

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

**Marius Costel EȘI**

*Stefan cel Mare University, Suceava*

mariusesi@gmail.com

### ***Abstract***

In this paper we will follow a series of ways to optimize the strategies characteristic of the human resources management in the school organization. We are also interested to analyze to what extent the quality assessment can materialize in school organizations through information management and control. The starting point in the approach that we have initiated in this regard is given by the quality-human resource relationship, a relationship that we will try to analyze from a pragmatic viewpoint.

Thus, we will try to discuss the relationship between the management by objectives and the total quality management by analyzing to what extent the second can successfully replace the first. Starting from the characteristics of the group, we will try to see to what extent the promotion of quality information correlated with diversity can contribute to the performance of the human resources management. Also, what we want to analyze and emphasize is the fact that the performance at the level of school organization depends a lot on the way in which a conflict is managed and removed.

***Keywords:*** *organizational quality, valorization, educational valorization, HR management, school organization;*

### ***1. Valorization and capitalization within the school***

One of these aims is to value and capitalize both on the pupil and the teacher, as both actors are seen as a human resource. Also, when we look at the school as an organization, our analysis turns to the structure and image of this specific form of organization, known in the specialized literature as “organizational culture”. Furthermore, taking into account such an assumption presupposes a focus of the methods of analysis starting from the idea of

“organizational development” or “change management” (where the emphasis is entirely on the human resource).

That is why, when we talk about the quality-human resource relationship, we must refer to the idea of pragmatism. In other words, the quality without unnecessary consumption of resources can be promoted through specific approaches in education (e.g. quality control management and guidance).

Such control is carried out at the school level (thematic inspections) or at the class level (class inspection). The performance must result in agreement with certain quality standards (Cole, 2004). However, regardless of how the quality control is managed, we believe that the prevention and the preventive measures can contribute to such an approach.

How do we ensure quality at the school organization level? On the one hand, trust and empathy are two vectors that trace and coordinate such a process. On the other hand, quality is a standardization measure, a state of fact that determines or, at least, should determine the emergence and support of quality programs at the school level.

Thus, we can talk about quality assurance in accordance with a series of principles and values formulated in accordance with the school system, a system that, in our opinion, must be “connected”, “recalibrated” to the idea of the organizational culture specificity. The emergence and promotion of the quality management at the level of the school organization is more than welcome in this regard.

External evaluations specific to the educational quality are carried out by specially accredited institutions in this regard. For example, ARACIP - the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in the Pre-University Education provides education, authorizes and periodically evaluates pre-university education units. Its activities are periodically reflected by the organizational assessment that provides education. Also, this institution “develops the reference standards and the main performance indicators, the internal quality assessment methodology, best practice guides, as well as a series of quality improvement recommendations”.

Therefore, we can state that one of the fundamental attributions of ARACIP is to watch over the quality of education.

What is the “quality of education”? As we try to provide an answer in this respect, we can specify that by this term, respectively this phrase, we understand the value granted by society and ensured through the system in relation to a series of principles, criteria and performance standards”. Such an approach at the school level is handled by the Commission

for Evaluation and Quality Assurance – CEAC. Such a committee oversees the way in which specific procedures for organizational (self) assessment activities are carried out and applied. Thus, based on the evaluation of an Internal Self-Assessment Report, a series of aspects related to the promotion and improvement of quality in education are brought to the attention of the beneficiaries.

If we were to summarize, we can say that the evaluation of the organization is carried out, according to ROFUIP, through:

- Institutional evaluation inspections of the organization carried out by the school inspectorates or by the Ministry of Education (everything related to the educational policy, the mission and the objectives proposed at the organization level is taken into account);
- The external and internal evaluation process (according to the legislation in force) of the organization.

### ***1.1. The group characteristics***

The approach to this this sub-theme related to quality improvement involves taking into account the notion of “group”. What we want to emphasize is that the organizational performance is possible through and with the help of the group.

The characteristics of the group are:

- *The identity* – the recognition by other group members and their belonging thereof.
- *The unity* – those who are not welcome receive resistance from the group members.
- *The control* – the group members decide who enters or leaves the group.
- *The hierarchy* – the establishment of a leader/ruler is acknowledged or recognized by the members, forming even a group hierarchy.
- *The goal* – is always clear, implied or explicit, and the group members aim to achieve it.
- *The conformism* – the group members accept certain group-specific attitudes and norms.

