



ROMANIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

THE ROMANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

THE NATIONAL REPORT

Bucharest

March 2001

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

1.1 The main reforms and innovations introduced in the educational system during the last decade

A. The legal framework of Romanian education 1995-2000

Fundamental principles and basic legislation

In Romania, the educational system is governed by four types of laws:

- the Constitution of Romania (passed in 1991)
- the organic law of education (Education Act 84/1995)
- common specialized laws (Act 88/1993 regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions and the recognition of university diplomas and the Act regarding the Statute of the Teaching Staff no 128/1997);
- Government decisions having the force of Acts of Parliament over an established period.
- Orders of the Minister of Education

From a legislative point of view, in the particular conditions of the political transition (the priority of Constitutional reform, the difficulty of passing an organic law as the Education Act is, the need for immediate change, before they are endorsed by law), there have been two distinct stages in Romania.

In the 1991-1995 period, the legislative framework of education was sketched by the Constitution (adopted in 1991), that explicitly refers to the right of people of getting education (article 32) and to the protection of children and youth (article 45), and, additionally, by annual Government Decisions that established the structure and the organization of education at the beginning of each school year. As the Education Act of 1978 had not been abrogated, this combination between Constitutional law and Government Decisions provided an operative framework adapted to the transition situation of the early 1990's. Another measure, passed through the emergency legislative procedure, was Act 88/1993, that preceded the passing of the framework law of education. This legislative intervention was necessary because of the sudden boom in the domain of higher education offer (that had been drastically limited at the end of the 1980's), mainly by the almost overnight creation of over 75 private higher education institutions. Act 88/1993 introduced a system of evaluation and accreditation of the new specializations and institutions.

In 1995 Act 84 was passed, an organic law which settled the normative framework for the organization and functioning of the national education system. The basic principles of this exhaustive law are: education as a national priority, the focusing on a democratic, open and humanistic educational ideal, equal chances of access to education for all the citizens of

Romania, the tax free status of state sponsored education, the introduction of religion as a subject in the curriculum, the adapting of the network of educational units to the demographic evolution and to the need of professional training, the apolitical character of education and the interdiction of any ideological or religious propaganda in the educational system, the granting of university autonomy and the accepting of alternative systems in the organization of education.

The legal framework for the activity of the teaching staff was established on July 11, 1997 when the Act regarding the Statute of the Teaching Staff was promulgated. Initially conceived as a mere annex to the organic law of education, The Statute became a priority problem and was the subject of special provisions. According to the Statute, the teaching profession is defined as one of the most prestigious ones, and the attempt is made that pecuniary retribution should match this status; the law also stimulates the interest of the teaching staff for their continuous training and for innovation in the domain of education.

Since 1997, attempts have been made to complete the transition period in the domain of education. The reform was meant to be comprehensive, apt to affect the entire structure of the educational system, at the level of content, educational institutions, financing and regulations. Consequently, the education **legislation in the period 1990-2000 aimed at the introduction and translation into legal terms of the curricular changes, of the evaluation of knowledge and institutions, of the infrastructure and computerization of education, of the domain of financing, of the status of the teaching staff, of the continuous professional training and of the permanent education.**

The fact that the regulations adopted by the Government (Ordinances and Decisions) and those issued by the Ministry of National Education (Orders) are much more numerous than those passed by Parliament is indicative of the intention of the Ministry of National Education of resorting to shortcut strategies of control. Consequently, the legislative framework came to be equally dynamic and loose.

At present, the Minister of Education and Research is faced with the difficult task of coagulating the legislation in the domain, to avoid dysfunction and certain discrepancies and to obtain a simpler and clearer legislative framework.

The principles on which this framework is being built remain the same: the compatibility with the European educational systems, de-centralization, the encouraging of performance, partnership with the economic and social environment.

The programme of the Government includes as top priorities the Higher Education Bill, the Permanent Education Bill, the improving of Act 88 regarding the evaluation and accreditation in the higher education system, bills regarding the setting up of private universities, as well as Research Bill that will encourage the participation of universities in research activities.

Domains and problems affected by the regulations (an illustrative, not exhaustive list)

1. Primary and secondary education

1.a. Curriculum: the applying of the new educational Framework plans; the curricular reform in schools and high schools; the status of the classes that are part of the curriculum decided upon by the school; the possibility of extensively studying a subject, a theme; the structure of the technological education subject; homework; the gradual transition to the textbook free market.

1.b. Aspects that are related to the curriculum: the assessment of the pupils' knowledge, national standards for the evaluation of institutions, the Regulations for the organizing and functioning of the educational units in the primary and secondary state-sponsored educational system, the right of the graduates in the secondary, vocational or college (and university) private education system of taking their final graduation exam in the system of the state-sponsored education.

1.c. Religion as subject in the curriculum. Theological education.

In the framework plans of primary and secondary education, religion is part of the common core of knowledge. With the assent of their parents, children choose the religion and denomination for study. Upon the express wish of the parents, that has to be manifested in a written form, the pupil may not attend religion classes.

The denominations that have obtained an official recognition by the government can set up and run their own institutions of private education.

The curriculum of the primary and secondary theological education is devised by each denomination respectively.

1.d. Forms of organization of education: full-time education; part-time education, evening classes, distance education.

Compulsory education is exclusively full-time education and can only exceptionally be part-time education distance education or evening-classes based. This can only be in the case of persons that are two years older than the average age of the respective grade. Forms can be set up for children over 14 years old who haven't finished the first four grades yet.

Compulsory education includes 8 grades and it will include 9 as of 2003. Compulsory attendance in the nine-grade full-time education ends at the age of 17.

2. Higher education (including scientific research in universities and international cooperation):

curricular reform in universities, the operation of the short-time higher education (university colleges); the continuation of study in university colleges of graduates from post-high school colleges; the regulations for entrance examinations in colleges and faculties; the finishing of study in short- and long-time higher education; the organization and unfolding of master's and doctoral programmes; complete university education given in foreign languages; the organization and operation of long-distance education in universities; criteria for evaluating the strategic plan for the institutional development of state universities; the change of the Regulation on which the activity of the National Council for Academic Evaluation is based; the approval of the methodological norms for the evaluation of the professional

performance of the university teaching staff; the authorization for provisional functioning and the accreditation of various fields of study in the private and state higher education; formula-funding for core financing of higher education.

3. Trainers' training; the status of the teachers, pupils/students:

- the organization of the national system of training the teaching staff in the primary and secondary education system; the admission of the teaching staff in the private system in the continuous training system of the teaching staff;
- the change of the structure of the teaching load in the primary and secondary education system; the occupying of the teaching position in the university colleges for educators; the recognition of the right of pupils in the state primary and secondary education system to benefit from the facilities and resources offered by units related to the state-sponsored institutions and by units outside the school system; the recognition of the right of the private higher education system institutions to have access – after being accredited - to the competition of projects for the financing of research, to investment funds, to research grants, to doctoral scholarships or to scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad; the appointment of the counsellor for educative and extracurricular activities.

4. Professional training, permanent education: the adopting of the programme “Values and Means of Present-day Education”; the eradication of illiteracy, the reducing of the dropping-out phenomenon and the increase in the number of pupils attending school; second chance education; the application of the Programme for fighting the marginalization and social and professional exclusion of the young people who dropped out of the obligatory education system; the prevention and fighting of juvenile delinquency; informal education; the training at work; the support for the education of Romany youth; the school and vocational orientation in the Romanian educational system; entrepreneurial education in primary and secondary schools; forms of organization of adult education.

5. Vocational education

5.a. Vocational schools

They provide a 2-3 year training that ends up with a graduation exam and a diploma of skilled worker.

5.b. Schools for apprentices

They provide a 1-2 year training that ends up with a practical test, the graduates getting in case they pass it a certificate of worker or apprentice worker. Apprenticeship can be organized in vocational schools, of school groups or at the very working place of the graduates in the private system.

6. Decentralization and management: the creation and consolidation of the institutional autonomy of schools, high schools and education inspectorates; the organization and functioning of the national system for the training, and improving the standards of, the managing, guiding and control staff in the

primary and secondary education system: the approval of the criteria for training the managers in the primary and secondary education system.

7. The restructuring of the school network; infrastructure and financing: the reorganization of vocational and special needs education; the types of high school; the extending of postgraduate studies; the organization and functioning of the alternative system; the programme for school rehabilitation; the creation of the Special Fund for supporting public education; the re-launching of investments in rural areas; the regulation of the status of financing education from local budgets; the global financing of universities; tuition in university and postgraduate education; school property.

8. The interaction with the environment, forms of partnership: the authorizing of schools and high schools to take over and make use of contributions of local communities; the asserting of school as a provider of services for the community; the involvement of parents in school life; the signing of contracts between the institutions of higher education and individuals or legal entities; the setting up of departments for university-companies-organizations cooperation; framework-contract between the education units and the representative Councils of parents, between the education units and local councils.

9. Special needs education – towards integrated education: as a general rule, it is organized as full-time education, but, in special cases, it can be organized in other forms, too. Only when they cannot be reoriented towards mass education, the children having “special educational needs” continue the process of education in units of special needs education.

10. Post high school state education: it is organized by the Ministry of Education and Research, on its own initiative or at the request of companies or other institutions that are interested. Tuition costs are paid by the applicants who must be high school graduates whether they are baccalaureate diploma holders or not. After they pass the final graduation exams, the graduates get a graduation certificate, accompanied by a certificate specifying their professional competence.

11. Institutional capacity: the setting up, the organization and the functioning of agencies, centres, offices and councils, such as: The National Agency for School Camps and Tourism; the National Centre for Continuing Education and Open and Distance Learning; the National Centre for the Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas; the National Council for the Equivalence of Diplomas; the National Centre for Adult Professional Training; the Council for Occupational Standards and Attestation.

12. Higher Education

12.a. Short and long-cycle higher education.

- State higher education is tax-free for the enrolment figure approved by the Government yearly which is financed from the national budget and tuition-fee based for the candidates who got a mark lower than that of the last successful candidate in the entrance examination. The enrolment

figure for the candidates that pay tuition fees and the amount of the fees are established by the university senate. Even in the tax-free state higher education system, certain fees are required (for the extension of the duration of studies stipulated by the law, for the entrance examination, for registrations, for make-up examinations).

- Only baccalaureate diploma holders can sit in the entrance examination, the organization of the examination lying within the competence of each higher education institution. High school graduates who in the last two years at school got awards in the international school competitions, in arts or sporting competitions (European, world or Olympic) are registered in the university education system without having to sit in the entrance examination).

- In accordance with the stipulations of act 60 of April 24, 2000 regarding the rights of the graduates from the accredited private universities to sit for the final graduation exam at accredited state higher education institutions, the respective graduates can take the final graduation exam at the institutions where the disciplines they have specialized in – or related disciplines – are accredited.

- The graduates from the short-cycle education system (university Colleges) can continue their studies in the long-cycle system in the same domain they have specialized in, or in a related one. The successful candidates sit in a make-up examination and are enrolled in the year corresponding to the examinations that have been passed and recognized.

- Short-cycle higher education studies end up with a graduation examination , the long-cycle ones end-up with a first-degree final examination or with a diploma examination (the latter, for a duration of studies of at least four years).

- The graduates who passed the final examination get a graduation diploma (in the case of short-cycle education), or a first degree diploma, an engineer's diploma, an architect's diploma, a physician's diploma, respectively, in the case of long-cycle education. If the graduates did not pass the final examination, the first degree examination or the diploma examination, they get a certificate of short-long-cycle university education (for details, see Order no 5124/2000).

- The graduates who attended the courses organized by the Department for the training of teaching staff, and got a graduation certificate, or those who were trained in educational psychology during the first three years of work in the field of education, can practice the teaching profession.

12.b. Postgraduate education

Postgraduate education includes: advanced studies (2-3 semester studies in the domain of specialization), master studies 2-4 semesters, they include several domains of specialization and end up with a dissertation), doctoral studies, postgraduate university studies, postgraduate specialized studies, postgraduate proficiency studies.

12.c. Scientific research and university autonomy

- The institutions for higher education can organize and run units, centres of research, centres for preparing human resources , production units, other institutional structures, they can organize and unfold higher education programmes in cooperation with other similar institutions in the country or abroad
- The Education Act and other legal provisions insist on the components that define university autonomy: the deciding on the internal structure of the institution, the planning, organizing, improving of the educational process, the organizing of the entrance examination and the decision upon the criteria for the assessment of student's performance, the planning and organizing of postgraduate studies, the selection and promotion of teaching staff, the establishing o the criteria for evaluating the latter's results, the awarding of academic and scientific titles, the organizing of research, documentation, publishing activities, cooperation programmes, the election of the management bodies, the identification of the financial and material needs, the use and managing of financial resources, the awarding of scholarships, the setting up of foundations, the maintaining of order and discipline in the university areas.

13. The evaluation of primary and secondary education institutions.

Institutional evaluation is achieved on the basis of standards and criteria defined by the Commission for Evaluation and Accreditation of Primary and Secondary Education (as stipulated by act 196/1999 for the approval of Government ordinance no.87/1998 regarding the setting up of the Evaluation and Accreditation Commission of Primary and Secondary Education, and further specified in the Annex to Government decision no. 127 of February 18 1998 regarding the approval of national standards for evaluation of primary and secondary education institutions).

14. Education for National Minorities

National minorities have the right to study in their mother tongue at all levels and in all forms of education, as well as in the "types of education for which there is sufficient demand".

- As regards the study of Romanian by the minorities, Education Act, in its reprinted form, stipulates the following:
 - At primary school level Romanian is taught on the basis of syllabuses and textbooks that are specially designed for the respective minority.
 - At lower secondary school level Romanian is taught on the basis of the same syllabuses, but using special textbooks.
 - At higher secondary school level (high school)Romanian is taught on the basis of syllabuses and textbooks identical to those used for classes where the teaching language is Romanian.
- As regards Romanian History and Geography:
 - At primary school level, teaching is performed on the basis of syllabuses and textbooks that are identical to those used for classes where the teaching language is Romanian.
 - Article 120 – (3) "The syllabuses and textbooks for world history and Romanian history will reflect the history and traditions of the national minorities in Romania.

- (4) At the level of lower secondary education in Romania, the History and traditions of national minorities can be introduced, upon request. Teaching is performed in the respective minority's language. The syllabuses and the textbooks for this discipline are approved by the Ministry of National Education".
- At the level of vocational, high-school or post-high school public education , teaching is performed in the mother tongue of the national minority, while special terminology is acquired in Romanian.
- At the level of higher education, groups, sections, colleges or faculties can be organized, where teaching is performed in the language of the minorities, while the acquisition of terminology in Romanian as well remains obligatory. "Upon request and on the basis of special legislation, multicultural higher education institutions can be created".
- Article 126 – "In the managing boards of the education units and institutions where there are groups, classes or section where teaching is performed in the languages of national minorities, a proportional representation is ensured of the teaching staff belonging to the national minorities, also taking into account their professional competence.

15. The national curriculum

- The national curriculum includes the contents of primary and secondary education, having a common core for all schools of the same type and elements that depend on the decision of each school or high school.
- Framework plans, that include compulsory, elective and optional subjects, as well as the minimal and maximal number of classes and the school curricula are devised by national special commissions and are endorsed by the National Council for the Curriculum and sanctioned by the Ministry.
- At the level of primary and secondary education alternative textbooks are used, the teacher having the right to recommend the pupils the textbook they have to study by.

16. Adult education

Individuals or legal entities can initiate on their own or in cooperation with education institutes, professional qualification, proficiency and professional conversion courses, which end up by the obtaining of a certificate of professional competence which is recognized on the labour market.

Individuals can only organize such courses if they were authorized to do so. Legal entities, can in their turn, provide educational services if their statute includes this type of activities and if they are authorized by the respective ministry, and, depending on the situation, by other ministry or public authority, too.

17. The Ministry of Education and Research

It bases its activity on consultative bodies at a national level and has under its authority an institutional network of which we mention the Inspectorates and the Houses of the Teaching Staff. The law stipulates that the inspectorates are decentralized specialized bodies, and the Houses of the Teaching Staff (HTS) are "documentation centres for organizing the continuous training and scholarly, methodical and cultural activities". On the

basis of the Education Act, republished and completed by the Emergency Ordinance no 91 of June 29, 2000, regarding the organization of the national system for the training of the staff in the primary and secondary education system, the top executive functions in the education inspectorate are performed by the general inspector, the deputy general inspector and the administrative manager (a position assimilated to that of deputy educational inspector). The appointing in a leading position in the public primary and secondary education system is competition based and made by the general inspector. The general inspector, the deputy general inspectors and the director of the HTS are appointed by order of the minister.

- Article 143 – (2) “The structure of the education inspectorates in the counties providing education in the languages of the national minorities as well, includes the education inspectors for this type of education, too”.

18. Financing problems

- Educational institutions can benefit - besides the sums coming from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research – from other financial sources: their own revenues, donations, sponsorships, taxes, etc.
- Pupils and students in the full-time public education system can benefit from a wide range of scholarships: scholarships for excellence, merit scholarships, study grants, social security scholarships.

19. Parents’ responsibilities

The parents or the legal guardians have the obligation of assuring the class attendance of the pupil in the compulsory education system. Failure to comply with this is considered to be contravention punishable by fine.

The Statute of the Teaching Staff – Act no 128/1997

The Statute stipulates:

- the functions, competence, responsibilities, rights and specific obligations of the teaching and auxiliary staff, as well as the managing, guidance and control staff.
- The conditions and modalities of occupying the didactic positions and performing the specific functions, of the functions of guidance and control, as well as the modalities and conditions under which the staff can be released from these positions and functions, or can end their activity and retire;
- the system of proficiency courses and of evaluation;
- the criteria on the basis of which the teaching load and the financial retribution are established, and under which awards and prizes are given and sanctions are applied.

B. The organization, structure and administration of the system

I. The Structure of the education system

The national education system includes public and private education units and institutions, has an open character and assures the possibility of transfer from one system to another under the conditions stipulated by law.

The obligation of attending school is established by the Constitution (article 32) and by the Education act. Article 15 of the Education act stipulates that the general compulsory education includes primary education (grades 1-4) and lower secondary education (grades 5-8). Compulsory education begins with the first grade of primary school, where pupils can be enrolled if they turn 7 during the respective calendar year. Upon the request of the parents or legal guardians, children who turned 6 by the beginning of school year if their psychosomatic development meets the required standards. For children who, for various reasons (social or health problems), have not finished the first four grades of compulsory education by the age of 14, "second chance" forms can be created. Compulsory education (grades 1-8) normally ends by the age of 15. It ends with a "capacity examination", that entitles the pupil to continue its studies in the post-compulsory educational system or to integrate in active life. Exceptionally, for those who are more than two years older than the average age of the respective grade, lower secondary education (grades 5-8) can also be organized under the form of evening classes or part-time education or distance education.

