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**QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION VS INTERNAL
CONTROL MANAGEMENT: *EFFICIENCY OR BUREAUCRACY?*¹**

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Abstract

Around the same year, 2005, in the Romanian education system have been initiated two demarches for improving *quality of education*: a) *quality assurance of education*; b) *the internal control / managerial*. There were numerous aspects that have hampered or made the two efforts should be viewed with reticence by the management of school organizations - under the sign of obvious of growth of *bureaucracy* in the educational system less to increase *the quality* of educational processes. Authors will try in this paper by a critical analysis, highlighting the main *positive* and *negative* aspects and make proposals regarding the compatibility referentials specific to the two important initiatives so that the process of their implementation, to become, to any entity education from pre-university education system, *flexible, efficient and efficacious*.

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1. Introduction

Starting with 2005, the necessary movement towards implementing the *instruments* and *mechanisms* meant to gradually build a culture of quality in the public entities had begun. These instruments, already functional in some EU countries (*A.N.: See "Charter Mark" in the UK, introduce in the early '90s for all UK public entities, at the initiative of then Prime Minister John Major*) have been promoted with the purpose to generalize the implementing process in the entire EU territory. One of the

¹ This article is from the point of view of the authors

main focus areas was (and will further be) *the educational filed* because of these elementary causes: a) the educational systems are too big – they have a large amount of educational entities, public entities; b) a considerable amount of people are working in the educational processes – *authors with different roles: teachers* (‘suppliers’ of educational products), *students* (their direct customers), *interested parties* (indirect clients, but beneficiaries of the educational services and products). Although the two models, **quality management system in education**- called in the official references *quality assurance in education*- and the **internal management control system** have appeared in the legal-normative movements in Romania approximately in the same year, the implementation of them in the Romanian educational system has been successively approached, at the beginning in a ‘huge rush’, only in the department of quality assurance in education. This was done through a legal-normative package which was finalised in 2007 and applied in the system starting with the 2007 - 2008 school year. In 2009, the second step which was designed to increase the quality of public services- *internal management control system (IMCS)* was taken. Then, an essential problem surfaces: did the implementation of these models have the desired effects – *the increase of quality in the services provided by the public educational entities* or the overlapping of these actually became a *generator of extra bureaucracy* (amongst which the increase of paperwork).

This is what we want to analyse in our work and also to identify some opportunities to improve or actually formulate proposal in this aspect.

2. Concepts

To fully understand the aspects regarding the implementation of the respective models, we consider it is necessary to highlight some useful concepts:

*a. **System** (Business Dictionary):*” *An assembly organized on a detailed element structure (entities, factors, ideas, persons, parts, etc.) dependent and co-dependent which influence each other continuously (directly or indirectly) so that they can sustain the activity and existence of the system with the purpose of reaching its major targets.*”

*b. **Quality system management (SMC) (ISO 9000:2006)**:*” *Quality system management is that part of the organizational management system orientated towards obtaining results reporting to the objectives of the quality in order to satisfy the necessities, expectations and requirements of the interested parties*”.

*c. **Internal control system (COSO)**:*” *The internal control is a process which is responsible for the administration of an organization (the administration council) and it is conducted by designated members from within the organization. The process is meant to offer a reasonable assurance in regards to reaching the efficient and effective operational objective, the financial dependability reports and the compliance to the Romanian legislation. The generic name for the internal control is **Internal Control Management System (ICMS)**.*

3. The Current Theoretical Context of Implementing the Two Models

The models have popped into the Romanian educational ‘scenery’ approximately at the same time, respectively in 2005. Both are important elements in the chapters regarding the adherence of Romania in

the common EU space, with an emphasis on the *obligation* of implementing them in the designated environments. The implementation process was based on the regulations in the educational field which were previously mentioned. ‘The construction’ of the two models was based, more or less, on some concepts and consecrated practices found at the European and worldwide level in this field. From analyzing them, some common aspects arise in both models (this making them compatible) but, there also are aspects which differentiate between them.

