THE CONFIGURATION OF THE QUALITY STRUCTURE IN THE PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION UNITS

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ABSTRACT

Due to its stiff character and less pliant, today's system of assessment the quality in schools needs to be changed from a structural point of view, setting up a new structure, with the role of ensuring, monitoring and assessing the quality. The new model must reflect the reality in the school communities and to prove its applicability and usefulness. The managers need a personal quality system which they would coordinate in order to direct the school organizations to performance.

INTRODUCTION

The research presents a new organizational structure with an impact on the administrative activity of the school, and focusing on assuring the quality to all the fields and finally to the educational services, which are provided by the school. The paper has four sections: Introduction, Material and Methods, Results and Discussions and Conclusions. The research has the aim to proving that given the specific circumstances which impact the activities and the life of the school, solutions can be found tolining up to relevant actions from the competition environment, which the school organizations reside in and to adapt the provided services to the beneficiaries' needs and expectations, with respect to the changing specific conditions of the school.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The methods and the investigation techniques used to achieve the objectives are the documentary analysis, the secondary analysis of the data of the quality type, the survey based on questionnaires of the school managers, the survey based on the interview of the teachers with attributions in the field of quality assurance in schools.

As a main objective we focus on the analysis of the evolution trends of the quality politics and the quality management systems of the schools and as a specific objective we choose to elaborate a new organzational structure of the school with specific departements , personnel, attributions and activities.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSIONS

For the substation and development of the science about quality, we record significant contributions made by Joseph Moses Juran, William Edwards Deming, Philip Crosby, Kaoru Ishikawa.

A first representative who has made important contributions to the development quality science is W. E. Deming. The overall ideas and concepts of Deming promoted the statistical

control system of the quality, by applying to all managerial lines even today, stating that "96% of variations in quality have common causes, and only 4% have special causes" (Ilieş L., 2003, p.30), which indicates the need for statistical use in controlling the variation of the quality .

Another exponent who has made an important contribution to the quality is J. M. Juran, because he defines quality in terms of *trilogy of quality*, identifying three categories of processes: **the quality planning, the quality control and the quality improvement**. The third author with major contributions in influencing the quality movement is **Ph. Crosby**, who starts from the idea that the low quality affects the organization with 20% of total revenues. The concept of "zero defects" is the idea and approach that influenced decisively the idea of increasing the quality, this concept is a contract or commitment for achieving the elimination of failure and achieving the success. Known for the introducing the concept of Total Quality Control – TQC, **Armand V. Feigenbaum** is seen by most experts as a promoter of total quality management movement. Total quality control is considered as a complex system which combines the efforts of all departments of the organization in order to achieve and improve the quality and to satisfy the clients. Another known author who developed the ideas of Deming, Juran and Feigenbaum, **Ishikawa K**. championed for the involvement of all employees in maintaining a high level of the quality, proposing the implementation of the participatory management.

As a general concept, *thequality* has its meaning, its sense of social, philosophical, economic and technical, nature, and it is used in various fields. In the relevant literature it is considered that four steps are necessary in order to integrate *the quality management* in a system, where each step is the holder of several components. First steps are: the *identification of the system and the current information needs of each department; the identification of the areas of duplication and overlap; the management checks in each department; the basic system analysis.*

As the assessment of the quality is established as one of the components of the control function, we considered necessary to present the main functions of quality management.
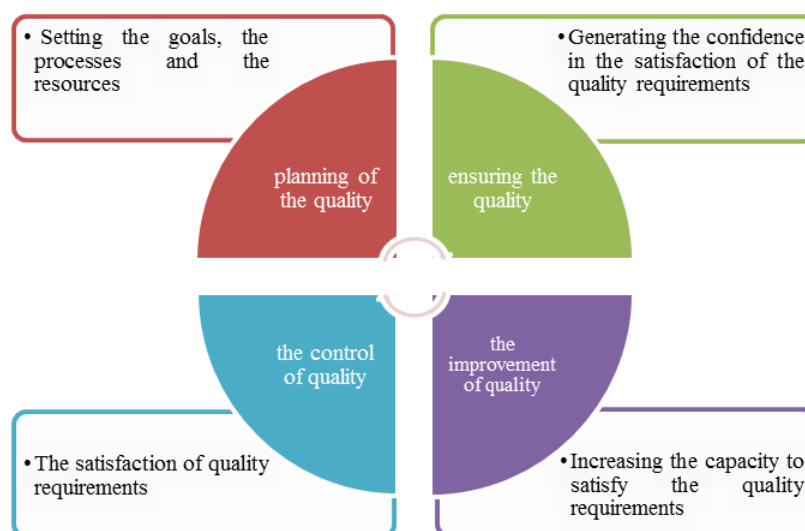

