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DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

Innovative managerial approaches to increase the performances of Romanian private educational institutions

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CHAPTER I

State-of-the-art on innovative strategies and policies in the field of educational management

Educational management is perceived as a set of concepts, techniques, guidelines and guidance tools that are used to achieve the objectives of the educational act, at an expected level of performance. It complements the idea, adding that in a current vision, educational management is defined as a complex need for training, design and evaluation of training, specific to the development of each person's personality, which takes into account certain objectives.

Educational management is in a constant process of change, in an era of innovation, digital transformation and globalization, being eminently essential for those responsible for managerial activity, to discover, in relation to the specifics of the institution they coordinate, innovative practices for an increased efficiency of the educational act. The essential aspects that an effective educational management must take into account are innovation, development, entrepreneurship, cooperation with all the factors participating in the process of the educational act of the educational unit, the exchange of experience and globalization.

According to specialized studies, it has been proven that a democratic management of an educational unit is optimal. This principle requires that all subordinate departments be consulted before a decision is made. Thus, the management becomes interactive and combines the unidirectional vertical guidance, from the central level, with the horizontal guidance, at the intermediate level, to the basic level of the educational institutions.

Many European countries, more developed than Romania, have managed to evolve in terms of pre-university institutions, becoming organizational entities with greater autonomy in terms of decision-makers, holding all stakeholders involved in the educational process, adopting innovative approaches, based on experiential learning.

In order for the educational manager to reach the expected level of performance and efficiency, it is mandatory to have experience in the educational field, to acquire and prove a special competence, accompanied by the spirit of initiative, optimal problem management, the ability to and capitalize on strengths and take potential risks in the decision-making process. The educational manager must be to some extent and demanding, fair and proving authority at the same time, by the power of example, civilized and modest in all circumstances, to show flexibility, innovative and creative spirit, to be responsible, essential attributes for increased success of the managerial act.

For those who are not in the education system, the notions of manager and leader are two concepts that seem somewhat abstract, being difficult to assimilate. Management combines creative, organizational skills, an analytical ability and interpersonal connections, as well as skills of proper time management and constant communication with members of the organization, which aims to achieve strategic objectives. Educational leadership, in return for educational management, involves a vision of the future of the school, anticipating what can be transformed, it also involves cooperation, teamwork and the use of motivational factors. The educational leader uses the ability to persuade, he is persevering, aiming to determine the colleagues to carry out the objectives proposed in the institutional development plan or the school action plan, as the case may be.

Educational leaders have a charismatic style, focused on colleagues, on their needs and necessities, while also being characterized by exploring and managing risk situations. A charismatic leader manages to guide his colleagues and achieve a concordance between the work to be done and the wishes. The charismatic leader can, through the power of persuasion, more easily attract his colleagues, who are willing to follow him without hesitation, in all the proposed activities. The charismatic leader does not have an abusive personality. He always acts tactfully, calmly, towards those around him, he knows how to listen, he is trustworthy, being able to even assume his mistakes and criticisms alike. He thus manages to gain the loyalty of the team he leads, in order to achieve the goals he has set for himself.

According to researchers and practitioners in the field of education, the leader of the school must be concessive and empathetic to the team he coordinates, while maintaining a certain barrier, so that a certain limit is not exceeded. On the other hand, it is necessary to use an authoritarian style, when the situation requires it and when the aim is to achieve an important goal. It is imperative that there is a balance in all actions taken, both in decision-making regarding the staff employed and the educational institution as such.

Currently, the educational manager who aims for the success of the organization he leads, must implement innovative management practices. Innovation is a process of change in the way we work in an organization, which involves certain risks, being implemented in all areas, including education, in order to ensure greater efficiency [53]. Innovation in the education sector is focused on introducing new ideas, methods, strategies and techniques in order to improve the learning process and its long-term efficiency, both internally and externally.

The implementation of innovative elements in school administration occurs in response to the digital transformation, resulting in creative and innovative practices around the globe. Innovation involves the practical application of ideas, technology and processes,

through new methods, in order to gain a competitive advantage that could improve workplace performance, quality of services and commitments. Innovation can be adopted or adapted.

Several aspects facilitated the innovative process in schools: competence, professional training, responsibility, desire for change, motivation for change, leadership support, participatory safety, complexity of work, etc. In addition, in studies on innovation in the education sector, practical experiences and continuous improvement of the manager and teachers are relevant.

In the literature, four essential types of innovations can be identified, which can be applied in educational management:

- Innovation of educational services, which involves the introduction of a new concept that significantly improves managerial practices in schools. For example, the introduction of electronic payment, such as the online payment of school fees, in private educational institutions.
- The innovation of the educational process refers to the implementation of the provision of new services or the improvement of the existing ones. The innovation of school processes aims to reduce the unit cost, in terms of service delivery, in order to improve or increase their quality. A concrete example in this sense is the use of new teaching methods, digital assessment and obviously, the use of ICT tools in the instructional-educational process, taking into account all its stages: teaching-learning-assessment.
- Educational marketing innovation, which involves the implementation of a new marketing method, which involves significant changes in the design of the educational offer or in its promotion.
- Organizational innovation: This involves the implementation of a new organizational method in educational management practices. This type of innovation is meant to increase teacher satisfaction, appropriate interpersonal relationships within the organization, reducing administrative bottlenecks. The ultimate goal is to increase responsibility and involvement among employees.

Innovative educational managerial practices represent a rigorous and systematic process of identifying and implementing unique activities for the organization, which aim to stimulate it, in order to achieve short, medium and long term goals. This process contains a set of tools that allow educational managers to use them appropriately. Common tools include brainstorming, lifecycle management of educational content, idea management, projects, curricular and extra-curricular portfolio planning. The process can be seen as an evolutionary integration of the organization, technology and market, through a series of activities: search, selection, implementation and capture.

In the digital age, schools need to constantly apply educational innovations (edtech) to keep up with current requirements and trends in the field, such as receptive smart environments or opportunities such as personalized learning based on virtual and augmented reality.

However, not all schools have been able to meet these challenges: digital technology has not yet been applied in all educational institutions, although it is widely used in most fields and in professional life. It was found that students do not acquire sufficient digital skills in school so that they can easily implement them for an effective educational act. Hence the major differences between the education system in some countries and the achievement of an adequate level of qualification. Teaching practices are often closely linked to the use of digital technology. Thus, there are many studies on the use of digital technology in schools, both in classrooms and among teachers and students, but often these studies focus only on one or two phenomena of education and technology.

In terms of innovative learning and teaching practices, different models have been discovered, including the management of the school, as well as issues related to the collaborative relationship between principals and teachers.

CHAPTER II

Peculiarities of the innovative managerial strategies and policies applied in the pre-university education institutions with private capital

High-performance education systems are those that establish the way education works, the mechanisms, the rules, the effects, the interaction of the components and the way of reporting to society as a whole, all thought and applicable at the level of a country. However, there are countless examples in the world of innovative initiatives within the education system, particular cases, which have proven their effectiveness and which can be a basis for reflection and inspiration for anyone, including those who work in the Romanian system. or who are interested in it and who want to take action in the fight against the inertia of a field that is so in need of revitalization.

The current education system in Romania is the result of capitalizing on opportunities to learn from the best practice guides of other countries with much more advanced education systems. Restructuring and innovation in the education system have been generated on the one hand by digital transformations and on the other hand by regulations related to the functioning of the system.

Referring to the international situation, it can be stated that innovation in the Romanian education system is relatively limited in intensity, coverage, results obtained, even if, with the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, the digital transformation of schools has picked up speed. Teaching methods, assessment and reward will be proactive and will focus on developing creativity, inventiveness and educational benefits. Following the implementation of this vision of education in Romania, teachers will be rewarded for performance, the educational act will be focused on the student, and teachers will become promoters of educational technologies, not only interested in modern methods of teaching, learning and assessment.

The use of ICT in high schools in Romania encourages a paradigm shift for teaching and learning, visible in every part of the educational process in our country. The type of learning supported by the use of ICT tends to be transformative learning; when ICT tools are used at different times in the lessons, learning tasks become open, authentic, analytical, expressive, inventive, based on problem solving and interpretation and the development of students' critical thinking. Figure 2.1 illustrates some relevant aspects regarding the impact of digital transformation on education in Romania.

