

The Impact of Human Resources Management Policies on Teachers’ Performance in Pre-university Education: A Comparative Analysis of Romania and Other States

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This paper aims to analyze the impact of human resource management policies in pre-university education systems in Romania, compared with other European states, namely: United Kingdom, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. Firstly, SWOT analysis of the pre-university education systems were designed, then a questionnaire was applied to teachers and school managers from each of the six countries, in order to highlight the positive aspects, along with those that can be improved. The results of the present research indicated the positive attitude of teachers and school managers towards the most relevant aspects of human resources management policies developed in their states.

Keywords: Human resources management, pre-university education system, SWOT analysis, teachers’ performance.

1. Introduction

In the modern dynamic world, education systems must face a continuous adaptive and evolutive process, beginning with the government policies related to human resource management and continuing with their diligent implementing, in order to ensure the highest performance level for employees, educational beneficiaries and for schools.

Viewed as a subsystem of the social system, the education system in Romania represents a component of the general social structure. Being marked by a historical and national character, it evolves simultaneously with the cultural development of the country, being subject to successive reform measures, and to structural and functional renewal. The changes mainly concerned the related legislative framework, the curricular offer and the school restructuring.

It consists of hierarchically organized institutions, governed by a series of principles in the structure of which we find the Ministry of National Education, school inspectorates at the regional level, educational units at the local level and other institutions for educational purposes.

2. Human resources management of the pre-university education system

In the recent years, through the involvement of the Ministry of Education and Research and with the support of the civil society representatives, but also of other development partners, a series of important reforms for the pre-university education system have been initiated. One of the issues of permanent relevance, faced by the Romanian pre-university education, is represented by the human resource considered as a main actor in building a sustainable democratic society. Therefore, an efficient management of human resources in education requires a strategic and coherent approach, which is materialized in a complex of measures for recruitment, selection, employment and retention of valuable employees. It also involves the initial and continuous training of human resources, but also the

existence of a system for evaluating performance, stimulating employees and rewarding meritorious results.

The pre-university education institutions are financed by the state, from the local budgets of the administrative-territorial units to which they belong or can be additionally financed by the Ministry of National Education, only if they have obtained special results in the field of inclusion or in the field of school performance².

3. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Romania

The SWOT analysis is attributed to management consultant Albert S. Humphrey, who undertook research at Stanford University between the 1960s and 1970s to find out what corporate planning failed. The research was funded by the Fortune 500 magazine (a magazine that makes up the top 500 richest people in the United States).

The first stage in performing the SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system is the inventory of qualities and weaknesses that characterize the internal components of the education system, after which we will move on to the analysis of opportunities and threats, which represent external factors.

The SWOT analysis of the education system is performed in order to identify and assign factors (positive or negative), thus having the opportunity to make an objective analysis of the current education system and giving the opportunity to establish regulatory measures, taking into account the reality Romanian education. This approach aims to streamline measures intended to reform the education system.

Starting from the study of the specialized literature and capitalizing on the experience gained during the teaching activities, the SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Romania considers the following criteria:

- Political, legislative and social context;
- Human resource³

Strengths:

- the existence, at the level of the education system, of an elite body of highly qualified teachers concerned both with the quality of the educational act and with the elaboration of scientific papers, specialized publications, new methodologies and textbooks;
- the possibility for teachers to improve themselves through accredited continuous training courses, as well as the improvement of teachers through teaching degrees, postgraduate courses, doctoral studies;
- the increasing number of specialists in educational management, due to the participation of many teachers in the master's and doctoral programs offered by the university centers in the country;
- school administration by local communities;

Weaknesses:

- teacher mobility fluctuations;
- poor motivation of young people to embrace their teaching career;
- political involvement at all levels of educational management (inspectorate, school, etc.);
- the decreasing number of students, due to the low birth rate;
- lack of coherent policies and a vision on the education system;
- legislation not adapted to the Romanian educational context;
- curriculum not adapted to the requirements of different ages and interests of students;

²https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Raport%20privind%20starea%20%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2ntului%20preuniversitar%20din%20Rom%C3%A2nia_2017-2018_0.pdf, p.28

³ <http://www.magazincritic.ro/2016/03/26/analiza-swot-a-sistemului-de-invataman-preuniversitar/>

