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DOMAIN OF MANAGEMENT**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND OFFERS IN  
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

The field of management is constantly evolving, and the design and implementation of effective bachelor's and master's programs in management are crucial to producing well-trained and capable managers. However, designing and evaluating these programs is a complex task as it requires consideration of various factors, such as the specific needs and context of the students, program goals and objectives, and current management trends and developments. This thesis presents a holistic approach to the context assessment and design of bachelor's and master's programs in management. The approach is based on a thorough analysis of the current literature and best practices in the field, as well as case studies and analyses of the Romanian educational system in general and of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in the field of economic sciences - management.

The objective of the doctoral thesis is to make an x-ray of the higher education system, especially the evolution and current situation of management programs to propose models for the design and management of educational programs and offers.

The first part of the thesis reviews the literature on educational management, context assessment, and management program design. This includes a discussion of various factors to consider when evaluating a program's context, such as student characteristics, program goals and objectives, and current management trends and developments. The literature review also covers the different design approaches that have been proposed for management programs and the different methods that have been used to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to knowing the context from the perspective of educational management, its role, and functions, as well as educational leadership. An integrated approach is needed, based on the vision and role of academic education to be a leader in integrating changes and adapting programs to society's demands and socio-economic challenges.

Chapter 2 states a presentation of the main managerial models used in the educational field, with their advantages and limitations. It must be understood that new managerial models must be taken into account and along with operational management, strategic management is important for the sustainable development of the educational unit. Unlike pre-university education which is obliged to formulate its strategic objectives according to the national strategy and the local development strategy and which is dependent on the strategic decisions of the line ministry (Ministry of Education), higher education educational units

benefit from university autonomy which it gives them a considerable degree of freedom in establishing the coordinates of institutional development.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of the context of performance assessment in the higher education system. This case study is used to illustrate how the approach proposed in the thesis can be applied in practice. The case study includes a detailed analysis of the context, aims and objectives, and methods that were used to design and evaluate academic educational programs. The case study also includes a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses and the position of educational programs in Romania concerning similar programs in other European countries or international programs.

It is essential to take into account the internationalization component of academic educational programs, a fact determined on the one hand by the possibility of circulation and therefore implicitly education within the universities of the European Union that young people can access, but on the other hand the desire to attract students from other countries to be prepared for the global labor market.

The second part of the thesis consists of several analyzes and case studies to create a complex picture of the context and coordinates that must be considered for the realization of effective management of educational programs.

Chapter 4 analyzes the educational management programs in Romania from the perspective of the legislative and regulatory context regarding the authorization and implementation of the programs. A typology of management programs is also made, these having an expansive variety compared to other programs in the field of economic sciences. Similar programs from other countries of the European Union are analyzed and last but not least, three programs, considered successful, offered by the Babeş Boylay University in Cluj, the Academy of Economic Sciences, and the WU Executive Academy (Vienna University of Economics and Business) are presented and analyzed.

Chapter 5 comprises four analyzes and two case studies. Two analyzes of the specialized literature are presented, a bibliometric analysis to establish the concepts with which the notion of the management program is related and an empirical analysis also based on the specialized literature to identify the directions of interest researched so far, the authors and the affiliation them, the evolution over time of concerns in the field.

The two case studies address performance in higher education in Romania and the design of educational programs since one of the central pillars of doctoral research is educational performance.

The cross-sectional study of educational programs in the field of economic sciences and the spatial analysis of programs provide a complex picture of the educational offer in the field of management and related programs. These constitute a basis for the work tool proposed by this research. Analyzes and studies allow the formulation of conclusions and implications for the successful management of educational programs. It will summarize the key findings of the research and allow you to formulate your own opinions and solutions.

Chapter 6 constitutes the corollary of this thesis, presenting operational models for the management of educational programs at the university level to ensure a quality education integrated into international performance requirements and adapted to the demands of the labor market.

The major contributions of this thesis are, first of all, a review of the grounded concepts of educational management and leadership, quality standards, and evaluation mechanisms of the didactic process. The exploration of specialized literature highlights the researchers' concern for this subject but also the concepts with which the notion of management educational programs is related.

The X-ray of management education programs in Romania and related ones (business administration, finance, accounting, marketing) provides information on the degree of territorial dispersion and highlights the areas in need. Case studies complete the picture of needs, context, and requirements for initiating, designing, and carrying out an educational program.

The most important contribution is represented by the proposals for educational program design models in higher education, namely the Collaborative Innovative Design Integrated Framework (CIPIC), respectively the particularities of CIPIC in the context of digital transformation, but also the program management model. The paper also includes recommendations for future research and practical implications for program designers and managers.

