

THE PERFORMANCES OF THE EDUCATION PROCESS IN RURAL AREAS - A PERMANENT CHALLENGE FOR THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *There are significant differences at the national level between the performances of the educational process in urban and rural or agricultural areas. Although the quality of teaching may be the same, there are many causes generating these discrepancies. These are generated by students, parents, school and, not at least, society. This paper researched issues of curriculum, human resources, material and financial resources and the relation with the community. The paper aims at drawing a cause - effect diagram and stating some measures to improve the situation, to increase the performance of the educational process, and to optimize the educational management in rural areas.*

Key words: *educational management, cause – effect diagram, the performance of the education process in rural areas.*

INTRODUCTION

A public education institution, either rural or urban, has the mission *to provide training through education, in accordance with the requirements derived from Romania's status as a member of the European Union and, given the context of globalization, a young generation able to function effectively in the present and future society* [7].

Starting from this objective and from the principles governing the national system of school education, this paper intends to analyze the performance of the educational process in rural and agricultural areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the context of promoting institutional decentralization and ensuring the quality system at all levels of school education, the educational management faces a series of aspects specific to the education process in rural and agricultural areas. Table 1 shows a summary in a SWOT analysis.

Based on it, the county school inspectorates included in the strategy for the school year 2014-2015 the following **directions of action**:

- Increasing the access of all children to a qualitative education;
- Increasing the school success rate;
- Reducing absenteeism;
- Implementing the institutional decentralization at the level of school education units;
- Providing training and development programs for teachers;
- Upgrading school infrastructure;
- Providing educational partnership to support the educational process.

Analyzing the identified problems on the four fields (curriculum, human resources, material and financial resources, relationship with the community), we found that there are some that could generate improvement projects. This paper aims to identify the problem – priority project, its causes and improvement measures.

Table 1

The SWOT analysis of education in rural and agricultural areas

(S) Strengths	(W) Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensuring an appropriate organization of the instructive-educational process in schools having sanitary authorization; ▪ the representatives of schools should form a <i>County Council of Students</i>, a mature and responsible partner of the County School Inspectorate and of other institutions and organizations in the county; ▪ the management capacity of institutions to coordinate, monitor and manage the current activity; ▪ well prepared teachers from the scientific point of view, most having professional experience, including managerial experience; ▪ developing teachers professionally through courses and training in their specialty, school management, mentoring, or computer use; ▪ highly adaptable and flexible training offer; ▪ increasing teachers' interest in national and international projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dysfunctions of the information flow between the School Inspectorate and the educational institutions; ▪ limited financial resources to motivate teachers; ▪ very low degree of baccalaureate graduation; ▪ very low degree of passing the high school entrance exam; ▪ high rate of absenteeism and school abandonment; ▪ insufficient involvement of the community and local authorities to ensure social conditions necessary for teachers' stability; ▪ poor communication and collaboration between the City Council and the school board.
(O) Opportunities	(T) Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ education is a national priority; ▪ participative management style based on collaboration; ▪ possible implication of the Student Council and Consultative Council of Parents in school life; ▪ employing permanent teachers and decreasing the number of substitutes; ▪ amplifying the European dimension by enable the access of the new generation to international cooperation programs and projects; ▪ better offers for teacher permanent training; ▪ regional, national and international programs; ▪ available and rapid information and communication with the Ministry of Education and Research through the portal and forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ high and rising rate of school abandonment; ▪ lack of school image promotion; ▪ ineffective communication within the organization: director-teacher, teacher - student; ▪ teachers' failure to adapt to change, especially in using participative active methods in teaching; ▪ decreasing number of school population, with implications in planning didactic personnel and school network; ▪ insufficient awareness of some rural stakeholders (local councils, businesses, unions, parents, students, teachers) on the priorities and directions necessary in education; ▪ the poor socio-economic situation of some students' families; ▪ parents' insufficient awareness on their role as main partner in school education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

