

Art classes in high school: “to be or not to be?” – the Romanian answer ¹

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Abstract: The importance of guarding the basic principles of human rights seems to be more and more emphasized by the atypical crises the world is facing over the last decade: hybrid wars, migrational waves, economic instability and the even more recent health hazards. This is only an additional turmoil for the identity dilemmas nation states try to tackle nowadays while digitalizing on fast forward. With all this in mind and truly believing that the way youth look and think today is a mirror of tomorrow’s society we conducted a research on public institutions of education and culture situated in the development region of Sud-Muntenia, Romania. This article presents the results of the on-line questionnaires applied at the beginning of this year to the managers of the local public institutions that have an essential role in conducting, implementing and supervising cultural and educational public policies in the seven component departments of the region. In addition to this there were also five high schools selected, with different education specifics, from different types of municipalities. In these cases, the targeted group was that of the students in their final year of upper secondary education. Their answers to the importance of art in education, their perspective on arts teaching and learning and their understanding of the role of other local public institutions are the subject of the study we propose in order to put a light on the necessity of education through art for the future of humanity’s cultural heritage.

Points for practitioners: This study can be of use for decision makers involved in drafting public policies on secondary education

Key words: *cultural rights, education, arts, high schools*

Introduction

The field of human rights was constituted by successive contributions made by researching the great principles in the field, the normative provisions, the institutions. But, like any other theoretical, pure and applied science, the science of human rights has progressed in the conditions of alternating light periods with dark ones. Just as we can only have democracy by granting rights, freedoms, civil society, political pluralism, equality or equity, we can only have freedom if we allow its manifestation in different forms, ideas or actions within a society. And a society that can guarantee civil liberties is a society able of developing an administrative framework that can efficiently withstand political turmoil and deliver a high-quality public service.³

Through the public administration system, the state not only manages its daily existence but also plans its future existence. The survival of the state depends to a large extent on the way it organizes the well-being of its own population - increasing the birth rate and discouraging emigration - and on the intelligent and sustainable way in which it exploits its territory - the natural resources at its disposal.

In this sense, a state truly aware of its own existence and especially of its own future will do everything possible to consolidate its pillars of values and principles that helped create it. While doing this reinforcement, the state provides as accurately as possible the steps it needs to take in the medium and long term. Because the natural way in which the roots of the civilization of the inhabitants of a certain area developed is, in our opinion, the natural way in which the society of the future can evolve in the same space, without succumbing to allogenic influences through assimilation.

Hence the special interest we should give to cultural rights, with an emphasis on the right to education. Once the visionary milestones for future development have been established, they must be systematically presented to the citizens. From the beginning of life and throughout it, in all aspects, citizens must have the opportunity to be educated, informed in the spirit of freedom, having the opportunity to develop and communicate their own critical and innovative

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³ Zlătescu, Irina.Moroianu, Drepturile omului: un sistem în evoluție. (2ndEd, București, Ed.IRDO, 2008) p. 24

thinking. Even in Article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, we find the following wording: "the free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious human rights."⁴

In the context of globalization, a society can advance and ensure its continuity only insofar as it can ensure the adaptation and connection of the individuals that compose it to the pace of evolution of science and information technology. Connection and adaptation can be achieved through the education system developed by each state and by strengthening cultural institutions. But in addition to the analysis of documents, direct observation and indirect observation we consider it important for the use of a quantitative method of psychosociological investigation. For a verification of the way in which the educational and cultural activity is currently carried out in Romania, in order to observe the tendencies, desideratum's, syncope's and perceptions at the level of citizens, we decided to collect a series of information related to the local access to culture and education through an online survey.

In this approach we start from two premises: 1. the globalization of culture and the society based on consumption have led to the need to build mechanisms and tools for protection, defense of the local specificity of populations, customs, cultures and civilizations threatened with extinction; 2. Classical education systems have been caught in the grip of adapting to the economic requirements of society and preserving local identities, being those called to prepare the new generations of citizens of a globalized world. Based on these premises we have built two hypotheses that we will try to validate through our study: 1. The role of local public authorities and subordinate institutions is extremely important in guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of citizens, which is why they have received in recent decades more responsibilities regarding culture and education; 2. Ensuring coherent public policies that lead to the creation and consolidation of cultural and educational institutions connected to the dynamics of the information society⁵, as well as attractive mechanisms for their functioning, can guarantee and extend citizens' access to culture and education, while maintaining specificity. national, regional or local cultural events.

Last but not least, such a study can indicate a possible answer to the following questions:

1. Which local public institutions, at national level, need to be reformed in order to adapt to the requirements of today's society in order to guarantee the right to culture and education for future generations?
2. What model of high school education should be adopted for the implementation of public policies in education to have the maximum proposed effect on the younger generations?

With a population of 20,121,641 according to the final data of the 2011 census⁶ (19,318,000 residents on January 1, 2020, according to most recent official data⁷) Romania has an area of 238,398 km² and joined the European Union on January 1, 2007. Romania's Fundamental post-communist Law – the modern democratic Constitution - was adopted in 1991 and supplemented by the Law on the revision of the Romanian Constitution no. 429 of October 29, 2003.

