

New Skills for New Jobs.

Lifelong Learning Initiatives in the Romanian Higher Education

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Abstract: In a complex world, characterized by diversity and change, the lifelong-oriented education answers the challenges of the open society. The paper describes the Romanian government's strategy for revitalizing the lifelong learning in higher education system. Attention is drawn to the technical universities in terms of the access to higher education and the transition to an educational system appropriate for a society based on individual freedom, political pluralism, and market economy. It is emphasized that 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.

Key-Words: training, labour market, reform, lifelong learning, communication, qualification, knowledge society, curriculum, infrastructure

1 Introduction

In a context in which lifelong learning in the Romanian higher education is still marked by inhibitions and the refusal of acknowledging ethnic and cultural diversity, 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. Many of the changes that have been made regarding the content of education in the last years pertain, on the one hand to the reassessment of the relation between knowledge, skills and attitudes, and, on the other hand, to the inevitable tendency of universities as

institutions towards opening themselves 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 in the fact that 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 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* [9]. This is the need for allotting the capacity of learning to be a particular field of influence, meant to replace the pedagogy of human being at the centre of the educational activity. 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. This kind of education 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.

Education in Romania are in the process of reform as long as the society we live in are moving towards big changes in education, working conditions, to a diversification of how to practice career. All components are subjected to higher processing actions: institutional organization, relational issues, the contents of the vehicle, and assessing system and lending, teacher training etc.

Romania's European Union accession and acceptance of *Bologna process* has led to a number of consequences, the most important one is raising the national education in European format; to cope with a knowledge society, put greater emphasis on abilities and skills, to build a more flexible education with several options, and with the possibility of adapting the educational process in everyday life and labour market needs.

2 The European Framework

The Romanian curriculum can not be outside the major trends in European education. From this point of view, disciplines of study programs must take into consideration the European documents on education, documents to which Romania joined. The European Commission has made education a document that described a *profile of European training*, as a recommendation proposing new basic skills required all persons to meet the demands of society and knowledge economy and facilitate access after school to lifelong learning [2]. These basic skills (key competences), which aims to compulsory schooling are:

- Helping workers and enterprises adapt to changing circumstances in the economy.
- Enhancing access to employment and participation in the workforce.

- Improving training and skills, both for individuals, and through better education and training systems.
- Promoting partnerships between actors such as employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion in the labour market.
- Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and combating discrimination in the labour market

The proposed European Union 2020 Strategy, which will be a core tool for the new European Commission, allots a key role to education and training as drivers of the higher skills that will fuel sustainable, knowledge-based growth in Europe. As Odile Quintin, Director General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, European Commission, said, *we need to move beyond rhetoric to genuine lifelong learning*. 'Investment in people and their skills is crucial, Quintin emphasized [8], to creating new sources of growth, even when budgets are under pressure; this means prioritising investment in high-quality education and skills development. This message needs to be heard in the wider political arena but also by those responsible for funding and systems development in adult education'. The economic crisis is also stark reminder that lifelong learning needs to support individuals throughout the economic cycle - the booms and the busts. Recessions bring change. And change requires new skills.

Even before the crisis, work was changing, with more and more jobs requiring a mix of high-level skills and soft skills. Clearly, to work in a particular sector, people need the relevant technical capacities. But these have to be underpinned by the cross-cutting skills that help people meet new demands: team-work, problem-solving, initiative-taking, creativity. At the Grundtvig 10th anniversary conference on 26-28 January 2010, in Brussels, it was clearly expressed that education and training must evolve. The *New Skills for New Jobs* initiative aims to do just this: to improve the capacity to anticipate the new job trends, and to gear the people's skills for the changes ahead and to ensure that everyone can benefit from change and not feel threatened by it. This is also what the Grundtvig programme proposes, with its dual objective of responding to the educational challenge of an ageing population in Europe and helping to provide adults with pathways to improving their knowledge and

skills. Given the demographic trend which provide the backdrop for the European Union 2020 strategy, it is clear that education and training must be reconsidered to give far more weight to helping adults improve their existing skills and develop new ones.

3 Romania's Lifelong Learning Priorities

As the strategy, and the European cooperation framework make clear - education and training are not only about preparing for jobs; they are vital for leveraging innovation and for creating the socially inclusive societies that must be a European hallmark.

Romania's ESF (European Social Fund) Operational Programs take an approach to the country's complex economic and social challenges, aiming to bring education and training, including doctoral studies and more university research activities, into line with labour market requirements at all levels.

Romania's ESF Operational Programs adopt a two pronged approach to tackle the challenges the country is facing [3]. The first Operational Program is entitled *Human resources development* and is dedicated to making the most of the Romanian workforce. The second one, *Administrative capacity development*, is designed to improve the public policy and service infrastructure in order to realise the human resources development objectives.

