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**TEACHING STAFF'S PERCEPTION IN THE PRE-ACADEMIC
EDUCATION ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The quality of education represents a provider's range of characteristics and his/her program through which the beneficiaries' expectations and the quality standards are fulfilled. Quality in education contains a set of principles and practices specific to the educational environment with all its components: school climate, material endowment, curriculum, relationships between teachers, students and community etc. A quality school aims a set of factors, not only a lesson, a program, a class or a teacher, the indicators of a quality school are obvious in various contexts: during the lesson, in the methodical activity, in the educational relations, in the school documents etc. The present paper has the purpose to identify the perception of the teaching staff in the pre-academic education regarding the quality of education, aiming at finding some enhancement measures for it. By means of the inquiry based questionnaire, we have highlighted the subjective and objective aspects which characterise a quality education. The applied questionnaire required the expression of the teachers' opinions from different levels of pre-academic education concerning: the beneficiaries' expectations, the students' school success, the involved human resource, the didactic process, relation school-community (the subjective side of approaching quality) and the quality standards, unitary for all the educational units (the objective side of approaching quality).

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1. Introduction

In these past thirty years, Romanian education has been undergoing the process of reform, a process felt by all those involved in the formation of new generations, at all levels. The reform aimed at enhancing the quality of education for the entire education system, but also Romania's alignment to the European educational standards, by developing harmonious, complex, integrity personalities, prepared both for professional insertion and for adapting to rapid changes in all aspects of life in general.

1.1. Defining quality in education

The quality of education is defined in legislative terms in Law no. 87/2006 for the approval of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on quality assurance of education (Art. 3): set of actions and characteristics of the education-providing institution, which offers study programs that meet both quality standards and expectations of beneficiaries. Quality education is based on the interdependence between providers and beneficiaries involved in the education offer. There is an interdependence between an organization and its suppliers, and mutual interest strengthens the institutional capacity to create value.

In defining quality in education, it is important to highlight the following two aspects “a. in the educational institutions actions are carried out to shape human personality (...); b. the products of the educational institutions are objectified in the learning outcomes (...)” (Trocaru et al, 2015, pp. 530-531).

Quality in education (QEÎ) - represents:

Attribute, characteristic, property, set of characteristics of a use value - process, product, subject, educational service, which expresses the degree to which they satisfy the social / individual need / interest. The science whose object (field) of study is quality is called *qualitology*. (Bocoș et al., 2016, p. 175)

Quality education is considered "the foundation on which a society can be built, in the direction of personal and professional development of the individual, as well as in the direction of social, cultural, economic and political development" (Catalano, 2020, p. 60). Education is able to ensure the necessary conditions for a complete and useful development, keeping in mind that the success of educational action depends on "an axiological system that promotes specific values, consistent with society and the quality of education: democracy, creativity, humanism, equity, moral and intellectual autonomy, optimal social and professional insertion, peace, solidarity, inclusion, quality of interpersonal relationships, tolerance" (Catalano, 2013, as cited in Catalano, 2020, p. 60).

1.2. Methodology of quality assurance in education

According to Emergency Ordinance 75/2005, education quality assurance is mainly focused on learning outcomes, expressed in terms of items of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are obtained by completing and completing a level of education or curriculum. The methodology of quality assurance in education is based on the relationships established between the following components: a) criteria, b) standards and reference standards, c) performance indicators, d) qualifications. Quality in education is

obtained through the following processes: a) effective planning and achievement of expected learning outcomes, b) monitoring of results, c) internal evaluation of results, d) external evaluation of results, e) continuous improvement of results in education. The components and processes of quality assurance and the relations between them are differentiated according to: a) the level of education and, as the case may be, of the qualification; b) the type of organization providing education; c) the type of study program.

Quality management ensures the quality of learning programs and promotes continuous improvement, these being the. In accordance with Law 87/2006, quality assurance of education requires a permanent concern for learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, values, attitudes), developed along three fundamental areas, for which specific criteria are established (Catalano, 2020, pp. 66-67):

A. *Institutional capacity* can be defined by the following criteria:

- a. institutional, administrative, managerial structures;
- b. material endowment and optimization of material use;
- c. human resources and capacity of the institution to attract human resources outside the institution and outside the country, in accordance with the law.

B. *Educational effectiveness* consists in mobilizing resources in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes through:

- a. content of the study programs;
- b. learning outcomes;
- c. employability;
- d. financial activity of the organization.

