

EDUCATION - THE CORNERSTONE OF KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:

The present paper examines the importance of education as a cornerstone to the knowledge-based society of future Europe and to its implementation in Romania.

The aim herein is to outline that at present, in order for the society to meet the current needs and to lie the foundations of highly performing, receptive economy in terms of the specific requirements of “knowledge-based society”, it must promote and implement new, modern management techniques, knowledge, and tools to support such activities.

The most outstanding sector in the relationship among research, development and innovation is education regarded as the “generator of knowledge-based society”.

Unfortunately, in Romania there are many weaknesses and strong challenges in the successful implementation of the European model (Europe 2020) which promotes “intelligent, sustainable, inclusive economy”¹.

Key words: education, research, development, innovation, knowledge.

JEL classification: D83, I23, I25.

1. Introduction

In the century “of speed” where novelties and information are the “meaning of life”, the society has become more and more concerned with the efficient management of everything that leads to performance. It is currently known that learning and knowledge have become successful key factors at international level and intangible resources are vital, therefore Europe shall rely on the industries and services based on knowledge.

Moreover, knowledge is the central element producing competitiveness and the world states, especially the developed ones, have consequently engaged in systematically generating competitiveness by improving national systems and international interactions that are increasingly sophisticated².

In Romania, there have been numerous initiatives referring to the successful promotion of this desideratum such as the *Strategy* called “*Education and Research for Knowledge-Based Society 2009-2015*” which is the third stage of the systematic endeavor the Romanian Presidency has involved in. Education and research irrespective of how noble they are not activities in themselves; they are means used to

¹ *Europe 2020 in Romania*, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm, accessed on 10 November 2012.

² Romanian Government, Ministry of Education and Research, National Authority for Scientific Research, *National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2007-2013*, <http://uefiscdi.gov.ro/userfiles/file/ROST/1188314177strategia%20ro.pdf>, p.7, accessed on 10 November 2012.

build a society type, the only one that can bring prosperity, sustainable growth and citizens' personal development³ to Romania.

The changes in the Romanian education system as well as all over Europe have been complex and radical, imposing essential transformations of the educational process. Initiating and implementing various reforms and processes at European or international levels are relevant to Romania to the extent to which the national educational system is undergoing a deep reform⁴.

Romania shows its will to build a knowledge-based society that opens to international values and competition where international collaborations and partnerships shall be promoted in advanced research, on general scientific and technological topics, focusing on the fields where they can also contribute in settling scientific or socio-economic matters, in order to make up for the differences from European countries and therefore Romania is preparing to consolidate the areas where it can be successful⁵.

2. "Education" cornerstone – description

Since it manifests itself as a social activity organized in specialized institutions, **individual training** becomes along with other social outcomes a distinct sector of the human society economy which uses limited resources to control the fundamental parameters of human development both at individual and social-community levels.

There is a hard-to-solve problem – **the problem of education for the current society's requirements** where traditional jobs are abandoned or no longer wanted and new ones immediately emerge⁶.

The basic elements of knowledge-based society become the following: the improvement of knowledge coding level and the development of new technologies; the enhancement of connections between business processes and scientific foundations; the increase in innovation rate and the shortening of production durations; the increase in education importance and the focus on intellectual capital and ongoing professional training; the increase in intangible assets investment at a faster rate than the investment in tangible assets; the relocation of added value generating centers to brands, public relations, marketing, distribution, and information management; the increase in the importance of innovativeness and effectiveness in the process of economic growth and configuration of new competitiveness bases; highly performing interrelations⁷.

The "Education" cornerstone can be analyzed according to structural indicators: *the share of education-related expenses in the GDP, the young population's access to education, the employment rate on long term and the population's participation in ongoing learning programmes.*

National Education Law no.1/2011 stipulates that **national education** annually receives from the public budget and the budgets of local public authorities at least 6% of

³ Romanian Presidency, Strategy called "Education and Research for Knowledge-Based Society" 2009-2015", http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/Educatie_si_Cercetare_pentru_Societatea_Cunoasterii.pdf, p. 2, accessed on 5 October 2012.

⁴ Babeş Bolyai University Development Centre, Strategic Project called "Improvement of University Management"(Ro. IMU), Executive Unit for the Funding of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (Ro. UEFISCDI), volume 3, no. 2, 2011, p.1.

⁵ Romanian Government, Ministry of Education and Research, National Authority for Scientific Research, *National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2007-2013*, <http://uefiscdi.gov.ro/userfiles/file/ROST/1188314177strategia%20ro.pdf>, p.8, accessed on 10 November 2012

⁶ Angela Abell, N. Oxbrow, *Competing with Knowledge*, Library Association Publishing, London, 2002, p. 33-34.

⁷ Anton Anton (coordinator), Diagnosis Analysis called "University and Knowledge", http://www.edu2025.ro/UserFiles/File/LivrabileR1/diagnostic_panel2.pdf, 2008, p. 7, accessed on 10 November 2012

the respective year's domestic gross product and scientific research activities are annually supplied by the public budget with at least 1% of the respective year's gross domestic product.