Figure 1. The quality management functions

The quality management functions are: the strategic and the operational planning of the quality, which envisages the setting out of the quality key objectives, but also the resources to achieve them; the quality assurance by using a specific methodology; the quality control, which regard the assessment, the inspection, the monitoring, the verification and the analysis (it is considered as an important function of the quality management, referring in principle to

all activities with a supervisory role of the evolution of the main processes and the evaluation results in the quality system).

Explicitly encountered and relatively similar, the principles of quality management retrieved from the relevant literature are: the quality assurance approaches focusing on the customer/beneficiary; practicing responsibly the leadership; ensuring the active involvement of the members; receptivity to the change and the concern for the organizational development; the realization of a decisional process based on concrete issues on a pragmatic approach; balancing the relationships in terms of gain, of giving and receiving; the quality management is approached as a system.

The reforming processes which reshape the life of school organization transform it into an open system with the *characteristics of a learning organization*. This raises legitimate school effort to identify and implement organizational models that allow the efficient management oriented towards performance. The quality of a school organization can be analyzed from multiple perspectives and in relation to different elements: the quality of processes, the quality of the educational services and the quality of the organization.

As functions, mainly, the quality management has the same functions as the general management. To implement a quality system is a responsibility of the manager involved and interested in the organization leaded by him. Each department must be involved with an advisory or executive role in the quality assurance process. When recording the minimal efforts to promote the quality culture, we find that there is a concern for developing and implementing a quality management system.

In accordance with ISO 8402, the quality management is seen as "all activities involving general management functions that determine the quality policy, objectives and responsibilities implemented by tools as: the planning, the control, the assurance and the improvement of the quality within the quality system".

At the national level, the national system of the implementation and the management of the quality in education includes: the institutional structures, the legal documents, the instruments and the documents with a regulatory nature, the management and the information assessment tools and different specific activities to assure the quality.
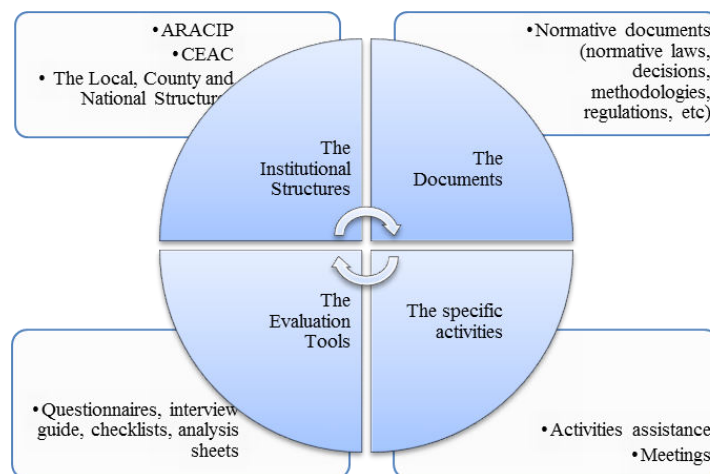
Figure 2. The Elements of the National Management and the
Quality Assurance System Education

The quality assurance is made in each school as a legal entity, at the internal level by the establishment of CEAC (The Committee for the Quality Evaluation and Assurance). It aims to achieve the specific internal quality assessment, by applying the specific tools and procedures, by completing the annual reports together with the proposals to improve the quality of work in schools.

The internal evaluation is in CEAC powers, as this committee is established by the law. The main function of CEAC is to coordinate the crossing of the quality cycle at the school level. Externally, ARACIP (The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education) is the institutional structure which carries out the external evaluation of schools at the secondary education level, in order to assess the activities and its results. However, ARACIP suggests the Ministry of Education measures to improve the quality of the education.

The quality assurance system can meet its objectives if it has the tools and the necessary legislative and normative documents. I found, by analyzing other systems (from Finland, France, Austria and Italy), that the European experiences in the field of the quality are different in many ways, even if there is a common legislative framework, which is the basis for the national assurance and quality monitoring systems.