3.1. Normative and Legislative Reglementations for Qms and Icms

3.1.1 Quality Management System(Qms) in Education

QMS in education was established through a normative act in 2005 (*Emergency Government Ordinance no. 75/2005, with amendments and additions*). Though, the normative act, establishes more the *educational quality assurance* (Dragulănescu, China, Militaru & Colceag, 2014, p 82-110) and less the *quality management*.” The *assurance of quality expresses the capacity of a supply organization to offer educational programmers according to the announced standards.*” From here comes the necessity of a *quality assurance system (QAS)* in education (*A system of procedures which the organization has to implement in order for its actions and educational processes to develop up to the announced standards*). As a comparison, the specialized literature does not specify the existence of a QAS, only the existence of a QMS, *quality assurance* being part of the *quality management* (alongside with other three parts: *planning, control, improvement*)

The effects of a implementation on a theoretically –normative approach, in the Romanian vision, have been numerous (Dragulănescu China, Militaru & Colceag, 2014), most of them being *negative*, from our point of view. The quality assurance in education, according to the legislative-normative framework, presupposes: *the obligation* of all the educational entities in the system to apply the stipulations within the framework through *two essential processes*: a process of *external evaluation* – handled by a *specialized agency (RAQAPE, RAQAHE)* and a process of *internal evaluation* - handled by the organization itself. If the first is *random*, when asked for, the second process has to be *permanent* with a *continuous* development and *maximum efficiency*. This has to be done according to the recommendations of the European Commission: *increasing the percentage of internal evaluation processes* and *decreasing* the percentage of the external one! Thus, the responsibility of the organization itself increases when being faced with the objectives pre-established in order to meet the requirements of the *interested parties*.

Currently all the entities in the pre-university educational system (*AN: their name, according to the legislation is "education establishment". It also uses the phrase "education provider"*) are being evaluated based on three types of standards: *of licensing* (when founding – standards of founding), *of accrediting* (confirmation of the functionality of a school- standards of functionality at a minimum quality level), *of referencing* (confirmation of functionality at an *optimum level*)! The three ‘types’ of standards contain *the same reference domains* and *sub-domains* (Government Decision (G.D.) no. 21/2007 approving standards for (authorization) / accreditation / periodic evaluation) :

A. *Institutionally capacity*; B. *Educational efficiency*; C. *Quality management*. The differentiating amongst the standards is held at the *requirements* level and the *philosophy* for evaluation is binary: it exists/it doesn’t exist, while checking if the requirements presented are being up to standard. There are

approximately 178 requirements formulated in each standard. ‘Forcefully’(without a pre-preparation of the educational system) applying the implementation of the Romanian model of *education/in education quality assurance* has generated some *positive aspects* but also *several negative ones* – especially visible in increased bureaucracy in the educational system (Dragulănescu, & Chină, 2010). According to the official data (AN: *These data can be accessed on RAQAPE*), until now, there have been evaluated over 3000 schools (over 7000 levels of education/specialization/professional qualifications) which means that the effects of *implementing this* model are visible in the system! This endeavor which has been functioning ever since 2004 must have met considerable efforts at the community level of the institutes. The components of it are:

- Implementing at the educational system levels (and professional training) some models/mechanism/instruments and procedure similar to the *quality management* (AN: *The intention was to implement specific models and tools TQM philosophy - Total Quality Management. See the, for example: ASQ - What is Total Quality Management (TQM?)* practice in the business area, based on two renowned and worldwide validate models – *ISO Standard 9001* and *The European Excellence Model(EFQM)*);

- Creating a culture of quality at the educational system levels and the professional training one, aspect established through the *Pan-European* events which carry a huge importance, for example the *Bergen Reunion* (2005).

These types of initiatives had a fundamental motive: finding a considerable discrepancy between the European space (educational) – being way behind compared to the *American educational space* (which is more evolved) and to the *Asian educational space* (which is even more evolved) (AN: *Appearance found to through projective act with distant horizon the Europe 2020 Strategy*). The planning events and documents previously mentioned have not imposed the obligation of introducing these models in the pre-University educational system. However, through this normative-legislative package previously mentioned, Romania has established *the entire educational domain* in the perspective of the quality assurance in education.

In this context, Romania has become a model, probably the only one, in the community educational system, in which, at the level of pre-university educational system, work in parallel an *‘educational quality assurance system’* but also a *school inspection system*, but also other control and monitoring instruments!

3.1.2 Internal Control Management System (ICMS)

In the past, few years, the pressures created by the financial crises lead to an obvious endeavor: creating in all the public entities a *management internal control* system with the purpose of assuring, especially in the public filed, desiderata essential to all the advanced societies on the civilization scale: *integrity, transparency, responsibility*. It must be specified that the management internal control system is *‘a negotiation arrangement assumed by Romania in chapter 28 ‘Financial Control’, currently chapter 32(AN: See paper "Comparative analysis of the internal management control system”, p 6)*. As a consequence of Romania following the EU adherence process, in the chapter mentioning normative acts send in 2005 (AN: *It is about the OMFP nr. 946/2005 later edited OMFP nr. 1649/2011*), the *Internal*

Control Standards the Managerial (ICSM) have been elaborated which are *obligatory* for the public institutions in Romania. The objective of implementing a ICSM, based on the management internal control standards, is to make responsible the management of any public entity in Romania for obtaining and rational, efficient and effective utilizing the public resources in order to achieve the designated targets for the respective entity. ICSM is based on a set of *management internal control standards* which define:

'A minimum of management rules which public entities must follow. These have the objective of creating a reference model which is uniform and coherent with which the management/internal control systems are evaluated/auto-evaluated and with the help of which the risk areas and future action point directions are identified'(Project Ministry of Education (MECSA), cod SMIS 37635, p 6).

