

# **THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract:** An adequate education and educational management in the spirit of sustainable development is a necessity applicable at the level of all national and world economies. The situation highlights that, among the 17 objectives contained in the Agenda, the one specific to educational management is also introduced, through which it tends to approach and apply measures to ensure a quality, inclusive and fair education, as well as a promotion of learning opportunities throughout life for all individuals, directed towards sustainable development. Education, the level of individual education, as well as the level of community education, has a fundamental role in the awareness and understanding of the concept of sustainable development, in the formation of skills and beliefs to apply it in practice. Without adequate education, without an effective educational system, sustainable economic and social development remains a difficult goal to achieve. Precisely for this reason, an educational management suitable for sustainable development is imperatively necessary.

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**Key words: educational management, local sustainable development, economic development, early education, education system**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The level of economic and social development of a society is closely related to the quality and efficiency of the educational system within it, the accessibility of all citizens to education being defining for their personal development and the collectives they come from, for reducing inequities between individuals both from the point of view of economic as well as social point of view. In this context, education represents a vector towards sustainable development, development both locally, implicitly regionally and nationally.

Education is a process in which at least two actors are involved: the provider of education (the educator) and the beneficiary (the one to be shaped), a process whose result consists in the incorporation of the individual into the system of moral values of the

environment to which he belongs, as well as the creation of a foundation of knowledge that will allow his personal and social development and achievement. The educational process is a complex and continuous process that includes, in addition to education, all the cultural values and productions that the individual comes into contact with in one form or another, starting from the cultural values of the family and ending with the organizational culture in which they work.

Education is a process in which the result is not a tangible product but an intangible one (education). Consequently, this process belongs to the services sector, services representing - a human activity, with specialized content, resulting in useful, immaterial and intangible effects intended to satisfy a social need.

A first particularity refers to intangibility. Although the result of education is intangible, a role, and sometimes a consequence, of the educational process is represented by books, as well as other cultural productions with physical support. Another particularity refers to the simultaneity of production and consumption, the educational process taking place during almost the entire life of an individual. This process starts in the family, takes place in the school and normally should continue to ensure the adaptability of the individual to the economic-social development of the community of which he is a part.

Particularly significant aspects of education aim at the simultaneity of production and consumption. Regional and national human heritage plays an important role in education. This is the result of previous activities, preserved in different tangible (monuments, museums) and intangible (traditions, customs) forms, but which have an educational impact at the current time. The existence and continuous development of the local, regional and national cultural heritage as feedback of the educational process tends to lead to the conclusion that, in the case of education, one cannot speak of non-sustainability, except at the most at the level of some restricted categories of individuals. In conclusion, education, as a service process, has its origins in the culture and value system of previous generations, is characterized by continuity and adaptability, is an essential public service for the population and through its results leads to the further development of cultural heritage. Educational processes speak of the past and shape the future. This continuity gives the educational process the quality of a sustainable process. Also, the educational process, as a public service, is influenced either by governmental public policies or by economic factors, and on the other hand, it influences the level and dynamics of the main indicators of economic development with an impact on its level and quality, the link between the quality educational process and economic development being bilateral.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE**

Over time, the educational process has developed in close correlation with economic and social development, the link between them being formed by two positive feedback loops, economic growth leading to the development of the educational system which, in turn, leads to economic growth. The economic system, through its level of development, influences the educational system through two main channels: material resources and human resources. Material resources contribute to the development of the material base and infrastructure of the educational system. The human resources provided by the economic system for the educational system refer to the specialists involved especially in vocational education and tertiary education, who contribute to the development of practical skills of graduates (Zlate, 2012).

In turn, the education system influences and dynamizes the economic system also through two main channels: human resources and knowledge resources. Human resources are represented by graduates of various levels of education entering production. Knowledge resources refer to the results of research carried out both in educational institutions and in specialized research institutions. At the same time, the educational system also has its own positive feedback loop that consists in the continuous training of new teachers. Seen from the point of view of knowledge transfer, the economy-education connection is represented by two flows: an experiential knowledge flow, resulting from production practice, and an analytical knowledge flow, resulting from research carried out in universities and research centers. In the imperative conditions of sustainable development, economic growth is conceived as a type of development that satisfies the needs of present generations without affecting those of future generations, education, as a branch of the service economy, and the entire educational process should be oriented towards the formation of skills and the development of knowledge in this direction (Cristea, 2018).