Opportunities:

- granting bonuses for teachers who have an outstanding teaching and extracurricular activity (community involvement, scientific research, etc.);
- liberalization of the continuous training market for increasing the quality and diversity of continuous training programs;
- participation in programs, exchange projects, international continuous training courses, etc. financed from European projects or other sources (Erasmus+, Comenius, Leonardo, etc.);

Threats:

- the insufficiency of the financial resources allocated to the endowment with the materials necessary for an optimal development of the instructive-educational process;
- the lack of coherence and promptness in the adoption of some legislative measures and of some unitary, efficient and firm methodologies of organization and development of the educational activity;
- increased risk of dropping out of school by students from disadvantaged families, with emigrant parents or children with SEN (special educational needs);
- the growing gap between rural and urban areas in terms of ensuring the right to education:
- the impossibility of the schools to select the teaching staff due to the centralized selection system;

4. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Great Britain

Strengths:

- dual education system, in which there are state schools and independent schools with an excellent reputation in terms of teaching and learning standards;
- Independent schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum
- each school organizes its schedule differently, the hours can last 35, 40, 45, 50 or 60 minutes
- differences between education systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- the concept of "School as a community" combines formal learning with the acquisition of social values: loyalty, team spirit, cooperation.

Weaknesses:

- Currently, the UK is in danger of losing its position as a superpower in the global education market due to changes in Brexit (visa rules, tuition fees, pupil / student access and the European Union)

Opportunities:

- promoting international collaboration in research and teaching
- schools offer a substantial program of extracurricular activities (sports, intellectual, experiential, cultural and relaxation)
- organizing large-scale outdoor activities;
- tradition in organizing "debate" clubs in which students develop oral skills in accordance with democratic rules;
- the existence of about 500 boarding schools
- promoting transnational education (British courses organized in other countries)

Threats:

- fierce competition in the world education market
- migration policies
- increased degree of competitiveness at school level (teaching according to the culture of the “teach to the test” principle)

5. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Spain

Strengths:

- decentralization: educational competences are shared between the General State Administration and the authorities of the Autonomous Communities (departments for education)
- schools have pedagogical, organizational and managerial autonomy in terms of the resources they own and manage.
- the participation of the educational community in the organization of schools, governance, functioning, as well as in the process of their evaluation.
- flexibility in changing students' educational pathways.

Weaknesses:

- insufficient professional training of the human resource, both at the beginning in the teaching activity and during the teaching career;
- the low level of students' academic performance throughout the educational process;
- insufficient number of teachers
- lack of clarification of values for both teachers and families

Opportunities:

- external, formative and diagnostic evaluations, at the end of each stage, focused on the level of competence acquisition.
- changes in the administration and management of the education system, in terms of: curriculum and distribution of competencies, participation in the management and governance of public and publicly funded private schools, school autonomy, education management and coordination bodies, public school administration and evaluation of the system education.
- the inclusion of Spanish students and teachers in European programs and projects (Socrates Program, the Leonard Di Vinci Program and Erasmus +).

Threats:

- increasing the number of cases of vandalism and physical aggression in schools amid a general lack of discipline;
- lack of communication between families (parents) and school representatives;
- the increasing number of students in the class.

6. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Turkey

Strengths:

- high potential for rapid development;
- development of private schools;
- the teacher-student relationship is based on respect and consideration;
- investments made in the education system, especially in urban areas;

Weaknesses:

- inconsistencies in the education system and in terms of equal educational opportunities.
- vocational schools are not attractive and there are not many job opportunities for vocational school graduates.
- educational policies are not so effective in terms of the total number of school dropouts;
- the traditional education system that prioritizes religion;
- focusing on the curriculum and the teacher, not on the student and his educational needs;
- the teacher is an active speaker, while the student has the status of passive listener;
- the emphasis is on memorization and reproduction of knowledge;
- the educational process is based on a strict discipline;

Opportunities:

- Turkey has the highest percentage of the young population in Europe;
- the continuous struggle between the followers of innovation in education (pro-Western) and those of traditional education;

Threats:

- gender discrimination, closely linked to the difficulties of families in poor rural areas to support their children, especially daughters, in a school;
- forced migration of families with children forced to emigrate from their places of residence (especially rural) due to security problems or the fight against it (between 1986 and 2005, approximately 350,000 children with their families, their subsequent participation in education being much diminished⁴).

7. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Greece

Strengths:

- one of the lowest dropout rates in Europe;
- well-trained and motivated teachers;
- new educational policies promote student-centered learning, more pronounced autonomy of educational institutions and an evaluation-based culture;
- promoting education for active citizenship.

Weaknesses:

- the education system has been severely affected by the economic crisis in the last decade;
- its effects were found in the cuts of budget allocations for education, as well as in the freezing of employment in the system, which affected the quality of the educational act;
- in Greece, total public expenditure on secondary education, as a percentage of total public expenditure, is relatively low. (2.9%, range 38/38, 2016)
- the results of the PISA tests showed that the performances of 15-year-old students are below the European average.

Opportunities:

- adopting innovative policies combined with structural reforms;
- the current government's efforts to provide students with the right environment, knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable development;
- promoting digital education among students and cultivating "soft skills": creativity, critical thinking - especially through STEM - (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), adaptability, problem solving, teamwork
- adopt a holistic approach to language teaching and learning, based on the linguistic diversity found in classrooms.
- a higher degree of contractual stability for teachers;

Threats:

- school population from disadvantaged categories (significant percentage of children from poor families, migrants and refugees);

8. SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system in Cyprus

Strengths:

- budget allocation of 5.7% of GDP for education;
- multicultural school population;
- the widespread use of several languages of communication in society: Greek, Turkish, English, etc.
- a significant number of schools operating based on Western education systems: French, English or American, attended by students from wealthy families or migrant families

Weaknesses:

- limited autonomy at the level of educational institutions due to the centralization in education;

⁴ Education in Turkey, editat de Arnd-Michael Nohl, Arzu Akkoyunlu-Wigley, Simon Wigley, Pag.42

- low number of decentralization elements, such as: teachers' autonomy in selecting classroom teaching methods or the right of school managers to have a limited budget allocated to various additional costs, such as the purchase of light equipment;

Opportunities:

- the existence of the private education alternative;
- Erasmus + programs developed in partnership with prestigious educational institutions in Europe;
- technical and vocational secondary education is provided in 2 streams: theoretically and practically, being able to be continued through post-secondary education and vocational training, thus generating well-trained and qualified graduates, able to successfully integrate on the labor market;
- encouraging the teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially English;

Threats:

- cultural and ideological differences between Greek Cypriots (representing 85% of the population of Cyprus), who use Greek in teaching in schools, while the Turkish Cypriot population uses Turkish;

9. Objectives and motivation of scientific research

In this paper we set as a general objective to conduct a comparative study on human resource management policies at the level of pre-university education institutions in Romania and other European countries: Great Britain, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, in an attempt to highlight the positive aspects, along with those that can be improved, but also ways to streamline the education system in our country.

Research objectives:

- identifying the role of human resources management for the schools' performance;
- identifying the role of human resources management for teachers' performance;
- identifying the role of human resources management for students' performance;
- identifying the role of extracurricular activities in obtaining schools' performance in pre-university education units.

The objectives pursued in the paper were to determine the evaluation of European pre-university management and to measure the compatibility of the evaluation of Romanian management with European practices. In the research methodology we used qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were collected through bibliographic study and questionnaires applied to teachers and school managers in Romanian education, on the one hand, as well as school managers and teachers from several European countries with which we developed collaborative partnerships and educational mobility projects.

10. Research methodology

Between 12.02.2020 - 28.04.2020, we started and carried out a pilot research involving 131 teachers and school managers from Romania and 98 teachers and school managers from other European countries: Great Britain, Spain, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. The research tool used consisted in the application of a questionnaire, which was handed to the subjects in printed and / or distributed online format, together with a letter of intent and a confidentiality statement.

The questionnaire was written both in Romanian, for the respondents from our country, and in English also, for the respondents from the five European countries. It included 20 questions, being structured in two parts. For this analysis, 2 questions were selected and addressed both to teachers and school managers in Romania, as well as to those in the European states participating in the study, for each one a table with the global score obtained being made.

