QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ETHICS MANAGEMENT IN PRE-UNIVERSITARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Journalistic publications in Romania have recorded an increasing number of abuse cases in schools. More and more teachers have become subjects in the files examined by the National Anticorruption Department, either because of the irregularities recorded at the national examinations, or because of other immoral activities conducted outside of school. In order to stop this "TREND", The Ministry of Education and Research decided to establish in 2011 **The National Ethics Council for School Education** *and to publish The Ethics Code for School Education in 2014. In the same year, ethics committees have been established at the school level, and these committees have drafted management plans and activity plans. At present, the work of these committees is formal and very little visible. In fact, the work is hampered by the lack of documentation and superficial knowledge of legal regulations that should be the base of the decisions taken by the committee. There are no procedures, the members of these committees had not been trained in the field of ethics management and, most of all, customs are often confused with the law and any action is analyzed according to the school's traditions and not according to regulations.*

In some schools a merger of the quality assurance committee with the committee of integrity / ethics is considered. This is because the first committee has a number of documents that can serve as base for the ethics committee documentation. There are, however, institutions that are trying to keep the two committees with separate responsibilities in order to work together to correlate the documentation for the school. This article deals with a critical analysis of the current state and the perspectives regarding the ethical management and the quality assurance management in secondary education institutions.

Keywords: *quality management, quality assurance, ethics management.*

Classification JEL: M12

Introduction

The concept of ethics management is relatively new in Romania. A proof of this statement is the fact that a web search of the materials containing the key words "ethics management" will lead to no more than 634 results [*www.google.ro, 04.06.2017, 10:37 am*], among which only 23 can be considered useful for clearing the concept. Whereas, the search for the concept "quality management", leads to identifying more than 221.000 results [*www.google.ro, 04.06.2017, 10:39 am*]. If we add to these key words the field of research of this article, "in pre-university education ", the results of the first concept analysed will rise significantly to more than 11.900, among which over 80% refer to misuses caught in journalistic articles, [*www.google.ro, 04.06.2017, 10:42 am*], whereas for the second concept, the results will decrease to 3.070 [*www.google.ro, 04.06.2017, 10:46 am*].

At the educational level, it is observed the necessity to realise a convergence between the quality standards and the work tools of the ethics committee, in other words, between the quality management and ethics management [Mureşan V., *Etica şi asigurarea calităţii (Ethics and quality insurance)*, 2010, published in the magazine QAR, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 134-135] in pre-university education institutions.

The methodological enterprise
The article is structured under the following points:
- ➢ Theoretical aspects regarding the quality management and ethics management;
- ➢ Convergence points of the quality management and ethics management;

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➢ The current stage of implementation of the quality management and ethics management in pre-university education institutions;

➢ Perspectives regarding the quality management and ethics management.

The type of research activity:

• the theoretical research in which the concepts are analysed: quality management and ethics management;

• applied research in which examples adapted to the issue at hand are highlighted.

Regarding the article "Ethics management and quality management in re-university education institutions", the enterprise consists of checking the scientific theories regarding the ethics management and quality management and the implementation of these theories in the practice of pre-university teaching.

The objectives of the research are:

➢ thoroughness of the concept of "ethics management";

➢ identifying the meeting points of the ethics management and quality management in pre-university education institutions;

➢ the current stage of ethics management and quality management in pre-university education institutions;

➢ the perspectives of the two management forms in pre-university institutions of Romania;

The set of problems of the research:

➢ the present research regards a synthesis of the theoretical ideas published on this subject in the branch literature, consolidated with an empirical analysis of those ideas.

The methods and techniques of choosing information used in the scientific research are: the comparative method, the descriptive method and the hands-on observation method.

Research questions:

1. What are the convergence points of the quality management and ethics management?

2. What is the current stage of implementation of the ethics management system, respectively, the quality management system, in the pre-university education institutions in Romania?

3. To what extent can a merger of the two be realised at the level of pre-university education in Romania?

Research hypotheses:

1. At the level of pre-university education institutions there are committees that deal with the quality management and ethics management.

2. There is coherence in implementing the specific tools of the quality management and ethics management.

3. The two forms of management can be dealt with by the quality management committee, because there are many convergence points between the quality management and the ethics management.

Theoretical considerations

Quality management represents the set of activities that have as purpose the reaching of a number of objectives with an optimum usage of resources. [Dragolea L.L., *Managementul calităţii - funcţii şi principia (Quality management – functions and principles)*, www.oeconomica.uab.ro/upload/lucrari/820063/32.pdf, *04.06.2017*, 13:45 pm]. The main specific activities of quality management are: planning, realising, evaluating and revising. The quality of activities is evaluated according to a series of indicators named performance indicators that aim increasing the inner force of the organisation, the capacity of the organisation to adapt to the market demands, respectively those of the beneficiaries and the increase of the capacity of the institution to adapt to the requirements of the external regulations.