Sustainable development implies the correlation of economic development closely related to the increase in the level of civilization at the regional and local level, with educational management having an important role regarding how teachers, through their role in the education of students, perceive the impact of education on the fight against social imbalances, poverty and social exclusion, as well as regarding the ways in which the mission of education in society can be facilitated (Albu, 2015).

In these conditions, educational management needs to focus on finding the most effective ways to attract children from the first levels of education (pre-school, preschool and primary), to motivate them, so that they perceive participation at each level of education not as an obligation, but as a way of personal development, of reaching a level that will ensure his future well-being (Balaure, 2013).

Designing and implementing an effective educational management requires, in addition to clear objectives and targets, knowledge of the concepts, mechanisms and levers necessary to create action strategies to achieve the set objectives. Management in an empirical form of organization appears towards the end of the 19th century. The industrial development, the increase in the size of enterprises and the division of labor that are beginning to become more and more evident, since the first decade of the 20th century, have as a consequence the crystallization of the concepts of organization and operation of enterprises, leading to the emergence and development of management as a science.

Educational management aims to achieve, seen as a conscious, rational activity, and considering the relationship between the types of education (formal, non-formal and informal), their degree of intentionality and organization, the area of action and influence. Educational management is treated as a science and art to form human resources, to constitute personalities, to design, organize, respectively to coordinate, evaluate and regulate the components of resources and implicitly of educational activities in order to develop freely, integrally and harmoniously human personality, considering the educational policy. Managerial activity aims at principles and functions, as well as rules and management methods aimed at achieving the objectives set at the level of the educational system. All managerial tools are applied and manifested at the highest possible standards of quality and efficiency, considering that at the level of each educational subsystem, specific grades should be established (Fiske, 2019).

In the field of educational services, as in the case of other fields of activity, the manager has in mind the establishment of objectives and the ways to achieve them, the determination of the necessary resources, the selection and training of personnel, as well as the organization of teams by skills. At the same time, he must build the necessary mechanisms for monitoring and coordinating activities, evaluate the results by acting in the direction of making changes when the situation demands it (Joita, 2021).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research was carried out in Romania and in accordance with its objective, the population aged 18 to 65 from the Oltenia Region, who interacted or is interacting with the education system, was included in the research. The choice of the selection procedure took into account the fact that, in Romania, access to education is universal and equal for all citizens. Consequently, the researched population being homogeneous in terms of access to education, simple (non-stratified) non-repeated selection was used as the selection procedure.

Taking into account that for the alternative characteristics, the sample size is 272 people, and for the non-alternative characteristics, 205 people, it follows that the minimum calculated sample size, for the chosen confidence level (95%), is  $n=272$ . To increase the relevance and to capture the influence of other characteristics of the population (level of education, income) on the point of view regarding the relationship between educational management and local sustainable development, the actual volume of the interviewed sample was 328 people.

Both online means and direct interviews with printed questionnaires were used for data collection. This process took place between January 2023 and May 2023. The processing of the obtained data was carried out with the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) product. In order to test the statistical significance of the relevance of the characteristics of the interviewees in the analysis of the opinions regarding the objectives of the survey, the Chi-Square test was used whose null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) shows that: there is no significant difference between the answers of the interviewees according to their socio-economic characteristics.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The first two characteristics of respondents refer to age group and gender (sex). Five intervals were created for age: 18 – 25 years, 26 – 35 years, 36 – 45 years, 46 – 55 years and over 55 years. The age group with the largest share (29.9%) is the 36-45 age group, followed by the 46-55 age groups (23.8%) and 26-35 years (20.4%). This structure highlights a normal, approximately symmetrical distribution of the interviewed population. With regard to the Gender characteristic, the structure of the interviewees is characterized by a significantly higher share of female persons (56.1%) compared to male persons (43.9%), which highlights the fact that the female population is more involved in the relations with the educational institutions in which the children are included.

