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## **What kind of models to implement change in education?**

### **THE PROJECT “EDUCATION 2000+” of the Center Education 2000+ Romania**

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*1. Introduction.* The project *Education 2000+* of the Center Education 2000+ Romania has been implemented in the Romanian educational system since 1999, on the basis of an active partnership with the Ministry of National Education. It has been ascertained that, although the reform components have obtained successful results at the conceptual level of their elaboration, the most difficult problem at this moment is the lack of *conceptual and active implementation models*. These models should be able to make the reform effective at the level of the intermediary and local institutions in the system.

The project has been conceived to last three years, and it aims at creating models of reform implementation at the intermediary (district) and local level. These models will be eventually multiplied at a national level. They are conceived to gradually improve:

- correlation between the reform projected at a central level and the due efforts at the local level;
- coordination as well as horizontal and vertical communication among the institutions that deal with the education reform implementation at intermediary and local level (more exactly District School Inspectorates, Teachers Centers (CCDs), Universities – their teacher training departments, Pedagogical Colleges, etc.);
- processes of institutional capacity and human resources development involved in change, in short, the quality of the managerial act and of the working or learning climate in educational institutions.

Concretely, the Project intends to support reform implementation at three levels:

- system level – initiating actions for institutional development and for creating human resources and new competencies to allow the inspectorates, the CCDs, the universities and colleges to support schools more ;
- school level – creating mechanisms on the strength of which school directors, teachers, students and parents have the possibility and are encouraged to take more responsibility for the educational quality improvement and for the improvement of education in general;
- community level – more involvement in school life.

In 1999, the project has been structured in two phases: the *preparatory phase* (January – August) and the *operational phase* (September – December). This presentation aims at reviewing the main steps of each phase, focusing then on some of the implementation *models* that the project suggests to the intermediary and local institutions.

**2. Education 2000+. Preparatory phase.** The preparatory phase of the project *Education 2000+* had in view three main objectives:

- a) accomplish the institutional and managerial infrastructure of the project;
- b) establish the working methodology for this infrastructure;
- c) stimulate the actions in these intermediary level key institutions (inspectorates, CCDs, faculties, pedagogical colleges, etc.) as well as in the pilot schools.

The following effective steps have been taken:

- a) institutional capacity and human resource analysis in those districts that had, at that moment, higher and upper teacher training education. Questionnaires were used and the results were presented in a synthetic report.
- b) Roma students and teachers' need analysis as well as the analysis of other human resources involved in educational projects for Roma students (this one was included in the above-mentioned analysis).
- c) carrying out infrastructure for the Project Education 2000+ implementation at the local level by:
  - selecting, on a contest basis, the pilot districts (called “implementation centers” – Bucharest, Constanta, Cluj, Galati, Hunedoara, Iasi, Sibiu and Timis)
  - establishing contacts and formal commitments with the key institutions at the level of those districts (inspectorates, CCDs, Pedagogical faculties, teacher training departments, other institutions and governmental or non-governmental organizations);
  - selecting *Working Groups*, made up of representatives of these institutions and capacitated to offer educational advice and professional support for the implementing actions at the local level;
  - training the working group members in view of accomplishing the local plans of project implementation; training activities for the key staff in pilot institutions (inspectors, experts from the CCDs, headmasters, heads of departments etc.)
  - performing need analysis in the pilot districts;
  - drawing up a list of criteria to select 10-12 pilot schools in each district;

- selecting a pilot schools network, on the basis of a school development plan competition;
- building up teams of headmasters and project coordinators from the pilot schools for local advisory activity (understand the Center Education 2000+ mission and strategy, as they are defined in the Project *Education 2000+*; project management; team building; school development/improvement; change management)
- accomplishing strategies and local implementing plans for each district for the years 1999-2000
- elaborating the reference terms for the pilot schools in the network
- developing working instruments for pilot schools: *The Guide of the Pilot School, Form for initial evaluation of pilot schools, Form for monitoring the project quality in pilot schools*
- providing the necessary equipment to each pilot institution, school or other kind of institution
- developing the necessary materials to draw up the next phases of the project.

### ***3. The activities of the operational phase***

The operational phase has been characterized, first of all, by the project “decentralization”. The activities in the framework of this project – coordinated, in the preliminary phase, from the Center, have been brought at the level of the pilot districts. As a result the activity of the key institutions and pilot schools became more dynamic.

