

The Impact of Cross-Cultural Values on the Manifestation of Performance Orientation in Romanian Educational System under the Aegis of European Union Strategy

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Abstract: Romania, state member of the European Union, as well as part of the South Eastern European- Cluster, is an emergence nation with strengths and weaknesses in achieving a democratic path. European integration assumes a series of principles with high values which promotes the equality among the students, correct dissemination of information, transparency and free access to future opportunities in career. The article shall try to present the Romanian cross-cultural values as stem for the educational performance according to European international standard. It will be evaluating the performance of contemporary Romanian educational system and the manner of accomplish the present main objectives. Only well-prepared people are capable to combat the high-power distance, to avoid the low performance and to improve a sustainable quality of life. The research methodology is based on positivism because the study is centered on the analyses of real events with a synchronic approach of reality.

Keywords: education policy; performance; European Union Strategy; Romanian cross-cultural values

JEL Classification: Z10

1. Introduction to the European Union development vision for 2013-2020

In 2007, when Romania was accepted in European Union the general opinion had been following the principle that this acceptance will provide a long-term security for all the people and the state will be an egalitarian one.

During the 2007-2013 European Union have had three main objectives: economic conversion and development for all the regions with a GDP under 25%, regional competitiveness and employment, and European territorial cooperation². Unfortunately, Romania was not able to accomplish any of these goals.

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² Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-2013 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/communications/2006/community-strategic-guidelines-on-cohesion-2007-2013 , accessed at 02/11/2018.

In an era of intelligent economy, characterized by productivity and social cohesion, EUROPE 2020 strategy has been developing three major cross-national priorities:

- Intelligent development by increasing a knowledge-based economy and constant innovation;
- Sustainability by promoting ecological technologies and competitiveness;
- Integrational development through consolidation of an economy with a high rate of employment characterized by secure social and territorial cohesion (Molle, 2015).

This strategy is aiming to define the future of European Union and is having a series of main objectives as starting points for the progress: 75% of the population (segment between 20 & 64 years) should have a permanent job, 3% of European GDP would be designated to research and development (R&D), clear improvement in climate and energy (so called objective 20/20/20), the reducing of early school leaving below 10%, incentives for the young generation to increase superior education (at least 40%), the reduction of poverty with 20 million¹. After 2020 we officially will know if Romania was capable to improve some aspects of this European priorities.

In the field of education, the access is set on knowledge and innovation as stems for economic and social development. For this aim it is necessary to improve the quality of contemporary educational systems, to harness the preformation in research, development and promote a true transfer of knowledge between all the European shareholders. The perfect communication skills are a strength point for international cooperation (Popa, 2014) because the innovative ideas could be transformed in new and valuable products. The amount of investment in European innovation, especially research and development (minus 2%) is very low compared to the international top performers: 2,6% in United States and 3,4% in Japan². As we can notice from the below figure, Romania is having a bottom down position, and even the high-tech sector is extremely performer, the private sector is constantly suffering for high taxation, corruption and bureaucracy.

¹ Strategia Europa 2020/Europe Strategy 2020

https://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/Europa2021/Strategia_Europa_2020.pdf accessed at 02/11/2018.

² Eurostat R & D expenditure https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/R_%26_D_expenditure, accessed at 02/11/2018.

