

# **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ROMANIA**

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**Abstract:** The performance of pre-university education institutions at European level is the result of a complex interaction between several factors. To ensure success in managing these institutions, their leaders must demonstrate both rigor and flexibility. Education managers must be agents of change and support youth development based on knowledge transfer so that graduates are motivated to pursue higher education and build successful careers. In this empirical research, the aim is to understand how teaching and non-teaching staff perceive the impact of leadership in pre-university educational institutions in Romania on educational performance. We are also concerned with the applicability of successful educational leadership practices from other European countries in the specific context of the Romanian education system.

**JEL classification: M21**

**Key words: management, performance, education, institutions, education**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In current global and national concerns, the role of education and how education influences the development and supports the social integration of the younger generation have become topics of major importance. The fundamental purpose of the pre-university education system is to offer, at a higher quality level, solutions to social and individual needs such as: the training and development of basic skills, indispensable for the evolution of society, the training and development of values and attitudes, necessary for the education of active and involved citizens, pre-professionalization and professionalization for the socio-professional insertion of young people. The social, economic, cultural and political changes that took place in Romania after 1989 and especially starting in 2007, from the moment of Romania's accession to the European Union, produced a series of transformations in Romanian pre-university education that led not only to changes in legislation, respectively organization and management, but also to changes in mentality in education.

A fundamental element for these changes to become operative at the system level is the need to move, at the management and operational level, from the condition of meeting minimum performance standards to the encouragement and support of certain behaviors and attitudes, both at the organizational and at the individual level, aimed at achieving these performance standards. In order to support these changes and improve the quality of the results of the pre-university education system, it is necessary for academic

research to take into account the aspects related to the management and the increase of performance in educational organizations.

Organizations are entities in which systematic and concrete interactions are carried out for the achievement of explicitly formulated objectives to which all members of the organization adhere. These objectives have a constructive role both in the process of internal structuring and in the organizational activity of fulfilling the assumed tasks and achieving the organizational performance. Organizations present an internal differentiation of positions, functions, activities through which, on different levels, the various components of the common objective are achieved. Each organization exhibits its own structural and functional dynamics that are closely related to the degree of performance achievement.

Summing up the essential elements of the multiple definitions existing in the specialized literature, it can be said that organizations are specialized social structures, within which a larger number of individuals form structured groups in order to achieve together clear and shared goals, objectives common and assumed, through interactions between members and within structured activities centered on a series of purposes. Achieving optimal organizational performance and increasing its level are conditioned by the existence in the organization of clearly defined and explicitly formulated goals, detailed in common objectives known, accepted and assumed by all members of the organization. Low level organizational performance and reduced institutional effectiveness of an organization are usually the expression of the existence of a certain degree of incompatibility / level of divergence between the organizational goals, values and objectives and the personal values and objectives of the members.

## **2. REVIEW OF SPECIALIZED LITERATURE**

The organization, as a social structure, appeared during human evolution primarily as a form of response of individuals to the need to achieve superior performance in their activities. The school organization can be considered as the fundamental educational entity of the educational system, respectively of the pre-university education system (Hurs, 2021). Performance refers to the achievement of objectives. That is why, in educational organizations, performance is associated with the degree of satisfaction of social requirements, with the extent to which the activity and its results rise to the level of standards regarding the quality of the education provided, and with the level to which it meets expectations and ensures satisfaction to the beneficiaries of education (Stoll and Fink, 2016). The quality of the institutional performance, the realization within the organization of a conduct oriented towards quality and performance and the education of young people in the spirit of quality, in order to integrate the concept of quality into the national culture, thus become the fundamental elements for the achievement of the performance of any educational organization. The concept of quality thus becomes a vital element and an intrinsic component of the institutional performance of any educational organization (Hollins, 2013).

The concept of management refers to the process, carried out in all types of organizations, of leading and coordinating actions and activities, both individual ones and those carried out by one or more organized groups of people, and aims to achieve the goals and fulfill the assumed objectives of the organization by concentrating the efforts of all its members for this purpose. At the same time, management also involves the activities of

mobilizing, allocating and managing the organization's resources in order to fulfill its objectives according to its purpose, mission, purposes and specific responsibilities.