From an administrative point of view, Romanian territory is organized in communes, cities and counties. Under the law, some cities are declared municipalities, meaning large cities, usually county or regional capitals (*municipii* - art. 3, paragraph 3). We are dealing with a unitary national state in which the form of government is the republic, with a semi-presidential regime, bicephalous executive, bicameral parliament (Chamber of Deputies and Senate with a 4-year term, elected by a uninominal voting system) in which justice is achieved through the High Court of Cassation and Justice and through the other courts established by law (art. 126, paragraph 1), and the local public administration has two tiers, rural/urban localities and counties.⁸

In Romania, the central administrative coordination, through the variant of deconcentrating at the county level, coexists with elements of decentralization that offer the possibility to the local communities to manage their own resources in order to ensure common interests. By local territorial community we mean that part of the national territory, with its inhabitants, which has legal personality and a seat of local administration.⁹ The public administration authorities,

⁴ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp acc. aug 2021

⁵ By this phrase we mean the type of society that characterizes our century and involves an increased use of information in all spheres of activity and human existence, with major economic and social impact that leads to the creation, dissemination and application of information in the political, educational or cultural environment – as stated by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics https://insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/publicatii%20statistice%20operative/seria_statistica_de_intreprinderi_societatea_informatiionala_2018.pdf

⁶ The housing and population census <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul/>– acc. aug. 2021

⁷ Romanian National Institute of Statistics data for 2020 <https://insse.ro> acc. Aug. 2021

⁸ Romanian Constitution of 2003 <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371> acc. sep. 2021

⁹ Bălan, Emil. *Instituții administrative*. (București C.H. Beck, 2008) p.56

through which local autonomy is exercised in communes and cities, are the local councils - elected on the basis of a proportional list - and the mayors elected directly, in a single ballot¹⁰ (since 2008), with a mandate of 4 years¹¹. Local councils and mayors' function, in accordance with the law, as autonomous administrative authorities and resolve public affairs in communes and cities (art. 121, paragraphs 1-2).¹²

In addition to the directly elected authorities, prefects in the counties are appointed as representatives of the Government at the local level, who led the decentralized public services of the ministries and other bodies of the central public administration in the administrative-territorial units. There are no subordination relations between prefects, on the one hand, local councils and mayors, as well as county councils and their presidents, on the other hand (art. 123, paragraphs 1-4)¹³. Therefore, it can be seen how local autonomy works in symbiosis with administrative devolution so that within the territorial administrative units there are authorities elected at the local level in order to manage local administrative tasks, but at the same time we have authorities representing the administration. central government, which by delegation exercises state powers but also responds to the interests of local authorities.¹⁴

Access to culture is guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution Chapter II, Fundamental rights and freedoms, at art. 33 where it is mentioned that: (1) Access to culture is guaranteed, in accordance with the law. (2) The freedom of the person to develop his spirituality and to access the values of the national and universal culture cannot be restricted. (3) The state must ensure the preservation of the spiritual identity, the support of the national culture, the stimulation of the arts, the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage, the development of the contemporary creativity, the promotion of the cultural and artistic values of Romania in the world.¹⁵

Regarding the right to education, also in Chapter II of the Constitution, in Article 32, we find that it is ensured through compulsory general education, through high school and vocational education, through higher education, as well as through other forms of instruction and training. (2) Education of all grades is conducted in Romanian. Under the law, education can also be conducted in a language of international circulation. 3. The right of persons belonging to national minorities to learn their mother tongue and the right to be trained in that language shall be guaranteed; the modalities of exercising these rights are established by law. (4) State education is free, according to the law. The state grants social scholarships to children and young people from disadvantaged and institutionalized families, in accordance with the law. (5) Education of all grades is carried out in state units, private and confessional, in accordance with the law. (6) University autonomy is guaranteed. (7) The state ensures the freedom of religious education, according to the specific requirements of each cult. In state schools, religious education is organized and guaranteed by law.

The law that regulates the organization of the educational system and the functioning of pre-university and university education is Law no. 1/2011 with subsequent amendments and completions, mentioned extensively in the first chapter. Article 112 clearly sets out the key role assigned to local authorities since 2011 as the land and buildings of early education, pre-school, primary, secondary and secondary schools, including other levels of education within them, established by the state. , become the local public domain being administered by the local councils and the state special education units enter the administration of the county councils (art. 2-3). Moreover, even if the central structure, the ministry, keeps in direct administration the palaces and clubs of the students, the Law gives the possibility that they can be transferred to the level of local administration if there is a request made by the county authorities (art. 4 and 4 ^ 1).¹⁶

In general education, music education is included in the compulsory curriculum up to the high school level, being then part of the core of electives that students, depending on the branch of specialization they follow, can choose to complete the program. They have access to music education from the beginning of primary school until the end of the pre-university educational cycle and in some Art Colleges, with the possibility to pursue further specializations at bachelor's, master's and doctoral level in academic institutions. Music schools offer music education in parallel with the general education system. Some of them are state-funded and therefore the courses are free and others are private institutions that charge certain fees from students. In parallel with these, there are the Popular Schools of Arts, which offer vocal and instrumental music courses for amateurs.¹⁷

¹⁰ Law no. 115/2015 on the election of public local authorities, in its current valid form.

¹¹ Romania's Administrative Code OUG 57/2019

¹² Romanian Constitution of 2003

¹³ Ibidem

¹⁴ Bălan, Emil. *Instituții administrative*. pp.58

¹⁵ Romanian Constitution of 2003

¹⁶ Law no. 1/2011 on the national education system <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/125150> acc. sep. 2021

¹⁷ <https://www.aec-music.eu/services/national-overviews/romania> acc. April 2021

Just as there can be no democracy without institutions to sustain it and no funds to sustain it, we can have no culture or education without well-funded and endowed institutions and establishments that can preserve, promote and develop the unique values of to each nation. On a closer look - in the history of mankind for the last 60 years - it can be seen that the lack of democracy involves a series of costs - not always only financially - which clearly exceed those necessary to support a democratic regime. Likewise, the neglect of national, regional and local culture can involve a number of costs, not financially quantifiable, which no people can afford. At the same time, the social dimension of education is highlighted by the fact that the full realization of this right does not materialize without actions on the part of the state through which education becomes possible and accessible. Public authorities have a positive obligation to create, organize and maintain the educational structures necessary for the realization of the right to education in its essential components.

