem and culminating in self-actualization.
- *Clayton Alderfer* develops another classification of needs: existence, relatedness and growth. He also considers that an individual might become frustrated unless they have satisfied the needs of existence and they consequently channel all their efforts in order to satisfy those needs, provided that the lack of relatedness can be a considerable motivational factor. (Pop, 2005: 35);
- *David C. McClelland* lends a new perspective to human needs: they depend on and are caused by the cultural environment: the needs for achievement, power and affiliation. (Pop, 2005: 35);
- *David Harvey (1973)* starts from the classification of A. Maslow and illustrates nine categories of services individuals ought to benefit from in order to have their needs satisfied: food, medical system, housing conditions, consumer goods, transport facilities, recreation (Pop, 2005: 36);

- *J. Bradshaw* (1972) presents a classification grounded on the way needs are created and not on their type. He identifies four categories of needs : normative needs – defined by an outside person, corresponding to professional norms and rules, comparative needs-structured and formed when interacting with other individuals, felt needs-the needs people feel and are aware of, the needs from their own perspective and expressed needs- publicly exposed needs, needs they want others to know they have (Pop, 2005: 37);
- *Anthony Forder* (1974) has introduced the notion of technical need as “the need resulted as a consequence of a new discovery leading to the production of a new category of goods and services” (Pop, 2005:38).

2.5 Upper Secondary Education in Romania and the National Examination

The Upper Secondary education in Romania is the most important step of high school cycle due to the fact that in this period the focus shifts from general based knowledge, to a specialized and an more intense learning, according to each profile curriculum, in order to prepare the students for the National Examination.

To identify when this period there is a need to look first at the education system as a whole. The table below shows how the education levels are divided in Romania, the data is provided by the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO.

Figure 5: Education Levels in Romania

Age	Grade	ISCED	Educational levels			
>19		6	Post-university education and training	University and post-university education	Non compulsory education	
		5	University education and training			
		4	Tertiary education, non-university level	Post-high school education		
18	XIII	3		2 nd cycle of high school		Upper secondary education
17	XII		2 nd cycle of high school			
16	XI			Complementary year of study		
15	X	2	1 st cycle of high school	Arts and Crafts School (vocational route)	Lower secondary education	
14	IX					
13	VIII	1	Gymnasium			
12	VII					
11	VI					
10	V					
9	IV	1	Primary education		Primary level	
8	III					
7	II					
6	I					
5		0	Pre-school education		Pre-school level	
4						
3						

Source: Birzea et al, 2006 in International Bureau of Education of UNESCO, 2006/07

As it can be seen from this structure, Upper Education is the period of time between the XI and XIII grades and it is not compulsory for the students. However, according to the Romanian Education Law, students who drop school before the final grade (either XII or XIII depending on

their profile) do not qualify for the National Examination that allows them to have access to University (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013a).

Moreover, according to the same law, secondary education includes a number of departments and profiles: the theoretical department with two profiles (Humanities and Exact Sciences), the technological department (which includes the profiles: technical, services, environmental protection and natural resources) and the vocational department (which includes the profiles: military training, theological, sports, arts and pedagogy) (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013d). In the case of the vocational department the studies are longer with one year (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013d) here is being produced the difference between the students that finish their study in the XII grade and the ones that finish high school in the XIII grade.

One particular specialization that needs attention is represented by the high schools that have a military profile. Their objective is to create professional as military personal, non-commissioned officers, police agents, and prison guardians (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013d). The plans for the curriculum and the number of students are determined by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013d). Moreover, the curriculum for specialist courses is developed by the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013b). Finally, the teachers from those specialized high school are officers within the above mention ministries and they are financed by the budget of the Ministry that coordinates the high school (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013d).

As can be seen, there are high school within the national education system over which the Ministry of Education has limited attributions and for which they do not organize and administer the budget. However, the students from those educational institution need to pass the same National Exam (as it will be shown later) to have access to University Education.

Regarding the Baccalaureate Examination there is a need to understand that within the timeframe of this paper (2007-2014) there have been changes, which that can serve as a cause for the fact that the passing percent has lowered. To make the understanding of this exam better I will present both procedures, started chronologically with the form of the exam previous to the present form (that has changed in 2011). Finally, is important to be aware of that fact that with every year changes have been brought to this National Examination, however they are connected more to the curricula itself or the efforts to counter suspicion of fraud, aspect that will

be analysed in the next chapter and thus they are not included in this section. In consequence, this section will focus on the structure the exam has before 2011 and how it was transformed.

Law 84 from 1995 (which regulates the baccalaureate exam from 2007 to 2011(including) gives sufficient details on how the exam is structure. Thus, it is stated that high school studies are finalized through the passing of a national examination, different according to department and profile of the student's studies (LegeX, 2009-2013). Moreover the exam is made from two examinations that have the same subjects for all departments and specialties, and three exams that are different according to specialization (all of them only written) (LegeX, 2009-2013).

The two examinations that are common for all students are: Romanian Literature and Language (both oral and in writing) and a foreign language (only oral). Moreover, students of national minorities have an additional exam (both oral and written) evaluating their knowledge of their mother language (LegeX, 2009-2013).

The exams different by specialization are as follows:

- Theoretical department, humanities specialty:
 - History or Geography;
 - Optional subject from the aria of specialties (except the one elected above);
 - Optional subject form outside the aria of specialties;
- Theoretical Department, Exact Sciences specialty:
 - Mathematics;
 - Optional subject from the aria of specialties (except the one elected above);
 - Optional subject form outside the aria of specialties;
- Technological Department (for all specialties):
 - Mathematics;
 - Optional subject from the aria of specialties (except the one elected above);
 - Optional subject form outside the aria of specialties;
- Vocational Department:
 - History, Geography, one of the Social Sciences subjects, Mathematics or other Sciences (depending to specialty)

- Optional subject from the area of specialties (except the one elected above);
- Optional subject form outside the area of specialties
(LegeX, 2009-2013)

During a year two sessions of the National Examinations are organized. At the conclusion of the exam (if the student passes it) he receives a Baccalaureate Diploma which states that candidate has passed all exams (and has the marks for all examinations) (LegeX, 2009-2013).

After seeing how the exam was organized until 2011, now it is time to look at the changes that Legea Educatiei Nationale 1/2011¹. The most important changes were related to the formalities but also to the structure of the exam as a whole.

First of all, after completing the high school the student receives a high school diploma which grants to the student the right to access a Collegium² and if they pass the National Exam, will give them the opportunity to apply for higher education (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013c).

Regarding the structure of the exam, the form introduced after 2011 (and the current form) is as it follows:

- Examination A: the evaluation of linguistic abilities to orally communicate in Romanian;
- Examination B: the evaluation of linguistic abilities to orally communicate in the mother language (only for national minorities);
- Examination C: the evaluation of linguistic abilities to orally communicate in a foreign language studied within high school;
- Examination D: the evaluation of digital skills;
- Examination E: written examinations as it follows:
 - Romanian language and Literature (common for all specialties);
 - Mother tongue and literature (only for national minorities; common for all specialties);

¹ Legea Educatiei Nationale 1/2011 it is translated in English as National Educational Law nr.1/2011

² Collegium – Vocational schools after high school of 3 years . Also, the students if apply for this they are obliged to pass the Baccalaureate Exam within first 2 years, otherwise they will not graduate.