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## CHAPTER 1

The purpose or mission of management is to lead to the fulfillment of predetermined objectives, not being characterized by its own goals or values (Newman & Clarke 1994 apud Bush, 2010).

*The purpose* of educational management is to ensure both the functionality of the educational system as a whole - general purpose, and of each of its component elements - school unit/institution, through a common approach to pedagogical values in relation to the orientation and specific realities of a democratic society open, so constantly changing. Identifying essential directions and finding methods to support effective educational endeavors in an era of innovation, transformation, and global growth is the goal of this type of management. Adaptation and permanent connection to the requirements of economic and social development encounter difficulties in defining and pursuing the goal due to the specific characteristics of education characterized by terms such as process, action, relationship, determination, diversification, social reality, and creativity. In the opinion of Bush (2011), the purpose and objectives of educational management must be related and identified with the objectives of education, but due to its specificity, education is not limited only to this aspect, and the purpose of management thus becomes the tool by which it is identified and removed in time the shortcomings, internal or external obstacles that appear in the process of achieving the proposed and assumed pedagogical objectives.

Being a complex system, under external pressure, the change of a component of the structure or a function affects the operation of all other components directly or indirectly, therefore the goal must target each element of it that contributes to the achievement or achievement of the objectives. Thus, the directions towards which the purpose of educational management is aimed are planning activities at the macro level - principles, approaches, and procedures and micro-facilitating institutional planning and educational administration; decision-making and problem-solving; effective communication and information management; awareness of the characteristics of quality institutions; developing an understanding of the essential components of democratic classroom management; developing an understanding of the concept of educational management of the roles and functions of an educational manager; ensuring the health and physical integrity of human resources; the development of a healthy school climate and favorable to educational activities; conflict and stress management; staff motivation; co-curricular planning; financing and budgeting; maintenance of school records; assessment of student and pupil achievements.

Managing resources to achieve educational goals is vital. The resources in the educational system are interdependent and contribute immensely to the holistic development of the educational institution.

## CHAPTER 2

The complex nature of educational management cannot be contained in a single managerial model. Among the first modern authors who proposed such models are Cuthbert (1984), Bolman & Deal (1997), and Morgan (1997), who, depending on the elements analyzed as main factors, identify and propose several types of managerial approaches. Cuthbert (1984) presents the following group of models: analytical-rational, pragmatic-rational, political, phenomenological, and interactionist. Bolman & Deal (1997) offer four models: structural, political, symbolic and human, and Morgan (1997) associates metaphors with organizations considering them mechanical, organic, contemplative, cultural, and political considering leadership as a consequence of them. Later, Bush (2010), based on - the level of agreement on objectives, the concept of structure, the level of environmental influences, and leadership strategies suitable for educational organizations, defines six managerial models, developed in close connection with the leadership style. The author proposes six managerial models - formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguous, and cultural. All the models proposed over time have as design criteria the structure of the organization, the objectives and the reporting of the members of the organization to them, the organizational culture, the relationship between the organization and the environment in which it operates, the institutional background and the relationships between employees or the relationships established between them in the function of their hierarchical positioning.

The following models were presented and analyzed:

- The formal model of educational management
- The collegial model of educational management
- The political model of educational management
- The subjective model of educational management
- The ambiguity model of educational management
- The cultural model of educational management



## CHAPTER 3

Performance is a concept of the definition of which a lot of variables are considered. For all periods and all stages of scientific research, the concept of performance occupied an important place, without establishing an agreement between the numerous researchers and theorists who approached this issue. This discordance and lack of agreement are due to the lack of a meaningful attempt to theoretically or practically define the concept due to the multidimensionality of the parameters and variables involved in the analysis. Some interpretations considered performance a level of the potentiality of an organization. Even if subjective and interpretive (Lebas, 1995), performance cannot exist independently of the objectives assumed by a strategy, it represents the achievement or overcoming of organizational objectives regardless of their nature and variety.

Efficiency and effectiveness are the two variables that mainly define performance, the combination of them reflecting the level of performance. Thus, the mathematical relationship for calculating performance is  $Performance = Efficiency \times Effectiveness$ .

The overall performance objectives are chosen so that they are consistent with the organization's mission and vision. They represent the basic benchmark in determining the objectives for each employee. The objectives are the ones through which the connection between the organization's strategy and the indicators is made. They change annually and can be broken down into several levels. However, their decomposition must reflect the coherence between the assumed global strategy and its various meanings specific to the breakdown levels.