3.1 Human Resources Development

The Sectorial Operational Program for Human resources plans to help 1 650 000 people by increasing their education level, their employability and adaptability. It has seven different priorities, all aimed at dealing with difficulties in the country's labour force:

- Lifelong learning (aimed at ensuring a better transition from school to working life, preventing early school leaving – particularly among vulnerable groups, encouraging companies to boost their employees' qualification levels, and improving workers' qualifications generally).
- Education and training (aims to modernise initial and continuing education and training (including higher education and research),

by focusing on management, quality assurance, teaching staff training and promotion of doctoral and postdoctoral programs).

- Increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises (to promote greater adaptability amongst workers and enterprises by increasing on-the-job training and by encouraging flexible attitudes to working practices).
- Modernising the public employment service (to get increasing numbers of people back into employment and enable particular groups, for instance the young, long-term unemployed and the elderly, to be targeted).
- More action to help people into work (to encourage people to enter the workforce).
- Promoting social inclusion (priority six concentrates efforts on getting the groups at risk of social exclusion (Roma, disabled, young people leaving state protection institutions, etc.) back into mainstream employment).
- Technical assistance (focuses on technical assistance which will underpin efforts made in the other six priorities and support the broad aims of the OP).

3.2 Administrative Capacity Development

The second Operational Program sets out to streamline the workings of the state in order to facilitate the human resources development strategy. It will achieve this via three priorities:

- Improving public policy and management (to create real improvements in the structure and process of public policy and management);
- Improving public services on a decentralised basis (to modernise and create efficient public services in Romania);
- Technical assistance (to underpin and support the efforts made in the first two priorities).

In the domain of the improving of the infrastructure and the connecting to the great computerized

information channels we can notice:

- the initiating and applying of a programme of 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 universities' libraries;
- the development of the education information network and the connecting of educational units to this network.

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 universities 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, 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.

In the domain of university management reform the main aims are:

- the creation of the institutional autonomy of high schools and universities from a financial, didactic and human resources point of view;
- the promotion of the institutional autonomy of 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.

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

- The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation
- 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. The creation and distribution of elective textbooks has benefited 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, the operational structures of the Project of Reform of Primary and Secondary Education in Romania have also got an institutional character.

4 Developments of Lifelong Learning in Technical Universities

Higher education technical institutions offer four types of postgraduate studies following the first degree, long-term university studies, as follows: in-depth specialization studies, master's degree studies, postgraduate academic studies, postgraduate studies of specialization and doctoral studies and postgraduate thoroughgoing studies for graduates of short-term and long term university studies. Also, universities provide assistance on a contract basis to initiators of adult training schemes as part of continuing education and re-training programs, or may initiate such schemes by themselves.

Ministries, national authorities, commercial companies or other legal entities, jointly with education units or separately, run adult training and refresher programs, to improve qualifications of their present or future employees or re-train them. These training courses grant qualification certificates or professional competence recognized on the labour market.

The law stipulates incentives for those who follow further-training courses for professional training, namely the right to standard salary, for those issued from public institutions and the payment of housing, per diem and transport, for those who take courses in other localities than that of their domicile.

For the training of adults the same law stipulates the possibility of organizing institutions and networks of open or distance education, that make use of modern communication and information technologies. These provisions of the law are applied in all universities.

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 [11].

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 strategy for continuing the curricular reform takes into account the priorities brought to the fore by the analysis of the social need for development [10]. A series of programs have been conceived for these needs [4].

The promoting of international partnerships between the education institutions in Romania and their counterparts in Europe, through participation in European programs of cooperation in the domain of education was materialized in:

- the programs 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 program included in the Stability Pact.
- The current evaluation has a prevalently educational character and is carried out by the teachers. 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, 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 student'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 students' results in each and every subject and an overall evaluation is achieved during the evaluation period at the end of each semester. The mark system has been replaced by the grade system. The decision about the student's moving up to the next year of study is made by each teacher on the basis of the former's results. According to the new system of evaluation, the student's getting in each subject at least a D ("sufficient") move up to the next year of study. The introduction of grades 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 (National Society for Experiential Education) in accordance with the new national curriculum. These indices make possible the description of the students' progress in each subject, along the educational and training process. The students' moving up to the next year of study is decided upon by each teacher teaching a certain subject.

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 students 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 student's moving up to the next year of study or registering again for the same year of study. The students' 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. The subjects for the written tests are established nationwide and evaluation is standardized.

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

- the increase of the level of objectivity in assessing the students' 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.

