

# The Quality of Education During the Quarantine Period. Is the Paradigm Shifting an Optimal Solution?

Oana-Miruna OPREA<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*The quality of the Romanian education is questioned, with the transition from the classical education to the online education. Romania has undergone a series of major changes in terms of education and this is due to multiple factors that have long been ignored: ensuring the necessary hygiene resources, the communication devices, the accessibility to the material resources of western schools or universities.*

*This paper will address the issue of the online education quality, in the conditions of the rapid transition from the onsite paradigm to the online paradigm.*

**Keywords:** *Online education; onsite education; paradigm shift; quality; educational management;*

---

<sup>1</sup> MA, Al. I Cuza University of Iasi, Romania.

## **1. Introduction**

The pandemic period was the largest sociological exercise of all time, but it was also a challenge especially in Romania when the education system went online. The outbreak of the Corona Virus pandemic occurred on February 26, 2020, and three weeks later a state of emergency was instituted, which involved quarantine measures, transportation restrictions, school closures until the end of the school year, with the obligation for students to work online (Săgeată, 2020). On September 14, 2020 the schools were to reopen for most of the pupils, after about 6 months; the lack of infrastructure, clear regulations and training has determined the conduct of classes superficially (Săgeată, 2020). Of course, this period took teachers from both rural and urban areas by surprise.

## **2. The online schooling**

On the one hand, the use of the platforms provided to support the courses was a challenge for both teachers and pupils, because of the fact that many people did not have a smartphone, a tablet, a computer or an internet connection allowing their children to participate in online classes. On the other hand, the solutions provided by the ministry came somewhat late, given that a long time had passed. Adapting to the online system has required efforts for both pupils and teachers, because of the fact that the already known teaching-learning methods have had to be adapted; as a result, “government institutions, schools, NGOs and private companies, education and tech professionals have found themselves at a (often online, remote) roundtable of debates to find solutions, putting together their expertise, ideas, portals, tools and e-learning platforms that were available. Although it must be said that speed and quality are not always guarantees of a quality process, we can still speak here primarily as a favorable context for reflection and permanent adaptation” (Botnariuc, et al, 2020, p. 7).

The current school network is characterized by overcrowded classes of 30-40 pupils, and “the functional illiteracy places Romania on the second to last place in the European Union, because 42% of 15-year-old Romanian students fail to use the information acquired at school to and solve everyday problems” (Săgeată, 2020).

## **3. The learning conditions during the pandemic**

Talking about school success during the pandemic is challenging (Terec-Vlad & Trifu, 2014; Terec-Vlad & Cucu, 2016)

Given the lack of technologies, favorable learning conditions, the isolation, etc., during this period, the pupils had to face stressful situations, an aspect that also emerged from the grades obtained at the end of the previous school year. We mentioned earlier that this condition has equally affected all parties involved in the educational process, which is why in this section of the paper we will focus upon how efforts have been made to ensure optimal learning conditions and school success.

In the context of the state of emergency, the educational process that until then was carried out in educational institutions ceased and was replaced by the online / remote education in which was meant to ensure “the continuation of the educational process under quarantine conditions through various distance communication tools” (Hadîrcă & Iarovoi, 2020).

Certainly, when talking about the online education, one must consider the communication technologies, which play a key part in the teacher-pupil relationship. The platforms they provide helped teachers to keep in touch with the pupils, as they adapted to the new conditions. Regarding the lack of practice of teachers to support teaching through platforms, we emphasize that each teacher had to adapt their teaching style, assessment and so on always taking into account the annual planning, curriculum and so forth. However, there were a number of problems that all schools encountered:

- The lack of the teacher’s training in digital skills;
- Pupils have found it difficult to adapt to the online learning process;
- The lack of ICT devices and internet connection;
- The large number of hours spent online and the difficulty of achieving all homework;
- The lack of support for the independent learning effort (Hadîrcă, & Iarovoi, 2020).

At the same time, it is important to mention that to these problems the issues related to the school dropout was added. During this period the risk of abandonment increased - 15.3% in 2019, 22.4% in rural areas ((Eurostat, indicator [edat\_lfse\_30]) because of the fact that many of the pupils “were left alone at home, which in the absence of monitoring, motivation, encouragement and guidance from parents or their legal representatives, faced an increased risk of non-schooling, dropping out of school and absenteeism, as they needed more attention than before” (Ciobanu, 2020). More than ever, pupils needed the support of their parents in achieving their

homework, especially when dealing with pupils from grades I-IV, but an important role was also played by the school psychologist.