The need for organization in groups and subgroups at the level of the school organization becomes legitimate especially when their members work together to achieve the organization's mission and objectives. In other words, a school manager/principal must be aware of such a state of affairs. Moreover, if their norms and values coincide with those of the organization, then the managerial approach is successful.

*Why is there a need for such groups at the organization level when the organization itself is a group?* The answer is simple in the sense that, as it is well known, within the organizational level, each member needs socialization, communication and, last but not least, the support of the peers. (Abric, 2002). Very often, it is more difficult for newcomers to the organization to identify with its norms and values. That's why, at first, they buy into a group where they find a common ground.

This prompts some recognition and later investment in the self-image. (Iosifescu, 2001). Belonging to a group determines and encourages for that person teamwork, knowledge and recognition of certain merits and the goal of the organization can be more easily achieved. At the same time, employees almost always need a reliable colleague, with whom they can consult and discuss.

Such a situation can later lead to an increase in the group's performance, a situation which can increase in motivation over time. In addition, belonging to a certain group generates trust and protection, while facilitating an adequate understanding of specific learning situations. (Radu, 2007). In this sense, some authors state that “the individual efficiency or work performance is determined by work behavior and it is influenced by critical contingencies related to the task (if the workplace is supplied with the necessary raw materials, if equipment malfunctions, interruptions incidentals of the technological process occur, etc.”. Therefore, it becomes more than obvious the need to assume and observe the norms of the particular group.

### ***1.2 Group regulations***

*What are the group regulations?* The group regulations stand for those shared perceptions of how certain activities within it should be conducted. Their function is to anticipate interpersonal relationships and activities to be carried out by the group members. Such norms are accepted by all the group members if they are clearly established. The regulations provide stability and durability to the group. If a person buys into a group, then it is said about him or her that in order to be accepted more easily, then he or she will try to learn the regulations faster and adhere to them as quickly as possible. His or her behavior is and must be desirable in accordance with the wishes of the group.

However, we must keep in mind that some people believe that the norms of the group they belong to are correct. In this respect, we draw attention to the fact that such a statement is not always correct and, therefore, a lot of finesse and diplomacy are needed to analyze an

unpleasant situation. We cite as an example the discussions during the teachers' council when teachers have the right to vote to lower a performance grade or expel a pupil for an act that contravenes the ROI. The cases of this kind have confirmed many times the need to analyze facts of this sort with utmost responsibility.

We want to emphasize the fact that the performance at the level of the school organization depends a lot on the way in which a conflict is managed and eliminated (Shaw, 1981). In other words, the problem brought into discussion is more about a dimension of conflict management. Moreover, according to some authors, the conflict comes from the relationship between the dimensions of cooperation and competition. (Dahrendorf, 1996), Also, the specialized literature reveals the distinction between the traditional perspective and the modern perspective of this conflict.

The issue of the emergence of the group at the organization level depends on the method of their identification and ranking. (Zlate, 2004) Thus, we can talk about the homogeneous or heterogeneous group that makes up the organizational culture (Neculau, 1997) or the group identified at department level (the group of teachers), or the group of people who are members of a certain department (for example the accounting department or the secretariat department). Also, the criteria for classifying groups are numerous and they depend on the diversification and purpose.

*The formal groups* include any employee within the organization, as well as its manager/director, who has a decisive role within the school organization. Its duties are very clearly specified in the specific methodology, but also in the ROFUIP. We can list the following:

- They manage the educational unit;
- They apply the legislation in force;
- They coordinate the qualitative process;
- They build the staffing project with the human resource needed.

The formal groups can be defined taking into account the work tasks, the employee status, the seniority and the work experience.

*The informal groups* can occur without the intervention of the manager/director. They are established, created by the employees themselves (for example, the group of smokers, the group of those who are passionate about a certain subject, the group of chess players, and so forth). Such groups are defined by norms, rules and common interests. Many times, such

groups set the standards of the school organization through their attitudes, values and norms of behavior.

## **2. The quality assessment in school organizations through information management and control**

The term “quality” itself relates to the traits or characteristics which show that certain criteria are met and certain needs are also met. At the educational level, on the one hand, quality can be defined as a set of characteristics that allow it to satisfy and fulfill certain needs in accordance with the fulfillment of its mission and objectives. On the other hand, the quality of the school organization must be differentiated from the quality of the school life.

