

The Curricular Area in the Romanian Education System in Moldavia before the Movement of the Forty-Eighters

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Abstract: The education system was and will be a factor which defines a nation and assures its union and its consistency. The beginnings of the education system in Moldavia, although hesitating at first, succeeded in developing the schools as institutions which are qualitatively lined up to the other European schools, regarding the school subjects and their content. Although at the beginning the education system was predominantly religious, the assimilation of the European cultural ideas led to the development of a multilateral education system, which was also supported by the state.

Keywords: school; education system; cultural, religious, theological curriculum

1. Introduction

The history of the Romanian education system underlines the fact that the first schools were founded by the most important monasteries and churches, the first educational institutions were considered the prerogative of some religious establishments which had a great influence regarding the cultural progress of the Romanian people. Although the first schools were founded by the Church and supported by the great cultural and religious personalities, this doesn't mean that the path towards school and education did not evolve in time, leading to the foundation of the state education system which included, subsequently the theological education system.

The case of the Moldavian education system was similar to that of Wallachia, but the Transylvanian school unfolded its destiny in another background.

2. The Role of Church in Education

The remarkable role that orthodoxy played in the organization, development and preservation of the European medieval culture in Moldavia is well-known. In the

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training of the priests and clerics which were needed for the royal office, the rulers of Moldavia established, along the centuries, monasteries which eventually became important cultural centres, where schools and libraries would function, such as those of Bistrita, Neamt, Putna, Probota and Dragomirna. Al. Dutu states that the years 1650 and 1848 constitute conventional boundaries which mark the time in which the Romanian humanism arose. He also noticed, agreeing with Iorga, that a Byzantine cultural model was established on Romanian ground, predominantly during the time of the assertion of Hellenism. Vlad Georgescu states that schools and libraries were the institutions by which the society spread its cultural values.

3. Royal School

In April 1714, the Royal School of Iasi was founded, with the help of the first Phanariot ruler, N. Mavrocordat. This school was going to become a true academy due to the introduction, from the year 1717, of the philosophical and science studies, which followed a university curriculum, in Greek. The charter of inception shows that this academy benefited from an organizational form based on several classes which studied Greek, Latin, Slavonic and Moldavian. However, only the Greek school had a curriculum containing university level subjects, the other three classes were of an elementary level.

The same ruler (Ghica), offered in 1736 a gift to the metropolitan of Moldavia, commissioning him with the care of teachers and their students. It was important for the teachers and the students to continue their work, despite their potential financial problems so Ghica's gift could help them continue. In the year 1742 Latin was included in the curriculum while, starting from the middle of the 17th century the interest for Slavonic diminished considerably.

There existed schooling projects initiated by rulers or by brighter clerics, but a project from the 6th of July 1749, belonging to the metropolitan Ignatius the Greek, overcomes the European customs of the time, because it stipulated the education of the young from the age of 3 until the age of 20 (within the Churches of St Nicholas, St Friday and St Sava from Iasi).

4. The first Schoolbooks and the Curricular Area in Next Schools

The second half of the 18th century brought the laicization of schools. This happened due to the publication of a schoolbook, the first schoolbooks published in Moldavia were the primers, beginning with the one printed in Iasi, in 1755 ("Bucvar" or learning starter). Its author was Vartolomei Mazareanu, the Father Superior of Putna monastery. This primer was published due to the initiative of the metropolitan Jacob. Other primers were going to be published in Iasi in 1783 and

in 1795, the first arithmetic book was published in the Principalities, entitled “Arithmetic elements demonstrated by Amfilochie of Hotin). The publishing of the first Romanian grammar books registered was that of Dimitrie Eustatievici, in 1757, but it remained as a manuscript. The first printed grammar book was that of Samuil Micu, in 1780, which was also used in Moldavia. The metropolitan Jacob Putneanul founded in 1774, at the Putna monastery, a spiritual school, entrusting its organization to Vartolomei Mazareanu. He followed the model of the Spiritual Academy from Kiev, where he studied. This new school taught: the Ceaslov, the Psalter and the Moldavian and Russian Catechism, Grammar, Geography, Oratory, Church History by Eusebius, the Psaltichia and Letter writing etc.; the studies had a length of two or three years and the graduates received a book (the book inserted by Isaia Balosescu, the future bishop, was kept), which meant that this school can be considered an elementary church school. Unfortunately, this school closed down in 1786, when the Upper Moldavia was annexed along with Putna monastery.