We believe that directory of differences contains: the instruments used (enforced by the law, or personalized at the school level); the decentralized or centralized education system nature, the degree of the local community involvement in the school life, the manner of the evaluation (the internal evaluation, the external evaluation, the peer-reviewed), the degree of promoting the quality culture, of internalizing the quality; the plan of focusing the quality on the results, the plan of focusing the quality evaluative models on the beneficiaries.

As we mentioned, we analyzed from the multiple perspectives the school as an organizational model adapted to the new paradigms: the school as an organization, the school as a knowledge organization, the school as an organization open to change, the community school.

The analysis and the interpretation of data obtained through the questionnaires applied to the managers of high schools and post-secondary schools (public and private) and by applying the interview to the teachers who are part of CEAC and other committees involved in the quality assurance, have achieved two important objectives with a high quality utility in the school organization:

1. **The guide for the development and the implementation of the quality system in the Secondary Education schools**.
2. A new configuration model of the quality responsible structures: **Departmental Structure of the Quality Assurance in the Pre-university Education Units (SDAC)**.
3. Thus, we developed **The Model of Departmental Structure of the Quality Assurance and Evaluation – SDAC**, structured on five distinct divisions, as a useful and effective structure in securing, monitoring and implementing the quality in Secondary Education school units.

SDAC Model includes: The Department of the Quality Assurance in Management, The Department of the Quality Assurance in the Paideutics Endeavour, The Department of the Quality Assurance in the External Relationships, The Department of Quality Assurance in the Pedagogical Research, The Department of Quality Assurance in Counseling, The Department of Quality Assurance in the Administration.

*Figure 3.*Departmental Structure of the Quality Assurance in the Pre-university Education Units

We described each department from the perspective of the following: the structure, the member tasks, the activity types and the reporting.
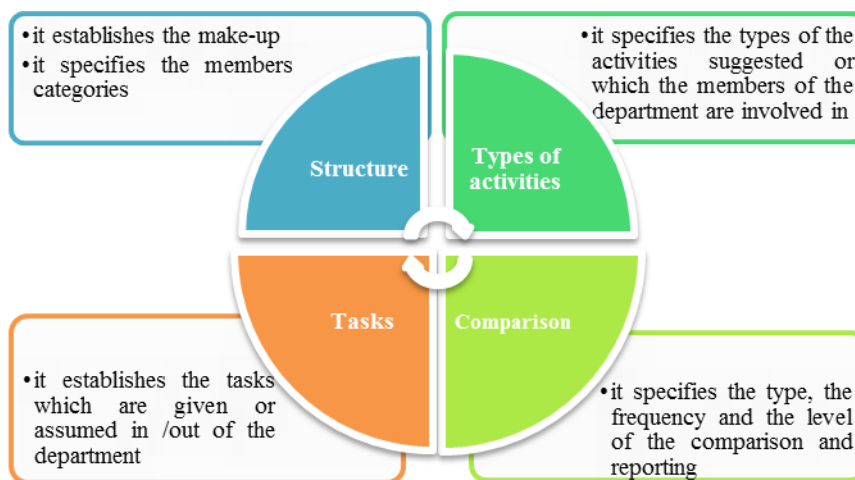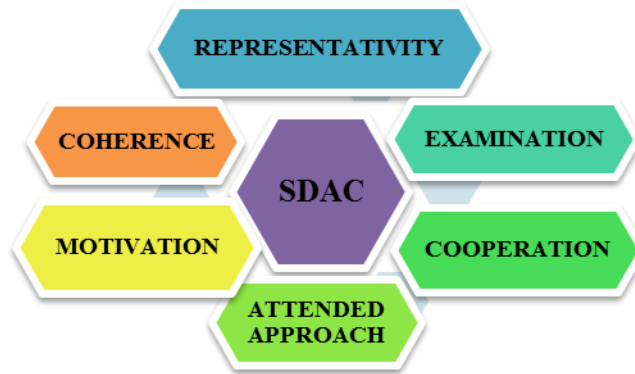

Figure 4. The data categories for describing a quality department

Our suggestion to develop and implement a quality assurance structure in the educational institutions is grounded on the following principles:

Figure 5. The principles of the Departmental Structure of the Quality Assurance in the Pre-university Education Units (SDAC)