#### ***3.1. Types of activities***

The activities of the operational phase in 1999 aimed at developing institutional capacity and building human resources. These two aspects had in view an improvement of the instructional and institutional management process, as well as the learning environment in schools.

*3.1.1.* From the point of view of their *location*, these activities were to be developed at three levels:

- a) Classroom level
- b) Pilot school level
- c) District level, i.e. the above mentioned key institutions

*3.1.2.* From the point of view of the *coverage degree*, there were:

- a) Activities that exclusively involve the teams of certain pilot schools or key institutions
- b) Inter-institutional activities to encourage projects developed in partnership.

*3.1.3.* As for the *categories of people* involved in training, we are referring to:

- a) School inspectors, CCD experts
- b) Managerial teams in schools (headmasters, members of the administration boards, heads of departments, etc.)
- c) Pre-university and university teachers

- d) Parents, community members, local leaders.

### ***3.2. Implementation models***

Up until now, we could consider two implementation models at the level of the 8 pilot counties. The strategy and the national plan of implementation ensure the coherence of these models. The models are:

- A model centered more on the school / key institution unity (team building; institutional development), doubled by an intense training of the staff involved in the change process.
- A model centered on training offered at the district level, to the staff working for the school or other institutions. The trainees will multiply the experience from the pilot schools.

## ***4. Operational concepts of implementation promoted by the Project Education 2000+***

Starting with the first year of its implementation, the project aimed at promoting a series of models at a national level. These models should not be copied but understood in terms of their internal mechanisms. They could also function as operational concepts to be multiplied in the processes of change implementation. We are going to present them under three categories: (a) institutional structures; (b) planning instruments; (c) implementation processes.

*4.1. The key institutions* are central or intermediary (district) institutions and organizations playing well-defined roles in reform implementation. The Ministry of Education has the clear functions of drawing up educational policies and ensuring the management and monitoring of the change processes. The key institutions at the intermediary level are the school inspectorates, the CCDs, the teacher training departments and the pedagogical colleges.

The main problem of each institution is to create institutional development plans, which should be able to ensure the progressive change of these institutions into “learning organizations”. Moreover, the future evolutions will certainly call for these institutions to build appropriate mechanisms of inter-institutional communication, to develop projects in partnership, to elaborate inter-institutional development plans.

*4.2. The Working Groups (of local educational advice)* are formed of representatives of various institutions involved in the project. These groups function on the basis of precise regulations and terms of reference. The members have clear responsibilities about the (a) coordination of the six program components (school development, teacher training, relations school-community, building up a network of key institutions, remedial education for Roma, public information on the changes in education); (b) Monitoring the activities in the pilot schools. Gradually, the project intends to offer professional training to the working group members so that they are able to take over educational advisory functions at the local level.

4.3 *The Pilot Schools* are schools selected on the basis of open competitions of school development plans. In general, they are representative for the ordinary schools in our educational system: urban/rural schools, schools in central (town, village) / marginal (disadvantageous) areas; homogeneous / heterogeneous (students belonging to the majority as well as to the ethnical and national minority groups) schools, etc. Each of the pilot schools has, at the moment, school development plans and plans especially designed for the implementation of the project Education 2000+. A member of the district working group is responsible for every pilot school; in addition, a member of a central working group will visit the schools once a month (see 4.14 below). The pilot schools generally develop activities of school improvement (see 4.6), teacher training, and establishing relations with other schools and with the community, improving the quality of education for Roma children. As a rule, the school headmaster is also the project manager in order to increase impact of the project in the school.

4.4. *The Resource School* is an important support for the activity of the working groups and pilot schools. These institutions, through the means of their staff, equipment and facilities, can be – as the name suggests – resource for development in other schools. They have already been constituted and will be sources of expertise for school and institutional improvement, as well as for stimulating human resource building in the pilot schools. The resource schools have the role of offering “in-service teacher training”, getting teachers from the pilot schools involved in the methods they are using.

4.5. *The Magnet School* is one of the models that aims at supporting the *project Education 2000+* and represents, as its name suggests, a school that can attract other schools by the innovating character of the methods it suggests. The Magnet School is considered as an organization with an advanced degree of institutional coherence. This school is expected:

- to have a clear school development plan, which should emphasize its mission, objectives and strategy, the scheduled specific activities
- to define the role of the community it belongs to, and its relations with other institutions
- to have an “institutional personality”, able to individualize that school from other schools
- to attract other schools by the innovations it suggests and by the support it can offer in promoting them.

