



The Specific of Scholar Dropout in Students' Opinion

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Abstract: *In the present days, education has a crucial role for development of contemporary society, because, in this way, it can perpetuate itself and can transmit, from a generation to the next one, the accumulated experience about humanity and reality. Considerate as a "Key-factor" for progress, the educational process from learning institutions can provide well-prepared labour work for all domains of activity and stimulate the intellectual curiosity, adapted capacity, creativity and innovation as well. Unfortunately, not every pupil (and their family) could understand the importance of formal education for their personal / professional development and for the progress of society. But from personal, social or economical reasons, many pupils prefer to leave the school before to graduate it with diploma. In the present study, we intend to analyze the pupils' attitude regarding to formal education in connection with teaching / learning activity, inter-personal relationship with colleagues or professors, so on and also, we try to identify some solutions for helping pupils to remain in school until they graduate with diploma. The sample was composed by 500 pupils who study in secondary level from 5 schools from Bihor county, Romania. The instrument was represented by a questionnaire composed from 37 items and the period of research was during the present academic year (2011 / 2012). The results of our study prove that, if pupils would be more involved in taking decision at their school level, or in didactic process and if they get any economic support, are increasing the chance for them to stay in educational system and be able to invest personal effort and material resources in their life development.*

Keywords: attitude, formal education, scholar dropout

The school dropout rate is an important indicator in assessing the performance of the education system, by level of education. From another perspective analysis, it signals some aspects of social and economic life, which can influence people's access to education. In the last few decades,

the lives of many people in Romania has changed a lot due to economic, social, cultural and political transformation from our country. In this context, many families are forced to pass through a complex process of redefining its own values - and to adapt at today's requirements. Education (in general) and school (in particular) play an essential role in preparing tomorrow's exchange by forming human society able to adapt or, even more, anticipate and provoke transformations of the contemporary world. Unfortunately, it seems that sometimes the school itself is overcome by social problems, being engaged in some situations that it should even out the community.

Thus, in the last few years, the school dropout rate issue has become an usual topic of analysis and debate. It is one of the issue that romanian school has to face it. According to Cristina Neamțu (2003:199), school dropout can be described as the phenomenon of quitting school, that is, early leaving of the formal learning system, regardless the level that has been achieved, before obtaining a qualification confirmed by a certificate, which means the school stage that has been started is not finished. Those pupils who drop out of school are not re-enrolled by their former educational institution and are not enrolled in alternative schooling programme either. As far as the legislation is concerned, school dropout is an issue up to the 10th grade (that is, about the age of 16), which is the last year of compulsory education in Romania (Blândul et al., 2010).

The most important causes that can generate scholar dropout are the following (Neamțu, 2003):

- *academic factors* - altered teacher-student relationship, low quality of educational programs, school absenteeism, student non-involvement in the educational process etc.;
- *social factors* - student's inability to make friends, marginalization / social isolation, association with other students with undesirable behaviors etc.;
- *extracurricular factors* - insufficient participation of pupils in organized school activities (clubs, competitions, trips and other events);
- *other factors* - the belief that the value of diploma / qualification obtained at school is irrelevant and not settled properly.

In such circumstances, some of the most important causes that can generate scholar dropout among students are pedagogical ones. Among these ones, we can mention: the quality of scholar life, the relevance of content taught in relation to the students' needs, teaching methods and professors' styles according with students' cognitive styles, specific of didactic evaluation, the opening of school regarding to the problems of local community, scholar discipline management and so on. We have to mention that all these factors do not act in isolation, but in a highly interdependence, the influence of any of them could have most serious consequences in terms of scholar dropout (Nelson et al., 2009).

The objectives

The purpose of our research is to identify students' attitudes regarding formal education, believing that this is one of the most important predictors of school dropout. Specifically, we wanted to explore the level of pupils' satisfaction about the educational institution where they study, how they evaluate the relationship with other educational agents, how are the most relevant qualities for an effective teacher in opinion of his pupils, and which are the criteria that underlying pupils' interest in different didactic disciplines. We believe that, by identifying these indicators, we can outline a more complete image regarding pupils' attitude towards school and we better understand why some of them decide to leave it very early.

The sample

The present research was conducted in mainstream education from rural area Avram Iancu, Boge, Carasau, Les and Şuncuiuş (Bihor county, Romania). The sample consisted in 500 pupils, 72% girls and 28% boys. All pupils were between 11 and 14 years old, were enrolled in inferior secondary school cycle. Number of subjects was divided almost equally between those 5 schools. Thus, at So8 Avram Iancu, 97 students were interviewed at Boge So8 - 84 students, at So8 Carasau - 102 students at So8 Les - 114 students and at GRI Şuncuiuş - 106 students.