Romania is still in the process of transition from a hierarchical to a decentralized democratic state model, and in this sense a certain responsibility (especially administrative and financial) is transferred from the national level to the local authorities, in the case of the education system, at school level. On the one hand, decentralization, the education market and school management have been introduced in public education, but at the same time through the many bureaucratic barriers and responsibilities of school inspectorates we find that we still have a largely centralized system. Thus, in the Romanian public education, the agenda of reforms such as the ones proposed by the New Public Management, for example, represents a hybrid of neoliberalism and lots of remnants of the former totalitarian system. This fact marked, in many aspects, the evolution of the quality of the final results of the education system and affected the level of pedagogical training of teachers.¹⁸

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, the balance of labor at the end of 2019 indicates a number of 1,378,407 employees in the public sector, of which in public administration, defense and social insurance in the public system 419,000 (211,4500 in public administration and services social), 359,000 people working in the education sector, of which 234,848 teaching staff (208,419 pre-university staff, 26,429 university staff) and 69,000 people in entertainment, cultural and recreational activities.¹⁹

Methodology

This paper is part of my PhD Thesis: *Public Administration Instruments for Guaranteeing the Right to Culture and Education at Local Level in Romania*. Thus, we chose to focus our research on a region among the 8 development regions of Romania. At this level we targeted group consisting of leaders of decentralized, decentralized and local institutions of culture and education to whom we will apply a questionnaire consisting of questions on access to education and culture and how to teach arts at high school level. At the same time, in order to obtain the perspective of the direct beneficiaries of the education process and to evaluate their degree of access to cultural events and activities, we turned our attention to a second target group consisting of young high school students in their last year of study. educational institutions located in both urban and rural areas. In this case we developed a separate questionnaire, with questions related to the conduct of art classes during the 4 years of high school, their perception of the administrative side of education and reporting to public authorities.

According to the statistical data available at this time²⁰, provided by the Ministry of Education through the National Institute of Statistics²¹, the dropout²² rate in Romania is 2.1%, in total in pre-university and 2.6% in upper secondary education (high school). The same data show a decrease in the rural-urban gap in terms of dropout, but the dropout rate remains at worrying levels (2.6% dropout in rural areas compared to 1.8% in urban areas). A considerable difference at national level is also shown in the comparative table by regions which shows that in the last 5 years in the Central Region there is the highest dropout rate (3.7% urban, 5.2% rural). At the opposite pole is the South-Muntenia Region which, surprisingly compared to the trends of other regions, has a lower dropout rate in rural areas - 1.6% - compared to urban areas - 2.3%

¹⁸Popescu, Ana-Cristina în Gunter, Hellen M. et all. *New Public Management and the reform of Education - European lessons for policy and practice*. pp.155-168

¹⁹ Statistical Yearbook of Romania <https://insse.ro/cms/en/content/statistical-yearbooks-romania>

²⁰The state of preuniversity education 2019-2020

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2020/Transparenta/Stare%20invatamant/Stare%20preuniversity_rev_5.07.2021.pdf

²¹Statistical Yearbook of Romania <https://insse.ro/cms/en/content/statistical-yearbooks-romania>

²²School dropout being calculated as the difference between the number of students enrolled at the beginning of a school year and the number of students enrolled at the end of the same school year - <https://www.edupedu.ro> aug.2021

The territorial administrative organization, at the level of the component counties of the region, sums up 32 medium and small towns, 16 big cities and 519 rural municipalities spread over an area of approximately 35 thousand square kilometers²³. Of the 7 counties, the most populated and with a high degree of urbanization and industrialization is Prahova County, which is why it will benefit from special attention in our research.

For the same period for which the National Institute of Statistics can provide us the updated the situation of school dropout (2017/2018) the data provided by the Prahova County Directorate of Statistics²⁴ reveals that in total in Prahova the dropout rate in education in this county was at 1.7%, being both below the regional average and below the national average. The Prahova school network, according to the data of the Prahova County School Inspectorate²⁵, includes 25 state and 2 private technical high schools, 14 colleges²⁶, 7 theoretical high schools, 2 vocational schools for students with special needs, 1 technical college and 9 children's clubs.

The two tiers administrative-territorial organization of Romania means that the public administration authorities exercising local autonomy in counties are the county councils presided by a directly elected president, and in the case of urban or rural territorial administrative units the directly elected local councils and mayors. According to the Romanian Administrative Code, local autonomy concerns the organization, functioning, competence and attributions of local public administration authorities, as well as the management of resources that, according to law, belong to the commune, city, municipality or county, as appropriate. Local autonomy guarantees the local public administration authorities, within the limits of the law, the right to have initiatives in all areas, except those expressly given in the competence of other public authorities, without a relationship of subordination between county authorities and those of local communities.²⁷

County	Area (km2)	Big cities	Medium and small towns	Rural municipalities	Villages
Argeş	6.826	3	4	95	576
Călăraşi	5.088	2	3	50	160
Dâmboviţa	4.054	2	5	82	353
Giurgiu	3.526	1	2	51	167
Ialomiţa	4.453	3	4	59	127
Prahova	4.716	2	12	90	405
Teleorman	5.79	3	2	92	231
TOTAL:	34.453	16	32	519	2019

Table no.1 Area and numbers of administrative units of the counties from South-Muntenia Region

Thus, regarding the economic region that is of interest to our analysis, we can find 7 distinct county councils, led by 7 council presidents, 48 local councils and mayors of urban municipalities (*oraşe*) and 519 local councils and mayors of rural localities (*comune*). Their administrative actions are supervised by 7 prefects as public administration authorities, who hold positions of public dignity as appointed representatives of the Government locally, who lead the decentralized public services of ministries and other central public administration bodies in administrative-territorial units. At this level we will apply the questionnaires for the managers in education and culture institutions that we have identified in the component counties. Considering the topic of our research, the institutions we focused on were:

²³2019/2020 available information according to <https://www.adrmuntenia.ro/date-demografice/static/1433>

²⁴DJS-PH https://prahova.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/educatie_rata-abandonului-scolar.pdf

²⁵<http://www.isj.ph.edu.ro/institutii>

²⁶In Romania the word *College*, that translates as *Colegiu*, is used to name those high-school units whose students register remarkable results, having a prestigious tradition of education and matching the performance criteria established by the Education Ministry, confirmed over time. In order to keep the title of *National College* (for general, theoretical teaching high-schools) or *College* (for technical or vocational high-schools) the school units are being evaluated on a five-year basis.