- Two examinations different for each department:
 - Exact sciences:
 - Mathematics;
 - Optional between: physics, chemistry, biology;
 - Humanities:
 - Foreign Language;
 - Optional between: Geography, History, Social Sciences;
 - Technical:
 - Written examination specific to the specialty;
 - Written optional examination between the courses specific to the specialty;
 - Vocational:
 - Practical or written examination specific to the specialization;
 - Written optional examination between the courses specific to the specialty
- (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013c).

The exam is considered passed if the candidate has passed all the examination. Moreover, he has passes the examination E with an average that is equal with 6 and more (out of 10). After he has passed the examination he receives the Baccalaureate Diploma (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013c).

Chapter 3: Barriers that prevent greater results in the Baccalaureate Exam

It is obvious that the decline in the results at the national examination has multiple causes. Those causes can be translated also in barriers. Barriers, due to the fact that taking into consideration a decline or decrease did not happen naturally, some factors contributed to it. In this chapter I will present some barriers, which may have been contributed to this drop.

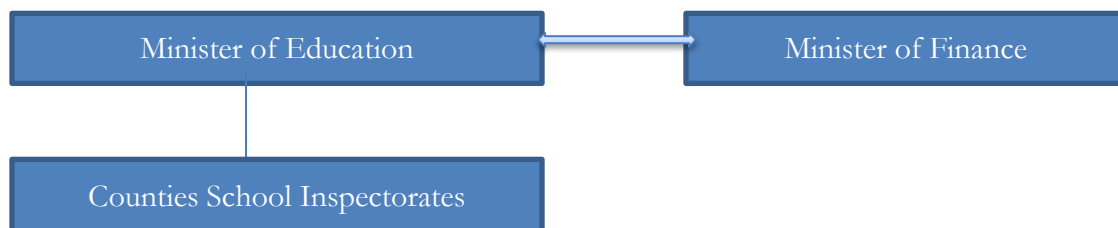
3.1 Still a Centralised Administration

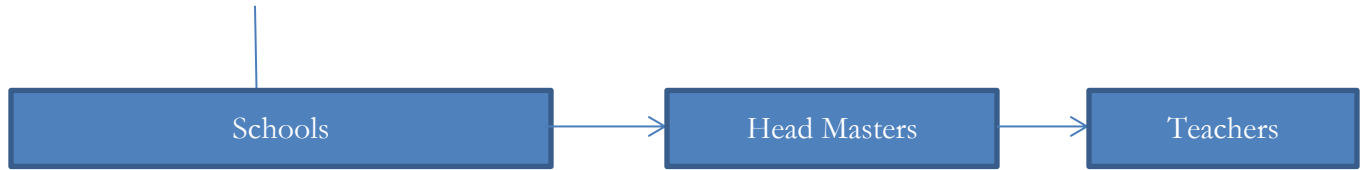
A study of the barriers that prevent the development of education and decreasing student performances cannot overlook the system that is responsible for its administration. However, a I cannot reproduce a complete structure in this section due to the fact that it is outside the purpose of this paper. Thus, this part will focus only on the shortcomings derived from the Romanian Education Administration.

First of all, as I already specified, before 1989, the Education System in Romania was a centralized one and after the 1989 Revolution there have been efforts to decentralize the system and make it more autonomous. However, looking at the data from the official web site for the Ministry of Education, it can be seen that even today, the central point of the administration, in terms of controlling every aspect of the Education System remains in the hands of the Minister of Education.

Furthermore, a simplified overview of the administration system is represented by the following figure:

Figure 6: Overview of the Administration System in Romania





Source: Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013b

Minister of Education

Moreover, I have compiled a list of attributions that the Minister has, as follows:

- Coordinate and controls the national system of education;
- Organizes the national network of state owned education and forwards proposition to the government regarding the tuition figures, after consultation with the schools, local authorities and the economic actors interested;
- Approves the National Curriculum and the National Evaluation System and makes sure that they are respected;
- Coordinates the Research Activity in Education;
- Provides the infrastructure for the production of text books; provides the financing for the acquisition of textbooks;
- Designs general criteria for admission to higher education;
- Approves the establishment of new high schools and post-secondary schools;
- Approves the organization and operation regulation for the subordinated institution, except for the institution of higher learning (authors note: Universities);
- Elaborates diagnostics studies and prognosis in the field of reforming the education and contributes to perfecting the legislative framework;
- Provides the framework for the development, approval and the production of educational material;
- Provides the framework for the selection and the adequate preparation for students with special aptitudes;
- Provides specialized education for students with physical or mental handicap;
- Analyses the way social protection is provided within the education system and forwards proposals to the government and the local administrations;

- Coordinates the activity of the University libraries under its supervision;
 - Is responsible for the training of the teachers;
 - Coordinates: the appoints, transfers, sacks, and keeps records of teacher, administrative staff and auxiliary staff;
 - Provides the distribution for the National Fund for the Vocational Training, after consulting the interested agents;
 - Is responsible for the assessment of the national education system on the basis of national standards;
 - Develops and applies strategies for the reformation, on medium and long term, of the education system;
 - Together with other ministries develops strategies for collaboration with other states and international organization specialized in education and research;
 - Collaborates, according to set conventions, with other states in which population of Romanian nationality or origin is living, so that education in mother tongue can be provided;
 - Develops norms for the school buildings and their equipment;
 - Determines, on the basis of internal norms and international agreements, ways for the recognition and equivalence for diplomas, certificates and scientific titles issued abroad;
 - Sets the structure of the school year, the exams sessions and school holiday for the state own education institution, except for the Universities;
 - Controls the way the financial norms are kept and how the state educational patrimony is administered; charges fees in both national and foreign currency to cover the costs of the sanction of diplomas
- (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013b).

School Inspectorates

Furthermore, the school inspectorate⁽⁴¹⁾ is responsible for the organization and financial matters of the school network and also they have the responsibility of inspecting the school, to make sure that the safety and health condition of the schools is met s and the teacher to ensure

that they respect the rules and regulations(OECD, 2000:19). Yet, the school Inspectorate evaluates the schools, but they do not have an efficient system for evaluation of teachers, thus the decisions they take are viewed with suspicion and within the School Inspectorates are noted important incidents of corruption (OECD, 2000:24)

However, the same attributions that the inspectorate has can be found in the Minister's one, which means that the Inspectorates double the Minister Work or vice-versa.

Moreover, it is important to mention that the inspectorates are not related or connected; they all are individual organisms, responding directly to the Ministry. They also are responsible with organization of counties school Olympics, where students, selected beforehand by a local school Olympics(for each city, part of that county) participate in order to compete for the first three places, places that grant students participation in the national Olympics (they are organized by Minister of Education only for high schools subjects). When it comes to appoint the head inspector within an inspectorate the Minister of Education has the responsibility, at least in theory, because in practice they are the result of political negotiations with the local leaders (OECD,2000:19).