In 1786, a “clerical school” was founded in the St Ilie monastery, near Suceava, led by the archimandrite Daniil Vlahovici. In 1789, when he became a bishop, the school would continue its activity in Cernauti. In 1827, the bishop Isaia Balosescu (1823-1834) succeeded in opening a theological institution at Cernauti, where only high school graduates were accepted. Courses were held in German, Greek and Latin.

The introduction of teaching material made possible the passing from a theoretical, bookish education system to a practical, real one. The alteration of the curriculum, due to the extension of the studied material, rose like a practical necessity, since the end of the 18th century. The Metropolitan Jacob Stamate suggested the founding at the Academy of Iasi of a practical engineering course.

Ghica reorganized the Academy which becomes an “Academy of teachings”, where teachers of Greek language, Greek Church Book, Moldavian language and Latin taught. The position of the Slavonic teacher disappeared.

The end of the 18th century marked the beginning of a decisive phase regarding the struggle of founding a national education system in Moldavia, which had as a main aim the promoting of Romanian language as a study and cultural language. A strong tendency of orientation towards the school of the West existed. French as well as other western languages were studied; the ideas of rationalism and encyclopedism were implemented. The school reforms of the 18th century led to the amplification of the Moldavian education system and subsequently to its laic and modern development. The struggle of the state for a national Romanian education system was mixed with the struggle for emerging and assertion of the nation.

By a charter of the 24th of May 1803, Moruzzi founded the schools of Focsani, Barlad, Galati and Chisinau, where Greek and Moldavian were being taught. By another charter of the 1st September 1803, the ruler Alexandru C. Moruzzi founded

the “Priests’ Seminary”, this “high standard school” was the result of the metropolitan Veniamin Costachi’s work. The seminary represents “the first theological orthodox Romanian school organized rigorously” and at the same time “the school of Romanian identity”. In 1840 the school will receive, as a wish of the ruler Mihail Sturdza, the name of “Seminaria Veniamina”, as recognition of the merits of its great founder, the metropolitan Veniamin.

The studies of the seminary had a length of 6 years and, in addition to the theological subjects, also taught profane subjects, which were identical to those from the curriculum of the seminary of Blaj, such as: Grammar, Romanian language, Philosophy, Oratory, Logic, Universal History, Psychology and Latin. This seminary is considered to be the first secondary education institution from Moldavia, where Romanian language was taught exclusively.

In 1820, the metropolitan Veniamin sent the scholar Gheorghe Asachi to Transylvania. The purpose of his visit was to look for teachers to occupy all the positions that the seminary offered. He came back to Moldavia accompanied by 4 teachers: Ioan Costea, for Oratory and Poetics, Ioan Manfi, for Latin, Vasile Fabian-Bob, for Theology and Vasile Pop, for the position of principal and for Philosophy and Philology. They were all Greek Catholic, with university degrees. Together with the Seminary the Royal School functioned, reorganized by the same charter “The Philological and Science Academy”, which, by the stipulations of the charter of Scarlat Calimachi from 1813, was called “The Superior Education System of Science”, having Romanian as teaching language.

Another important step towards the assertion of the education system in its national language, besides the founding of the Seminary of Socola, was the opening and presentation, in 1814, of the engineering course, led by Asachi at the Lord’s Academy. Asachi was helped in this process by Veniamin Costachi. The course, with a length of 4 years, and guided by schoolbooks composed by Gh. Asachi, offered the first engineers who graduated on the 18th of July 1818.

