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Quality Education within the Scope Sustainable Development in the Context of Globalization. A Case Study of Primary Education in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: The Case of Romania

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Abstract: Education in Romania, which is considered a national priority, has over time witnessed numerous transformations imposed by national, European and international requirements. The study proposed by the authors is aimed at capitalizing on the legal framework that coordinates primary education, as a component part of education in general.
International organizations, with a role in globalizing the economic branches of all countries, have included quality education as a global goal of international interest on their agenda. Given the importance of primary education in quality education, the authors aimed to make a regional classification within the context of a statistical analysis based on the United Nations report in 2018.

Keywords: *Quality education; primary education; regional analysis; Romania; enrollment in primary education.*

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1. Reflections of the national education law in primary education in Romania. Libraries and librarians

Organized on the basis of the quality principle, pre-university education, as well as the entire Romanian education, concentrates its activities in that field in accordance with the reference standards and good practices at national and international level (Law no.1 / 2011, art.3).

Coordinated on the basis of the legal provisions in force, the national pre-university education system also includes primary education, which includes the preparatory class along with grades I-IV, being a compulsory education for the frequency form (Law No. 1/2011, Article 23).

Included in this segment of primary education are children who reached the age of at least 6 years before the start of the school year, or those who reach that age by the end of the calendar year and show an appropriate psychosomatic development. For the children who have not been able to attend primary education for various reasons, but are aged less than 14 years, the Ministry of National Education can organize a *second chance* education program (Law No. 1/2011, Article 29).

For private primary education, educational alternatives (e.g. Waldorf, Step by Step, Freinet, Montessori, etc.) can be organized in the Romanian language, in the languages of national minorities, or in international languages (Law no.1 / 2011, art. 59), through the framework of whose curriculum and school curriculum are established core competences found in the national curriculum, taking into account the recommendations of globalization organizations with attributions in the field.

The preparatory class aims, through the curriculum developed, to "model" the students for the next levels, physically and socio-emotionally, for the cognitive development of language and communication, including adequate skills for attitudes and learning abilities (Law no. 1/2011, Article 68).

The national evaluation at the end of the second class is based on pupils' fundamental competences related to writing, reading and mathematics, and the national assessment at the end of the fourth grade examines the whole set of basic competences acquired in primary school pupils, based on international testing (Law No. 1/2011, Article 74).

For the purposes of national final evaluations at the end of second and fourth grades, besides the school textbooks and auxiliary teaching resources approved by the Ministry of Education, a good source of information and documentation for students are the school libraries – both

traditional and virtual ones, e-learning school, but also the Centers for Documentation and Information (Law No. 1/2011, Article 70).

The presence of school libraries as part of the material basis of pre-university education is not only necessary, but also imperative, both through the available documents that are included in their background, and especially by the presence of the librarians, who thus become "complementary teachers" in the learning and information activity of students.

A retrospective analysis of the evolution of the number of school libraries, since the entry of Romania into the globalized structures (2007), and the European Union, up to 2016, has seen a 2% increase in the school libraries in the total number of Romanian libraries. From the point of view of the number of registered active users who attended these school libraries during the period 2008-2016, the same analysis recorded a decrease by 458 (thousands) of users (Răbigan & Stana, 2018, pp. 136, 139).

In other words, the result of the analysis apparently expresses the state's concern in providing the material base, which is not negligible, but the students have attended the spaces of the school libraries less and less.

2. Primary education for sustainable development. A case study on the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region

The United Nations, a globalization exponent made up of 193 member states, where the European Union has a leading position, launched, in 2015, a global call for sustainable development, set out in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Objectives, in the context of which sustainable development goals have been set for Member States that are called to global change by 2030. All the objectives described make up a universally valid agenda that applies to all member countries of the United Nations. The data reported through periodic reports are essential to transform sustainable development goals into practical tools meant to solve problems. Agglutinated into 17 global objectives, the tasks established provide a holistic vision for the sustainable development of the environment, the economies and society in general (Carloni & Crosier, 2019).

Education, as a national priority for each Member State, but also one of the objectives of global development, has been included in the Global Objectives package, at heading 4 of the list of objectives, under the heading "Quality Education".

The objective of education is also divided into several sub-objectives. In essence, this global goal is to address education without inequalities

between national education systems and between individuals, as it is desirable to eliminate all forms of discrimination in education and to follow a path of education that is conducive to sustainable development (Carloni & Crosier, 2019).

