

The Management of Public Policy in Education

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Abstract. Within this work I analyzed the run of the LLP Program LLP - Life-long Learning Program through the problems and objectives, as they appear in the Common decision of the Parliament and the Council of the European Union, decision related to the implementation of this program. I also referred to another aspect of integration “equation” into European structures, the objectives of education in the European Union, in the description of its social policy, continuing with the presentation of Community programs as an instrument of European public policy in education, strategic management of human resources, explaining the importance of developing human resources, of the impact of national and international programs on training of human resources, pending the establishment of directions for the development of integrated lifelong education program.

.Keywords: Social policy; labour market; Life Long Learning Programme

1. Objectives of the LLP – Life Long Programmes. An Introduction

The basis for defining *Socrates Program*, the current *LLP (starting with 2014 Erasmus+ Programme)* is rather incrementalist, associated with hypothesis that policy makers control environment to a limited extent and thus their freedom of choice is limited. Another feature of incrementalism lies in the fact that the organisations and programs don't have “*objectives*”; in fact, only individuals and groups have their own targets, at the organisational level there is a “mixture” and their interference. The managerialist approach, on the other hand, starts from the assumption that political decision-makers have a sufficient degree of control over the environment, freedom of choice and may adopt, as a consequence, a proactive approach. From this point of view, the program proposes specific objectives which are to be found, operationalized, between the options of action offered, such as:

- to develop European dimension in education, at all levels, in order to promote European citizenship, based on cultural heritage of the *Member States*;

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- to promote knowledge of the EU states languages;
- to promote intercultural dimension in education;
- to promote cooperation between institutions, between *Member States* at any level of education, increasing, as a result, the potential of teaching;
- to encourage mobility of teachers, in order to promote *European dimension of studies* and to contribute increasing their quality;
- to encourage mobility of students, giving them an opportunity to complete their studies in another *Member State*;
- to encourage contacts between students, at all levels of education;
- to encourage academic recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications, in order to facilitate development of a *single European area in education*;
- to encourage open and distance education, within a European context;
- to stimulate exchanges of information on education systems and to promote exchanges of experience between educational authorities from the *Member States*.

Of course, they may be considered as general objectives proposed in the framework of a legal act. Their operationalizing potential is high and this is shown by the concrete options proposed. *In our opinion, the Program has a low degree of flexibility and this denotes, rather, a control of the decision-makers on the environment. This decision is unequivocal and precise both in terms of the objectives, as well as means of action, which allows, to a very small extent, the interpretation and readjustment of the program depending on future developments.* As regards the organisation of implementation, the *European Commission*, its possibilities of redefining and re-adjustment of proposed objectives are limited, but operationalization in order to implement it is a handy tool.

2. Levels of Analysis

Perrow (1970) has classified several levels of analysis at which aims have to be studied to understand organisations decisions (Perrow, 1970, p. 82):

1. *societal purposes*: the reference point is society in general and these purposes are, therefore, manifest or latent functions of the organisation in question;
2. “*products*” purposes (output): this time reference is that segment of the public who is in direct contact with the organisation - customer services or products in

question. Examples, in this respect, are: the creation of commercial products, medical services, educational programs, often called primary, central functions of the organisation;

3. *purposes of system*: reference is the organisation itself and the concern relates to how it works, regardless of the products and/or services which it produces. Examples, in this respect, there are a number of purposes as economic growth, efficiency, market position. In the event of a public organisation, the purposes of system can be political power, the image, the concern for defining legitimacy, public responsibility, efficiency and so on;

4. *purposes related to product features*: in this case, the reference point is the product or the service provided itself, whether the focus is on quantity, either on quality, variety, style, innovation. These purposes are, in fact, derived from the “*output*” purposes and those of the system;

5. *derived purposes*: the reference point is the leadership of organisation itself and what it chooses to do with the power and resources they accumulate while pursuing other goals. For example, an organisation may use its power and welfare or to achieve political goals, or to help the community, or to support some expenses for art or educational institutions, or to provide opportunities for the staff development, etc.

Perrow argues that these categories are not distinct, always, as they are, in reality, but that it is important that, analytically, to work with these distinctions in order to reveal the development of organisations.

In the illustrated case, it is desirable the program analysis and less of the organisation which it manages. Of course, the objectives of the program are unitary, consistent and unequivocal. Actually, the programs are products or services and, as such, shall constitute those “*products*” purposes (*output*) of the organisations. They cannot however be abstracted, but “*interpreted*” in the context of implementation mechanisms, in particular by the features that these mechanisms may have them printed programs.