Trying to compare with other European education systems, it can also be stated that the school manager and managerial skills could not be implemented ad-litteram in the Romanian education system due to different social, political and economic conditions. Problems in educational management are largely due to multiple changes and the inability of educational factors to adapt and accept these changes.

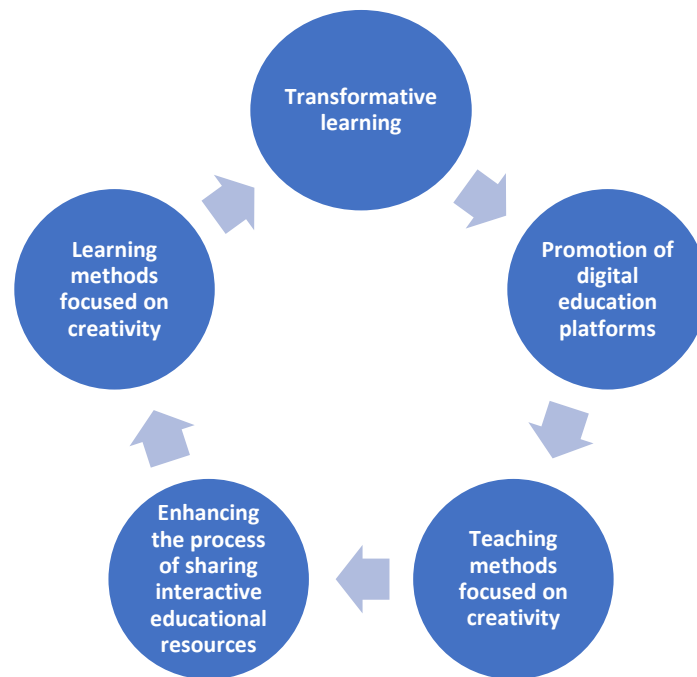


Figure 2.1. The impact of digital transformation on education in Romania

Source: personal contribution, based on the literature

The Romanian education system is a process of adaptive change in education, for the initiation of which the first actions are those of leadership, followed by those of management. Due to its status as a strategic resource, the dominant nature of action in education at this time is one focused on real leadership, later doubled by action focused on management.

Private educational institutions are governed by the same legislation as state schools, before operating, going through an extensive and rigorous external evaluation process, by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, in order to obtain the provisional operation authorization. and subsequently, before the graduation of the third promotion, the control being carried out under the aegis of the same state authority, in order to obtain the accreditation of the institution. Once every five years, the accredited educational institutions are subject to the external evaluation process, under the conditions imposed by law.

While in many areas the private sector is skeptical about the provision of private education services in Romania over the past decade, some experts in the field have come to the conclusion that often, the approach to principles and the innovative managerial vision of private educational institutions, are concretely related to the problems of contemporary society. Apart from these considerations, in order to meet the highest standards and to be able to withstand the market over time, private educational institutions must constantly prove effective management, the director's profile being characterized by special managerial skills to properly manage human resources. and financial, providing equal opportunities for both staff and students. For an efficient management, it is imperative that the director meets a series of qualities, to be in a process of continuous improvement, with a mission and vision based on reason, to be democratic, communicative, diplomatic, conscientious, able to create a pleasant work environment, proving responsiveness to employee solutions and encouraging initiatives and teamwork, both among staff and students. If state educational institutions have existed and will always exist, regardless of managerial or institutional performance, the essential condition for private educational institutions to last over time, to develop and to avoid failure, is to prove the effectiveness of their management. The field of education will never reach its peak, therefore, all the more so, private education must focus on opportunities to capitalize on innovative management strategies and policies, to find ways to optimize effective management, in order to achieve performance.

Private high schools adopt a series of innovation practices as a result of a process of strategic adaptation. The process of strategic adjustment can be triggered by any change in the environment or an internal proposal for strategic innovation. Educational managers are first interested in shaping the process of strategic adjustment based on two main dimensions: the response derived from adjustments and the nature of the changes needed. In terms of the types of responses, we assume that the ultimate goal of the strategic adaptation process is to develop competitive advantages in the market for educational services. To achieve this, private high school managers can focus on two different types of dynamic responses:

- by rearranging resources and capabilities to create new skills, such as innovation, flexibility, quality, cost and educational service provided;
- by rearranging the content parameters, in terms of having a new portfolio of curricular activities, introducing gamification platforms for learning.

CHAPTER III

Theoretical issues regarding the analysis of the performances of private educational institutions, through the Balanced Scorecard method

Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton launched the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) in the Harvard Business Review in a later article that became the basis for the development of The Balanced Scorecard. They felt at the time that managers should be aware that the evaluation system applied in their organization affects the behavior of the execution staff. They also considered that the use of only financial-accounting indicators for performance evaluation may affect the interest in continuous improvement and innovation. Measuring performance through traditional financial methods has yielded good results in traditional business models, but they can no longer cover the full range of needs of today's organizations.

Balanced Scorecard is a system for managing and optimizing the execution of the strategy of an educational institution, which after being successfully applied by several organizations in this sector and after a promotion supported by some of the best performing educational institutions in the world, has become a point of reference, a kind of "must have" for educational managers around the world.

Education experts say that BSC should be used in educational institutions, with a preference for strengthening and the importance of resource management, rather than monitoring performance. The BSC approach in the field of education could create a positive innovative impact on the performance of organizations, naturally related to all the factors involved.

Although the BSC method is frequently used in business, worldwide, there is very little research in this field in education, and in Romania the concept is completely new in this field. Researchers in the field of education acknowledge that the implementation of the BSC in the education sector is possible only in relation to defining the vision, strategic objectives and overall strategy of the institution and that both partial and derived strategies, setting secondary and individual objectives, and prioritizing and prioritizing to accompany the implementation process.

Many private educational institutions are looking to establish management systems that can monitor their performance and enable them to adapt to the emerging challenges that arise as a result of implementing key changes. A key element of private educational

institutions is the achievement of outstanding results, which place them in the top of the preferences of pupils and students, in terms of innovative educational services.

The process of building a Balanced Scorecard begins with a clear alignment of strategic objectives, linked between the four perspectives of a strategic map adapted for private educational institutions. The associated objectives in the strategy map reflect the selected performance indicators, indicating that private schools will improve student performance by focusing on teacher effectiveness, community involvement and high quality facilities. Private sector education managers will pursue goals by leveraging innovative educational technologies, ensuring financial stability by efficiently collecting student fees, and aligning resources with strategic priorities. This will require efficient internal processes and improvements in student services. Finally, for this to happen, private schools will invest in human capital to increase investment attractiveness, increase engagement, improve the recruitment and retention of successful staff, and build a culture based on responsibility.

The overall efficiency and performance of private educational institutions can be further improved with appropriate methods for assessing and reviewing competitiveness. The BSC provides a framework for private educational institutions to improve their performance in making strategic decisions. However, translating BSC into an educational context is not an easy process. It will be a challenge that educational institutions, especially private ones, need to take into account especially in the development of the implementation framework. These include training, designing, developing and controlling BSC perspectives.

The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) tool can provide significant improvements to an educational institution's performance when used to develop a balanced dashboard. BECPE falls into seven categories: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Students / Stakeholders, Analysis, Personnel, Process Management and Performance Results. By choosing key performance indicators in each of these categories to build a balanced scoreboard, an educational institution can create a comprehensive strategic map for institutional development.

In last years, there has been a trend in private high schools, namely to use a new concept: Total Performance Scorecard (TPS), which is a combination of the concepts Balanced Scorecard, Total Quality Management and Skills Management.