11. The investigated sample

The sample of respondents at national level is represented by:

- beginner teachers who participated in the Program for the training of beginner teachers of English and French in order to take the final exam in education, organized by the House of the Teaching Staff of which I am a trainer;
- school managers from state and private pre-university education institutions;
- teachers of various specializations with whom I collaborated throughout the teaching activity;
- teachers and school managers from the Aspire Teachers Academy, of which I am a member;

The subjects from the European countries to which the questionnaire was applied are mostly represented by teachers of various specializations, especially modern languages and school managers that I met after participating in Erasmus + Projects in Turkey, Greece, Spain., but also in our country, as well as in training courses in Great Britain and Cyprus.

12. Analysis and interpretation of results

This first section includes the results and interpretations generated by the first question under analysis, which aimed at the solutions offered by a successful human resources management for a series of defining aspects for the pre-university education system, such as: coherent educational policies, hiring competent staff, keeping valuable employees in the educational system and maintaining their motivation at a high level, providing the necessary material resources or continuous teaching training.

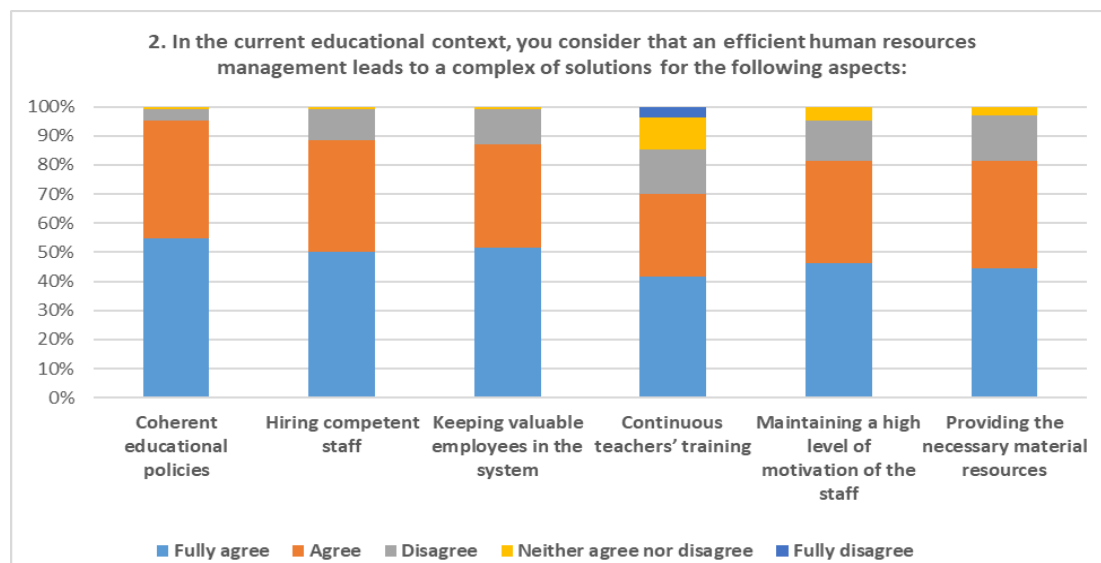


Fig. 1.a. Analysis of the answers offered by teachers in Romania

Table 1.a. Overall score of the results recorded after processing the questionnaires of the Romanian respondents

	Coherent educational policies	Hiring competent staff	Keeping valuable employees in the system	Continuous teachers' training	Maintaining a high level of motivation of the staff	Providing the necessary material resources						
Fully agree	71	65	67	54	60	58	142	130	134	108	120	116
Agree	53	50	46	37	46	48	53	50	46	37	46	48

	Coherent educational policies	Hiring competent staff	Keeping valuable employees in the system	Continuous teachers' training	Maintaining a high level of motivation of the staff	Providing the necessary material resources						
Disagree	5	14	16	20	18	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1	1	14	6	4	-1	-1	-1	-14	-6	-4
Fully disagree	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	-10	0	0
							1.49	1.38	1.38	0.93	1.23	1.23

Source: author processing

According to the answers received from teachers in Romania, it was observed that a significant percentage of the total number of respondents is registered in “Total Agreement” (71) and “Agreement” (53), which allows us to note that both coherent educational policies, hiring / maintaining valuable employees in the system, as well as continuous training, staff motivation, along with ensuring the material resources necessary for the optimal development of the instructive-educational process, are considered as direct results of a successful human resources management.