C. *Quality management* it is concretized by the following criteria:

- a. strategies and procedures for quality assurance;
- b. procedures for initiating, monitoring and periodically reviewing programs and activities carried out;
- c. objective and transparent procedures for evaluating learning outcomes;
- d. procedures for periodic evaluation of the teaching staff's quality;
- e. accessibility of adequate learning resources;
- f. systematically updated database on internal quality assurance;
- g. transparency of public interest information, including the part relating to study programs and, where appropriate, the diplomas and qualifications offered;
- h. functionality of the quality assurance structures in education, according to the law;
- i. accuracy of the reports provided by the legislation in force.

In order to promote the educational system and its orientation towards quality, it is necessary that all the components related to quality assurance (criteria, indicators, standards, descriptors) be known and applied in a unitary way.

2. Problem Statement

In education, the quality indicator is "a qualitative expression of the description of the objective or impact of an educational process", according to the *Praxiological Dictionary of Pedagogy* (Bocoș et al., 2017 p. 34). The use of quality indicators ensures the effective measurement of the compliance degree of

educational services with standards, by quantifying the quality parameters in education: functionality, reliability, preventive and corrective maintenance, usefulness of processes, actions and results obtained, aesthetic form of actions, operational efficiency, rational consumption of resources, technical-economic characteristics, etc. These quality indicators in education can be grouped into three categories (Bocoș et al., 2017).

“1. Internal indicators (curriculum, human and financial resources, educational environment, educational processes, school life);

2. Relevance indicators (utility, impact on educational needs, autonomy, responsibility, skills, participation in education, integration into the labour market);

3. Interface indicators (psychological, social aspects, satisfaction, visibility, partnerships)”. (p. 34).

Obviously, all educational indicators (global and partial), education development indicators, school plan indicators, evaluation indicators, performance indicators, etc. are relevant in analysing the quality of education, which makes it difficult to identify truly significant quality indicators.

3. Research Questions

Quality education is considered “the basis on which we can build a society, in the direction of individual personal and professional development and in the direction of social, cultural, economic and political development” (Catalano, 2020, p. 60). Starting from this confirmed reality, this research proposes to answer the following question: Which is the degree of observance and fulfillment of the criteria and indicators of a quality education in the perception of the teaching staff in the pre-academic educational system?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research consists in identifying the perception of the teaching staff in the pre-academic educational system referring to the quality of education, having in view the future implementation of some enhancement measures. The proposed objective aimed at: the analysis of the teaching staff's perception regarding the importance of the identified quality indicators: the delimitation degree of the respective indicators achievement.

5. Research Methods

The achievement of the research supposed the use of the inquiry method based on questionnaire, applied to a number of 50 teaching staff who activates at different educational cycles: pre-school, primary, secondary and high school. The inquiry based on questionnaire supposes a direct exchange of information between the researcher and the subjects under investigation in which the data are collected (opinions, facts, educational needs, interests, motivations, knowledge, behaviors, desires, aspirations etc), connected to certain phenomena, situations and manifestations” (Bocoș, 2003, p. 51). The inquiry method represents “a research method of interactive and extensive type, which supposes a direct exchange of information between the researcher and the subjects under investigation” (Bocoș, 2020, p. 44).

We applied the technique of the indirect inquiry, the respondent completing online the answers in writing by means of Google Forms. The questions addressed to the respondents (14 in number) were of several types. According to the content, the questionnaire applied contained both opinion questions and knowledge questions. From the perspective of the answers recording form there were close questions which “allow only a single variant of answer, according to the questioned person’s opinion, from several possible variants, explained and fixed in the questionnaire” and mixed, which “contain besides the set of explained variants another one of the type *Others ...* (Bocoș, 2020, p. 46). The questionnaire was organised on six sections, corresponding to the criteria and indicators of quality: A. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries’ actual and future needs; B. The students’ educational success; C. The didactic process; D. The human resource; E. The relation school-family-community; F. The material endowment of the school; G. The observance of ARACIP quality standards. Each section solicited the respondents to identify the presence and level of observance of the set of characteristics and manifestations according to which the quality of education is assessed.

6. Findings

The first question of the questionnaire solicited the participating teaching staff to express the opinion referring to the quality of education offered in school. There were 37% positive answers from 74% of the subjects, 12 answered negatively (24%), and one subject (2%) answered I do not know. We will present below the significant results obtained connected to the set of quality indicators, identified by the teaching staff participating in the inquiry.

