

THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE: HOW POLITICS INFLUENCES UNIVERSITIES, BUT EDUCATION INFLUENCES POLITICS

PUTEREA CUNOAȘTERII: CUM POLITICA INFLUENȚEAZĂ UNIVERSITĂȚILE, DAR EDUCAȚIA INFLUENȚEAZĂ POLITICA

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Abstract: *The research provides a political analysis of the interaction between power and education in Moldovan society to identify understanding of the relationship between power structures and education in the format of the state regulation system. This interaction is defined as a scientific definition and as mechanism for the practical implementation of contemporary modernization in the field of Moldovan education. This approach made it possible to form a fairly holistic view of the possible forms and methods of influence of the Moldovan authorities on the educational process in the context of a comprehensive modernization of society.*

Key words: *power, knowledge, education, public administration and regulation, educational process.*

Rezumat: *Cercetarea oferă o analiză politică a interacțiunii dintre putere și educație în societatea moldovenească pentru a identifica înțelegerea relației dintre structurile de putere și educație în formatul sistemului de reglementare de stat. Această interacțiune este definită ca o definiție științifică și ca mecanism de implementare practică a modernizării contemporane în domeniul educației moldovenești. Această abordare a permis formarea unei viziuni destul de holistice asupra formelor și metodelor posibile de influență ale autorităților moldovenești asupra procesului educațional în contextul unei modernizări cuprinzătoare a societății.*

Cuvinte cheie: *puterea, cunoștințe, educație, administrație publică și reglementare, proces educațional.*

Introduction

World and national experience in the development of educational systems convincingly indicates that Government and education are closely related socio-political institutions that interact as a set of processes of influence of various government and educational objects interdependently with a constant change in state.

Without the potential of political and state power it is impossible to solve

the problems assigned to education by modern society. In turn, education, as the most important element of public life and state structure, is designed to contribute to the solution of such strategic tasks for the country as ensuring political and socio-economic stability, improving culture and the spiritual and moral sphere, and developing civil society institutions.

Politics and universities directly influence each other. The state establishes and finances universities, can both recruit the staff and dismiss and expel objectionable teachers and students, uses the scientific research base to lobby its interests, and, among other things, brainwash employees and students through ideologization. In turn, universities, having enlisted the support of the authorities, become independent economic entities, can influence the decisions of politicians with the results of their experiments and go towards common goals, uniting in groups to strengthen their negotiating positions and financial opportunities.

Nevertheless, the discussion about whether there is a place for politics within the walls of universities has been going on in Moldova for many years: some representatives of the country's leading universities believe that educational institutions should not interact with the authorities, while others fully support the position of engagement. In order to understand what the goals of modern universities are and whether it is possible to achieve them, going hand in hand with the state, it is necessary to understand the formats of cooperation between universities and authorities, how politics supports university ecosystems, why political groups expel their opponents from institutions, what made universities an entrepreneurial institution, what research results can become a political weapon and what will allow universities to influence the future of society. (Mayor-Zaragoza, F., 2010)

In many circles, there is an insistence on respect for the value neutrality of the professor's position and the political neutrality of the university as a whole, ensuring its "safety". Representatives of the position of engagement, appealing to the civil and corporate feelings and interests of students, teachers and administrative staff of the university, convince their opponents that politics is an integral part of the life and history of universities, but participation in political life is a moral duty or a pragmatic necessity of higher education institutions. Discussing normative issues (what a university or a scientist should or should not do), participants in the long-running discussion often ignore positive issues (what is happening; how universities and politics interact). This material will be devoted to the description of positive aspects. Although their interaction is often reflexive, as politics influence universities, which in turn influence politics, in order to understand what points of contact exist between higher education institutions and the political environment, we will have to separate these concepts. Since politics has historically preceded universities, it is logical to start with the formats in which politics affect the higher education system.

It must be remembered that, first, politics contributes to the creation of university structures and ecosystems. If in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the rulers were mainly limited to founding and less often patronizing universities, then, starting from the 17th century, they show a close interest in scientific organizations, developing their charter, providing regular support and funding. One of the most striking examples, that could be mentioned, is the Humboldt University, founded in the early 19th century in Prussia, which became a project of the Prussian political (rather than academic) elites, who were interested in improving the efficiency of education and increasing the number of highly qualified specialists, as well as developing scientific potential, that was to strengthen the state against the backdrop of defeats at the beginning of the Napoleonic wars.

Secondly, as we know, politics can contribute to the ideologization of science and education, prescribing the teaching of some disciplines and prohibiting others, as was the case, for example, in the USSR.