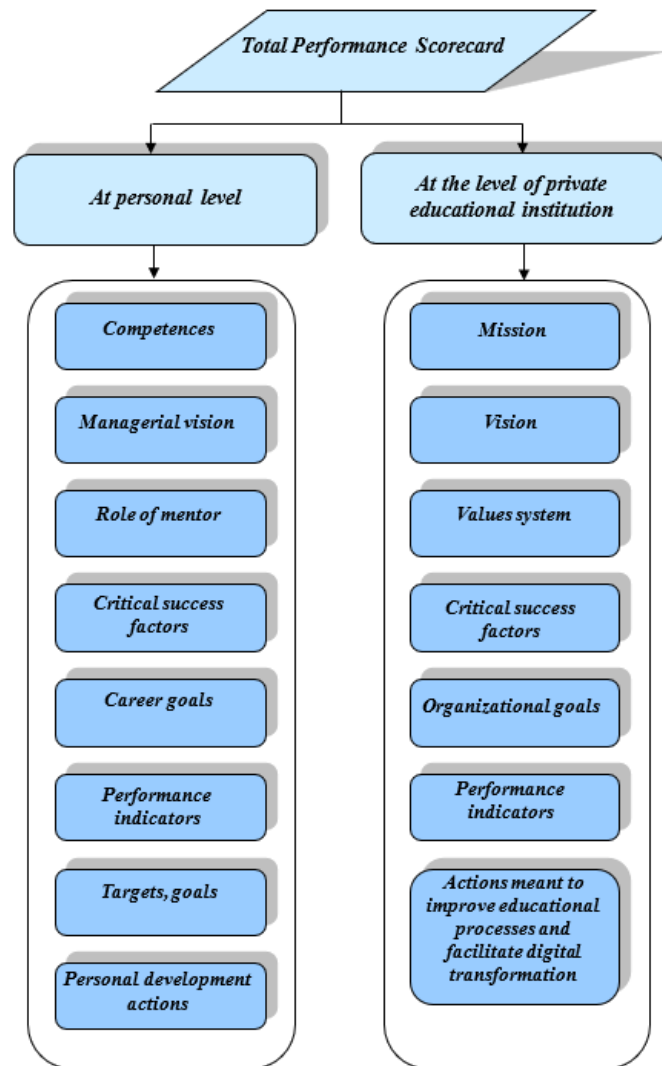


Figure 3.1. Total Performance Scorecard on a personal and institutional level

Source: personal contribution, based on the literature

Total Performance Scorecard differs significantly from traditional performance management concepts in that it is an integrated concept that uses the personal goal as a starting point, then considers harmonizing personal behavior with the set of goals at the organization level.

If we consider the change that will contribute to the real improvement of the activity of a private educational institution, this can be done only when the employees are willing to get out of the comfort zone, they improve in the educational institutions and outside them. The individual involvement of employees stimulates the learning, creativity and self-guidance of individuals and work teams.

The private educational institutions that use such an approach are the ones that are constantly learning, improving as a result of the fact that, as a rule, the knowledge expires quickly and must be updated by all the staff of the organization.

CHAPTER IV

Qualitative study on the impact of innovative management strategies and policies on the performance of privately owned pre-university institutions

The present study was approached through a qualitative research, conducted through an interview guide, which includes 20 open-ended questions, addressed to managers of private educational institutions, at high school level, in the country and abroad, to explore innovative strategies underlying the performance of a private educational institution.

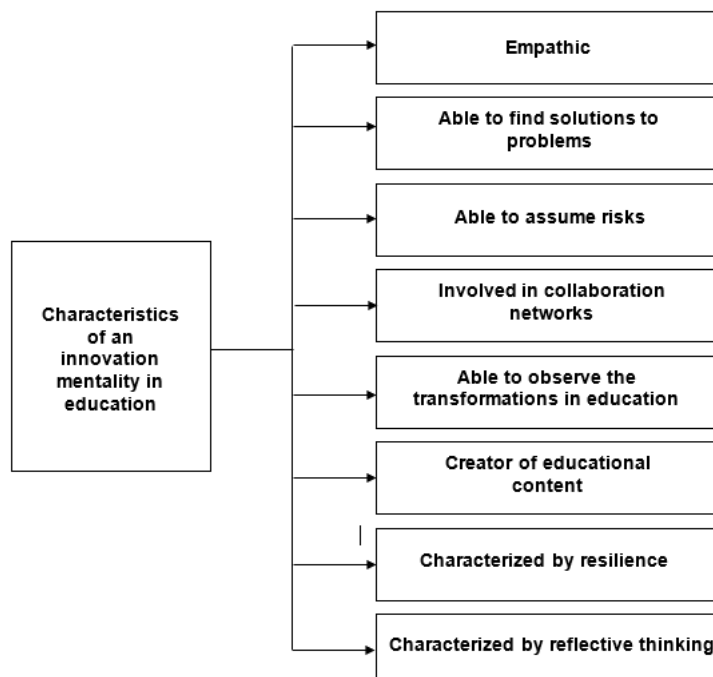


Figure 4.1. Characteristics of an innovation mentality in education

The main objective of this qualitative research was to analyze the perceptions of educational managers in different private high schools, at European level, on how to transform the educational process to achieve higher performance, manifested by higher learning outcomes.

The specific objectives focused on exploring the ideas presented by the educational managers, regarding the changes of mentality, necessary to induce innovative elements in the managerial practices of the private high schools.

The first open question in the interview guide asked the managers for an exercise in imagination, in which to assign the role of student, in his own school that he manages, and then to address the management of the school, regarding the proposals meant to stimulate students' interest in learning. The role play is based on deep reflection on the essential aspects, facilitating the real identification of the students' needs, to develop their interest in learning.

Another perception is the creation of an educational framework in which students can develop their personal skills, teachers with flexibility in designing teaching activities. flexible learning activities, which highlight creativity, interdisciplinarity, cooperation with all educational factors, in preparing students for life; promoting outstanding results (not necessarily from the same school) as examples of individual success and initiating activities that stimulate class and student competition and develop students' sense of belonging to the group.

School leaders say it is imperative to expand the process of democratizing the school and to participate in decision-making among students, as the school has an obligation to familiarize students with the democratic practices and institutions that exist in society. Therefore, if we give students the responsibilities, the opportunity to express their opinions, make decisions and participate in school life, we thus give them the chance to form and practice the necessary skills in a successful society.

Involving students in the design and development of all activities designed, through opinion polls, identifying students' needs, improving the material base, promoting and conducting educational activities, humanitarian campaigns, organizing shows, school-level celebrations, proposals among students with There are other ways to involve them in the decision-making process, with the idea that they will feel obliged to comply with them.

Respondents say that the stimulation of creative imagination is a fundamental factor of creativity, because it merges information into new structures, by merging, transforming and merging images, objects and phenomena in a new sense. Although originality is the most specific characteristic of creative thinking, it is conditioned by flexibility and facilitated by fluency (associativity). The conditions between the three factors: flexibility, originality and fluency, are in fact reciprocal, without all having the same weight in the creative process.

According to some managers, the application of the notions acquired in everyday life is defining. Among the innovative solutions mentioned are the use of active methods, such as learning through discovery, integrated curriculum approach at the level of study subjects, modern IT tools, which students can use constantly.

Partnerships with non-formal education institutions, associations, museums, NGOs have a significant share in the harmonious development of students, both personally and professionally.

Another topic of discussion in the interview agenda used in this qualitative research was to identify respondents' perceptions of key opportunities to capitalize on students' learning potential. Among the essential aspects listed are the development of critical thinking, the development of creativity in relation to current requirements, the flexibility of decisions, the development of communication skills, combining theory with current practice.

Next, we list among the edifying traits of the personality of educational leaders, seriousness, adaptability, decision-making ability, transparency, communication, punctuality and equidistance, impartiality, team spirit, fairness. Another view is that a good mediator has the ability to delegate and inspire confidence, with a developed emotional intelligence, attention to others, diplomacy, proper time management, organization, initiative, vision, projection, high interpersonal intelligence, developed general intelligence, clear mind, perspective, planning and development skills, self-development and peer support, innovation. Calm is another asset of a true leader, empathetic to the needs of others, active, good organizer and trainer of generations.

The leaders of the educational institutions participating in the interview shared with us the following question, the ways in which they managed to interact effectively with other educational institutions and to connect in national and international educational networks, respectively. They mentioned the implementation of school projects, partnerships with educational institutions, participation in practical training programs, knowledge and relationships through the Internet, exchange of good practices. One of the managers states that the effective inter-institutional interactions are entirely due to educational projects: Edu Networks, eTwinning, Digital School.

According to educational managers, students have adapted faster than teachers to the online environment, even though the vast majority of students and parents have expressed dissatisfaction with the current global context, which has forced them to make this form of learning the biggest difficulties. being greeted with the start of online schooling in the previous school year, due to the lack of technical devices.