The measurement of objectives for objectives and objective levels is achieved through performance indicators. Measurements are made against the initial or expected level. A distinction is made between *elementary/functional indicators* that accompany local or *elementary* objectives and *composite indicators/macro-indicators* that result from the aggregation of objectives with which they are associated in the synthesis process.

Correct performance measurement involves setting the correct indicators for each level, process, or function in the organization. This approach leads to the need to establish indicators that are easy to use, simple to understand and analyze, flexible, and with the possibility of modification over time.

Performance measurement is a managerial tool that provides information on the overall performance of the organization, i.e. the extent to which the objectives assumed by it have been achieved. By highlighting results derived from monitoring progress, controlling

deviations, and identifying opportunities, it is thus possible to transmit the information necessary to improve the various processes and activities of the organization - for example, the decision-making process, facilitating internal and external communication, and motivating employees. At the same time, it is a means of motivation and control.

Performance evaluation forms in the higher education system and the results of Romanian universities are presented, as well as the performance indicators used by ARACIS.

## **CHAPTER 4**

Global socio-economic dynamics are causing profound changes in all areas. The free movement of people, capital, and goods within the European Union allowed the development of domestic businesses with local or foreign capital, but also the development of subsidiaries and branches of multinational companies. The qualified labor force to manage businesses can be drawn both from Romanian graduates and from other European countries. At the same time, the universities that offer management programs are very attractive to young people in terms of their lack of local offers and opportunities in the labor market.

Europeans, more than Americans, react proactively to these transformations involving increasingly specialized skills. The American model of business studies is not accepted in Western Europe, which is why business education is experiencing a renaissance through the development of innovative programs in which the managerial function is re-conceptualized. This leads to the restructuring of the educational offer by diversifying the curriculum and launching an offer that promises opportunities for higher management studies. In-Company and MBA educational programs (especially in a consortium) are thus being developed (Harbridge House, England, 1998). In the United States the process is slower, and Universities keep the traditional lines of managerial education, which are, however, supplemented with specialized studies with the support of large companies.

In present times, management training programs are increasingly present in universities around the world, offering a wide range of specializations adapted to regional economic and social contexts.

The typology of management educational programs and their way of organization in different universities in Romania and at the international level is presented.

The analysis of these programs present in Romanian universities revealed a large number of faculties that offer this type of study. We made a division of them into faculties with specific economics and faculties from the spectrum of the other fields that included

management programs in the educational offer. There are four different levels of management learning/education. Each of these requires a different period of time (on average 3 years) and not all of them are available at every faculty - economics-specific faculties offer all stages of training, while faculties from other fields are present, in particular, with master's studies. Business schools, on the other hand, can only award advanced-level degrees such as master's degrees, doctorates, or other forms of postgraduate study. At the level of Romania, we have identified 64 faculties, of which 38 faculties from *the economic field* and 26 faculties from other fields.

## CHAPTER 5

Literature analysis - Carrying out a content analysis of the specialized literature provides an x-ray of the concepts with which the authors link the notion of an educational program. In this way we can determine: which are the elements that converge to the design of an educational program, and the formation of programs' portfolio.

The studied database is the World of Science (WoS) known to bring together the most prestigious publications in the world, with an impact on theory and practice in all fields. The analysis was carried out using the software VOSviewer version 1.6.17, released in July 2021, made by the Center for Science and Technology, Leiden University, The Netherlands, and offered free of charge, between December 2021 and January 2022.

In this context, this section aims to explore and investigate the field of program management and educational offers in university education using the empirical analysis of published scientific articles, exploring the conceptual, intellectual, and collaborative structure and highlighting research directions, in an attempt to identify potential clusters of research and the structure of prevailing concepts.

The top 5 countries are the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, People's Republic of China. The newest countries on the copyrighted map are Russia, Ukraine, and Indonesia. Romania is poorly represented with only 29 documents and 3 links, but located in the middle of the time. This fact can lead us to the conclusion that the scientific world (authors) in Romania is interested in the subject but have a weak connection with the international academic world.

Bibliometric analysis - The study proposes to answer the following research questions: *Who are the authors with the highest number of articles and citations? Which journals have the highest visibility? What are the most cited works and also what are the*

*most addressed thematic areas in the field of program management? With which countries do authors in the field collaborate? What is the intellectual, social, and conceptual structure of the main publications in the field of program management and educational offers in university education?*

This analysis is based on 1620 documents indexed in the WoS platform and 1590 documents indexed in Scopus.