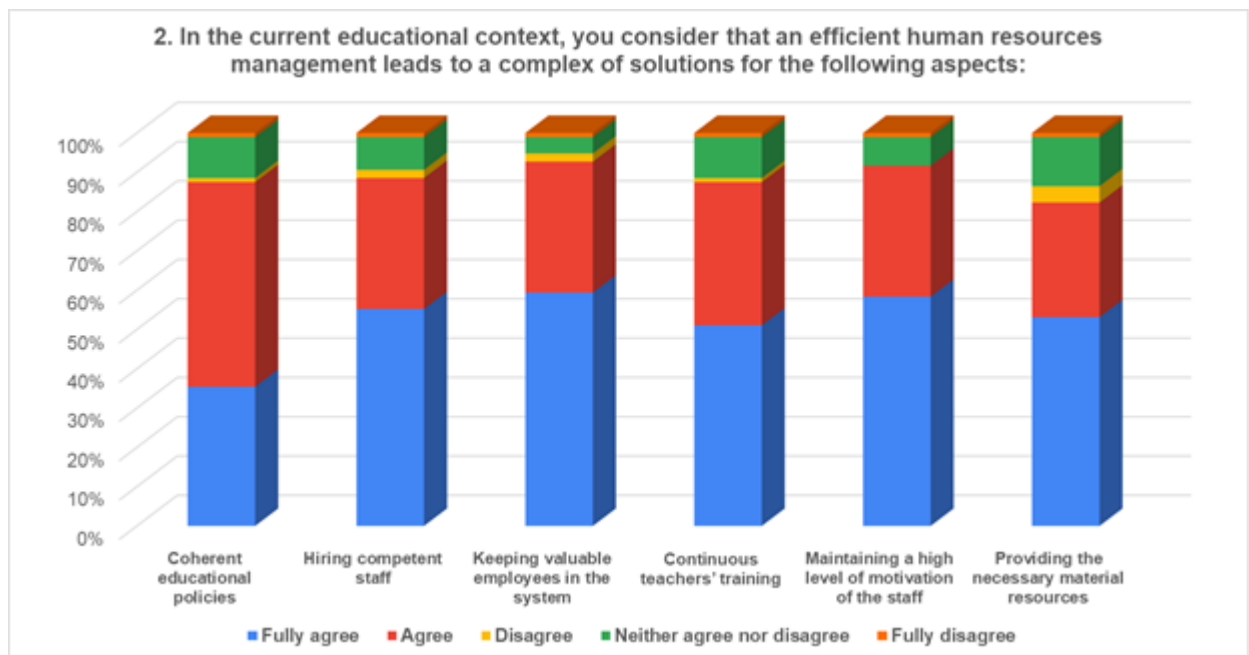


Fig. 1.b. Analysis of the answers offered by teachers from other European countries

Table 1.b. Overall score of the results recorded after processing the questionnaires of the respondents from other European countries

	Coherent educational policies	Hiring competent staff	Keeping valuable employees in the system	Continuous teachers' training	Maintaining a high level of motivation of the staff	Providing the necessary material resources						
Fully agree	34	53	57	49	56	51	68	106	114	98	112	102
Agree	50	32	32	35	32	28	50	32	32	35	32	28
Disagree	1	2	2	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0

	Coherent educational policies	Hiring competent staff	Keeping valuable employees in the system	Continuous teachers' training	Maintaining a high level of motivation of the staff	Providing the necessary material resources						
Neither agree nor disagree	10	8	4	10	7	12	-10	-8	-4	-10	-7	-12
Fully disagree	1	1	1	1	1	1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
							1.1	1.33	1.46	1.26	1.41	1.21

Source: author processing

The high percentage of answers in the categories “Total Agreement”, respectively “Agreement” indicates that, in most cases, employees and managers in the pre-university education system associate the idea of an efficient human resources management with the optimal functioning of educational activity in all its components. : educational policies, financial and human resources.

The following analyzed situation refers to the aspects that optimize and favor the increase of the level of performance of the education employees.