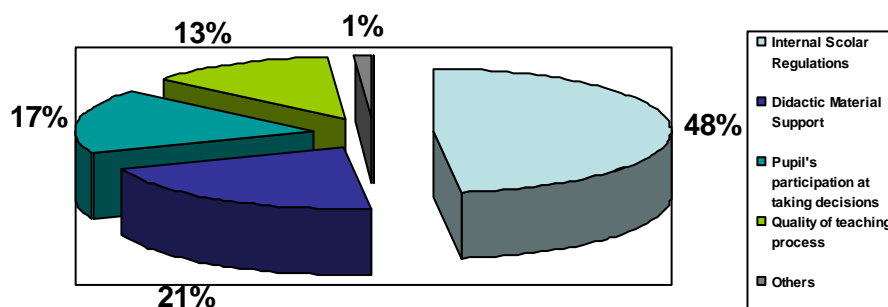
The instrument and procedure

To conducting for the this research, the lot of subjects was administrated one questionnaire, which consisted in 37 items grouped into the following categories: causes and consequences of early leaving of formal education, frequency of this phenomenon, particularities of didactic disciplines from that pupils use to absent most often, ways, and places where pupils agree to spend their "free time" etc. Quantitative interpretation of the results was done by calculating the frequency responses of subjects and presentation of obtained data was performed in a pictures.

The results

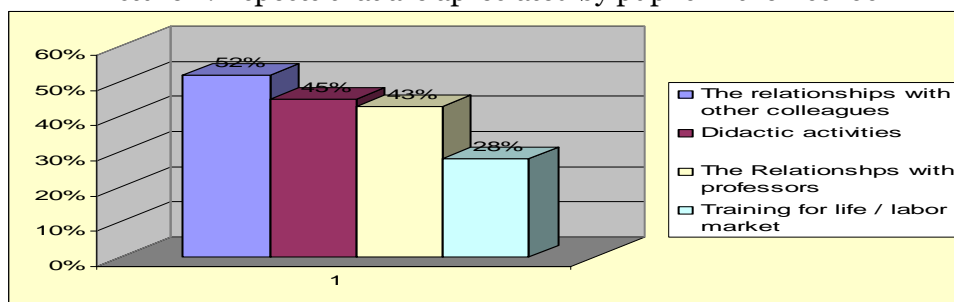
The most important results of quantitative interpretation could be presenting in the following pictures.

Picture 1. Aspects that can generate dissatisfaction of pupils in school



Regarding the opinion of first mentioned item, it should be noted that 53 pupils preferred to not express their point of view. From total respondents, 48% are dissatisfied by the internal rules from school, 21% of subjects would like more favorable conditions for teaching / learning process, 17% would like to be involved in certain decisions and for 13%, the quality of teaching is low.

Picture 2. Aspects that are apreciated by pupils in their school

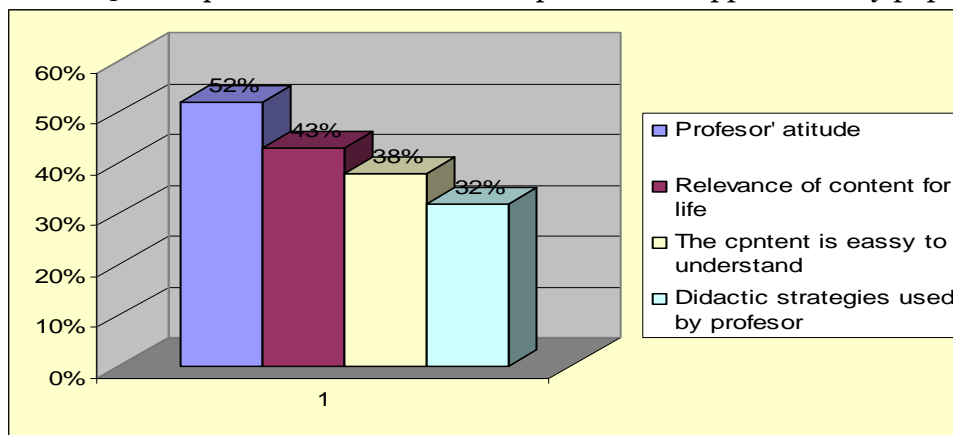


From analyzing the Picture no. 2, we can observe that in the most cases, the opinion about the elements that could generate pupils' satisfaction / dissatisfaction related to school are divided. Thus, many respondents appreciate in their school the quality of relationships with colleagues, while that quality of relationships between pupils and professor or teaching / learning process could generate rather unsatisfied. It is surprising that 72% of respondents believe that the school does not prepare graduates valuable, able to successfully integrate on the labor market. According to pupils' answers, this means that the school is struggling to convince that it is able to successfully fulfill their mission for which it was created – education for life for future generations. For medium and long term, the effects of such attitudes could be extremely serious: lack of trust in the formal education system, devaluation of educational services and, finally, early leaving of school by more and more pupils.

Interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is another element that can enhance quality of education and create a positive attitude of students toward formal education. Analyzing responses, we see that, in general, this relationship is polarized around feelings of sympathy and mutual trust, or, conversely, of dislike, distrust or even hostility. On the other hand, we hold that students appreciate teachers, primarily for their human quality and then for their professional skills. Among the most

valued qualities, we can mention: tolerance, empathy for the pupils' problems, patience, keeping promises, respect for others, humor, sociability, the human and professional model, effective teaching style etc. Conversely, students do not appreciate the teachers' verbally or physically aggressive behavior, unwarranted criticism, "mechanistic" teaching methods irrelevant taught content, subjectivity in didactic evaluation, excessive severity and so on.

Picture 3. The qualities of a didactic discipline that is appreciated by pupils



Finally, regarding the pupils' opinion to didactic disciplines, it depends on how teacher behaves on courses (52%), the utility for life of accumulated knowledge (43%), the ease with which can be assimilated taught content (38%) and teaching strategies used in didactic activity (28%). Again it seems that what matters most are the attitudes of teachers towards pupils and less the style in which they approach the teaching / learning / assessment process.

Discussion and conclusions

Prevention of dropout and promotion of completion have become concerns that receive increasing attention from policy makers, researchers and educators dealing with youth at risk (Momanu & Hojbota, 2013:117). The achievements researches of Willett and Singer, (1991), Pierrakeas et al. (2004) made obvious the fact that beside intrinsic factors (student-related) that direct to the school dropout, a significant role it also have the extrinsic factors (institutional-related) such as study methods and materials, educational approach, and teacher influence.

In this matter, qualitative interpretation of the results presented in the previous paragraphs highlight some interesting findings. The first aspect would be that the school is appreciated rather to others factors than those strictly related to the specific of educational process: the permissiveness of internal Regulation, the quality of inter-personal relationships among educational agents, the didactic material, pupils' participation in taking decisions that affect themselves and so on. The contemporary school is not those traditional "space of knowledge", where the first (and sometimes only) task is the transmission / acquisition of informational content, but is

an area of education and training, where the most important thing is the acquisition of values for life (Kempes et al., 2005).

Second, in pupils' opinion, the effective teacher is one who has, first, pedagogical competences and only then methodical and specialized ones. It seems that today's teacher is appreciated more for their excellent human model than those skills that confer him a scientist status (Cuban, 2011). The phenomenon could be explained in terms of diversifying sources of information, the educational tasks was taken and completed by family, media (radio, TV, print and online publications), NGOs, other institutions of art and culture (Fullerton et al., 2010).

If we were to generalize the above findings, the Romanian school should admit that it have to redefine the place and role in contemporary society and adapt the educational offer toward its client needs and expectations. The contemporary School is not the sole provider of knowledge, but is see by students as a place where they would like to prepare themselves for life. Unfortunately, our survey data indicates that just over one quarter of respondents believe in the usefulness of knowledge acquired at school. In this context, it seems perfectly justified the idea produce by a segment of the community on devaluation of formal education, which, due to economic difficulties becoming more pronounced, may lead to the phenomenon of early school leaving. It requires a rethinking of educational marketing strategy, a new curriculum offer flexible and adapted to modern society, in which students learn how to learn and information come from life and for life. Organizing extracurricular activities in which to train so students, teachers and so other members of the local community can give students the motivation to achieve socio-professional implicitly to reconsider school and long-term effects (Apostu et al., 2011).

In conclusion, pointing out the phenomenon of early school dropout, only in the social, economical and educational, precarious conditions of the family and neglect the possible causes by the teaching training can have undesirable effects. Our obtained results show that pupils from contemporary school expect from it to be a marker capable of providing the necessary values for life. However, the school should remain the main promoter of knowledge, able, as well, to help pupils to learn critical taught information and transmitted values and use them appropriately in daily activity. Otherwise, school dropout will become more prominent and the school will become, paradoxically, one of the factors potential generating of this phenomenon, with very serious effects both on students and communities, and on its own images.

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