Therefore, the institutional framework of Program implementation consists of the *European Commission, the Socrate/LLPs Committee and National Agencies* (see Article 4 and 5, para. 3 of the *Decision*). *The Committee* shall consist of two representatives of the *Member States* and shall be chaired by the *Commission*. On a proposal from the *Commission*, *the Committee* is the one who has the approval

responsibility of the *Program priorities* and *the methodology* for its implementation. Also, *the Committee* shall approve distribution of the Community financial support and the criteria for the selection of *Program* projects. As stated in *para. 4 of Article 4*, the *Committee* shall act as the body of the *Council*, and follows similar procedures for the adoption as those offered Council by *the Maastricht Treaty*. *The Committee* is an *international* court, contrary to *the Commission*, which is a *supranational* instance. The opinion of the *Member States* concerning the implementation of the *Program* is focused through the *Committee*. *The Committee* tends, therefore, to express the equal opinion of the *Member States*, while *the Commission* develops societal purposes and their own system purposes. The European political “*game*” between *international* institutions and those *supranational* is found reproduced in the framework of the *Program*.

There are, however, in addition to those “*output*” purposes and societal purposes arising out of implementation of the program. *Reason itself of a program at national or Community level (supranational) is that of the existence of certain social benefits that transcend group of those directly involved in the program*. Whether it is about negative externalities, in which case a current status as a matter of fact must be remedied by State intervention, whether it is the case of positive externalities, a situation in which the active action of one of the public courts promotes a public asset, all these cases involve costs and/or benefits that “*affect*” the whole society. *The program* mentions the multiplier effect that those who obtain financing in the program must have it on those who, in this way, they will benefit (only) indirectly. *The need for Community action aims, primarily, the aspect of these supranational social benefits, otherwise, the principle of subsidiarity may require providing public services to decentralised levels (national, regional or local)*.

In this case, the system purposes are promoting European institutions and their programs. Copyright, *logos*, emblems of the *European Commission* must be made public whenever it finances European projects. Even if financing belongs, ultimately, to the *Governments of the Member States*, *financial support is Community* and the *European Commission* is credited with the development of the program. The *Commission* shall also be substituted for, to a large extent, and the other European institutions (*the Council* and *the Parliament*), contributing to the development of the program, in an effort to strengthen the image of a locomotive of European integration. Other types of purposes, the derived purposes or those “*related to*” the characteristics of the product shall be substituted for purposes referred to above.

Regarding the “*output*” purposes submitted, they show, in turn, subsumed purposes of the *second rank*. They do not appear as such to the objectives set out in the *Decision* (*first rank* purposes), but they are derived purposes as a result of implementation of the program and its objectives in the educational context of the *Member States*. These, in turn, are the direct result of elaborations of the *Commission* on the basis and continuation of *Decision in question*. *Decision* represents only the reference framework, priorities within the *Program* being proposed by the *Commission* and subject to the approval of the *Committee*.

Given the vastness of the Program that extends to all levels of education, in this work I approached, for example, only specific objectives explicitly mentioned in the program for higher education, namely:

- to support the achievement of a European area of higher education;
- to contribute along with higher education and vocational education to the process of innovation.

3. The Operational Objectives

Policies proposed by the *Commission* in order to achieve these general objectives, involve pursuing the following *operational objectives*:

- to improve the quality and increase the volume of students and teaching staff mobility in *Europe*, as well as to contribute to achieving, by 2012, at least 3 million students and, by 2020, at least 7 million students in the framework of Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs and its predecessors;
- to improve the quality and increase the volume of multilateral cooperation between the institutions of higher education in *Europe*;
- to increase the degree of transparency and compatibility between higher education and professional qualifications obtained in *Europe*;
- to improve the quality and increase the volume of cooperation between higher education institutions and companies;
- to facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and training at tertiary level, and their transfer from one participating country to others;
- to support the development of *IT&C* innovative content, services, pedagogy and practice for lifelong learning.

Thus, *although the stipulated objective is that of making a European area of higher education, and as a result, encouragement of various exchanges and experiences, the Program develops a series of secondary objectives, which aim at new practices in the methodology in teaching and curricular reform.* The operationalization of the general objectives constitutes the instrument for the promotion of the *Commission* objectives within the limits of the program defined by the *Decision*. *Community support for these programs shall mean an involvement of a supranational authority in the management of the national education system and requires compatibility between European systems.* A Community policy has the right of pre-emption on national policies, in the event of incompatibility between them. Aligning national policy to European development requirements thus becomes a necessity to legitimize the educational system. *In our opinion, Socrates - LLP Program is not a regulatory program but through the priorities it promotes, manages to induce a conception of desirable development that has, thus, a normative role.*

Instruments of intervention that constitute the prerogative of the *European Commission* are, in fact, *financing priorities and ensuring, in this way, the benefit of values defined at Community level.* The *Commission* cannot develop regulatory policies in this area, but indirectly, by funding their own derived objectives, can ensure promoting Community values.

