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CONSIDERATION ABOUT QUALITY IN EDUCATION THROUGH GEOGRAPHY - THE PREMISE FOR A PERFORMANCE GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract. The three pillars of the educational reforms of the last decades in Europe and in the world, on which is based the national systems of management and quality assurance, including the Republic of Moldova one, are quality, equity and efficiency. This alignment is necessary not only to ensure a real and functional integration, from an educational point of view, of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union, but also, for the initiatives in this field to be consonant, from the theoretical and methodological points of view, with what is happening now in the world. The research endeavor in education quality does not suggest a systematically coordinated agenda. That is why integrated information from cognitive science into the conceptualization of giftedness and educational program design targeted at gifted children are more than welcomed.

Key-words: education, geographic education, student results, assessment, curriculum.

CONSIDERAȚII PRIVIND CALITATEA ÎN EDUCAȚIA PRIN GEOGRAFIE – PREMIȘĂ PENTRU UN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT GEOGRAFIC DE PERFORMANȚĂ

Rezumat. Cei trei piloni ai reformelor educaționale din ultimele decenii în Europa și în lume, pe care se bazează sistemele naționale de management și asigurare a calității, inclusiv în Republica Moldova, sunt calitatea, echitatea și eficiența. Această aliniere este necesară nu numai pentru a asigura o integrare reală și funcțională, din punct de vedere educațional, a Republicii Moldova în Uniunea Europeană, ci și pentru ca inițiativele din acest domeniu să fie în consonanță, din punct de vedere teoretic și metodologic, cu ceea ce se întâmplă acum în lume. Efortul de cercetare în calitatea educației nu sugerează o agendă coordonată sistematic. De aceea, informațiile integrate din știința cognitivă în conceptualizarea supradotării și proiectarea programelor educaționale vizate copiilor supradotați sunt mai mult ca bine venite.

Cuvinte cheie: educație, educație geografică, rezultate ale studenților, evaluare, curriculum.

Introduction

The three pillars of the educational reforms of the last decades in Europe and in the world, on which is based the national systems of management and quality assurance, including the Republic of Moldova one, are quality, equity and efficiency. This alignment is necessary not only to ensure a real and functional integration, from an educational point of view, of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union, but also, for the initiatives in this field to be consonant, from the theoretical and methodological points of view, with what is happening now in the world. The need for unitary understanding of the education quality appeared from the fact that „ it does not exist yet, a unitary concept of quality, this being judged according to the values promoted in the society and at the level of the school organization, educational politics and strategies existing at national, regional and local

levels, existing situation, defined by contextual and situational factors, the evolution of the concept of „quality” [1, p.2].

Methods and materials

In order to carry out this study we opted for qualitative methods of investigation, namely the case study. The case study was focused on the school discipline Geography and the elements underlying the quality assurance of education through geography. Other methods used were the analysis of existing curricular documents, observation of curricular and extracurricular activities.

Results and discussion

Some defining elements of quality in education are highlighted (fig. 1). The most important of these elements is considered the completeness. The quality of object, process or phenomenon does not refer to characteristics treated separately, but integrated. So, other two important elements of the quality in education results - hierarchy and the capacity for change. The quality change could be spontaneous or directed. In the last case we can refer to the quality management capacity. Another important elements is the axiological character - different individual perception, adaptability to some or other objectives, conditions, needs of a particular person, social group or society in general. The degree of satisfaction of needs is determined by the degree of the quality expression. It creates the possibility to measure quality, both quantitatively and qualitatively.



Figure 1. The defining elements of quality in education

In the opinion of Constantin Șerban Iosifescu, a product or service is defined as "quality" only if, on the one hand, it meets certain standards according to which it has been defined (it fulfills the functions for which it was created) and, on the other hand, if it meets or exceeds the expectations of the beneficiaries, if he/she likes it. We can have quality in

education only if what the school offers meets the stated or implicit needs of individuals or of the community and, if, on the other hand, the beneficiaries of the educational services are satisfied with the educational services offered. Establishing and adhering to quality principles is essential for any organization that wants to offer quality products or services. The quality of the education offered by the school can be increased by several quality indicators, among which the quality of the students activity, by:

- enriching the students' learning experiences through new learning strategies and methods, through interaction with other students, etc .;
- increasing student performance - school results, exam results, education for using of new information and communication technologies, education for society, ecological education, demographic education, etc.