Although the original referent and dictionary definition refers almost exclusively to the private economic environment "enterprises", the concept has been taken up and adopted, from a pragmatic perspective, in the public sector as well, the management of educational organizations actually representing a management system similar to the private one, applied to educational institutions (and adapted to their specificity), which implies that they should be run as if they were businesses. In this context, the notion of management must be understood in terms of objectives, procedures and tools of administration, management, as well as methods and techniques of measurement, evaluation and control (Law, 2010). Performance evaluation is a basic management activity, carried out in order to determine the degree to which the organization achieves its organizational objectives and its members effectively fulfill their tasks/responsibilities, an essential objective of any organization being the achievement of performance standards. In educational institutions, performance management is carried out at all institutional levels in order to achieve the proposed objectives and if introduced and carried out correctly, it can make a significant contribution to the success of the institution (James, 2018).

Performance factors are indicators that reflect how well a person or an organization must perform its activities in order to achieve the expected results. As a rule, the performance factors are expressed in a general way, they express the level of quality at which the institution's activities must be carried out and are found in the performance criteria. The capacity for self-organization (that is, to restore the balance of organizational behaviors in relation to the various disturbances that occur, from within or from without) and at the same time for change at the institutional level in order to achieve and increase performance is a significant indicator that shows the state of the health of an organization, such as a pre-university educational institution, and its ability to record institutional development and progress (Baker, 2020).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The decision-making problem within the present empirical research consists in understanding the perception of the impact of leadership at the level of pre-university education in Romania on educational performance, by the teaching and non-teaching staff included in the study sample. Another point of interest is the applicability of good educational leadership practices from other European countries to the educational context in Romania. This decision-making problem crystallized in the formulation of the objectives of the quantitative study, which follow the ways in which the activities of pre-university education managers, but also of the teams they coordinate, lead to the fulfillment of predetermined performance indicators. In this sense, an online questionnaire was developed and administered, which highlights the perceptions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the value contributed by managerial and colleagues activities to increasing institutional and school performance, measured by 5-point Likert scales (Total Disagree – Total Agreement) . For the profile of the respondents, we used as criteria: institutional environment, professional category, seniority (experience) in education and level of studies, used as independent variables.

Before launching the questionnaire, I created a focus group, attended by 5 educational managers and 5 teaching staff, during which I agreed on the final form of the questions included in the questionnaire. The study took place between March 2023 and

August 2023, with 150 responses being validated, which formed the basis of further processing for statistical analyzes with the help of SPSS software, version 23.

The conceptual model of correlational research implies the existence of three informational clusters, represented in the form of composite variables: *activities of educational managers*, *activities of teaching staff* and *institutional performances*. In order to validate the internal consistency of the research instrument, consisting of 21 items of the questionnaire distributed in the 3, we resorted to determining the value of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient by processing the data in the SPSS software for each individual cluster.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the case of the *Educational manager activities* cluster, we note a high level of internal consistency of the research instrument (0.954) – Table 1.

**Table 1. Determining the value of the Cronbach coefficient**

Cronbach's Alpha value	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	Number of items in the research instrument
.954	.955	6

Source: Output SPSS

The correlation between each item and the sum of the other items highlights the fact that the item with the highest correlation index is "The manager evaluates progress in accordance with the institutional development plan and ensures staff motivation/training" ( $r=0.914$ ). On the "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" column, we notice that the values of this indicator associated with the items are close to the global Cronbach's Alpha value (0.954), a fact that does not lead to the need to eliminate some items in the subsequent correlational analyzes - Table 2.

**Table 2. Statistical indicators associated with the analysis based on Cronbach Alpha associated with the cluster Educational managerial activities**

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The manager develops an organizational culture in which the creativity, collaboration and diversity of ideas of all members of the educational community are appreciated	.853	.762	.946
The manager evaluates the progress according to the institutional development plan and ensures the motivation / training of the staff	.914	.848	.939
The manager ensures the professional training of teaching, auxiliary and non-teaching teaching staff	.788	.652	.954
The manager ensures the fair distribution of funds allocated, according to the law, by expenditure chapters and budget items	.874	.785	.943
The manager develops internal work tools that facilitate the guidance, control and evaluation of all activities	.864	.775	.945
The manager ensures the proper promotion and remuneration of the staff	.865	.781	.944

Source: Output SPSS

In the case of the *Teacher Activities* cluster, we also note a high level of internal consistency of the research instrument (0.954) – Table 3.