NOTE. Stating with the promotion of pupils who are in the fifth grade in the 1999-2000 school year, the transition is made to the nine-year compulsory education (grades 1-9, in accordance with Act 151/July 30 1999.

In accordance with Education Act, the education system in Romania includes:

□ PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

- **Pre-school education**, organized in groups for children aged 3-7 (lower, middle, upper, and preparatory group), in **kindergartens** with standard, extended or weekly programme.
- **Primary education** (compulsory), which includes grades 1-4 and is organized in schools as full-time education.
- **Lower secondary education** (gymnasiums), which includes grades 5-9, is compulsory and ends up with the taking of a "capacity examination"; the pupils who pass this examination get a "certificate of capacity"
- **Higher secondary education** (high school education) includes grades 10-12, 13 – full-time education and grades 9/10-13 – part-time education and evening classes. High school education has the following branches: 1. Theoretical; 2. Technological; 3. Vocational. Enrollment is made on the basis of the results in the capacity exam. High school studies end up with a "baccalaureate examination". After passing this examination, the graduates get the "baccalaureate diploma".
- **Vocational education** (1-2/3 years), organized as full-time education or as evening classes in "vocational schools" and apprentice schools with a duration of 2-3 years and 1-3 years respectively. Lower secondary education graduates whether they are "capacity certificate" holders or not, can enroll in the "vocational schools" and in the apprentice schools. Admission is granted on the basis of predominantly practical tests, specific to the selected profession. The courses of "vocational" and

apprentice schools end up with a 'graduation exam' followed by the obtaining of a "graduation diploma" (occupational proficiency certificate).

- **Post-high school education** (1-3 years), organized in post-high school and foreman schools specializing the students in domains required by various companies or institutions. Admission is granted on a competitive basis. High school graduates, whether they are baccalaurate diploma holders or not, can take part in the entrance examination. The studies end up with a graduation examination. If they pass it, the graduates get a **graduation certificate**.

The pre-university education system includes related units: logopedic centres, "Houses of the Teaching Staff", offices and County Centres for Pedagogical Psychology Assistance".

□ HIGHER EDUCATION

- **University education**
 - Short-cycle university education (3 years) is organized in colleges. It ends up with a "graduation examination" after which a "graduation diploma" is obtained. The graduates of "university colleges" holding a "graduation diploma" can continue their studies in the long-cycle education system within the specialization followed initially or within a related specialization. This can be done through passing a competitive examination under the conditions established by the university senate. After passing the competitive examination as well as the make-up examinations, the candidates will be enrolled in the long-cycle university educational system.
 - The long-cycle university education (4-6 years, depending on the domain) is organized in universities, institutes, academies. The higher education institution commonly comprises several faculties, university colleges, departments, units for scientific research, for designing and small scale production, centres of excellence. Admission in higher education is granted on a competitive basis, following an entrance examination; the students can simultaneously attend the courses of two or several faculties, but only benefit from certain facilities established by the law for one direction of study. High school graduates, holding a baccalaurate diploma can take part in the entrance examination. Besides the enrollment figure financed from the budget, as of the 1998/1999 academic year, there are also fee-paying student places. The long-cycle university education ends up with a first degree examination, following which a first degree diploma is obtained. The students and graduates who opt for the didactic profession must take part in the activities of the Department for the Teaching Staff Training. When they graduate from these courses they get graduation certificates that grant them the status of teachers.

- Postgraduate studies
 - advanced studies in the specialization certified by the diploma (2-3 semesters);
 - master studies: the integration of several domains of specialization (2-4 semesters);
 - doctoral studies;
 - refresher courses

Admission in the postgraduate study programmes is granted on a competitive basis (for advanced studies, master studies, academic postgraduate studies, doctoral studies) or on request (for university postgraduate specialization studies and for proficiency studies).

II. The general management of Education

The management of education has been traditionally centralized, the central bodies (the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and the Government) having the ultimate authority to decide about all functional domains (human resources, financial and material resources, curriculum and the development of educational institutions).

The management of education at all levels – national, regional (county) and local – is regulated by Education Act (Act 84/1995) republished with all the subsequent changes and additions.

The general management of education at a national level is provided by the Ministry of Education and Research.

According to Education Act, the Ministry of Education and Research coordinates and controls the national educational system, organizes the public education network and suggests the Government the enrollment figures, approves the curricula, the syllabuses and the school textbooks for primary and secondary education, organizes national contests for school textbooks and provides the financing for their publication for the benefit of compulsory education, coordinates the activity of research, is charge of the training of, and providing refresher courses to, the teaching staff, etc. Some of the attributions of the ministry are exerted through agencies, services and specialized offices under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Research.

At county level, primary and secondary education are coordinated by the County Education Inspectorates, whose authority extends over all school units and other related unit of a pre-university level. The county education inspectorates cooperate with local communities in the financing of the school units under their authority, monitor the manner in which the pre-university educational network functions and organizes school inspections, secures the application of law and the organization, management and carrying out of the educational process. They submit to the Ministry of Education and Research for approval the staffing ratio of the network under their authority, coordinates the staffing of educational units, in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of the Teaching Staff, organizes and advises the refresher courses for the teaching staff, their scientific research and other complementary activities, coordinates the organization of entrance examinations and of the graduation

examinations in the educational units, as well as the school contests. The inspectorates can set up, with the endorsement of the Ministry of Education and Research, units of public education – kindergartens, primary schools, gymnasiums, vocational schools and apprentice schools.

Locally, the management of the institutions is achieved, differentially, for the units of a pre-university level (which enjoy a lower degree of autonomy) and for universities (that have a higher degree of autonomy).

Locally, the managing of pre-university education is provided by the leadership of the respective units. The latter are led by the Headmaster (Principal), the deputy headmasters (under certain conditions), a Managing Board and a Staff Board. The Managing Board and the Staff board function on the basis of regulations approved by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The higher education institutions enjoy autonomy, in the terms stipulated by Education Act. University autonomy refers to the right of university communities of managing themselves, of exerting their academic freedom without ideological, political or religious interference. The document regulating the activity of any university is the University Charter, adopted by the Senate of each higher education institution.

The leading bodies are elected, by secret ballot, for a period of four years, according to the University Charter of each higher education institution. The higher education institutions are led by senates and the faculties and departments by councils. The senates are presided over by chancellors, the faculty councils by deans, and those of the departments by directors. Their attributions are stipulated by University Charter. The executive leadership of the higher education institution is provided by the senate bureau, including the chancellor, the vice-chancellors, the Secretary of the university senate and the administrative general manager.

III. Education Institutions

Education institutions differ with respect to the level at which they operate – pre-university level or university level..

- At the pre-university level, the basic units are:
 - The **Kindergarten**, for the pre-school level – which has the “group” as its main subdivision: the lower, middle, upper and preparatory groups. “The Kindergarten” is led by a director and a managing council.
 - The **school**, for compulsory education, which has as its subdivisions the “classes” (one or several, depending on the number of pupils enrolled). The teachers are grouped, according to their specialization, in “Chairs”. The “schools” are led by the headmaster, the deputy headmaster, the managing board and the Staff board. In rural areas there are also “primary schools” (only grades 1-4) where teaching can be carried out simultaneously (if the number of pupils is very small).
- In the post-compulsory education, the basic units are:
 - The **High School**, organized into sections and profiles, every section/specialization having grades from 9th to 12th. The prestigious high schools having remarkable achievements have the title of “National Colleges”.

- **School complexes** – for technical, industrial, administrative domains – which can group “specialized high schools”, “vocational schools” and/or foreman schools, “post-high school schools” and apprentice schools.
- The independent **post-high school unit**. The teachers are grouped, according to their specialization, in “Chairs”.

The **Education Inspectorate** is the county leading body. At the level of each county related units of pre-university education are organized that are under the jurisdiction of education inspectorates: the house of the teaching staff, centres or offices for pedagogical psychology assistance, inter-school logopedic centres.

The **Higher Education Institutions** include **faculties, specialized sections, university colleges, departments**, units for scientific research, designing, low scale production, centres of scientific excellence, etc.

Private education is considered an alternative or a complement to public education, and the institutions of private education, after being accredited, become part of the national educational system. Private education institutions have organizational and functional autonomy, according to the provisions of Education Act and in agreement with the national criteria and standards. They can only be organized as non-profit organizations and only on non-discrimination principles.

IV. Consultation among various levels of the educational system

The mechanisms regarding consultation among the different levels and forms of education are being created currently. To this purpose, the doing away with the entrance examinations to a higher educational cycle is being considered. These examinations will be replaced by the recognition of the final examination for the immediately lower educational cycle.

The consultation between the primary level and the lower secondary one is informally carried out at the level of schools by the teachers teaching a number of classes to primary school pupils and by the involvement of primary school teachers in the monitoring of the educational route of their former pupils at the immediately higher level. Moreover, the curricular area counselling and orientation is meant to establish communication among various educational levels.

Upon the pupils’ enrollment in the first grade, primary school teachers can consult or require evaluation forms from the educators in the kindergartens where their pupils were educated.

The consultative bodies in which teachers representing various educational levels take part function under the authority of the Ministry of National Education. Among these, we can mention: the National Council for Educational Reform, the National Council for the Recognition of Academic Ranks, Diplomas and Certificates, the National Higher Education Funding Council, the National Council for Higher Education Research, the National Council for School Libraries, the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Research, the Student Consultative Council, the national commissions for various disciplines, etc.

A Consultative Council is organized in Education Inspectorates. The consulting of pupils is achieved through the Pupils' Consultative Councils, organized at the level of the school unit, the county or the whole country.

The participation and consultation of various agents of social life

The participation and consultation of social agents is carried out at both the level of primary and secondary education and at the level of university education. At a national level, there are consultative bodies under the authority of the Ministry of National Education that facilitate mainly the consultation of teachers who teach at various levels of the educational system.

In the pre-university educational system at a county level, there are Consultative councils that work under the authority of Education Inspectorates and that include school headmasters, prestigious teachers, representatives of the parents and of local authorities, of the religious communities and of the various companies. At a regional level, there are also Consultative Councils of the Pupils.

At a local level, the consultation and participation of social agents is achieved through:

- The Administrative council of each school unit, that includes representatives of the teachers, of the parents, of local government, of the industrial companies and of the pupils (for high schools and post-high school education).
- The parents' committee that functions at the level of the school and of each class.
- The support, by local government officials, of the funding of maintenance and refurbishment work carried out in each school unit.
- For vocational education there are negotiations and contractual relations among educational units and various companies, as regards professional practice during school years and the employment of pupils after graduation.
- A series of international projects - such as the PHARE project regarding the reform of vocational education - have mechanisms of participation and consultation both at a national and local level, that include representatives of educational units, of economic agents, of the employers, of the trade unions and of public authorities.
- The representatives of the trade unions and of the other staff categories in the educational system are usually consulted when decisions are made as to human resources, both at a national level and at the regional and local ones.
- Higher education has several links to the social and economic and cultural environment, through university foundations, centres for continuous training, etc. The consultation among teachers and students is achieved through the election of the students' representatives in the university senates and faculty councils.

V. Services for educational and professional orientation

Institutions involve in the educational and professional orientation

At the level of pre-university education there are County Centres for Pedagogical Psychology Assistance, that cooperate with the County Departments for Labour and Social Assistance, with the County Centres for Preventive Medicine, with the Labour Force and Unemployment Offices. In the big cities Inter-School Offices for Pedagogical Psychology Assistance can be set up for a number of schools having a large number of pupils. Their tasks pertain not only to educational and professional orientation, but also to “pedagogical psychology assistance” for the pupils, teachers and parents in solving the problems of an educational nature that appear during school years. These are educational institutions that receive funds from the budget. The methodological guidance of these units is provided by the Institute for Educational Sciences. For the pupils who are about to graduate and for the young graduates, Centres for Information and Career Counselling have been set up.

The staff directly involved in the activity of educational and professional orientation is made up of **school counsellors/psychologists**, and **teachers**. Usually, they are graduates of the Faculty of Psychology, Sociology, Pedagogy and Social Assistance.

VI. The school calendar

The Ministry of Education and Research decides on the organization of the school year. For the pre-university education system (primary, lower and upper secondary, vocational and post-high school education) the ministry decides on the structure of the school year, the examination sessions, the dates for the holding of entrance examinations and school holidays. In the private educational system the same structure is generally observed.

For higher education, the general coordinates are established by the Ministry of National Education, but the principle of university autonomy works in this respect, too.

The school year

As of 1998/1999, the division of the school year into semesters at pre-university level was adopted. (O.M.N.E. no 3343/ March, 2, 1998). The semesters include study periods alternating with vacation periods. The 2000/2001 school year had 34 weeks.

Changes in the school calendar are possible in special situations (epidemics, natural calamities, etc.) or when local characteristics require it (the agricultural calendar in rural areas, etc.) if sanctioned by the education inspectorates.

In preschool education, the structure of the school year is, in principle, identical to that of primary and secondary education. However, the respective institutions have a certain amount of autonomy as far as the decisions on the duration of holidays are concerned, in many cases holidays being shorter than at other educational levels.

The academic year in higher education is made up of two semesters, which are also separated by vacation periods and examination periods. University senates are authorized to independently decide the structure of the two semesters of the academic year observing the following general rules:

- The beginning of the academic year is either in September or at the beginning of October.
- Each semester has 14 full study weeks comprising courses, seminars, practical work that are only interrupted by official holidays and by unforeseen events.
- August is a vacation month devoted to maintenance work, repairs, etc.
- Students' holidays are given at Christmas and New year (two weeks), between the semesters (one week) and at Easter (a couple of days). The examination sessions are independently established by the rector's office of each university.

Weekly and daily programme

In Romania, as of 1990, the school week in preschool, pre-university, and, in most cases university education is of 5 days (Monday to Friday). The weekly and daily timetable is decided upon on the basis of the curriculum corresponding to each study level.

In preschool education units, the daily and weekly timetable was established in accordance with the syllabus for training and educational activities corresponding to this level (Order of The Ministry of Education no 32665/1993, republished in 1996). The number of classes stipulated for this educational level was of 4 daily and 20 weekly (in the case of standard programme kindergartens) for all groups of children, irrespective of level or age. The four-hour daily programme which is scheduled in the morning includes, besides compulsory educational activities, complementary activities: games and optional activities.

For primary education, the daily and weekly timetable (the arrangement of subjects within the school day and week) was decided upon by the "educator" (teacher at primary school level), in agreement with the curriculum for this level.

In the secondary cycle (lower and upper), the daily and weekly timetable is established by each unit separately, after consultations between the headmaster and the teaching staff, in agreement with the curriculum for this level.

At the level of higher education, the daily and weekly timetable is established devised by each institution, on the basis of the curriculum and in accordance with the principle of university autonomy. Classes can be scheduled at any time in the day or week (sometimes even on Saturdays). As of 1999 the open and distance learning education was also introduced.

VII. Geographical and economic accessibility.

The network of public education units is organized and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research, in accordance with the demographic evolution and with the current and future needs for professional training. At the same time, local authorities and companies can set up and fund

educational units in conformity with legal provisions. The geographical distribution and accessibility of the educational units differs according to the educational level. The way in which preschool educational units are distributed cover, in general the demand, in urban areas the distances between the kindergarten and the child's home being, usually, not very long. In case the parents prefer a certain preschool educational unit, they have the responsibility of taking their children to and back from school, as school transport is not provided.

In rural areas, though the network of units of this kind is relatively developed (there are kindergartens in most places in the countryside) especially in the mountainous and hilly regions, in the Danube Delta, etc, these educational units are far from the children's homes, no school transport is provided, and consequently a great part of the children having the respective age don't go to school.

The network of compulsory general education is created depending on the distribution of school population on the territory. School units corresponding at least to the level of primary education can be found, in general, in any place, even in the rural ones having very few children. In these places, in such situations, there are school units with a very low number of pupils (4-5 in each class). In the classes with a lower number of children pupils of different ages and grades are taught simultaneously. The respective school units need an annual authorization for functioning from the Ministry of Education and Research.

The new Education Act stipulates that, in future, "in certain special situations, the pupils in primary and lower secondary schools who have to learn in other place than where they live should be offered transport services, and boarding school conditions at the expense of the Ministry of Education and Research, of local government, local companies and communities, of charities, individuals or legal entities".

The network of higher secondary education units is established by the Ministry of Education and Research at the upon recommendation from the education inspectorates and consultation with other factors that are concerned. The national and local educational needs are taken into account and, to a certain extent, the economic characteristics of the region. The network is mainly located in urban areas.

Students can opt for any higher education institution, located in any part of the country. In case they come from other places than the place where the higher education institution is located they are provided accommodation in students' hostels. The development of private higher education as an alternative to the public one led to an increase in the number of university centres and, implicitly, the geographical accessibility has been much improved. In conformity with Education Act, in the network of compulsory secondary education school textbooks are provided free of charge. Pupils in the higher secondary education system are also entitled to get free textbooks if the income per capita of their family is equal to, or lower than, the minimal salary in the Romanian economy. Medical and psychological assistance are offered freely to the pupils who study in the system of preschool, primary or secondary education as well as to the students. Throughout the school year, pupils and students in the public or private education system are entitled to discounts on local means of transport, for cultural activities, etc.

Special education is provided both by special education institutions and by common school units.

In the **higher education** system, universities can establish certain taxes for both the Romanian and foreign students.

VIII. Administrative monitoring and inspections.

At pre-university level there is a national administrative monitoring and inspection system, provided by the corps of inspectors of the county inspectorates and the Ministry of Education and Research. The findings and opinions of the school inspection are registered in the inspection papers, in conformity with the rules for the organization and functioning of school inspections established by the Ministry of Education and Research. The forms and records or inspections are mapped out by each county inspectorate respectively, on the basis of the above mentioned rules.

By Order of the Minister of National Education no 4336/ August 17 1998 the National Commission for the Evaluation and Accreditation o Pre-university Education was created, which has the task of evaluating the pre-university education institutions on the basis of their human resources, curriculum, financial aspects, etc.