It should be noted that MICS had a more dynamic evolution than QMS. Thus, in 2015, the entire 'construction' of MICS had been revised, corrected, improved and adapted to the current situations through a normative act issued by the Romanian General Secretary of the Government. Currently, the entire endeavor regarding MICS is *monitored* and *controlled* by to Romanian fundamental institutions: Romanian Court of Accounts –for all the public entities (that have a juridical persona) and by GGS (Management Internal Control Direction) for all the main credit release authorities. ICSM is a direct and obligatory responsibility for leading any *public entity* (AN: *The term "public authority" is explained (along with other terms in this field) by Law no. 672/2002, republished with amendments and additions*). The ICSM standards are in a total of 16 ((Project Ministry of Education (MECSA), cod SMIS 37635:”*Comparative analysis of the internal management control system*” p 20), all being elaborated based on the experience gained along the years of *reference organizations* in the field: INTOSAI, COSO etc, grouped in ”*five key elements of internal control* (cf. ”*Comparative analysis of the internal management control system*” pp 20 - 26): a. *Control environment*; b. *Risk performances and management*; c. *Control activities*; d. *Informing and communication*; e. *Audit and evaluation*”.

3.2 Comparative Aspects of the Two Models: Qms and Icsm

Both models have been elaborated based on *fundamental* domains, which were previously mentioned, and express a minimum level of accomplishing the formulated requirements. For example, *the reference standard* utilized in school evaluations is formulated in such manner so as to define an *optimum level* of functionality of the evaluated school, but the requirements of it, express a *minimum level* of accomplishment.

While the *credential standard* is formulated to underline the functionality of the educational entity at a minimum level required by it (defined by the legislation as a minimal level of quality), the standards of ICSM regard the *efficiency, effectiveness and performances* that the evaluated entity has shown in its period of existence.

The management internal control standards regard essential aspects for a high achieved functionality of the educational entity:

- *Strengthening* the process of *internal evaluation* – making the top management in the organization responsible with increasing the importance of the internal evaluation process;
- Making the educational entities responsible with the *risk management* when it comes to the functionality of the respective organization;

- Rolling some processes responsible with *control, monitor, audit*, in regards to the functionality of the respective entity.

It can be said, from the quality management perspective that ICSM is more orientated towards implementing specific elements in this domain rather than the other model studied in this article, QMS. Although, at the time of writing the present article, there is no data officially published analyzing the implementation of ICSM at the pre-University educational system nor analyzing a comparison between the effects the two models have.

In figure, no 1 we presented the structure of both models and the possible compatibilities between the *component domains* (the dotted lines).

