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Field of study: HISTORY

The European Union educational policy

The historical perspective and its implications in the process of Europeanization of higher education in Romania

(1945-2020)

(Summary)

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The present scientific approach aims to analyse the historical course of the educational policy of the European Union, starting with the beginning of the European construction and up to contemporaneity, by reporting to the legislative framework and to the relevant historical events that perfected the European educational policy.

The subject is topical, because education and implicitly higher education are currently key pillars in fulfilling the political, economic and social aspirations of the European Union. The project of European unification has generated a paradigm shift, a new economic, political and social reality, at the heart of which is the individual and his ability to respond to the needs of the current society.

This thesis provides substantial guidelines for its use as a source of documentation, as this topic is not covered in depth in any scientific work in the field of history in the local space. The attention to subjects in the educational sphere mainly directed towards approaches from a pedagogical, cultural, philosophical and socio-political perspective. These multidisciplinary approaches strengthen the interdisciplinary nature of educational phenomena, and the lack of a coherent historical approach to the evolution of education in the context of European construction is the starting point and motivation that led to the improvement of this scientific approach.

The originality of the paper is conferred by the approach from a historical and social perspective of the educational strategy of the European Union, with an impact on the evolution of Romanian higher education. After a century of political and ideological changes, Romanian universities find themselves in the same position of reintegration into the European university circuit through the specific reforms of Europeanization. Thus, the “return to Europe” is the leitmotif of the evolution and modernization of the Romanian university system, with its founding in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Hence the interest for the analysis of the mechanisms that contributed to this new reality of the European university space and its implications in the dynamics of Romanian higher education. The starting point or the question that underlies this scientific approach is: *What were the stages that led to the development of European education policy that targeted higher education and what were the implications of Romanian higher education in the context of Romanian’s accession to the European Union?*

In order to understand the current European situation, it is essential to place current developments in a historical perspective. The temporal limits that delimit the analysis of these phenomena are between the beginning of the European construction and the present, referring at the same time to the end of the nineteenth century, and to the founding of the Romanian academic

environment. This lower limit in the case of the analysis of the educational phenomenon in the Romanian space is necessary to support the research hypothesis.

The present research is part of the research line of the history of educational policies and educational phenomena, dealing with interconnected aspects between educational policies and the social history of education. The historical research of the educational legislation is a current that brings a new perspective in the field of the history of education. This is due to the complexity of its approach at the methodological level, as this line of research does not only involve the preparation of a register of legislative acts, but rather the study of the genesis and development of legislation, seen in the light of political or economic changes in a society, analyzing at the same time, the general path and its impact on the society.

Regarding the research methodology in the field of education history, the application of the historical-educational method requires the completion of certain stages that are inevitable and that have certain objectives and specific technical characteristics.

A first stage in this approach is the heuristic stage or the stage of locating and classifying the documents, followed by the external critique of the sources according to their formal characteristics and the internal critique of the sources for their correct understanding and interpretation. Also, the scientific approach of the paper aims at the methods of systematic, logical and historical interpretation of the content of the European and national legislation relevant for the educational field, which would support the research hypothesis. Going through these stages allows the elaboration of conclusions and the final synthesis. Thus, as a result of the techniques used, the research methodology has an interdisciplinary, historical, political and sociological character, as is the nature of the research topic.

Structured in five chapters, the paper analyses a phenomenon of an educational nature, mainly focused on the dynamics and role of higher education in the context of European construction and the implications of this new educational paradigm on Romanian higher education.

In this analysis, the approach to the issue is built starting from the historical reconstruction of the general context in which the role of education and implicitly of higher education is perfected in the legislative and institutional framework of European construction. Subsequently, the central focus of the research shifts to the analysis of this educational phenomenon and what it represents for Romanian higher education. In this approach we do not propose a *stricto sensu* interpretation of the reforms that have been undertaken in the Romanian education system, but rather an analysis of the phenomena that generated the changes and reforms before and after the accession to the European Union.

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The first chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the introductory and methodological considerations of scientific research. In this chapter we have highlighted the main aspects and approaches in the national and international literature, which constitute the general framework and the current stage of knowledge of the subject of scientific research.

The second chapter is intended for theoretical considerations on the proposed topic, explaining the notions, concepts and elements involved in the presented processes. Therefore, in the second chapter we analysed the concepts of internationalization, Europeanization, globalization, but also the mechanisms of functioning of the European Union, which are involved or have been involved in shaping educational policies over time.

At the same time, in this chapter we focused on the phenomena and concepts that characterize the reform process in the former communist states, which provide a scientific basis for the changes in these societies. The theoretical substantiation is a first step of the scientific approach through which we highlighted the current research trends, models and criteria used, these being presented in a coherent and synthetic manner in the first two chapters of the thesis.

In the third chapter we analysed from a historical point of view, the evolution of educational initiatives, dealing with aspects related to the evolution of the European Union, from the establishment until the end of the '90s.

Over time, the challenges generated by social and economic crises have led European leaders to advocate for a stronger commitment of the European Community in the education sector. The much more active involvement of the European institutions has driven the promotion of cooperation between higher education institutions, increased opportunities for the recognition of diplomas and periods of study and the encouragement of academic mobility. Education and training of European citizens and equal access to all forms of education is becoming a goal of the unification project, an essential pillar of the knowledge economy.

In the fourth chapter we analysed the aspects that contributed to the building of the European dimension of higher education, from the first European initiatives that aimed at the European academic

environment, to the creation of the common space for higher education, in which universities become a key pillar for directions of development of the European Union.

A common area of higher education is becoming a key element of the Lisbon Strategy, which gives educational cooperation a key role to play in fulfilling the long-term economic, political and social goals of the European project. Like other sectoral areas, education, and in particular the European academic environment, has faced the need to correspond to the Union's political and social development directions, this being possible by stimulating the internationalization process.

In the last chapter, we turned our attention to the Romanian space, to see what this new European educational paradigm meant for Romania. In this chapter we have treated in an original way this arch over time, starting from the preamble of the appearance of Romanian higher education and the new return to Europe. More than a century later, Romanian universities are in the same position of reintegration into the European university circuit through the specific reforms of Europeanization.

The Europeanization and import of Western models are the practice of solidifying a university system that has proven to be sometimes fragile and subject to controversy, precisely in terms of the characteristics of Romanian society. During the communist period, higher education is detached from the Western model and will fully meet the imperatives of communist society, to support the dominant ideology of the planned economy and social engineering, being subordinated to the anticipated needs of various industries. This fact gives the peculiarity of an educational system subject to ideological fragmentation, which, moreover, is the starting point of the process of transition to democracy and accession to the European Union.