At university level, in conformity with Act no 88/ December 17, 1993 the faculties, university colleges and fields of study in the domain of higher education are periodically (every 5 years) submitted to the academic evaluation of the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation. Similarly, the National Council for Higher Education Research is empowered to evaluate the stage of execution of the research projects funded by grants from universities. Irrespective of the level, the modalities and forms of financial control are applied, that are used in the case of any institution and organization financed from public funds.

IX. Education funding.

Education funding amounts, in conformity with the law, to 4% of the gross domestic product. The funding of pre-university level is achieved in conformity with institutional decentralization and autonomy. By the Emergency Ordinance of the Romanian Government no 66/1988, the global funding of higher education institutions is introduced. In conformity with Education Act completed and modified by Act 151/ July 30 1999, the expense for the funding of education is covered from the national budget.

Before 1998, in accordance with Budget Act no 10/1991, the Ministry of Education and Research established the budget of every institution. The Ministry of Education and Research then distributed the approved budgets to the institutions under its authority and to the county education inspectorates. The latter further distributed the money allotted from the budget to the educational institutions under their jurisdiction.

Local authorities use the funds they get from the Government, the local budget and their own resources. They will also use, starting with the 2002 school year, the funds needed for paying the teachers' salaries, and the administrative and auxiliary staff's salaries.

In the pre-university educational system, education institutions can also use extra-budgetary resources that can come from permanent training services, distance learning, consultancy and other activities that correspond to the specific of educational activities (OM no 3412/March 30, 1999).

As in the case of pre-university education funding, the financial resources allotted from the national budget represent the main source of funding for higher education. In conformity with the Law of Education, regarding core funding, global budget allowances are granted to state universities depending on student numbers. The recurrent grant implies the distribution of other resources, according to specific procedures, to meet the needs of each institution and will be managed by the latter.

Among extra-budgetary sources, the special services the institutions provide for the market have greatest weight. Supplementary funding is drawn from the application of certain administrative taxes stipulated in education Act (e.g. entrance examination taxes, registration taxes, resit taxes, extracurricular activities taxes, etc.). The amounts of these taxes are established by the university senate.

An important element of education funding at university level is represented by the external funding sources (international bodies, such as World Bank or European Commission –PHARE, Universitas 2000, the TEMPUS, SOCRATES, LEONARDO and YOUTH FOR EUROPE Programmes).

C. Evaluation policies, methods and instruments

The responsibility of evaluating and examining school results has been transferred, as a consequence of the reform of the evaluation system, to a unique, autonomous body – the National Service for Evaluation and Examination – the main task of which is to draw expert's reports and studies regarding the national evaluation system. It also has to identify solutions to the reform problems raised by this system.

The National Service for Evaluation and Examination (NSEE) conceives and applies the strategy of modernizing evaluation, coordinates examinations in pre-university education system, conceives the tests, the exam regulations, conceives the indices of performance, writes reports on the results that have been obtained, carries out surveys and polls regarding the evaluation of school results, in order to continuously feed back the Ministry of Education. NSEE has relations of cooperation with other institutions; schools, education inspectorates, universities, research centres, professional associations, international institutions.

The programme for reforming the evaluation of school results suggested the setting up of two categories of examinations: national examinations (the **capacity examination** and the **baccalaureate examination**) and local examinations. To these the **national testing of the pupils** and **current evaluation** are added

- **The national capacity examination** is an assessment examination that is meant to certify the pupils' capacities at the end of the compulsory education cycle.

- **The national baccalaureate examination** is a criterion based examination that certifies the knowledge and capacities of the high school graduates at the end of high school studies.
- **The national testing of pupils** is meant to certify and maintain educational standards. The testing has an external character and is carried out on representative samples (approx. 2000 pupils), at the end of primary school and at the end of curricular cycles.
- **The current evaluation** has a prevailing educational character and is carried out by the teachers throughout the school year. The periodic evaluations were carried out mainly through written tests, especially in the most important subjects. As part of the process of reform of the education, starting with the 1998/1999 school year a new system of evaluation was implemented. The evaluation is based on levels of performance: high, average and minimal. On the basis of these levels the following grades have been introduced: very well, well, sufficient and insufficient. Later, the grade “excellent” was also introduced. Current evaluation checks the manner in which objectives have been reached, the organization and assimilation of the acquired knowledge, the improvement of the pupils’ results and the establishment of a supplementary training programme for the pupils having very good results and a make-up one for the pupils encountering difficulties in the process of learning.
- To the traditional **evaluation methods** – the oral evaluation, the written tests, the practical tests – the alternative (complementary) evaluation methods have been added – the project, the file, the report, the investigation, the systematic observation of the pupil’s behaviour. In order to enhance the objectivity level of the evaluation tests, particular attention was paid to the evaluation tests based on objective items – multiple choice items, double choice items, pair type items – semi-objective items and open answer items. The reform of the evaluation system has taken into account as main evaluation instruments , depending on the age of the pupils and the specific of each discipline, the written tests at the end of the semester, practical activities in sciences, interviews, the files containing the work of the pupils over the entire semester, etc.

Changes regarding the assessment of the pupils’ results

In the **primary education system**, the marks have been replaced by **grades**. The introduction of grades at the level of primary education meant to shift the emphasis from quantitative aspects to qualitative aspects as far as the evaluation of results is concerned, by reference to the indices of performance devised by the NSEE, in conformity with the new national curriculum. These indices describe the progress of the pupils in each subject, throughout the educational and training process.

In the **lower secondary education** system, besides the traditional methods (written, oral and practical tests) alternative methods are also applied (projects, systematic observation through the evaluation record of the pupil, etc.) The pupils who got a pass at the end of the last year of study are declared graduates of the lower secondary education system and have the right to sit in the “capacity examination”. In case they don’t pass the “capacity examination’ a resit is possible in any of the next sessions.

In **high school** the modality of assessing the pupils' results is similar to that of the preceding cycle. High school studies end up in a "bacalaureate examination", organized at a national level, and taking into account the various fields of study. The passing of the examination results in the obtaining of the "baccalaureate diploma", on the basis of which pupils can sit in the entrance examination for higher education.

The graduates of technological or vocational high schools can get their certificate of professional competence after they pass "practical test", which is not part of the "baccalaureate examination".

Two sessions for the "baccalaureate examination" are organized during a school year. The candidates have the possibility of taking the "baccalaureate examination" tax free and as many times they like if they pay a fee. The results of the "baccalaureate examination" are made public. High school graduates that are not holders of a "baccalaureate diploma" can ask to be given a "graduation certificate" which does not, however, allow their access to higher education.

In the domain of professional education, the graduates of vocational and apprentice schools who have a "certificate of capacity" can continue their studies in high school, usually in the same field in which they were trained at the schools from which they graduated. The courses of the vocational school and of the apprentice school end up in a "graduation examination" and the obtaining of the "graduation diploma". In the case of the apprentice school the exam consists in a practical test. The graduation diploma certifies the training of the graduates and give them the right to practice the profession they were trained for.

Evaluation at a national level

The Ministry of Education and Research draws a report on the state of the national educational system that it submits to Parliament. The report is based on the analyses carried out by schools and general education inspectorates.

Evaluation at a regional and local level

Evaluation at a local level is performed by the education inspectorates, that are specialized bodies in the domain of pre-university education, under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Research. The education inspectorates, one for each county, and those in each district of Bucharest, as well as the municipal one, have under their authority the units of pre-university education, of mass and special education, as well as their related units and the units where extra-school activities are carried out.

Education inspectorates perform the control functions: general, specialized and special at pre-university level, periodically analyze the state of education on the basis of information that they get from the area under their authority and send an annual report to the Ministry of Education and Research.

Institutional self-evaluation

The headmaster is the person in charge of and coordinating the entire educational activity at the pre-university level. He has the obligation to send quarterly and yearly reports on the state of the educational activity in the school he is in charge of. These reports are made on the basis of the criteria included in the managerial contract or required by the education inspectorates and the Ministry of Education and Research.

At the level of higher education, institutional evaluation is based on the principle of university autonomy. For the public and newly created private higher education institutions, the methodology and criteria for institutional evaluation are drawn by the national Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation.

The evaluation of higher education

In conformity with Act no 88/1993 regarding the accreditation of the higher education institutions and the recognition of university diplomas, the activity of academic evaluation and accreditation in Romania is carried out by the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (NCAEA) and by the evaluating commissions that work under its authority. The National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation is an independent body, having its own structure and organization.

D. The aims and main characteristics of current and planned reforms

The main features of the ongoing educational reform are:

1. In the domain of curricular reform:

- the devising of a new National Curriculum, that includes new educational plans and syllabuses for all subjects;
- the conception of a new structure of the school year;
- the development of the curriculum for vocational education and the generalization of the results obtained in the PHARE-VET Programme;
- the creation of standards for professional training that should correspond to the current and future needs of the labour market, according to the new National Profession Nomenclature;
- the publishing of the elective high school textbooks within a free market system, while the endorsing of these textbooks, on the basis of reports written by specialists, remains within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Research;
- the promoting of elective subjects and of the development of the local curriculum by the educational units;
- the drawing up and implementation of a new curriculum for pre-school education;
- the drawing up of the new National Nomenclature of Academic Fields of Study;
- the reorganization, on modern bases, of the basic and continuous training of the teaching staff;

- the organization and equipment of the newly created university colleges in accordance with the current educational requirements;
- the reorganization of postgraduate studies;
- the development of the curriculum in colleges and universities and its rendering compatible with the European one;
- the reorganization of the fields of study at university level and the extending of the double and multiple academic specialization;
- the application of the system of the transfer credits in universities;
- the development of the distance learning national network;
- the promoting of the initiatives related to second chance education;
- the promoting of the use of information and communication technologies in didactic activities;
- the drawing up of a new system for evaluating knowledge and competence;
- the organization of institutional evaluation;
- the reorganization of the school network;

2. In the domain of changing the nature of education and reviving research we can mention:

- the decongesting of the syllabuses, their renewal and the focusing of the educational process on class work , thus reducing the dependence of school success on “parallel education”;
- the reduction of the number of examinations and the increase of their functionality ;
- the setting up of centres of excellence in universities and the priority financing thereof;
- the establishing of the new thematic priorities of research;
- the generalization of the system of financing projects on a competitive basis;
- the setting up of doctoral and advanced studies schools;
- the rendering of the results of research compatible with international standards.

3. In the domain of the improving of the infrastructure and the connecting to the great computerized information channels we can notice:

- the initiating of actions of school rehabilitation;
- the conceiving of a programme for the revival of rural education;
- the initiating and applying of a programme of school and university investments on the basis of the special fund for education;
- the application of a programme of reform of the administration of universities;
- the encouraging of partnerships between universities and businesses, which are meant to trigger investments in the university infrastructure;
- the drawing up of a programme for the modernization of school libraries;
- the development of the education information network ROEDUNET and the connecting of educational units to this network.

4. In the domain of the development of the interaction between educational units and the economic, social, administrative, cultural environment we can notice:

- the restructuring of the school network in relation to the local demographic and economic characteristics, as well as to the projects for local development;
- the involving of the parents in the process of decision making as regards the development of the educational units, in the suggestion of elective subjects, in the financial supporting of didactic activities;
- the promoting of professional reconversion;
- the setting up of technological transfer centres in universities;
- the consolidation of local education budgets and the covering of the administrative and investment expenses from these budgets at the pre-university level;
- the opening up of the possibility of financing by local businesses of classes, schools, high schools, sections for university specialization, colleges and faculties, on a contractual basis;
- the reference to high schools and universities as service providers for the community;
- the conceiving of a programme of support for the teaching staff who move up to the countryside;
- the devising of programmes meant to support the education of the Romany population;
- the promotion under different forms of adult education and the reintegration of those who prematurely abandoned the educational system;
- the drawing up of a programme meant to develop human resources.

5. In the domain of school and university management reform the main aims were:

- the creation of the institutional autonomy of schools, high schools and universities from a financial, didactic and human resources point of view;
- the promotion of the institutional autonomy of schools and high schools as regards the defining of local curriculum;
- the complete self-management of extra-budgetary resources by the educational units and the creation of the possibility of placing them in commercial banks;
- the setting up of a new system of financing of the pre-university educational system, where the local community plays a major role;
- the stimulating of the drawing up by each education unit of its own budget on the basis of multiple financing sources: the central budget, the local budgets, the special fund for education, tuition fees, administrative fees, local community contributions, own incomes, national and international grants, donations and sponsorships;
- the application of a new system of global financing of the universities and of the faculties within universities;
- the extending of financing on the basis of research and professional training programmes;

- the introducing of fee-paying student places in public universities;
- the drawing up of programmes for the managerial training as part of the basic training of the teaching staff;
- the promoting of the contractual relation in partnerships between the education units and their social partners who are interested in the educational domain;
- the promoting of postgraduate training and the reorganization of its financing;
- the consolidation of social security scholarships and the reorganization of the system of granting scholarships for students.

6. In the domain of extending international cooperation the following main measures have been taken:

- the promoting of international partnerships between the education institutions in Romania and their counterparts in Europe, through participation in European programmes of cooperation in the domain of education: Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci;
- the signing of international agreements for the equivalence of certificates of study and diplomas;
- the extending of full university education in one of the main international languages: English, French, German;
- the drawing up of curricula by Romanian institutions in a partnership relation with institutions in other countries;
- the participation in the setting up of multinational research units;
- the setting up of international educational institutions based in Romania;
- the extending of the international mobility of pupils, students, teaching staff;
- the application of the South-Eastern Europe educational programme included in the Stability Pact.

1.2. The main quantitative and qualitative achievements of the last decade.

A. Access to education.

Equal chances or equity in education means that all the beneficiaries of the educational system have the premises of equal chances of access to social life as the educational offer is multiple and addresses different needs, capacities and aptitudes taking into account the individual demand for education.

In Romania, the right to get education is the basic principle of educational policies.

Education Act proclaims that education is a national priority and establishes the educational ideal in relation to the criteria for the right to getting education: the free, entire and harmonious development of human individuality, the shaping of the autonomous and creative personality.

In the context of the **general educational offer**, the access to education is facilitated through different forms of social protection, among which:

► **The services, institutions, studies, assistance and the use of the logistic base are free of charge**

- public education is free of charge – a Constitutional provision
- textbooks in the primary and lower secondary public education system are free of charge
- medical and pedagogical psychology assistance of pupils and students are free of charge

► **The full covering from the national budget** of the costs for the preparatory group in pre-school education

► **Joint financing**

- for the maintenance of pre-school pupils, of pupils and of students in boarding schools, hostels and canteens
- for extracurricular activities: scientific, technical, cultural and artistic, sporting and creative which are organized for pupils having remarkable performances
- for the payment of teaching staff, the number of positions financed from the state budget can be supplemented by the educational units – according to their needs – from their own extra-budgetary sources

► **The providing of services and institutional facilities:**

- The granting of scholarships to pupils having obtained remarkable results
- Discounts for pupils on local public means of transport

► **Aspects regarding the organization of the system:**

- **Forms of organization of education:**
 - usually organized as full-time education, the lower secondary education can be exceptionally organized under the form of evening classes, as part-time education or as distance education for those who are more than two years older than the average age of the respective grade
 - the lower and higher secondary education and higher education can be organized as full-time education, evening classes, or
 - part-time education; higher education can also be organized as distance and/or correspondence education
- **The open character of the system:**
 - **in pre-university education:**
 - the possibility for pupils to be transferred in the pre-university education system from one school unit to another, from one domain of study to another and from one network to another
 - the possibility for pupils in the vocational education system that have passed the capacity examination to attend in parallel high school courses in evening classes, in the part-time system or in the distance

education system, as well as the possibility of registering in the 10th or 11th grade in high school after passing a couple of make-up examinations, after they graduate from the vocational education system.

- **in higher education:**
- the possibility for graduates, holders of a first degree diploma, specialize in a second domain
- the possibility for graduates of university colleges that are diploma holders to specialize in a second domain in the system of short-cycle education
- the possibility of graduates of university colleges, that are diploma holders to continue their studies in the long-cycle education system, in the same domain they graduated in, or in a related one, if they pass a number of make up examinations

B. Equity in the domain of education

In order to secure the equitable character of the educational offer, to the initiatives of educational policy presented above, and which are addressed to all the beneficiaries of the system, some special initiatives can be added, addressed to certain categories of the population. Thus, in conformity with the stipulations in the Constitution of Romania, school must secure the observance of the right to get education stipulated for all children and youth, irrespective of their social or ethnic origin, of heir sex or religious affiliation.

Among the types of measures that aim at the establishment of an equitable situation as regards education, we can mention:

► Social protection for children, pupils and youth with special needs

- the organization and functioning of education institutions, classes and groups for children and youth having special educational needs, at a pre-school level, at primary school level, at the level of lower and higher secondary education, vocational education and post-secondary education
- the organization and functioning of special units: orphanages and family-type orphanages for parentless children or children coming from poor families, adoptive families or family placement

► The observance of the right to cultural and linguistic heritage, to intellectual property

- the right of national minorities of being taught and of learning in their mother tongue: faculties, school units, classes and educational groups where teaching is in the languages of national minorities: at all levels of education schools and classes are organized where teaching is in the languages of national minorities (Hungarian, German, Serbian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Croat, Turkish etc.)
- the including in the content of education of the history and traditions of each national minority, and the providing of textbooks and the necessary material support

- the training of the teaching staff in the languages of the national minorities (for the Romany ethnic groups there are even specially designed places in pedagogical schools and universities)

► **The securing of access to basic education through the organization of the education network (the organization of education in distress areas)**

The network of the general compulsory education is established taking into account the territorial distribution of school population. Pre-school education and compulsory education are organized as close as possible to the pupils' homes (usually, in the places where they live). Though this implies high costs for isolated places, for the areas having a low demographic index and those where the access to school is difficult or implies high levels of risks (forests, heavy traffic, etc), for the areas where the population of minority ethnic origin is numerous, there are school units that function with a reduced number of pupils in the class, a situation which mainly typifies primary education in rural areas. In the classes with a reduced number of pupils, teaching is performed simultaneously for pupils of various ages and grades. 84% of the units of compulsory education function in rural areas and less than a half (44%) of the children of the respective age attend them (school year 1999-2000).