We considered it appropriate to represent through a cloud of words, made with the help of Nvivo software, the most frequently used words by the respondents who participated in this qualitative study. Word clouds are visual representations of words that occur more frequently in speech.

Figure 4.2. reflects the distribution of the word cloud associated with this research, the most relevant words refer to concepts specific to educational processes, focused on students: learning, development, projects, communication, involvement, creativity.



Figure 4.2. Wordcloud associated to qualitative research

Source: report provided by Nvivo software

The major differences between the responses of education managers in Romania and those of education managers in other European countries can be summarized as follows: we find the highest level of empathy in managers in Germany, France and the Czech Republic; managers able to quickly identify solutions to problems are part of the samples of the qualitative study in Romania and Turkey; we perceive a higher degree of risk-taking in managers in Italy and Poland; we observe a greater involvement in collaboration networks with managers in Turkey and Malta; we note a higher proportion of managers able to observe changes in education in France, Italy and Germany; creators of educational content are found in all 8 countries analyzed; Resilience is specific to educational managers in Germany, Romania and Poland, while reflective thinking is most associated with managers in Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic.

CHAPTER V

Quantitative study on capitalizing on the development opportunities of private capital pre-university education institutions by applying innovative managerial and educational strategies and policies

The quantitative research carried out during the doctoral training internship had as fundamental objective the identification and capitalization of the development opportunities of private capital high schools in Romania by applying innovative management strategies and policies, respectively innovative educational strategies and policies.

The specific objectives focused on exploring the effect coefficients between the latent variables involved in the study (vision, strategic flexibility, collaborative work environment, attractiveness of educational offer, teacher satisfaction and student performance), as well as the analysis of correlations between two independent variables. predictors (respondents' perceptions of innovative managerial strategies and policies, respectively of innovative educational strategies and policies) and the six latent variables mentioned above.

In order to adequately meet the specific objectives of quantitative research, the conceptual model was divided into three sub-models. The first submodel highlights the links between the six latent variables and was designed according to the SEM-PLS method (Figure 5.1).

The six latent variables are reflective, as we used 2.3 or 4 items in the questionnaire to highlight the content of each. Vision (VIZ), work environment (ML), strategic flexibility (FLEX), student performance (PERF) are characterized by 3 items, the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE) by 2 items, while teacher satisfaction (SCD) by 4 items.

Modeling using structural equations, using the least squares method (SEM PLS), gave us the opportunity to configure and estimate complex relationships between latent variables in this submodel.

The six hypotheses related to this submodel are:

H1: The vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has a significant effect on strategic flexibility (FLEX).

H2: The vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has a significant effect on the work environment (ML).

H3: The strategic flexibility provided by private high school management teams (FLEX) has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction (SCD).

H4: The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE).

H5: The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on student performance (PERF).

H6: The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction (SCD).

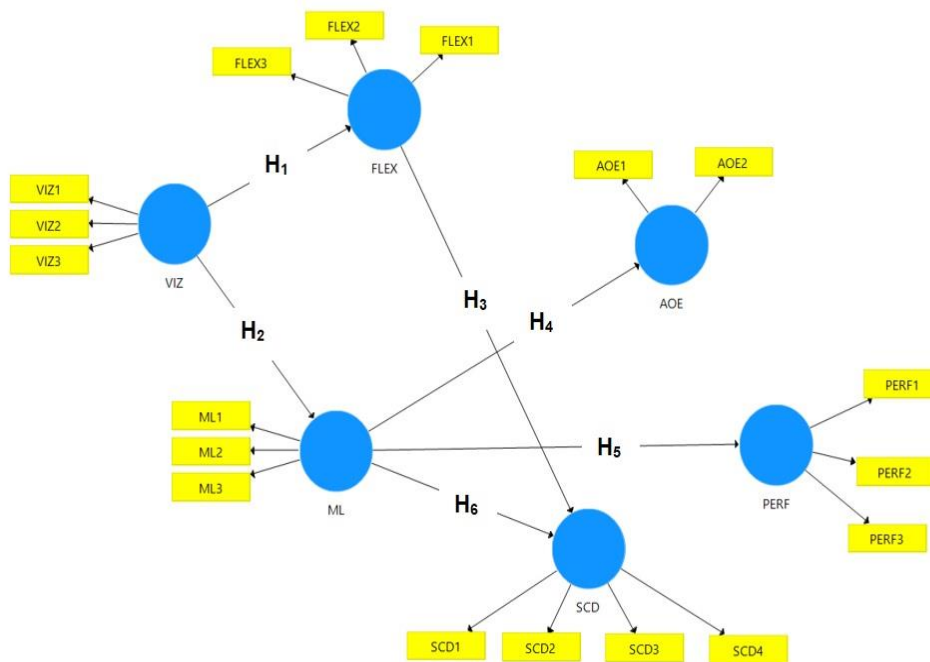


Figure 5.1. Conceptual framework approached using the SEM-PLS method

Source: Graphical representation generated with SmartPLS software

The second conceptual submodel positions respondents' perceptions of the application of innovative management strategies and policies and their impact on three latent variables (the existence of a clear vision on the development of the institution, the flexibility of the institutional development plan and the existence of a working environment based on teacher collaboration and stimulation). student creativity) - Figure 5.2.

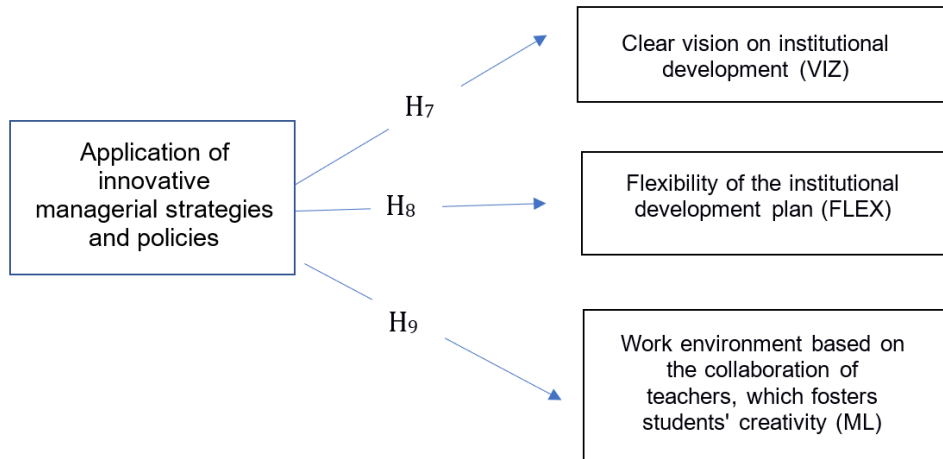


Figure 5.2. Conceptual framework approached using Chi-Square and Pearson R statistical indicators

Source: original contribution

The three hypotheses related to this submodel are:

H7: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors the implementation of a clear vision on their development.

H8: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania ensures the flexibility of their institutional development plans.

H9: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors a work environment based on the collaboration of teachers and stimulating students' creativity.

In this submodel, the testing of the three hypotheses was performed by the statistical indicators Chi-Square and Pearson R.

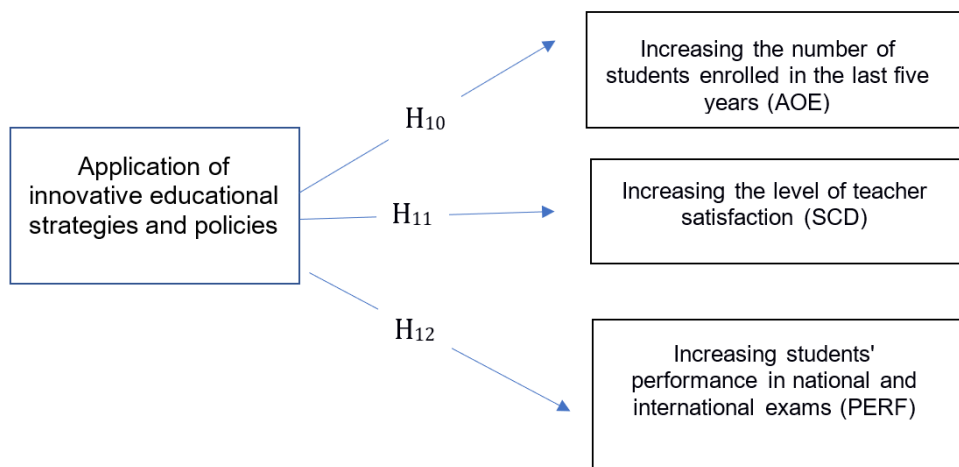


Figure 5.3. Conceptual framework approached using linear regression

Source: original contribution

The third conceptual submodel reflects respondents' perceptions of the application of innovative educational strategies and policies and their impact on three other latent variables (increasing the number of students enrolled in the last five years, increasing teacher satisfaction and increasing student performance in national and international exams).) - Figure 5.3.