In addition, the school Inspectorate is the decision maker for all the human resources in the education system (OECD,2000:19), which means that they facilitate the process of hiring personnel in education and also provides the National Agency of Work Force with the available jobs within their jurisdiction. However, the decision of the value of the human resources wages is not theirs, this aspect being established in the National Parliament (OECD, 2000:24)

Schools and Headmasters

Schools in Romania have little autonomy, as I already mentioned the fact that the School Inspectorate takes all the decisions regarding human resources. Also in terms of autonomy an important fact is that schools receive the budget, established by Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, that sometimes is lower than they would need, there is no personalized budget plan, this being one of the most important factors when headmaster, or teachers ask local NGO's to help them. Moreover, the headmasters are not viewed as managers, although they have some managerial attributions and they do not need a prior special training or a degree for this function and they are proposed by the School Inspectorate, but appointed and named in function by the Ministry of Education and if they are

part of a Political Party they will have to resign from that function and from that party (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013b).

3.2 Budget Shortage and lack of administration skills

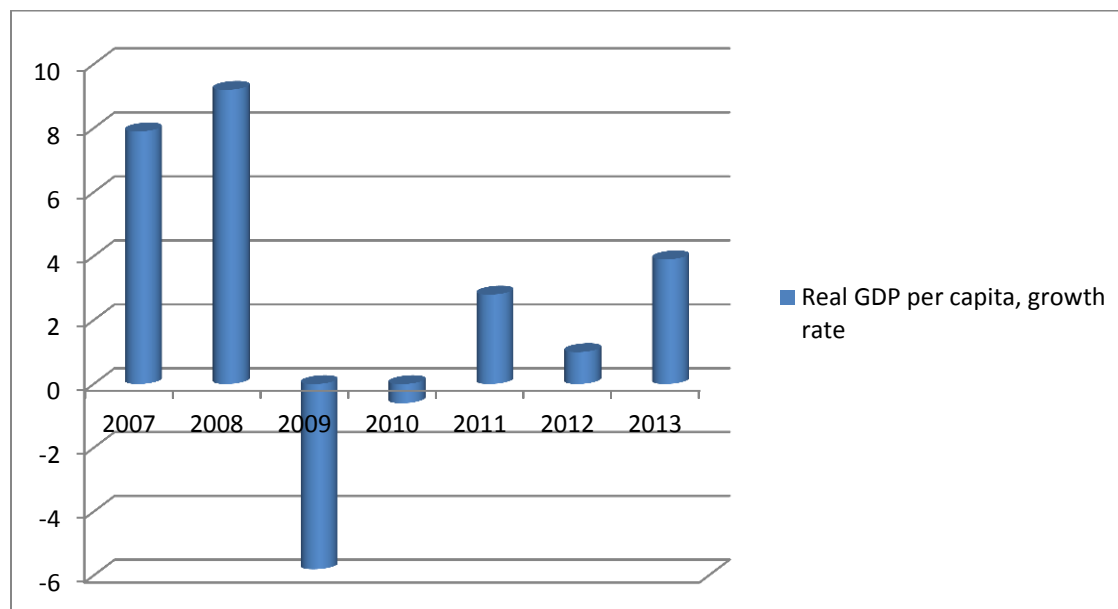
In Romania, budget shortage and lack of administration skills have a direct effect on students. For instance, in the same article from ZF Mircea Miclea, former minister of education in Romania in 2004-2005 declared: “the fundamental problem within the education system in Romania is not that teachers wages are lower than in other stated, but because the teachers are not paid according to their performances and the schools are not financed according to the academic achievements of the students. He also mentioned that there is no efficiency in the education system due to the fact that there are countries with a lower education budget and they achieve great performances, which can be translated into a higher efficacy in organizing the budget”(Mitreă,2013.).

Once with the economic crisis, there were lots of shortages and cuts and in Romania, the most affected systems were the educational and the medical ones. The Economic crisis started in Romania at the end of 2008 and one “[t]he gross domestic product (GDP) is one of the primary indicators of a country's economic performance. It is calculated by either adding up everyone's income during the period or by adding the value of all final goods and services produced in the country during the year. Per capita GDP is sometimes used as an indicator of standard of living as well, with higher per capita GDP being interpreted as having a higher standard of living” (Investopedia,2014).

On the other hand, the growth rate of real GDP “it is often used as an indicator of how well off a country is, since it is a measure of average real income in that country. However, it is not a complete measure of economic welfare. For example, GDP does not include most unpaid household work. Neither does GDP take account of negative effects of economic activity, like environmental degradation.[...] Real GDP per capita is calculated as the ratio of real GDP to the average population of a specific year.”(Eurostat, 2014a).

In the chart below, there is represented the real GDP per capita, growth rate in Romania from 2007 to 2013.

Figure 7: .Real GDP per capita, growth rate



Source: Eurostat, 2014b.

As it can be seen, from 2007 to 2008 there was an increase in the growth rate of 1.3% in Romania. However, in 2009 the situation changed dramatically and the growth rate dropped with 15 % than in 2008. In 2010, the situation started to recover, the growth rate increased with 5.2 %. In 2011, the growth rate was still increasing with more than 2%, while in 2012 the growth rate dropped again, almost three times lower than in 2011. However, in 2013, Real GDP per capita rose with almost 3% than in 2012. Those fluctuations also show how the economy in Romania is fluctuating, the shifts in population and also show how fast a country well-being can change dramatically in one year.

The next table is presenting the World Development Indicators, which usually show the welfare and the economic position of a state.

Table 2: World Development Indicators

Series Name	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GNI per capita (\$)	12720	15280	15340	16000	16830	17300	18060

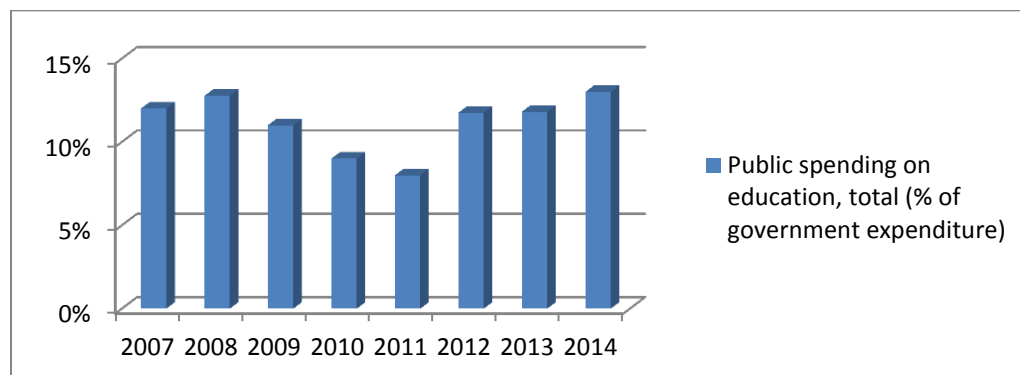
Population, total	208829 82	205378 75	203674 87	202468 71	201475 28	200767 27	199635 81
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	72.565 8	72.565	73.309	73.458	74.563	74.563

Source: World Bank Group, 2014b

GNI represent the “ Gross national income (GNI) is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad. GNI per capita is gross national income divided by mid-year population. GNI per capita in US dollars is converted using the World Bank Atlas method”(UNICEF). In the table above, in terms of GNI per capita there is a steady increase within the time frame. Furthermore, the Life expectancy at birth is fluctuating. In the first two years it stays constant, but throughout 2010 and 2011 there is small increase. In 2012 the numbers remained unchanged while in 2013 there is no data. But taking into consideration the evolution from the previous years, most likely it remained constant. However, the population is decreasing constantly within the time frame which may indicate a high number of people migrating and also can indicate an ageing population with lower Birth rate.