The system of evaluation of 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;
- the evaluation at the end of certain educational cycles;
- the permanent training of the teaches in the domains of evaluation and examination.

The reform elements implemented by the NSEE 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 students' 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.

5 Trainers' Training

The problem of teacher education has become essential not only for school systems, but for all contemporary societies. Education has always been one of the main elements of maintaining a culture and social development [1]. More than in all previous periods, at present, education is considered one of the key pillars of building a knowledge-based society. In the context of the knowledge society, education system regains a central role and the teacher once again becomes one of the main actors. Decreased number of teachers and the relative decline in their quality of teaching made the issue of training teachers to become a central element of social policies in many countries. Without an initial and continuing training of teachers we cannot adapt to European requirements. Therefore the training programs 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 textbooks), new modalities of evaluation, the preparation of the students 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 universities 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. Stimulating change at universities level starts from the premise that every person is an agent of change and envisages several objectives:

- the change of the structure of the teaching load in the education system;
- the occupying of the teaching position in the university colleges for educators;
- the recognition of the right of the private higher education system institutions to have access;
- to participate in 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 solving of problems by finding certain group solutions, the sharing of a common vision of the needs and interests of the university and the participation of all human resources in building up this vision, the contacts of the university 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 universities have the possibility of individualizing their educational offer, the central role being played by the curricular offer.

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 teachers to devise and put into practice a curriculum that should be predominantly an interdisciplinary one, or one focusing on new domains [5].

Though there are new programs (that have an advanced internal structure), the users encounter important difficulties in perceiving, understanding and applying them. 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 programs enabling the teachers to understand and apply the curriculum. We consider that the continuous training in the area of the curriculum can lead to a considerable improvement of the way in which the latter can be applied.

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 university curriculum.

6 A New Conception of University as an Institution

In the last twenty years, the numerous legislative changes having a general character have been precariously spread into the academic system. 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 program 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 meant to speed up and complete the transition period. The first decade of the 21st century in Romania has been characterized by a dynamic continuity in that it has been taking over adapting and deepening everything that is valid in the comprehensive reform started in 1998, and is realistically oriented to the process of changing the structures and the contents of education. 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.

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. 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 alternative pedagogical approaches.

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 [6]. Having a decisive role at the level of social macrostructures motivation, these objectives are mainly advancing a new conception of university as an institution, a conception according to which the configuration of contents is reshaped because:

- university 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 universities as institutions 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 people's capacity for self-education and their ability of adapting to change;
- 3) to promote interdisciplinarity;

Universities are called upon to enhance their 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. These documents also emphasize:

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

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 [12]. 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*) suggest many valid entries for the education for values. As for the segment *curriculum decided upon by the university* 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 future that introduce the students to values such as tolerance and mutual comprehension, making them discover the respect for identity and the acceptance of difference.

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.

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 first years of the 21th 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.

Generally speaking, the motivating factors for modernizing the educational contents are convergent to the 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 students to their active participation in the pedagogical activity will have a relevant impact on the quality of learning.

Summarizing the statements above, we can say that the manner in which the lifelong learning contents in Romania is justified today combines in a balanced way an extrinsic motivation (the harmonization with the European approach, the receptiveness to educational innovation) and an intrinsic motivation (the ability of meeting the needs of society).

University education has more ways to share:

- Short-cycle university education (3 years, it 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 baccalaureate diploma can take part in the entrance examination. Besides the enrolment figure financed from the budget, 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).

The management of education has been traditionally centralized, the central bodies (the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, 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, Research and Innovation.

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 enrolment figures, approves the curricula, the syllabuses and the school textbooks, 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 in 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, Research and Innovation.

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 students, teachers and parents in solving the problems of an educational nature that appear. 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 students 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.

7 Conclusions

The most important achievements of the lifelong learning initiatives 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 school and academic management and of international cooperation.

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.

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Therefore all the steps should lead to the following goals

- providing a basic education for all the citizens of the country, in the form of some minimum abilities necessary to the life and work in a democratic society;
- promoting an open and flexible education able to meet the most various interests, aptitudes and aspirations;
- building up of new professional abilities, management and trade skills, economical and financial behavior, aptitudes and social relationships requested by the market economy;
- development of the interest in education and permanent emancipation through an education concentrated not on the limited needs of a certain profession, but on the continuous availability for knowledge and action, for reflection and social criticism in the view of adaptation to a changing social context.

The government's reform strategy involves the agreement with the European approach, the receptiveness to educational innovation and the ability of meeting the needs of society. The emphasis is put on the domains of the curriculum, of the infrastructure, of the connection to the great information channels, and international cooperation. This brief presentation is an argument in supporting the statement that Romanian education is in full process of reorganization, a consequence of the changes in which our whole society is employed.

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