The three hypotheses related to this submodel are:

H10: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the number of students enrolled in the last five years, which means a high attractiveness of educational offers.

H11: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the level of teacher satisfaction.

H12: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the performance of students in national and international exams.

In this submodel, the testing of the three hypotheses was performed by determining the Pearson correlation coefficients (R), the determination coefficients (R²), applying the ANOVA test and determining the coefficients of the linear regression functions.

The structural model highlights that the vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has the strongest effect on the work environment (ML), as the coefficient of effect associated with this link is the highest (0.334), while the strategic flexibility provided by Private high school management teams (FLEX) have the weakest effect on teacher satisfaction (SCD) - effect coefficient of only 0.066.

Estimates of parameters associated with the analyzed structural submodel (external variable loadings and estimated relationship coefficients in subsamples) are used to generate statistical reports, which reflect T-test values and asymptotic meanings (p-values). These statistical tests are able to validate or invalidate the hypotheses of the submodel.

Figure 5.4 reflects the new structural model generated by the SmartPLS software after applying the bootstrapping procedure; we notice that on the links between the latent variables the p values related to the asymptotic significance are highlighted.

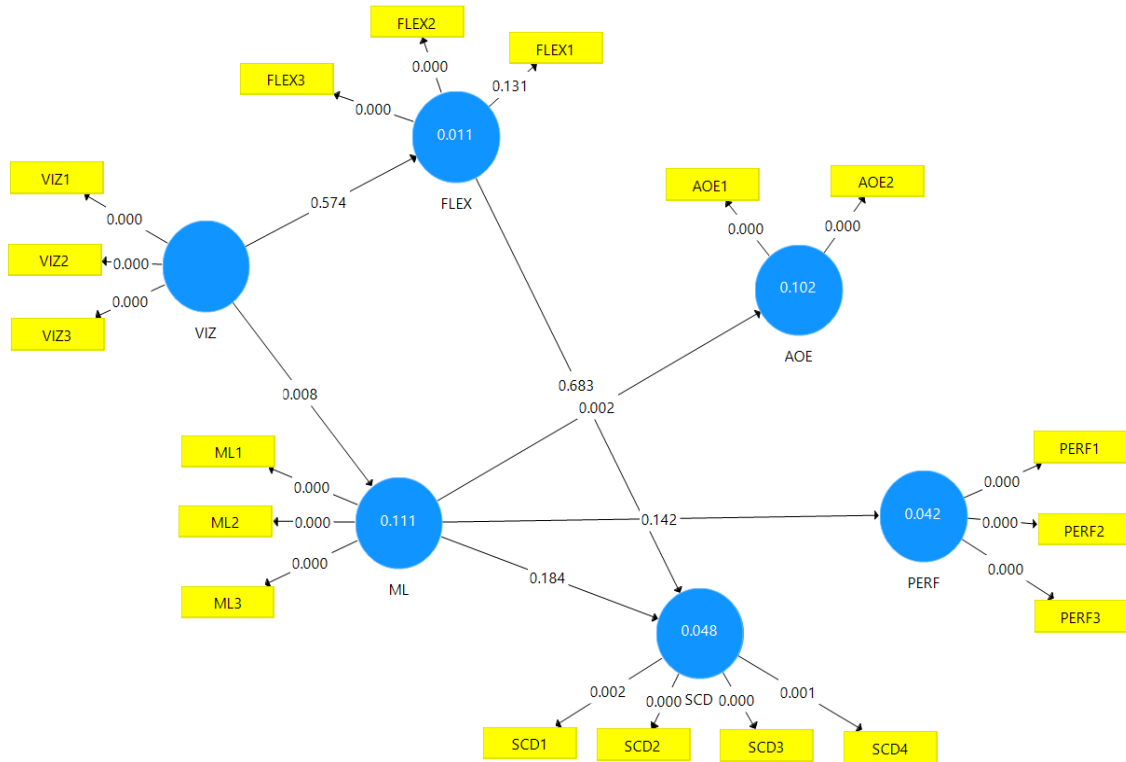


Figure 5.4. Determining p values associated with the relationships between the variables of the submodel

Source: print-screen Smart PLS software

Out of the 6 hypotheses of this submodel, only two are validated, as the p values do not exceed the maximum allowed significance level of 0.05, namely (Table 5.1):

H2: The vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has a significant effect on the work environment (ML) - asymptotic significance value $p = 0.008$;

H4: The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE) - asymptotic significance value $p = 0.002$.

Table 5.1. The values associated with the asymptotic significance p and the T test for the 6 hypotheses in the structural submodel

	Eșantion original (O)	Media eșantionului...	Deviația Standard (STDEV)	Statistica T (O/STDEV)	Valorile-P
FLEX -> SCD	0.066	0.105	0.160	0.409	0.683
ML -> AOE	0.320	0.334	0.102	3.141	0.002
ML -> PERF	0.204	0.231	0.139	1.471	0.142
ML -> SCD	0.187	0.201	0.141	1.329	0.184
VIZ -> FLEX	0.106	0.091	0.188	0.563	0.574
VIZ -> ML	0.334	0.348	0.126	2.644	0.008

Source: print-screen Smart PLS software

The T test shows the strength of the correlation between the latent variables in this structural submodel. Thus, the working environment at the level of private high schools (ML), characterized by the collaboration between teachers and on stimulating students' creativity has a significant effect on the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE) - value T = 3.141.

Testing the hypotheses of the second submodel reflects the following results:

H7: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors the implementation of a clear vision on their development.

Table 5.2. Results of Chi Square test – H₇

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymptotic significance
Pearson Chi-Square	23.670	9	.005
Likelihood Ratio	18.596	9	.029
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.926	1	.001
Number of Valid Cases	100		

Source: report provided by SPSS software

Because the asymptotic significance coefficient (0.005) is lower than the minimum allowable threshold of 0.05 and because the value of the Pearson Chi Square indicator (23,670), in the context of 9 degrees of freedom, is higher than the value of the Pearson Chi Square tabular (16,919) , hypothesis H7 is validated.

H8: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania ensures the flexibility of their institutional development plans.

Table 5.3. Results of Chi Square test – H₈

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymptotic significance
Pearson Chi-Square	13.276	6	.039
Likelihood Ratio	14.155	6	.028
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.898	1	.015
Number of Valid Cases	100		

Source: report provided by SPSS software

Because the asymptotic significance coefficient (0.039) is lower than the minimum allowable threshold of 0.05 and because the value of the Pearson Chi Square indicator (13,276), in the context of 6 degrees of freedom, is higher than the value of the Pearson Chi Square tabular (12,592), hypothesis H8 is validated.

H9: The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors a work environment based on the collaboration of teachers and stimulating students' creativity.

Table 5.4. Results of Chi Square test – H₉

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymptotic significance
Pearson Chi-Square	16.422	6	.012
Likelihood Ratio	15.092	6	.020
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.462	1	.006
Number of Valid Cases	100		

Source: report provided by SPSS software

Because the asymptotic significance coefficient (0.012) is lower than the minimum allowable threshold of 0.05 and because the value of the Pearson Chi Square indicator (16,422), in the context of 6 degrees of freedom, is higher than the value of the Pearson Chi Square tabular (12,592) , hypothesis H9 is validated.

H10: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the number of students enrolled in the last five years, which means a high attractiveness of educational offers.

The ANOVA test (Table 5.5) shows that the linear regression model does not significantly predict respondents' perceptions of the attractiveness of the educational offer, as the value of asymptotic significance (0.283) is higher than the allowed significance threshold of 0.05.