The conceptual structure map of documents studies their basic topics, separating the most common terms through the method of mapping the connection between words. Thus, in the case of both databases, we have 3 differentiated clusters. For WoS: the blue cluster consists of terms related to the labor market ("unemployment", "employment", "Labor market"), the green cluster is focused on teaching-learning and technology ("learning", "teaching", "technology), the red cluster consists of terms such as "tertiary education", "development", "evolution", "covid-19".

Performance case study - Three universities were selected to carry out the empirical research: Valahia University of Târgoviște (VUT), University of Pitești (UP), and Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (LBUS). The motivation for choosing these universities was the following:

The set of performance indicators used in Romanian higher education is similar to those used internationally as a result of the globalization process in the field of education and scientific research. Among them are: the number of students, the number of graduates, integration with the business environment, internationalization, the number of projects submitted and respectively financed, the quality of research, and its visibility - number of citations. However, the existence of international classifications, the increase in competitiveness at the national level, and the financial constraints influence the performance measurement process and determined the management of the institutions to establish the objectives following the aspects pursued by the classifications.

The good scores obtained in the classifications were widely used for commercial purposes - advertisements & publicity. Poor results are often used to mobilize students and teachers to make joint efforts to improve/maintain scores. These conditions determined the decrease of academic staff's interest in teaching activities and led to the encouragement of stratification within the university systems - with the generation of social inequalities, the lower interest in certain fields (for example, social sciences and humanities where the number of ISI publications is significantly lower than in economic, technical, transdisciplinary fields).

Case study on program design - Romanian economic education has an old tradition, being among the specializations that were present in the first Romanian educational institutions that appeared in Romania. After 1990, higher education services were diversified due to the development of several university centers. The study presented in this report tries to capture the particularities of the management study programs in young university centers - the Valahia University of Târgoviște (VUT), the Ovidius University of Constanța (OUC), and the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (NSPAS).

The three universities studied demonstrate the variability of the development of management programs adapted to the local economic specifics and emphasize the ability of Romanian education to adapt through well-defined and substantiated curricula, through teaching staff with international visibility and a competitive spirit.

Transversal analysis - The sustainability of management programs depends on the degree to which they respond to the socio-economic context, the way in which they are integrated into the educational offer, and the degree to which they respond to the demands of the labor market. A cross-sectional analysis of management education programs shows us how they evolved in the period 1990-2020.

The study of the documents on the basis of which the study programs were established and carried out shows that in the period 1990-2000s, there were significant legislative loopholes that allowed little formalization of them and even less. More specifically, the first law regulating the field is Law No. 88/1993 on the accreditation of higher education institutions and the recognition of diplomas. Based on this law, the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEAA) is established, which during the period 1993-2006 is the body through which control is exercised over the establishment process and the operation of higher education institutions, as well as educational programs. It also has the role of establishing quality standards and promoting regulations aimed at ensuring coherence and consistency of the components of the Romanian university education system.

Spatial analysis - Spatial analysis of the educational programs studied provides an insight into the areas where they have developed over time, providing the labor market with

qualified personnel for economic activities and the areas where such educational programs are needed.

The spatial distribution of economic programs in existence at any given time provides an insight into the geographic areas where there might be a demand for them. This must be addressed in the context of the economic development of the area, the potential of the school population, and neighborhoods that could polarize the possible candidates.

There are at least three conditions for organizing a university study program:

- 1- There must be demand i.e. there must be a large enough pool of candidates who are interested in the respective specialization;
- 2- To be able to create the educational infrastructure;
- 3- To have the necessary teaching staff.

The digitization process, implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated that for certain specializations, especially those in the field of social sciences, it is possible to adopt e-education programs. They allow universities with established programs to promote digital or hybrid education and therefore allow access to these programs for the school population in regions where the offer is limited or zero.

From the previously presented analyses, it emerges that to achieve effective management of educational programs, it is necessary to corroborate all information and develop the best mechanisms for increasing the accessibility of candidates to quality educational programs.

## **CHAPTER 6**

Finally, current trends and developments in management are explored, including the changing business environment and the impact of technological advances. These trends and developments will be taken into account when assessing the context and designing management programs.

The various methods and frameworks that have been proposed for assessing the context of management programs include an examination of different approaches to identifying the needs and characteristics of target students, as well as methods of assessing current trends and developments in the field of management.

Methods and models for evaluating the context and management programs, the proposal of work tools, the managerial model for the design of CIPIC management programs,

the design model for management programs in the context of digital transformation, and the program portfolio management model were proposed in the field of management.