■ **Identifying the problem – priority project:**

Analyzing the average results for Baccalaureate exam in 2014, obtained by the students in urban and rural areas in the 3 counties chosen as reference for the study (Argeș [5], Brăila [11] and Dâmbovița [6]), we found the distribution represented in Table 2:

Table 2

The average results for Bacalaureate 2014

School Inspectorate	Area of residence	Average results – number of students with grades between							Total	Passing percentage
		1.00–4.99	5.00–5.99	6.00–6.99	7.00–7.99	8.00–8.99	9.00–9.99	10		
Argeş County	Total	1,132	646	645	734	950	1,161	25	5,293	78.61%
	Urban	347	248	287	375	566	865	22	2,710	87.20%
	Rural	785	398	358	359	384	296	3	2,583	69.61%
Brăila County	Total	561	393	410	344	324	285	14	2,331	75.93%
	Urban	203	194	228	204	244	247	14	1,334	84.78%
	Rural	358	199	182	140	80	38	0	997	64.09%
Dâmbovița County	Total	2,676	732	523	355	235	116	2	4,639	42.32%
	Urban	647	257	215	184	152	97	2	1,554	58.37%
	Rural	2,029	475	308	171	83	19	0	3,085	34.23%

The result distribution in the three counties (urban + rural) is represented graphically in Figure 1:

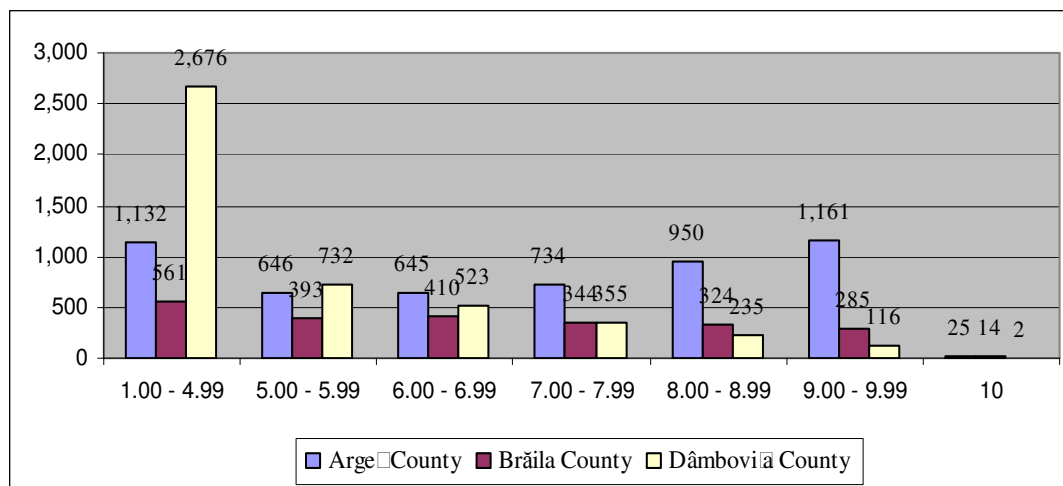


Fig. 1 Comparing the average results by county for Bacalaureate 2014

We noticed that in Dâmbovița county, where the share of students from rural areas is higher (2,029 rural students vs. 647 urban students), there was a noticeable lower passing percentage compared to the other two counties, a fact confirmed also by the frequency distribution of school results presented in Table 3:

