

About school network decentralization in Gorj county

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Abstract: This paper presents practical aspects of decentralization school network encountered last year in Pre School in Gorj. This took into account the reorganization of school network according to school population dynamics, especially in rural areas of labor mobility in both urban and rural areas, at the request of local communities in order to ensure equal opportunities to education for all children, increasing quality of education, upgrading school facilities and cost effectiveness of educational administration

In this highly complex process are covered actions and different areas of the local and school curricula, pupils' choices and their correlation with local needs of the present and future labor market. It stresses the complementary activities of this phenomenon, those related to school management, counseling and guidance, training, financial management, academic and extracurricular programs and projects, EU projects, partnerships and examples of good practice, inclusion and social cohesion at EU level.

Keywords: education, decentralization, quality, upgrading, efficiency.

Globalization of economy and markets, including labor market is a challenge to the social reality, a new reality with dynamic and structure changes that school must take into account increasingly for future projects and programs in education and training. All these aspects are added to the education globalization and lifelong learning without

which obtaining and maintaining a place in the labor market becomes problematic.

Our current school „equips’ young people with information, knowledge and those rather theoretical, abstract, speculative, rather than enriching them with skills, which means much more. This essential requirement comes from a new type of society and economy, knowledge and technological development, the explosion of information and therefore the mechanisms for selecting and processing them.

Decentralization, process already initiated in Gorj county concerns four major areas: school network, human resources, education management and financing. The next steps in implementing this project is expected schools to be run by a manager appointed by the mayor to the local council proposal, which is not required to be a teacher. Management Board will no longer deal with teaching. Staff Committee will be responsible for this. The County Board of Education will deal strictly with school curriculum, standards of quality for the education process, control and monitoring. Since 2010, financing per student has passed, which resulted in restructuring and resizing of the county school system.

That is why decentralization is perhaps the last chance to restore performance in education, not only in terms of spending, but also its orientation to the real needs of market and society. With one condition: students, parents, teachers and mayor sincerely wish to make both teaching and education and not just be a personal affair of each.

Facing the reality, PhD. Nicolae Robu’s words, Chancellor at University Politehnica in Timisoara, express a hard fact to be changed as soon as possible. Otherwise, performance, progress and civilization remain far from us, "Romanian education system tries to develop mathematicians, literary critics, biologists and other scientists from people who are not born for it, ignoring what could grow to bear fruit, but not cultivated, there is no hard market: honor, honesty, fairness, justice, truth, tolerance, solidarity, respect for nature, respect for property, creativity, initiative, knowledge useful in the everyday life. Education must be redefined as that one oriented to values, skills and interest in and to society". In order not to get loss of moral, aesthetic and social values presented above by Professor Robu, we present below the strategic objectives of school education development in Gorj with parallel concerns of the management team of the County Board of

Education to achieve decentralization:

a) adapting the curriculum requirements of a company changing by:

- implementation of the new regulatory and curriculum in schools;
- linking curriculum with local needs, with regional development areas in the county, with the Regional Action Plan For Education (PRAISE), with the Local Action Plan For Education (LEAP), with the county development strategy;
- achieving admission to high school based on students potential;
- profiles adapt to local needs of development;
- approaching the school curriculum in terms of student and community, encouraging the individual learning and training skills.

b) human, material and financial resources management by:

- training and developing managers, staff and auxiliary teaching;
- management through methodological advice, local and regional area seminars;
- the appointment of good practice through scientific sessions in managerial;
- promoting participatory management;
- the existence of a working group to monitorize managerial control system;
- implementation of risk management system;
- developing psycho-pedagogical skills and expertise of staff and managers;
- organizing training courses at university level;
- providing financial and material resources;
- providing resources for compulsory education;
- developing school and virtual libraries;
- developing virtual laboratories.

c) a more intensive development of school - community relation by:

- maintaining and enhancing appropriate institutional relationships between educational institutions and local government, districts and regions;
- strengthening relations with their social and economic medium;

- promoting and developing the projects initiated by the European Commission (Comenius, Arion, Leonardo Grundtving);
- promoting intercultural, multicultural and equal opportunities;
- the development of school educational programs and projects;
- Integrated school campuses for basic, complementary and continuous education;
- d) training by:
 - offer training plan based on forecasts of development;
 - provision of training based on training standards and professional skills;
 - advice and career guidance;
 - training program linking local and regional development;
 - organizing learning in real working conditions through practical training internships in businesses;
 - monitoring and analysis of the relevance of graduate employment for professional analysis and integration of socio-professional insertion.

Regarding the performing teaching staff, schools have not got yet the necessary autonomy in Gorj, the main obstacle being the absence of legislative regulations. The current legislation partially supports this staff acquisition only for the children clubs and vocational schools.