Program structure distinguishes, at the university level, for example, between centralised actions (whose selection and management shall be carried out at the *Commission* level) and decentralised actions (involving management of the national implementation structures). Although it is a largely administrative measure, as regards streamlining program management, this affects and promoting national priorities on financed projects. Obvious pressure of these national structures of implementation, to participate in the decisions within the framework of the program, falls often in conflict with the *Commission* desire to impose its own agenda and its own decisions. There is, therefore, a *national - supranational* dialectic that subsumes the *international - supranational* dialectic and which is typical for this Community program, relating both to identify problems as well as the objectives and options for action.

4. Instruments (options) of Action

Instruments proposed to achieve the objectives envisaged involve carrying out following activities funded by the *European Commission*:

- creating and promoting transnational projects, networks, partnerships and associations;
- *the curriculum* development, modules, educational materials and other educational products;
- exchanges and mobility of teachers and students;
- transnational continuous training courses for teachers;
- visits to facilitate preparation of projects or exchange of experience;
- activities for the preparation of studies, analyzes and data collection;
- evaluation of projects;
- dissemination of the results.

The program is structured to promote European cooperation in six areas:

- higher education;
- school education;
- exchanges of young people;
- learning of international languages;
- open and distance education;
- adult education;
- exchange of information and experiences.

From a theoretical point of view, “... *decisions between the options of action varies, depending on their representation, as certain points on a continuum (example: exact amount of budget allocation) or one or more discrete options, some of them being mutually-exclusive*” (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984, p. 173). In this case, it seems that the option is for a certain point in the *continuum*, where *the decision variable* is the *size of the budget*. This conclusion is justified by the establishment, by *Decision*, Article 7, of the total budget for the Program in the first phase, the amount of 850 million euros¹. Also, the main dissension between the *Council* and the *Parliament* as regards *Decision*, for the second phase of the *Socrates II* program, was one budgetary, respectively opting for different points on the decision making continuum. This reflects a differentiated perception of the seriousness and extent of

¹ Initially, it was about the ECU currency, replaced subsequently by euro.

the problem and, therefore, the option for a more comprehensive intervention of the Community is reflected in a larger budget (the budget allocated to phase II, 2000-2006, was 1 850 000 thousands euros, and the budget allocated for *LLP* 2007 - 2008 was 18 155,966 thousands euros). But of course the option, at this level, was political rather than a technical one.

The type of analysis to be applied depends on the decisions particularity to be continuous or discrete (in fact, the variable of reference). A series of techniques for the analysis of decision shall be applicable only discrete values, but it may be used and in the case of continuous ones by grouping intervals in discrete values (averages or medians of these intervals).

Certain sets of options will involve political decisions, as well as allocation of funds to the defense or the welfare services.

5. Categories of Analysis

In general terms, are identified two categories of analysis, namely:

1. decision analysis;
2. economic and budget analysis.

In the first category are considered discrete decisions, in the case of the second, rather those continuous. Also, a distinction must be drawn between alternative options for solving a problem and those to satisfy different issues.

In this work I conducted the *cost-benefit analysis* with nonmonetary variables respectively, rationalization of decision in question, considering the solution selected as the critical level between the allocation of resources for *the Socrates - LLP Program* and their use in other Community programs. Analysis assumes that there are monetary costs and nonmonetary benefits.

In *cost-benefit analysis* with nonmonetary variables, to benefits expressed, usually, nonmonetary, as the number of cases resolved, they can not be assigned monetary values but rather is designated a value - threshold they operate by determining marginal benefits report on marginal costs.

The level of 850 million ECU, referred to in the Decision (this is the total budget of the program for phase I, 1995-1999) is, as a matter of fact, the result of a technical and budget analysis, and represents, as a consequence, or critical level at which

average cost (including the opportunity) of the entire *Program* equals average benefit, or the result of a political decision. The budget level is, in this case, the reference variable depending on which it is decided *Program design*. Proposed instruments are redistributive and require financing certain activities considered beneficial in terms of Community.

Decision on the assessment of Community benefits may also be a political decision or a technique one. Externalities existence involves a difficult calculation of benefits, what are affected in the Community, as a result of the program in force. Available subprograms (listed, in this work, at the level of higher education, school education, etc.) involve a *cost-benefit analysis* in the program, to identify the optimal level of funds allocation between subcomponents. Existence of benefits and costs that transcend local, regional or national level, the existence of a single valuable European space and, not least, the existence of treaties and European institutions, regulating relations of the *Member States*, sets up the need providing a program at a centralised level. ***We can consider that the program submitted shall comply, rather, an incrementalist and political approach than rationalist - comprehensive and technical one.***

As intermediate evaluations showed very good performance in the implementation of the programs, underlined by the beneficiaries and representatives of the various groups of interests linked with education and vocational training, the *European Commission* has proposed their continuation with a second and a third phase, substantially improved from the point of view of content complexity, widening areas of beneficiaries and the higher level of funding. Finally, the proposal has been approved by *the Council* and the *European Parliament*.