Going back to education, the next two charts are presenting the budget education as % of GDP and how much % budget allocation of public funds goes to education sector.

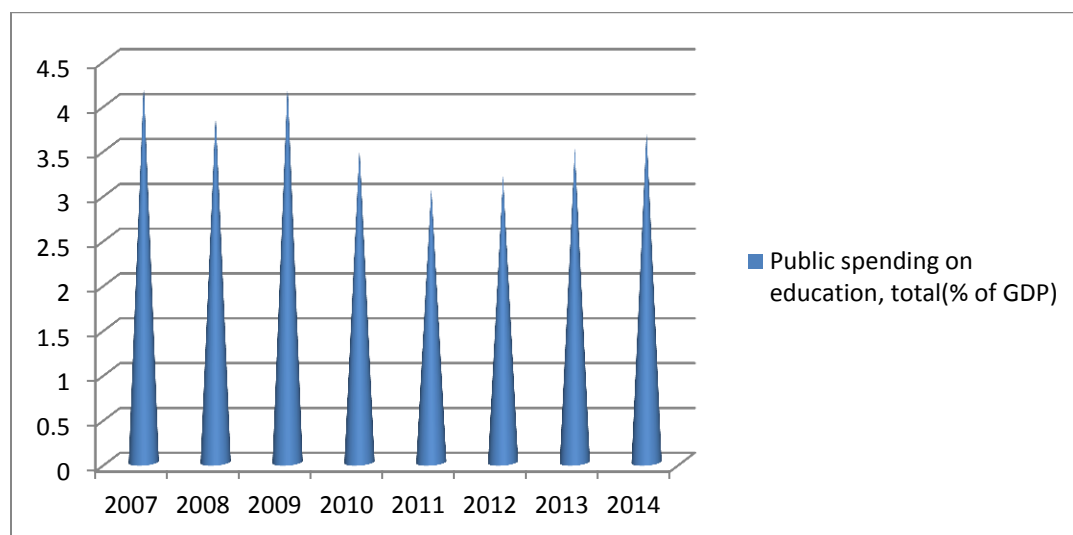
Figure 8: Public spending on education, total (% of government expenditure)



Source: Own elaboration, data from World Bank Group, 2014c; Gheorghita, 2013.

In this table it is clear that in the last 8 years the percentages from the public budget towards education were not constant. From 2007 until 2008 the percentages rose, with almost 2%, while in 2009 dropped by 2%. From then it started to fall gradually until in 2011. From 2012 until 2014, the percentages started to increase again, the highest peak being in 2014 of 13%.

Figure 9: Public spending on education, total (% of GDP)



Sources: Own elaboration, data from World Bank Group, 2014d; United Nations Statistical Division, 2014 and 6 Pentru Educatie, 2013.

This table shows that in the last 8 years the education budget as % of GDP never went more than 4.24% and that happened in 2009 and in 2007 the percentage was with one less than in 2009.

The lowest percentage, as it can be seen is in 2011 of 3.07. From 2012, onwards the percentages started to increase, slowly.

Now, if we compare all of this charts and table, the real GDP growth, the number of people and the budgets for education, it can be noticed that in 2009 all of them went down considerably, excepting though the population. The situation, for all the indicators is that an improvement could be seen in 2012, years in which the education system received less money, less money that could lead to a poorer quality of education, implicitly the results of the Baccalaureate exam.

In the following figure, there is presented how the budget was divided by levels of educations and other expenditures in 2013. The upper secondary level is represented by ISCED 3, while ISCED 2 is lower secondary level and ISCED 4 Collegium and ISCED 5 and 6 represent the tertiary levels (CNIDPT, n.d).

Figure 10: Education budget by type of expenditure and level of education, June 2013

Education budget by type of expenditure and level of education, June 2013

	Currency	Capital expenditure	Current expenditure	Personnel expenditure	2 aggregated categories out of 3	3 categories aggregated	Public subsidies to parents with children in education and to students	Total
ISCED 0	RON							1 829 700 000
	EUR							408 387 831
ISCED 1	RON							3 119 200 000
	EUR							696 203 379
ISCED 2 and 3 (general)	RON							6 847 200 000
	EUR							1 528 290 516
ISCED 3 (vocational)	RON							121 400 000
	EUR							27 096 399
ISCED 4	RON							148 000 000
	EUR							33 033 502
ISCED 5 and 6	RON							5 260 400 000
	EUR							1 174 117 804
Not allocated by ISCED level	RON							2 680 100 000
	EUR							598 196 549
Total	RON	1 248 800 000	9 013 900 000	9 743 200 000				20 006 000 000
	EUR	278 731 334	2 011 896 524	2 174 675 802				4 465 325 982

Source: Eurydice Facts and Figures, 2013:56.

As it can be seen, the lower and upper secondary levels had the highest amount of from the total budget, followed immediately by the tertiary level.

As a final conclusion, regarding the budget allocations, in the National Educational Law it is stipulated that the education sector shall receive at least 6% of the GDP each year, performance that was never achieved in the period presented (Ministerul Educației Naționale, 2006-2013).

3.3 Low teacher's wages and its implications

Another barrier in achieving better results and increase the graduation percentage of the high school students is represented by teachers.

Teachers, in the context of education are important actors, they being the ones who are supposed to guide and train students and to offer them the knowledge needed for passing the exam.

When the students fail, morally and professionally speaking, teachers fail too and when students succeed, part of that success is attributed to the teachers.

As I stated in the last chapter the tendencies in modern teaching are in order “[t]o promote student participation, instructors need to minimize their own participation. Students will defer to the instructor as a participant, which works against the goal of student activity. Instructors might initiate the discussions and should observe them, perhaps offering help to facilitate progress when is needed” (Dominowsky, 2002:93). There are some rules for this method to work as :

- “ Everyone is expected to participate
- Dominance of the conversation by one or two people is unacceptable
- Do not interrupt-let people finish their thoughts
- Different views are encouraged
- Keep the discussion focus on the assigned topic” (Dominowsky, 2002:93).

The same tendencies are promoted by the Teacher Training Module in Romania, although in reality the incidence of using traditional methods is higher than modern alternative methods (Bosoran, 2011:17).

To be able to teach in upper secondary level, one has to complete a Teacher Training Module. The teacher Training Module is divided in two levels. Level I, is a three years composed course that only students enrolled in higher education program can follow (Consiliul Studenților, 2010). Is it important to mention that they will have to start this module from the first year, graduating it at the end of their B.A program (there are some exceptions: there are university programs that can last 4 years- applied sciences, pharmacy and nursery or 6 years as medical school, architecture; in this case they will have graduate this module at the end of the 3rd year of their program). They will learn how to teach courses within their bachelor program. For instance, a student enrolled in B.A History program will have his training course adapted on his major subject, that being history. Same applies for a student enrolled in mathematics- computer sciences program- he will be entitled to teach math and or informatics as well as for a student enrolled in literature courses- he will be teaching Romanian language.

The first level of this module is insuring graduates the right to occupy educative jobs within the area of their bachelor degree only in the compulsory education level (10 grades) (Consiliul Studenților, 2010).