Educational management is currently perhaps the wider framework of autonomy, supporting the field of school education and extra-curricular activities, projects and extra-curricular programs, non-formal educational activities of the children clubs, teacher/pupil consultancy organized by teachers. Most of Gorj county schools, whether they are primary, secondary or high school, have included in their management programs and educational activities, in their extra-curricular activity calendar, topics, action programs and educational needs arising from the analysis carried out with educational partners: Student Councils, Representative Council Of Parents, community and civil society. We all were pleasantly surprised to find that at the School of Pestisani town, regarding the curricular area of “Counseling and Guidance”, the secondary level students study topics of optional courses such as “Education for a healthy lifestyle”, topic which seeks to be implemented through the National Counseling Program called “Education for our Health In Romanian School”. Innovations and enterprising are much more open and flexible in extra-curricular activities from the kindergarten, where the pre-scholars and their parents fully benefit from educational

projects implemented teachers by attracting partners, foundations, associations, NGOs or civil society representatives.

Fragile elements of decentralization can be observed in the offer of optional subjects in the school curriculum at primary and secondary education, and also in the curriculum development and local technology in secondary schools, schools of arts and crafts. For example, I once came across a more than commendable situation at School "Ion Lotreanu"-Alimpesti Village. Here, students at the primary school, level 4th, have chosen as an optional course the "Nature-my friend", where they learnt to raise fruit trees and vegetables proper to the native climate and soil of the village. Here they have also used the greenhouse adapted in the school yard by a European program of rural development and learnt interesting things about ecological education and healthy food. The follow-up of teaching these topics to the small children is that, after a year, in many households of Alimpesti, solar crops emerged, although the settlement is located in a pre-mountainous area, the Oltet Valley.

A very decided step towards decentralization was made in Gorj by restructuring the school network. A total of 41 schools and kindergartens will cease operation from the school year 2010/2011. The main cause that led to the absorption of small institutions by more central ones was the decreasing number of students. Here are some examples: nursery with less than 10 children were merged with those where the number is higher; primary schools with less than 10 pupils were merged with the general schools; Secondary School Ciocadia was taken over by Secondary School Balcesti, because in Ciocadia, the number of pupils from the secondary level reached only 23, which contradicts the principle of funding "per capita" applicable from January 1, 2010; Secondary School No.7 from Targu-Jiu was taken over by Secondary School "Ecaterina Teodoroiu" Targu-Jiu because the number of students here is less than that provided by law; the Forestry College from Targu-Jiu ceased to exist and students were taken over by Motor Transport School "Traian Vuia" Targu-Jiu due to a decreasing number of students on the ground of an unattractive educational offer at this college.

This image emerges as a part of a new vision for Gorj schools, from the perspective of sustainable development and globalization of education, to create preconditions in order to ensure quality in education and efficient use of resources creating the premises carrying out the decentralization process, which requires involvement and accountability on the one hand, and strategic thinking and control, on the other hand. With passage of this year's

school funding per student, actions enterprised by CBE Gorj regarding this purpose are more than appropriate.

Impact aspects of restructuring the school network in Gorj:

- CBE Gorj action is part of a national strategy for restructuring and decentralization of education in schools and it is designed to create a geographical area of an organized school network, managed and financed under the rigors of European quality assurance of the educational process, free and full access for children and youth to education, the adequacy of educational documents of offer to the interests and needs of direct and indirect beneficiaries.

- Gorj school network restructuring must not cause imbalances and distortions in organization, management and support from national educational system; this process will ensure a well-balanced and clear division between agencies and representative institutions of local communities and county on the one hand, and the national –MEDCTS, MIA and PFM on the other hand.

- Resistance to change on the part of teachers, school communities, local communities, government.

- To perpetuate a conservative and harmful spirit to major changes in the field of social reality and the mentality that comes from past and traditions, factors that hamper development of the county education on the ground of a new reality in terms of social and economic size;

- Creating conditions for equal access to education and equality of opportunity for all preschool and school children;

- Ensure the school environment conducive to the assertion of competition in education;

- Changing attitude towards school and ourselves for much of the teaching staff, redefining their necessary space and chances for professional, cultural and social worth;

- School opening to a new quality in education, increased competitive spirit among students and groups, between educational organizations, strengthening the motivation for learning and improving school performance;

- Cost –effective maintenance and upgrading of educational facilities, providing the necessary educational environment in order to achieve an rarefied and credible educational act;

- Creating conditions for attracting new partners to support the learning process, community and family empowerment to the importance of life education and social progress, increased confidence and involvement of social partners in the mission of school;

- Increasing collaboration and communication of schools staff with the students and the entire community, creating harmony between school objectives and students' needs, broadening the horizon of expectations and aims and enhancing autonomy on self-education market;

- The need for a number of minibuses to transport pupils from home to school and vice-versa;

- Increase local accountability to the management of material bases of school, their responsible and thoughtful administration, elimination of all sorts of waste and abuse in the cars used exclusively for transporting school children (e.g.: at Slivilesti, improperly used fuel to supply minibuses caused damage to their engines, and thus students were left without means of transport);

- From September 1, 2010, students enrolling in schools that ceased to exist will be transferred to schools that have taken over their old schools and full teachers hold transfer by restricting activity to the school that has legal personality.

These were a few issues from the perspective of decentralization, achieved in Gorj on a strategy adapted to the realities of place, so as schools will continue to operate in European settings! In addition, if we do not have an efficient school in every community, children will leave to the city. Here, in our county Gorj, we bowed with great patience to the implementation of decentralization.

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