We note that through a process of continuous monitoring of the results obtained by carrying out the activities, as well as through an entire process of planning thereof, a necessary and sufficient premise can be built to support the idea of quality in education. Basically, the results of the learning process reflect the quality of the instructional-educational approach in the school.

Assessing the quality of the educational act implies taking into account a number of characteristics such as:

- *The power of the organization* as such: everything that represents the structure of the organization from a material, financial, managerial and administrative view point.
- *The usefulness of the organization socially*: it aims at obtaining and managing resources with the intent of fulfilling the organizational mission and the objectives which are predetermined and assumed at managerial level.
- *Taking into account the idea of quality management*: it involves the development of specific procedures and strategies regarding the accessibility of some material and informational resources.

The problem that can be brought up now, in this context, is that according to which at the level of the school organization we can talk about a specific management of applicability. In other words, does total quality management, which replaces the management by objectives, really achieve efficiency and performance? Of course, the answer to such a question can be expressed in relation to what we call “organizational culture”. And the “total” quality management is, in our opinion, a fundamental component of it. However, it remains

to be seen if the management by objectives can still find its usefulness and legitimacy in the contemporary society within a school organization.

### **2.1. The performance of the educational organization**

We note that the performance of the school organization and its members is one of the conditions for obtaining its quality. On the one hand, the organizational climate (characteristics of the work environment) reveals some aspects that can be visible on the surface (objectives, mission, vision, material and financial resources, work standards, skills and human resource capability), and others that remain somewhat hidden (the attitudes and behavior of the human resource, certain values - and here we touch on the question of desirable or undesirable values). On the other hand, the organizational environment is highly dependent on the type of management at the top of the school organization (continuous concern for quality and communication with employees).

Extrapolating such a total quality management in the Romanian educational environment, we can note the fact that the very idea of quality is legitimized educationally by the beneficiary, who is the pupil. In other words, the quality of education is also the result of effort and teamwork, through cooperation. It is a total commitment to achieve total quality.

The provision of quality education also implies the assumption of a specific offer in terms of education. That is why the idea of communication becomes important at the level of quality management. Such an approach involves the need to know and facilitate messages and information sent through different channels and in different forms. In other words, quality must relate to information, and information must meet the attributes of quality.

To have access to qualitative information:

- *It must be effective* – the desired effect is immediate and beneficial.
- *It must be appropriate* – to fit the context to which it refers.
- *It must be clear, accurate and logical* – the level of understanding should be suitable for the beneficiary.

### **2.2. Promoting the quality education**

Promoting a quality education means promoting an education oriented towards results, transposed and quantified in terms of (“created” or “added”) value, but also towards institutional or personalized autonomy. When we talk about the quality of education, we must relate to the development and implementation of educational programs and partnerships at the

local/regional, national and international level. The optimization and the continuous improvement of education therefore requires the relating of the beneficiaries, of the socio-educational actors to a series of internal (adaptation to the curriculum) or external (inclusion, non-discrimination) indicators.

The quality information also implies an efficient management of the human resource within the school organization. Thus, quick and correct answers can be found to new problems that may arise during the educational activity. Starting from the fact that the changes are quite numerous and sometimes with a high degree of complexity; thus it becomes more than obvious that there is a need for efficient management of the information that circulates and is worked with also at the school level.

One of the effective methods of information management is the use of multimedia channels (internet, mobile phone, social networks, forums and discussion groups, such as WhatsApp). Such a method proves more than useful in the field of educational marketing (school fairs, presentation of the organization and its own fields and activities, and so on). It is also worth mentioning that through the Internet connections and links with other national and international organizations can be made, thus opening the way to the development and facilitation of joint work programs and projects (e.g. Erasmus).

### **Conclusions**

Assessing the quality of the educational act means examining according to certain criteria what it is achieved in relation to the quality standards. The actions carried out, developed and assessed arise and materialize through the trust of the beneficiaries. That is why it is necessary to continuously improve what it is obtained as a result of the instructional-educational process.

The search for the true identity of a school organization from the perspective of the human resources management dimension also comes from change and also from its acceptance at the level of the organizational culture as such. In other words, the school as an organization must accept the new vision of educational policy. Also, the school is a composing element of the community and it should be a priority for it. The term “organization” itself comes from the Greek “organon” which means “tool”. Therefore, the school is a tool through which a goal is achieved.

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