²⁷Romania's Administrative Code OUG 57/2019 art. 84-85

- County School Inspectorates (CSI)- decentralized public services of the Ministry of Education operating under the National Education Law no. 1/2011;
- County Directorates for Culture (CDC)- decentralized public services of the Ministry of Culture, having legal personality, which operates based on Government Decision no. 90/2010 on the organization and functioning of the Ministry of Culture, with subsequent amendments and completions and of the Order of the Minister of Culture no. 2080/2012;
- County and local Cultural Centers - public cultural institutions of county or local interest with legal personality, operating under the authority of the county council or local council, as appropriate.
- Children's Palaces and Clubs - as education and culture institutions, related units of the Ministry of Education, subordinated to the County School Inspectorates, intended for extracurricular activities of pre-university education, operating under the National Education Law provisions and with regulations approved by ministerial order;
- School units covering the upper secondary schooling level - high schools and colleges operating at the locality level, having legal personality, under the administration of local councils, according to L.E.N. no.1 / 2011 and which have a vocational or pedagogical profile.

In the following paragraphs we will detail how we conducted the survey, the structure, format and size of the questionnaire for each target group and the content and type of questions. The period of their application was between 1 and 28th of February 2021. The method of application was self-administered, online, due to the conditions specific to the health alert conditions imposed by the central authorities. Both questionnaires applied to the two target groups fall rather into the category of factual data questionnaires, although they also contain some requests regarding respondents' opinions. The forms do not collect personal identification data such as name, address or identity documents and have as main theme the organization and realization of education in the field of arts at high school level. They contain both closed and open questions, start from a general level to reach the end of the particular interest of our research, they begin with a message on the argumentation of research and personal data protection, continue with introductory questions, buffer questions, bifurcated questions and “why” questions interspersed with control questions. In building the applied forms we adapted the models used by the National Agency for the Evaluation of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the USA in the most recent campaign to assess the skills and knowledge of American students, from state and private schools, in art disciplines (arts musical and visual arts).

County	CSI	CDC	County Cultural Centers	Children's Palaces	Children's Clubs	Vocational and/or pedagogical high-schools
Argeş	1	1	1	1	2	1
Călăraşi	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dâmboviţa	1	1	1	1	3	1
Giurgiu	1	1	1	1	0	1
Ialomiţa	1	1	1	1	0	1
Prahova	1	1	1	1	8	2
Teleorman	1	1	1	1	0	1
TOTAL:	7	7	7	7	14	8

Table no. 2 Institutions that were targeted by our survey

In order to obtain the official information regarding the institutions presented in Table no. 2 we researched their official websites and, as far as possible, we looked over the available contact details. Subsequently, we completed a questionnaire with 22 questions, regarding access to education and culture and how to teach arts subjects at high school level, which I sent from the official e-mail address provided by the Doctoral School of SNSPA to the persons in charge of the above-mentioned institutions. The entire activity of applying the questionnaire was carried out online, in compliance with the GDPR rules, taking into account the special conditions for carrying out institutional activities in

the period 2020-2021, caused by the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic. Of the 50 institutions to which the online questionnaire was sent, 34 responded, of which 2 were resent, with 32 forms finally valid. An interesting aspect is the fact that although all the e-mail addresses of the County School Inspectorates are functional and public, no General School Inspector or another person within the inspectorates' management did respond, even if a retransmission of the request was made. Regarding the County Directorates for Culture, we registered only one answer, from Prahova County. In the case of these institutions, the situation is equally disappointing regarding the transparency of the information, but different in the sense that 3 (Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu) from 7 directions do not have a presentation website, so, implicitly, they do not have an e-mail address that can be easily identified. A 4th direction (Teleorman) although it has a site, it does not have a valid e-mail, while in Ialomița the site is out of date, even if the e-mail address is valid.

Taking into account the approach of modern public management according to which the citizen is seen as a client, a consultation of the direct beneficiaries of the education system was required, those who need to acquire today the necessary knowledge to face the challenges of tomorrow's society. We are talking, of course, about students, in our case high school students. For these, we developed a separate questionnaire, with 24 positions, in order to find out both their reporting on art classes during the 4 years of high school, and their visions regarding the administrative part of public education in Romania.

In the same region of South Muntenia, but only in Prahova County, the most urbanized and populated²⁸ of the 7 counties, we selected 5 educational units that also offer upper secondary education courses:

- an arts college, located in the big urban environment - "Carmen Sylva" College of Arts, Ploiești
- a pedagogical college also located in the big urban environment - „Regina Maria” National Pedagogical College - Ploiești
- a theoretical college located in a small urban area - “Nicolae Iorga” National College, Vălenii de Munte
- a technological high school in a small urban area - Agromontan Technological High School „Romeo Constantinescu” Vălenii de Munte
- a theoretical college from the rural area - “Ferdinand I” College, Măneciu

I called directly the management of these educational units to obtain the agreement of principals and principals for the application of the set of questions, in electronic format, to students in the 12th grade exclusively, from different specializations, in compliance with health safety rules and GDPR rules, subject to the anonymity of the respondents. Once the agreement was obtained, we sent the online questionnaire form to the teachers and they sent it to the online groups of the classes they coordinated. Thus, within 15 days we obtained a number of 228 complete answers.

After checking each form, we eliminated 17 of them: one completed by a student who was not part of the target group, a problem identified by checking the box regarding the current age and class; one by a teacher, a situation identified on the basis of information related to the age and type of school being graduated; 15 for duplicates of already registered forms, situation identified based on the e-mail address sent, mandatory information. Thus, we stopped at 211 forms registered and submitted to our analysis and interpretation.