In 1820 the Seminary of Socola was reformed. Asachi had been studying in Transylvania the principles of schools, according to which teachers with a university degree were employed (Ioan Costea, Vasile Fabian, Vasile Pop). This reform allows the extension of the curriculum by introducing Logic, Philosophy, Geography and Universal History. The Transylvanian teachers brought along a refreshing national breath that characterized the Romanian school of Transylvania.

After the year 1821, a grown interest is shown towards the elementary, village schools where the teaching language was Romanian and which had a predominant religious education system.

The metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, a prelate with an obvious interest for the Romanian school, after the opening and reorganization of the Socola Seminary,

founded an elementary school in a room at the Three Hierarchs monastery. He entrusted, in 1826, the leadership of this school to Gh. Saulescu.

The charter from 1828 stated that the subjects, which were going to be studied at this school (named « Vasiliana »), would be taught only in Romanian. These subjects were : Religious Studies, Philosophy, Biography, Logic, Oratory, History, Poetry, Mathematics, Moral Values, Political and Agricultural Economy, Natural History and Archeology. Latin was going to be studied as the language that gave birth to Romanian. Latin was tolerated but any other modern language could have been studied. The gymnasium enlarged its profile and capacity after 1832, when it was included in the education system reorganized as a public institution.

In the emergence of new prospects regarding the development of the national education system the time of the Organic Regulation and the laws which were framed on its basis, played an important part. The founding programme of the Vasilian Gymnasium anticipated the creation of the national education system as an institutionalized, state service.

The introduction of the school as a public asset within the Organic Regulation engages the necessity of each county to have a national, collective, elementary school. At the beginning this kind of schools functioned in Roman, Husi, Galati, Focsani, Barlad si Botosani. Regulations regarding the establishment of an agronomical, a technical, military and for girls education system were stated as laws; the learning process had to be a general one but it had to vary accordingly to the role that the learners would occupy within the society.

The Organic Regulation's intention was to establish and develop a beginning regarding the nationalization of the education system; this beginning was accomplished especially during Ion Sandu Sturdza's reign, thus creating the general legislative framework which was necessary to the development of the national progressive initiatives.

Referring to the number and degree of the public education institutions, the Organic Regulation specified the following:

- a) The Vasilian Gymnasium, founded in 1644 by Vasile Lupu and restored by the Trusteeship on the 1st of January 1828
- b) In addition to the Gymnasium there existed a temporary institute for the sons of the clerks of the state
- c) Six elementary schools founded at Roman, Husi, Botosani, Barlad, Galati and Focsani
- d) The Seminary of Socola, with the purpose of forming clerics

The academic committee, during its first session on the 12th of January 1833, suggested the formulation of a new school regulation and it was going to contain the rules of elaboration of the schoolbooks which were approved by the

Trusteeship on the 15th of April 1833. These rules stated the use of the words of Romanian origin, a simple presentation of the theoretical information, without any comments and the content of the works were not allowed to contain ideas against religion, moral values and the state.

The concern of the academic Committee for a new school regulation, which had to comprise clear instructions regarding the structure of a national, modern education system, was going to be materialized in Gh. Asachi's well-known wording entitled « Regulation of the public schools from Moldavia under the patronage of the ruler Mihail Grigoriu Sturdza Voievod, drawn up by the Trusteeship of public teachings ». This regulation was approved on the 14th of June 1835, on the eve of the opening festivity of the Mihalean Academy. This new regulation was necessary due to the progress achieved in developing and diversifying the Moldavian education system. This progress was related to the founding of an all-girls' school, with a length of 3 years, opened on the 8th November 1834. The school functioned in four chambers of the St Ilie church in Iasi, with teachers who were women, two teachers from outside, one of them was a catechist (because they paid special attention to liturgy) and under the supervision of a nun; the structure followed the pestalozzian model, with a length of three years, and later of four years, the classes were held in Romanian, and an introduction in the structure and practice of sewing and trimming was taught.

