

# FUNDAMENTAL LANDMARKS ON PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

*Elena Roxana VIȘAN \**

## **Abstract**

*The creation of a common administrative space that aims at the major interest of each individual, determines in the field of education the construction of a laborious process of public educational policies in order to increase the quality of education with expected effects on the labor market. This paper offers us perspectives on the concept of public policy in the education system, integrated by decision makers, influenced by external factors, and applied by specialists in educational practice in order to develop the education process, a key element of integration into the community acquis.*

**Key Words:** *public policies, national strategies, efficiency, strategy, policy evaluation.*

**JEL Classification:** [K38]

## **1. Introduction**

The modernization of the education process through its continuous reform, sends us to the educational initiatives - the educational policies promoted with the urgent need to ensure an efficient educational system in order to respond to global transformations. Seen as a strategic goal of all nations, education reflects throughout its policy the guidance of the society evolution seen as a whole, materialized through a set of principles, procedures and action processes established in the statute, administrative code and institutional regulations that determine the status and orientation of the population, reflecting as a final product the orientation of the evolution of the society as a whole, (C. Crețu, C Dușe et al., 2011, p. 5).

Following the evolution at the individual level, of social groups and finally at the level of human communities, “educational policy represents that set of theoretical and applied concerns, which, starting from the real data and resources of a certain human community, synthesizes the fundamental (defining) options. of its aiming at the efficient training / education of its members” (Crișan, 2008, p. 66).

The directions of public educational policies must focus on trust, access to information, transparency, accountability, performance, respect for budgetary constraints and continuity<sup>1</sup>, requiring a unitary cooperation of policy makers in achieving them. From this perspective, the analysis of public educational policies involves addressing how the distribution of power and decision-making affects the results of education, (Torsten Husen, 1985, p. 397), where political action in

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\* PhD candidate, National University for Political Sciences and Public Administration, Bucharest, member of the European Law Institute, Vienna-Bruxelles.

<sup>1</sup> [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/5\\_8\\_Politici%20educationale\\_concept%20si%20tendinte](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/5_8_Politici%20educationale_concept%20si%20tendinte).

education is a process in which questions are asked, problems are presented, explanations are offered and solutions are suggested (G. de Girolamo, 1993).

Taking into account these aspects, educational policies represent the exclusive prerogative of the central bodies: Parliament, Government, Ministries, (Crișan, 2003, p. 66), but let us not forget that local public administration authorities, local inspectorates, educational institutions, etc., develop educational policies, practically being a continuity of with local policies. In this sense, it is obvious the process of elaborating educational policies, when they are elaborated without a prior consultation or a debate with the interested actors, becoming a “cabinet policy” (Crișan, 2003, p. 66), without real chances of long-term success. Studying a wide range of phenomena related to the level of acquisition of skills, youth qualifications, social insertion on the labor market, social inclusion, educational administrative practices, educational policies are part of the system of public social policies that aim to the modification of the characteristics of the social life of the community, having as central element the well-being of the individual, of the family, of the collectivity and of the society in general” (Rîș noveanu, fără an). Therefore, the targets of educational policies take into account economic outcomes in equal measure, with social welfare, inclusion and social cohesion.

## 2. Key trends in public education policies

In an attempt to address the process of implementing policies in the national education system, their transmission is done from top to bottom - "top-down", enunciating European considerations such as changing perspectives in evaluating the activities carried out within the administration: the transition from a perspective oriented towards the perpetuation of the institutions, towards one oriented towards the results of their activity. (Marius Profiroiu, p. 110)

In this direction, there is a key element of effective education policy, namely strategic and targeted planning of approach and implementation efforts, which requires an appropriate institutional structure, based on important principles of participation and bottom-up partnership. Referring to the practices regarding public policies in the field of education, we configure new application trends, influenced by contextual factors, which ensure the value and effectiveness of the education process at national and regional level. For this, it is necessary to outline some fundamental pillars to identify a common strategy for institutionalizing public policies, in order to develop a culture of education policy viable to present and future challenges. From the research carried out in specialized publications, three fundamental pillars are identified that are the basis for shaping an effective educational policy: *the time pillar*, *the resources pillar*, *the impact pillar* (Gillian Golden, 2020, p. 17).

*The time pillar* acts on the sustainability standard in the implementation of the educational policy, outlining the time frame necessary to measure the results, their visibility as an expected effect of the application of the educational policy. In most cases, the complexity of the elaboration and application of public educational

policies differs from one administration to another, which means that: the direction of a reform can have multiple trajectories and stages, therefore, the impact can differ between time periods and between different levels of the education system (Pollitt, C. and G. Bouckaert, 2017).