The literature aimed to educate students capable of higher performance identifies certain fundamental premises of the curricular theories in this field, the most important ones aiming to training differentiation and the curricular adaptation to their development needs in confluent approaches that allow accelerated and advanced learning and extended experiences [2, p .116].

The main directions of curricular adaptation refer to curricular acceleration and enrichment. The curricular acceleration implies educational strategies by which the advanced contents and advanced development of skills and abilities is offered to student, before the age at which they are expected to be acquired. Two forms of acceleration are essential in the practice of gifted education: content-based and school-based acceleration. Curriculum enrichment typically uses three major types of activities: students are exposed to a variety of disciplines, study topics, people, events, etc .; offering learning experiences that promote intellectual and emotional development; the acquisition of advanced content at a certain school discipline.

There are several national and international normative documents of educational policies at the geographic education base in the Republic of Moldova, among which:

- Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, no. 152 of 17.07.2014, as subsequently amended;
- The reference frame of the National Curriculum, approved by Ministry of Education order no. 432 of May 29, 2017;
- International Charter of Geographical Education, 1992 and 2016;
- Key competences for lifelong learning, adopted by the European Parliament and Council in Brussels on May 22, 2018;
- Framework plan for primary, gymnasium and lyceum education, approved annually by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research order;
- Geography Curriculum, 2010 and 2019 editions.

Geography is a school discipline that has a specificity highlighted by two significant characteristics:

a) the favorite object of study is the interference (interaction) between nature and society, geography being in this way a science of both nature and society;

b) the main methodological dimension represented by the cartographic method.

Nowadays we are in a stage of conceptual searches and of permanent renewal of the geographical content in the general education. This approach is demonstrated against the background of great changes in teaching-learning-evaluating geography in general education. From a school discipline oriented to the formation of a scientific-geographical representation of the world, geography has become a discipline, the content of which has a praxiological and unique character of geographical knowledge and play a great role in the formation and development of world culture, its importance in the life and activity of the contemporary man.

The Geography Curriculum offers premises for accelerating and enriching the curriculum, based on the following conceptual benchmarks: conforming the Geography curricular concept to the latest achievements and trends in the field of education sciences and geographic sciences at national and international level, firstly by focusing on skills training and designing the system of study purposes (skills, learning products etc.), by taking over good practices and adjusting them to the geographical reality of our country; reconceptualizing of school geography and capitalizing on new opportunities for studying geography, at a higher quality and efficiency level, by optimizing the system of competences, scientific contents, teaching-learning-evaluation activities, in light of current rigor; making interdisciplinary connections, by correlating the Geography curriculum with other school disciplines curriculum in general education, both by formulating competences, and by adjusting the recommended contents, activities and learning products, etc.

The geography curriculum included the units of competence, activities and learning products which are directly connected each other. At the same time, there is a correlation with the content units that the teacher must perform individually for each lesson. The learning activities are formulated in a diversified way, focusing on the interaction of the student with constructed supports, individual or group investigation, the development of critical thinking and active involvement in the process of its formation.

Within the geography lessons, many learning situations of a practical nature can be organized, in which the practical activities aim to acquire procedural knowledge (to analyze a landscape; to interpret a map; to construct a diagram, to measure an environmental indicator with an instrument or device, etc). When we design a situation where students acquire this kind of knowledge, the most commonly used verbs are: to estimate, to calculate, to measure, to elaborate, to orient, to use, to apply, to comment, to solve, to combine, to model, to experiment, to represent etc.

With reference to geographic education, quality expresses the integrated character of education through geography, determining its capacity (or inability) to meet existing and potential needs of personality and society. The quality of the geographic education has a

hierarchical character, that is, it implies an interdependence between several component elements, and the contribution of each component in the achievement of the integrated character is different (fig.2).