Table 3

The frequency of the average results for Baccalaureate 2014

Average result range	Nr. of students with average results within			Cumulated no. of students			Share of students with average results within (%)			Cumulated share (%)		
	Argeș	Brăila	Dâmbovița	Argeș	Brăila	Dâmbovița	Argeș	Brăila	Dâmbovița	Argeș	Brăila	Dâmbovița
1.00 – 4.99	1,132	561	2,676	1,132	561	2,676	21.39	24.07	57.68	21.39	24.07	57.68
5.00 – 5.99	646	393	732	1,778	954	3,408	12.20	16.86	15.78	33.59	40.93	73.46
6.00 – 6.99	645	410	523	2,423	1,364	3,931	12.19	17.59	11.27	45.78	58.52	84.74
7.00 – 7.99	734	344	355	3,157	1,708	4,286	13.87	14.76	7.65	59.64	73.27	92.39
8.00 – 8.99	950	324	235	4,107	2,032	4,521	17.95	13.90	5.07	77.59	87.17	97.46
9.00 – 9.99	1,161	285	116	5,268	2,317	4,637	21.93	12.23	2.50	99.53	99.40	99.96
10	25	14	2	5,293	2,331	4,639	0.47	0.60	0.04	100	100	100
Total	5,293	2,331	4,639	-	-	-	100	100	100	-	-	-

Analyzing the structure of the candidates' results in each county by area (rural and urban), we noticed the significant lower results of rural students. The diagram in Figure 2 represents this relevantly:

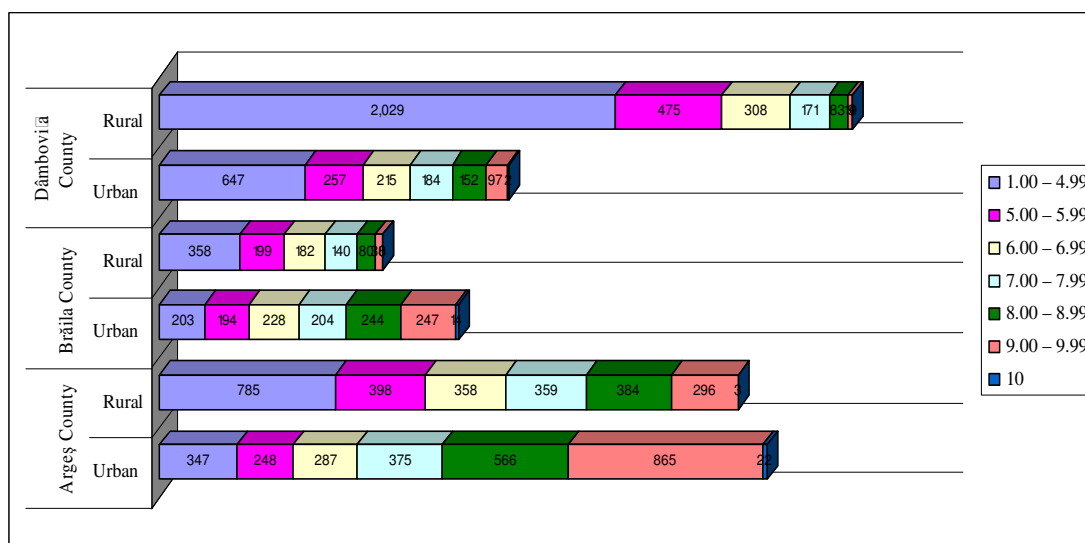


Fig. 2: 2014 Baccalaureate results by area

Therefore, **the problem – priority project** in rural and agricultural schools seems to be the poor results at **Baccalaureate 2014** and **National Evaluation 2014**.

■ **The processes impacting the problem. Determining the problem degree**

Table 4 analyzes the *main causes* that could have generated the lower level of performance for the students in rural and agricultural areas at National Evaluation 2014 and Baccalaureate 2014, compared to the urban students. Each factor is evaluated both in importance and as a convenience, while the partial scores estimate synthetically *the problem degree – priority project*.

Table 4

Determining the problem degree – priority project

CAUSE	Share importance	Evaluation	Score
- the material endowment of rural schools does not coincide with that of urban schools	0.2	3	0.6
- after some rural schools merged, the students had to travel longer distances from their villages to reach the school they belonged	0.1	4	0.4
- many children are involved in agricultural work, helping their parents and grandparents to ensure their living	0.2	5	1.0
- the absence of parents working abroad means that children remain with their grandparents or other relatives who may not show the same interest in school, instruction and education for these children	0.1	2	0.2
- the existence of single-parent families with specific problems	0.1	3	0.3
- in many cases, the parents' main concern is tomorrow, not the school, although they are "along the students"	0.1	3	0.3
- the native heritage of some students prevent them in mastering the high standard curriculum	0.2	4	0.8
Total	1.0	-	3.6

■ **The cause-effect diagram for the problem - priority project:**

Figure 3 shows the cause-effect diagram for the problem - priority project (poor results at the examinations National Evaluation and Baccalaureate).