	Units		Pupil percentage	
	urban	rural	urban	rural
Primary education	8.0%	92.0%	52.1%	47.9%
Lower secondary education	22.6%	77.4%	59.2%	40.8%
Total	16.0%	84.0%	55.8%	44.2%

As regards the attending of lower secondary education by the pupils living in such places, this often involves the transport of pupils to a school that is in other place than the one where they live; the child has therefore either to commute daily, or to find accommodation or go to a boarding school. In order to reduce the phenomenon of dropping out caused by such situations, Education Act stipulates that in future "in special circumstances, pupils in the primary or lower secondary education system will benefit from transport services, boarding and boarding school conditions, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Research, of local authorities, of local companies and businesses, of local communities, charities, of other legal entities and individuals".

- dispensation from the norms regarding the size of a class (established by article 158 of Education Act, depending on the level of study of pre-university education) as a measure of reform and organizing education in classes with a lower number of pupils and/or in classes with

simultaneous teaching, though leads to an increased financial effort, represents a necessary initiative, meant to reduce the risks of marginalizing certain categories of the population;

- supplementary pay for the teaching staff working in secluded areas, the amount of money depending on the degree of isolation of the place.

► **The diversification of the educational offer (a plurality of options)**

- **at the level of lower and higher secondary education schools/classes** are organized where intensive courses in a foreign language (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian) are taught;
- **in all education units** widespread international languages are studied, the study of the first one starting in the 3rd grade, and that of the second one in the 5th grade.
- there are units in the pre-school, primary and lower secondary educational system where groups or classes with alternative pedagogical approaches function: Waldorf, Montessori, Petersen, (starting with 1990) and Step by Step (starting with 1995, with a much wider spread – in over 30 counties);
- at the level of primary, lower secondary and higher secondary education, there are units (or classes) with an integrated or supplementary arts syllabus (music, fine arts, performing arts, choreography) and schools or classes with a sports syllabus.

The aspects of educational policy listed above are measures that mean to secure for all children and youth the chance of participating in the education process, but also to diversify the educational offer for all categories of the population through multiple educational forms (alternative pedagogical approaches, vocational education, the study of foreign languages etc.) with special care for certain categories of population (handicapped people, ethnic minorities etc.)

Difficulties created by the context of functioning of the educational system

The social and economic developments of recent years – against the background of serious perturbations on the harmonious and natural development at regional and local level, forcibly induced in the 1980's by exaggerated industrialization, by the displacement of people from rural areas to urban ones, by the depopulation of villages which were left with an aging population) – deepened the discrepancies between various regions, between the rural and urban communities, between various areas. As far as education is concerned, a number of negative phenomena can be noticed, as well as the manifestation of risk factors regarding equal chances of getting education, that are materialized in:

- **the inadequate quality of economic infrastructure and of local services**, mainly in rural areas, with consequences on the standards of living:

- **discrepancies** caused by the insufficiency and uneven distribution of funds, associated both with the deepening of the general crisis in the economy, and with the legislative changes in the domain of education financing, regarding the introducing of complementary financing in pre-university public education and the setting up of financial autonomy of educational units.

Thus, the need was felt for the introducing - besides the funds coming from the state budget (meant to cover the expenses with the staff, the textbooks and the refresher courses for the teaching staff) of complementary financing coming from:

- funds from local budgets meant to cover the maintenance and the administrative costs, as well as the expense with materials, services, repairs (current and capital) and investments, the subvention for boarding schools, hostels and canteens for the pupils as well as other expenses of a social assistance nature (e.g. social security scholarships);
 - funds from extra-budgetary sources, as a result of introducing financial autonomy for the pre-university education units; the latter has thus the right to build up its own sources of financing – as a complement to the money obtained from the local budget (which is, in most cases, insufficient) – coming from the education and production activities, the providing of services, renting, donations and sponsorships. They create a decentralization of financing in the education system (started in 1999). This can represent a risk factor, materialized in the increase of the dependence of education financing on both economic development at local level and the capacity of authorities to collect and manage the local budget revenues, and the managerial capacity of the school to attract extra-budgetary sources.
- **discrepancies induced by the quality of the infrastructure and the equipment:**
 - the quality of the infrastructure of the educational system, that is of the buildings and the equipment they have, the organization and use of the space, the quality of the furniture. In 1999, more than a quarter of the school units functioned in buildings that had been built over 50 years before, some of them being from the 19th century. The situation is even worse in rural areas, where the number of buildings of this type raises up to almost a half. Only a third of the units (38%) functioned in buildings that had been erected after 1970. The age of the buildings influences not only the quality of the equipment the units are provided with, but is also an impediment to reaching the required current standards regarding the size of the classrooms, the equipment with laboratories, workshops, gymnasiums etc.
 - the amount and quality of the material resources, the equipment with means of information and communication and with didactic materials are often unsatisfactory. Once again, the units that are more deficient in this field are those in the rural areas, of which only a third (32.5%) have a telephone (approximately 10% of the kindergartens and primary schools and 60% of the schools with grades 1-8 and only 8% of the

lower and higher secondary education units have computers (the program for providing the school system with computers is being implemented). As far as the means of information are concerned, we should mention the conclusion of the analysis of the units in rural areas, according to which only two thirds 65.7% of the units have libraries but even these have an aging stock of books, with few specialized studies. At a national level, in 1999, only half of the pre-university education units had school libraries and had programs for the development of their stocks, of the number of books and periodical collections. A program co-financed by World Bank has been initiated for the development of libraries in certain rural areas as Rural Centers of Documentation and Training for the Teaching Staff. As far as the equipment with didactic materials (maps, abacuses, alphabets, lab tools) is concerned, it was found either inappropriate – the equipment was dated and/or worn out – or altogether non-existent.

- **discrepancies generated by the quality of human resources, from the perspective of**
 - **the qualification of the teaching staff**
 - the number of the skilled staff is still high, in the 1999-2000 school year at the level of compulsory education it was of only 80% (similar to that in the preceding school year), displaying significant differences between urban areas, where it was of 86.3%, and rural areas , where it was of only 73.8%. The best situation is encountered at the level of higher secondary education, where the weight of unskilled staff amounts to only 9.4%. As far as subjects are concerned, the most deficient as regards skilled staff are modern languages, but also basic disciplines like Romanian and history;
 - the access to continuous training, the motivation for and interest in professional training
 - **the extent of the staff fluctuation phenomenon and of commuting**
 - **the limited access to means of information and documentation** for the teaching staff in certain isolated rural localities
- **discrepancies generated by the distribution of the educational network**: if the organizing of an education unit in an isolated place or one with a low demographic index represents a desirable solution for the people in the region, this often happens at the expense of the quality of the education provided as the teaching staff available in such areas do not usually have the necessary training for the job.
- **discrepancies induced by the instruction (education) level of the population** in various regions, having as a result not only issues of communication between the school and the pupils' families, but also an unsatisfactory involvement of the respective community in the solving of the school's problems.

Dysfunctions in the individual demand for education, generated by the social and economic contest

Recent years have witnessed the start of a process of rapid deepening of polarization in the domain of education, an important section of the younger generation getting higher education, while, at the opposite pole, a worryingly increasing section of the population doesn't get any education at all or drops out from school at the primary or lower secondary level. At present, in the primary and lower secondary education system – compulsory and free of charge – a ratio of 5% of the children of the respective age are not included in the system; in the 1999-2000 school year, the ratio of inclusion of the school population was of 95.4% in the primary and lower secondary education, with certain differences between the two levels.

The ratio of inclusion in the compulsory education system in the 1999-2000 school year.

Total	Education levels		Environment	
	Primary	Lower secondary	Urban	Rural
95.4%	98.9%	92.4%	95.0%	95.8%

As regards inclusion in the basic education system, with the exception of some restricted sections of the population (Romany population or religious minorities that are hostile to education), no negative attitude of the parents towards school was recorded, the legislation stipulating that child allowances should be paid by schools stimulating the children's participation in the educational process. The phenomena of failure to attend classes or of dropping out from school are rather the consequence of the dramatic social and economic condition of certain families that have to cover certain costs associated with their children going to school (school supplies, clothes/uniforms, transport expenses). To all these we need to add that many parents prefer to keep their children at home to use them in agricultural activities.

The study assessing rural education reveals that the main cause for explaining the phenomenon of non attending school in the areas close to the big cities is the existence of certain mentalities according to which there are other opportunities than school for social success. At the opposite pole are placed the units with simultaneous teaching and those with a lower number of pupils in the class/school, where the refusal to attend school, dropping out or poor attendance are significantly less frequent if not altogether absent. An explanation for this situation is that the area of recruiting the pupils is restricted in such cases, the relations between the members of the community are much closer, based on mutual acquaintance and, usually, in such areas the teacher enjoys a particular prestige. Similarly, in areas with a low demographic index school population is reduced in number which has the tendency to decrease even further. The teacher in such areas is very much interested – in order to keep the job – to encourage the pupils' participation in classes.

The entire legislation in the domain of education, complemented by measures in the domain of social security meant to stimulate and facilitate the participation of pupils in the educational process refers mainly to basic education. If, as regards compulsory education, certain opportunities are created for attracting the population to education, for the secondary level, the circumstances are entirely different. The great majority of high school units (85.2%) and of vocational schools (71.1%) are placed in urban environments, which substantially reduces the chances of youth in rural areas of accessing post-compulsory education, most of the families being utterly unable to afford the costs for transport, accommodation and boarding, which are only partly covered from the state budget.

The distribution of post-compulsory education units in the 1999-2000 school year

	Total	Urban	Rural
High schools	1340	85.2%	14.8%
Vocational schools	97	71.1%	28.9%

In these circumstances, the motivation for continuing their studies is much reduced for the graduates of lower secondary schools in rural areas, many of them choosing to look for a job (as agricultural workers or as temporary workers) or to join their parents in their household activities. Besides, even of those who chose to continue their studies a significant number drop out after a while.

For the youth in rural areas, one of the opportunities regarding the continuation of their studies – supported both by school headmasters and parents – is the organization of apprentice classes within the school units the children graduated from, which gives them the opportunity to continue studying after they finished the 8th grade. In the short run, the association of apprentice education to the compulsory education units in rural areas represents, of course, an opportunity for these youth. In the long run, however, this initiative can lead to a deepening of the effects of the gap between villages and towns, both from an educational point of view and from the point of view of social success, the more so if the development of this school is not based on the local and regional training needs.

An aspect that should not be neglected at all and which is linked to the economic area is represented by the educational level of the population. The absence of jobs, the great number of the unemployed, the illusion of getting not very high, but promptly paid wages, offered by the black labour market, resulted in a diminishing of the trust of less educated people in the educational and training role of school.

C. The quality of education

Among the elements of the reform that can be found in all the components of the education system at all educational levels (curricular reform, the reform of the evaluation system, the reform in the development of the school network, the reform of school management and the training of the

teaching staff, et), we are going to present a number of initiatives regarding the evolution and development of the system elements.

Because of the layered structure of the system – stipulated by Education Act – we can talk about its *vertical development*. Thus, through the introducing of the preparatory group for the 6-year-old children and the emphasis on post-university education, the educational system will include the levels addressed to pre-school, primary, lower secondary and higher secondary as well as higher education – for the population of the respective ages, but also forms of study for higher education graduates.

Act 151/1999 brings a series of changes and additions as regards the organization and structure of the educational system, among which:

- the organization of high school education in three branches:
 - theoretical – with a duration of 3 years
 - technological (technical, services, the exploiting of natural resources and environment protection) – with a duration of 3-4 years
 - vocational (military, theological, sports, arts, pedagogical) – with a duration of 3-4 years
- the delivering, upon graduation from a vocational school or a post-secondary school, of a certificate of competence where the various types of competence acquired in school are listed
- the delivering, upon graduation from high school, of a certificate of professional competence (for the pupils of specialized high schools)
- the inclusion of continuous training in the national educational system

Besides, because of the appearance and development of private education and of the consequent diversification of the educational offer at the level of higher secondary education and of the higher education, we can talk about an important **horizontal development** of the system.

► Quantitative elements

Note: The indices of inclusions presented are valid for the 1999-2000 school year

The number of school units, of pupils and of teachers at the pre-university level in the 1999-2000 school year

Education level	Number of units	Number of pupils	Number of staff	Pupils per teacher
pre-school education	12,831	616,313	35,619	17.3
primary education	5,860	1,174,227	61,671	19.0
lower secondary education	7,128	1,287,183	96,507	13.3
high school education */	1,340	694,376	67,239	10.0
vocational education */	97	222,234	3,845	19.3

*/ Note: Starting with the 1999-2000 school year the independent school units of the educational network were defined, in the new circumstances created by the application by the Ministry of National Education of the new framework curricula. Thus:

- the network of high school education includes, as independent units: high schools (621) and school complexes (719)
- the network of vocational education includes: vocational schools and apprentice schools

The most important elements regarding the evolution of the system are the following:

► **Pre-school education**

The gradual generalization of the preparatory group for children preparing to go to school, stipulated by Education act in 1995, led to a ratio of inclusion in the kindergartens of 89% of the 6-year-old children in the 1999-2000 school year, 2.3 more percentages than in the preceding school year (86.7%).

The ratio of inclusion in kindergartens in the 1999-2000 school year

	Total	Urban	Rural
total amount of 3-6-year-old children	65.2%	67.1%	63.5%
6-year-old children	89.0%	94.6%	83.9%

As far as pre-school education is concerned, because of the age of the pupils involved, it can only be attended in units close to the children's homes. The lower ratio of inclusion of 6-year-old children in kindergartens in rural areas can be explained either by the extremely low number of children in some such places (which makes it difficult to organize such units), either by difficulties of access. We must, however, mention the effort of the people in a position of authority in the county education inspectorates to create kindergarten groups in almost all rural areas, in the places that do not have the possibility to build up minimal material resources, the kindergartens being hosted by the school building. In pre-school education, 7.6% of the overall number of children enrolled in the 1999-2000 school year are educated in a national minority language. Of the total amount of the teaching staff in pre-school education, 79.2% have the qualifications required for the job.

► **Primary and lower secondary education**

As a complement to the legislative and social security elements presented above, including the distribution according to areas of residence of the educational network and of the number of pupils, among the improvements brought by the reform to compulsory education we can mention:

- the establishment of the age of 7 as the age when children start going to school
- the introduction of modern languages starting with the 3rd grade, into all educational units
- the appearance – to a small extent – of some private units

- the introduction of the elective textbooks for grades 1-8
- the reform of the current evaluation system for primary school level, through methods based on evaluation standards and performance indices
- the organization in the 1995, 1996 and 1998 school years of national evaluations (on a representative national sample) of the performance of first cycle graduates
- the introduction of evaluation at the end of lower secondary education cycle, through the national capacity examination, the first promotion that took this examination being the one of the 1998-1999 school year
- out of the total number of the graduates of the lower secondary education – the 1998-1999 year we can find 80% enrolled in the first high school or vocational school grade. Of the same generation, 8.5% of the lower secondary cycle graduates are not continuing their studies, which represents two percentages more as compared to the preceding year.

Graduation year	High School	Vocational School	Apprentice School	Not continuing their studies
1997-1998	59.7%	24.1%	9.5%	6.7%
1998-1999	59.2%	19.3%	13.0%	8.5%

Dropping out of school during the years of study in the compulsory education cycles (the ratio of people in a generation who started the first grade and did not finish the lower secondary cycle) is of about 17%.

► **High school education**

- ever since the beginning of the reform, the high school network has undergone important changes, through the drastic reduction of fields of specialization having a technical character (industrial, agricultural, etc) to the benefit of the theoretical, economic or informatics. During the period 1989/1990-1998/1999 the number of pupils attending pedagogical schools has tripled , but, starting with the 1999-2000 school year the training of educators and primary school teachers has become the responsibility of the University Colleges for primary education teachers.
- Starting with the 1999-2000 school year, high school education has been organized into orientations and profiles, the structure of the pupil numbers being the following:

Total	694,376
A.Theoretical orientation	49.47%
- Theoretical profile	49.41%
- Special profile	0.06%
B. Technological orientation	43.29%
- Technical profile	28.16%
- Agricultural profile	4.12%
- Forestry profile	0.88%
- Agricultural and tourist profile	0.24%
- Economic profile	8.46%
- Administrative profile	0.50%
- Veterinary profile	0.89%
- Special profile	0.04%
C. Vocational orientation	7.24%
- Sports profile	1.56%
- Fine arts profile	0.71%
- Musical profile	0.54%
- Choreography profile	0.07%
- Pedagogical profile	2.31%
- Military profile	0.27%
- Theological profile	1.78%

- the introduction of the new curriculum starting with the 1999-2000 school year triggered the reshaping of the school network, the category of high schools now including high schools and independent school complexes
- out of the total number of pupils, 93.8% are enrolled in urban area high schools and only 6.2% attend courses in rural area high schools, and only a fifth (19.8%) of the pupils enrolled in urban area high school live in rural areas
- 87.4% of the high school pupils attend high school full-time programmes, 11.1% attend evening classes and only 1.5% of them are studying part-time
- as of the 1999-2000 school year, access to high school education is based on the candidates' results in the capacity examination

► Vocational education

- the reform of vocational education (started in 75 schools) has entered the stage of generalization; the vocational and technical education has been deeply restructured through the restructuring of its aims and the introduction of a new system of evaluation and certification, through the new curricular structure that includes general culture subject, special subject, practical training, etc.
- the introduction of the new curriculum as of the 1999-2000 school year resulted into the reshaping of the school network, which now includes 97 independent educational units
- in the 1999-2000 school year, out of the 97 vocational education units, 90 are public owned, one is private property and 6 are owned by various associations
- the vocational and apprentice education are only organized as full-time forms of training.

► Higher education

Higher education is the educational level that witnessed the most spectacular development – as regards the number of students or its extension through the appearance of the private educational system:

- the appearance, in 1990, of the private higher education – organized on the basis of the Decree no 54/1990, of the Act for the Accreditation of higher education institutions no 88/1993 and of Education Act no 84/1995 represented the beginning of the process of extension
- in conformity with Ordinance no 54 of the Ministry of National Education, as of the 1998/1999 academic year the legal basis was created for the access to public higher education by paying tuition fees by the entrance examination candidates that do not manage to occupy the tax-free student places, that are funded from the national budget; thus the chance is created for an additional number of high school graduates to continue their studies
- the private higher education – many of whose institutions are in full process of being accredited – met the need for education and continuation of training after the secondary education cycle of large sections of the population; the numbers of students enrolled in these forms of education represent almost a third of the overall figure of university students in Romania.