6.1. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries’ present and future needs

In order to identify the achievement level of this indicator, the following question was stated: *The education offered by school succeeds to achieve the following* (Table 1):

Table 1. The indicators for the satisfaction of the beneficiaries’ actual and future needs

Column Heading	in a very high extent	in high extent	sufficient	in a small extent
To form key competences	16%	46%	20%	18%
To form specific competences	6%	44%	26%	24%
To satisfy the needs of the direct beneficiaries of education	10%	32%	40%	12%
To satisfy the needs of the indirect beneficiaries of education	8%	32%	46%	14%
To determine interest and motivation for learning	0%	24%	42%	34%

To encourage initiative, innovation and creativity	10%	30%	38%	20%
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6.2. The students' educational success

We proposed ourselves the identification of *the factors which contribute to the students' educational success*, obtaining their ranking:

1. *The activation of the student's motivation for learning*
2. *Offering learning situations adapted to the children's needs*
3. *The degree of the parents' involvement and help*
4. *The teachers' professional preparation and involvement*
5. *The teaching process achieved in school*
6. *Organising the activity in blended learning format*
7. *Making the students responsible for their own school path*

6.3. The teaching process

The teaching staff has appreciated the importance of the educational process components which influence the quality of the educational act. The descriptive statistics are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. The importance of the educational process components

The component of the educational process	High importance	Average importance	Low importance
Offering learning activities which should lead to the formation/development of competences	58%	34%	8%
Focus on the achievement of the lesson objectives (planning and effective achievement of results)	26%	46%	10%
Approaching all the contents of the school curricula	18%	48%	34%
Objective evaluation	58%	30%	12%
Offering operative feed-back	62%	24%	14%
Evaluation/self-evaluation of results	54%	34%	12%
Application of some regulating/corrective measures	42%	36%	22%

Regarding the educational contents, the high school students' opinion reveals "that teachers are preoccupied to offer contents related to the modern curricular theory requirements, but these contents are much focused on the teaching process and their logic and continuity and less on diversity, applicability or students' needs" (Țiru, 2016, pp. 43-44).

6.4. The human resource

The teaching staff were asked to self- assess their own educational performance on a scale from 1 (minimal level) to 5 (maximal level). We pursued the following aspects, for which we obtained the results mentioned below (Table 3):

Table 3. The result of self-assessment

Aspects	Level 5	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
I am well prepared	20 (40%)	27 (54%)	6 (12%)	-	-
I succeed in stirring the students' interest	17 (34%)	28 (56%)	5 (10%)	-	-
I am understanding/indulgent with the students	10 (20%)	30 (60%)	10 (20%)	-	-
I use interactive teaching-learning methods	22 (44%)	18 (36%)	10 (20%)	-	-
I make my meaning clear to all my students	26 (52%)	21 (42%)	3 (6%)		
I do not respect the students/ I use an inadequate language	-	-	-	46 (92%)	4 (8%)
I am demanding	6 (12%),	20 (40%)	14 (28%)	10 (20%)	
I always search for educational resources	24 (48%)	22 (44%)	4 (8%)		
I adapt information to the prevailing learning style and to the class level	27 (54%)	19 (38%)	4 (8%)		
It is necessary to attend some courses for the development of psycho/pedagogical competences	19 (38%)	17 (34%)	14 (28%)		
It is necessary to attend some courses for the development of the specialised competences	14 (28%)	16 (32%)	20 (40%)		
I use the competences acquired during the training courses in the classroom	20 (40%)	21 (42%)	9 (18%)		

6.5. The relation school-family-community

The teaching staff has enumerated the partner institutions in the achieved projects (Table 4):

Table 4. Parteners

Institution	Yes	No	I don't know
a) Local Council and Mayor's Office	47	2	1
b) Firms	27	7	16
c) Sanitary authorities	31	2	17
d) Church	39	4	7
e) Police	42	2	6
f) Non-governmental organisations	39	2	9
c) Foreign partners	38	6	6

6.6. The material endowment of the school

The teachers' degree of contentment regarding the technical-material endowment existing in the school where they are teaching, is presented in the graphical representation below (Figure 1):