## CONCLUSIONS

The profound transformations that society is currently going through are the result of the effects of the COVID-19 health crisis, which forced us to face very special challenges such as "lockdown", the online transfer of many activities, the work at home, etc. At the same time, there was an explosion of what was called digital transformation in the sense of the adoption of digital techniques and technologies.

Starting with the year 2020, at the global level, several coordinates for the resettlement of socio-economic processes have emerged, namely:

- digital transformation and the adoption of techniques such as e-banking, e-government, e-education, e-health, IoT (Internet of Things), AI (Artificial Intelligence), Big Data, etc.;
- new innovative business models to ensure economic resilience;
- a new energy paradigm, rethinking economic activities from the perspective of using energy from renewable sources and eliminating energy obtained from fossil fuels;
- circular economy and compliance with the principles of sustainable development;
- the restructuring of the labor market, the disappearance of some occupations and the appearance of new occupations; globalization of the labor market, labor mobility, and its delocalization;
- internationalization of the educational market;
- management of energy, food, workforce, political, military, etc. crises;
- socio-economic inclusion and convergence.

In this context with multiple challenges and as many restructurings and resettlements at the global level it is natural that the academic world also faces major challenges. Academic education, namely bachelor's, master's, and doctorate educational programs is the form by which people are prepared to face the new requirements. Education is the spearhead in shaping visions and implementing the elements of progress. To regain its leading position in the process of digital transformation and rethinking the business environment, there is a need for the operationalization of educational programs that respond to new societal requirements.

The objective of the doctoral thesis is to make an x-ray of the higher education system, especially the evolution and current situation of management programs to propose models for the design and management of educational programs and offers.

To meet the objective, a presentation of the higher education system in Romania, educational management methods, and academic performance evaluation mechanisms was made. Aspects related to educational leadership, quality standards, and mechanisms for evaluating the didactic process were also explored.

The contributions that the thesis brings to management theory and practice are:

- ✓ the evolution of the higher education system in Romania and the positioning of management education programs concerning other European programs;
- ✓ bibliometric analysis to determine the concepts with which the notion of management educational program is related and the intensity of the links;
- ✓ exploring the specialized literature to highlight the researchers' concern for this subject, establishing the poles of maximum performance in research in the field, the membership of the Romanian academic environment in this networking;
- ✓ cross-sectional analysis of management education programs in Romania and related ones (business administration, finance, accounting, marketing);
- ✓ spatial analysis of management and related educational programs, establishing the degree of territorial dispersion and highlighting areas in need or vulnerable;
- ✓ Case Studies on university performance;
- ✓ Case Study for educational program design that completes the picture of needs, context, and requirements for initiating, designing, and carrying out an educational program;
- ✓ Proposing methods for evaluating the management framework and programs, and establishing general work schemes:
  - Methods of Evaluating the educational context and Framework;
  - Evaluation Methods of educational programs.
- ✓ Managerial model for designing management programs consisting of:
  - Models of approach to the design of educational programs
  - The Collaborative Innovative Design Integrated Framework (CIDIF).



- ✓ Design a model of management programs in the context of digital transformation, by identifying the key areas necessary for the training of managers in the context of digital transformation;
- ✓ Management model of the portfolio of programs in the field of management, by proposing:
  - Program portfolio management model;
  - The strategic directions for the operationalization of the decision to restructure the program portfolio;
  - Program portfolio management operational scheme.

Overall, this thesis provides a comprehensive and practical approach to the context assessment and design of bachelor and master programs in management, based on an in-depth review of the literature and best practices, as well as case studies and detailed analysis. The approach and recommendations presented in this thesis can be used by program designers, university managers, and other stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of management programs in today's rapidly changing business environment.

### **Limits of research**

Considering the complexity of the studied phenomena, during the research we faced a series of limits, the most important of which would be:

- ✓ the breadth of specialized literature that imposed a selection of those that were the basis of the analyzes based on certain criteria;
- ✓ the difficult mapping of educational programs due to a lacunar taxonomy;
- ✓ lack of systematic information (databases) regarding the content of educational programs;
- ✓ lack of information regarding the integration of graduates into the labor market in the short, medium, and long term;
- ✓ partial information about teaching staff;
- ✓ the impossibility of axonometric compatibility with EU programs.

### **Future research directions**

Future research will focus on exploring the efficiency and effectiveness of management education programs, the compatibility between the portfolio of knowledge and skills offered by a program and the needs of the labor market, the response of the academic environment to societal challenges, and educational globalization.

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