Ethics management is the management of all the elements linked to the moral life of an organisation and deals with elaborating guiding instruments that contribute to the ethical development of the organisation, as well as the methods that can be used to determine in which direction the organisation should develop. "Ethics management involves the description and analysis of the current ethical situation, the determination of the desired situation and the setting of measures that can be used to reach it." [Gavrilescu L., *Decizia etica: dificultatati si provocari*, (Ethical Decision : difficulties and challenges) www.humanistica.ro/anuare/2011/Continut/Art%2025.pdf, *04.06.2017*, 10:20].

The values promoted by the quality management are: optimisation, efficiency, acceptance and legitimacy. [Mureşan V. *Etica şi asigurarea calităţii (Ethics and Quality Insurance)*, Quality Assurance Review, vol. 2, no. 2, September 2010, p. 135]

The values promoted by the ethics management are: clarity, consistency, sustainability, approval, accomplishment, transparency and criticism. [Kaptein M. *Developing and testing a measure for ethical culture of organization: the corporate ethical virtue model,* Journal of Organizational Behaviour, no. 29, 2008, p. 925-929]

The main instruments of QM are: quality standards, institutions/agencies of authorisation/accreditation/periodic evaluation, quality insurance committees, communication systems regarding the quality management, training courses concerning quality insurance procedures, good practice examples.

The main instruments of EM are: ethical codes, ethics committees, national ethics councils, ethical communication systems, ethics training courses, ethical organisational culture.

Convergence points of quality management and ethics management

The empirical analysis of the situation in the pre-university education institutions allows us to identify a few common points of the two management forms. Among them we can mention: they both aim improving the relationships between employees, between school and its organisational partners, between teachers and students/parents; both aim increasing the quality of the educational services provided by the institution and diminishing the risks to which the school is exposed due to unethical behaviour of some employees.

The current stage of implementation of the two management forms in the pre-university education institutions

At European level there are concerns for establishing some common standards of quality insurance. Good practice examples are offered by Great Britain, a country renowned for the quality of its educational services. Nevertheless, there can be identified two styles of dealing with quality management in Europe: the Anglo-Saxon style, a style considered rough, based on procedures, national councils that evaluate periodically the pre-university education institutions and that can apply sanctions to the institutions that have major non-conformities; and the Northern countries style, considered mild, based on forming an institutional culture of quality.

Romania took the Anglo-Saxon style in 2005. At present, there is no pre-university education institution that has not been evaluated at least once by the Romanian Agency for Quality Insurance. Also, at least formally, all schools have implemented the quality insurance system of educational services.

As far as the ethics management is concerned, in the countries of Northern and Western Europe there is a culture of ethics in the pre-university education institutions. Also, the instruments used are available for those interested, only a web click away. In the South-East of Europe, the concept of ethics management is relatively new. In Romania, in 2011, The National Council for Ethics in Pre-university Education was founded and in 2014 *The Ethical Code for Pre-university* education was launched for public debate. Starting with the academic year 2014-2015, some schools have adapted the code for their organisation and have published on their sites the personalised code. In the same year, 2014, at the level of some school organisations, ethics committees were founded, named in some schools: integrity

committees, committees that have elaborated management plans, have established objectives and have organised activities planned all through the academic year.

Analysing the web sites of high schools in Romania, we can observe that, when it comes to quality insurance over 83% of high schools in Romania provide information regarding the activity of the quality insurance committee, whereas only 36% of them have created pages for the ethics committee and have published information related to its activity on the site.

Moreover, hands-on observation makes me state that the most programmed actions of the two committees are formal, sporadic, and at the level of the pre-university education institutions, there is neither a culture of quality, nor one of ethics. There are still traditions, considered ethical, that lead the school activity and contributes to creating the organisational climate.

Perspectives regarding quality management and ethics management

Both the quality insurance committee and the ethics committee have as responsibilities planning of activities, elaborating procedures, realising activities, evaluating and revising them. Taking into account these responsibilities and the convergence points of the two management forms, many educational institutions considered merging the two committees. Thus, in the following period of time, the procedures elaborated at the school level by the quality insurance committee will be revised by the ethics committee, a mission far easier than that of elaborating other procedures from nothing. In addition, in case of elaborating another set of procedures, the probability of some procedures to come into conflict with existing procedures, would be great.

Although we consider the activity of the ethics committee should be separate by the activity of the quality insurance committee, we tend to agree that, for the time being, the two committees should collaborate in revising the school documents, and afterwards to work separately and even to set action to mutually evaluate their activities.

Conclusions

The study integrated in the article *Quality management and ethics management in pre-university education institutions*, proves that at the level of pre-university education institutions there are committees that deal with quality management and ethics management. If the activity of quality insurance committee is visible online, the activity of the ethics committee is very little visible both online and at school level.

The instruments used by both committees are copied from the good practice examples but are used sporadically. For this reason, there is no quality culture, respectively, no ethics culture in educational institutions.

Although it is advisable that, at the beginning, the quality insurance committee and the ethics committee to collaborate at school level to revise school documents, it is best that their activity does not overlap, and the committees do not merge.

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