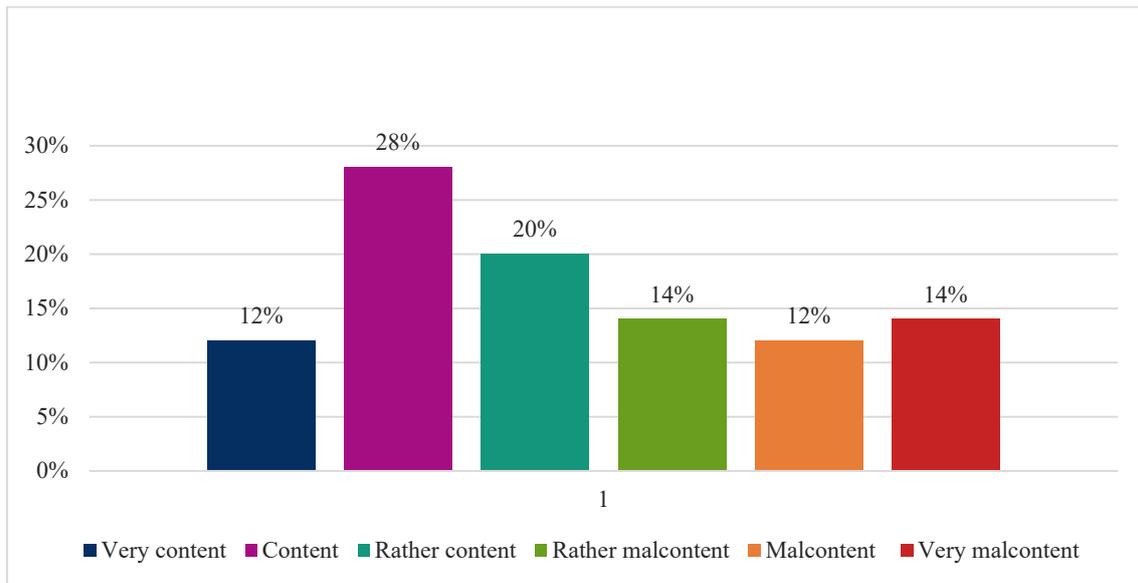


Figure 1. The degree of contentment regarding the technical-material endowment

6.7. The observance of ARACIP quality standards

The question had as purpose *the identification of the teachers' knowledge level concerning the three fields of quality assurance: the institutional capacity, the educational efficiency and quality management*. As seen in Figure 2 below, from the results obtained, we can conclude that most of the interrogated teachers possess knowledge about quality assurance:

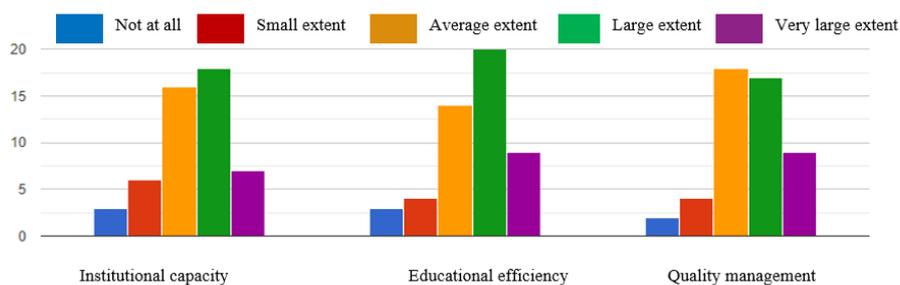


Figure 2. The teachers' knowledge level concerning the three fields of quality assurance

7. Conclusion

As a consequence of the answers record and the interpretation of the data collected after the achieved quantitative research, we can reach the following conclusions:

- we identified the indicators of a qualitative education, simultaneously with the teaching staff's perception referring to the importance and relevance of the respective indicators;
- we outlined the achievement degree of the criteria and representative indicators for the assurance of an optimal level of education in the Romanian pre-academic educational system.

The table 5 below centralises all the researched aspects, namely: ranking of indicators of a qualitative educational system (according to relevance) and their achievement degree, in the teaching staff's perception.

Table 5. The centralisation of the results

Identified Indicators	Relevance Degree	Achievement Degree
The satisfaction of the beneficiaries' actual and future needs	98%	The procent 50% of the teachers consider that these needs are satisfied.
The human resource	96%	Most of the teachers appreciate their own didactic performance in the interval 4-5.
The relation school-family-community	96%	In proportion of 70% it is concretised in diverse forms.
The material endowment of the school	96%	Less than 50% of the respondents are content and very content with the material conditions in schools
The didactic process	94%	Offering learning activities which should lead to the formation/development of competences, objective evaluation and operative feedback are very important elements.
The students' educational success	80%	It depends in a very large extent on the activation of the student's learning motivation and offering learning situations adapted to the children's needs.
The observance of ARACIP quality standards	75%	The standards are known and respected in a large extent.

By means of the achieved study, we have a clear perspective on the quality of education at the level of pre-academic educational system in the Caraș-Severin County and we can imagine the way of intervention concerning the improvement of the educational process.

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