Table 5.5. ANOVA test associated to H₁₀

Model		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Asymptotic significance
1	Regression	1.020	1	1.020	1.165	.283
	Residual	85.740	98	.875		
	Total	86.760	99			
Dependent variable: Respondents' perception of the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE)						
Predictor: Respondents' perception of the implementation of innovative educational strategies and policies (SPEI)						

Source: report provided by SPSS software

H11: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the level of teacher satisfaction.

The ANOVA test (Table 5.6) demonstrates that the linear regression model significantly predicts respondents' perceptions of teacher satisfaction levels, as the value of asymptotic significance (0.001) is less than the allowable significance threshold of 0.05.

Table 5.6. ANOVA test associated to H₁₁

Model		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Asymptotic significance
1	Regression	20.083	1	20.083	71.238	.001
	Residual	27.627	98	.282		
	Total	47.710	99			
Dependent variable: Respondents' perception of teacher satisfaction level (SCD)						
Predictor: Respondents' perception of the implementation of innovative educational strategies and policies (SPEI)						

Source: report provided by SPSS software

H12: The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the performance of students in national and international exams.

The ANOVA test (Table 5.7) demonstrates that the linear regression model significantly predicts respondents' perceptions of students' performance on national and international exams, as the value of asymptotic significance (0.0001) is less than the allowed significance threshold of 0.05.

Table 5.7. ANOVA test associated to H₁₂

Model		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Asymptotic significance
1	Regression	28.254	1	28.254	87.882	.0001
	Residual	31.506	98	.321		
	Total	59.760	99			
Dependent variable: Respondents' perception of students' performance in national and international exams (PERF)						
Predictor: Respondents' perception of the implementation of innovative educational strategies and policies (SPEI)						

Source: report provided by SPSS software

Table 5.8. Hypothesis testing summary table

Hypothesis	Hypothesis description	Test result
H₁	The vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has a significant effect on strategic flexibility (FLEX).	Rejected
H₂	The vision of private high school managers on their development (VIZ) has a significant effect on the work environment (ML).	Rejected
H₃	The strategic flexibility provided by private high school management teams (FLEX) has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction (SCD).	Rejected
H₄	The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on the attractiveness of the educational offer (AOE).	Supported
H₅	The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on student performance (PERF).	Rejected
H₆	The working environment at the level of private high schools (ML) has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction (SCD).	Rejected
H₇	The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors the implementation of a clear vision on their development.	Supported
H₈	The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania ensures the flexibility of their institutional development plans.	Supported
H₉	The application of innovative management strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania favors a work environment based on the collaboration of teachers and stimulating students' creativity.	Supported
H₁₀	The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania determines the increase of the number of students enrolled in the last five years, which means a high attractiveness of educational offers.	Rejected
H₁₁	The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania increases the level of teacher satisfaction.	Supported
H₁₂	The application of innovative educational strategies and policies in private high schools in Romania determines the increase of students' performance in national and international exams.	Supported

Source: original contribution

CHAPTER VI

Multi-dimensional analysis of the performance of a private high school in Romania, using the Balanced Scorecard method

Founded 22 years ago, by a group of teachers with initiative and enthusiasm, the Theoretical High School "Marin Coman", from the city of Galați, humanistic profile, philology specialization, is already outlining its own tradition in pre-university education in Galați, being at this time, the only private high school in Galati county.

The mission of the school is to support the integration in the European space of Romanian pre-university higher education, as well as the recognition of diplomas at European level, thus guaranteeing flexible adaptation to the modern education system, by correlating innovative, educational elements with their own development needs.

The vision of the school involves the formation of knowledge, skills and abilities, which will allow students to continue their studies in the country and / or abroad, by developing a competitive spirit and continuous support of motivation.

We designed a system of key performance indicators relevant to the activities of the Theoretical High School "Marin Coman" in Galati, which reflects the distribution of these indicators on four perspectives: financial perspective, educational perspective, stakeholder satisfaction perspective and organizational development perspective.

We used the free online version of the Balanced Scorecard Designer software, which is available at: <https://www.webbsc.com/>.

The first dimension of the analysis was represented by the financial perspective, in which four relevant key performance indicators were selected, whose values predicted at the beginning of 2020, respectively values achieved at the end of 2020, can be viewed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Performance indicators associated with the financial perspective of the Balanced Scorecard system

Key performance indicators	Minimal value forecasted	Maximal value forecasted	Value of the indicator by the end of 2020
Income from non-profit activities in 2020	1.700.000	2.100.000	1.983.286
Result of activities without patrimonial	300.000	400.000	345.529

Key performance indicators	Minimal value forecasted	Maximal value forecasted	Value of the indicator by the end of 2020
purpose in 2020			
Debts as at 31 December 2020 (amounts to be paid in less than 1 year)	70.000	90.000	77.164
Equity at December 31, 2020	300.000	350.000	333.795

Source: internal data, provided by the top management of „Marin Coman” Theoretical High School

The overall performance of the financial perspective (61.26%) was determined as a weighted average of the performance levels associated with the 4 indicators - Figure 6.1, considering the following weights assigned to them:

- income from non-profit activities in 2020 - 30%;
- the result of activities without patrimonial purpose in 2020 - 30%;
- debts on December 31, 2020 (amounts to be paid in a period of less than 1 year) - 20%;
- equity at December 31, 2020 - 20%.

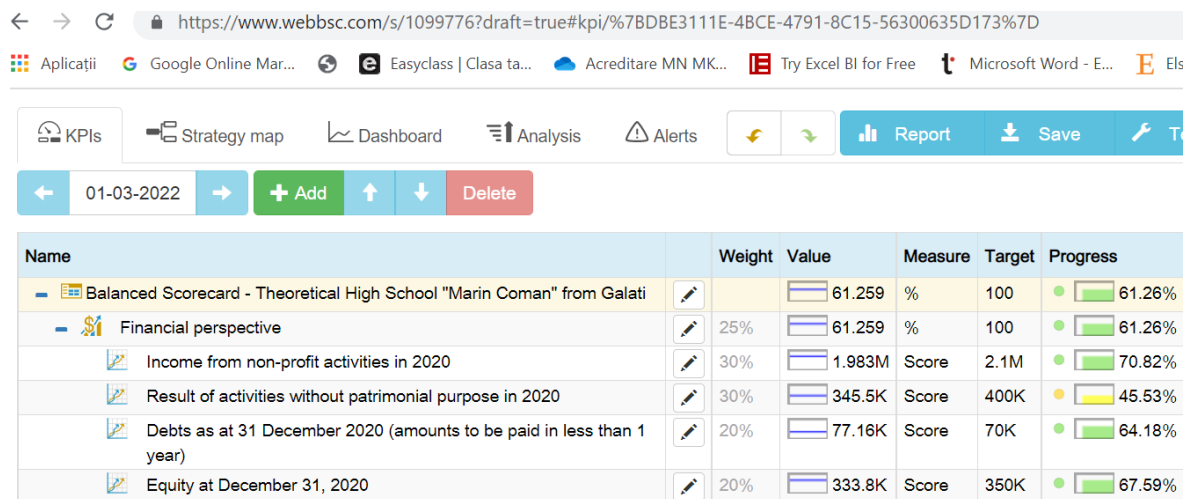


Figure 6.1. The level of performance associated with the financial perspective of the Balanced Scorecard

Source: output Balanced Scorecard Designer software

The second dimension of the analysis was represented by the educational perspective, consisting of four key performance indicators, whose values predicted at the beginning of 2020, respectively values achieved at the end of 2020, can be viewed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Performance indicators associated with the educational perspective of the Balanced Scorecard system

Key performance indicators	Minimal value forecasted	Maximal value forecasted	Value of the indicator by the end of 2020
Ratio between the number of students and the number of teachers	15	30	22
High school graduation rate	70	100	100
Baccalaureate pass rate in 2020	70	100	95
Share of high school graduates from 2020 who have enrolled in university studies	60	100	95

Source: internal data, provided by the top management of „Marin Coman” Theoretical High School

The overall performance of educational perspectives (83.17%) was determined as a weighted average of the performance levels associated with the 4 indicators - Figure 6.2, considering the following weights assigned to them:

- ratio between the number of students and the number of teachers - 20%;
- high school graduation rate - 30%;
- baccalaureate pass rate in 2020 - 30%;
- share of 2020 graduates who enrolled in university studies - 20%.