**Table 3. Determination of the value of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the Teacher activities cluster**

Cronbach's Alpha value	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	Number of items in the research instrument
.969	.969	9

Source: Output SPSS

The correlation between each item and the sum of the other items highlights the fact that the item with the highest correlation index is "Teaching staff creatively and constructively approach the teaching strategies used in the educational process " ( $r=0.926$ ). It is not necessary to remove items from this cluster, because on the "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" column, we notice that the values of this indicator associated with the items are close to the global Cronbach's Alpha value (0.968) - Table 4.

**Table 4. Statistical indicators associated with the analysis based on Cronbach Alpha associated with the Teacher activities cluster**

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The teaching staff apply teaching and learning strategies that meet the needs of the students and ensure the effective and comprehensive completion of the program	.838	.721	.966
Teachers effectively integrate ICT resources in education	.793	.659	.968
Teaching staff creatively and constructively approach the teaching strategies used in the educational process	.926	.699	.966
Teaching staff supports the conclusion of partnerships and collaborations with other institutions for extracurricular activities	.926	.862	.962
Teachers request permanent feedback, both from students and parents, regarding the act of learning	.866	.752	.966
Teaching staff participate in continuous training/improvement programs with the aim of diversifying their skills portfolio	.876	.796	.964

Source: Output SPSS

In the case of the *Institutional Performance* cluster, the level of internal consistency of the research instrument is high (0.968) – Table 5.

**Table 5. Determination of the value of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the Institutional Performance cluster**

Cronbach's Alpha value	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	Number of items in the research instrument
.928	.928	6

Source: Output SPSS

The correlation between each item and the sum of the other items highlights the fact that the item with the highest correlation index is "The passing rate within the educational institution is well above the national average" ( $r=0.923$ ). It is not necessary to delete items from this cluster, because on the "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" column, we notice that the values of this indicator associated with the items are close to the global Cronbach's Alpha value (0.969) - Table 6.

**Table 6. Statistical indicators associated with the Cronbach Alpha analysis associated with the Institutional Performance cluster**

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The passing rate within the educational institution is well above the national average	.923	.834	.961
The results of the standardized tests in the different study cycles are above the national average	.871	.779	.961
The participation of students and teachers in national and international competitions is encouraged and supported	.793	.659	.968
Students and teachers are supported in the involvement of school and extracurricular educational activities, national and international educational projects	.839	.695	.969
The educational offer of the school meets the needs of the students and really adds to the development of key skills	.839	.729	.961
The institution encourages student and parent initiatives, collaborates with local community stakeholders	.866	.752	.966

Source: Output SPSS

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Improving institutional performance and implicitly ensuring the development of pre-university education institutions can be achieved by developing and applying effective and modern performance management strategies and systems. The congruence of the objectives of the educational systems at the level of pre-university education in Europe and a series of similarities at the level of structure, organization and educational and managerial practices in the European educational systems allow the taking over, transfer and adaptation, by pre-university education institutions in Romania, of some good practices and of performance management models and tools used in the practice of similar

institutions in European countries. The use of modern performance management and internal evaluation techniques and tools, taken over and adapted either from the business environment or from the practice of pre-university educational institutions in European countries, can significantly support the increase in the performance of educational institutions in Romania, many remaining still in the traditional paradigm of education, failing to adapt to the dynamics of the transformations taking place in society. The projects aimed at the transfer of good educational practices at the European level constitute a major opportunity for pre-university education institutions in Romania, from the perspective of adapting development strategies and some elements of institutional performance management to models and practices from pre-university education institutions in European countries . Through the assumed objectives, this doctoral thesis aimed to contribute to the identification of some pillars of increasing the performance of pre-university educational institutions at the European level and their adaptation to the current educational context in Romania. The connection of Romania to the educational, internal evaluation and institutional performance management practices of the European pre-university education systems, the exchange of experience and best practices carried out within the framework of European educational projects, can contribute decisively to the increase in the performance of the pre-university education institutions in our country, in a modern vision on student training, on institutional performance in education, in agreement with the directions and trends in the educational field and with the perspectives of socio-cultural development at the European level.

Performance management is essential to achieving organizational goals and ensuring that educational institution staff are able to perform at their best to succeed personally and professionally, which in turn enables students to achieve outstanding learning performance. Performance management processes at the level of pre-university education institutions must reflect the context and nature of the individual contributions of teaching and non-teaching staff to the achievement of objectives; educational managers must ensure that everyone working within the institution understands the impact of their contribution to the development of the organization. The role of educational leaders in assessing institutional performance is paramount, as is the need to continually develop performance management strategies that reflect the changing environment in which high schools and colleges operate..

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