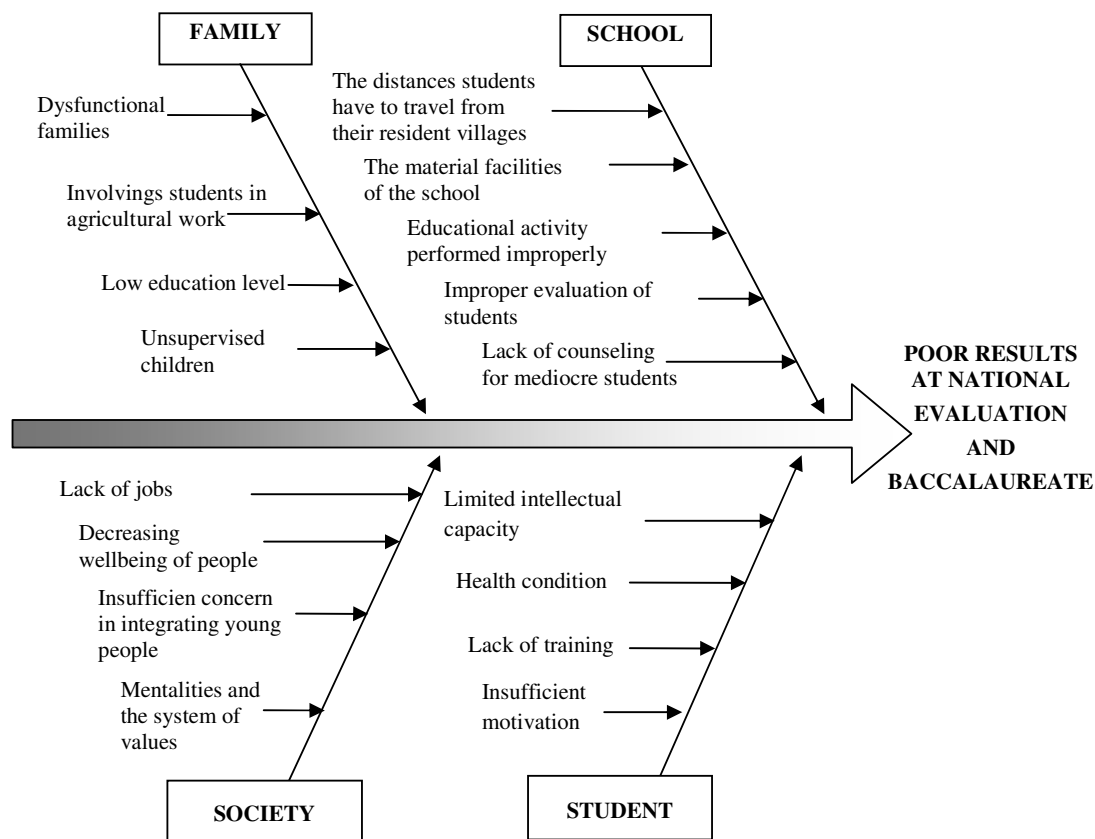


Fig. 3: The cause-effect diagram for the problem - priority project

■ **Evaluating alternatives and establishing the action plan to resolve the problem - priority project:**

Table 5 presents the proposed measures to monitor, control and remedy the situation (the poor results obtained by students in rural and agricultural areas at the examinations National Evaluation and Bacalaureate).