The departmental quality assurance system, in the way we are suggesting it, is identified by the following: it offers the manager the opportunity to establish and introduce a personal system of quality; it ensures a high level of representativeness of the whole school staff, together with the evaluation of each member and the improvement of the profession; it offers opportunities to each member of the organization to involve in different departments in special, and in the life of the school structure in general, with a social recognition of each performance; it promotes the cooperation at different levels within the school organization and with different staff categories, with specific aims and activities of the quality area; the tasks are assumed or assigned and are done during the suggested or offered activities; it allows the achievement of the assurance process, the observation and implementation of the quality in a permissive, natural, pliant and creative environment. The suggested model maintains a high motivational level of the educational unit's members; it supports punctual and pertinent information on the quality policies, nationwide and from an organizational level; it allows an active involving of the staff in the decisional processes or acts; it ensures the involvement of the school organization's members in the development of some quality standards specific to their unit; the manager and the department's leaders promotes and internalizes a culture of quality; it stimulates the members' cooperation, strengthening the educational community by organizing some joint departments (representing the different types of personnel); the departmental structure provides the coherence of the developing values, estimating the suggestions, and the perspectives of the different staff categories; it implies the collective and experiential learning; it ensures the molding of a professional network to guarantee the quality.

We have to specify that this model of configuring the structures of the quality assurance in the educational institutions is working by relating and respecting the legal and methodical demanding which were implemented nationwide, the quality standards and the institutions which compose the national system of the quality management.

The department model asserts a new configuration of the organizationaland administrative plan and of the lining up to relevant actions from the competition environment which the school organizations reside in.

The investigated subjects support the necessity of the implementation of some new and changed elements, that could allow the design of a model based on ways of thinking and acting of some new paradigms: the participating approach (involving all staff on representativeness and expertise criterion), the system decentralization (the decisions are taken during a consultation process and the strategies and the quality system are designed by knowing the school's community every-day life).

After processing the data, statistically it results that there is a poor relation between the variables the efficiency of the quality system and the setting up of a new quality assurance structure.

We established that 10% of the managers, who consider the adaptation to the realities of the school community as an efficient element of the quality system, support the idea of assembling of new structures in the quality field, in the educational institutions.

A very high supporting attitude in this respect have the managers who consider that an efficient system of quality assurance must be characterized by the capacity to support the organizational development (17%), together with the implementation of an adequate organizational model (24%).

The departments are organized to involve mixed teams of different categories from the staff, renowned for their expertise capacity, regarding the department's specificity. Thus, principles as: the cooperation, the team work, the collective learning, the representativeness are almost fulfilled.

The departmental model brings solutions for a direct involving of the manager in cooperating with the quality departments heads, and with the assurance quality professional network. The departmental model is associated from our perspective, with the peer review model (with external examiners). The professional network in quality issues at which we referred becomes a very important segment of the human resource, whose service brings added value both to the belonging organization (through the concrete activities and results) and the educational institutions to which external collegiate evaluation will take part. The fact that these experts are from an assurance quality department means a gain for the human resources and for the organization.

The idea to change the structures which ensure the quality in schools is supported by the managers and the practitioners in different ways, in relation with the elements which sets up CEAC, the main committee involved in the quality area.

By organizing a departmental model of quality, the managers assure a characteristic of an efficient system of quality, which ensures opportunities of involving the staff in consulting, advising and taking part in concrete activities of the quality area. The managers think that all human categories must be involved and represented in the assurance quality process.

Analyzing the relationship between the necessity of the active involvement of the staff to ensure the quality and the characteristics of the efficient quality system, we can see that the managers who are not supporting the involvement of the educational actors in ensuring the quality can also discourage the adaptation to the proper school community reality.

The organizational models, which the investigated managers refer to, are promoted by the modern organizations management and they have some common aspects: the *flexibility*, the *quality*, the *cooperation*, *the united community of organization's members*, *the internal and external partnership and the professionalism*. All these models transcend the classical vision of the organization, with a specific power distribution, offering the schools' community members the opportunity of approaching the act of decision.

The adequacy to *the reality of the school community*, to *the school structure and characteristics*, *to school resources, to the requirements of the implemented organizational model*, *to the beneficiaries' interests and needs*, represents aspects which form the characteristics of an efficient quality system, for the managers and practitioners included in research.

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