In the meantime, in the world there are new and new challenges and, for *Europe* to be able to face them (as training and the development of human resources has been recognized as having a crucial role), *the two Community programs have not been enough as unique instruments of public common policy in education and training.*

Starting with the last decade of 20th century, two major changes have begun to affect the economic environment and lifestyle in all developed countries of the world. The former was *globalisation*: as national economies have become more and more interdependent, was born “*global economy*”. The second was new technological revolution, marked by the spread of Internet and new information and communication technologies (*IT&C*).

This technological revolution has started in the United States, whose economy has been, at the same time, and the main beneficiary. Doing business through internet has made American companies more efficient and productive. Between 1995 and 2001, the U.S. economy has registered an annual growth of 3.6%, exceeding the annual average (2.4%) of economic growth of Europe, in the same period. Also, in Europe, GDP/capita represented only 69% of that recorded in the U.S., while European labour productivity was only 78% of the level recorded for the American economy.

In early 2000, the *EU* leaders have become aware of the fact that the economy *EU* needs a profound process of modernization, in order to be able to compete, efficiently, with the U.S. and other major global players. Meeting in *Lisbon* in March 2000, the *European Council* has been established, for the *EU*, a new and very ambitious goal: to become, in 10 years, “... *the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.* The assembly of policies and instruments activated in order to achieve this purpose are called *Lisbon Process*.

This change requires not only a radical transformation of the European economy, but also a challenging program for the modernization of educational systems; *in Lisbon stated publicly that human resources are the most valuable asset of Europe and therefore, investments in human resources are vital: an increase of only one year of the period of compulsory education lead to an economic growth of 5% in the short term, and 2.5% in the long term. Must be taken into account and positive impact that education has on the quality of employment, citizenship, health and social inclusion.*

Discussions were held and on the issue of comparisons with the main competitors in the human resources:

- *lack of private investments* (at the *EU* level) in human resources: if, as regards public investment, the *EU* is very good (4.9% of GDP, as compared to 4.8% the U.S. and only 3.6% Japan), on investments coming from the private sector, in the *EU* they represent only 0.4% of GDP, while in the U.S.A. is at the level of 2.2%, and in Japan, to 1.2% in 2002. In addition, in the United States is spent from 2 and up to 5 times more for a student, than in the Member States of the *EU*;
- *too few young graduates of higher education*: at the *EU* level, only 22% of the population between the ages of 25 and 64 years are university graduates, while in the U.S. the percentage is 37 %, and in Japan, 34 %;

- *lower level of attractiveness for young people who want to attend courses of higher education: young people in Asia and South America prefer U.S. and, at the same time, there are 2 times more European students in the United States, than American students in Europe.*
- *at the same time, although the European Union issues more diplomas in scientific and technological field than the U.S.A. and Japan (25,7 % EU, 21.9% U.S.A. and 17.2% Japan), EU has fewer researchers. Thus, in EU states are only 5.4 researchers at 1000 inhabitants, while in the U.S.A. their number is 8,7, and in Japan, 9,7.*

As a result, the *European Council* asked the *Education Council* and, respectively, the *European Commission*, to reflect on a number of *common concrete targets* of education systems, covering common concerns respecting, at the same time, national diversity. As a result, in 2001, the *Council of Education* has defined a educational and vocational training strategy (time horizon 2010), in order to develop public policies in education, in such a way that *European systems of education and vocational training to become a reference system at world level in the field of quality in the perspective of 2010.*

The three strategic objectives as defined by the *European Council* in Stockholm in March 2001, they have been:

1. improving the quality and effectiveness of education and vocational training systems in the European Union;
2. facilitating access to education and vocational training for all citizens;
3. opening of education and training systems to the society.

This report on strategic objectives was adopted and became the official document that outlines European approach, comprehensive and coherent of the national systems of education and training in *EU* member states. Those present agreed, also, on the fact that, together, the *Council* and the *European Commission*, must prepare a detailed program for implementing objectives, program to be submitted for the approval of *European Council*, in the spring of 2002.

6. Concluding Remarks

The institutionalist perspective is relevant to the political game of the European institutions. Analytical phases of the Program development can easily be found in the documents at its disposal. Technical analysis, however, so far as it has been, is

not public and it can only be imagined in this work and the chosen solution rationalized. Program philosophy is, however, clear and political decision explains, to a large extent, the option for a specific budget design of the Program. Overcoming the general considerations, I have tried in my scientific approach to emphasize the main theoretical aspects regarding the implementation of the Detailed work program on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in EU.

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