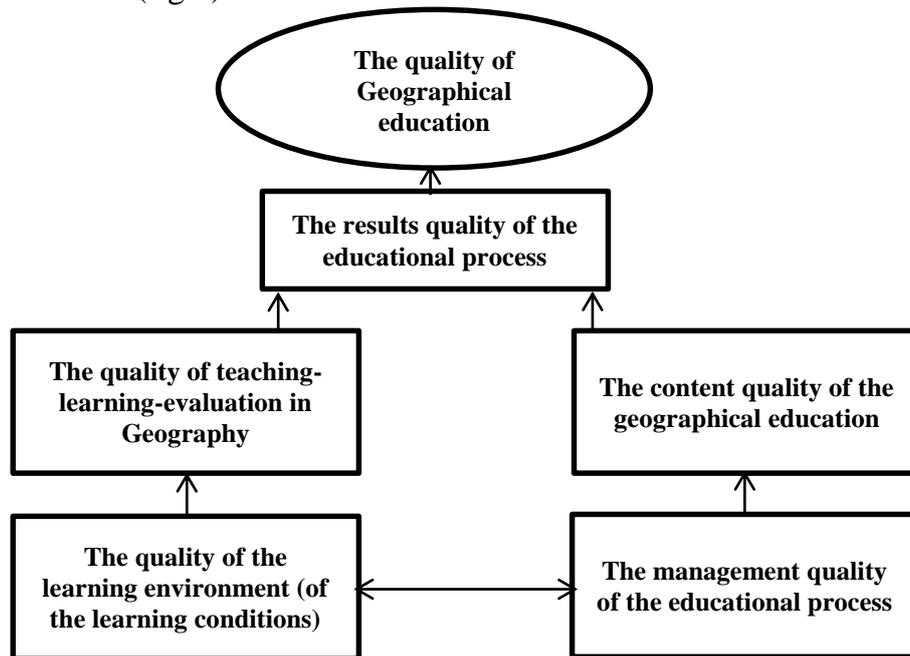


Figure 2. The quality of geographical education

The results quality of the educational process in geography is of particular importance. Secondly, there is the quality of the teaching-learning-evaluation process in geography and the quality of the content of geographic education. The third position in the hierarchy is occupied by the quality of the learning environment and the management quality of the educational process and of the education system generally.

Research shows that the efficiency of geography learning depends on the teachers qualification, the curriculum content and textbooks, the use of learning means and methods, the educational management, achieved at all levels. In order to analyze the situation of the geographical education, it is proposed to apply all the factors mentioned above and not just to limit at the assimilation level assessment of the content elements in the curriculum and textbooks. Not all of the mentioned factors can be measured from the perspective of quality indicators. So, through the concept / expression "quality of school geographic education" is reflected the contemporary and traditional pedagogy approaches through geography (teaching methodology in geography). In this case, the main quality indicator serves the *students' school results* (students' performance / achievement). They could be subjected to dynamic analysis and can be grouped into three categories: summative, formative and diagnostic [3, pag.79].

The evaluation of the educational results / success of the students are closely related to the research of the education role by geography in the formation of the student's personality. The evaluation of the training results involves a multilateral character: the students' knowledge about the world, using / application of the scientific knowledge methods by them; understanding the importance of scientific knowledge for human life

and activity. In the Geography curriculum, at the end of each class there is the *Purpose* section, which includes the specific geographical skills and attitudes that the student will acquire at the end of each study year. The factual results of learning are presented in the form of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values.

Conclusions

Nowadays, the curriculum of geography presents the advantage of providing study content in an accelerated manner, but also offering enriched learning experiences aimed at developing higher-level cognitive skills which could ensure the transfer of acquired knowledge and quality assurance in geography education. At the same time, the importance of motivation, focused on the idea of self-directed learning, in which intrinsic motivation predominates, must be emphasized. One of the basic features of the education quality evaluation through geography is the need for permanent monitoring on the success of students in geography. In order to ensure a qualitative educational process in geography and to achieve a curricular acceleration, oriented to students, it is recommended to make field applications. These field applications will be more effective if they have an integrated character through the inclusion of other school subjects: biology, physics, chemistry, history and so on. Curricular acceleration in geography could be achieved, also, by inviting well-known researchers at lessons, scientists who would hold guest lectures.

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