*The resource pillar* is also responsible for the tools used in the application of educational policies that are closely related to the human capital that acts for their efficient application, but also for the financial ones that facilitate the action of others. Such a connection provides an intense motivation, knowledge and assimilation of skills among the research staff, which becomes a fine observer of the data and information collected, thus opening relevant assessments related to the reforms implemented. During the evaluation of educational policies, it was found that the variety and volume of instrumental, human and financial resources ensure a solid impact of the implementation of the applied reform. At the same time, practitioners of public educational policies draw our attention to the fact that limiting the capacity of instrumental, human and financial resources can lead to inefficient results, without substance outlining a weak relationship between policy makers and practitioners (Guskey T., 2000).

*The impact pillar* has a significant role in determining the cause-effect relationship, the emphasis being on the political-society relationship, administrators-practitioners of the education system, promoters-beneficiaries. Socio-political challenges have shown that the impact of a public policy can be negatively influenced by the partial implementation of the reform, unfair political competition or poor administration of the reform. A conclusive example of this can be either political actions related to a particular political position and / or underperforming reform, or the attitude of an incumbent government, which is less enthusiastic about recognizing the positive impact of evaluation for the policy introduced and undertaken by a another government administration, (Bamber, V. and S. Anderson, 2012). Such dynamics act as a barrier to institutionalizing reforms in education systems, encouraging a strong aversion to their failure, identifying a lack of motivation to encourage systemic practices, a major challenge to the innovative evolution of public sector policies<sup>2</sup>. There is therefore a trend of administrative uncertainty, where the impact pillar can be distorted, distilled into minimal, inefficient results with major risks of involution of the entire education system.

The outlined framework completes a well-defined process of developing, implementing and evaluating public educational policies supported by rhetorical considerations such as: "when it will be applied, why is it implemented, what are the evaluation standards, who will evaluate?", (Gillian Golden, p.19). The answer is provided by the three pillars mentioned in relation to the situational context, key factors of success in the administration of educational policies. Thus, the education administration must pay close attention to the questions of who, what, why, why, how, when, in order to ensure that it will be the most appropriate reform in the field

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<sup>2</sup> OECD (2015), *The Innovation Imperative in the Public Sector: Setting an Agenda for Action*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264236561-en>.

of education. A model of the efficiency of educational policies presented offers policy makers the ability to combine a perspective as appropriate as possible to systemic needs, the legal context and economic, social and cultural externalities (Fig.1).

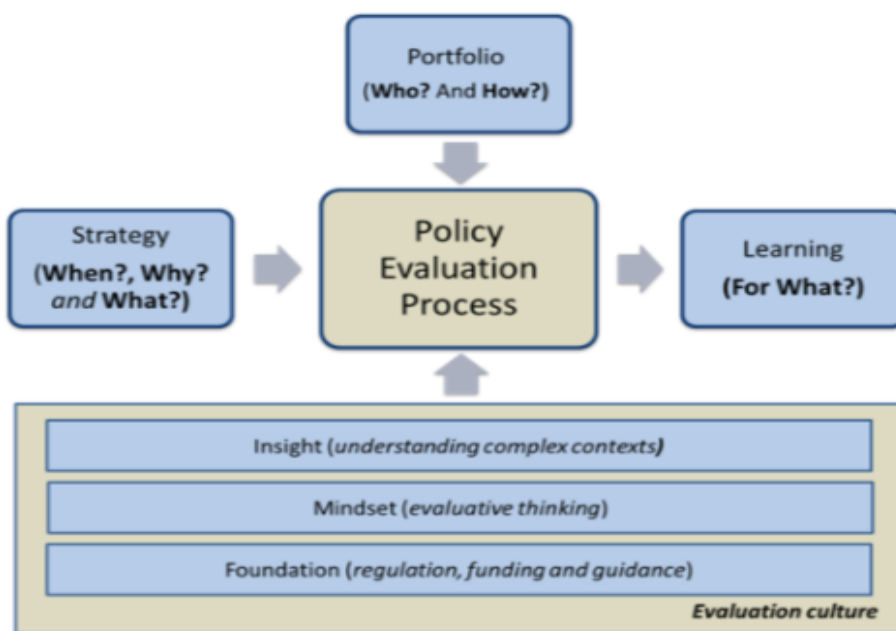


Fig. 1. The process of evaluating public policies<sup>3</sup>

The construction of a perfectible process can be materialized through a strategic framework that involves an institutional involvement of policy makers with an emphasis on methodological, legal and financial notes in order to incorporate a systematic mentality to increase the quality and efficiency of educational reforms. Thus, the portfolio of the versatile approach emerges, an element of performance in approaching public education policies, influenced by various contextual tactics in implementation and evaluation, with long-term effects on the entire education system.

### 3. National and European practices on public education policies

The approach to education as an indispensable element of economic and social evolution worldwide is strengthened by Decision no. 1298/2008 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008, emphasizing the need for the qualitative development of higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries. In this context, the first objectives of Romania's integration in the European space appeared, aiming at education and culture as "defining elements in the redesign of

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 20.