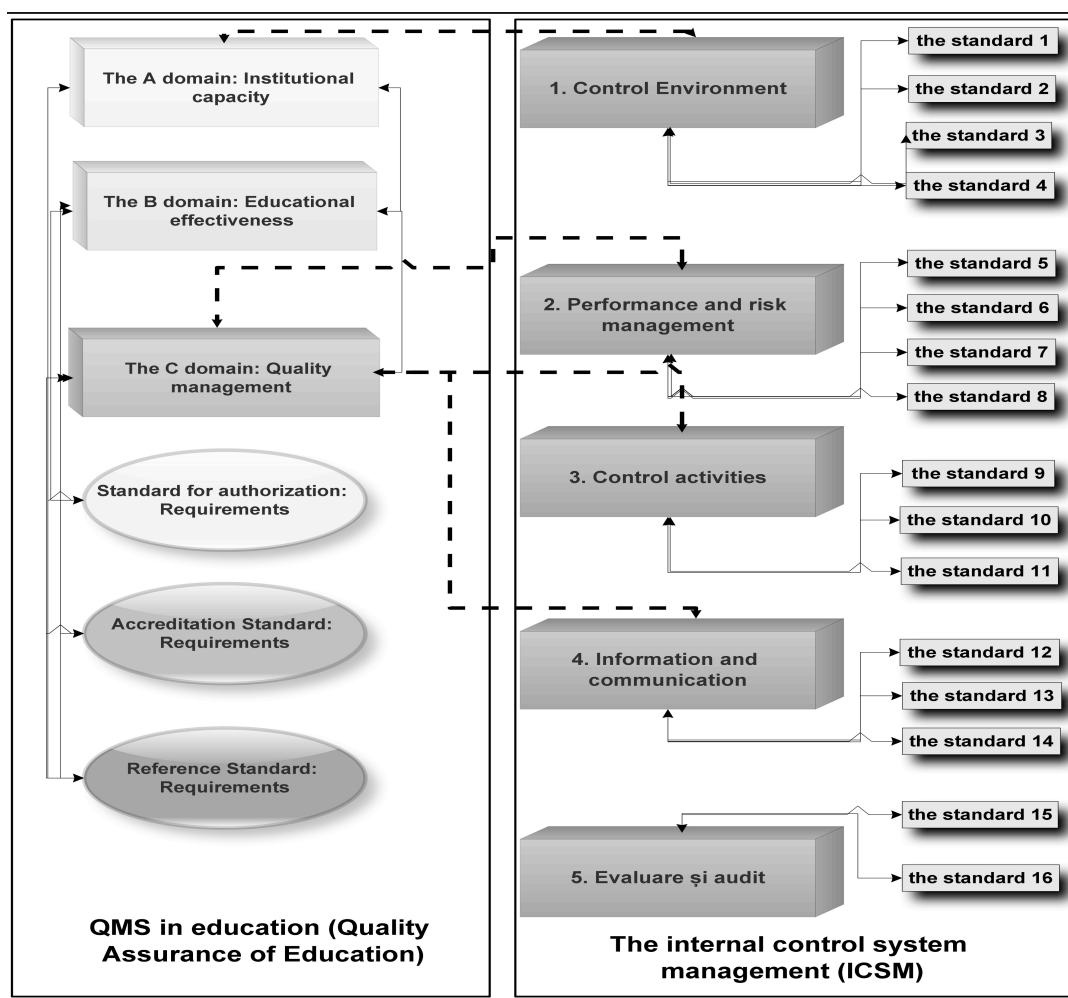


Figure 1. The structure of the two models and possible connections/compatibilities between the fields.

Source: authors

4. Implementing Qms and Icsm – *Efficiency, Effectiveness* or Increasing *Bureaucracy* in The Romanian Education System?

After 2005, the Romanian adherence process in the EU territory had engaged numerous *subsequent processes* which are specific to the admission negotiation chapters. *Chapter 18* from the adherence process was the one dedicated to ‘the education of professional training and youth’ (*Romanian*

*Affiliation: negotiation chapters, p 12) which had a major objective:” according to the EU Treaty, the Union must contribute to the development of the quality in education which must include an European dimension’. Thus, the endeavors regarding the implementation of some of the models which are supposed to create the necessary conditions for the educational system to evolve in such manner it can reach compatible performances with other systems of development in the Union, were absolutely necessary. A major ‘defect’ of the implementation process regarding QMS and ICSM is, in our opinion, maintaining, in parallel, existing educational models in the system (with their specific admeasurements): school inspection, school evaluation in the professional and technical education system based on a appropriate and personal model, **external evaluation based on the national standards, management internal control system** – the last two being previously presented. In the current reality, a school from the pre-University educational system, must separately account to all four institutions (accordingly to the four obligatory models)! It is hard to believe that efficiency and effectiveness exist in this context, because the requirements for the four models *are not compatible*, generating a ‘fair amount’ of bureaucracy in all the schools in the system!*

As a consequence, the implementation of the two models hasn’t generated efficient and effective results – rather a significant increase of bureaucracy!

5. Conclusions

We appreciate that QMS and ICSM are two extremely important models in the evolution of the pre-University educational system (for the entire system actually). Implementing them is an obligatory and necessary process according to the negotiation chapters. We also consider that the *implementation* process for the two models has been achieved, in a few aspects, defectively, including through: 1. maintaining, in parallel, other models of monitoring and controlling which were enumerated previously; 2. the inexistence of a corresponding process of compatibility for the two models; 3. not adapting the two models to the current situations (the modification which appeared in the legislation, the types and sizes of schools, etc.

The major negative effect of implementing the two models was previously stated: *the increase of bureaucracy in the pre-University educational system.*

The solution we propose is:

Adapting the current models in the system, the above-mentioned ones: *school inspections, school evaluation in the professional and technical education system based on a appropriate and personal model, external evaluation based on the national standards, management internal control system* to the current relations in the educational system, **make in them compatible** to the current existing quality models which are validated both on a community level and on a worldwide level.

The creation of a single quality management model in the pre-University educational system, based on the previously mentioned facts!

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