Results for the institution managers target group

The age of the respondents varied between 24 and 60 years, and most of those who completed the questionnaire are teachers by profession, all graduates of higher education who work at the department today. The first questions surveyed the appetite for reading and recreational activities that constitute access to elements of education and art. Thus, 100% of the respondents have a library or a special space for books at home. Almost 50% of them read over 20 pages a day, 40% listen to music at least once a day, but only 32% usually dance once every few days. Most of the respondents spend between 30 minutes and an hour preparing the teaching activity daily. The time spent on social networks and applications is less than an hour a day in the case of 53%, only 6% of them exceeding 4 hours a day in the online environment. Most consider themselves teachers, mentors or artists by vocation, while only a small percentage think of themselves as civil servants. Most of the time dedicated to professional activity is spent through classroom teaching, student counseling, individual research or administrative work, while the organization of extracurricular activities occupies a prominent place in the order of their priorities.

Those who carry out teaching activities have ranked, according to the degree of importance in the teaching process, the elements they consider successful in carrying out the educational process. They placed individual study in first place,

²⁸ 2019/2020 available information according to <https://www.adrmuntenia.ro/>

followed by teaching style and non-formal teaching methods. And in the last places are online research and library study, to the detriment of planning and teamwork.

Insufficient funding for the system, legislative instability, lack of concentration of students, the multitude of administrative tasks, permissive school regulations, the school curriculum and even parents' associations were identified as the main obstacles in the teaching activity. With regard to adequate funding for education, 81% of respondents believe that this issue should be in the top 3 government priorities and that policy makers should agree on a pact for education.

To question number 13 regarding the organization of participation in cultural events outside school, 6.7% stated that they did not organize such outings with students at all, but most of the respondents, 30%, said that they are often concerned about organizing such participations. This fact comes to strengthen the answers regarding the importance of non-formal education, as mentioned above and to confirm the information obtained in question no. 9 regarding the time allocated to extracurricular activities.

For the next question, number 14 of the questionnaire, we left open the option of a multiple answer, but mandatory, being in this case interested in finding out the opinion of the respondents regarding the introduction of general arts and culture classes in general high school education. This was correlated with point no. 16 of the questionnaire where I asked to express their opinion - having as alternative answers: strong agreement, agreement, neither agreement nor disagreement, disagreement and strong disagreement - on several issues related to the program and the conduct of classes.

Thus, we found that almost 70% of respondents mentioned music and visual arts, followed closely by theater, dance and photography among the subjects that should be part of the general program in high school, which according to over 65% of respondents would must provide art classes throughout the 4 years, compulsory (47%) or optional (53%), for which it should be possible to form groups of students from different specializations (over 70% with strong agreement and agreement). At the same time, they all strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that creative activities improve the educational process, which is why both the state and local communities need to support more vocational schools and programs dedicated to talented young people. Regarding the number of subjects studied in high school, only 37% of respondents consider that it is already too high, as well as those who neither agree nor disagree with this statement, the remaining 26% being convinced that no however, there are too many subjects in the general high school curriculum.

Furthermore, because 56% of the respondents stated that the schools are in a very good collaboration with the other cultural institutions, we asked through a mandatory, open question that they mention 2 institutions in the vicinity of their home where they can take arts courses, specifying whether they are free or for a fee. Two of the respondents stated that they do not know such institutions, and another stated that, living in rural areas, he does not have such an institution nearby and that over time, although he declared his readiness to organize a School Summer for extracurricular activities, was permanently hit by the refusal of the public administration. Most of them mentioned the Popular Schools of Arts, Palaces and Children's Clubs and County Cultural Centers with activities for a fee and the local art high schools and cultural centers with free access of students to classes.

The following questions tackled the administrative organization of pre-university education. Thus, when asked, optionally, about the benefits – if any - of the school units transfer on to the administration of local councils (since 2011, according to the Education Law no.1/2011), 16% of the only 31 respondents this time, considered that it had no positive effect, 39% avoided a clear answer mentioning it had no positive nor negative consequences and 45% thought it was a good measure for schools.

Regarding the position of high school or college principal, 41% avoided giving a direct answer, mentioning that they neither approve nor disapprove of it becoming a strictly managerial one without teaching or leadership responsibilities. Cumulatively, 44% considered that such a transformation would be beneficial and only 15% said they were against this change in the current state of affairs. The proportion of those who avoid leaning towards approval or disapproval remains the same - 41% - and to the next question related to the need for all palaces and children's clubs to be subordinated to local authorities, following the model of educational institutions. Here, however, the proportion of those who reject such a possibility is only 9%, the remaining 50% being convinced that it would be a beneficial thing.

Given the exceptional situation in which the courses took place in the last school year, for 2021-2022, more than half of the respondents stated that they would prefer all the courses to take place in physical format, very few of them opting for exclusively online. In this sense, at the last point related to the topic of our research we asked for their opinion on the 3 main changes needed to improve the teaching of arts in general high school education. Here only one person stated that another abstains and that there is no case for change at this time. The other answers were:

Proper spaces for art classes practice	Smaller classes of students
Heiring more arts specialized personnel	A better correlation with final exams requirements
Fair budgeting	More musical instruments in schools and more interest shown for vocal groups
Mandatory interdisciplinary art classes	Each student should have the possibility to study a musical instrument
Arts should be mandatory but schools should have the right to decide which classes to provide	Discovering, encouraging and better stimulating gifted, talented students
Modern teaching methods, connected to creative industries;	Yearly improving workshops for teachers
Evaluation by evolution of students	More focus on practicing in small groups of students
More digital means for exposing information	Gifted students should have special training programs
New fields of arts should be introduced and students should be encouraged to follow	Smart teaching, more attractive methods of interaction

Table no.3 free answers of the institution managers on high-school arts teaching improvement

Results for the students target group

If in the case of the managements of the deconcentrated public institutions of culture and education the interest for our research could be said to have been low, it should be mentioned that, regarding the school units chosen to be part of the study, we enjoyed a real openness. and collaboration. An extremely gratifying case was encountered in the situation of the “Dinu Lipatti” High School of Arts, from Pitești, Argeș County, where the management of the unit was so pleased with the questionnaire sent that on its own initiative it was sent to a class of students in the last year For study. Unfortunately, the form being intended exclusively for the people in charge of the high school, all the answers were removed from the evaluation of the respective questionnaire. But in order to meet the openness with which we were received, we also sent the questionnaire to the students including the answers received from them in a total of 211 valid forms.