The other three characteristics of the respondents refer to the level of education, income and residence environment. In terms of education levels, overall, the largest share is those with bachelor's degrees 42.1%, followed by those with master's degrees 20.0% and high school (secondary) 24.4%. The other two levels of education correspond to small (4% secondary school) and very small (0.6% doctorate) weights, their use in segmenting opinions being very little relevant.

Regarding the income groups, the largest share (29.6%) is for respondents with incomes between 3001 and 4000 lei, followed by those with incomes between 2000 and 3000 lei (27.4%), those with incomes between 4001 and 5000 lei and those with incomes below 2000 lei (14.3%). Regarding the respondents with incomes over 5000 lei, they represent only 7.9% of the total.

The structure of the respondents by place of residence highlights the fact that of their total, approximately two-thirds live in the urban environment and one-third in the rural environment, highlighting the fact that family-educational institution relations are closer in the urban environment than in the rural environment.

*The opinions of the interviewed persons regarding the relationship between educational management and local sustainable development*

Interviewing the respondents aimed at identifying their attitudes towards the personal development of the young generation, the attitude of the family and the school towards the imperative of sustainable local development as well as regarding the school-family relationship in the education of children.

In order to identify and evaluate the respondents' attitude towards the personal development of the young generation and their orientation towards continuous self-education, questions four and five of the survey questionnaire were formulated.

In order to analyze the extent to which the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents influence the rate of consultation by the young generation of libraries, as well as participation in cultural and educational activities, the Chi-Square statistical test was used, the results obtained being presented in Table 1.

Taking into account the fact that the Significance values corresponding to the characteristics Level of education for attending libraries, and respectively Income and Gender are higher than the significance threshold  $\alpha=0.05$ , it follows that, for them, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted and, consequently, they do not significantly influence the answers of those interviewed regarding the issues addressed.

**Table 1. The results of testing the statistical significance of the respondents' characteristics regarding the personal development of the young generation**

Characteristic	Visiting libraries		Cultural and educational activities	
	Chi-Square statist.	Significance	Chi-Square statist.	Significance
Environment	13,646	0,009	12,227	0,016
Age	25,343	0,064	60,417	0,000
Education level	20,866	0,184	12,720	0,693
Income	28,418	0,028	10,552	0,836
Gender	1,800	0,772	1,154	0,886

*Source: Developed by the author using SPSS*

From the analysis of the opinions of those interviewed, without taking into account their socioeconomic characteristics, regarding the personal development of the young generation through reading and visiting libraries, it emerged that, on their own initiative, only 36% of the students are interested in these activities, 15% attending very often, and 21% often, libraries.

In addition to them, the school, through the requirements imposed on the students, manages to get another 35% of the students to consult the bibliographic materials. Taking them into account, it follows that 71% of the students end up, sent or on their own initiative, to visit or consult the libraries. Unfortunately, the other 29% are very rarely (20%) or not at all (9%) interested in consulting or frequenting libraries with a negative impact on both their personal development and the communities they belong to.

The comparative analysis, by residential area, highlights the fact that in rural areas the share of those who visit libraries very often is 16.2%, 1.5 percentage points more than those in urban areas. On the other hand, the share of those who frequent libraries is 24.2%, almost double that of those from rural areas. Overall (Table 2), the share of those who visit libraries on their own initiative, at least often, in urban areas is 38.9%, compared to 30.8% in rural areas.