To graduate this level, students have to participate in all the theoretical and practical courses, stipulated by the curriculum of this module. The theoretical courses are: Educational Psychology, two Pedagogy-Education courses, Classroom Management, Didactics, and computer assisted instruction. The practical training is divided in two semesters, where students will be assisting and teaching (under observation) in high schools (their major subject) (DPPD Bacau, n.d)

However, to be able to teach for upper secondary level, as mentioned before 11 to 13 grades, students have to complete Level II of this module (Consiliul Studenților, 2010).

This level lasts 2 years and you can have access at it only if you follow a master degree program. Also it is important to mention that the master degree has to be in the same area or very closed to the bachelor program.

During this level, students will have to follow the next courses: The Psycho-pedagogy of adolescents, youth and adults, The design and the management of educational programs, Educational Research Methodology, Teaching and Development in the teaching field specialty, Management of school organization. They will also have to participate in Teaching practice, where they will assist and teach in upper secondary courses ((DPPD Bacau, n.d)

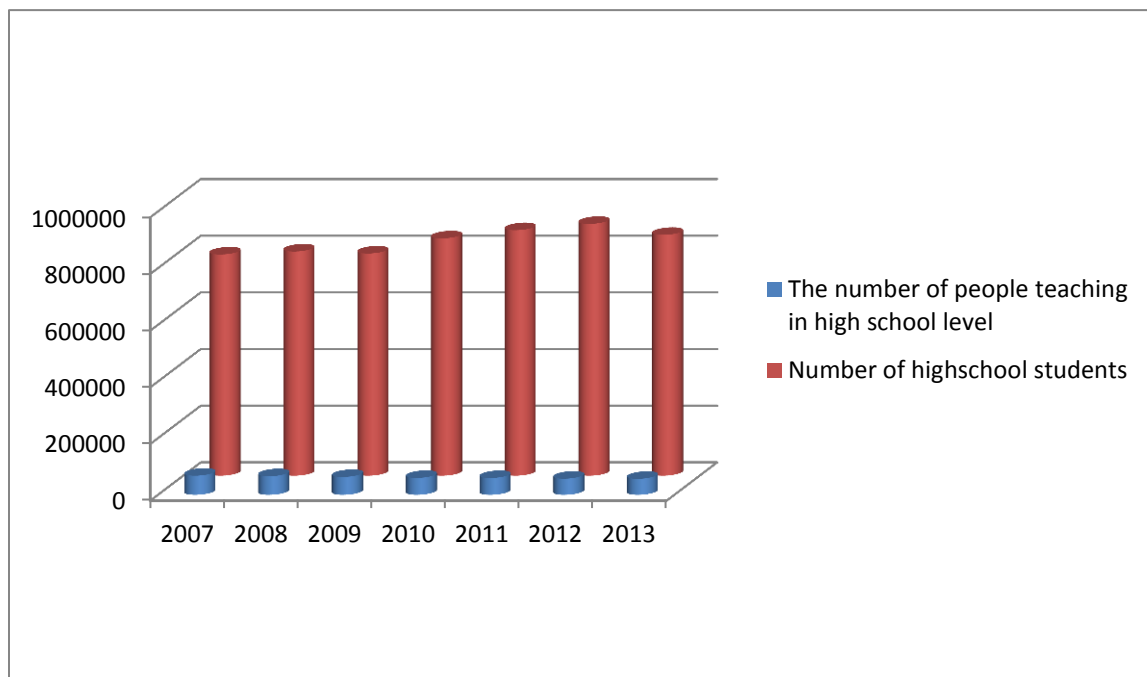
To graduate those levels, students will have to graduate each course individually plus a final exam, a portfolio. The requirements of the portfolio are established by each faculty depending on the major subject of the students.

Moreover, is important to mention that in Romania for the state owned universities there are two types of students. Those who do not pay and tuition fee (depends on the faculty but usually there 40 50 places for students with great academic results) and those who pay the tuition fee. However, only the state funded students have this course offered for free, the others will have to pay a tuition fee. Also, this training module does not interfere with the B.A program results and it carries 30 ECT's , which are extra credits.

Taking into consideration that following this module is not mandatory, so it is a choice that students make; most of the students enrolled in higher education program follow it, to ensure themselves a second job, in case they cannot find one in their area of expertise.

Furthermore, in the following chart there is a presentation of the number of teachers within the high school level and the number of students enrolled in high school.

Figure11: A Comparison between the number of teachers and students in high school



Source: Own elaboration, data from INSSE, 1998-2014a and INSSE, 1998-2014b

As it can be seen the number of teachers dropped gradually from 2007 until 2013 whereas the number of students fluctuated over time. From 2007 until 2009 there was an increase in numbers, but in 2009 there was a shortage of approximately 7000 students. From 2010 until 2012 the numbers increased gradually until 2013 when there is a significant decrease.

Furthermore, the fact that the number of teachers dropped but the number of students continue to grow, with some exceptions, it means that there is a shortage in human resources, which has an implication on the labor market and unemployment. As well it means that a teacher will have to teach more students at once than in previous years which will have a direct effect on the quality of teaching and students would either receive much less attention from the teacher and it could have a direct implication on his academic achievements and results.

Another important fact that needs to be argued when talking about teachers is their wages.

First of all I have presented gross annually salary. What is important to know is that not all the teachers receive the same salary; it is given taking into consideration the following factors:

- function and the teaching norm;
 - the level of education required for teaching position; teaching degree;
 - academic title(diploma)
 - recognized work experience in education;
 - quality of educational activity
- (Indaco Systems, 2014).

Table 3: Annual Gross Salaries of Full-time Fully Qualified Upper Secondary Teachers in Public Schools

	Basic Statuary Salary				Average actual salary	
	Minimum		Maximum			
School years	RON	EUR	RON	EUR	RON	EUR
2011/2012	11772	27777	31284	7380	21528	5078
2012/2013	13655	3221	36287	8650	24541	5789
2013/2014	13655	3060	36287	8150	24972	5597

Source: Own elaboration, data from : Eurydice Facts and Figures, 2011/2012:66; Eurydice Facts and Figures 2012/2013:64; Eurydice Facts and Figures, 2013/2014:78

In this table, basic statuary salary refers to the fact that “[t]he average number of years that a reference teacher must complete to obtain the maximum basic statuary salary is 40 years”(Eurydice Report, 2013/2014:78).

Moreover, making a simple calculation, the gross monthly salary in 2011/2012 starts from 981RON/231.41 EUR from 981 lei to 2607RON/ 652.5 EUR with an average of 1794 Ron/423.16 EUR. In 2012/2013 the salary fluctuated between 1137.91 RON/268.41 EUR and 3023.91 RON/720.83EUR with a medium rate of 2045.08 RON/482.41. In 2013/2014 the wages

are between 1137.91 RON/225 EUR and 3023.91 RON/679.16 EUR with an average of 2081 RON/482.41 EUR.

As it can be observed, there are some fluctuations over time. The minimum and the maximum statutory wage grew from 2011/2012 to 2012/2013 but in 2013/2014 remained unchanged. However, the average salary increased from year to year, the highest increase was in from 2011/2012 to 2012/2013. Although the minimum and the maximum value in RON³ of the wage was the same in the last two years the EUR value in 2013/2014 is smaller than in the previous year as a direct cause of the depreciation of the national currency.

Although the average salary increased from 2012 to 2013 in national currency, the EUR value remained the same as the one from 2012.