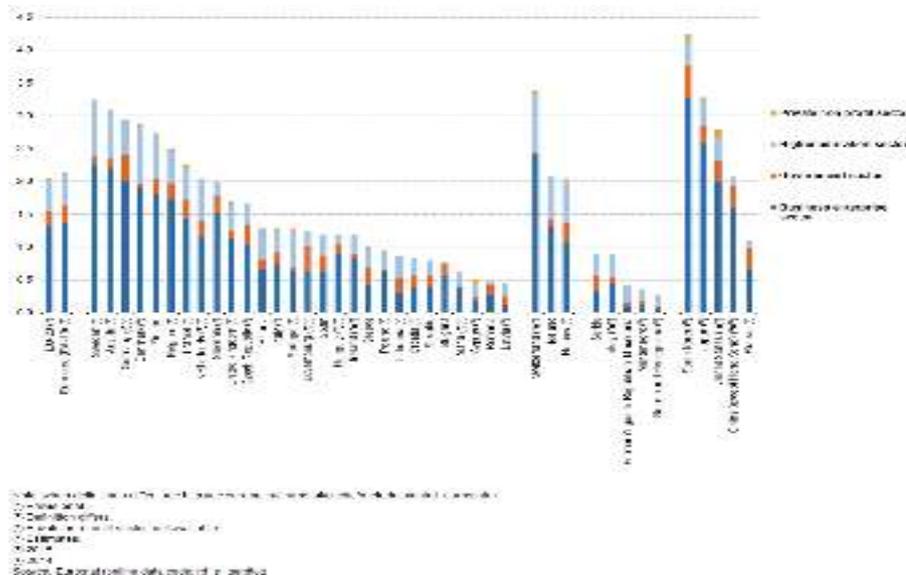


Figure 1. European investments in research and development

Source: Eurostat

Another weak cornerstone of European countries, and particularly Romania, is the situation of education and the general lack of preoccupation for the importance of long live learning. A quarter of European pupils and collegians are having problems in readings, the rate of drop out of school is extremely high and less than 30% of the persons between 25 and 35 years are graduate students compared to 40% in United States and more than 50% in Japan¹.

One of the strength points for Romania is the progress achieved in high tech industry, the fifth place in high-tech exports by high-technology group of products in EU-28². Except the Romanian case, one of the European problems is the low speed of internet, especially in the rural zones and this is a real preoccupation for the impossibility to improve the online dissemination of knowledge.

Among the top priorities for the European development vision is enhancing the support for the strategic field in education and longtime formation in the area. The intended objective is the implementation of a long-life learning policy in all the States of the Communitarian Block. The economical and social partners are key factors in the process because their development strategy should be based on

¹ Eurostat Tertiary education statistics, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics, accessed at 02/11/2018.

² Europa. eu High-tech statistics - economic data <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/46748.pdf>, accessed at 02/11/2018.

flexicurity¹ under the principle of promoting a performant environment for education, formation and work.

The objective to modernize the labor market is achievable only by promoting the autonomy of the people through education, capable to obtain new competences having the possibility to access proper carrier orientation in order to avoid unemployment.

As final remark for this first part, the principle of flexicurity is a possibility for all the European citizens, regardless the region, religion or political orientation to achieve new competences for enhancing the struggle against poverty, social exclusion and assuring a higher productivity

2. The Effect of Romanian Cross-Cultural Values for the Educational Sustainability

The cross-cultural management and the comparative management are forms of general management and are trying to identify the cultural differences between countries, companies etc. (Zait, 2009; Nicolescu & Verboncu, 2008) in order to obtain positive results considering the regional cultural values and norms.

For analyzing the Romanian cross-cultural values, it was used the Hofstede survey because it is world wide recognized even the method has been some time contested by some scholars. His general conclusion is: even though the employees are adopting the practice of an organization, they are keeping the values of their country or native region (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Based on cross cultural researches we can infer that Romanian management is paternalistic, with a low adaptation for change, the influence of the group is very strong on the mentality of the person, and the present migration of young generations is gradually “killing” the initiative and creativity. For Nicolescu & Verboncu (2011) the Romanian management as well as the Eastern European Management is situated under the average level of European management and the lowest performance is specific to public administration and the highest is obtained by the multinational corporations.

The scores for the Romanian cross-cultural values, presented in the next figure, are: power distance (90), uncertainty avoidance (90), masculinity versus femininity

¹ Flexicurity is a new concept based on a welfare state model with a pro-active labor market policy. It is an integrated strategy for enhancing, at the same time, flexibility and security in the labor market. It attempts to reconcile employers' need for a flexible workforce with workers' need for security – confidence that they will not face long periods of unemployment. Source: European Commission. Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=102> accessed at 02/11/2018.