**Tabelul 2. Influența mediului de rezidență și a veniturilor celor intervievați privind frecvența utilizării bibliotecilor în educația elevilor**

Characteristic		The frequency of library consultation by students					
		UM	Very often (monthly)	Often (quarterly)	When required by school	Rarely	Never
Rural	35,7%	%	16,2	14,5	35	18,8	15,4
		cumulative	16,2	30,8	65,8	84,6	100
Urban	64,3%	%	14,7	24,2	35,5	20,9	4,7
		cumulative	14,7	38,9	74,4	95,3	100

*Source: Developed by the author using SPSS*

Regarding the share of students who rarely or never visit libraries, it is very high both in rural areas, where it exceeds one third (18.8% very rarely + 15.4% never), and in urban areas, where although it is more small, however, represents 25.6% (20.9% very rarely + 4.7% never).

The shares of those who consider that students attend libraries at least quarterly fall between 27.8%, for the income category 3001-4000 lei and 41.1%, for the income category 2000-3000 lei, the interval being 13.3 percentage points. This range includes the income category below 2000 lei (31.9%) and 4001-5000 lei (39.7%). Analyzed separately, the shares of those who frequent or consult libraries on their own initiative differ significantly. Thus, the biggest differences regarding those who frequent libraries very often are between the group of respondents with incomes below 2000 lei (6.4%) and the group of those with incomes between 2000 and 3000 lei (25.6%). A smaller but significant difference, regarding the share of students who frequent (quarterly) libraries, is also recorded between two other income groups: between the group of respondents with incomes below 2000 lei to which 25.5% correspond (the maximum percentage), and that of respondents with incomes between 2000 and 3000 lei of 15.6%, representing the minimum share.

As in the case of the analysis by residence environments, and in the case of respondents from income groups, the opinions are relatively similar, in the sense that school educational management, through the curricula, involves students in attending or consulting libraries in a proportion of approximately one third over those who do so on

their own initiative. Their weights are between 28.9%, for the 2000-3000 lei income group, and 44.4%, for the 3001-4000 lei income group. In conclusion, the share of students who go to the library on their own initiative and when they are asked to do so by the school is over 70% in the case of income groups above 2000 lei, while for the income group below 2000 lei it is of only 63.8%, which leads in the case of this income group to much higher shares of those who rarely or never visit libraries. Another way of personal development of the young generation and not only, is the participation in cultural and educational activities, as well as those aimed at getting to know the cultural and natural heritage of the community and the region they belong to.

Overall (Table 3), the share of those who participate on their own initiative in cultural and educational activities in rural areas is 53.8%, compared to 52.6% in urban areas. If we also take into account those who only participate in cultural and educational activities organized by the school, it results that at least 75.2% of students from rural areas and 86.3% of students from urban areas participate often or organized by the school in these activities. On the other hand, there is a big difference between urban and rural environments in terms of the share of those who participate very rarely or not at all in cultural and educational activities: 13.7% in the urban environment and almost double (24.8%) in the rural environment.

**Table 3. The influence of the environment of residence and the age of the interviewees regarding the participation of students in cultural and educational activities**

Characteristic		The frequency of student participation in cultural and educational activities					
		UM	Very often (on own initiative)	Often (on own initiative)	When organized by the school	Rarely	Never
Rural	35,7%	%	12	41,9	21,4	17,9	6,8
		cumulative	12	53,8	75,2	93,2	100
Urban	64,3%	%	18	34,6	33,6	9	4,7
		cumulative	18	52,6	86,3	95,3	100

*Source: Developed by the author using SPSS*

After testing the relevance of the respondents' age regarding students' participation in cultural and educational activities, it turned out that their age group differentiates the answers. Taking into account this, as well as the specifics of the question, only three of the five age groups were chosen, the 18-25 and over 55 age groups not being representative. The participation rate of students' own initiative in cultural and educational activities has significant values both in the case of those with very frequent and frequent participation in such activities. In the case of very frequent participation in these activities, the highest value, of 17.9%, was recorded by children of respondents in the 26-35 age group, followed by those of respondents in the 46-55 age group.