Now, I will present a table with salaries from different areas in order to have a clear picture of how different some other domains wage compared with the teacher's.

Table 4: Wages in 2013. Different Sectors

Work Area	Entry Level	Middle Level	Senior Level
Sales	200 -400 EUR	250-500	500-1300 EUR
Marketing	350-750 EUR	450-1000 EUR	800-1200 EUR
IT	500-1000 EUR	650-1700 EUR	1200-2500 EUR
Banking System	500-700 EUR	800-1500EUR	2000-4000EUR
Engineering and Production	600-800 EUR	1000-1200 EUR	1500-2500EUR

Source: Own elaboration, data from Hipo,n.d.

Looking at this table and the previous table, there is a significant difference regarding the salaries that other workers receive in comparison with the ones that teachers receive. The highest salaries are reported in the IT-Computer Sciences area and the lowest in Sales.

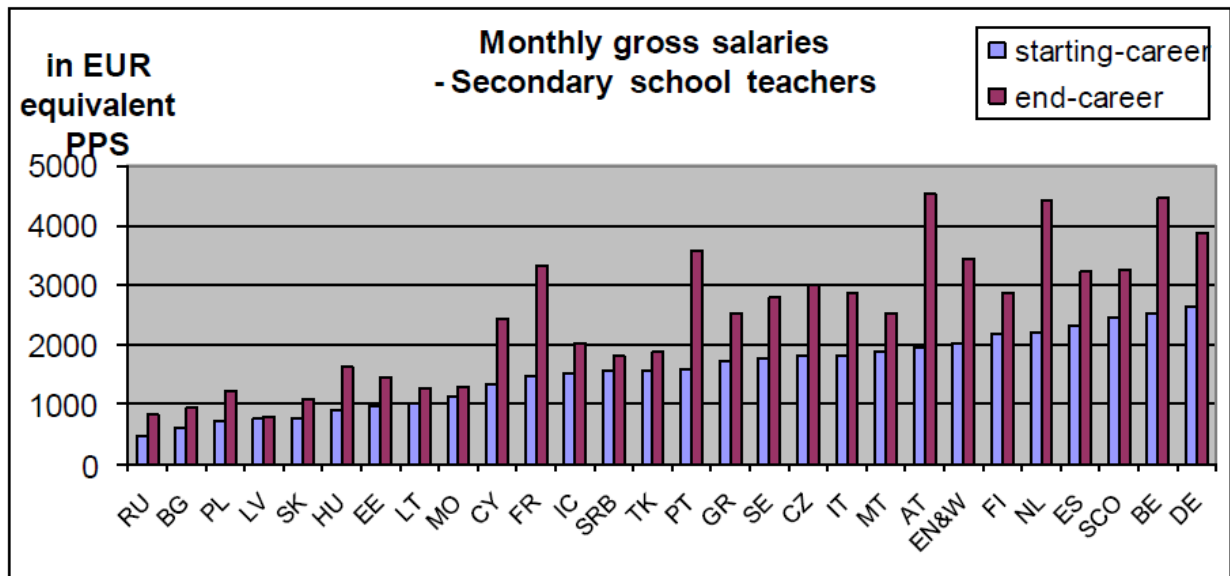
Furthermore, for example, in an article published in a national newspaper⁴ by Corina Mitrea there is stated that the Romanian teachers have one of the lower wages within the European Union with an wage of approximately 350 euros which represent 1.3 times more over the national medium wage (Mitrea,2013) In the same time, in Bulgaria teachers received 1.6 times

³ RON- Romanian National Currency; 1 EUR- estimated value(as a result of the calculations from Eurydice data) from 4.23-2012- to 5.2 RON -2013-

⁴ The newspaper is called *Ziarul Financiar*, that can be translated as the Financial Newspaper

over the medium wage while in Poland about 2.5 times higher than medium wage. Those rates were based on *Teacher and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe 2012-2013* report written by *The Eurydice Network*, part of European Commission (Mitrea, 2013).

Figure 12: Monthly gross salaries- secondary school teachers within the European Union



Source: *Questionnaire Survey 'Teachers' Pay in Europe*, 2008 in Béla Galgóczi and Vera Glassner, 2008:9.

As a final conclusion having such a low rate in terms of wages, compared with other wages in country but compared with other European Countries, there is the possibility that teachers are not so motivated thus, not performing at their best performance, or as I mentioned before, being a teacher might not be the first option and from the need of having a safe income, teaching is a possibility.

3.4 Corruption, a step forward in damaging the credibility of the Exam

Alongside all the problems that can be found in the upper secondary system in Romania, there is new phenomenon that affects the examination process as a whole. Seeing how the results dropped in this time frame it is only logical that corruption install itself and affect the credibility of the examination process.

Furthermore, an exam that has its credibility shaken every year might have a bad impact over the students and loose its score value, the proof that the students are ready for higher education. In consequence the student might consider the exam as unimportant look for other means to pass the exam.

Going further, I will present some cases of corruption that were shown in the Romanian Press to show the extent of damage that the exam has taken to its credibility.

I will start with the year 2008, due to the fact that this phenomenon began to creep into the public opinion and the media started to show the first cases of corruption regarding the baccalaureate exam.

The first case is linked to “George Enescu” High school from Bucharest. Approximately 60 students have raised allegation against the headmaster, saying that he has made the students to contribute with the sum of 200RON so that they can get higher results to the Bacalaureate exam. In the light of those allegations the headmaster declared that this is not true, leaving no room for further inspections, as she left the School for Holiday (Antena3, 2008a). The second case is linked to “Gheorghe Pop de Băsești” high school from Sighetul Marmației. 126 students admitted to the prosecutors that they passed the exam by fraud. More than that, one of the students told the investigators that the headmaster of the high school helped them to copy during the exam by receiving drafts containing the answers for the exams. Also, another student, which was arrested, declared that the headmaster made the students to contribute with the sum of 1000 RON to pass the exam, claiming in the same time that she is

a victim and she did not had another choice. In the end, the headmaster, Meda Leoredan admitted in front of the judges that she did constrain the students to pay the amount of money and that she helped them pass the exam, claiming in the same time that she was forced by the Bacalaureate Commission from Sighetul Marmatiei to collect the money. As a result of this, the DNA (National Division for fight Against Corruption) prosecutors started to investigate the commission also. DNA opened a process and they suggested that there are around 50 teachers and over 130 students involved in this fraud. (Antena3, 2008b)

The third case involves multiple high schools from Vrancea County. 21 teachers, from several high schools are being trialled for the suspicion of bribe and corruption related to the Bacalaureate Exam. The bribes paid were between 2000 and 3500 RON by several students to pass the exam. One of the teachers that took the bribe was the wife of the general school inspector. As a result of this, the inspector is being investigated also due to the fact that he was the one who appointed his wife in the Bacalaureate Commission. (Realitatea, 2010a)

In the year 2009 I did not find relevant news regarding this phenomenon.