(42), individualism versus collectivism (30), long term orientation versus short term orientation (52), indulgence versus restraint (20) (Hofstede Center, 2018).

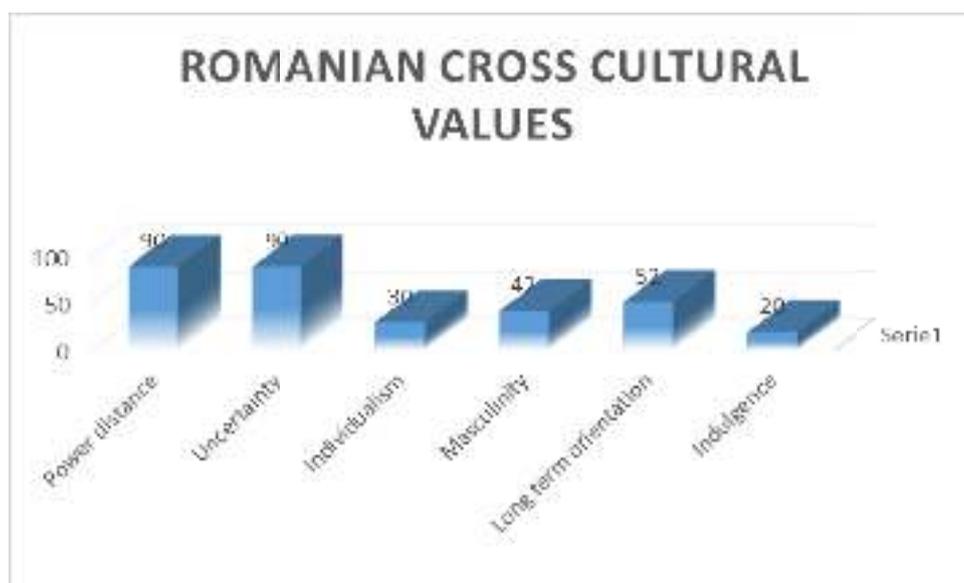


Figure 2. Romanian cross-cultural values: adaptation *apud* Hofstede Center (2018)

The power distance is representing the degree of acceptance and reward of inequality and the unequal distribution of power in a community (Chhokar et al, 2008). The Romanian score for this dimension (90) is one the highest in the world compared to Guatemala (95), Philippine (94), Panama (95) and Russia (93).

At the opposite pole there are the Nordic States: Denmark (18), Finland (31), Norway (31), Sweden (31), Iceland (31) with extremely low values, which means that the Nordic Cluster is dominated by an equal distribution of power (Albæk & Rosdahl, 2017; Bergmann, 2014; Calforms, 2015) and we can find in the area a meritocracy and not an untouchable hierarchy.

In Romania, the representative democracy is not able to transpose the political campaign slogans in public policy. In the educational system there is a high manifestation of power distance, almost all the principals from elementary schools and high schools are politically appointed and the educational process is penurious forced to accept unperformed managers with low performances. The situations are even sad and sometimes theatrical with the ministerial top management. In present we can find various Ministers with huge gaps in elementary knowledge and low skills in speaking their own native language. The Romanian media is having a full-time job presenting their "managerial masterpieces". In the most cases the protest

manifestations of the teachers and professors are not influencing the authorities to take into account the public will. We can infer from the high-power distance score that Romanian society is not an equalitarian one and the hierarchy is not established after common consultations, a sad reality for everyone with negative international impact.

The Romanian score for individualism is quite low (30) which means the people are integrated in cohesive groups, and these cohesive groups could be family or not. Also, is very important for almost everybody to make a good impression in society. The people are looking for jobs who can offer enough time with their families, even there is a respect for the private life and individualistic values. In the educational system as a constant for collectivist societies the personnel are looking for external protection and the political membership provides extra protection and mostly is offering solutions for an unexpected and improper career improvement.