Thirdly, we know many examples from the past of how the political situation can influence personnel policy. Influential political groups and individual politicians can expel political opponents (both students and staff) from universities and/or promote their supporters to university positions.

Summing up this section, we can say that politics sets the framework for the existence of universities, and can also influence them through the ideologization of science and teaching or through personnel appointments. Looking on how politics can influence the university, it is also very important to look at the reverse process, the influence of the university on politics.

To begin, I would like to return to Max Weber and his classic work “Science as a Vocation and a Profession” (Weber, 1989), which is regularly referred to in debates about the roles of the university and scientists in the political processes. In his work, Weber points out that “politics has no place in the classroom”, and also postulates the neutrality of science in relation to any external values. A careful reading of “Science as a Vocation and a Profession” shows that Weber limited himself to “banishing” politics from the classroom and the laboratory, not deeming it necessary to indicate that it “has no place in the university”.

Thus, it can be seen that the modern university enters politics in pursuit of its economic goals. However, not only the position of modern universities in the structure of the innovation economy determines how they will influence politics. Their scientific research activity can also influence the political field.

The global trend towards politicization and, in some cases, ideologization of the social and natural sciences is manifested both in grant and publication policies, and the results of research become objects of struggle, tools or targets for various political or ideological groups. As a result, research funding is

seriously dependent on the political and ideological conjuncture - in order to receive funding or popularize research on one platform or another, scientists often have to "go into politics", politically coloring the results and even prerequisites of their research, conducting them on money and for the benefit of those or other organizations.

Research methodology

The methods and rules, that were used within the process of writing this work, in order to obtain and achieve a more detailed analysis, were: the historical method, the empirical method, the structural method, the institutional method, etc. All these techniques made it possible to demonstrate how the politics influences the education and vice-versa, how the education could influence the politics of the state; to analyze the types of influence; to investigate the problems which could appear both in education and in politics, etc.

Findings

Over the past decades, the reconstruction of the political system of the Republic of Mooldova has taken place - a change in the fundamental foundations of the political and legal system, the choice of a new vector for the development of the country as a whole.

Thus, on the one hand, these transformations formalized a new constitutional system and a new democratic state, and on the other hand, provided all the opportunities for the emergence of new political institutions, including civil society institutions.

The ruling circles emphasized that the country has powerful reserves for the implementation of not only tactical, but also fundamental long-term tasks, and it was emphasized that the most important thing is to improve the quality and standard of living of millions of our citizens. The most important condition for the implementation of this installation is the coordinated actions of authorities at all levels, but the basis for this should be a really operating system of strategic and spatial planning, which will link the priorities of sectoral and regional development. An important role in improving the quality of life is assigned to the prospects for the development of education.

Analyzing modern education, specialists, theorists and practitioners see different ways to ensure its dynamic development. In our opinion, the need for a gradual transition from managerial influences to a system of regulation of public relations is seen as more progressive and effective. The growing role of the state in the regulation of socio-economic processes is critically ineffective due to the low level of social responsibility of decision-making subjects. This problem has deep roots associated with the deformation of the institutional matrix, which leads to a violation of the basic principles of the systemic integration of society,

which implies the need to search for new forms of relations between the state and society. This search inevitably leads to the concept of social responsibility as an institution that determines social obligations associated with decision-making powers. For example, Baker D., in his work “Mass Higher Education and the Super Research University: Symbiotic Trends and Future Scenarios”, shows the close relationship between economic and educational processes and politics, since limiting the quality of education for the sake of political stability, is a counterproductive strategy in modern conditions (Baker, 2012).

In order to comprehend the directions and methods of power influence, we qualify power as the initial beginning of the impact on the sphere of education. It should be noted that state and political power are not the same thing, because in addition to state power, there are and may exist other forms of political power. However, state power has always been and remains political power, on the basis of which it should be considered as the ability or opportunity to exercise political leadership of society. Consequently, the systems of influence on their part on socio-political, including educational processes, and on society in general, also have fundamental differences, and state power is more inclined to such a system of influence on social processes as management. This is due to the bureaucratic structure of the state apparatus. In addition, such an important branch of power, as the executive, includes the administrative apparatus. Therefore, apart from managing education, the executive power practically cannot exercise other functions of influence.

In contrast to state power, political power (represented by the political elite) does not have an administrative and managerial apparatus. Therefore, when influencing the state apparatus, society and educational processes, the political elite tends to regulate, that is, to establish certain rules, to influence the solution of certain problems in a targeted manner. For example, in the work of modern political scientist Keane J., fundamental in terms of significance for Western political science, several models of the existence and functioning of the legitimate institution of the state and its interaction with civil society, are defined:

- The state that provides security;
- The constitutional state;
- The minimalized state;
- The common state;
- A democratic state in accordance with what role the state performs in relation to society and at what level it dominates and subjugates other spheres.