Other educational systems (the American or the Dutch ones, for example) define these magnet schools as institutions that focus on a certain specific: for instance, intensive study of some subjects, a choice of a specific educational type, etc.

4.6. *School Improvement* is a complex process that implies a deep change of the working and learning environment in a school. School improvement aims at aspects of the school life such as: shared management, appropriate responsibilities for the school members, active commissions for curricular or problem areas, stimulating the learning process, in-service teacher training, organizing the administration board, students taking

part in decision-making processes, finding the most effective ways of involving the parents and the community in school life, etc.

4.7. *Institutional Capacity Building* – at the pilot schools level, or at the key institutions level – implies the development of experimental organigrams in the key institutions or in schools, new positions designed to ensure the role and function specifications, clear distribution of the managerial tasks, elaborating high quality management mechanisms in order to ensure the activity planning, development, monitoring and evaluation, the development of mechanisms for conflict or institutional crises resolution.

4.8. *The Inter-Institutional Development Plan* specifies the mission, long-term and short-term objectives, and predictable outcomes, as well as the actions that a group of institutions (maybe future consortia) has in view, as a result of their common aims and interests. These common plans would remove many of the present parallelisms, discontinuances and incoherencies in the processes of change implementation at the local level. They would also provide a better use of human resources.

Concretely, the Project *Education 2000+* has been encouraging and financially supporting the building up of *Consortia for Educational Advice and Support*, which should support the local processes of change implementation.

4.9. *Teacher training focused on school*. Teacher training is one of the main areas of every reform and it implies a great deal of challenging dilemmas and innovations.

One of the most important difficulty in this field is the training centered on the individual and not on the team. Let's analyze this aspect. It is well known the fact that during the in-service training, the teachers are formed outside the institution and the team they belong to. As a result of this kind of training, these teachers might change their vision. But they go back then to their schools where the other teachers are not accustomed or trained to accept and share that new vision. The exceptions to this rule are rare and insignificant. The teaching staff of a school cannot change unless more than a few teachers attend various kind of in-service teacher training courses. Our hypothesis is that it is necessary to have a coherent training of the whole teaching staff in a school; moreover it is necessary to train the teachers so that they can become a real team. Team-building courses are not enough. Other methods are also needed: inter-institutional communication, common activity planning, negotiation, development and evaluation, etc. There are specific aspects common to all the subject didactics: cooperative learning, team teaching, pair work, etc. As a general rule, each school should assume a set of procedures and values, which will provide the coherence of the implementation activity. The school-centered, team-centered training would have many advantages. The most important are:

- building a sense of common mission
- creating a common organizational culture
- assuming a set of common values

4.10. *Formal structuring of the relation school-community*. In most of the areas where we are working now, the relation between school and community has significantly improved. The local authorities, the church, other people interested in school life have

established an open collaboration with the school. For the year 2000 it is extremely important to encourage the setting up of *formal school-community associations*, which should be able to identify and meet the needs each school has, related to the needs of the community. The objective of our program for the next two years is to encourage community schools in Romania. The community would support these schools and, at the same time, they would represent a place of continuous education for the community. This might lead to a revival of the continuous education, especially in the rural areas.

*4.11. Formal structuring of the relation school-parents.* The improvement of the relation between parents and school – an essential objective for the year 1999 – is obvious at the pilot schools we are working with. This would give the possibility of a more effective multiplication of the following experiences – which are new for our educational system, but proved to be successful in other systems:

- parents' involvement in organizing and developing school activities (teaching, watching, etc.) and extra-curricular activities (cultural, sports, travel, etc.)
- activities of the type “parents playing the role of a teacher”
- parents involvement in the decision making process in school
- permanent informing of parents about their children's school results
- parents involvement in collecting supplementary funds for the school
- parents involvement in student and school evaluation activities
- considering parents as the bearers of the school message in the relations with the community

*4.12. “Second Chance”* – this expression defines the remedial educational program addressed mainly to the young Roma who dropped out of school at different ages and who are over school age. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we are offering these young people a bivalent form of schooling. The educational process takes place in a vocational school, where these young people have the opportunity to finish their basic education and, at the same time, to learn a trade specific to their ethnic group. The program has already started in three of the pilot districts (Iasi, Galati and Cluj), and in other districts such as Timis, Suceava, Hunedoara.