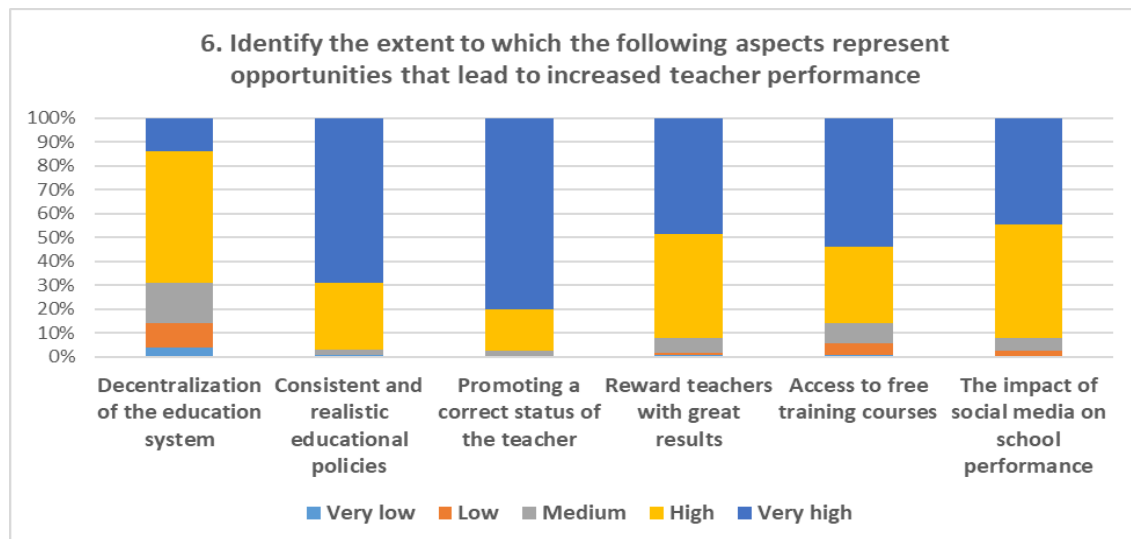


Fig. 2.a. Analysis of the answers offered by teachers in Romania

Table 2.a Overall score of the results recorded after processing the questionnaires of the Romanian respondents

	Decentralization of the education system	Consistent and realistic educational policies	Promoting a correct status of the teacher	Reward teachers with great results	Access to free training courses	The impact of social media on school performance						
Very low	5	1	0	1	1	0	-10	-2	0	-2	-2	0
Low	13	0	0	1	6	3	-13	0	0	-1	-6	-3
Medium	22	3	3	8	11	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
High	72	36	23	57	42	62	72	36	23	57	42	62
Very high	18	90	104	63	70	58	36	180	208	126	140	116
							0.65	1.65	1.78	1.38	1.34	1.35

Source: Personally processed data

The considerable number of answers “High” - 72 and “Very high” - 18 indicate that the performance of teachers in Romania is conditioned and directly influenced by aspects

related especially to strategic management, such as: decentralization of the education system, coherent educational policies, but also by the perception that civil society has on school performance, filtered through social media.

At the same time, the material component materialized in the access of teachers to free courses and training programs, as well as the rewarding of deserving teachers is considered as a vector for increasing the performance of employees in the education system.