Indulgence versus restraint is an indicator who study in which proportion a society allows or not the personal satisfaction of its members, the indulgence is characteristic for nations without strict control and offers the joy of life for its gentry (Onea, 2011). Romania is having a very low indulgence (20) which demonstrates that it is a highly bureaucratic state, with economical constraints and problems and with great esteem for tradition and social customs. Thereof, the educational system is well structured, with weak tolerance, obedient, there is a propensity for punishment measures and bad behaviors are not tolerated.

Uncertainty avoidance is the measure who presents the degree of threat in a community, how the people act and accept new and uncertain situations (House et al, 2004). This dimension is the reflection of the level of independence for the persons inside of a country and in Romania the score is extremely high (90) identical to power distance. The people are living under a continuous threat, there is a strong anxiety and a high intolerance to any type of new situation. In schools we can find the mentality that the teachers are always having all the answers, and we can talk about an acceptance of the rules in public institutions, even those are not always followed.

Long time orientation versus short time orientation refers to the sets of values with direct consequences upon a certain period of time (close – short time and far – long time orientation). Romanian value is 52 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and we can conclude that there is an equilibrium between the approach of traditions and social attitudes. Exist children with high level of tolerance and respect, meanwhile another segment of the youth is more preoccupied with personal wellbeing. In the same manner the solving of the problems is making in an organized style, or with passion without no logic and respect for other feelings.

Masculinity versus femininity reflect the importance of sexual differences in a society (ibidem) and the polarization of function based on this criterion. The

masculine societies are centered on acceptance of provocation and conflict, and feminine countries are promoting sensibility, respect and modesty. Romania has a predisposition for feminine values with means the acceptance of sharing the power between men and women (an excellent reality), compassion for the weak and there is a social morality. We can find also many women in public functions or in the educational system.

Between the cultural values and the problems of a society it is a strong connection, because understanding the cultural patters we are capable to improve our superior aspirations. The Romanian educational system is still rooted in our collective mentality and its improvement can be done only by promoting a shift from an obedient tradition to the acceptance of performance inside the group.

3. The Manifestation of Performance Orientation in Romanian Educational System

For being a leader in the regional area, a nation must have well-educated citizens with principles based on performance orientation and a correct synergy between the leaders and society. Performance orientation is in favor of a sustainable economy and is the key for the Universities visions, even their methodologies are based on traditional or secular principles.

Performance orientation is referring to which what high level amidst a society's members is encouraged and reward the excellence, personal improvement and performance (Kocheva & Kochoska, 2015; Che-Ha et al., 2014)

In Romanian system there is a broad contrast between the way in which the authorities are evaluating the performance and the reality seen by society, business communities or foreign partners.

In elementary and high schools is predominant the tradition of "paternalism mentality" and the tendency to is still to support the "familiar relations" between the teachers and the Manager/Principal (mostly politically elected), the last one demand loyalty and offers protections only if his/her authority is accepted. The state is the main shareholder in most of the schools and when the Government is changed the entire national strategy follows new political patters.

No matter the political orientation, in almost 30 years after the Romanian revolution, all the Governments have been seen the educational approach as a superior-subordinate relationship, strengthening the hierarchy. Unlike the Nordic model where the equalitarian system is the base for national success (Sjovaag & Bergmann, 2012) and the employees become more performance-oriented workers within a collective - individual system, in Romania we notice the existence of

authoritarian directions combined with some democratic practices of European Union.

According to European Union principles, the educational Leader must be a skilled administrator in order to cope effectively with the immense demand of public concern about the situation of the youth and must make the promises and the decisions based on practical reasons, which realistically can be respected.