The number of students in the higher education system (1998-1999):

	Public	Private
Total (407,720)	277,666	130,054
- long-cycle education	254,294	72,172
- short-cycle education	23,372	57,882

The public higher education (1998-1999)

- organized in 43 municipalities and towns, it includes 57 education institutions and 361 faculties and university colleges
- the number of students witnessed a growth of 68.8% in the 1998-1999 academic year, as compared to the 1989-1990 academic year; out of these students, 91.6% are studying in the long-cycle system and one can notice a significant increase of the ratio of full-time students from 57.7% in the 1989-1990 academic year to 94.8% in the 1998-1999 academic year, through the sharp cut in the number of students attending evening classes (1.3% in 1998-1999)
- the period after 1990 witnessed a change in the options for various fields of study, by the reduction of faculties with technical profiles and the development of those having a university profile; thus, taking into account their domain of specialization, 35.2% of the students are enrolled in the technical education system, 26.0% in the university one and 17.6% in the economic one.

- Starting with the 1998-1999 academic year, access to the public higher education institutions is possible – in the conditions of university autonomy – on the basis of the results in the baccalaureate examination, optionally correlated to the selection tests organized by the respective institutions
- specific services and institutional facilities:
 - student discounts on trains and local means of transport for full-time students
 - merit scholarships, the amount of which varies in relation to the student's results, granted on the basis of performance criteria – bank credits for students in the public education system (GO no 105/1998)
 - the managing by the universities of 314 students' hostels, with a standard capacity of 94, 844 places; some universities accommodate students in boarding schools, too, on the basis of agreements concluded with education inspectorates

The private higher education (1998-1999)

- In the period 1993/1994 – 1998/1999 the numbers of students grew with about 17%, in the 1998/1999 academic year the ratio of full-time students being of 68.3% and that of part-time students of 31.6%.

Higher education	Public	Private
technical	35.2%	0.33%
university	26.0%	18.48%
economic	17.6%	40.65%
medical and pharm.	10.6%	2.13%
agricultural	4.3%	1.89%
law	4.0%	35.54%
artistic	2.3%	0.98%

D. The involvement of society in the process of changing the educational system

The provisions of the reform extended communication with external factors, among which we can mention, besides family – whose role in relation with school was much increased – the local council and businesses, community factors, the church, etc. Through the new managerial and financial legislation that refers to the decentralization and autonomy of the educational units, the bases are laid for one of the fundamental objectives of reform in Romania*. In this respect we will mention a couple of directions:

- a greater responsibility and initiative in establishing the curriculum, in managing the extra-budgetary financial sources, as well as in the domain of selecting one's own human resources. In this context, the real partnership between school and community becomes the

* The OMNE no 4522/September 24, 1999, suggests that a framework-contract should be concluded between the school and the representatives of local communities (parents' committees, local councils and businesses) which should stipulate the attributions and responsibilities of all parties involved as well as precise deadlines for the solving of the specific problems the school is confronted with. This framework-contract means to secure the transparent character of the school's activity and the extent to which it is observed becomes a criterion in assessing the results of the educational units.

- cornerstone of the efficient functioning of educational units*
- the functioning of the higher secondary education (high schools of technological and vocational orientation, as well as vocational schools) in a mixed structure based on both the school and the company, aiming at the training for a type of activity
- the involvement of the family in curricular decisions, related to the establishment of the curriculum upon the decision of the school.

Considered to be an important desideratum in the reform of education, the role and the extent of the involvement of the community in solving the problems of school represented one of the objectives of the investigation carried out at the level of rural education in Romania. To this effect, the research was aimed at investigating - by questionnaire based research (the questions were addressed to school headmasters) and in group discussions with the pupils' parents – the forms of cooperation between school and family. The research being exhaustive, the results that have been obtained offer a diagnostic image of this initiative at the level of rural education in Romania.

Family represents the essential factor that contributes, together with school, to the development and training of children. Starting from this premise, the new educational policies of the reform of the education system in Romania emphasize the necessity of actively involving both parties in the school's activity.

The research carried out at the level of rural areas education emphasized the following domains of cooperation, which are mentioned in the order of their importance, as it resulted from the answers offered from the managers of educational units.

The domain of cooperation between the school and the pupil's family	Answers per cent
- material and administrative problems	40,9%
- school attendance	26,5%
- school activity and the pupil's results	21,4%
-decisions regarding the content of education, school and vocational orientation	4,3%
-financial contributions	94,2%
- the organization of extra-curricular activities	2,7%

The data in the questionnaire, as well as the group discussions suggest a weak level of involvement of the family in problems like: the establishment of the curriculum upon the decision of the school, the establishment of the school timetable, the option regarding religious activity.

As regards the cooperation between the school and local authorities, the latter becomes indispensable as a result of institutional autonomy and decentralization, especially because the local councils manage certain budgetary allowances or certain funds coming from extra-budgetary sources.

The investigation carried out to this effect, at the level of the units in rural areas emphasized the main difficulties that schools are facing in their cooperation with local authorities:

Difficulties in cooperation	Answers per cent
- the granting of insufficient funds for the needs of the school	63.1%
- lack of interest from local authorities in the problems of the school (the obtaining and transport of fuel, the organizing of disinfection and current repairs activities, the equipment of the school with didactic means	23.6%
- failure to observe legal provisions regarding the rights of the school and the teaching staff	7.2%
- communication problems and lack of transparency in the process of decision making	6.1%

As regards financing, an important source besides financing from the local budget is represented by the involvement of other institutions and businesses. As we are in rural areas, the weight of this factors is pretty reduced, so that over three quarters of the units (77.7%) have not benefited at all from such funds, while 18.7% only to an insufficient extent.

In the traditional Romanian rural community, the Church was considered, beside the School, a spiritual pole. The priest and the teachers were always perceived as major personalities in the life of the village. The results of the above mentioned investigation put into relief the following domains as priority ones in the cooperation with the church: the domain of moral and religious education of children, as well as problems related to the material and financial support for the school, the pupils and their families.

Generally speaking, we can notice many dysfunctions in the relations between the school and the community, which have the following causes:

- a certain degree of resistance to change from the part of the teaching staff and the school headmasters, due to a lack of managerial training and experience, a factor that blocks the partnership initiatives
- a low degree of awareness of the role of the school and of the importance of a real partnership from the part of both the family and the local authorities and the other institutions within the rural community.
- limited opportunities of cooperation with other types of institutions within the community or outside it (businesses, non-governmental organizations, foundations, associations, etc.)

1.3 Lessons taught by the processes of change and reform of the educational system: initiatives taken, successful or miscarried strategies, main difficulties

A. Initiatives taken

The reform of education was conceived in order that the provisions regarding the educational ideal about the training of youth for a democratic society included in Education Act no 84/1995 should come to life. It also envisaged the perspective of Romania's integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.

Efforts have been made for bringing learning back to school, the latter proving its efficiency by the abilities acquired by the young people, in accordance with the new social and economic reality after 1989. These

abilities were proved not only formally, by a study diploma, but also in real life competitive situations on the Romanian and international labour market.

Within the reform of pre-university education, a special place has been held by the **development of the links between school and local communities**, schools acquiring an increased managerial and financial independence. Moreover, educational units have been empowered to decide on a part of the curriculum, a new decision making mechanism being created and a new system of relations being set up among partners interested in education: school, family, representatives of local communities. On the basis of the framework thus created, all these parties can cooperate for increasing the quality of education and building a climate of emulation, auspicious to the personal and institutional development.

A particular emphasis was laid on the raising of the professionalism of the teaching staff, of curriculum authors, of school managers, in agreement with the new requirements at a national and European level.

For the **creation of the legislative basis** needed for the application of the measures of educational reform, steps have been taken for revising the current legislation and completing it with new elements that should contribute to rendering the educational process more efficient.

The application of the new framework plans in the curricular field, at a pre-university level, was achieved gradually, stage by stage, because the changes thus introduced affect an extremely numerous population and often involve a change in mentality that needs time. The simplification of syllabuses and school textbooks by shifting the emphasis from the assimilation of (often irrelevant) knowledge and bare memorizing to formative approaches, presupposes a change in the pedagogical vision on teaching/studying a subject included in a curricular area. The reduction of the number of classes for certain subjects in the common core of compulsory education is not meant to diminish the importance of that discipline in the training of people. This involves a deep reconsideration of the objectives associated with those subjects, so that curiosity and the capacity of understanding what is studied should be stimulated, for each pupil respectively, taking into account his/her specific education needs and interests. For pupils having a particular interest in certain fields, there is a possibility of organizing a number of extra classes.

Cooperating with the publishing houses in the respective domain, the Ministry of Education and Research initiated the creation of elective textbooks, emphasizing the fact that in this field, too there is a need for change in the mentalities about using the textbook as an educational tool. The textbook is considered to be a documentary resource, permanently available to the pupil. The teaching/learning process should not, however, be guided by the textbook, but by the formative objects stipulated by the new framework curricula.

Besides the process of reforming the curriculum, special attention has been paid to the reform of the evaluation system, with a view to making the gradual introduction of a new evaluation system possible. This system is oriented towards doing away with the entrance examinations to a higher educational level and creating the possibility for the mobility of young people both inside the country and throughout Europe. The effort of reforming the evaluating system focused on two main directions: on the one hand, the reform of final examinations (the capacity examination and the baccalaureate

examination), and on the other hand the reform of evaluation as a process, of current evaluation, respectively, meant to record the progress of the pupils or the obstacles that they meet in coping with the formal exigencies of the curriculum.

The Ministry of Education and Research has been concerned with raising the professional standards of the staff who train the teams of evaluators, as well as with the involvement of the teaching staff in activities of continuous training in the domain of evaluating the knowledge and competence acquired by the pupils. The decision to change the structure of the school year from a termly to a semestrial one, has been made taking into account the advantages offered by the

Latter as regards the striking of a better balance between the periods of school activity and the vacation ones. There are only two summative evaluations included in this new formula, instead of three. The content of the evaluation has been modified in relation to the intentions of diversifying and rendering flexible the evaluation procedures. The semestrial periods of evaluation are the periods when revisions are made, the knowledge is summed up and consolidated. These are activities that are necessary in any educational approach, current evaluation continuing to be carried out under forms and in modalities that are much diversified. It does not only restrict to test papers and control written papers, but also includes new and interesting modalities such as project-like activities, folders of the latter, team activities, etc. Besides, control written papers and tests are meant to evaluate the relevant knowledge and competence, so that the extent to which formative objectives stipulated in the curricula are reached should be evaluated and not the amount of information.

The change of the system of evaluation in the primary educational system from a mark-based system to one based on grades is based on the conception according to which the aim of the evaluation, especially in primary school, should be the pupils' motivation for learning, at the same time with monitoring and stimulating their progress, using performance indices.

The curriculum and evaluation were designed with a view to establishing a reflexive didactic practice in education, which should put the pupils in the situation of using what they learned in different contexts, thus developing the basic capacities and skills. In this context, school becomes an environment in which democratic practices and values are promoted, that offer a favourable climate for the youth's learning, self-discovery and orientation in private and public life, in his/her career and in the social and political activity by the full exercise of his/her quality of citizen of a democratic society.

B. The main results, failures and difficulties

The most important achievements of the reform are those in the domain of the curriculum, of the infrastructure and of the connection to the great information channels, of the interaction between the education institutions and community, of school and academic management and of international cooperation.

The problems which are most difficult to overcome are those originating in the inauspicious social and economic context which resulted in the

decrease in the standards of living of the population and in the interest in education. This has led to:

- an increase in the number of school drop-outs and of illiterate people, because their family don't have the financial means to keep them at school even in the conditions of a tuition-free compulsory education;
- the fall in the number of pupils and of school attendance ratio, mainly in the higher secondary education (high school);
- the reduction of the demand for education, especially in the poorer layers of society;
- the deepening of inequality as regards access to education and inequity regarding the chances of success at school;
- a growth in the number of competent people emigrating to other country, as the number of diploma holding unemployed people is growing;

One of the difficulties that required and still requires sustained efforts is the building up of a coherent legal framework that should not be submitted any more to often conflicting initiatives. The identification of the blank spots of education and the clear definition of the legal framework of education represent premises of a fluent functioning of the education system.

1.4. The main problems and challenges that national education is going to face at the beginning of the 21st century.

A major problem of any contemporary reform of education is represented by the organization of the educational offer so as to match the diversification of the educational demands of children and youth, in the circumstances of growing financial difficulties. The solution of organizing and reforming education from the perspective of permanent education appears to be a realistic one as it allows for the creation of certain flexible bridges between levels and routes of education.

A real reform of education has as a major aim the development of the free and creative personality, its social function being integration in social order and change. Such a reform starts from reality and from traditions, secures equal chances of access to and success in education, answers the challenges of contemporary world, of the "new economies, based on computer technologies of communication, on knowledge and creativity, changes consumerist mentalities into creative attitudes. A challenge comes from the difficulty of achieving at the same time and to the same extent an equality of chances at the highest qualitative level of education. Another comes from the processes of globalization and integration and refers to the preserving of national identity and dignity, the developing of national heritage, the assertion of the national creative spirit.

The reform of education will have to take into account: the major aims of the social, economic, political project, the needs and aspirations of young people, the cultural and pedagogical level of society, the resources of the system, the adherence of social agents to change, the succession of stages in the logic of the reform.

The reforms in education must be a step in front the economic ones – without being isolated from them – in order to develop the tendencies of

stability and economic growth. If the revival of economic growth is a condition of a lasting social and educational development, the success of the education reform is a premise for the macro-structural economic reforms that primarily aim at the development of certain sectors (tertiary – from the sphere of services, health, education) new professions and jobs, new attitudes towards performance, competition, merit, risk, the new social middle class that encourages economic, social and political pluralism.

Changes in education will be submitted to a triple impact: cultural traditions, the current problems of the world, the problems of the future.

The reforms of education, by extending the duration of compulsory education, encourage the democratization of society as they reduce the dependence of the social position of a person on his/her social origin.

From this perspective, the priorities of educational reforms at the beginning of the 21st century seem to be: the securing of equal chances of getting education, the improvement of the quality of education, the assertion of the organizing principle of continuous education – at all ages and along all alternative educational routes (formal, non-formal and informal). If education doesn't succeed as a factor increasing professionalism and stimulating the freedom of creation, then the costs will be higher as we will have to spend more on public services or the social protection of those who are not easily adaptable to social and professional and cultural integration. The problem of striking a balance between the demand for social and professional training and the educational offer will be solved both by prognoses about the labour force market and, mainly, by training extremely adaptable graduates (multiple skills).

The current trend in educational reform must be preserved and adjusted on the way, so that the process of European integration be a constant attribute of this approach. In this context, the coordinates of future efforts might be:

- securing the equality of access to education and, mainly, doing away with the discrepancies between the urban and rural environments;
- securing the equality of chances of getting education by a judicious organization of the education network, by a pluralist educational offer;
- eliminating the difficulties created by the inappropriate quality of economic infrastructure and local services, by the insufficiency and non-uniform distribution of funds, by the quality of the equipment and human resources;
- compensating the disadvantages created by the social and economic context in which the educational system operates, by legislative and administrative measures aiming at reducing the phenomenon of dropping out from school and at restoring confidence and interest in the social and professional success through education;
- becoming part of the European Higher Education Area;
- realization of lifelong learning for all, with increased role of ICT.

2.1.a. The process of decision making. What decisions are made at different levels? How are these decisions put to practice?

2.1.b. The planning and conceiving of the curriculum.

In accordance with The Education Act no. 84/1995 the curricula and the plans of study are mapped out by the national departmental commissions which are coordinated by the National Council for the Curriculum (NCC). NCC makes the curricula, ensuring their vertical and horizontal coherence and submits them to the Ministry of Education for approval (see the figure of Annex 1 that gives a synthetic presentation of the manner in which decisions are made and assessed at various levels). If we refer to the manner in which the system worked between 1998-2000, we can say that the process of devising the curricula, of consultations and of approval of the above mentioned documents consists of a sequence of stages:

- the selection of the model of curriculum devising, following the consulting of experts;
- the devising of the curriculum drafts by the national departmental commissions and their forwarding , accompanied by a report, to the Commission of Experts of the National Council for the Curriculum, to the scientific secretary thereof;
- the consulting of those interested in the curriculum drafts;
- the centralization of the suggestions made during the consultations, a process carried out by the members of the Commissions for coordination of the NCC (these are commissions that coordinate the activity of the national departmental commissions by regrouping them on curricular areas);
- the communication of these suggestions to the commission of experts (CE) of the NCC.
- the discussing of possible changes to be brought to the curricula from the perspective of the suggestions that have been made and the analysis of the vertical and horizontal correlations;
- the sanctioning of the appropriate curricula by the executive board of the NCC
- the drafting of the sanctioning documents and the sanctioning of the curricula by Order of Minister

15 The National Curriculum for Compulsory Education. Referential Framework, MNE/NCC, 1998, defines the reference points , the criteria and the principles underlying the devising of the new curricula. These are the following:

Fundamental reference points:

- the reference to the dynamics and current necessities as well as to the projected aims of the Romanian educational system, which are generated by the evolution of society and are specified in official documents of educational policy.

- the reference to the current tendencies and the generally accepted international criteria in the domain of curricular reforms.
- the reference to those traditions of the Romanian educational system that are relevant from the point of view of the ongoing reform.

Indices:

- the level, the variety and the complexity of the pupil's educational interests.
- the rhythm of continuous multiplication of the domains of knowledge.
- the requirements of shaping the pupils' personality in a changing world

Principles underlying the conception:

A. Principles regarding the curriculum as a whole:

- The curriculum must reflect the educational ideal of the Romanian school as defined by the Education Act
- The curriculum must take into account the age characteristics of the pupils, which should be correlated with the principles of the psychology of learning
- the curriculum must reflect the dynamics of the social and cultural values that are characteristic for an open and democratic society.
- The curriculum must stimulate the development of critical and creative thinking.
- The curriculum must help the pupils discover their gifts and make the best of them to their own benefit and that of the whole society.

B. Principles regarding learning:

- Pupils learn in different ways and rhythms.
- Learning presupposes continuous investigations, effort and self-discipline.
- Learning develops attitudes and skills and contributes to the acquisition of knowledge.
- Learning must start from relevant aspects for the personal development of the pupil and for its inclusion in social life
- Learning can be carried out through self-study and group activities.

C. Principles regarding teaching:

- Teaching must generate and stimulate the pupils' motivation for permanent learning.
- The teachers and primary school teachers must create various learning opportunities, that should facilitate the intended goals' achievement.