The shares of children who participate often and on their own initiative in cultural and educational activities are between 49.0%, for respondents in the 36-45 age group, and 29.9%, for respondents in the 26-35 age group. Analyzed together, the shares of children who participated on their own initiative in cultural and educational activities were 47.8% for respondents aged 26-35, 53.8% for respondents aged 46-55, the highest value, 60.2%,

being recorded by the children of respondents in the age group 36-45 years. In the case of students' participation only in the activities organized by the school, the highest share, of 33.3%, was recorded by the children of respondents aged 46-55, followed by the children of those aged 26-35 (32.8%). and at a difference of 9.8 percentage points, the children of respondents aged 36-45, the registered share being 23.5%. In general, taking into account the contribution of the educational system, as well as that of families, the participation of children and students in cultural and educational activities and knowledge of local and regional heritage, was at least 80.6% for the children of the people interviewed with aged between 26 and 35 years, at least 83.7% for those whose parents are between 36 and 45 years old, and at least 83.7% for the children of respondents in the 46-55 age group.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Starting from the need to know the opinions of the community regarding local sustainable development in order to establish the directions of action of the local and regional educational management, the survey carried out and presented in this chapter highlighted a number of positive and negative aspects regarding the personal development of the young generation, saving resources and educating children and students. In general, it resulted that attention is paid to the personal development of the young generation, a good part of the students getting used, on their own initiative, both to visit or consult libraries, in order to acquire knowledge, and to participate in cultural-educational activities for an integration as good as possible in the community. The results obtained through the conducted survey, however, highlight the existence of a significant weight, representing over a quarter of the total number of students, who not only are not used to consulting a library, they do not do it even when asked by school. A similar situation resulted in the case of participation in cultural-educational activities.

Although their shares are much lower than in the case of those with very rare or no visits to libraries, they are still high, especially in the case of children with parents between 25 and 45 years old, when they are more engaged in professional activities, as well as in the case of those from rural areas, to whom educational management should pay more attention. Saving water and electricity in their own households, as well as educating children in this regard, is a concern for the majority of those interviewed, with the greatest attention being paid to reducing electricity consumption. It turned out that respondents' views towards these imperatives of sustainable development differ according to age groups and education levels. By age group, those over 35 were the most convinced of the need to save these resources. The level of education is also an element that influences the opinions of the respondents, at least in terms of total agreement with saving resources. The higher the level of education, the more important is the awareness of the need for local and regional sustainable development.

It also turned out that in most households there are concerns both for saving resources and for environmental protection through waste collection, children and students being educated in this regard. However, educational management should aim and contribute more to increasing the level of education not only of students but also of all members of the community. From the analysis of opinions regarding the school's involvement, through its educational management in local sustainable development, it emerged that only a third of respondents are at least satisfied, schools organizing some activities with students regarding environmental protection, their frequency being quite low. According to the opinions of two thirds of those interviewed, the frequency of these

activities was at most twice a year. The attitude of the respondents towards the school's organization of practical activities with students, meetings with local leaders, as well as for the formulation of proposals regarding local sustainable development directions, was different both by residence environment and by groups of age. Urban residents showed a greater interest in involving students in the arrangement and maintenance of green spaces, as well as organizing trips to learn about local and regional heritage. Regarding the organization of meetings with local leaders and the students' formulation of local development proposals, these activities are supported and considered at least important by the young population, which highlights their interest in the sustainable development of their communities.

From the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction of the interviewed persons regarding the school's involvement in the child's education, it emerged that more than half of them are at least satisfied with the quality of the educational management carried out in this direction. It also emerged that the opinions of the respondents are relatively different according to age, with the most satisfied being those between the ages of 26 and 45. It also resulted that the majority of respondents believe that the school and the family have equal roles in the education of the student, with opinions regarding the role of the school increasing among those with higher levels of education compared to others. In conclusion, the relationship family - educational management - local community is essential in the sustainable development of local and regional communities, the great majority of respondents highlighting the fact that both in the family, in the school and at the community level, attention is paid to the personal development of the young generation by putting in practice the requirements of sustainable development and their adaptation to the local specifics, the role of the school, through educational management, being particularly important in clarifying the concepts and directions of action towards sustainable development, awareness of their need and educating and mobilizing the young generation in this regard.

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