European architecture", (Anda Veronica Nedelcu-Ienei, p. 278). Such a framework determines the construction of a European dimension in the field of education, strengthened by the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997. The legal instrument mentioned addresses the issue of academic education, research and technology from the perspective of substantiating exchanges of academic and professional experience. over time have been made possible through European programs / projects consolidated and implemented at the level of each Member State.

Thus, through the process of Romania's integration into the European Union, it was possible to adopt these educational policies that propose the evolution of national human capital based on three basic elements of the education process: adapting the curriculum to social needs, inserting human resources on the national labor market and European, assessment of key and transversal competences among students.

Undoubtedly, in international practice there are two main approaches in public policy formulation: goal-oriented policies, which focus on high-level strategic issues (national, international) or policy areas, in general, and problem-oriented policies, which focus on issues specific issues to be addressed and related to a specific policy area<sup>4</sup>. Referring to the national space we can highlight policies focused on goals: Strategy on reducing early school leaving, Strategy on education and training in Romania, National Lifelong Learning Strategy, and for policies focused on issues recall: Strategy for tertiary education, Vocational/Technical Education Development Program 2015-2020, Inclusive Education Development Program 2011-2020, Rural Education Project (2004-2009), "Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups" Project, etc.

The sustainability and efficiency of educational policies is supported by the efforts of the ministerial administration regarding the management of public educational programs, which produce real changes, practical implementation and strategic direction in achieving the objectives on education at national and European level. The guidelines of the educational policies mentioned above are aimed both at the direct beneficiaries of education and at increasing the quality of the learning act using innovative methods and practices.

At the level of the direct beneficiaries of education, there are a series of actions regarding the reduction of the number of young people in a situation of school dropout and failure, as well as of those without the preparation of lower and upper secondary education. In this sense, working groups are created at local, county and national level that establish strategies to support young people at risk, difficulty in participating in the instructional-educational process. At the same time, a wide horizon opens in the organization of vocational and technical education, in relation to the requirements of the labor market. The creation of professional retraining opportunities for both young people and adults shows a positive perspective of adaptability to the needs of the European Community space.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imagfile/5\\_8\\_Politici%20educationale\\_concept%20si%20tendinte](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imagfile/5_8_Politici%20educationale_concept%20si%20tendinte).

Another form of implementation of public policies refers to the increase of quality in the education system, achievable of exchanges of experience between pre-university and university units of the same profile to be promoted later between different profiles based on the programs adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. Since 2008<sup>5</sup>, Erasmus+ program created for the introduction of „institutional contracts” with an emphasis on a theme of promoting cultural and professional diversity; Marie Curie actions represent a framework for research, technological development, determining European excellence in human resource development, world-wide dynamics.

The Comenius program is a way of exchanging initiative and experimental innovation regarding the management system; The "Grundtvig" program, part of the Socrates program, aims at adult education implemented on three guidelines: adult education through a formal and informal framework, second-chance schools set up for young people who have left the educational environment early without acquiring the qualification and the validation of the competitiveness ensured by the mobility of teachers, visits and exchanges of experience through joint seminars within the cooperation initiatives between institutions in the same field<sup>6</sup>; The Minerva program refers to a form of education found in the legislative recommendations of the European institutions and provided in the law of national education - „distance learning”, an innovative field focused on lifelong learning for complementary vocational training or improvement.

The DiscoverEU-2018 program offers the opportunity to get to know one's own continent, to be aware of the importance of cultural diversity and the preservation of national identity, belonging to the identity of the European continent and to promote the European Year of Cultural Heritage. This program targets young people in all Member States, guaranteeing equal opportunities through a candidacy supported by modern technology and a transparent selection process.

Such opportunities for cooperation through knowledge and exchanges of experience, highlight a high degree of social determinism, which makes the school an institution of reaction that re-signifies reality, (Anghelache, 2012, p. 87). In this cause, „members states of the European Union have common value (...) to guarantee fundamental rights” (Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, 2015, p. 17).

Also, public educational programs introduce into social reality the intercultural communication, the transmission of traditions by ensuring identity continuity, eliminating the distance between past and present, between young and adults, between equality and inequality, between old and new, between evolution and involution, between learning and training.

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<sup>5</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Romanian Parliament, Department for parliamentary information of the SCC, „Culture 2000”, European Union Program for the period 2000-2004, p. 13.

## Conclusion

Vector of composition and positive cultivation of quality education, training and learning are the integrative components, with a role in ensuring the right to education and implicitly of the systemic educational progress at European and national level. Also, the complexity of public educational policies formulates a collective commitment on the part of state decision-makers and opens opportunities for each beneficiary to a high quality educational, training and education process, which can qualify him in a desired field of activity.

In conclusion, public education policies consistently ensure the priorities of the education system, involving a considerable number of key actors with decision-making skills in the education process, providing solutions to the challenges of internal and external factors. A complex approach to the implementation of public educational policies is visible through effective governance of the education system using pragmatic thinking that can provide practical directions on how to identify and represent the entire system of educational values.

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