As previously mentioned, we were also interested in measuring some aspects related to students' reporting to the online learning environment, a situation that has become extremely widespread in our country due to the suspension of physical education during the 2020-2021 school year. the cause of the emergency and alert situations generated by the health crisis we went through. As such, before entering the analysis of the actual questions of the questionnaire, we found out that 7.6% of those in the target group do not have access to a computer or laptop in their home. And out of the total of those who still have such a device in their personal home, 3.5% do not have access to the internet.

Returning to the classic, incipient way of access to elements of culture and education, if in the previous case of the target group of teachers and heads of institutions we met a percentage of 100% in terms of owning a special space for books inside the personal home, in the case of students only 82.5% of them have at home a library or a space dedicated specifically to storing books. Most of them have less than 100 volumes of books at home, only 21% saying they would have enough volumes to occupy an entire library. Almost 30% mentioned that they do not read at all outside of class, and of those who do, most of them - 45% - read only 5 pages or less per day.

However, the report changes as we move on to the next questions. For example, an overwhelming majority listen to music several times a day (66%) and cumulatively almost 60% usually dance at least once every few days. Worth considering and following in relation to the following data is the answer to the seventh question: On average, how much time do you spend online? Here we find that 70% of the 12th grade respondents spend more than 3 hours a day in the virtual environment on social networks and applications, unlike the previously surveyed teachers who, for the most part, generally spend less than 2 hours on day on the internet. And this aspect can be one of the explanations both for the

syncope in the online teaching process of the school year under the sign of the pandemic, and especially for the students' difficulties in the learning process.

The time spent online by students is also reflected in their choice to conduct courses in general, while teachers opted for less than 10% to continue the educational process exclusively online, 25% of the students surveyed would prefer to participate in classes in this way. The proportion of those who opt for the mixed mode, physical and online, is similar to that observed in the answers provided by teachers (33% - 34%) only slightly over 40% being those who want to actually enjoy the physical presence in the classrooms. of course.

When asked about the courses that helped them during their four years of high school in developing their own native skills or talents, a large majority, 62.5%, answered in the negative, being of the opinion that there were no such courses. The question was open-ended, of the 37.5% who answered positively, most also mentioned the course that was useful to them, a small percentage of 12% placing the positive answer but without this specification. On the first two places in the list of answers were the subjects related to arts, followed at a considerable distance, but in close proportions, by disciplines such as Romanian language, information technology, psychology or practice modules.

Question number 11 in the questionnaire retains the same majority of students who consider that the school curriculum does not encourage almost at all or only to a very small extent students with native skills. And in the next question, number 12, the respondents were asked to mention which they consider to be, in addition to schools, the institutions that should support and encourage students to develop their skills. In this situation a large part of the respondents - 31% - answered that they do not know what other institutions should come to the aid of schools, while equally - 30% - mentioned the local state cultural institutions (houses of culture and cultural centers, theaters, philharmonics, libraries), and 24% believe that town halls would be best able to support schools in this regard. Only 5% mentioned Children's Clubs and Palaces, with only one answer having a special note in the sense that the respondent stated that exclusively teachers should be those who support and encourage students with native skills and not a specific institution.

However, being interested to see if the respondents know local institutions, other than schools, where they can receive education in the arts, free or for a fee, we continued with an open question requesting the mention of two such institutions near them. A percentage of 52% do not know any such institution, 22% indicated the Homes / Houses of Culture / Cultural Centers, 14% Clubs / Children's Palaces / Art Schools, 7% simply mentioned the town hall, and in very small art high schools or private organizations were mentioned. The very high percentage of those who said they do not know / do not know the arts education institutions in their locality could raise some questions about how they still fulfill their mission being institutions supported by public budgets and which annually, respecting the cultural management plans, should report the fulfillment of some performance criteria that justify the continuation or not of the managers' mandates.

For the next question, number 13 of the questionnaire, we left open the option of a multiple answer, mandatory, being in this case interested in finding out the opinion of the respondents on the introduction of subjects in the field of arts and culture that they would have liked to have studied in high school. This was correlated both with question number 19 related to activities that young people would have liked to have had the opportunity to carry out in the 4 years of secondary education, and with points no. 20 and 22 of the questionnaires where I asked to express the opinion - having as alternative answers: strong agreement, agreement, neither agreement nor disagreement, disagreement and strong disagreement - on several issues related to the teaching curriculum and the way the classes develop. .

Again, similar to the answers in the questionnaire for heads of educational and cultural institutions, music and fine arts, cumulatively, were mentioned by the majority of respondents - 58%, followed by photography - 47%, drama - 35%, dance - 33% , folklore and traditions - 13% and pottery 9%. Coupled with the answers obtained to the question related to the activities he would have liked to carry out in high school - also a question with multiple possible answers - we find that almost half of the students surveyed would have wanted to learn to play an instrument and many they would have liked to be part of a dance troupe or to participate in a group activity to organize a musical event.

Given the long time spent online, as evidenced by their statements, we find that 73% say they feel more creative in the virtual environment, almost half (48%) claiming that in high school drawing and music classes are boring, although almost unanimously (98%) agree that music plays an important role in personal development. In the same proportion, respondents believe that access to education and culture should be free, that the arts are important in the educational process, which is why the state should invest more in vocational schools and local communities should support schools in the development of education. special programs for talented young people. Over 90% say that the curriculum should be modified to allow courses in the arts in all specializations, with an optional character, during all 4 years of high school.

These differences between what they want and what happens in the classroom can be an indicator of the lack of interest shown due to the non-adaptation of arts teaching methods to the current profile of high school students - non-adaptation caused by either pedagogical approach or lack of endowment. corresponding to. Of the 3% who provided other answers regarding the subjects they would have liked to study in high school, the answer of a student from the Fine Arts specialization within a vocational high school attracted our attention especially because she noticed the need to art high schools to study mathematics, because otherwise it is difficult for students to accumulate certain information. In the case of this type of high school, the mathematical discipline is studied until the end of the 10th grade.