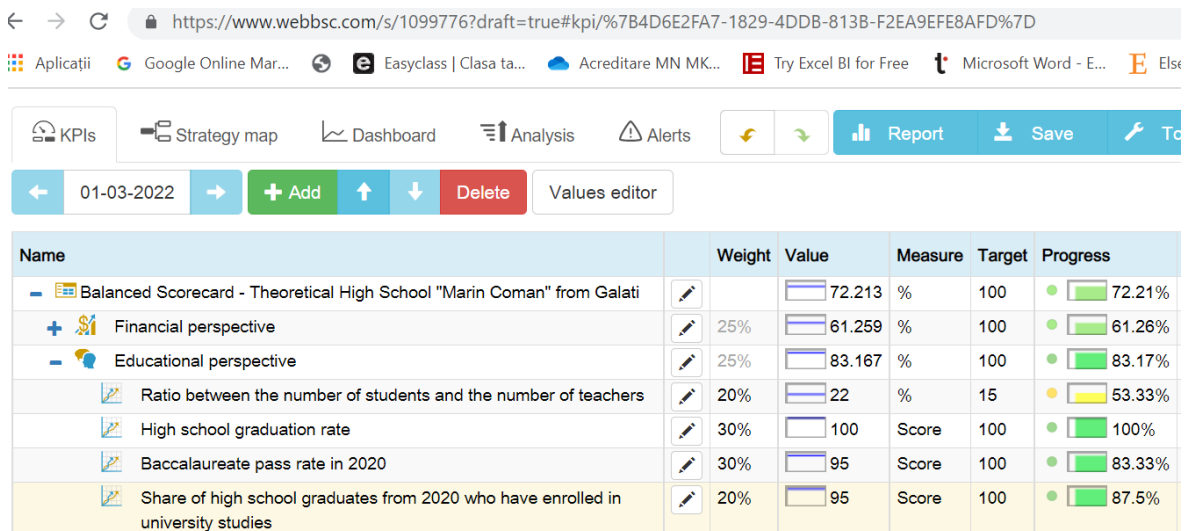


Figure 6.2. The level of performance associated with the educational perspective of the Balanced Scorecard

Source: output Balanced Scorecard Designer software

The third dimension of the analysis (stakeholder satisfaction perspective) integrated four key performance indicators, whose values predicted at the beginning of 2020, respectively values achieved at the end of 2020, can be viewed in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Performance indicators associated with the stakeholder satisfaction perspective of the Balanced Scorecard system

Key performance indicators	Minimal value forecasted	Maximal value forecasted	Value of the indicator by the end of 2020
Student satisfaction level	1	10	8,4
Parent satisfaction level	1	10	8,6
Teacher satisfaction level	1	10	9,2
Top management satisfaction level	0	100	98

Source: internal data, provided by the top management of „Marin Coman” Theoretical High School

The overall performance of the stakeholder satisfaction perspective (88.49%) was determined as a weighted average of the performance levels associated with the 4 indicators - Figure 6.3, considering the following weights allocated to them:

- student satisfaction level - 30%;
- level of parental satisfaction - 20%;
- teacher satisfaction level - 30%;
- top management satisfaction level - 20%.

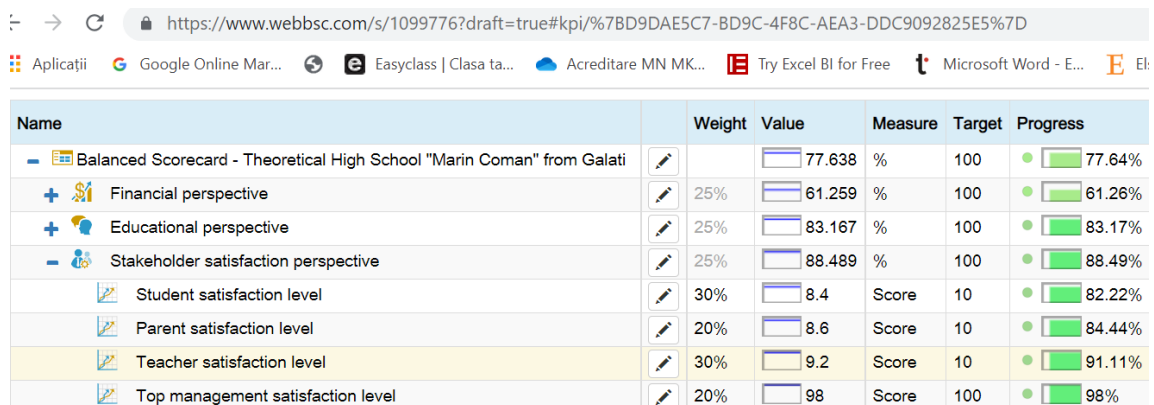


Figure 6.3. The level of performance associated with the stakeholder satisfaction perspective of the Balanced Scorecard

Source: output Balanced Scorecard Designer software

The fourth dimension of the analysis (organizational development perspective) is based on four key performance indicators, whose values predicted at the beginning of 2020, respectively values achieved at the end of 2020, can be viewed in Table 6.4.

Tabelul 6.4. Performance indicators associated with the organizational development perspective of the Balanced Scorecard system

Key performance indicators	Minimal value forecasted	Maximal value forecasted	Value of the indicator by the end of 2020
Number of extracurricular activities in 2020	7	12	9
Share of teachers involved in European projects in 2020	40	100	77
Number of educational projects from the „Otherwise School” online program in 2020	20	40	29
Share of teachers participating in methodical circles in 2020	70	100	100

Source: internal data, provided by the top management of „Marin Coman” Theoretical High School

The overall performance of the organizational development perspective (59.5%) was determined as a weighted average of the performance levels associated with the 4 indicators - Figure 6.4, considering the following weights assigned to them:

- number of extra-curricular activities in 2020 - 30%;
- share of teachers involved in European projects in 2020 - 30%;
- number of educational projects in the „Otherwise School” online program in 2020 - 20%;
- share of teachers participating in methodical circles in 2020 - 20%.

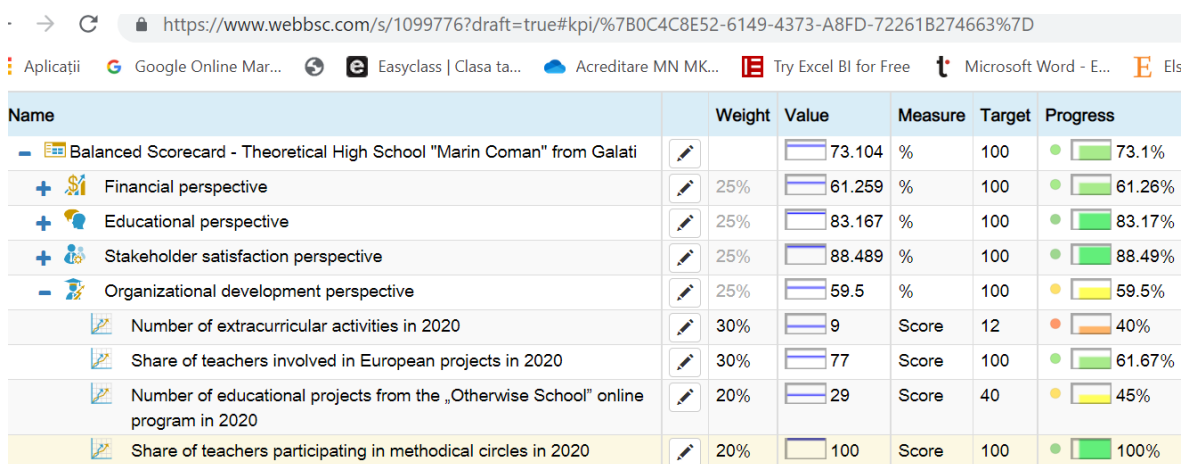


Figura 6.4. The level of performance associated with the organizational development perspective of the Balanced Scorecard

Source: output Balanced Scorecard Designer software

Finally, the overall performance of the entire Balanced Scorecard system associated with the private high school under investigation (72.75%) was determined as a weighted average of the performances of the four perspectives - Figure 6.5, considering the following weights assigned to them:

- financial perspective - 20%;
- educational perspective - 30%;
- stakeholder satisfaction perspective - 20%;
- perspective of organizational development - 30%.