In the year 2010 I have found 2 relevant cases. The first one is linked to a high school from Bacău where for the headmaster, 2 of his employs and 13 students were issued arrest warrants. They are investigated for the suspicion of corruption. After investigating, the DNA prosecutors found out that in that high school, a graduation Diploma cost 2000 RON. When the investigators searched their high school offices they found many envelopes with money. In the end, the students were released. (Antena3, 2010)

The second case involves a university professor, who was appointed as the Chief of the Bacalaureate Commission from Cluj. He has been arrested for 29 days under suspicion of corruption. It is considered that he took bribe from 2 high schools from Cluj, for at least 42 students to pass the Romanian Language and Literature written examination. The prosecutors maintain that he has collected from students around 30.000 euros to help them fraud the exam. In the same file case there are at least 6 other teachers from both high-schools involved. (Realitatea, 2010b).

For the year 2011 I am going to present two cases.

The first one involves The Headmaster of the 'Alexandru Borza' high school form Cluj-Napoca, Ioan Rus, who has been arrested for suspicion of corruption. After investigations it has been discovered that he has real-estate valuing 400.000 euros. He is also investigated,

being brought the same accusations, for the last three sessions of the Exam (2008,2009 and 2010). (Realitatea, 2011a)

The second case involves multiple teachers from Galati that have been sent to court under suspicions of corruption and bribe taking. In the same time, the students who paid the bribe are being investigated. (Realitatea, 2011b)

In the year 2012, there was one of the biggest anti-corruption investigations. The DNA prosecutors started to investigate 6 high schools (theoretical and vocational) from Ialomita County. Until now, they have arrested 96 teachers, over 100 students and their parents plus the director of the Ialomita school inspectorate, who is believed to be the one who initiated all of this. According to DNA, the bribes were set between 100 and 1300, depending how many written examination the student paid to pass. (Antena3, 2013a. and Realitatea, 2013a)

The year 2013 registers a spike in corruption scandals. A very interesting fact is that during this year SRI⁵ got involved in investigating the alleged crimes of corruption. One of their attributions is to protect the constitutional values. (Realitatea, 2013b)

The following cases are part of their investigation:

- Dimitrie Bolintineanu High school, Bucharest. This high school was a baccalaureate examination center⁶ The headmaster and other 28 teachers (23 from high school and other 5 part of the Baccalaureate Commission) have taken bribes. The bribes were from 300 to 600 euros and around 20% of the students from this center paid the amount to be allowed to copy and cheat during the written examinations. Moreover, before the exam started the students from this high school had to pay 100 lei, forced by the head master. That amount of money was for the teachers assisting the written examinations to not notice if a student was cheating (Realitatea, 2013c). In the same case, after the investigation started, the headmaster took action to nominate the permissive invigilators and a commission that was susceptible to fraud, according to a press release by the Central Bucharest Tribunal. (Realitatea, 2013c)

⁵ Romanian Service of Information is an intelligence agency which is equivalent to the British MI5

⁶ Examination center represents a high school or a gymnasium school that is hosting the exam from multiple high schools from that County, Bucharest in this case

- A student from Constanta County has been expelled from the baccalaureate exam for cheating. After that she has declared to members of the Bacalaureate Commission that together with other candidates have paid 50RON each for the two invigilators to be permissive. She maintains that the invigilators took the money, and after the examination was finished, the teachers declared that the sum of money they received was too small, comparing with the risks they take and that they should have come up with more money. (Cuget Liber, 2013)
- The president of the Bacalaureate Commission at Ion Banescu high school from Mangalia has been arrested under suspicions of corruption, being accused that he has received bribes of 3.000 euros and accommodation at a hotel from Saturn from at least 23 students and few teachers from that high school. The bribe was for students to pass the Chemistry examination. (Antena3, 2013b)

In the year 2014, even after all that happened in 2013 there were multiple cases of corruption during this exam. For instance, a teacher and the 2 school inspectors from Arad County were asking students who wanted to pass the examination to pay. The sums were between 300 euros for Biology, to 450 euros for a passing mark at the Romanian Language and Literature and for mathematics 500 euros. A search warrant was served for their houses and the investigators found many envelop with money and in the end they were arrested. (Realitatea, 2014a)

The last case I am going to present is from Braila County where the school inspector and 2 teachers were arrested for taking bribe. Many students and their parents are investigated for paying the written examination of mathematics and Romanian language and literature. (Antena3,2014)

As a final conclusion, I will present a press conference after the 2014 exam.” In the last 5 years 280 people have been trialled for either receiving money or giving money for them or someone else to pass the national exam. For many of them as teachers, school inspectors, students and parents were already sentenced and the highest sentence was 4 years in prison. But yet, those who were arrested and investigated in 2014 still do not learn from others mistakes and fraud at baccalaureate exam is still happening. Although video monitoring in the exam classes have been installed, students still cheat and copy, and the value of the Romanian school is losing consideration with every generation”(Realitatea, 2014b).

Chapter4: Ending Remarks

Taking into consideration that the problem that I posed at the beginning of the paper, the incapacity of a higher percentage of students to pass the National Baccalaureate, I had as a prime objective to ask why this is happening. It is a fair question taking into consideration the fact that until 2009, including 2009 the percentage of students passing the exam was quite high, around 80% and suddenly started to fall, and not necessary gradually the differences being significant, as in 2011 the percentage was almost 50% lower than in 2009, although the situation remediated until 2014, but never reaching the performance from 2007-2009. This problem, as I stated in the beginning, needs a special attention, and I have argued why it is so important.

It is important, due to the fact that the level of education and implicitly the level of culture need to be as high as possible, education being one of the most important tools in achieving great results in all the other spheres of life.

In the second chapter I have defined education, I have provided multiple definitions and classification for understanding why is important, why education plays a crucial role in development, development of the people, of the others systems and in the end development of the country itself.

I have described education as a socialization process, socialization being so important in shaping relations with other persons, in improving the culture legacy and to improve the quality of people life. Socialization implies first of all, communication changes in ideologies, progressive learning. I also described education from an economic point of view, due to the fact that from that point of view, the schools are preparing children/students to undertake the responsibility of entering the labor market, to improve the labor strategies, in the end improving the economy of the country and the standards of life for the people who came afterwards, who will perpetuate this economic cycle.

Also, from an economic stand, the state invests in people, in terms of educating them, and the people/students have to give the state back in a way or another what was invested and usually they do that by taking a job, paying taxes, taxes that are covering social-medical expenses for the people that once they were educated, paid taxes and also they cover for students that are being educated. And what way for making sure that this cycle goes on is better than a good education?

Of course, someone may argue that education is only about money or lack of it, and no sense whatsoever in learning and accumulating knowledge per se and because of it might not see how important for is to learn to outcome all difficulties that in the end will led to a better paid jobs, to a better life and in the end he will benefit again because this money cycle will return to the him, and the new generation will provide for his well-being, but if the next generation will lose more and more quality in education, it is a possibility that that generation will not be able to pay for. In the end, it is about economy and money flow but is not all.

I have also argue the importance of education in terms of personal development, character and personality development that in the end are important due to the fact that through this process of self-realization, motivation and fulfilment people will be conscious of the importance of education, and this is what in schools should happen, the teachers should teach the students how to be like that, but if the teachers are not motivated or fulfilled, it is quite hard for this to happen.

I have also presented two educational theories, theories that embrace the change in education, theories that are modern orientated, that provides tools for a better quality in education, changing the teaching methods that enhance the teacher to motivate the students, to provide them analytical tools that will help them in critical thinking, analysing new theories, new ground that will perpetuate the change, the change that they believe is for a better and more productive future.