(Keane, 1989)

As a rule, the political leadership of education is carried out rather ambiguously. What is the specificity of the policy of the modern Moldovan state and its manifestation in the field of education?

To answer this question, it is necessary to determine the following

parameters of political power (or the so-called characteristics of the political regime), which also influence the formation of education in society:

- Formation of the state educational policy;
- Real separation of powers, horizontally and vertically, and taking into account the specifics of the impact of such a division on education;
- Mechanisms for making political decisions in the field of education;
- The presence or absence of a really functioning political opposition and the possibility of its influence on the educational process in society;
- The degree of dissemination of political information, the real and formal freedom of the functioning of the media, informing the general public about the real state situation in education;
- The existing relations of political power with the bureaucracy, with the state apparatus that manages education;
- Turnover of political elites in power;
- Social base (support groups - declared and real) of the political regime, its presence among the participants in the educational process;
- The degree of involvement of the masses in the administration of the state, in the system of influencing education in society;
- The predominant way to resolve social and political conflicts, contradictions in the educational sphere;
- The nature and basic mechanisms of using the means of social violence in society and in the educational sphere;
- The realized degree of competence of political authorities in matters of influencing society and the development of education.

A particularly important issue of democratic reforms is the separation of powers. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, "state power in the Republic of Moldova is exercised on the basis of division into legislative, executive and judicial. Legislative, executive and judicial authorities are independent" (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994).

Therefore, the judiciary and legislative power, as well as the executive, should influence education in society, that is, be independent political actors in educational policy. At the same time, let me pay attention to the fact that the legislative and judicial branches, unlike the executive, cannot apply the administrative method of influencing education. That is, the legislative and executive branches of government, in my opinion, can carry out state regulation of education in society, but the executive branch is mainly state administration.

Consequently, the weakening of the positions of the legislative and judicial branches of power, other political and public actors in educational policy does not contribute to the formation of the institutional foundations of the system of state regulation of the educational process. At the same time, the very strong position of the executive power in influencing education in society creates

conditions for strengthening the system of state management of the educational sphere.

Let me analyze the features and mechanisms of the authorities' influence on education in the case of vertical division. In the Republic of Moldova, among the state authorities in the field of education, the Government of Moldova and the Ministry of Education and Science, subordinate to it, are vested with powers. In the first place, in the list of competences is the development and implementation of state policy in the field of education. We believe that in practice this provision does not fully correspond to reality, since the development and implementation of the main directions of such a policy is carried out (or should be carried out) by the country's top political leadership. At the same time, a number of powers in the field of education have been transferred to higher educational institutions themselves for implementation.

At the same time, the analysis of the bureaucratic ladder indicates that the highest position in the social structure of education is occupied by representatives of the highest authorities of the country, who form the state policy in the field of education. But representatives of the top management (ministry employees, department employees, etc.) develop universal requirements for the content and quality of training programs in accordance with changing socio-economic and political conditions. Along with this, they exercise social control over the education system, determine the system of formal sanctions in educational institutions. Administrative workers of the lower level (rectors of universities and deans, directors of schools and colleges, etc.) are responsible for the implementation of the educational process, adjust and clarify the learning strategy in relation to this educational institution, carry out operational management and control over the work of teachers and the behavior of students.

Distracting from the complex hierarchical dependence of these positions, attention should be paid to the role that administrative workers play in the education system. Their main task is to make responsible decisions and form a strategy for the educational process: to determine the list of basic disciplines and the sequence of their study, to provide the material and technical base of educational institutions, etc. They are responsible for the formation of the teaching corps, determine the regulatory requirements for the activities of teachers and staff, as well as the criteria for evaluating their work. In any case, such a hierarchy of administrative workers in the field of education presupposes the existence of only a system of state administration and practically leaves no room for the mechanisms of state regulation of the educational process.

Recruitment and turnover of elites in Moldova have not yet acquired a democratic character. It should be admitted that we practically did not have and have not formed social groups other than the bureaucracy, capable of becoming the basis of political power and forming a political elite. One gets the impression

that although the political elite is interested in a quality education for the majority of the population, at present all actions on its part come down to statements of their intentions.