On the 20th of November, during the same year, the « extraordinary » classes from the Vasilin Gymnasium began; they were later transferred to the Mihailean Academy, which included three faculties : Philosophy, Law and Theology, after Johan Muller began his extraordinary course of « drawing of figures and historical paintings ».

Another important document for the public education system was the one offered to the press by Asachi along with the new regulation on the 1st of June 1835, entitled “Tablo ghegeneralnic a materiilor de învățământ care se paradocsesc în Academia Mihăileană și în școlile publice din Moldova”.

The legislative framework promoted by the Organic Regulation allowed the establishment of the most important foundation regarding the development of the national education system from Wallachia in the first half of the 19th century, the Mihailean Academy in Iasi. This institution is considered to be the first superior school of Moldavia, founded due to the efforts of the metropolitan Veniamin and of Gh. Asachi.

The new institution had to continue, at a superior level, the traditions of the old Academy, founded by Vasile Lupu in the 17th century that would replace the Greek one, which disappeared in 1821, at the time of the revolution.

In 1835, the classes of the Vasilian Gymnasium are dissolved and transferred to the Academy, along with the faculty and the extraordinary classes. The elementary school and the normal class remained at the Three Hierarchs, which meant that at the Mihailean Academy, one could find all teaching level, except the primary one. Regarding the length and content of the studies we can say that the modern structure of the classes differed from the contemporary one, the faculty of Philosophy represented only a preparatory class to promoting to other specializations considered superior (law and theology classes) and the faculty of theology was at the level of the seminaries founded later. The Mihailean Academy was the education institution of the highest level which functioned in the Principalities until 1860.

An important step made towards the development of the national ideology is represented by the opening within the Academy of a national history course held by Mihail Kogalniceanu (who taught within the Academy only until the spring of 1843, the history of the state was held in the following years by I. Albinet), because, until the school year 1843-1844, the National History was not a special school subject, included in the Academy's curriculum. The references to the Romanian past were comprised in certain chapters from the Universal History subjects or in those of chronological history. A certain precedent represented the teaching, in the previous school year (1842-1843), of a History and Oratory course within the Seminary of Socola ("the faculty of Theology"-integrated to the Academy) by Ioan Maiorescu, who came in Moldavia from Craiova. Even though the course was not a proper National History course, the existence of a manuscript of the Moldavian History drawn up by Ioan Maiorescu, is a strong reason in sustaining the hypothesis that he taught, for the first time, a History course.

It was also suggested to found an elementary school in the more populated villages and to postpone the superior education. Asachi even suggested bringing foreign teachers to create a university, although the regulation stated its preference for the national language. The next phase was the promulgation of the "Project of reorganizing of public teachings in Moldavia", at the end of February 1847.

The teachers of the Mihailean Academy had in their wide vision, besides their specific scholarly preoccupations, the concern of transmitting the national wit to their students, trying to educate true patriots to whom they could hand over their responsibilities. Their fervent preoccupations for the spreading of the national language and history were no longer a novelty. The initiators were the members of the Transylvanian School and the echo of their preoccupations was felt by the Principalities, but they were also emphasized by the teachers who came from Transylvania to teach in different Moldavian education institutions, especially within the Mihailean Academy.

5. Conclusions

The first grammar books, which were used as school books, were published and also the publication of a substantial amount of school books was taken into account. There also existed an interest in enlarging the Romanian vocabulary; a similar also important preoccupation is the one concerning the introduction of the Latin alphabet in schools, the first book with Latin letters was printed in Moldavia in 1838 by Neofit Scriban. In 1844, the teacher Gh. Saulescu suggested an orthography for Latin letter writing. The preoccupations regarding schools were actually submitted to a larger movement of promoting the Romanian culture and literature. Such national aims were supported by certain publications like: "Literary Dacia", "The Romanian Archive", "The Prosperity" etc.

In conclusion, we must mention that fact that teaching in Moldavian schools before 1848, was in a tight relationship to the national structure which was interested in introducing Romanian language as a support for our national ideology, accordingly with the unity ideals of the Romanian people at the time.

6. Bibliography

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