With regard to reducing the school dropout, it is considered that “the success of these measures is conditioned by the training of teachers so that they understand the role of the schooling in providing educational opportunities, especially to disadvantaged groups and what activities they can carry out [...] The school dropout originates in the situations in which pupils disconnect from school [...] the disconnection is important in the context in which many of the skills are acquired cumulatively, therefore the absenteeism for a long periods of time makes it difficult to recover the amount of information required concerning the subjects in the school curriculum” (Florian & Țoc, 2020).

A greater involvement of all the factors involved in education would help reduce this dropout rate. However, we must also take into account the social and economic conditions of our country because the school dropout is not due only to a single factor, such as the education system, but also to: the poverty level (32.5% of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 37.9% of children under 16 are at risk of social exclusion) (Eurostat [ilc\_peps01]), the low wage levels, the overcrowding, the monetary poverty, and so on.

Regarding the use of the new communication technologies during the pandemic, experts from the University of Bucharest, the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, the “West University” of Timișoara and the “Institute of Educational Sciences” conducted a research to which 6000 teachers participated: the “Home school – a new challenge for pupils and an opportunity for teachers”; the research reveals “the necessary support measures that can form the basis of decisions at local level and from the Ministry of Education”<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4. Measures and proposals for a qualitative educational act**

During this pandemic period, several social actors came up with proposals to ensure the continuation of the educational process. Certainly, the measures implemented such as the online grade book were effective, but for a short period of time. The improvement of the educational process calls for discussion of all the social actors involved: pupils, parents, institutions, and so forth; if the deficiencies of the educational process were noticed during the lock-down period,

---

<sup>2</sup> (“Home school – a new challenge for pupils and an opportunity for teachers” available at: <https://unibuc.ro/scoala-de-acasa-o-provocare-noua-pentru-elevi-si-o-opportunitate-pentru-profesori/>)

it is time for these deficiencies to be resolved, and this aspect does not only involve the training of teachers: it involves the new technologies, the accessibility, a good relationship with the parents and the relatives of pupils, and so on. All these issues will be resolved in a timely manner if and only if sufficient money is allocated for a range of basic needs.

## 5. Conclusions

Given a series of basic shortcomings that have placed Romania on one of the leading places in the world, the Government should come up with optimal measures to reduce the number of families regarding the pupils living at the subsistence level. Therefore, the measures and decisions should be taken in favor of the direct beneficiaries of education, but also in favor of the teachers.

## References

- Botnariuc, P., Cucuș, C., Glava, C., Iancu, D., Ilie, M., Istrate, O., Labăr A.V., Pânișoară, I.O., Ștefănescu, D., & Velea, S. (2020). *Școala Online. Elemente pentru inovarea educației. Raport de cercetare evaluative*. Editura Universității din București, București.
- Ciobanu, V. (2020). Impactul pandemiei „Covid-19” asupra sistemului educațional. *Materialele Conferinței științifico-practice internaționale*, 9-10 octombrie 2020.  
[https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/219-223\\_15.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/219-223_15.pdf)
- Florian, B., & Țoc, S. (2020). *Policy note: educația în timpul pandemiei. Răspunsuri la criza nesfârșită a sistemului educațional românesc*. București.
- Hadîrcă, M., & Iarovoi, R. (2020). Învățământul la distanță: concept, metodologie, probleme de implementare. *Revista Univers Pedagogic*, 3(67), 107-112.
- Săgeată, R. (2020). Școala în pandemie. Provocări și incertitudini. Cazul României. *Geopolitica Revista de Geografie Politică, Geopolitică și Geostrategie*, 1-19.
- Terec-Vlad, L., & Trifu, A. (2014). The Appreciative Inquiry as a Way of Enhancing Organization Performance. *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetari Economice "Gheorghe Zane"-Iasi*, 23(2), 183-187.

Terec-Vlad, L., & Cucu, M. (2016). Ethics and organizational culture–  
Key elements regarding the development of economic activities.  
*Ecoforum Journal*, 5(1), 1-22.

Școala de acasă – o provocare nouă pentru elevi și o oportunitate  
pentru profesori. [https://unibuc.ro/scoala-de-acasa-o-provocare-  
noua-pentru-elevi-si-o-oportunitate-pentru-profesori/](https://unibuc.ro/scoala-de-acasa-o-provocare-noua-pentru-elevi-si-o-oportunitate-pentru-profesori/)