Table 5

Action plan to increase the performance of education in rural and agricultural areas for the school year 2014 – 2015

Pos.	Objectives	Methods	Deadline	Responsible party
1.	Making students and parents aware of the importance, complexity and functions of the school and the implications of initial simulation, respectively the bacalaureate simulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thematic inspections ▪ Meetings with parents ▪ Advising the parents of children with poor results at the initial evaluations, respectively the bacalaureate simulations. 	According to the <i>Diagram of Inspections</i> , of C.S.I.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Territorial inspectors - School directors - Teachers-class masters
2.	Developing the exigencies on the level of knowledge acquired in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specialty inspections ▪ Establishing and implementing some measures to motivate student learning (presenting lessons more attractively). 	Weekly, according to the <i>Diagram of Inspections</i> , of C.S.I.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistant general school inspector - Specialty school inspectors - Teachers / methodists
3.	Monitoring the application of tests according to the models proposed by the ministry and grading them according to their scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thematic and specialty inspections ▪ Meetings and methodical commissions 	According to the <i>Diagram of Inspections</i> , monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School inspectors - School directors - People in charge with methodical commissions
4.	Familiarizing students with the examinations National Evaluation or Bacalaureate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizing objective simulations of the examinations in schools 	March-April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School directors - People in charge with methodical commissions/ departments
5.	Preparing all students of eighth, respectively twelfth grade, for the examinations National Evaluation, respectively Bacalaureate 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizing additional training activities for the students in eighth, respectively twelfth grade, according to the school training schedule. ▪ Establishing and implementing a recovery program for the absent students. 	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School directors - People in charge with methodical commissions/ departments Teachers

6.	Psychological counseling of students and their parents for the examinations National Evaluation and Baccalaureate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psycho-pedagogical counseling for students and parents ▪ Meetings with parents for each terminal class and for all classes in the school 	According to a the program commonly agreed with the students and their parents, 2 times / semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School directors - Psycho-pedagogical advisers - Class masters - Parents
7.	Monitoring the level of knowledge for the students in eighth, respectively twelfth grade, for the examinations National Evaluation / Baccalaureate (according to the themes and objectives of " <i>The single chart of inspections for the school year 2014-2015</i> ")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyzing periodically the real stage of students' knowledge in the Teachers' Council and the Board of Directors 	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School directors - People in charge with methodical commissions/ departments - Teachers and class masters
			Specialty inspections: Romanian Language, Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialty school inspector - Romanian Language, Mathematics/ Methodists

CONCLUSIONS

The results of rural students at the examinations *National Evaluation 2014* and *Baccalaureate 2014* differed significantly from those of urban students; the discrepancies resulted from many **causes**, such as students, parents, school and society:

- a) after some rural schools merged, the students had to travel longer distances from their villages to reach the school they belonged;
- b) the material endowment of rural schools does not coincide with that of urban schools;
- c) many children are involved in agricultural work, helping their parents and grandparents to ensure their living;
- d) the absence of parents working abroad means that children remain with their grandparents or other relatives who may not show the same interest in school, instruction and education for these children;
- e) the existence of single-parent families with specific problems;
- f) in many cases, the parents' main concern is tomorrow, not the school, although they are "along the students";
- g) the native heritage of some students prevent them in mastering the high standard curriculum.

Therefore we propose the following specific **measures** to optimize the training of students, to increase the performance of the educational process and to optimize the educational management in rural and agricultural areas:

- adapting the school curriculum to the students' age and to the socio-economic aspects of the society;
- the educational process should be performed differently, because not all students can learn and apply knowledge in the same rhythm; the effective implementation of this concept is necessary, it should not remain a mere discussion;
- training teachers in psycho-pedagogy and their specialties;
- adopting of a plan of further training in schools and departments for the students with problems;

- the importance of learning and the methods to stimulate students / parents to study should be presented during the meetings with parents;
- making analyzes in every schools to detect any gaps in student learning;
- implementing some active and participative methods in the classes to motivate students' interest in learning;
- optimizing the transport of students to their school.

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