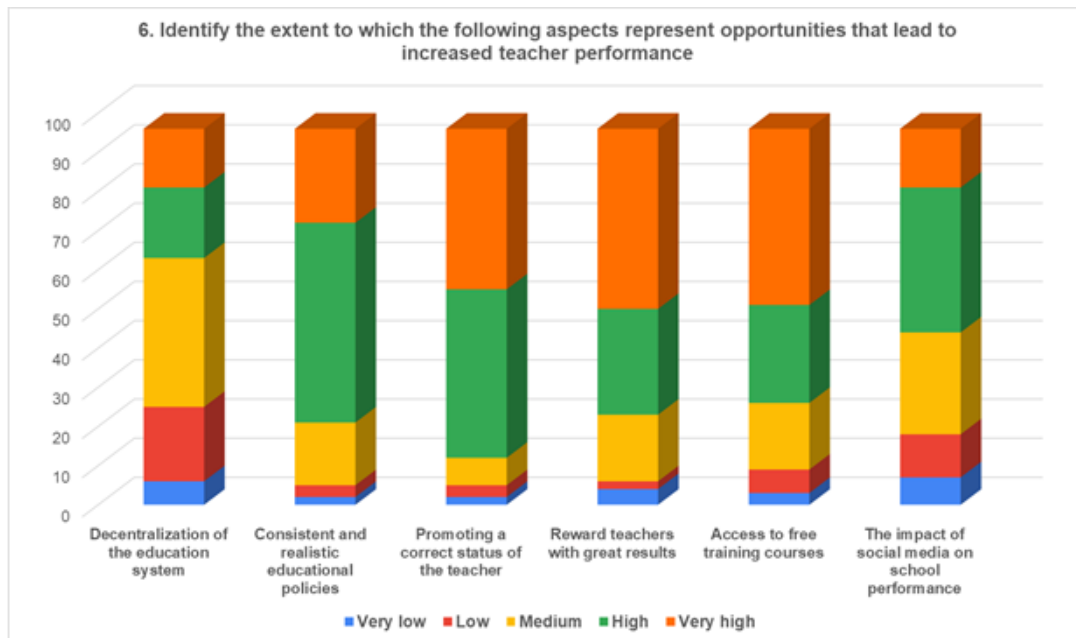


Fig. 2.b Analysis of the answers offered by teachers from other European countries

Table 2.b Overall score of the results recorded after processing the questionnaires of the respondents from other European countries

	Decentralization of the education system	Consistent and realistic educational policies	Promoting a correct status of the teacher	Reward teachers with great results	Access to free training courses	The impact of social media on school performance						
Very low	6	2	2	4	3	7	-12	-4	-4	-8	-6	-14
Low	19	3	3	2	6	11	-19	-3	-3	-2	-6	-11
Medium	38	16	7	17	17	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
High	18	51	43	27	25	37	18	51	43	27	25	37
Very high	15	24	41	46	45	15	30	48	82	92	90	30
							0.18	0.96	1.23	1.14	1.07	0.44

Source: Personally processed data

Analyzing the answers provided by respondents from other European countries to the same question, it is observed that the decentralization of the education system along with the impact of social media are perceived as medium-level opportunities (38 answers out of 98), respectively high-level (18) and very high (15) in terms of increasing employee performance.

The results obtained from the research

From the bibliographic research and comparative analysis, information was collected regarding the possible intersection points and similarities between different aspects of human resources management in the Romanian and European pre-university education institutions.

Carrying out a comparative analysis between the evaluation of human resources management within the European educational systems, compared to the Romanian one, we found a series of common characteristic features, but also a set of differences, generated by the economic, cultural and social context of each state.

The similarity elements registered at the level of the analyzed educational systems are objectified in:

- the existence of a coordinating body at national level,
- the existence of standards for school managers,
- concern for the training and professional development of human resources,
- orientation towards reaching performance standards,
- teachers ‘availability to access, participate and involve in international educational projects and partnerships (such as Erasmus +, eTwinning, etc.) that promote cooperation and exchange of good practices, strengthening the European dimension of educational institutions;

On the other hand, there is a wide range of differences in:

- educational policies adopted and promoted at the level of each state,
- curricular and organizational architecture,
- autonomy given to schools by local and central authorities,
- the percentage allocated to education in the GDP at the level of each state,
- socio-cultural, economic and religious differences registered among the school population, which give the national specificity.

13. Conclusions and recommendations

Following the comparative analysis of pre-university education systems in Romania and five other European states, namely: Great Britain, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, from the perspective of human resource management, we can notice its impact upon the performance of teachers and schools, too.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance that pre-university education institutions need to adapt to latest trends and requirements, continually adapting and identifying opportunities for improvement in order to make progress. In the face of the changes imposed by global institutional development, pre-university education institutions must show a special interest at national level and cope with changes in technology, opportunities for rapid access to information and rapidly identify ways to improve activity carried out in the context of sustainable development.

Future research based on this study would focus on analyzing the impact of human resource management policies on teachers' motivation, from the perspective of increasing the quality of education and performance in the education system, but also human resource management in the new educational paradigm generated by the pandemic.

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