- The teachers and primary school teachers must discover and stimulate the pupils' interests and skills.
- Teaching does not only mean transmitting knowledge, but conveying moral, behavioural and attitudinal values as well.
- Teaching must facilitate the transmission of information and skills from one domain of study to another.
- Teaching must be carried out in context relating school activity to everyday life.

D. Principles regarding the assessment:

- Assessment is an essential dimension of the curricular process and an actual classroom activity.
- Assessment must combine the use of a wide variety of methods
- Assessment must be a regulating process that informs the educational agents about the quality of school activity.
- Assessment must lead the pupils to a correct self-evaluation and a continuous improvement of their performance
- Assessment is based on curricular performance standards, oriented towards the abilities of the pupil at the end of his/her educational years when he/she is to enter social life.

The national curriculum.

- curricular cycles (subdivisions of the training period including several years of study, having certain common aims that are defined according to the age characteristics of the pupils): *fundamental acquisitions* (the preparatory year, the first and second grades); *development* (third and fourth grades); *observation and orientation* (seventh to ninth grades); *thoroughgoing study* (tenth and eleventh grades); *specialization* (twelfth grade).
- curricular areas (they regroup the years of study on the basis of certain principles and criteria of an epistemological, psychological and pedagogical nature); *Languages and communication, Mathematics and Natural sciences, Man and Society, Arts, Sport and Physical Education, Technologies, Counselling and Orientation.*

Consequently, the different subject syllabuses suggest educational routes that, on the one hand, are shaped according to the goals of curricular cycles, and, on the other hand, display areas of interference with those of other syllabuses within the same curricular area.

The structure of the syllabuses.

The syllabus describes the educational offer of a certain subject along a well defined training period and includes:

for grades 1 to 9th:

Presentation note

The framework objectives - these are objectives having a high degree of generality and complexity. They are linked to the acquiring of certain skills and attitudes that are specific to the respective subject, objectives that are pursued along several years of study.

Reference objectives – they specify the expectations as to the results of learning and follow the advance in the acquisition of skills and knowledge on a yearly basis.

The examples of learning activities. For achieving the established objectives several types of learning activities can be organized. The syllabus offers at least one example of such activities for each reference objective, respectively. The examples of learning activities are thus conceived that they start from the concrete experience of the pupils and to be included into didactic strategies appropriate for the various learning contexts.

The contents – these are means through which the achievement of the established framework and reference objectives is pursued. The content units are organized either systematically, or according to the component domains of the various subjects.

The curricular reference standards are criteria for the assessment of the quality of the learning process. They are synthetic statements that are apt to indicate the extent to which the curricular objectives are achieved by the pupils. In concrete terms, the standards represent the specification of performance targets related to the knowledge, skills and behaviours established by the curriculum. They represent a common and unified system of reference for all pupils at the end of an educational stage.

for grades 10th to 12th:

General skills (if the respective subject is included in the syllabuses for more than one year of study. The general skills have the role of orienting the didactic activity along the entire duration of study and to give a final evaluation of the acquisitions of the pupil after having studied the respective subject.

Specific skills and contents. Specific skills are formed during a year of study and derive from the general skills, as they are stages on the way of the latter's acquisition. Certain contents correspond to specific skills.

Values and attitudes. As not all the desired results of training can be defined in terms of actions or observable and easily assessable behaviours, the including of such an entry was considered necessary.

Methodological suggestions (that are offered in support for the didactic activity). They can refer to:

- the actual unfolding of the teaching/learning activity (how should teaching and learning unfold so that the pupil should get the established specific skills);
- suggestions regarding the learning activities;
- equipment necessary for the implementing of the syllabus
- suggestions regarding continuous assessment.

The syllabuses suggest a number of examples of learning activities to help teachers organize an active, pupil-centred type of education. To this effect we list several types of activities suggested by the syllabuses and correlated to various reference objectives): role playing, debates, case study, problem solving, experiments.

Methodology remains, however, something at the teacher's own choice. The examples of learning activities, though not compulsory, as they are mere suggestions, help the teacher focus on what the pupil learns and not on what "is taught" and encourage the development of active strategies in the didactic activity.

The structure of the syllabus and, inside it, the learning activities, are indicative of an approach focused on **how well, when and why we learn what we learn**, and the **later utility of what has been learnt at school**.

The syllabuses include the curricular performance standards stipulated for the end of the fourth and, respectively, the eighth grade.

According to the *Reference framework* the **Curricular performance standards** are national standards. They represent a common and unified system of reference for all pupils at the end of an educational stage.

The curricular performance standards are criteria for the assessment of the quality of the learning process. They are synthetic statements that are apt to indicate the extent to which the curricular objectives are achieved by the pupils. In concrete terms, the standards represent the specification of performance targets related to the knowledge, skills and behaviours established by the curriculum.

The curricular performance standards make the connection between the curriculum and assessment. On their basis the levels of performance will be established, as well as the items that are needed for the assessment tests.

The duration of the school year is established by order of the Minister. The 1999-2000 school year lasted 34 weeks. The weekly time allowances for each of the common core subjects can be found in the table in Annex 2 – compulsory activities – 1st to 8th grade (1999-2000 school year).

2.1.c. Teaching and learning strategies. Which are the methods used for strengthening the correlation between education and learning and for encouraging the active participation of the learners?

The educational system in Romania – just like the other European systems – is facing some general requirements whose direction is imposed by the economic, social, political and cultural development, both at a national and international level.

The Romanian National Curriculum was devised taking into account the expectations that society has in these conditions from school and which school, in its turn, presents to the younger generation during the educational and learning process.

Within the *Reference framework* of the National Curriculum for compulsory education, these exigencies are thus summarized:

- The aptitude for thinking critically and divergently which is likely to help the pupils make good use in different circumstances of the knowledge and skills they have acquired;
- The motivation and capacity to positively react to change, as a premise of personal development;
- The aptitude for active social integration, combined with a set of personalized attitudes and values, that will enable the graduates to participate in the life of an open and democratic society.

For attaining the goals of Romanian educational system, a **pupil-centred educational process** has become a compulsory curricular orientation and consequently the application of certain teaching and learning strategies and of certain methods that should accomplish this aim has become equally impending. We are going to see how this component is reflected by the educational theory and practice in Romania.

In the National Curriculum, the fact that education is pupil-centred is reflected in the **conception underlying the Curriculum** for primary and secondary education. The latter, being organized in curricular areas that include a core of compulsory subjects, besides a range of elective ones, has been reshaped in order to allow as personal as possible educational routes, through a varied offer of electives of all types (subject-centred, curricular area-centred). This had the aim of developing the pupils' critical thought, their capacity to solve problems alone, to communicate in their mother tongue or in a foreign language, to use informational technology, etc. in order that school should offer **individual educational routes**. The introducing of the electives in the process of educating the pupils has represented an important moment on the way to the renewing of the didactic approach. This means, on the one hand, the freedom of pupils to choose subjects or contents according to their own interests and aptitudes – with the parents' active involvement in the pupils' educational orientation – and, on the other hand, the devising by the teachers/teams of teachers of the elective syllabuses and of the classes proper, thus increasing their responsibility in the educational activity.

The syllabuses for all levels and for all types of schools, also include – explicitly – strategic elements that are meant to serve the goal of forming a new educational profile of the pupil. Thus, at the level of each curricular area,

the objectives and the strategic and methodological dominants of the curriculum are centred both around the interests of the society and on the interests of the beneficiary of the educational activity, the pupil with its needs. Rendering the contents flexible and adapting them to the concrete level of development of the pupils was constantly pursued, the emphasis being on procedural learning on the pupils' structuring of their own strategies and procedures of solving the problems, of exploring and investigating them. These orientations have materialized, on the one hand, in the manner in which contents have been organized, and, on the other hand, in the types of activities that are meant to be carried on together with the pupils for attaining the curricular goals.

The great majority of the elective textbooks have been reshaped in order to offer the pupils and the teachers modern applied methodologies, with learning activities centred on individual and group work and differentiated learning tasks. Of course that both the syllabuses and, particularly, the textbooks that they generated, can still be improved as regards the amount of knowledge suggested to be acquired, and the focusing of learning on the individual aptitudes of the pupils; this goes along with the greater attention that must be given to developing the pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their making sensitive to all sorts of values.

Among the didactic methods that the activities mentioned in the syllabuses and the use of the new textbooks favour, maybe the most important are those leading to a new type of communication between the teacher and the pupils and among pupils during classes, thus developing the team spirit and cooperation among the members of the group (pupils-pupils or pupils-teacher). The method of the project and the requirement of making individual folders – the use of which has been generalized lately in the didactic documents and strategies and which are gradually becoming a common practice in class – are introducing a new kind of individual and/or group activity of the pupils, emphasizing the development of the originality, creativity and independence of the pupils in carrying out certain coherent learning tasks.

In order to answer the challenges of the future, the Romanian teacher will have to become a facilitator of the learning process, encouraging individual development and increasing the opportunities of the pupil for group and self-study. Besides the planning activities he will have to organize the group involved in the learning process and become flexible enough to be able to face unforeseen and even temporary situations of conflict. The teacher will have the opportunity to go beyond the narrow, protected framework of the classroom and start to work together with his colleagues. An integrated curricular approach, which is gradually built and results from cooperation during work and from a team spirit will facilitate the introduction and acquisition more and more easily transferable.

In order to apply the formal curriculum, an important role must be played by teacher training. Besides restructuring the initial training programmes offered by the Universities, a central role in the Reform of the Romanian education is played by the continuous training of the teaching staff. The two major directions in the restructuring of teacher training have been, during the last two years the decentralizing of the training offer and the increase in its quality. The main option in achieving a coherent policy in teacher training has

been the model of chain training. The initial level was provided by the training of groups of inspectors of all categories, school principals and teachers through projects of the World Bank and the Ministry of National Education; this training was achieved by the team of the National Curriculum Council, foundations with educational interests, the main such organization being The Education 2000+ Centre of the Foundation for an Open Society. The second level of training was performed by all the county inspectorates for education in cooperation with the Teaching Staff Houses and of the Universities, with the help of education experts, etc. Finally, local training was carried out at the level of pedagogical circles and school departments, and were mainly focused on the modernization of concrete activities in class and the putting to practice of a number of new methods of teaching and learning.

According to the evaluations made by schools and to the conclusions of the control activities of the inspectorates for education, as well as to the teachers' opinion, training has not managed so far to include a sufficient number of teachers and has not yet attained its goal of essential innovative factor in the successful application of the reform. Especially in rural areas, both the initial training and the continuous one are still deficient, which results in a lower level of penetration of the reform and an unsatisfactory quality of the educational process in schools, as well as the survival of certain traditional teaching methods, no longer in tune with the new goals of the Romanian national education in a European context.

Another important aspect is linked to the role of the pupils themselves in organizing their own school activities and the school community life in general (the pupils' councils, the school magazines, the democratization of the relation teacher-pupil, etc.) as well as to the **role of the parents and local councils** in their relation with school. In this respect, though we can state that there are no coherent and persuasive global strategies, following the introduction of *educational counselling* in the curriculum and of educational psychologists in schools, the first positive signs have started to show. A viable initiative in this respect originated in the private sector through the nearly 100 schools of the projects of the Centre Education 2000+, projects that will be materialized in 2001.

The first associations of parents and teachers have been created in schools, already having a legal status.

In the future, school will have to be mainly oriented to developing partnerships with local communities, under the pressure of social conditions that stringently impose the cohesion of all the parties involved in education: school, family, local community. This partnership – developed on both a formal and informal basis proves to be indispensable in the future attaining of the goals of the Romanian educational system.

The modernization of Romanian education will become convincing when the reform will materialize in the change of the didactic approach in class. This process of modernization will have to materialize in the formal curricular innovation (planning, syllabuses), elective textbooks, educational tools, the generalized access to the informational system and the new modalities of information that represent new quality supports in the coherent application of certain new didactic methods and strategies for which teachers need to be trained. A coherent policy of continuous training combined with the decentralization offered by "training services", a school opened to the

community, the establishment of a truly pupil-centred teaching/learning process, are only a few of the elements that will finally impose a real and complete reform in the Romanian educational system.

2.1.d. Policies, methods and instruments of evaluation used to assess the pupils' progress

In accordance with the aims of the reform of the primary and secondary education in Romania, the reform of the evaluation system consists of the following general stages: the evaluation of knowledge is made along a whole semester, the weeks of the final evaluation period at the end of each semester are dedicated to the evaluation, which has the following objectives: to achieve the revision and systematization of the acquired knowledge; to improve the results of learning, to enhance the performance of the pupils that have obtained very good results and to help pupils with unsatisfactory results to catch up with the others.

The National Service for Evaluation and Examination (NSEE) devises and puts into practice the strategy for modernizing the evaluation.

The programme for reforming the evaluation of school results led to the setting up of two categories of examinations: **national examinations** (the capacity examination and the baccalaureate examination) and **local examinations**. To these the national testing of the pupils and current evaluation are added.

- **The Capacity Examination** is taken at the end of the compulsory education cycle and is an assessment examination that is meant to certify the pupils' capacities, assessing their performance in the following subjects: Romanian, mathematics, history and geography. The results of these examination also count in the selection of the pupils for the upper level of secondary education. After they have passed the capacity examination the pupils get a "certificate of capacity". The graduates of lower secondary schools (gymnasiums) holding a "certificate of capacity" are eligible for the higher secondary education.
- **The Baccalaureate Examination**, at the end of high school studies is a criterion based examination that certifies the knowledge and capacities of the high school graduates. The results in this examination can be used in selecting the candidates for higher education.
- **The national testing of pupils** is meant to certify and maintain educational standards. The testing has an external character and is carried out on representative samples at the end of primary school and at the end of curricular cycles. At the end of 1996, the national testing at the end of the fourth grade focused on a sample made up of 77 forms of 9 counties and Bucharest and in 1998, 154 forms of all the counties, including 3800 pupils.
- **The current evaluation** has a prevailing educational character and is carried out by the teachers throughout the school year. The periodic evaluations were carried out mainly through written tests, especially in the most important subjects. As part of the process of

reform of the education, starting with the 1998/1999 school year a new system of evaluation was implemented. The evaluation is based on levels of performance: high, average and minimal.

- At the end of each semester, along a period of two or three weeks the **overall evaluation** takes place.
- To the traditional **evaluation methods** – the oral evaluation, the written tests, the practical tests – the **alternative (complementary) evaluation methods** have been added – the project, the file, the report, the investigation, the systematic observation of the pupil's behaviour. In order to enhance the objectivity level of the evaluation tests, particular attention was paid to the evaluation tests based on objective items – multiple choice items, double choice items, pair type items – semi-objective items and open answer items.

At the level of compulsory education, the teachers continuously evaluate the pupils' results in each and every subject and an overall evaluation is achieved during the evaluation period at the end of each semester. For primary education the mark system has been replaced by the grade system. The decision about the pupil's moving up to the next year of study is made by each teacher or primary school teacher on the basis of the former's results. According to the new system of evaluation, the pupils getting in each subject at least a D ("sufficient") move up to the next year of study. There is no final graduation exam for primary education. The pupils who got a pass at the end of the first cycle are automatically registered for the lower secondary education level (gymnasium). The introduction of grades at the level of primary schools meant to shift the emphasis from quantitative to qualitative criteria for the evaluation of results through reference to the **indices of performance** issued by the NSEE in accordance with the new **national curriculum**. These indices make possible the description of the pupils' progress in each subject, along the educational and training process. In the lower secondary education system a rising marking scale from 1 to 10 is used, the minimal mark for a pass being 5. The pupils' moving up to the next year of study is decided upon by each teacher teaching a certain subject. The pupils getting a pass at the end of the last year of study are given a certificate upon leaving school and have the right to register for the "capacity examination".

In high school the modality of evaluating the pupils is similar to the one used in the lower secondary education system. The examination of the pupils is largely carried out on a continuous basis, through oral evaluation and written tests. For the practical instruction the evaluation takes into account the quality standards of the activities carried out by the pupils during the respective classes, the assignments or the works that have been done, according to the type of high school. On the basis of the results of the evaluation the decision is made about the pupil's moving up to the next year of study or registering again for the same year of study. The pupils' moving up from one year of study to another is achieved in a manner similar to the one described above for the lower secondary education system. High school studies end with the "baccalaureate examination", organized at the national level, according to the type of school. The subjects for the written tests are established nationwide, the examining panels are formed of teachers coming from other schools and evaluation is standardized. Those passing the

examination get a baccalaureate diploma on the basis of which they can register for the entrance examination to higher education.

The changes introduced lately in the evaluation system had the following objectives:

- the increase of the level of objectivity in assessing the pupils' performance, the amelioration of the educational value of permanent evaluation, the establishing of a closer link between permanent evaluation and the national examinations
- the promoting of a vigorous action of diversifying the evaluation methods and instruments by using alternative methods in addition to those that were traditional in the Romanian educational system. This has implied both actions for the training of national and local trainers who had to evaluate, present and make use of the methods and tools of alternative evaluation, and the publication of evaluation guides for each subject of study, guides that also include illustrating models.

2.2.a. To adapt the content of education – factors that motivate the reform

Modernizing the content of education has always been an integral part of the reform strategies that have succeeded one another since 1990. It started with the programme of modification and adjustment measures (that was the very beginning of the reform activity) which was later followed by the introduction of the concept of **global reform** (1997) meant to speed up and complete the transition period. Extending the current tendencies into the near future, through an analysis having a prospective character, we can prognosticate that **the first decade of the 21st century in Romania will be characterized by a dynamic continuity** in the sense that it will take over, adapt and deepen everything that is valid in the comprehensive reform started in 1998, and will realistically orient the process of changing the structures and the contents of education. We can foresee that the strategic options will largely be consistent with the previous orientations as far as the selection and organizing of contents in primary and secondary education is concerned.

At present as in the past, the motivation for change has the same sources (the philosophy of education) and involves the same levels of clarification. In the first years after the events of December 1989 the source of legitimacy for the changing/adapting of the contents was the **imperious need of social and cultural mutations for the transition period** as an irrevocable passage from the centralized and authoritarian educational system to an educational system appropriate for a society based on individual freedom, political pluralism, legitimate state and market economy, against this background many factors generating motivation for change have appeared, of which many proved to be long-lasting.