In the Romanian national government program 2017-2020 the education must be: exciting, continuous and coherent and the main objectives are:

- Construction of 2,500 nurseries, kindergartens and after-school facilities;
- Establish a National Register of Entrepreneurs Mentors by operating an online public database that will form the basis for a network of volunteer mentors who will implement the entrepreneurship in schools;
- Strengthening the monitoring capacity and the evaluation of the education system, the implementation of Integrated Education Information System in Romania, National Qualifications Framework, etc.);
- Realize new research based on the needs of businesses in terms of employing qualified personnel;
- Establishing the schooling plans according to the needs of the labor market;
- Revival of vocational and technical education through flexibility of the system etc.¹.

Internal pressures and constrains had not be handled effectively, so until now the above-mentioned objectives have not been accomplished. The results attributed to Romanian educational reforms are systematically much lower than those obtained from other nations inside the European Union.

The Romanian people are having dynamism, team orientation, but the pressure of too many Government laws and regulations is maintaining a continuing pressure upon the didactic staff. There is a need of a more humanistic style of governmental management who will offer to the persons involved in the educational process the chance to be performance-oriented at the work place and to choose outstanding leaders better prepared to handle managers-employee relations.

A long-term national policy in the field of education, with less political implications, will make creativity and innovation more achievable and the uncertainty will not always be presented in the people's minds. Those improvements are necessary because in the Romanian traditions exists the

¹ Romanian national government program 2017-2020 <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b&q=programul+de+guvernare+2017-2020+pdf> accessed at 28/09/2018.

recognition of the importance of humanism, the preference for intellectualism and the ability to maintain the originality. One of the strength points for the national educational system is the consolidation of European mobility programs for collegians, students, teachers, professors and scholars (Tempus, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Marie Curie) and developing a benchmarking analyses with the internal programs. Through those programs Romanian system has been capable to maximize the investments in the educational system, to improve and adopt new key-competences and to promote the importance of international formal and non-formal learning. As a short analysis about the scholar performances we can infer that the persons involved in the process are having a European assumption about sharing their research, but express great dissatisfaction with the low development of the sector.

As final remark for this part we can infer that the Romanian educational system needs encouragement for improving its excellence because there are great expectations after a transition from a dictatorship toward a democracy and a fairness approach is needed for eliminating social and political hierarchies.

4. Conclusions

It seems quite difficult, but not impossible for Romania to adopt in short term a competitive and innovative European policy, because traditionally the nation is still rooted in cultural values which promotes the acceptance of high-power distance and is not oriented for equalitarian values.

The Romanian people by understanding the importance of long-term educational investments in sustainability will be better prepared for new business opportunities in the future.

The Romanian entrepreneurship is supporting the high-tech corporate performance through a quality-oriented adaptation for the international policy. Romania is capable to gain stable and long-term benefits if the structural funds will be used in the benefit of his internet infrastructure which is a real gate for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

In other sectors the national conscience should transcend the indifferences of some part of political "elite" for whom the social competence is something that goes beyond their personal responsibility.

In Romania there is a need for performance orientation related with real interest for the improvement of the educational system based on a quality orientation. Unfortunately, in elementary and high schools demonstrated ability in teaching and administration does not count so much, the political support remains the criterion for promotion to leadership.

Joining the European Union in 2007 have been brought for the educational system many benefits, the mobility programs (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus etc.) are having a significant effect namely on the student's long term future orientation in career, and their reputation gain international credibility. But the implementation of new educational policy needs to be strengthened because it is necessary to put downward the pressure caused by the inefficiency of the system.

In future research we will try to be more specific about the evolution of educational system, to identify and explore the problems of each general sector and not only to present a brief overview. We will also explore the evolution of educational leadership and how they tend to activate after the Romanian Presidency of the Council of European Union.

A cultural mantra for the Romanian educational policy could be: “pervasiveness of intellectualism is possible to be accomplished only when equality and equity will be the premises for selection of the hierarchy”.

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