





**PART ONE**

**EDUCATION -  
THE BASIS  
OF THE  
KNOWLEDGE  
SOCIETY**





# 1

## The Education Awaiting Its Reform

**T**he Romanian educational system has been living, for two decades now, in hope and fear of the reform. Hope, because change is an objective necessity, required by the education's reality on all levels, within the context of the great changes happening on national, European and global level. Fear, because all attempts and tribulations under the aegis of reform were a series of experiments which have affected the teachers, the students, the parents and, in one way or another, the entire society. Therefore, even though the necessity of reform is, in general terms, understood (with the exception of the dull minds, restricted by absurd or obsolete approaches), "the reform", as it was carried out, generated tension, anxiety and,

most of all, a huge and permanent instability, and the reaction it caused was rejection. It has to do with an odd Romanian dialectic, an oxymoronic approach, characteristic of the traditional Romanian existence.

The reform is a chimera that has been haunting the system for over twenty years now. Nobody knew well what it was, how it was, how it had to be. Each of the heads of the educational system has merely estimated the concept of reform and its rendition to reality. The reformative measures, carried out by various strategists and visionaries, have been strongly influenced by the political factor. During these two decades, the educational system has been politicized, subjected to political interests. Therefore, we can't truly talk of an authentic reform for at least two reasons: firstly, we didn't have the proper experts to create it, to see beyond the immediate horizon; secondly, the entire process, wavering and tormenting, has been altered along the way by political and populist interests. To all this an aggravating element is also added, a Romanian particularity, based on a mentality corrupted by our awareness of marginality as a nation, civilization and culture, representing the origin of an ill-fated inferiority complex, with a wide reach: the pre-eminence of foreign models. The reformative experiments have been carried

out under the tyranny of models, taken from various educational systems and “implemented”, foolishly at times, into our own system. Its particularities, structure and purposes weren’t taken into consideration, in the context of historical becoming, which, at some particular times, led to good things as well, if we were to refer to names, personalities and performance. Modernization is, without a doubt, not only necessity, but urgency as well, and it implies undertaking certain institutions or good methods which have proved to be efficient and pragmatic in other systems. But this should not mean simply copying and grafting them to an educational body that has its own DNA. Grafted on this philosophy of mimetic undertaking, the educational reforms have remained stuck on the test stage – with the system having been transformed into a big laboratory – most of the times ending in failure and in a state of huge confusion. Perhaps a solid conceptual foundation would have been needed, first and foremost, a clear definition of the term “reform” following the hermeneutics of genuine specialists. In this case, it would have been necessary to start from an essential truth: the reform should not focus on change for the sake of the change only, it should not aim to change the form and not the content, but it should be a real transformation of vision, concept

and paradigm, moving towards a modern, qualitative, efficient and competitive educational system.

Education Minister Daniel Funeriu has taken over a responsibility of tremendous difficulty: changing the Romanian educational system from scratch. Within the context of such revolutionary intentions, the current head of Education of Romania has managed to cause great tension within our system. Funeriu's reform takes place on two levels: on a conceptual level, with a normative support which is currently being drafted, and on a level of practical approaches. The Law of National Education, the Minister's dispositions, the methodologies etc., all the norms and regulations are rewriting the reform's politics, the area which has suffered the most until now. The new law, passed by the Government, managed to rock the system at that time, and the vibrations have not yet ceased. In their wake we have documents, flowing out in storms right from the normative spring of the Ministry, now in a prolific phase of its existence. What's left is to wait and see when all these will be put together to form a coherent and functional system. At the moment, higher education is being alerted by criteria related to the didactic career and to the process of classifying universities. On

the level of practical approaches, two earthquakes have shaken the secondary education: the baccalaureate exams, with its two editions, one weaker than the other, and the tenure process. Both examinations have revealed the true situation in which Romanian education finds itself, concerning the quality and efficiency of the educational act, of the students' level of knowledge, as well as that of their future teaching "mentors".

So far, the Funeriu Ministry has registered a series of significant documents and actions, done with obstinacy, in spite of all the critical and opposing observations, some of them wellfounded. In the Minister's vision, all these actions are meant to trigger the reform which has been long awaited by the educational system, its representatives and our entire society. The waiting so far has been nothing more than a long gaze into the sun and a great disappointment, repeated with each and every mandate. An aggravating circumstance of these attempts is represented by the fact that they are unfolding in an ill-fated time of crisis, when education is terribly harmed by cuts in wages, by shortages and poverty, and its people are being placed in humiliating positions, many times at the limits of subsistence. Under these conditions, the challenges initiated by law, regulations and methodologies and by the radical change in the approach to national exams fail

to find their place in a system torn by disappointment, poverty, lack of hope and perspective. Funeriu's reform will have no one to support it if it doesn't turn towards the people as well, if it doesn't concentrate on the "human resources". It is, however, its only chance to succeed. Otherwise, it will remain but a pile of documents, norms and revolutionary gestures. Thus, a priority of this new attempt to change should be in the financing of the system. Up to this day, the education has "benefited", through the "concern" and "competence" of politicians, of a chronic under-financing, which generated its continuous degradation. The fact that this 6% is, at the moment, unattainable leads to many question marks. In order to modernize the education system and make it more European, no matter how daring and challenging the ministerial measures are, as long as its people are being betrayed, humiliated and unmotivated by the attitude towards education the reform is not possible.

The education system and, along with it, our entire society are awaiting the reform. A reform in the true sense of the word, which would aim towards modernization, quality growth and efficiency of our educational system. The Romanian educational system is in a crucial moment of its existence, in a time of

necessary change imposed by the demands of the Knowledge Society. The Romanian education system has the capacity and resources to become competitive on both European and global levels. This progress is however fully dependent on two conditions: the education's politics and its financing. They are both in an interdependent relation; one cannot function without the other. An urgency of the reform, in regards to financing, must be that of the human resources. Qualified and motivated people remain the major priority of any reform. Without them, the entire structure, built out of norms, visions and intentions, is under the risk of collapsing within a normative and euphonious phraseology, but one which lacks content. And the reform, to which the Minister aspires, with all his audacious fights against the system, presents the same risk of being added to the series of failed experiments over the years and mandates of other reformers. For now, with this new beginning, the education is in a state of alert, as it senses that new changes are coming its way and that it's being subjected to a process of transformation whose meanings it doesn't yet comprehend. Our wish is that fear of change will fade away from the tension of waiting and that only hope will remain. A justified hope towards the Ministry's politics, built on concrete evolution and maintained by those

who run the destinies of education through clear actions and measures, also on a financial level and not only on a virtual one. Let's hope that reform finally gets to show itself on the horizon. A reform meant to serve the education, its people, the students and Romanian society, and not only politicians.