After Romania joined the Council of Europe, the impact of these factors was stimulated by the **international developments**, and mainly by the European ones, for which the Romanian government has manifested a constant interest as it envisages our country's joining the EU structures. In fact, the phrase "European standards compatible" is significantly recurrent in the official documents published by the Ministry of Education and Research,

and we could say that this compatibility represents a **constant preoccupation of the policies of reforming education in Romania**. In the deep structures, the will of “making Romanian education compatible with European standards”, underlying the global need for change, is based on another motivation. This refers to the option of developing Romania’s economy according to the model of western societies (societies that are technologically advanced and politically pluralist as far as the functioning of democracy is concerned). Education has undoubtedly the role of facilitating, through the competence it provides, the evolution towards this type of society.

Besides the evolution towards European structures, a **growing receptivity for the current problems of the world has become an important source of motivation** in devising reform in Romania:

- the scientific and technological progress in the “computer age”, and, generally, the extending of human knowledge;
- the growing weight and influence of the media in the international society;
- the need for restoring the ‘spiritual sense” in the advanced societies by resorting to values and promoting the participation of people in the shaping of democratic citizenship;
- the need for alternative pedagogical approaches (see Annex 3).

These tendencies have been taken over by the official discourse on the social and cultural development and, naturally, have become a main source of motivation for educational modernization in Romania. It should be mentioned that the **agents of change refer to these factors using phrases like “long term objectives” or long term orientations”**. Having a decisive role at the level of social macrostructures motivation, these objectives are mainly advancing a new conception of school as an institution, a conception according to which the configuration of contents is reshaped because:

- school is no longer seen as the only source of models and the unique valid place where knowledge is transmitted;
- accumulating sheer knowledge is no longer a priority in the educational process, as acquiring competence, values and attitudes becomes more important;
- far from representing a handicap, the new position of school as an institution in the current informational environment stimulates educational institutions to develop a threefold strategy: 1) to integrate fresh knowledge in the curricula; 2) to pass from learning based on memorizing data to solving problems, developing the pupils’ capacity for self-education and their ability of adapting to change; 3) to promote interdisciplinarity ; 4) to use the educational potentialities of the new professional culture that is organized around the communication tools, thus answering the challenges of new technologies;
- in order to significantly diminish the risk of cultural marginalization and educational inequalities in a context where poverty still affects large sections of Romanian society , school is called upon to enhance its educational mission, by diversifying the modalities of education in the spirit of certain values: solidarity, cooperation, tolerance,

democratic attitudes, respect for life, for the environment, for the cultural heritage, for multiculturalism.

These objectives can be found in different phrasings and proportions in the regulating documents of curricular reform in Romania : “parametres of novelty” or “dominants”. To this effect we can mention: the Reference Framework for a National Curriculum (compulsory education); the note of presentation of the syllabuses for all the common core subjects; the guides for curricular devising, the methodological tools for curricular areas, etc.

The same documents also emphasize:

- the necessity of reconsidering the hierarchies of contents from the perspective of education centred on the capacity of learning through interaction;
- the necessity of diversifying learning activities and stimulating individual study.

Generally speaking, the motivating factors for modernizing the educational contents are convergent to the (largely justified) expectation that the **shifting of emphasis from information to training, from authoritarianism to autonomy, from the unilateral conveying of information to cooperation, from a subordinate position of pupils to their active participation in the pedagogical activity will have a relevant impact on the quality of learning.**

Finally, for stimulating the increase in the professional character of the teacher’s activity (another factor in the educational process), the people in charge of the reform offer a different type of motivation to the main agents (teachers, system managers, school managers, trainers, executives, educational counsellors). This involves their participation in international projects (most of them European educational projects). Indeed, dynamism in the process of continuous training, the transfer of didactic technology, the intercultural experiences of the Romanian teachers during the last ten years, their participation in European networks specialized in the activity of teaching, of evaluating and of conceiving material supports for the courses represents a powerful reason in favour of continuing the reform.

Summarizing the statements above, we can say that the manner in which the reform of the educational contents in Romania is justified today combines in a balanced way an **extrinsic motivation** (the harmonization with the European approach, the meeting of the standards of a “learning society”, the receptiveness to educational innovation) and an **intrinsic motivation** (the ability of meeting the needs of society, the continuity of the “valuable traditions” of Romanian education).

2.2.b. The main institutions and bodies that participate in the process of changing and adapting the content of education

The main agents involved in the complex process of restructuring the content of Romanian primary and secondary education are:

- The Ministry of Education and Research;
- The National Council for the Reform of Education;
- The Unit for Coordinating the Project of Reform of Primary and Secondary Education;
- The National Council for the Curriculum
- The National Council for the Ratification of School Textbooks;
- The National Service for Evaluation and Examination;
- The Council for Professional Standards and Ratification;
- The National Commission of Evaluation and Accreditation of Primary and Secondary Education;
- The Institute of Educational Sciences.

The **reform of the curriculum** is the main instrument of educational policy and of innovation used in Romania by the authorities in the domain of education to bring about the change /adaptation of the content of learning in the educational system. The reform of the curriculum has a normative character; its application is endorsed by orders of the central authority.

As regards the creation and distribution of school textbooks for compulsory education the current legislative framework stipulates:

“The ministry of education provides the framework for the creation of the textbooks and ensures the budgeting of schools for the acquisition of the above mentioned textbooks” (The Education Act, article 141, paragraph c).

Within the Project of Reform of the Primary and Secondary Education in Romania, a National Council for the Ratification of Textbooks was created. As of 1994, the primary and lower secondary educational systems are equipped with elective textbooks, and as of 1999 this is also the case of higher secondary education. The creation and distribution of elective textbooks has benefited between 1994 and 2000 from the financial support of World Bank on the basis of the loan agreement between the aforementioned bank and the Government of Romania. According to this agreement, which was enacted in 1994, the operational structures of the Project of Reform of Primary and Secondary Education in Romania have also got an institutional character; this includes a component referring to School Textbooks.

The System of evaluation of school results is based on a series of legislative acts.

Following the Government Decision no. 372 of 1998, the National Service for Evaluation and Examination was created; it had the status of national agency under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and was granted a legal status by the Government Decision no 327 of 1998. NSEE is in charge of implementing the new system of educational evaluation by:

- the current evaluation of primary and secondary education;
- the national examinations (the Capacity Examination and, as of 2000, the baccalaureate examination);
- the evaluation at the end of certain educational cycles;

- the permanent training of the teachers in the domains of evaluation and examination.

The reform elements implemented by the SNEE since its creation abide by the following principles and include the following directions:

- The implementing and continuous amelioration of a system of evaluation and examination centred around a qualitatively and quantitatively balanced proportion of educational results.
- The conceiving of the educational evaluation as an essential tool for the entire educational process.
- The development and implementation of new methods and tools of evaluation based on educational standards and national criteria of performance.
- The planning and organization of exams and national evaluations as part of the national programme for medium- and long-term educational reform.
- The diagnosis of the performance levels of the students.
- The certification of the pupils' competence at the end of certain educational cycles and stages.
- The prognosis of the pupils' success and specific performance.
- The creation on a medium- and long-term basis of a culture of educational evaluation, through the joint efforts of training the educational agents and of publishing certain works addressing different types of audience.

The development of schools in rural areas is a priority among the intentions and actions of reform of the educational system. A first synthesis of the directions of action in this respect was achieved by the "Reviving rural education" programme sanctioned by the Prime Minister of Romania (decision no. 5557 of January 21 1999) and submitted for approval and support to several national and international bodies. On the basis of the Order of the Ministry of National Education of February 15, 1999, the "Pilot Microproject for promoting rural centres of documentation, information and teaching staff training" was started in the Bistrița-Năsăud, Teleorman, Călărași, Hunedoara and Vaslui counties. These rural centres work as resource and innovation units having the aim of reducing the number of problems related to the reform of primary and secondary education. They also work both as a factor inspiring the emulation in the neighbouring villages and as local resource centres for the aforementioned places. Since June 1999 a team of specialists has been carrying out a monographic and statistic study regarding the needs and problems of education in rural areas.

2.2.c. WHAT? (the areas covered, the introducing of new subjects, the revision of the content of the subjects that are studied, priority themes regarding the content of education)

In order that content changes be possible, a **flexible reference framework** is needed to enable various intervention modalities: the adding of new contents, the “infusion” of various novelty elements and/or the integration of certain domains of knowledge that have functioned separately.

The solutions found for Romania are: **curricular areas**, the same for the whole duration of education but adapted to its different stages and the **introducing of the curriculum decided upon by the school (CDS)** as part of the national curriculum, having various modalities of approach (extension, deepening, elective subjects at the level of subjects proper, of the curricular area or of several curricular areas).

The novelty elements can be identified as follows:

- a. as compulsory subjects in the common core (e.g. “civic education” at the level of compulsory education);
- b. as optional subjects (part of CDS), that have to be included in the “school’s offer” (e.g. the education for quality);
- c. as compulsory areas of knowledge included in the curriculum (e.g. the “Counselling and Orientation” curricular area.

The curriculum for the **Technologies** curricular area includes a module called “Information Technology”. This module is studied in the 8th grade. It offers the pupils the opportunity to understand the development of technique and the impact of information technology on the environment and society, as well as the using of informational sources and of the processing means in order to take over and process information.

Another modality of renewing the contents of school education is represented by **integration**. Thus, the domain of natural sciences (biology, physics, chemistry) is included as a subject called “Sciences” (for grades 2 to 6). The elements of integration can be noticed at the level of all the curriculum components (objectives, contents, learning activities).

School textbooks are a component part of the national curriculum beside framework-plans, syllabuses and teaching tools. Within the curricular reform in Romania, textbooks also represent **modalities of implementing the curriculum**. The pedagogical conception that the textbooks illustrate has been constantly enriched, in the first place at the level of the learning activities suggested to the pupils, but also as regards the sources of knowledge that are included (documents, images, graphics, projects etc.).

Many of the changes that have been made regarding the content of education in the last years of the 20th century pertain, on the one hand to the reassessment of the relation between knowledge, skills (“savoir-faire”) and attitudes, and, on the other hand, to the inevitable tendency of school as an institution towards opening itself to the outward world and searching, among its realities, new orientations and resources for various types of cooperation with other educational agents. The consequences of this evolution became noticeable even before the year 2000:

- certain curricular developments are related, within various subjects and mostly at the interface of these subjects, to **common themes and skills necessary for the solving of problems**, the testing of solutions, the development of the critical spirit;
- the new trends in education (such as, for instance, education for citizenship) are suggesting **new pedagogical methods** (the resorting to discovery, communication and participation, the taking into account of the volitional and affective aspects in the development of personality, new criteria of evaluation of educational influence.

The process of changing the content of education in Romania started by the acknowledgement of the fact that **access to knowledge is not the only mission of educational reform**, the primary and secondary education being in fact regarded as a complex area where personality is shaped, and not as a one-way and consequently authoritarian manner of transmitting knowledge by the teachers. A major change regarding the content of education consists in the emergence of the “new types of education” that we could join under the generic concept of **value-oriented education**. This is not a nostalgia for an “end of century and millenium humanism”, but the need for allotting the capacity of **learning to be** (Jacques Delors, 1996) a particular field of influence, meant to replace the pedagogy of human being at the centre of the educational activity. Consequently, the latter is also focused on the **problems of forming the character and persuasions**. In a global approach, the new types of education are particularized by the fact that they stimulate the understanding of the interdependencies in the spirit of the values of cultural pluralism and tolerance. In a complex world, characterized by diversity and change, the value-oriented education answers the challenges of the open society. In the context that is specific to Romania, where fighting marginalization and social and cultural discriminations is a process that has recently started, this orientation could offer **compensatory solutions for the socialization of young people**, in a context in which social culture in Romania is still marked by inhibitions and the refusal of acknowledging ethnic and cultural diversity. Beyond the inevitable “de-Communization” and “de-ideologization “ of education (1990-1992), education for values has generated a **new representation of the relation between individual liberties and responsibility** as a decisive element in the process of building a solidary community (see the preamble of the social and human sciences syllabuses) between 1995 and 2000.

The emphasis on values is materialized in the curriculum by delimiting certain subdivisions of formal education and by promoting a new learner’s behaviour based on formative interaction. As this involves the “transition from information to formation”, the disciplines in the common core (see the curricular areas “language and communication”, “man and society”, “counselling and orientation”, as well as “arts”) suggest many valid entries for the education for values. As for the segment “curriculum decided upon by the school” it offers many opportunities of projecting certain optional subjects that aim at:

- entrepreneurial education, education for the environment, education for peace and cooperation, education for private life, education for

democratic citizenship, education for the cultural heritage, education for the future that introduce the young people to values such as tolerance and mutual comprehension, making them discover that the respect for identity and the acceptance of difference diminish the risk of conflict and cultural shock.

Seen from the perspective of contents and learning activities, intercultural education is about to strengthen its position among the extracurricular activities (informal programmes socially oriented to increasing the degree of ethnic and social tolerance), in many social cases being perceived not only as a “space of encounters” but as a genuine “community home”, as well. We can notice at the same time the tendency to extend the range of activities/projects/optional subjects (“curriculum decided upon by the school”) which combine the culture of heritage and local geography, oral history and the transmitting of cultural norms, linguistic education, folklore and rural ecology.

Given the multicultural character of many areas in Romania, **intercultural education** can be seen as a **domain of social education through which the new curriculum tries to meet the expectations of civil society**. All the documents of educational policy of the last years of the 20th century endorse this domain of educational intervention in Romania. Important steps have been taken in this direction not only by curriculum specialists, but also (or mostly) by trainers, by cultural mediators and by various bodies and associations acting at community level. Though it is a very young domain, intercultural education in Romania can provide a convincing example of social partnership in the field of education.

2.2.d. HOW? (Strategies adopted in the conception, application, continuation and evaluation of the curricular reform)

The strategy for continuing the curricular reform takes into account the priorities brought to the fore by the **analysis of the social need for development**. A series of programmes have been conceived for these needs.

Priority domains for the application of social reform in Romania

Distress zones

The Programme for Reviving Rural Education (OMNE no. 3179 of February 5, 2000) is conceived as an intervention programme for improving the quality of education in the schools and highschools of rural areas. "...The aim of the programme is to offer equal chances of getting education to the pupils in rural areas, by providing high standard education in an environment that is auspicious to learning." The programme was conceived with the aim of "...establishing a participatory methodology as regards the evaluation of the situation of education and of its capacity for achieving *lasting educational programmes, the testing of interventions* meant to contribute to the improvement of the teaching/learning activities and the *strengthening of the relations between school and community*."

The remedy programmes are conceived for those situations when the performance of the pupil does not attain the objectives suggested by the curriculum, which prevents the pupil from keeping the pace with the rest of the form. They aim at identifying the deficient component and projecting certain interventions depending on the pupil's problems. According to research in the domain "a remedy programme must not exceed 40 minutes a day and last more than two or three consecutive weeks for each pupil; moreover, the pupils must not perceive this activity as some sort of punishment."

These programmes, devised at school level, may be accompanied by prevention programmes that have the role to offer support from an early stage in order to prevent the pupil's lagging behind. These interventions mainly aim at the development of a positive attitude towards the aforementioned domain.

"The second chance"

The programme for fighting the marginalization and social and professional exclusion of the young people who dropped out from compulsory education without acquiring the minimal competence needed for obtaining a job, also known under the name of "Second chance", unfolds according to the prescriptions of the Ministry of National Education Order MNEO no. 3062/ January 18, 2000. This programme is addressed to young people aged between 14 and 24 who have not completed their lower secondary education studies and it has two major objectives: the completion of compulsory studies and the obtaining of certain qualifications. The organization of this programme is part of a package of concrete measures regarding the completion of basic education and the ensuring of a chance for social and professional integration of young people. The programme is based on a partnership among several institutions: educational units, public administration, social partners and non-

governmental organizations. According to this programme, school is not understood as a “number of classes”, but is “... a resource centre whose final aim is to place the young person and his/her family on the routes that are specific to permanent education.

School is not an institution that develops in isolation from community, but in the context of the social partnership derived from its interactions with the cultural, economic and social environment.” As of 1999, the programme has been unfolding in several counties and in Bucharest.

The directions of development of the curricular reform in Romania can be synthetically presented as follows:

“School improvement”

Stimulating change at school level starts from the premise that every person is an agent of change and envisages several objectives.: the solving of problems by finding certain group solutions, the sharing of a common vision of the needs and interests of the school and the participation of all human resources in building up this vision, the contacts of the school with the wider environment in order that the occurrence of isolated activities should be avoided. In Romania, the reform measures have created the framework for the development of educational institutions. Thus, by the new national curriculum, the schools have the possibility of individualizing their educational offer, the central role being played by the curricular offer. At school level programmes aiming at the development of human resources and of the community relations can be designed.

The change of the teaching practice

The training programmes aim at: changes at a behavioural level and at the level of practice, changes at the level of persuasions and of the points of view on the entire reform process. The new reference framework in the domain of continuous training and of the initial training is being designed and one of its key elements concerns the standards of professional training. These standards correspond to new requirements that teachers must meet: new teaching methods fitted to the novelty elements that the curriculum introduced (including school textbooks), new modalities of evaluation, the linking of school to community, the preparation of the pupils for their career, the integration of the new informational technologies in the didactic approach, etc.

The training offer has become varied, the continuous education in school being a new element, a modality through which schools can establish the strategies for implementing innovating ideas. Diversity represents a characteristic of the modalities of organizing training, the interactive sessions having the greatest weight. The latter allow for the introduction of new content elements, the reflection on the modalities of work and the sharing of one’s own professional experience.

2.2.e. Results: difficulties that have been encountered and the solutions found to solve them

In spite of the progress achieved in the curriculum (at both a conceptual and formal level), the latter cannot reflect all the changes that are taking place in the area of academic subjects and of the interdisciplinary domains where there is a great mobility of the concepts, methodology and contents. This gap has partly been bridged by introducing the new curriculum offers, but remains a fundamental problem of the evolution in time of the educational contents.

A solution to this problem could be the recommendation that can be made to the users (the teachers) to devise and put into practice a curriculum decided upon by the school (CDS) that should be predominantly an interdisciplinary one, or one focusing on new domains. Each school must have a Curriculum board, part of the school board, having the concrete responsibility of defining the curricular offer of the school.

Because of a **relative resistance to innovation**, some domains that are new as regards the content of education (see the curricular area “Sciences”) have suffered certain transformations after they were introduced in the national curriculum. This is due to the initial training of the teachers that are involved in this field and to the attempt to preserve the identity of each component subject. That is why, at present, the integrated teaching of Sciences is still rather a desideratum.

A solution in this respect is represented by the **achievement of some functional structures at various educational levels, that should integrate in an organic way fundamental elements in the domain of sciences**; this could be achieved at a first stage by building in the field of Sciences certain curriculum modules decided upon by the school.