A data report on the implementation of the global sustainable development goals in the world, illustrative of 2018, provides a picture of the ranking of the achievement of each objective within the set of 17 established at country level, these targets being grouped into four categories.

In keeping with the classification of each country according to the degree of implementation of the overall objective 4, "Quality Education", as well as the other global objectives, four categories of implementation are characterized by: "sustainable development objectives achieved"; "challenges remain"; "significant challenges remain" "major challenges remain". For the objective 4, "Quality Education", but also for the descriptive indicators of the performance of the objective, six directions have been identified, described as: "maintaining the achievement of sustainable development objectives→"; "on track to achieve goal by 2030↑"; "score moderately increasing, insufficient to attain goal ′"; "score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate→"; "score decreasing↓"; "trend information unavailable" (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller, 2018).

Based on the Sustainable Development Objectives report and the data table for 2018 on global responsibilities related to the implementation of Objective 4, one should proceed to analyzing the data and to interpret it.

Primary education in the context of sustainable development until 2030, which is assigned a decisive role in achieving the performance of a "Quality Education", is measured and expressed through the indicator "Net enrollment rate in primary education".

In the report of 2018 on the global UN initiative for global solutions needed for sustainable development, the data describing Romania's "Quality Education" goal appear in the context of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. For this reason, the following analysis, aiming at a better knowledge of primary education, includes a table of 24 countries in the region. The "Net enrollment rate in primary education" indicator will be analyzed from the point of view of "Quality Education" rating for each region's component country, as well as the trend of this rating (see **Table 1**).

Table 1 The ranking of the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2018 according to the rating for "Quality Education"

Country	"Quality Education"		"Net enrollment rate in primary education"(%)		
	Rating	Trend	Rating	Stage of implementation	Trend
1. Lithuania	97,00	↑	98,2	Sustainable development goals achieved	↑
2. Georgia	96,3	↑	99,6	Sustainable development goals achieved	↑
3. Russsian Federation	93,8	↑	97,00	Challenges remain	↑
4. Uzbekistan	93,5	↑	96,2	Challenges remain	↑
5. Belarus	93,3	↑	96,1	Challenges remain	↑
6. Cyprus	93,3	′	97,4	Challenges remain	↓
7. Malta	91,6	●●	97,6	Challenges remain	●●
8. Azerbaijan	90,1	↑	94,9	Challenges remain	↑
9. Tajikistan	89,6	↓	97,7	Challenges remain	↓
10. Serbia	89,3	↑	95,7	Challenges remain	↑
11. Montenegro	89,0	→	93,7	Challenges remain	↓
12. Ukraine	88,6	′	92,4	Challenges remain	↑
13. Armenia	88,2	●●	92,1	Challenges remain	●●
14. Moldova	86,1	′	86,9	Significant challenges remain	↓
15. Kazakhstan	85,3	→	86,2	Significant challenges remain	↓
16. Bulgaria	84,9	→	91,2	Challenges remain	↓
17. Albania	84,8	′	95,1	Challenges remain	↑
18. Kyrgyz Republic	84,7	′	89,4	Challenges remain	′
19. Croatia	84,5	′	87,5	Significant challenges remain	′
20. Romania	82,2	→	86,6	Significant challenges remain	↓
21. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	81,5	′	91,7	Challenges remain	↑
22. Bosnia and Herzegovina	80,2	●●	-	Unavailable information	●●
23. Turkmenistan	69,3	●●	-	Unavailable information	●●
24. Afghanistan	6,9	●●	-	Unavailable information	●●

Source: authors own data processing from (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller, 2018) available online at https://dashboards.sdgindex.org)

The table above shows the ranking achieved by Objective 4 score "Quality Education" for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the year 2018. The top five is Lithuania, followed by Georgia, the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Belarus, and the last five places are Romania, followed by the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

In terms of the "Net enrollment in primary education" indicator (%), the highest percentage was recorded by Georgia 99.6%, followed by Lithuania 98.2%, Tajikistan 97.7% Malta 97.6%, Cyprus 97.4%, and the last place is Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, for which no data were visible.

3. Primary education in Romania in the context of globalization. An analysis in the orbit of sustainable development

The case of Romania, with the data ranging over the above-mentioned report, gives a picture of the global objectives that revolve around sustainable development, and reveals a registered rating of 82.2 for goal 4, "Quality Education" (see **Figure 1**).

