

# The Romanian education system in times of Covid-19 pandemic: an exploratory study

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has produced radical changes to the normal state of life, including to the education process. Under those circumstances, the education systems had to respond rapidly to challenges and diverse factors by implementing significant changes in the teaching-learning-assessment process. The pandemic showed the need for implementing coherent measures in order to outcome the long-term impact on the education process and the need for major changes in the process of teaching and learning. In this respect, the present study is an exploratory research aiming to assess the state of education in Romania and evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the education system. The study focused on three objectives: (1) to assess the state of education in Romania and to identify the main existing problems; (2) to identify the main factors that influenced the state and the well-functioning of the education system during the pandemic and (3) to identify the most appropriate long-term measures that should be implemented in order to improve the state of the education system and outcome the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the learning process. The study started from three hypotheses: (H1) The most important problem faced by the Romanian education system is the high school dropout rate; (H2) The factor with the highest negative impact on the education system during the pandemic was the low level of funding and (H3) The most important measure to outcome the negative impact of the pandemic is the development of digital competences of students and teachers. The study is based on qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research methodology consists of a document analysis conducted in order to investigate the state of education and an opinion survey conducted among civil servants from the Ministry of Education. The research revealed that the pandemic had a significant impact on the Romanian education system and, in particular, on the education process in rural areas. In addition, it led to the increase of the illiteracy rate and the school dropout rate. The teaching-learning-assessment process and the relationship between teachers and students were affected. The most important problem of the system was the high number of students from families at risk of poverty, who did not have access to the online teaching activities, which led to the rise of social inequalities. In order to reduce the impact of these negative effects, the main recommendations would be the digitalization of the education system, the development of digital skills among teachers and students, the increase in the level of the system's funding, and changes in the curriculum and in the teaching methods.