Furthermore, if in the case of teachers when asked about the organization of participation in cultural events outside the school only 30% said that they are often concerned with organizing such activities, of students asked if they had such trips outside of the classes during high school 49% stated that they had none at all, 35% annually and only 12% semesterly. Coupled with the response to the interest in art classes, to the time spent in the virtual environment and on social networks and to the cultural and educational institutions I know, we can get an idea of the current state of reporting students to education and another about the need to change the way we work in the system, both centrally and locally. The penultimate request of the questionnaire involved an open, short answer, by completing the following statement: “*When I listen to music, I feel ...*”. From the centralization of the answers came a wide range of positive emotions (good 25%, very good 18%, relaxed 16%, happy 12%, free 10%) only 1% of respondents saying they feel nothing when listening to music.

At the end, the persons who filled in the form up to this point were asked to decide on how to compose it, having the possibility to choose between 5 answer options, 4 were predetermined and a 5th left the possibility of free expression, without there is the multiple-choice option, the question being mandatory for the completion of the procedure for sending all the answers. Thus, 50% of the respondents stated that they found our approach interesting, 29% categorized the form as well made, 13% considered that it was too long, 5% that it needed improvements and only 3% had feedback original, shown in the next table:

It has no use	Arts in generally should be encouraged more, by any means
It needs an improvement for some questions that need complex answers	Teachers should pay more attention in identifying gifted students an work with them more
A very different survey, nicely done	The survey is useful only if some measures will be taken according to it, for us graduating students it is already too late for any improvement
Nice try, but I do hope it finds a practical use	I do hope this can contribute to improvements in teaching conditions, with better trained arts professionals.
It's another chance for youngsters to make their voice heard and who knows maybe someone will listen now	It's right on time for some needed changes. Art doesn't mean breaking with science, but a more profound understanding of life.

Table no.4 students free answers on the topic of our research

Conclusions

The school years 2020 - 2021 and 2021-2022 have as a specific of classes teaching the restrictions imposed by the health crisis generated by the SARS-CoV-2 type flu. This context has been compounded by the unstable political climate and strong economic fluctuations with effects on the labor market, where more or less, forced digitization seems to be about to determine the decline of traditional trades and the emergence of new ones, which require skills that the public system instruction is called to develop them. All this may lead to future high school graduates and their families having additional concerns about completing their pre-university schooling or pursuing university studies.

In the face of these challenges, the Romanian education system needs a rapid transformation in order to come to the real support of society. In this chapter we tried to highlight at the level of a single region and, subsequently, at the level of a county component of it the perceptions of experts, practitioners, in the cultural and educational field but also of the young beneficiaries of their efforts, regarding the state of affairs. in the system. The image captured by us in February 2021 and the projections of those surveyed, on how the educational process should take place in the future are not far from what the statistical data tell us at national level.

A study conducted by the World Vision Romania Organization in 74 rural schools in 14 counties, in the context of the reopening of schools for physical participation and the issuance of order no. 300 of the Minister of Education of February 19, 2021 on education, unveils that 80% of the teachers surveyed need training on digital education, 77% need specific information developed in the form of an online teaching guide, 60% believe that a readjustment of curricula and materials is needed. and 46% of them believe that their students lost up to 45% of the knowledge supposed to have been assimilated in the school year affected by the pandemic. The same organization surveys revealed that in 2020 over 60% of rural area located parents did not work during the pandemic and 40% of them failed to provide children with basic food needs. In their earliest study, conducted just a few weeks ago, at of the beginning of the school year 2021/2022 on 1000 respondents from rural areas, revealed the fact that the vast majority of students and teachers want to physically take the courses. Also, the students wish for classes to be more interactive, they also want their parents to be more supportive on homework, as for the teachers they wisht that they could to be more communicative and a majority of 40% of them long for more extracurricular activities. Both teachers and students want the state to invest in modernizing and digitizing schools to which they would prefer having a more positive attitude.²⁹

The central element analyzed was the right of every person to receive education. By virtue of this, we considered that all citizens should be guaranteed access to elementary education free of charge and compulsory, so that later, depending on the administrative capacity of each state, the administrative apparatus can be organized so that the stages of secondary education and be as affordable as possible for as many people as possible. The efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the way the state has understood to apply the principle of subsidiarity have turned local public authorities into determinants of the progress and well-being of communities. Through the institutions that have returned to them in coordination, local public administrations have taken on more and more responsibilities in guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of citizens, even in terms of access to culture and education.

Moreover, as shown by our study conducted on the two groups from South- Muntenia economic development region in Romania - coordinators in education and culture and high-school students - it was observed how strong is the perception of citizens on the importance of local government institutions, especially the mayor's institution and the local council. At the same time, the lack of visibility of the activity of children's cultural centers or clubs / palaces emphasizes the need to change the way they work. Especially since the same research showed that the need for access and the interest of the new generations for art and culture is at a high level. Of course, it is not enough to measure perceptions for the subsequent issuance of reform proposals, but this analysis, considered both in the context of the analysis compared to other political-administrative systems and in the light of national indices of the dimensions of cultural values developed by Hofstede, can be a concrete starting point in the application of modern reform principles.

It's a paradox that a recent dramatic event, - the SARS Cov-2 pandemic, has had a positive effect on the digitization of the education system and the transposition of art and culture events into the virtual environment, an objective to which societies in more economically and technologically developed countries they were heading much faster than our country anyway. However, after a year and a half of online-work, online schooling and cultural events hosted on digital platforms, a large part of the institutions responsible for managing the application of public policies in the field of culture and education at county level either have no site at all. and e-mail addresses, whether they are not functional, are not updated and respond with difficulty or not at all to online requests. In this case it is explicable their disconnection from the needs of the generation that spends on average over 2-3 hours a day in the virtual environment, who reads printed books in a declining percentage from year to year and who knows almost nothing about the extracurricular activities they would like and could even carry out with the facilitation of these institutions.