In practice, the political elite of Moldova does not sufficiently exercise political influence on society in order to improve the quality of education in society, and most of the problems in this area are completely entrusted to the state apparatus. It turns out that representatives of the political elite only declare the need to create a system of state regulation of education, but the numerous state apparatus neutralizes it with its system of state administration.

Perhaps we can agree that the political elite has practically no opportunity to directly influence modern society. It can be noted that the main link between elite groups, on the one hand, society and individual citizens, on the other, is the state apparatus. However, the modern state apparatus in Moldova, apparently, can no longer offer society anything, except for administrative measures in managing the educational process. At the same time, one can clearly see the demand of the political elite to the state apparatus in terms of fulfilling the basic requirements of the Bologna process.

However, the current state of the Moldovan political elite as a whole, its degree of education and preparedness indicates that it still does not have such qualities necessary for the elite as solidarity, unity of goals and actions, high professionalism, awareness of responsibility to the people. It does not yet have sufficient legitimacy.

This is probably why, despite the fact that in our country the process of liberalization of the political system is declared by the highest authorities, there is no effective political education and sound knowledge of politicians about the experience of world political transformations.

It is possible that as a result of the existence of today's educational system, representatives of the modern political elite do not and cannot acquire the ability to apply positive foreign experience in conducting such political experiments. The political elite can gain productive experience of effective influence in the context of the diversity of social interests of modern Moldova only by improving the quality of political decisions and their effective implementation, which will contribute to social progress, the growth of the welfare of the people, the renewal and optimization of its composition through the best representatives from various social groups.

At present, among the directions of policy in the field of education in Moldova, the most important are the improvement of the quality and accessibility of education, the creation of a system of continuous education. One of the ways to implement these areas is the development and implementation of e-learning in educational practice. It should be noted that our country has sufficient potential not only to promote e-learning within the country, but also to export it to other

countries. And also, in fairness, it is worth noting the serious backlog of e-learning in Moldova from the leading Western countries.

The factors, that are hindering the development of e-learning at Moldovan universities are:

- lack of an appropriate regulatory framework;
- the absence of real legal mechanisms for the protection of copyright and commercial rights to educational and scientific and methodological developments as objects of intellectual property;
- lack of standards that determine the composition and content of the educational and methodological complex that is part of the information training system.

To solve these problems at the state level, it is necessary:

1. to realize the problem, which, by its social significance, is a national project;
2. To decide on the creation of a state corporation, the purpose of which will be the development of a new industry - the learning industry;
3. To develop a quality assessment system in the e-learning system;
(Chitiba C., 2012)

Thus, as a conclusion, we can note that in our country a system of state management of education in society has been formed, which, firstly, is due to the insufficient degree of influence of the political elite of the country on the formation of educational policy and the transfer of powers to implement the strategy of this policy to the state apparatus. Secondly, the system of state management of the educational process is currently due to a high degree of influence on this process by executive authorities.

However, the system of public administration of education, in connection with the constantly complicating social ties in education and Moldova's entry into the Bologna process, is increasingly generating contradictions in relations between government and society, between educational institutions and authorities, between scientific and pedagogical workers and the administration of educational institutions, between teachers and learners. There is growing concern in society about the quality of education, the aggravation of employment issues, the inconsistency of professional training with business requirements, despite the introduction of standards, due to inefficient educational policy. These contradictions show the need for a transition to a qualitatively different way of influencing political and state power on education in society - a system of state regulation.

In turn, the system of state regulation of education in society assumes an increase in the role of the legislative and judicial authorities, as well as other actors of the political system (political and public organizations, business) in influencing the educational process in the Republic of Moldova. In fact, we are

talking about the formation of an even higher level of the system of influence on education in society - self-regulation, which will allow resolving the above-mentioned contradictions.

Conclusions

Thus, even if the university miraculously manages to avoid interaction with politics from outside, it will never be able to get rid of politics as a way of perceiving the world, cooperating and fighting for resources within its walls.

Based on the above considerations, it can be assumed that the greatest success will be achieved by those universities whose management and staff accept the inevitability of interacting with political reality. By accepting this need and examining this reality, such universities will be able to reap great benefits by using their connection with the political sphere to effectively achieve their goals.

The most "frontal" approach in this case will be to lobby the universities for their interests. This can be especially effective if universities start uniting into groups to strengthen their negotiating position and financial capabilities. In addition, universities can contribute to the improvement of the quality of public administration and decision-making through the provision of quality expertise and the production of scientific knowledge. As part of the longest path to achieving goals, universities can take advantage of the fact that the vast majority of civil servants pass through their walls, which allows universities to influence their knowledge, values and social capital, thereby to some extent determining the appearance of future officials and politicians.

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