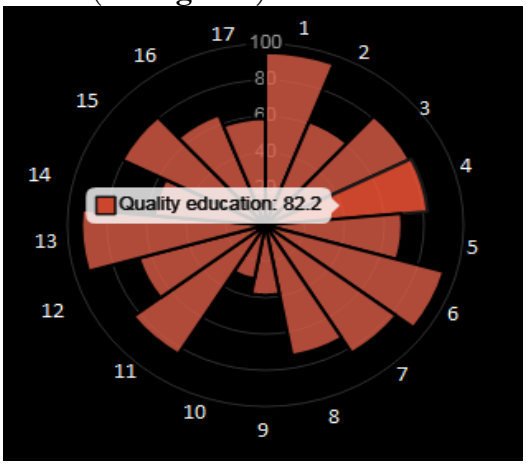


Figure 1 Rating recorde for the goal 4 "Quality Education" by Romania

Source: authors own data processing from (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller, 2018, available online https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/#/ROU)

An analysis of performance in goal 4, "Quality Education", registered in Romania, can be achieved by interpreting the ratings for the indicators that characterize the objective (see **Figure 2**).

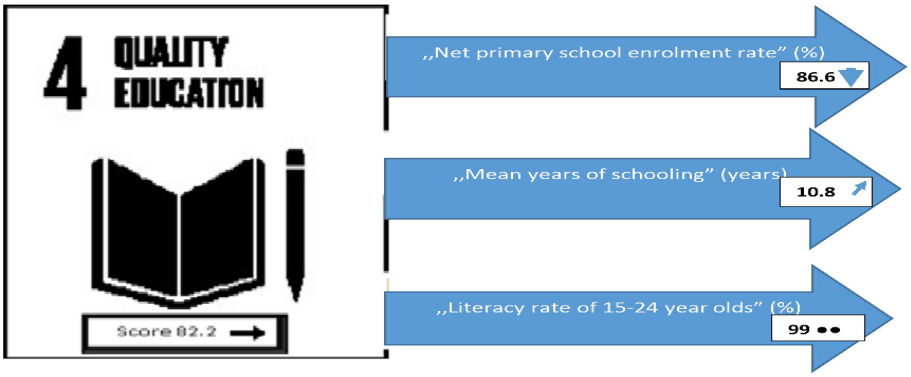


Figure 2 Descriptive indicators for the global goal 4 "Quality Education" – Romania

Source: authors data processing (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller, 2018) available online at https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/#/ROU)

From the two figures presented above, the overall goal no. 4, "Quality Education", at the level of Romania (82.2), showed a tendency of "stagnation or increase to less than 50% of the recorded rate". As regards the "Net enrollment rate in primary education", 86.6% signifies a major drop in the percentage of children enrolled in the preparatory class and grades I-IV in the year 2018. The indicator "Average years of schooling" showed a number of 10.8 years, representing a moderate growth trend, insufficient to achieve the overall objective. The third indicator, "Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds", was 99%. From the perspective of this indicator, there is a trend towards reaching the target by 2030, signifying an improvement in the achievement of the global goal 4 "Quality Education".

4. Conclusions

Starting from some realities of the Romanian education, anchored and recorded in the legislation in force, the present work carried out the analysis of some specific indicators of education, referring in particular to the primary education, namely the "net enrollment rate in primary education".

The sources on which the working hypothesis was based were selected both from the law of Romanian education and from the international regulations, mainly dealing with primary education. The analysis focused on the aforementioned indicator in the context of quality education. This global objective is part of sustainable development, which has been included in U.N.O. agenda in 2015, with precise global targets with

a deadline in 2030. We noticed that it was given an important role by UN representatives with global and global implications.

Although the global education ranking, i.e. 44, seems fairly acceptable (Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. 2018) there are rather worrying disparities in the net enrollment rate in primary education, which is a segment of education that plays an important role in defining the educational profile of a nation.

Analyzing the statistic figures that are representative only of Eastern Europe (the countries included in **Table 1**), data that in fact represent a main interest not only as far as the geographic location of Romania is concerned, but also its cultural traditions, it can be noted that its standing is still more worrying: Romania occupies the last place – coming even after Moldova, Croatia and Albania. The results of the table are thus very discouraging.

The authors believe that the overall objective of quality education should be introduced as a principle in the Romanian legislation, concretely taking into account the three indicators that describe quality education in the context of sustainable development.

Therefore, future research should be encouraged, no less than analyses and theoretical as well as practical initiatives of the specialists in the field, which should lead to increasing the efficiency of the development of national education, especially at the level of primary education. The authors believe that it is necessary to coordinate these initiatives with further, more efficient studies, programs and actions that take into account the current state and economic prospects of Romania.

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