According to the *Fiscal Budget Strategy for 2012-2014*, the total costs of the Ministry of Education are estimated to rise from 5.669 billion Lei in 2011 to 5.742 billion Lei in 2012, and furthermore to 7.795 billion Lei in 2013 and 8.984 billion Lei in 2014. The share of investment expenses in total expenses might remain relatively constant until 2013 (17.5% in 2012 and 19.1% in 2013), but it shall drop noticeably to 14.9%, in 2014⁸.

As to the *rate of early school leaving and the increased number of young graduates*, the European Union's member states must make sustainable efforts to accomplish the educational goals of the 2020 Europe Strategy aimed at decreasing school leaving at minimum 10% and increasing the number of graduates by at least 40% according to the 2011 data issued by Eurostat.

As far as *early school leaving* is concerned, defined as the percentage of young people aged 18-24 who hold only secondary school diplomas and stop attending any other type of education or training, eleven member states including Romania have exceeded the 10% reference, their rate has tripled and has reached 20 %⁹, with Malta (33.5%), Spain (26.5%) and Portugal (23.2%) facing the highest rates of school leaving, however they have had significant progress over the last years. Other member states which have managed to decrease the rate of school leaving are Cyprus (11.2%), Latvia (11.8%) and Bulgaria (12.8%)¹⁰.

Of all the twenty-seven member states of the European Union, in thirteen countries the *higher education graduation rate* exceeds the targeted 40%. Some of the countries with a low level of graduation such as Slovenia (37.9%), Latvia (35.7%), Hungary (28.1%), Portugal (26.1%), Czech Republic (23.8%) and Romania (20.4%) have had a 2% annual increase in their graduation level, according to Eurostat 2011.

The labor market in Romania has encountered significant changes in the amount and structure of the main labor force indicators, thus the number of active and employed people has decreased and the unemployment rate has been relatively constant.

Active population, employed people and unemployed people
- thousand people -

Indicators	2008	2009	2010	2011
Active population	9,944	9,924	9,965	9,868
Employed population	9,369	9,243	9,240	9,138
Unemployed population	575	681	725	730

Source: *Romania shown in figures*, INS, 2012, p.17

After the number of employed people continuously rose during 2005-2008, it started to decrease in 2009 and had its lowest value in 2011 (9,138 thousand people).

⁸ *The Government has changed their minds: education stops receiving 6% of the GDP until 2014*, <http://www.ziare.com/scoala/educatie/guvernul-s-a-razgandit-educatia-nu-mai-primeste-6-la-suta-din-pib-pana-in-2014-1113574>, 2011, accessed on 10 November 2012.

⁹ *The rate of school leaving has reached 20% in Romania*, <http://citynews.ro/eveniment/rata-abandonului-scolar-ajuns-la-20-romania-219211>, accessed on 6 September 2012.

¹⁰ *Progress in the reduction of early school leaving and the increase in the number of graduates in Europe*, http://www.eudirect.ro/pub/nr6_2012.pdf, Informative Bulletin, year 5, no.6, 2012, p.3.

The number of unemployed people rose in 2011 up to 730 thousand, higher than the year 2010 (0.7%), and also higher than 2009 (7.3%). Of the total number of unemployed people in 2011, 28.8% were young (15-24 years old).

Since the future of the labour market is never sure and some jobs which are subject to technological progress will cease to exist, the people practising them should be ready for something else: the solution is attending ongoing learning programmes.

3. Suggestions to consolidate the education cornerstone in Romania for knowledge-based society

In order to ensure the quality of education, training, long-life learning, competence development, significant investment is necessary in education and training such as:

- the preparation of modern education and training systems to provide key and excellence competences¹¹;
- the higher attractiveness by ensuring quality and excellence. The culture of excellence, higher flexibility, the public access to training, better communication and improvement of human resources are ways to encourage the implementation of knowledge-based society in Romania¹²;
- the openness of education institutions to the society by more interest in ongoing education and by scientific and academic research at international level with all professional environments concerned;
- the improvement of human resources in compliance with those in the European area;
- the promotion of higher education attractiveness to knowledge-based society¹³;
- the increased development of transnational education and professional mobility for young people;
- the decrease in unemployment rate and the increase in the occupation rate for young people;
- the use of European programmes designed to finance education and young people's activities.

The 2020 Europe Strategy envisages the construction of a society based on knowledge, research and innovation, and focuses on high-level education and competences in compliance with labour market requirements and active participation in the society.

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¹¹ *Youth on the Move*, Luxemburg, Publication Office of the European Union, 2010, p.5, http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/yom_ro.pdf, accessed on 10 November 2012.

¹² Ion Gh. Roșca, *About the Cornerstones of Knowledge-Based Society in Romania*, <http://store.ectap.ro/articole/105.pdf>, p. 10, accessed on 10 September 2012.

¹³ Idem 11, p.20.

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