Though there are new programmes (that have an advanced internal structure), the users encounter important difficulties in perceiving, understanding and applying them. In this respect we can notice the specific lack of a “culture of the curriculum”, that aims at the understanding and using of the school curriculum as a whole, in accordance with its inner philosophy. The syllabuses, which are pretty heavily loaded, materialize in school practice by a type of education focused on the informative aspects, and, generally, overemphasize the contents. This has been also favoured by the existence of some very dense training supports (textbooks)..

This problem could be solved by conceiving some **coherent programmes enabling the teachers to understand and apply the school curriculum**. We consider that the continuous training in the area of the school curriculum can lead to a considerable improvement of the way in which the latter can be applied.

The relation between the curriculum and the textbooks display a variety of situations, ranging from textbooks translating the essence of the curriculum and its philosophy in an appropriate way, to textbooks that visibly depart from the latter. This situation is due to the fact that many of the textbook authors did not manage to really understand the school curriculum.

There could exist in this domain the theoretical possibility of achieving certain **curricular abilities** for potential textbook authors. This is, however, difficult to achieve in practice. Lest the training process should continue to

lead to a fetishist approach to textbooks, the distribution of guidebooks for teachers is useful, that should provide them with a complex of methodological reference points, leading to the application of the school curriculum in the spirit in which it was created.

The initial training of teachers which is currently achieved is, generally, inappropriate for the application of the new curriculum. That is why it is necessary to focus continuous training on the problems that are characteristic for the school curriculum.

The link between the national and the local curriculum (“curriculum decided upon by the school”) is achieved to a relatively low extent. This is due to the “centralist” mentality of the teachers, according to which any curriculum must come from a central authority. In many schools the council for the curriculum that was created in all education units has, for the time being, just a formal aspect.

The designing of a curriculum centred on local educational needs and resources represents an element of the tendency towards **educational de-centralization**, which has to be encouraged. There are cases in the system where this activity has remarkable results, as it has materialized in programme drafts, textbooks, books and other educational resources. These cases need to be known and promoted in the system.

2.2.f. Problems to be solved with the utmost urgency

Generally, we can notice that the numerous legislative changes having a general character (1995-2000) have been precariously spread into the school system. The legal framework for the de-centralization of the decision-making process and the participation of the community in the process of education still preserves vague, fragmentary and contradictory aspects. The autonomy of the educational units hasn't worked yet because centralist mentalities are still prevailing, both in the case of school principals, who want to preserve a discretionary power and in the case of the teachers, who feel better protected if they apply the old strategies that don't raise any problems of pedagogical projections for them and do not question their authority.

At present, there is a search for new solutions that should put into practice the general compulsory nine-grade education, in accordance with the stipulations of the education act no, 84 of 1995, article 6. The Ministry of Education and Research also suggests new types of theoretical and vocational education. The new policy is trying to restructure the educational system in a way that should satisfy the economic, social, and political needs. It affects the entire educational system, the programmes, the agents involved, the underlying philosophy and the management of the educational system. A strategic vision was now conceived having the role of coordinating those projects that seemed difficult to carry out before.

An element distorting the manner of perceiving by the society of innovation the area of education content is the manner in which the media are reflecting these problems. The journalists often adopt attitudes resulting in the approaching of just some aspects of innovation in the domain of educational content, attitudes that reveal an insufficient or partial understanding of the respective content. The manner in which some information circulated by the

media influences the social public opinion is not likely to favour the correct and objective access to the problems of educational content to anybody else than teaching staff.

An important problem on which the success of the school education largely depends is the **providing of the teacher with a minimum of usable didactic materials**, if possible new ones. The preoccupation of teachers with reporting the lack of various didactic materials is well-known, as are the expectations they have of a central authority to create and distribute the textbooks. There are examples of teachers who had the initiative of providing didactic materials from their own resources.

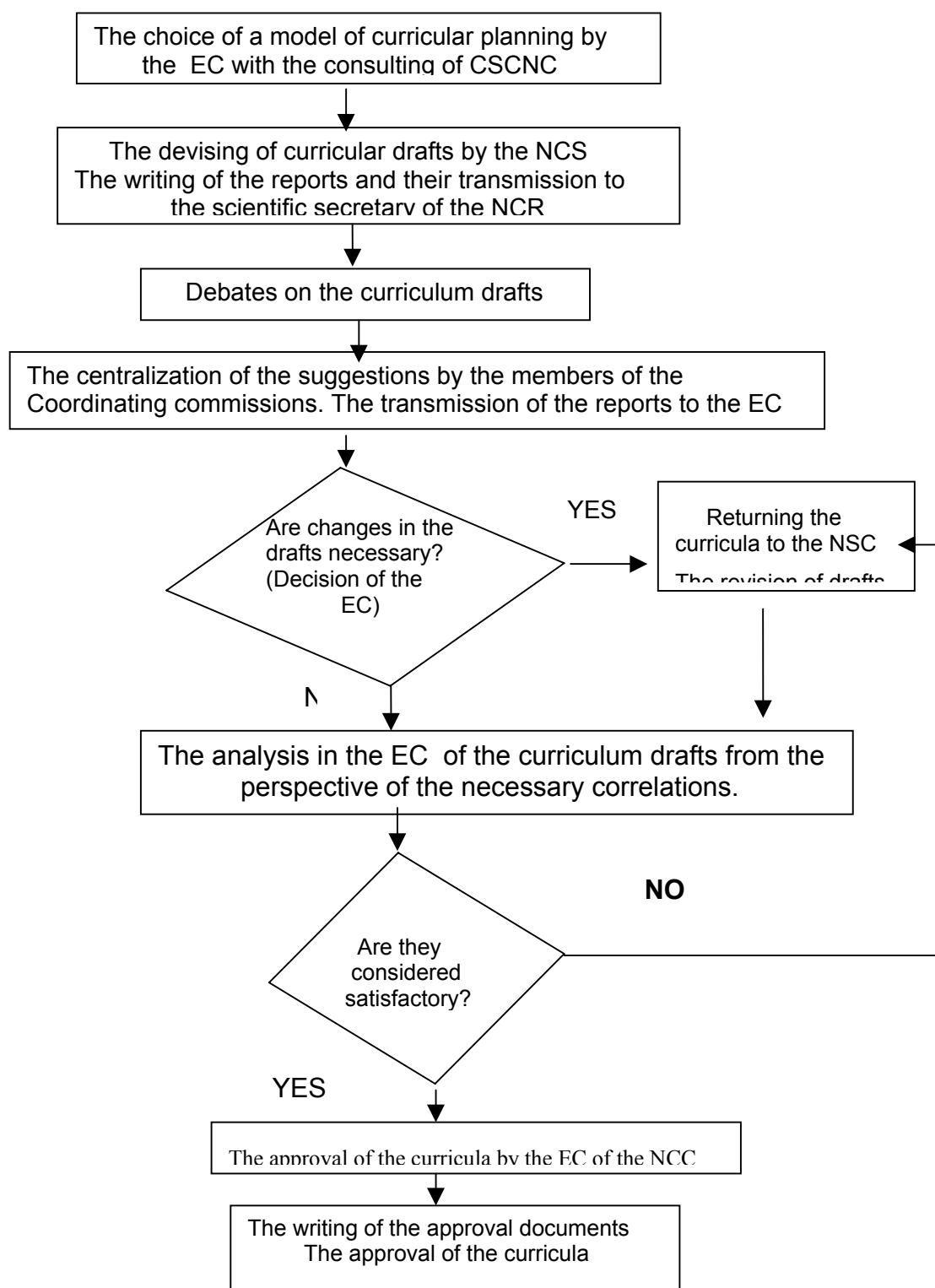
This problem can be solved by stimulating the existence of a private system of planning, creating and distributing didactic materials. By this private system we do not understand only one company producing didactic material, but a complex of ventures and firms among which there is a division of labour. The Ministry of Education and Research will have to also coordinate the activity of **scientific and methodological evaluation of the planning, producing and implementation of didactic materials**

The application of the new curriculum, which represents, essentially, an important change in the content of education, must be anticipated by an adequate training of the users.

The centralized system and local conservatism creates certain obstacles in stimulating some initiatives regarding the improvement of educational content. Other, quite a few, examples demonstrate, however, that local initiative can lead to a noticeable diversification of the educational contents. The problem is to stimulate certain methodological coordinates by this local initiative of varying the content of education.

Annex 1

THE PROCESS OF DEVISING - CONSULTING – APPROVAL OF CURRICULA



Annex 2

THE FRAMEWORK - PLAN FOR GRADES I – VIII (School year 1999-2000)

The curricular area/subject	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
I. Language and communication	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9	9-10	8-9	8-9	9-10
A. Romanian	7-8	7-8	5-7	5-7	5	4	4	4
B. Modern language 1	-	-	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
C. Modern language 2	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
D. Latin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
E. Electives	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
II. Mathematics and Natural Sciences	3-4	3-4	4-6	4-6	4-6	6-8	7-10	7-10
1. Mathematics	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	4	4	4
2. Natural sciences	-	-	1-2	1-2	-	-	-	-
3. Physics	-	-	-	-	-	1-2	1-2	1-2
Chemistry					-	-	1-2	1-2
Biology					1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
III. Man and Society	1-2	1-2	2-3	3-5	3-5	3-5	4-6	6-7
1. Civic education	-	-	1-2	1-2	-	-	-	-
Civic culture	-	-	-	-	0-1	0-1	1-2	1-2
2. History and Geography	-	-	-	-	2-3	2-3	2-3	-
Romanian History	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Romania's Geography	-	-	-	1-2	-	-	-	2
3. Religion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4. Electives	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
IV. Arts	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	1-2
1. Plastic education	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
2. Musical education	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	
3. Electives	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
V. Physical education and sport	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
1. Physical education	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
2. Electives	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
VI. Technologies	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
1. Practical abilities	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	-	-	-	-
2. Technological education	-	-	-	-	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
3. Electives	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
VII. Counselling and Orientation	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
1. Counselling and Orientation	-	-	-	-	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
2. Electives	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Minimal no of classes per week	18	18	20	21	23	24	27	28
Maximal no of classes per week	20	20	22	23	26	28	29	30

Explanatory notes

- Religion is a compulsory subject and its study is organized depending on the denomination to which the pupils belong. According to constitutional provisions parents can decide that their children do not attend Religion classes
- In schools where teaching is in the language of national minorities, the framework-plan is applied as follows:
 - the native language and literature are studied during the number of classes marked in the table above for Romanian;
 - Romanian is studied during 4 classes per week in grades 1-4 and with a similar time allowance marked in the table above for grades 5-8;
 - the history and traditions of the minorities are studied during a class per week in grades 6-7;
 - the study of modern language 2 is optional for grades 5-8.

The number of classes per week in the school year 1999-2000 was the following:

Number of classes/grade	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VII I
Minimal number of classes per week	22	22	24	25	26	26	29	30
Maximal number of classes per week	24	24	26	27	30	30	33	34

- Equal chances are provided by the number of common core classes allotted to each particular subject. In the framework-plan table, the common core is represented by the number left to the class offer.
- Each form decides upon its own class combination, according to the pupils' options by completing the common core with classes from the 'curriculum decided upon by the school' up to – at least – the minimal number of classes per week or – at the most – the maximal number of classes per week.

Annex 3

Alternative education in Romania – recent developments

The development of educational programmes, principles and hypotheses. Alternative education in Romania.

In the 1990's Romania a few alternative pedagogical approaches managed to materialize as alternatives to the traditional public education. Among these, we mention: Jena Plan, Montessori alternative, the Step by Step alternative and Waldorf alternative. All these forms of alternative education are components of the public, state sponsored education, and not of the private system. Several consequences derive from that, which will subsequently be presented within each alternative

The decision-making process

Jena Plan. Jena Plan was introduced in Romania experimentally in September 1994 at the level of preschool education. It was introduced following the requests from teaching staff in four Counties (Botoşani, Braşov, Bucureşti, Constanţa) and benefited from the scholarly supervision of researchers from the Institute of Educational Sciences. The legal framework within which this initiative was created is represented by the Constitution of Romania, Education Act (article 17), the Methodology for the Organization and Operation of Alternative Education in Romania (June 1994) the Statute of the Teaching Staff, declarations and international conventions stipulating the need for democracy in education, which were signed by Romania. Jena Plan was introduced in the public education system of Romania and the teaching staff involved in the process, work on the basis of the curriculum for preschool education. The decision to work on the basis of this curriculum belongs to the teaching staff and the managers of preschool educational units and to the parents. This ensures the possibility for the children to be transferred from the system of alternative education to the traditional one (at preschool and primary school level). The modality of approaching the subjects, the activities carried out by the children are specific to the spirit of working and living community described by Jena Plan.

Montessori Alternative. There was a tradition in inter-war Romania at the level of preschool education in training primary school teacher to apply Montessori Alternative. This was supported by training certain educators by lectures given by Maria Montessori, and the former's activity was organized through Montessori Association of Romania led by Constantin Rădulescu Motru and supported by the publication of translations. The return to this tradition was achieved at the level of non-governmental organizations through the reestablishment of Montessori Association of Romania in 1990, which is affiliated to the International Montessori Association, and through the training

of a number of educators and primary school teachers with the support of several foundations and centres for training in Montessori pedagogy in Europe. The new legislative framework that allowed for and encouraged the promoting of alternative pedagogical systems in the Romanian educational system developed in time, so that currently the decision to set up Montessori groups belongs to education inspectorates, following the request of the parents and of associations that can support the application of this pedagogy. Certain minimal conditions must be met regarding the training of the educators, that must be certified by documents proving graduation in a course in Montessori pedagogy, the equipment with teaching materials characteristic to this pedagogy, the existence of a minimal number of 15 children for the setting up of a group, the providing of appropriate classrooms.

Waldorf Alternative. In Romania, Waldorf Alternative is part of the public education that benefits from the common budgeting of schools in the traditional system .

The curricula in Romania have taken over the purpose and the distribution of subjects into years of study, but have done away with the elements that are completely different from the Romanian educational system and culture. The patterning of the curricula is identical to that in traditional education. The structure is identical as are the general objectives. The specific differences are allowed at the level of the methodology and of certain contents. In Romania, the specific contents and the methods are those specified for all Waldorf schools in the world. Working on the curricula is carried out by teams of teachers or primary school teachers, which then forward to the National council for the Curriculum the documents that have been processed according to the requirements. The Council then forwards the curricula to the Ministry, which approves them through its decisional channels. This modality of cooperation with local and national authorities is established by the general Agreement for Cooperation no 11,304/ 7 Nov. 1996, signed by the Ministry of Education, the Waldorf Federation of Romania and the German Association Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners.

The Step by Step Alternative represents an educational alternative addressed to the children aged between 1-13/14, as well as to their parents. The Step by step Programme is run as an educational alternative accredited by the approval decision no 10015 of May 1995 of the Commission for alternatives of the ministry of national Education, according to Convention no 9003 of January 1998 and benefits from consultancy from the Children's Resources International Washington D.C. which has the licence for the methodology. It is distinguished as an alternative by the principles underlying its development and the methodology that is used, and as far as the curricula are concerned, they resemble those in the traditional system, with the difference that there are new contents that are adapted to the area where this alternative functions. The decisions regarding these contents belong to the teaching staff.

Strategies for teaching and learning.

Jena Plan. In the groups that function according to the principles of Jena plan, the focus is on direct, spontaneous education, as it is the most natural and easy to assimilate. As far as possible, the starting point is represented by authentic learning situations, personal experimenting, real life. The teacher has the role of supporting the children, but is not permanently at the centre of the activities. Often the position of authority is taken over by one or several children who assume this authority or are invested with it by the others with it. In conclusion, one learns as much from the teacher as from any other child (or group of children). Activism is essential in the educational process. Educational activities have a greater weight as compared to the training ones at this age level.

Montessori Alternative. Montessori pedagogy has a specific character as regards teaching and learning which, in their entirety, must support and develop the capacities of younger children of being educated or educating themselves. It also answers some tendencies and specific needs that any child has at this age: the need for movement, for refining his/her senses, for developing communication, for performing his/her own, independent activities, for knowing the natural the natural, social and cultural environment of which he/she is part, of acquiring certain fundamental cultural values. The didactic activities that aim at achieving these goals and are concerned with a part of the overall strategy of this pedagogy are carried out through lessons and concrete presentations that are held with the children individually, in small groups or with the entire group. The “three-stage lesson”, as a particular manner of teaching, the “presentations” of model activities and a series of other didactic activities that are commonly accomplished in any kindergarten, lead to a great variety of didactic activities and to a multitude of responsibilities that the teacher has.

Waldorf Alternative. The main teaching and learning strategies are linked to the applicability of what we learn. From the first lessons the notions are connected, by intuitive discovery, with the child’s capacity for establishing a solid link with the environment. That is why ready-made definitions are avoided and in their stead the situations are presented when the pupil has to consciously and coherently infer the laws it has studied. Individual work and case study are not ruled out and traditional methods of formal education are also used. In this form of education, it is essential to take into account the capacity of the teacher himself to integrate in his own personality “the enthusiastic discoverer” and the “humanist with artistic inclinations”.

The Step by Step Alternative. Within the Step by Step programme, the conditions are provided for the meeting of the basic requirement of the programme, namely, the individualizing of teaching; this is so, because there are certain minimal requirements about the organization of the learning environment (the existence of enough physical space for each classroom, the existence of activity centres specific to each age group and the existence the materials characteristic to each centre of activity). Each child has at his/her disposition the space and materials needed for the development of the

individual potential. The role of the teacher is to answer the needs of every child, using all the forms of organization of the activities: the frontal one (the feeling of class community), group and individual activities. Another characteristic of learning in the Step by step programme is that all children learn from a wide range of direct experiences. In the Step by Step alternative, through the varied activities that children carry out, the reaching by every child of the upper threshold of development in all respects is aimed at. The basic principle in assessing the child's performance is the relating to two systems of reference: the previous performance of the child and the performance stipulated by the psychological portrait of a child belonging to a certain age group. For this purpose, files for each child are created, containing all their works, as well as assessment books devised by the specialists working on this alternative. The assessment books, that make reference to the national curriculum and the requirements specific to the programme, include an inventory of behaviours that children must acquire during a certain period of time. Consulting these two documents, one can notice the progress or the regress of the child. What characterizes assessment within the Step by Step alternative is the fact that it is a qualitative assessment and not a quantitative one.