*4.13. Supporting teachers' associations.* This activity has had in view, mainly this year, the setting up of a teachers' association that should focus on stimulating and improving children's education in communities with/of Roma. The association will be supported according to its interest in solving the specific schooling problems of Roma children on the one hand, and in supporting its members' training on the other hand. The support offered to this kind of associations will also depend on the funds they will be able to get from other organizations.

*4.14. Monitoring conceived as technical assistance.* One of the most elaborated and effective aspects of this project is its monitoring. There is an independent team monitoring the pilot schools, at the moment. We will soon involve in the project a highly qualified team to monitor the activities from the key institutions. The monitoring of the pilot schools started in October, by using initial evaluation / self-evaluation forms. Once a month, each school receives the visit of a monitor who follows the evolution of that

school according to a set of qualitative and qualitative indicators, elaborated for each program component. The monthly activity is conceived as one of technical assistance for the pilot schools. The monitoring of the key institutions begins in December. The project management will use people from important administrative position in the system (Inspectors General or Deputy Inspectors, Directors of CCDs, university professors). They will evaluate those institutions activity in the framework of the project and they will also provide technical assistance.

## ***5. New elements for the strategy of the year 2000***

*5.1. The Center Education 2000+.* From 1999 the project is coordinated by a new foundation – part of the Soros Open Network– named *Center Education 2000+*. This center functions as *a national center of educational programs elaboration and implementing at regional and national level*. It develops various activities such as:

- offering technical assistance for supporting the implementation processes in various educational domains (school development, curriculum implementing, partnership in education, remedial education, risk-children education, etc.)
- drawing up educational strategies and policies, on request
- offering technical assistance for the elaboration and development of educational projects initiated in schools or in other institutions, etc.

### *5.2. Priorities of the Project Education 2000+*

*5.2.1. New program directions.* In 2000 the following directions have been added to the program:

- a) co-financing a Master Course in educational policies at the University of Iasi, in view of developing human resources necessary to this domain of educational sciences
- b) supporting courses focused on the new didactics in the pedagogical colleges
- c) developing school-based curriculum and supporting materials for this curriculum component
- d) improving rural education, program that aimed at: (a) institutional capacity building in rural schools, (b) human resources development and giving qualification to the teachers who are not specialized in a certain subject; (c) improving the educational process in schools.

*5.2.2. A new procedure of “motivating financing” of pilot schools and institutions.* In 1999 also the financing of pilot schools and institutions was differentiated. However, starting with 2000 the financing of these institutions encompassed three new aspects:

- a) the form of financing will took into account the results from 1999;
- b) the financing were offered to the schools according to the quality of their school development plans and the implementation plans; the better the project, the more financing; thus, the financing was a motivating one;
- c) the stronger the capacity of a school or institution to acquire supplementary money or to initiate various activities of co-financing with third parties, the bigger the financing;

- d) the financing of those schools that intend to initiate partnerships or to create networks with other districts or schools.

5.2.3. *Institutionalize new forms of innovation.* In the framework of the project initiatives meant to have a systemic impact were institutionalized. These initiatives were:

- a) creating *national centers for teacher training on educational innovation*, located in the schools using those innovations (for example, a first center of training in the field of “remedial teaching” has been created at School 4 in Pucioasa); these centers offer the teachers and managers “packs” of training courses for different periods; the advantage is that the training packs take place in the situational context where the innovation in discussion is put into practice; we intend to create, on the basis of a competition, these kinds of centers at different educational institutions able to provide competitive training packs; involve the school inspectorates and research and upper education institutions in creating these centers; we also intend to create these kinds of centers for school improvement, education for/in Roma communities, school-community-parents, distance training, etc.
- b) introduced the *summer schools of the Center Education 2000+ on various themes of interest for teachers (disciplinary didactics, interactive learning/teaching, school-decision curriculum, etc.)*; the participants were selected, on the one hand, from the pilot schools and , on the other hand, on competition basis, starting from intention letters and CVs; the courses have been announced in spring and the universities in the project involved themselves in organizing them.

6. **Conclusions.** The most important issues in the project for the year 2000 have been:

- multiplication of the acquired experience
- monitoring the quality of the processes developed in the framework of the project
- introducing motivating mechanisms to finance the institutions involved
- financing the institutions involved according to their capacity of getting funds from third parties
- implementing various, dynamic selection mechanisms, to encourage and support the most challenging innovations at the national level.