Name	Weight	Value	Measure	Target	Progress
Balanced Scorecard - Theoretical High School "Marin Coman" from Galati		72.75	%	100	72.75%
Financial perspective	20%	61.259	%	100	61.26%
Educational perspective	30%	83.167	%	100	83.17%
Stakeholder satisfaction perspective	20%	88.489	%	100	88.49%
Organizational development perspective	30%	59.5	%	100	59.5%

Figure 6.5. The overall performance level of the Balanced Scorecard system associated with the Theoretical High School "Marin Coman" from Galați

Source: output Balanced Scorecard Designer software

The main conclusion that emerges from this global assessment of the Balanced Scorecard system associated with the Theoretical High School "Marin Coman" in Galati is that we can rank in terms of importance, the impact of the four perspectives on global performance: the perspective of stakeholder satisfaction registered the higher performance score, while the perspective of organizational development recorded the lowest performance score.

Chapter VII

Designing a guide to innovative managerial practices focused on increasing the performance of private capital pre-university education institutions in Romania

In the digital age, educational institutions need to innovate in a radically different way, based on rapid experimentation and lifelong learning. Instead of focusing only on the learning outcomes and performance indicators of graduates, we propose a new managerial approach that focuses on identifying the right problem and then on developing, testing and learning from multiple possible solutions.

Private high school managers need to become champions of change, able to proactively promote the use of educational innovation by all teachers. Change agents are teachers who share with their colleagues the benefits of using innovative educational platforms, providing encouragement, direct support and advice so that they can successfully implement educational technology, avoiding technocentrism syndrome.

The spread of digital educational innovations, considered scaling or diffusion, refers to activities aimed at increasing the user base of edtech platforms and solutions among the high school / private college that acquires them. Dissemination refers to intentional activities, both passive and active, in which educational leaders in private high schools / colleges engage in order to explain the benefits of a digital innovation dedicated to education. The two concepts differ in that propagation explicitly requires others to embrace innovation, while simply spreading awareness and knowledge of educational innovation is tantamount to successful dissemination (Figure 7.1).

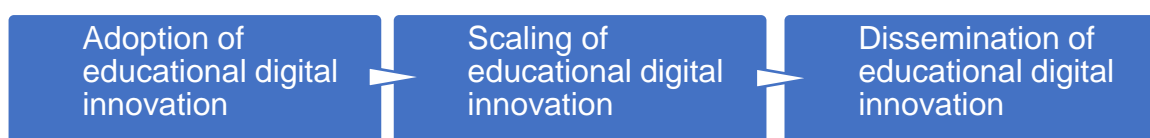


Figure 7.1. The stages of experimenting with an educational digital innovation

Source: original contribution

Private capital pre-university institutions in Romania are characterized by symbolic negotiations between management and different hierarchical levels regarding the defining

characteristics and operational strategies that allow the adoption and propagation of innovative educational resources. In these negotiations, all stakeholders must strike a balance between the relative importance of the imperatives of the education market, such as fiscal solvency, profit, prestige and responsibility, but also the imperatives of the mission, such as social responsibility, community service. In addition to these usual organizational impulses, members of private high schools / colleges must also continually resolve disputes over content innovation strategies and educational processes. Compared to state high schools, private high schools usually have relatively high levels of employee autonomy, more flexible and clear processes and protocols, but also a greater share of the time, effort and involvement needed to ensure quality education.

Managers of private-capital pre-university education institutions in Romania face decisions regarding both opportunities for incremental and disruptive innovation, as well as the costs of purchasing edtech solutions.

Incremental innovation in the field of education refers to a series of improvements to existing educational processes, facilitated by the adoption of interactive educational platforms.

Disruptive (radical) innovation in education is found in the context of providing and acquiring knowledge, combining the principles of hetagogy (self-determined learning, supported by web technologies such as massive open online courses - MOOCs) and pedagogy.

		Type of educational innovation	
		<i>Incremental</i>	<i>Disruptive</i>
Target	<i>Teaching staff</i>	Convincing teaching staff to use improved versions of the existent educational platforms	Changing mentalities of the teaching staff to adopt emerging educational technologies
	<i>Managerial team</i>	Developing managerial policies focused on the improvement of interactive teaching methods	Building a vision which fosters stakeholders to use emerging EdTech to acquire and share knowledge

Figure 7.2. Strategic options for addressing types of educational innovation

Source: original contribution

We designed a two-dimensional matrix, which reflects four strategic managerial options that can be adopted by the principals of pre-university education institutions with private capital in Romania (Figure 7.2).

The success of some policies and managerial strategies adopted at the level of private high schools / colleges in Romania is conditioned by the creation of communities of practice, which can help the widespread adoption of a digital educational innovation. Members of a community of practice interact through the exchange of ideas, expertise, and advice, informally creating standards, a solid knowledge base for emerging educational technologies, and a shared perspective on adopting, disseminating, and disseminating innovations associated with educational platforms. By creating and supporting a community of practice around innovation, its members can work together to create interactive educational content, assessment resources, case studies, good practice guides, etc .; they can also work together to identify opportunities for funding disruptive edtech resources.

We launch through the strategic options regarding the approach of the types of educational innovation a series of challenges, addressed both at individual and institutional level - Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Challenges for the managers of pre-university education institutions with private capital in Romania

At individual level	The development of technological skills of private high school teachers must be correlated with the depth of teaching activities, by improving the understanding of innovative educational technology and its functional principles.
	Teachers' experience in the use of educational technologies should be shared at the institutional level with as many potential beneficiaries of innovative educational platforms as possible.
	The novelty of disruptive educational innovations seems to increase the depth and scope of information processing due to insufficient understanding of the process of adopting emerging technologies.
	Individual motivation is positively related to the depth and scope of activities to adopt new technologies available for teaching.
At organizational level	The individual aversion of teachers to the risk of a deep misunderstanding of the functionalities of innovative educational platforms must be managed by educational managers in a collaborative manner.
	Decisions about the adoption of innovative educational technologies must be explained to teachers by logical reasoning that is easy to understand.
	Formal managerial policies for the processes of adopting innovative educational technologies have the role of increasing the depth and scope of information

	processing associated with educational content.
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Source: original contribution

Institutional support can be the key to helping teachers feel more comfortable when adopting new educational innovations. This may include colleagues and IT administrators providing technical support for innovative teaching, rewarding experimental teaching in differentiated pay decisions, or providing the type of classroom formats that are needed to be able to use the desired innovation. The roles of students in adopting educational innovation are not limited to being users; students can also act as agents of mentality change in education.

Conclusions, managerial implications, limitations of studies and future research in private educational institutions

Typical methods of managing innovation in education include establishing a responsibility for leaders to develop reward systems for knowledge sharing and establishing best organizational practices capable of leveraging human capital expertise. Current applications of innovation management in the education system, especially the private one, underline the importance of collaborative networks for the transfer of managerial practices that have proven successful in specific contexts, as well as the accessibility of digital infrastructures for smart learning. The enrichment of the educational landscape through emerging technologies supports leadership focused on assuming the digital transformation and the benefits it brings, without neglecting continuous investments in the development of human capital skills to use these technologies effectively. As we can see from the various answers to the quantitative and qualitative studies conducted in this doctoral thesis, changes in educational systems are changes in the mentality of educational managers. The managers of private high schools and colleges in Romania are the main beneficiaries of the results of the studies included in this doctoral research. First of all, I can learn from the experiences of educational managers in privately held pre-university institutions, who presented in the qualitative study their way of thinking about addressing some of the challenges they have recently faced in the context of accelerated digital transformations. Covid-19 pandemic. Second, the correlations between the precursors of educational and managerial performance, validated in the quantitative study, contribute to the awareness of the adoption of changes in current managerial practices. Thirdly, the guide for experimenting with innovative managerial practices is a methodological benchmark for designing their own strategies and policies aimed at increasing the performance of the institutions they manage. We honestly assume a number of limitations of the qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as the case study in which we applied the Balanced Scorecard method. The limited number of answers to the open-ended questions of the semi-structured interview guide, the application of a sample of convenience in quantitative research and the use of a minimum set of key performance indicators in the case study are the main limitations of the research conducted. The future research agenda will include addressing strategies for developing distributed educational leadership, developing and using effective interpersonal communication skills, staff motivation, conflict management skills, and the role of values and expectations in the management of private high schools.

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