In this context, taking into consideration that some teachers in Romania still use traditional methods, applying those theories will led to better results, implicitly in the Bacalaureate exam.

Although some may argue that in 2007-2009 there were similar methods used as in 20011-2013 and the results were much higher, in that period a lot of changes in economic sector mostly, have happened and when that is happening, towards a sustainable transformation some techniques must be revised to achieve that final goal.

Furthermore, I have presented several classifications of the needs. As I sated before, understanding what needs are and what needs people have will help the change, in this context better results at that exam. From my point of view, passing the exam, perpetuate the image of needing to pass the exam that will motivate the new coming batches that have to take this exam to pass it to be better than the last generation, to be competitive.

In addition, in the popular and cultural belief, this exam is also called a life testing exam, mainly because it is at the end of the teenage period, when people became young adults with new obligations, being is a test of how well prepared they are to undertake that responsibility.

The next step in my paper was to discuss the labor market. As I already mentioned is important to understand this concept because entering the labor market is the next natural step that individuals take. Labor market is interrelated to the unemployment phenomenon and as I showed the youth unemployment in Romania is high and this is an important issue mainly because it underlines that the young population do not have the means, educational in this case, to take a job. Of course, there is also the possibility that there are not enough work places, but this is not such an important issue in Romania in this moment.

Afterwards, I have presented how the education in Romania is levelled. The I presented briefly how the high schools are divided by specialization this being an important aspect, because the baccalaureate exam is constructed differently for those specializations, not being an universal exam, leaving the opportunity for the students to study and expand their knowledge according to what they chose.

Moreover, in the same part, I have presented what this exam is composed of, what are the main subjects from where the students chose for each written and oral examination, although there are few compulsory subjects. I have also mentioned that the methodology and the subjects for this particular exam have changed once with the implementation of the new law. In the previous system, from 2007-2010 the exam itself was harder in terms of how many subjects the students had to take. There are a lot of differences between the systems. Instead of 6 subjects -4 written and 2 orals, with the new law there were only 3 written subjects and digital and foreign language competences, which were supervised by high school locals' teachers and not part of the whole examination as was before. In the end, the students from 2011 batches onwards had to learn for only 3 written examinations instead of 4, and this is a huge change due to the fact that work load was lower but still the results went down.

The third chapter that analyses and presents the causes I found, is comprised by three key, of what I have called, barriers in achieving great results.

All those barriers are linked back with the theoretical framework, and show how the concepts connect and how the theories respond to the scope of the paper.

The first cause or barrier is how the administration of the education system is levelled. Not being a decentralized system, with no clear attributions among its organisms sometimes some tasks are doubled in effort, effort that implies resources and time, which are so valuable within a system. Moreover, even though the creators of the law of education from 2011 stated that this law will focus on students, will increase the results and it will be reformed 100% as it can be seen throughout the paper this did not happen. The new law did not centre on students, because if this was true the results would not be in this manner.

Another important aspect when talking about administration, as school inspectorates, as they take over the schools, leaving the school itself and its member with more or less no autonomy it is important to think why this is still happening, why schools and teachers do not have the power of deciding, mostly financially, for the students, they being the first that have contact with them.

Also the school inspectorates have the ultimate decision when hiring human resource, this being a real impediment for the schools, they should be the one who should take that decision. The answer for this would be that, a more centralized system is easy to be controlled and corrupted as it can be seen in the credibility section. In the same way, about corruption, an aspect of it is how the school inspectorates are chosen ,that it does not represent a democratic way of choosing, this being based on political connections by the local authorities of that county.

Another aspect is the financial resource flow, when the budgets are divided there not taking into consideration specifically high school needs and this should represent a critical aspect.

Last aspect I want to discuss is the head masters management skills, they not being obliged to have any, or at least prior consolidated experience which should be mandatory due to the fact that they are leading an educational institution and teaching experience in this context does not mean everything.

The next cause I found important is based on the teacher motivation and the fact that they are provided with a training that meet somehow modern school teaching and behaving and they do not put in practice what they have learned, they manage this situation how was managed before, not taking into consideration the changes and the need of change.

Of course, that debating this subject leaves many questions that one reader may have but due to fact that the purpose of this paper did not permitted me to talk and present more in depth this subject, I chose to focus on their wages and less on their training and how they train students further. In terms of their wages, can be noticed that there is a gap between the importance of

being a teacher and how they are paid in the end, and this may cause a lot of issues as frustration, lack of motivation and lack of interest when it comes to perform at their best capacity.

It can be seen that their wages did not rise that much within the period analysed and the best example is the last two years. The salaries remained constant although the rate of inflation rose leading to a depreciation of the national currency which also means that the market prices, as goods and commodities, increased, leading in the end of having the same salary as in the previous year but less value, being hard to compensate all the shifts which means a decreased life style. A decreased life style means a change in prioritizing their needs and cope. All these factors influence their way of teaching and the fact that the results dropped significantly can be associated with their fault, voluntarily or involuntarily.

A low wage, which is associated with not so much of appreciation of one's work, can contribute to their need in engaging in corruption actions within the baccalaureate exam for extra money. Of course is not an excuse and does not absolve them of the guilt of cheating and influencing some students results which again is not fair for the students who worked hard to pass the exam based on their own knowledge.

This has a direct effect on the credibility of the examination correctitude and giving all the students equal chances of graduating. The credibility of the exam itself may influence and convince the students from the next generation that there is no need to learn for this exam, is easier and better to pay for it. Those students who pass the exam, cheating, of course that there are much more cases than I presented and surely lots of students who did not get caught, took the chances from other students who worked hard to pass the exam in terms of following higher education programs or even took a job that they did not deserve it. And this is also a result of poor education, moral sense, things that should have been cemented during high school.

I have mentioned before that there were budget shortages and the low percentages that are allocated for education and also the fact that even it is stipulated in the law, which became a constitutional right, the financial Ministry never managed to attribute more or at least 6% of GDP for education.

The situation with the financial administration of the education may pose many questions and I cannot answer to all of them, but for what I can answer is the fact that from 2009 the situation in budgets and real GDP growth changed dramatically and the effect of this started to be seen in education in the following years.

Although the situation started to remediate at the end of the analysed period it does not mean that the issues that grew in that period were solved and the best example is that the percentage of passing the baccalaureate exam is low.

To serve the objectives proposed and answering the question I would say that every actor that I presented contributed in a way or another to the decrease of the exam rates. It is fair to say that the economy had the highest influence in the course of action. Not enough financial resources led a lower investment in the education sector. A lower investment in education meant lower wages for teachers and lower salaries increased the inclination in engaging in criminal activities regarding the exam. Also, lower salaries meant less implication from their part towards the students, thus decreasing the quality of training itself and in the end fewer graduate students had a direct effect in youth unemployment. In the end, the students are the most affected from many perspectives and they are the ones who suffer the consequences first hand.

This whole cause-effect relation is formatting a vicious cycle, where important decisions should be taken in order to break the cycle, as prioritizing and promoting the importance of the quality of education.

In the end, education means by all means development and structural changes should be made in order to enhance the chances of a better course in development as whole.

All in all, the high school students should be taught and be brought up differently in order for them to change the situation and to understand the gravity of this problem and the fact that they, the current batch of high school students, serve as a model for the next generations.

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