In the end we can come up with an answer to the 2 questions raised from the start:

1. Which public institutions in the country with local responsibilities in the field of culture and education should be reformed? According to the results of our research, it is necessary to rethink:

- the role of the General School Inspectorates;
- the activity of the County Directorates for Culture;
- the position of school principals;
- administrative subordination of Children's Palaces / Clubs;
- involvement in the life of communities of Cultural Houses and Cultural Centers.

²⁹ <https://worldvision.ro/blog-media/studii-si-rapoarte/>

In the information society, as an addition to access to information and knowledge, it is necessary to generate new knowledge and efficiently organize its transfer. The way each country organizes its own system of education and manages to train its citizens becomes of great importance for their survival in the future.

2. What model of high school education should be adopted so that the effect of public policies in education is one with a complete positive impact on future generations of students and graduates?

From the study carried out by us at the level of high school students, some ideas emerge for the steps that any serious approach to education reform should take. 10 years after the adoption of the National Education Law, a deep analysis of the educational ideal and its transposition into the legal norm is required. Taking into account the numerous changes made over the years, it is necessary to re-establish the articles of law, a clarification of some of them and a reanalysis of the opportunity of others, followed by a republishing. This approach should be a priority for both the legislature and especially the national executive. The comparative analysis of the Romanian legislation on education revealed that when the ideology of education was lower and the involvement of experts was higher, progress was visible in the field.

The answers provided by the surveyed students lead not only to the need to rethink the issues related to pedagogy and permanent consultation of education experts, but also to create in schools the environment necessary to develop what specialists call well-being today. In order to generate such a state, we also need positive emotions, emotions that can be triggered and art (music, photography, drawing, etc.) as we found in the results of our questionnaires. Education no longer involves just the transfer of information, but turns into a process in which, throughout life, individuals learn how to learn, how to access and exploit information leading to the process of innovation.

Referring to the pyramid of needs proposed by Maslow, if we look at the need for education and culture as being placed on higher levels of self-esteem and self-realization and if we make their achievement a goal understood by as many citizens as possible, we will contribute certainly in creating that set of conditions that lead to individual fulfillment and freedom. We can thus achieve the desideratum of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights according to which personal development is the central objective of education, development that in fact represents the natural evolution towards a climate of tolerance, peace, collaboration and constructive intercultural dialogue.

Taking into account the above, thinking at the all the literature and the researches in the field, and analyzing the results of our own research, we have developed a series of recommendations that may be subject to public policy initiatives:

- It may be of great use creating an online portal gathering all cultural and non-formal education institutions, where they should be presented by regions, counties, administrative-territorial units. The information shall be updated weekly and may be available in at least one international language. This can be funded and managed by The Ministry of Culture;
- A working group at parliamentary level, composed of members of the Senate Committee on Education, Youth and Sports and members of the Chamber of Deputies Committee on Education, can be formed and by consulting all education experts and stakeholders, will analyze the amendment to Article 100, paragraph 3 of the National Education Law, regarding the subordination of Children's Palaces and Clubs to the local public administration authorities, with the possibility for them to associate in matters of financing these institutions, that will remain educational units for extracurricular activities, related to the Ministry of Education and methodologically subordinated to them;
- According to the results of our questionnaires but also to the current interests of the Romanian National Council of Students Association³⁰, we propose to speed up the adoption of high school framework plans with an essential change: keeping the art curriculum in the common core for all fields (theoretical, vocational, professional, technological). throughout the high school period, with the possibility that this study disciplines could be optional, established at school level, through the methodological procedure similarly to the methodology on curriculum development at the school's decision, established by ministerial order. And in order for these subjects to be equally accessible to those who express their options, we consider it beneficial to facilitate their organization in groups of at least 15 - maximum 20 students in the same year, but, as the case may be, from different classes or specializations. In this way, activities between heterogeneous groups are encouraged at the same time as the discovery and development of young people with native creative talents and skills.
- County councils and local councils, through the instruments provided by law, together with the executive authorities (presidents of county councils respectively mayors) through legal instruments provided by law and modern managerial ones should develop, at ATU level or at associative, local strategies on culture and education

³⁰ <https://www.edupedu.ro/schimbari-propuse-de-elevi-pentru-planurile-cadru-de-liceu-cursuri-la-alegere-din-noul-curriculum-la-decizia-elevului-din-oferta-scolii-cdeos-la-care-sa-poata-merge-grupe-de-minimum-15-elevi-din-c/>

and in close liaison with private sector representatives to provide citizens with easy access to a wide range of activities designed to help increase culture and social participation.

All these proposals are made as a result of our scientific approach and taking into account studies in the field that show that adolescent students who are offered a high degree of awareness of belonging to a community that exploits their innovative potential while developing a type of personality non-conflicting, maintain good relationships with parents and other people they interact with, recording positive results in the educational process.³¹

In addition to the role of organizing the administration of laws and that of implementing laws, the definition of public administration emphasizes the fulfillment of legislative and executive mandates, by using theories and managerial processes, to serve the interests of society as a whole and also to each of its component parts. Admitting that that access to cultural rights, including education, is a key element in the development of individuals and for the progress of society, we believe that there can be no doubt that public administration has the role of organizing the implementation and implementing the policies needed to guarantee these cultural rights.

Being aware of our research limits, for further development of the research on the line that we followed, a comparative study could be extended, on the degree of success at the graduation exams held by young high school graduates in EU member countries. We can then compare the degree of literacy, the index of democracy for these states and the degree of happiness / satisfaction of the citizens. Or we could return to national and regional level in order to compare the degree of success of the graduates from theoretical high schools with those from vocational arts high schools and those from technological and vocational crafts high schools in an attempt to see if those with higher exposure to arts disciplines do have better results as a whole.

³¹ <https://www.oecd.org/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-iii-9789264273856-en.htm> apud Țârcă Anca. 2021. *Hai cu starea de bine în școală*. (Ed. Corint Educațional. București.2021)

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